

The Witness of John the Baptist pt.1

John 1: 19-37

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²⁸ These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Day Two

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! ³⁰ This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ 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.”

Day Three

³⁵ 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. ³⁸ Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, “What do you seek?”

They said to Him, “Rabbi” (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), “where are You staying?”

³⁹ He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

⁴⁰ One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own

brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ).⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.

Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, A Stone).

Introduction

Every young student has learned about Isaac Newton’s famous contribution. If you remember, he was sitting under an apple tree one afternoon, and a ripe apple fell from one of the limbs and hit him on the head. Isaac Newton then discovered . . . aspirin! No, Isaac Newton discovered the laws of gravity.

Few know, however, that if it were not for Edmund Halley, the world might never have learned from Newton. Halley:

- challenged Newton to think through his original notions,
- corrected Newton’s mathematical errors,
- coaxed the hesitant Newton to write his great work, *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*,
- edited and supervised the publication of that work, and
- financed the first edition, even though Newton had more wealth. Historians call it one of the most selfless examples in the annals of science. Newton began almost immediately to reap the rewards of prominence, while Halley received little credit. The only reason we even know about Halley is because of the comet that is named after him and appears briefly once every 76 years, and then disappears once again

into the vast heavens. One biographical statement about Halley was that he did not care who got the credit, his mission in life was to simply advance the cause of science!

Review:

John 20:30

³⁰ And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Lesson

Now why is this so important that John the apostle draws from John the Baptist this initial testimony? And the answer to that question is multiple. Number one: because John was a prophet. In fact, he was the only prophet in Israel. In fact, there hadn't been a prophet in 400 years. "And everyone understood John to be a prophet." That is what it says in Matthew 14, and that is what is repeated in **Matthew 21:26**. Everyone knew him to be a prophet. In **John 5:35** it says that for a while everyone was willing to rejoice in his light, and he was a burning and shining lamp. So, first of all, it is to be understood that if you're going to have a human testimony given to the Messiah, it needs to come from the most credible source. And the most believable, credible preacher and witness to the person of Christ would be the one who was

most reliable, who was called by God to be a prophet and therefore spoke the word of God, and that's John the Baptist. Furthermore, John the Baptist was not just an ordinary man. He didn't have an ordinary origin. He came from a priestly family, which gave him extra credibility because the priests were revered and honored and respected throughout the land of Israel. His lineage was of the highest kind, religiously speaking. And that gave him a hearing. So here is a true prophet, the first one in 400 years, everybody knows that. He speaks for God, he speaks from God, and he is also priestly in his heritage. You can add this other component to John's credibility—his birth was extraordinary. One might say miraculous because his parents were barren, and they were in their senior years—had never been able to have children—and his mother Elizabeth gives birth in her old age to this son. That is miraculous.

Beyond that, his birth was not only a miraculous event, but it was a prophesied event by an angel who showed up to Zacharias when he was doing his sacrificial work in Jerusalem. An angel from heaven came and declared to him that they would have a child and that this child would be the forerunner of the Messiah, that he would actually come into their lives through the normal birth channels—even though they were barren—that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, that he would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn many of the hearts of the people back to God and prepare them for the arrival of Messiah.

So he was a prophet and recognized to be a prophet. He had a miraculous birth, humanly speaking. He was prophesied by an angel, and the prophecy of the angel came to pass. Another component that makes John so unique is he lived completely apart from the religious system of Israel. He, from the time that he disappears in chapter 1 of Luke, he goes into the wilderness and for thirty years or the greater portion of that thirty years, he lives like a hermit out in the middle of the desert and eats whatever he can find with his hand and wears whatever he can put on his back (camel's hair). He is a nomad who is completely alien to the

religious system. In fact, he's so alien to the religious system that the first glimpse we have of the leaders of Israel coming to him, he says to them, "You brood of snakes, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" He is not only alien to the apostate system of Judaism, he is anti-apostate Judaism. He's not only separate from them, he speaks prophetically against them and warns of their judgment to come.

