

## The Purpose of John Lk. 3:1-20

*Thesis: By understanding the purpose of John, we can better understand the Christ.*

### Introduction:

- A. From the beginning, it should be understood that the term “Baptist” is not the proper translation of John’s name.
  - 1. In fact, it is a terrible translation.
  - 2. It is a description of what he did, not who he was.
  - 3. It is more correct to say “John the immerser.”
  
- B. The reason this is important is because some have said that they do not want to be a part of a church that John was not a part of.
  - 1. If John could hear that, he would be turning over in his grave.
  - 2. In the case of John, it was okay because the church had not yet been established.
  - 3. In our case, it is not okay because it is the church that the saved are a part of.
  - 4. John came to prepare the way for the Messiah, not to be the Messiah.
  
- C. Today, we are going to notice the purpose of the life of John, and see how he fulfilled that purpose.

### I. The purpose of John was to prepare the way for the Christ.

#### A. It had been prophesied that one would come to prepare the way for the Christ.

- 1. There are two prominent Old Testament prophecies concerning John.
  - a. **Is. 40:3-5** - The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. {4} Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; {5} The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”
  - b. **Mal. 4:5-6** - Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. {6} And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.
- 2. All of Israel were waiting on this prophecy to be fulfilled.

#### B. This prophecy was fulfilled in John (3:3-6).

- 1. Prophecies were made concerning John when he was born.
  - a. **Lk. 1:13-17** (Prophecy of Gabriel when he appeared to Zacharias in the temple) - But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will

bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. {14} And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. {15} For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. {16} And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. {17} He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of *Elijah*, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

- b. **Lk. 1:76-79** (Zacharias' prophecy concerning John after his birth and circumcision) - And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, {77} To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins, {78} Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; {79} To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
2. John fulfilled these prophecies when he began his ministry.
  - a. **Lk. 3:3-6** - And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, {4} as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.' {5} Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; {6} And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."
  - b. The point is that John, through his life and work, fulfilled the prophecies concerning him.
3. Jesus spoke of the work of John and his purpose.
  - a. **Mt. 11:7-14** (After the disciples of John left the presence of Jesus) - As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? {8} But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. {9} But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. {10} For this is he of whom it is written: 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.' {11} Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. {12} And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. {13} For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. {14} And if you are willing to receive it, he is *Elijah* who is to come."

- b. **Mt. 17:10-13** (Jesus and His disciples understood who John was)
  - And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” {11} Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things. {12} But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.” {13} Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

**John’s purpose was to lead others to Christ; and he did this in two ways (message and actions).**

**II. John led others to Christ through his message.**

**A. John’s message was simple: “Bear fruits worthy of repentance” (3:7-14).**

- 1. **Lk. 3:3** - John “went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”
- 2. John was very specific in his message about repentance.
  - a. He tells his audience to “bear fruits worthy of repentance,” and he warns them of the consequences of not repenting (3:7-9).
  - b. Several individuals of different occupations ask John exactly what this means (3:10-14).
    - 1) People in general (3:10-11)
    - 2) Tax collectors (3:12-13)
    - 3) Soldiers (3:14)
- 3. Simply put, to “bear fruits worthy of repentance” means that we change our actions in order to be pleasing to God.

**B. The message of Jesus was the same as the message of John.**

- 1. From the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus taught that men should repent.
  - a. **Mk. 1:14-15** - Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, {15} and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”
  - b. **Mt. 4:17** (Jesus departs from Nazareth and dwells in Capernaum)
    - From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
  - c. **Lk. 13:1-5** - There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. {2} And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? {3} I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. {4} Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who

dwelt in Jerusalem? {5} I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

2. Jesus taught His disciples to preach repentance.
  - a. **Mk. 6:12** (Jesus sends out the 12 disciples) - So they went out and preached that people should repent.
  - b. The point is that Jesus placed a strong emphasis on repentance.

**C. Today, we need to understand the significance of repentance.**

1. You cannot be pleasing to God if you do not change your actions!
2. **Acts 2:38** - Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
3. **Acts 3:19** (Peter speaking in front of Solomon’s Porch at the temple) - Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,
4. **Acts 17:30-31** (Paul speaking at the Areopagus) - Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, {31} because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

**The message of John was bear fruits worthy of repentance; and it is still important to us today.**

**III. John led others to Christ by his actions (3:15-20).**

**A. Through his actions, John demonstrated that he was not the Christ (3:15-18).**

1. Many people were wondering if John was the Christ or not (3:15).
2. John said that the Christ was the one who would come after him and was mightier than him (3:16-18).
3. In other texts, we read of John declaring that he is not the Christ.
  - a. **Jn. 1:15** - John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.’”
  - b. **Jn. 1:19-23** - Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” {20} He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” {21} And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” {22} Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” {23} He said: **“I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’”** as the prophet Isaiah said.”
  - c. **Jn. 1:29-30** - The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of

the world! {30} This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"

- d. **Jn. 1:35-37** (John tells Andrew and Peter that Jesus is the Christ) - Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. {36} And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" {37} The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.
- e. **Jn. 3:30** - He must increase, but I must decrease.
- 4. The actions of John declared that he was not the Christ, but that they should follow the Christ.

**B. Even in his death, John is a great encouragement to us and shows us what it means to give our life for Christ (3:19-20).**

- 1. Herod had put John in prison because John had condemned his marriage.
- 2. It was during this imprisonment that John was beheaded (**Mk. 6:14-29**).
- 3. John gives us a great example of what it means to give our life for Christ.
  - a. The example that John gives us is one of encouragement.
  - b. It shows us the importance of following Christ, even if it may cost us our life.
  - c. **Lk. 9:23-26** - Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. {24} For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. {25} For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? {26} For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels."
  - d. **Rev. 2:10** (To the church in Smyrna) - Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

### **Conclusion:**

- A. In a real sense, we should all be like John.
- B. John understood his purpose in this life.
  - 1. He was to lead others to Christ.
  - 2. Our purpose in this life is to lead others to Christ.
  - 3. **Ecc. 12:13** - Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.
  - 4. **Mk. 16:15-16** - And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. {16} He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."