

## Luke 3:1~6

Here in chapter 3, verse 1, we find the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist. For nearly thirty years, all was silent...but here we find that the silence is broken by the voice of one crying in the wilderness! Luke sets the stage...he gives us the names of a whole host of characters that will play a vital role in both the life and death of both John and Jesus. The names mentioned here are the main leaders, both political and religious, that will play a major part in bringing about God's plan of redemption. Once again we are reminded as we look at these rulers, that there is none outside God's control. He used everyone of these pagan rulers to bring about His will. Even the corrupt, religious leaders of the day, God still used them to bring about His perfect plan.

No doubt, at the birth of both John and Jesus, there was a big stir, given all the events that took place. But it had been around 30 years, and no doubt things had quieted down. But Luke tells, that in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, the silence is broken by the voice of one crying in the wilderness! Luke tells us here that in that year, "***the word of the Lord came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.***" That phrase, "***the word of the Lord came unto John,***" was indicative of the manner of prophets. John was the last of the O.T. prophets. He served a very interesting role, in that of a transitional figure forming a bridge between the age of promise to the age of fulfillment. According to Luke, John spent his entire life in the desert, the wilderness, being prepared for this day.

Being around the age of 30, Luke declares his time had come..."***the word of the Lord came unto John.***" The Lord had spoken...He had given John the message that he was to proclaim to the nation Israel...*the call for repentance*...

(Vs 3) <sup>3</sup>***And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;***

The cry in the wilderness, was a cry for repentance... Calling on the nation to repent, crying out to the people to turn from their sinful, rebellious ways and turn back to the Lord! John was instructed by the Lord, that for all who heeded the call, they were to be baptized, ***signifying*** the cleansing of their sin! No doubt, here we see the "*New token*" of the covenant being established. Remember the previous "*token*" was circumcision. But here, John is introducing what would be the "*sign*" of the New Covenant...

Tragically, many associate "*Water baptism*" with salvation, thinking that if you get baptized, you're saved. I couldn't tell you the number of people that I've talked to, that when I ask them about their soul, they reply by saying that they have been baptized. Even more tragic, I often hear those associated with the church associate's salvation the same way. It speaks to the ignorance to the teachings of scripture...

The word "*baptism*" simply means to "*immerse, or to submerge fully.*" The problem is, most immediately identify the word "*baptism,*" *with water,* when the word refers to the act of immersion, but does not indicate into what. (Romans 6, we are "*Baptized into his death.*") Here, he refers to "*the Baptism of Repentance.*"

<sup>3</sup>***And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;***

John was not preaching for people to be baptized in the Jordan River, but to be baptized in repentance. True, it was followed by being baptized in the water, but the true baptism was in repentance. Water baptism only serves as a beautiful picture of what true salvation is all about. Repentance means to turn, to change one's ways. To immerse oneself in repentance is to cleanse one's heart of wrong ways, evil doings... As the water "*cleanses the dirt*" off of a man's skin, ***repentance*** "*cleanses the man's heart.*"

**Baptism of Repentance**... It is not the act of washing, but the repentance itself that results in cleansing, for they have not been cleansed unless they TURN away from their wickedness.

(**Make reference to Verses 7~8, Fruits of repentance**) John cried out to the people to turn from their sins, and cleanse their hearts in preparation for the coming of the Lord! Something Luke declares a fulfillment of a prophetic word written by Isaiah the prophet.

(Vs 4~6) *As it is written*... Luke declares, John's ministry was prophesied by Isaiah the prophet (Is. 40). Not only was it a fulfillment of Isaiah, it was also a fulfillment of Malachi as well.

(3:1) *<sup>1</sup>Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me...*

Both prophets proclaim the same thing, that just prior to the Lord's coming to visit His people, there would be one sent to proclaim His coming and prepare for His arrival.

(**Isaiah 40**) *<sup>3</sup>The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

Here, Isaiah refers to John as the voice of one crying in the wilderness...calling on the people to make preparations for the coming of the King!

The position referred to here is that of what was commonly known as a "forerunner." A forerunner was someone who was dispatched just prior to the King visiting a place, to make all the necessary preparations for the King's arrival. Everything from the route that he would travel, (which is what is spoken of here), to where he would stay the night, where and what he would eat, he would set the "itinerary," what the king would do and when, his departure time...every thing, every last detail. Needless to say, the forerunner had a huge responsibility in making sure everything was ready for the king's arrival.

Here in Isaiah, verses 3~4, the prophet speaks in terms of the forerunners task of ensuring that the road on which the king would travel to his destination, meet the proper standards.

*...Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

The words spoken in verse four, were literal in the sense, these things were done in preparation for a king's visit. When preparing for a King's visit, thousands of men were employed to prepare the travel route, (making new roads if necessary) roads that were straight, level and smooth. If there was a hill in the way, it was removed. If there was a valley, you filled it, if it was bumpy, you smoothed it... Only a smooth, straight, level road is appropriate for a King...

(Vs 4) *<sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:*

Well here, Isaiah uses the preparing of a road *metaphorically*...referring to a people; both *morally* and *spiritually prepared* to receive their Lord.

He uses the imagery of preparing the roads for the arrival of a King, to describe the work of the forerunner in the hearts of the people. Each image, point to the "making right" of "what is wrong."

*<sup>4</sup>Every valley shall be exalted... **That which is "lacking" shall be filled!***

*...and every mountain and hill shall be made low... **The prideful must be humbled!***

*...the crooked shall be made straight... **That which is unjust...shall be made just...***

Separately, each image could be open to various interpretations as to what each one means, but the point of all four is the same...

**T**: Whatever is “*wrong*,” needs to be made “*right!*”

And the solution to all four is the same... ***Repentance!***

John’s purpose as the forerunner of Christ, was to prepare the way of the Lord, *by preparing the hearts of the people!* Their hearts weren’t right, and they needed to make them right, and *the only way to truly do that...* was repent!

- Is there a lacking in your faithfulness to the Lord...that needs to be filled up? ...**Repent!**
- Has pride filled your heart, is self exalted over God? ...**Repent!**
- Are your dealings with God just, are you doing what is right in His eyes? ...**Repent!**

Repentance “*fills the valleys!*”

Repentance “*brings down the mountains!*”

Repentance “*straightens out what is crooked!*”

Repentance “*makes smooth that which is rough!*”

John’s cry was a “*Call for the people to cleanse and prepare their hearts by repentance!*”

In Matthew, we are told, that John preached, “*Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*”

The Lord is on His way...**REPENT**... Beloved, the same message we’re still proclaiming today! A message that *must be heeded*, if you are to be right with the Lord! To simply “*hear*” the message is not enough! You must respond to the message by “*turning*” away from the wrong to do the right! The heart that yet possesses valleys, mountains, and crooked ways, is not right!

This morning, *I’m the voice of one crying* in Providence Baptist Church...The message I have, is the same one that John declared...Repent! Turn from your wicked ways, turn from your disobedience to the Lord and His ways! Turn from your pride, and living your life to yourself... For I’m telling you that if you don’t, you will perish!

You may be here this morning, and you may have been “*baptized*”... But I want to ask you, where you simply baptized in water or in repentance. The question is, have you turned? Are you striving to do the Lord’s will? Have you turned your back on this world? Are you presenting your life to Him in service?

Or are you continuing to live for yourself, your will, living to this world and the things of this world?

**Baptism of Repentance**... It is not the act of washing, but the repentance itself that results in cleansing. For they have not been cleansed unless they TURN away from their wickedness.

I want to close by asking you a simple question...**Is your heart right?**

If it’s not, you need to come this morning, and come clean before God...

<sup>5</sup>*And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*