This is the man that John draws on for the initial testimony. He's not a product of the system religiously. He's not, in a sense, simply a product of a human life. He is a divinely prepared child. He is not a man who found a career because he sort of had a bent that way. He was ordained by God and so prophesied to do what he did. And he was before all a true prophet, a burning, shining lamp.

The point being this, that if you're going to identify someone to start the testimony, pick the most credible person. And that's exactly what John the apostle does in drawing out John the Baptist. As I told you last time, John isn't concerned about where he lives, what he wears, what he eats. He's only concerned about his testimony. The nation acknowledges John the Baptist as a spokesman for God and so John draws on his testimony and rightly so. This is the most credible, believable, trustworthy voice in Israel. And the people have come to know it and they're flooding his wilderness location, coming by the tens of thousands from all Jerusalem, Judea, and the surrounding places to hear him.

Now to get this testimony, in verses 19 to 37 John the apostle hones in on three days, three days of the enduring ministry of John the Baptist. He ministered for months and months but out of that period there's a three-day sort of apex, and it's an important three days because on day two Jesus actually shows up. And so John the apostle gives us a picture and gives us within that picture of the ministry of John the Baptist, the specific testimony of John. There are three points here and John has three messages to give. He gives one on day one, another on day two,

and another on day three; and they're sequential, and they are testimonies that really are permanent in their validity.

On day one he says, "He is here." On day two he says, "Look at Him." And on day three he says, "Follow Him." And that would be the message that any preacher would give regarding Christ. He is here, look at Him, see the revelation of who He is and follow Him. And that's the nature of John's ministry. So that gives you the overview—three days, three messages.

And interestingly enough, the three messages are given to three groups. On day one it is a hostile delegation from the Sanhedrin, the Jewish leading religious council. On day two it is the mass of people that are there. And on day three it is some of John's own disciples. So three days, three messages to three different groups.

I. Day One

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Verse 19,

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John the Baptist

In Luke 1, you remember, Zacharias, an old priest married to Elizabeth, went in to minister at the temple. While he was ministering in the temple, it says in verse 11, an angel of the Lord came to him right there by the altar of incense, and the angel in verse 13 said to him that he shouldn't be afraid because his prayer had been heard. He and his wife had prayed for a child. They were barren and the prayer was now heard. "You will bear a son," said the angel, "you'll give him the name John. You will have joy and gladness and many will rejoice at his birth for he will be great in the sight of the Lord." Verse 15, "Drink no wine or liquor, be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb, he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God and it is he who will go as a forerunner before the Messiah in the spirit and power of that great prophet Elijah. He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord," or for the Messiah.

when -- what was the context of John's arrival

Jerusalem is the obvious headquarters of Jewish religion. The people in power in the Jewish council, which is called the Sanhedrin, that's a council of seventy plus the high priest who ran Judaism. That council is made up predominantly of Sadducees. Sadducees were religious liberals who were not fundamentalists in the sense that the Pharisees were—didn't believe in miracles,

didn't believe in physical resurrection. They were the sort of critics of the Old Testament, didn't necessarily believe in the minutia of the Word of God the way the Pharisees did. But they had the bulk of power. And the predominance of the Sanhedrin members came from the Sadducees, the high priest, former high priest, the chief priest which made up mostly of Sadducees. They controlled the temple operation and the money and the power and the connections with Rome.

But with them were the Pharisees. They were much more devoted to the law. They were less political. They were the ones who studied the law, who applied the law, who taught the law to the people. And they were the lawyers, we would say, that is they were the experts on the law of God.

But apparently this delegation from the Sanhedrin is mixed with both. The idea in verse 19 that the Jews sent them would mean that they came from the Sanhedrin. John uses the expression "the Jews" seventy times in his gospel. As I told you last time, he's not using it ethnically, or racially, he's using it to identify those hostile to Jesus. Those who are hostile to Jesus, he calls "the Jews." And that would represent the Sanhedrin. But it also encompasses, verse 24 says, the Pharisees. They had been sent from the Pharisees. The best we can say is this is probably a coalition coming from the Sanhedrin, and the Pharisees become the leading questioners in this group. As I said, the Sadducees predominated in the Sanhedrin, but it also included Pharisees. So here comes this delegation and they select priests; the Sanhedrin selects priests and Levites from Jerusalem. And they are accompanied by Pharisees. They come to pose questions to John the Baptist. The questions sound like questions that reflect the Pharisaic understanding because they're connected to the interpretation of the Old Testament, which was their primary realm of operation.

