

“A Better Place (Like Heaven) on Earth” John 10:39-42

³⁹ Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. ⁴⁰ And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed. ⁴¹ Then many came to Him and said, “John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true.” ⁴² And many believed in Him there. John 10:39–42 (NKJV)

John the Baptist is mentioned in these verses. Yet, by this time John the Baptist was dead.

He had drawn crowds to this wilderness place. Yet, he saw the crowds shrink. When questioned about his dwindling numbers, John said, **³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3:30 (NKJV)**

Finally, at a bit over 30 years old, John is Beheaded by Herod!

I. A place of escape and safety –

³⁹ Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand. ⁴⁰ And He went away again beyond the Jordan ... John 10:39–40 A (NKJV)

- 1. Jesus had been ministering and teaching in Jerusalem, I believe this was His first call, it was the first place He told His disciples to go after His death and resurrection, right before His ascension –*

⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

- 2. Jerusalem may have been Jesus’ first call but not his only –*

- 3. Just beyond the Jordan was safer –*

A. A natural barrier, the Jordan River

B. A spiritual, social barrier protecting Him from attack, the people away from Jerusalem were those who were more on His side...

II. Where John the Baptist had taught was a prepared place (Bethabara) –

⁴⁰ And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed. ⁴¹ Then many came to Him and said, “John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true.” John 10:40–41 (NKJV)

1. It is wonderful what the Old Testament tells us about John the Baptist and Jesus –

³ 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.” Isaiah 40:3–5 (NKJV)

A. This is what John (the Baptist) claims for himself –

¹⁹ 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.” John 1:19–23 (NKJV)

B. Note John mission was a mission accomplished –

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.” John 1:23 (NKJV)

C. What is described by Isaiah is what in that day was done literally for KINGS

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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; Isaiah 40:3 B & :4

Roads were not everywhere, in that day, like they are today. People rode horses, or camels, or donkeys or WALKED; travel was often through wilderness

Augustus, the same mentioned in Luke 2 - ² And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. Luke 2:1 (NKJV) was the first to build roads throughout his Roman Empire that were permanent, that common people might travel on.

*Before Augustus, such roads, or highways “**Make straight in the desert A highway for our God, ...**” Isaiah 40 3 B were built only for kings!*

D. Yet, John never built any physical roads for Jesus to travel on, he understood Isaiah’s prophecy as he should metaphorically –

2. Morally and spiritually, roads were built to men’s hearts –

A. Valleys exalted were already humbled people lifted up –

⁴ Every valley shall be exalted... Isaiah 40:4 A

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted. Matthew 5:3–4 (NKJV)

B. Mountains and hills brought low, was PROUD people being humbled – and every mountain and hill brought low; Isaiah 40:4 B

⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. James 4:7–10 (NKJV)

3. *John's Ministry was not backed by signs (miracles) but all that he said was TRUE -*

⁴¹ Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true." John 10:41 (NKJV)

A. *The confirmation of John's ministry was not his own miraculous signs, but Jesus' miracles –*

³¹ I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." ³² And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ³³ I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' ³⁴ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." John 1:31–34 (NKJV)

B. *Note, John no miracles, baptism with water –*

C. *Jesus, many miracles, baptism with the Holy Spirit –*

D. *John did not have Jesus' power, but his work was still vitally important. You could ask the questions: Does Jesus have this place of peace without John? Are so many saved without John?*

III. *Because John (the Baptist) had prepared (taught) them well, the people of Bethabara believed –*

1. *Water baptism does not SAVE, it does not take away sin – What does take away sin?*

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! John 1:29 (NKJV)

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus – Hymn 307 Consider how John the Apostle speaks of Jesus as he introduces his Book of Revelation to the seven churches -

⁴ John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, ⁶ and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Revelation 1:4–6 (NKJV)

2. What then is the purpose of water baptism, if it does not save the person who is baptized?

A. It was and is a sign of God's Covenant, it points us to Jesus Christ our Covenant Keeper –

¹⁹ For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. ²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. 2 Corinthians 1:19–20 (NKJV)

B. It was and is a sign of initiation, it is meant for those who are NEW and JUST STARTING in the FAITH disciples (learners) who may not yet be born again Christians –

C. This is why we baptize even infants, because infants can start learning about Jesus Christ at the youngest of ages (they are little learners / little disciples)

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. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:38–39 (NKJV)

D. Making disciples is our job –

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.** ¹⁹ **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,** ²⁰ **teaching them to observe all****

things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

Matthew 28:18–20 (NKJV)

⁶ “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children,... Deuteronomy 6:6–7 A (NKJV)

E. Yet, a disciple a learner, is not always born again, they don't always see God's Kingdom –

⁶⁶ From that *time* many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. John 6:66 (NKJV)

Jesus was arguing He is the Bread of Life – they wanted only regular bread, they missed out!

IV. Yet, John the Baptist's heart preparing of the people in Bethabara was not fruitless as many believed him about Jesus – (and many saved)

⁴¹ Then many came to Him and said, “John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true.” John 10:41 (NKJV)

1. John the Baptism was not the Savior, but Jesus was (and is). He was not the Christ, but Jesus was (and is).

Water baptism does not wash away sin, but Jesus, blood does!

2. Water baptism does not save or even point to true salvation in our hearts, rather it points us to Christ and baptism of the Holy Spirit which does save –

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 1 Corinthians 3:5–6 (NKJV)

3. *Preparing our hearts for God's Word is something ministers / pastors are supposed to do, but we also are to do for ourselves –*

¹² Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For *it is* time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you. Hosea 10:12 (NKJV)

² Then He taught them many things by parables, and said to them in His teaching: ³ “Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴ And it happened, as he sowed, *that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it. ⁵ Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. ⁶ But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away. ⁷ And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. ⁸ But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.” ⁹ And He said to them, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” ¹⁰ But when He was alone, those around Him with the twelve asked Him about the parable. ¹¹ And He said to them, “To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, ¹² so that ‘Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand;*

Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.’ ”

¹³ And He said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? ¹⁴ The sower sows the word. ¹⁵ And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts. ¹⁶ These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness; ¹⁷ and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble. ¹⁸ Now these are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word, ¹⁹ and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²⁰ But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept *it*, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.” Mark 4:2–20 (NKJV)

4. *Many believed because John the Baptist had prepared their hearts for Jesus' truth, and they seem to have continued in this glorious truth, John had died but his influence continued, truth he taught was blessed by God with salvation -*

³¹ **Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31–32 (NKJV)**

Arnold A. Brevick