

“Appearance of the Forerunner – Preparation”

Luke 3: 1 – 18

In (Luke 1: 8 – 17), we learn how this whole matter begun as an angel spoke to Zechariah the priest as he was carrying out his duties in the temple. There was an initial fear as the angel appeared and began to speak, but the angel quickly told Zechariah not to be afraid. Zechariah had evidently prayed for children and now the angel tells him his prayer has been heard and this reaffirms the truth that God answers prayers in his own time so we should not give up. Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth would bear him a son and he would be named, John. He would be a joy and delight to Zechariah and many would rejoice at his birth for this child would be great in the sight of the Lord. The angel also gave instructions for rearing this child and then told of the work he would do. Fear would turn to joy at the coming of this child. All we know about the early years of John's life we find in (Luke 1: 80), And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly in Israel. Then in Luke chapter 3 we learn more about him.

The Jewish kingdom was divided into regions and governors were appointed by the Roman emperor and the Israelites chafed under that system of rule. The ancient glory of Israel had faded and the people were looking for someone to lead them back to the glory of years past. The Jewish church had also decayed as it had two high priests rather than one according to the law of Moses. The people were looking for change.

John came to prepare the way for the Messiah and it would not be done by force, but by a voice speaking throughout the country and in the process, he was fulfilling prophecy of Isaiah. There were various obstacles representing the character of men. Valleys, depressed and despairing folks; mountains, the exalted and proud leaders; crooked places, the evidence of sin; rough ways, those who were rugged and harsh by nature. All these classes of people through John's preaching are to be prepared for God's salvation through the person of Jesus Christ.

John's message was simple and to the point. The people needed to repent of their sins and then bring forth fruit of that repentance such as justice and compassion that would indicate their willingness to change following their repentance. Different types of folks came to John asking him

what they should do to show this kind of fruit and he gave them some directives. He told them to share with those who have less and be satisfied with what they had rather than always trying to get more.

John's preaching was successful as he got the people's attention to the point they wanted to know if he was the Messiah. He said he was not the Messiah for there was one coming who was a greater person than himself. John told the people the Messiah would exercise authority and execute judgment as well as baptize with fire. If the people would not accept the fire of purification, then they will receive it as judgment.

Yes, John came to prepare the way for the Messiah, Jesus Christ and he did his work but it eventually cost him his life as he spoke the truth being directed by God. In life and in death John faithfully prepared the way for the Messiah.

Pastor Garry Culler