So they come to John and they ask him a series of questions about who he is. Verse 19, "Who are you?" What is implied in that question is, "Are you the Messiah?"

1. I am not the Christ

²⁰ He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. ⁸ He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

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.’”

The Character of the Preacher. Humility

Spurgeon personally interviewed every prospective student – he was looking for what he called the clear evidence of the call of God on their lives. In fact, Spurgeon would turn down so many applicants that he earned the nickname, Parson Slayer.

He simply felt concern for protecting the church from unqualified, ungifted, and even ungodly men.

Like the time, a young man came to apply for entrance; Spurgeon writes, and I quote, “His face could have served as the title-page to a volume on pride and conceit. He sent word to me that he must see me at once – without any appointment. His audacity admitted him; and when he was before me, he said, “Sir, I want to enter your College and wish to enter it at once.”

He informed me that as to his preaching, he could produce the highest testimonials, but hardly thought they would be needed, as a personal interview with me would convince me of his ability at once.

His surprise was great when I said, “Sir, I am obliged to tell you that I cannot accept your application.” “Why not?” “Well, I will tell you plainly; you are so dreadfully clever that I could not insult you by receiving you into our student body, where we have nothing but rather ordinary students – you would have to condescend too much in joining us.”

“Well then” he said, “you ought to at least allow me to show my preaching abilities – select any text you like, or suggest any subject you please, and here in this very room, I will preach upon it.” Spurgeon responded, “Oh, I cannot, for I feel myself unworthy of the privilege.”

Charles Spurgeon A Legacy of Light, Part 10

Verse 20

I am not the Christ - This confession proves that John was not an impostor. He had a wide reputation. The nation was expecting that the Messiah was about to come, and multitudes were ready to believe that John was he, [Luke 3:15](#). If John had been an impostor he would have taken advantage of this excited state of public feeling, proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, and formed a large party in his favor. The fact that he did not do it is full proof that he did not intend to impose on people, but came only as the forerunner of Christ; and his example shows that all Christians, and especially all Christian ministers, however much they may be honored and blessed, should be willing to lay all their honors at the feet of Jesus; to keep themselves back and to hold up before the world only the Son of God. To do this is one eminent mark of the true spirit of a minister of the gospel.

2. I am not Elijah

21 And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?”

He said, “I am not.”

Verse 21

Art thou Elias? - This is the Greek way of writing Elijah. The Jews expected that Elijah would appear before the Messiah came. See the notes at [Matthew 11:14](#). They supposed that it would be the real Elijah returned from heaven. In this sense John denied that he was Elijah; but he did not deny that he was the Elias or Elijah which the prophet intended [Matthew 3:3](#), for he immediately proceeds to state [John 1:23](#) that he was sent, as it was predicted that Elijah would be, to prepare the way of the Lord; so that, while he corrected their false notions about Elijah, he so clearly stated to them his true character that they might understand that he was really the one predicted as Elijah.

So they then say to him, “Well, what then?”—verse 21—“Are you Elijah?” Why did they ask that? Because [Malachi 4:5](#)—our Old Testament ends with that—promises that before the coming of Messiah in judgment at the great and terrible day of the Lord, Elijah will come, Elijah will come. And his answer is the same. “I am not,” a very strong denial, “I am not the...I am not Elijah.” This is not a recycled prophet. This is not a reincarnation. This is not Elijah taking on another name. This is a man who has never previously lived, born to Zacharias and Elizabeth, named John, and called the Baptist because of his baptizing ministry. “I am not Elijah.”

Now that poses an important question, because in [Matthew 17](#) the statement is made by our Lord that John is Elijah, John is Elijah. And people say, “Well, wait a minute, John says he’s not, and Jesus says he is. How do we harmonize those two?”

