

Prepared

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Luke 3:7-18

We live in a time where people are busy and distracted so it is hard to prepare to meet with God. We rush into God's presence to "ask a favor", we call on Him only when we are desperate, or we pray to mark it off of our to do list for the day. Even though the pace was much slower, we see in today's Scripture that John the Baptist needed to prepare people to meet Jesus.



John began his ministry preaching repentance and then he performed "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Jesus also began His ministry preaching repentance. Could it be that repentance is our first step of preparation? Repentance is the preparation of the heart that John was calling for to make the paths straight.

John was harsh and wanted to be clear about who should be baptized. It was the prepared that should be baptized, the ones whose hearts were repentant. Just because your Father is Abraham doesn't mean your heart is prepared. Today, we could say, just because you go to church or just because your parents and grandparents went to church or even just because you are a deacon or Sunday School teacher; that does not make your heart right. The message is just as clear for today; we need to prepare our hearts for the coming Messiah. [excerpts from Russ Wilkins]

Warning (Luke 3:7-9)

- John's sermons were designed to prepare the way for the Messiah.
 - He preached a message of repentance and baptized many people who responded.
 - Though he preached in a remote area of the Jordan river, multitudes came to hear.
 - John did not mince words as he confronted hypocrisy. He refuted the religiously proud.
 - Some of the people were sincere and were immersed (baptized) in the Jordan. Others came with impure motives. John called the people with unclean motives a **"generation of vipers"**.
 - John was not interested in the approval of the crowd but of God alone.
 - The word 'repentance' literally means a change of mind, i.e. a true transformation of one's life.
 - **"bring forth therefore fruits of repentance"** – John demanded to see evidence of changed lives from those that he baptized. Baptism is a symbol of something that has already happened.
 - John's baptism differed from baptism after Jesus' resurrection. Believers in Christ Jesus have died to an old way of life and have been raised in Christ to a newness of life in Him.
 - Many Jews claimed special privilege with God because Abraham was their ancestor.
 - John states that God created Israel. People need to follow God not their ancestry.
 - John also preached with urgency – **"the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree"**
 - While the nation sinned, every individual must make a decision to repent.
- **How would you compare/contrast the condition of society in John's day and our current era?**
- **What fruit will you bear in this New Year?**



Response (Luke 3:10-14)

- Remember, God had called John from the womb for his ministry.
 - John's mission had been defined in the prophecy of Isaiah *"A voice of one calling in the wilderness' prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'."* Isaiah 40:3
- So, who responded to John's call to repentance?
 - ***"the people asked him ... what shall we do then?"***
 - Ordinary people responded and wanted to repent, but how?
 - John said to *love others*. If you have two coats, give one to someone who does not have a coat.
 - Likewise, share your food (meat) with others. Each person can find a tangible way to show a changed life by helping others instead of living selfishly.
 - ***"Then came also publicans ... what shall we do?"***
 - Publicans were usually Jews employed by the Romans. They were considered traitors by their countrymen. Tax collectors were notorious for stealing from those they taxed.
 - John said ***"exact no more"*** – in otherwise, a changed life would be one lived honestly.
 - ***"And the soldiers likewise ... what shall we do?"***
 - Some of the Roman soldiers were touched by John's message.
 - Soldiers were known to be violent and would accuse people falsely in hopes of a bribe.
 - John said to stop these behaviors and to be content with the wage they received.
- Ordinary people, government workers, and soldiers all responded to John's message. In each person's case, true repentance is demonstrated by turning from sin as we turn to the Savior.
- Repentance is demonstrated through godly living.
- **If you were in the crowd that day, what changes might John say you should make?**
- **What evidence of repentance do others see in our lives?**



Division (Luke 3:15-18)

- The people who heard John wondered what was next ***"the people were in expectation"***.
- The crowd wondered about John out loud ***"whether he were the Christ, or not"***
- John was quick to answer ***"one mightier than I cometh"***
 - The tense of 'cometh' indicates it was already underway. John gave three characteristics:
 - He was mightier than John. The people would be awed by the Messiah's authority.
 - John did not consider himself worthy to unloose the latch of His shoes.
 - The day was coming when the Messiah would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire.
- The Messiah's judgment is both positive and negative, hopeful and woeful.
 - The fan would move the air to separate the wheat from the chaff.
 - The fan was in the Messiah's hand, he was ready to begin.
- The good news is that the Messiah will ***"gather the wheat in His garner."*** We can be saved from sin!
- **What does repentance mean to you?**

Biblical Truth:

Jesus is the promised Messiah who brings judgment.

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."
Proverbs 28:13

