

John the Baptist's Testimony About Jesus

-Repent and believe the good news-

And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Mark 1:7-8

Last visit we learned about Nicodemus and we learned that Judaism, which Nicodemus represented, was not sufficient to enter the Kingdom of God. Our journey in the Book of John now takes us to John the Baptist. At the time of the writing of the Book of John the clash between the church and synagogue was intense. The Pharisees thought their pedigree and knowledge was sufficient. A debate erupted over the baptism of Jesus and the baptism of John the Baptist as to which had greater purifying ability.

Baptism was first used in the Mosaic laws of purification, where it means a mere washing & cleansing (Leviticus 16:4,24.) This OT law is what the Pharisees believed in, they were stuck in "The Law." John baptized by immersing repentant sinners in water, those who had a change of mind and heart. (John 1:6,11) John's baptism involved repentance, confession, changed lives and the belief in the coming of the kingdom of God through the Messiah, who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus would baptize all those who received him with the Holy Spirit. Those who received Jesus baptism would receive the Holy Spirit. The point behind the term "born again" is that no one's pedigree or religion is sufficient, the Pharisees did not understand this teaching and rejected John's baptism and the baptism of Jesus. The basic truth is that all mankind are heirs of Adam's fall.

Now the people in Israel were wondering whether John the Baptist could be the Christ or Messiah promised throughout the Old Testament. John clearly indicated that he was not their Messiah but only His forerunner. (John 1:19-29.) Generations had come and gone, and still there was silence. God's voice was not heard. But then came John the Baptist with the clear-cut assignment pronounced earlier by the prophet Isaiah. In the Book of Isaiah in Chapter 40 Isaiah predicts the coming of John the Baptist: "A voice of one calling in the desert prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God." John the Baptist understood his significance as he fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah.

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus, he was called to "prepare the way" for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but what exactly did he do in preparing the way? And how did the people cooperate with John in preparing the way for Jesus? John the Baptist was creating a favorable environment for Jesus to enter into and operate in the lives of the people. John prepared the way through preaching repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins. The people confessed their sins and were baptized as a sign that they confessed their sins and turned from their sins. Sin prepares the way for Satan to enter our lives, while repentance and forgiveness of sins prepares the way for the Lord to enter our lives. John's baptism with water prepared a person to receive Christ's message.

I believe a valuable principle we can learn from this story is that if there are unconfessed sins in our lives, they can hinder us from seeing Jesus. We need to repent of our sins and turn from them and receive forgiveness. By repentance of our sins, we "prepare the way" for Jesus to operate in our lives. But simply acknowledging our sins is not enough, God's Word says that we must confess our sins and turn from them and receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, then and only then are our sins forgiven and we become saved "born again" into God's family.