It’s very simple. You understand it this way. In [Luke 1:17](#) the angel said to Zacharias he will come “in the spirit and power of Elijah,” He will come “in the spirit and power of Elijah”—with the same boldness and the same power in preaching, and the same call to repentance that Elijah had.

So there will be two, in a sense, comings of Elijah. At the first coming of Christ there will be one in the spirit and power of Elijah. At the Second Coming of Christ there will be the actual Elijah. Prior to the coming of Christ in judgment will come Elijah, but prior to the coming of Christ to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin there

is John who comes in the spirit and power of Elijah. That's made clear, I think, if you read [Matthew 16:13](#) to 16 and compare that with the seventh chapter, verses 9 to 13 of Matthew as well. So John says I'm not the return of Elijah prior to the coming of Christ. And remember, Elijah didn't die; he went to heaven, taken to heaven by God in the chariot. And so he didn't die. He will return in the future, before the Second Coming of Christ.

3. I am not the Prophet

“Are you the Prophet?”

And he answered, “No.”

That prophet - It is possible that the Jews supposed that not only “Elijah” would reappear before the coming of the Messiah, but also “Jeremiah.” See the notes at [Matthew 16:14](#). Some have supposed, however, that this question has reference to the prediction of Moses in [Deuteronomy 18:15](#).

So they ask him another question. “Are you the Prophet?” “Are you the Prophet?” What is that? Deuteronomy 18, Moses talked about a prophet who would come, a prophet who would come and speak the word of the Lord. And the Jews knew he was talking about Messiah; they assumed he was talking about Messiah. And if you read the sermon of Peter in [Acts 3:22](#) and [23](#), he says that that passage in Deuteronomy 18 is referring to Messiah. If you read the sermon of Stephen in chapter 7, verse 37, he says Deuteronomy 18 is referring to Messiah. So that was common Jewish understanding. So they're asking questions about these eschatological figures. Are you the Messiah? Are you the one who is to come before

the Messiah? And then they ask him again, Are you the Prophet who they believe to be the Messiah?

And the question that's behind the questions is this: "Why in the world do you think you have the authority to be baptizing these masses of people?" Again, their issues were always about power and authority. They were completely hostile to Jesus because He assumed authority in what He said and what He did. He hadn't come through any rabbinical system, any rabbinical institution, any rabbinical training—none of the normal channels. He didn't have any authorization from anybody in religious power, and Jesus acted on His own authority again and again and again, and He said, "Look, I have all authority given to Me," as you know, "in heaven and in earth." He took authority over the Sabbath. He took authority over death. He took authority over demons. He took authority over creation, nature. He took authority over diseases. And this issue of authority especially irritated them when He took authority to interpret the Word of God and declare for God what God would say. It was always about authority because Jesus was a massive threat to their religious authority.

Well, John was the same. The people were going to John by the tens of thousands. Typically speaking, if we can go back and look at their history a little bit, they did have a baptism that they enacted for proselytes, meaning Gentiles who wanted to become Jews and become a part of their religion. They could go through a proselyte baptism, go into water symbolizing externally what was going on internally. In other words, I want to be cleansed of my paganism and I want to enter into the religion of the true God of Israel.

From what I can tell in reading, this was actually done by individuals. In other words, they would do it themselves. I suppose a friend could do it but from what I can tell, if you wanted to become a Jew, you would literally do a baptism of yourself, put yourself in water as a symbol on the outside of what you wanted to happen on the inside. At least we cannot find any authorized

group in the history of Israel that did this. So it seems to be something people did as a sort of public confession. And so, here comes John and he takes the authority to be the one doing this, and he actually goes so far as to say, “I am doing this by divine authority.” Down in verse 33, “He who sent me to baptize in water.” So he comes with this commission and must have made it known that he was doing this with authority from God. So they’re saying to him, “Who do you think you are? You’re not the Messiah. We might allow for the Messiah to do this. You’re not Elijah. We might assume that Elijah would do this. Where do you get the power or the authority to do this?” That’s what’s behind the question.

I am a voice

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.”

