

Lesson 03: The Ministry of John the Baptist

Objective: To know that to repent means *to turn around* and *to change one's direction*, re-orientation.

Background: In ancient times, a “herald” (or “forerunner”) is a man who announces the news of impending events, such as the coming visit of a king, and makes the people ready for the occasion. John the Baptist was the “herald” sent by God (Isa. 40:3) *to prepare the hearts* of the people for Jesus the Messiah (Christ-king). The Jews who heard John, discerned in him the “prophetic voice” that had not been heard for nearly 400 years since the day of Malachi.

Instruction: Read Luke 1 :5-25, 57-80; 3:1-17 first before studying Lk:3:1-17.

Let's Think:

1. In what way was the birth of John *similar to* that of Jesus? (Compare with Lk, 1 :5-17 and 26-33.) Why did Jesus say in Lk: 7:26 that John was “more than a prophet”? Does Isaiah 40:3; Mt. 3:3; Lk 1 :76,77 shed some light on this? Explain.
2. Where did John spend his days before his public appearance? (Lk:1 :80; 3:2) Has the environment in any way *shaped* his life-style (Mt. 3:4), his character, and his message (note the illustrations he gave in Lk. 3:7-10)? Explain.
3. Was John's ministry *endorsed* or sponsored by any of the “big names,” civil or religious, listed in Lk 3: 1-2? What was the essence of his message? And how do you account for *the effect* of his ministry? (Lk. 3:1-3; Mt. 3:1-6; also Mt. 21:24-26)
4. It was a common belief of the Jews that the physical descendants of Abraham through Jacob would be *exempted* from the coming wrath (Judgment) of God. How did John confront their false sense of security? What imagery did he employ to bring the truth home? (Lk. 3: 8-9)
5. According to John, will “water baptism” *without genuine repentance* save a person from the coming judgment? (Lk3: 3, 7, 8) Are “repentance” and “remorse” synonymous? Explain. (Compare Lk.15:11-20 with Mt.27:3-5)
6. How does John's counseling underline the truth that genuine repentance has *moral implications*? Does he divide life into two compartments: *secular versus sacred*? Give examples. (vs.10-14).
7. Have you repented and accepted the Good News of Jesus? If so, how has it affected your daily decisions and *business transactions*?

Let's Remember: If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1 :9).