Luke 3:3

³ 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.’ ”*

So he says, “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness,” and he draws it right out of Isaiah 40, verse 3; that’s a quote from Isaiah 40, verse 3. I am the fulfillment of that prophecy. The prophecy that there would come before the Messiah a voice crying in the wilderness, not particularly the wilderness of Judea, but the wilderness of Israel in the spiritual sense—the barrenness, the bankruptcy, the desert of hearts that Israel had become with no life. I’m coming into that wilderness. I am a voice, nothing more. And I say make straight the way of the Lord as Isaiah the prophet says in **Isaiah 40, verses 3 through 5.**

In Isaiah, the first 39 chapters are speaking of severe judgement. Chapter 40 takes an abrupt turn to offer comfort to a repenting people, God desire for his people is salvation .

So he says my job is to be a voice to cry out to you to make your heart a ready path for the King. The King is on the way; I’m telling you to get ready. He is a true preacher, John is, he’s a true teacher. He’s a true believer. But he’s only a voice, and he’s pointing to Jesus Christ. And he’s telling the people, “Make your path straight.” Get the obstacles, the bends, the dips, the high places, and I went into that a little bit from Isaiah 40 last time. The low places, the base places in your life need to be lifted up. The

high places, the proud places need to be brought down—the crooked part of your life, the perverted places need to be straightened out. The cluttered places need to be cleaned off to get ready for the one who is coming. I'm only the voice. I'm only the voice.

1. repentance for the remission of sins

Romans 2:17-24

CNN)Donald Trump talked about his Christian faith Saturday, but said he's never sought forgiveness for his sins.

Trump, [who also made headlines for questioning Arizona Sen. John McCain's heroism Saturday](#), made the comments about his faith during a Q&A at the Family Leadership Summit in Ames, Iowa.

The event is a gathering sponsored by several socially-conservative Christian organizations, including the Family Research Council, a socially conservative lobbying organization; Liberty University, the world's largest evangelical university; and the National Organization for Marriage, a group established to prevent the legalization of same-sex marriage.

Trump, who told CNN earlier that he is both anti-abortion and anti-same-sex marriage, said people are surprised to learn about his Christian faith.

"People are so shocked when they find ... out I am Protestant. I am Presbyterian. And I go to church and I love God and I love my church," he said.

Moderator Frank Luntz asked Trump whether he has ever asked God for forgiveness for his actions.

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"I am not sure I have. I just go on and try to do a better job from there. I don't think so," he said. "I think if I do something wrong, I think, I just try and make it right. I don't bring God into that picture. I don't."

Trump said that while he hasn't asked God for forgiveness, he does participate in Holy Communion.

"When I drink my little wine -- which is about the only wine I drink -- and have my little cracker, I guess that is a form of asking for forgiveness, and I do that as often as possible because I feel cleansed," he said. "I think in terms of 'let's go on and let's make it right.'"

[After months of reflection](#), Donald Trump says he still doesn't regret his decision not to ask God for forgiveness for his sins.

In an interview on Sunday with CNN, the Republican presidential frontrunner said that he does not

regret never asking God for forgiveness, partially because he says he doesn't have much to apologize for. "I have great relationship with God. I have great relationship with the Evangelicals," **Trump said in the interview** before pivoting to his poll numbers among Evangelical voters.

"I like to be good. I don't like to have to ask for forgiveness. And I am good. I don't do a lot of things that are bad. I try to do nothing that is bad."

Shortly after a poll indicated that conservative Christians were concerned that he'd never asked God for forgiveness, **Donald Trump** announced that he has, indeed, asked God for forgiveness, but in his "own way."

Trump, a self-described Presbyterian whose ascendancy in the Republican primary race has placed his religious beliefs under scrutiny, **told a Christian evangelical radio show** that not only does he think it's important to ask God for forgiveness, he's done so, somewhat.

"I think [asking for forgiveness is] great," he told *The Brody File*. "I consider communion to be a very important thing. You know, when I go to church and I take communion I consider that asking for forgiveness in my own way. And I do think it's a great thing and I think it's an important thing and it makes you feel good."

Luke 3: 4-6

'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;

What's he talking about? Well let's just make it simple. The wilderness here is your heart. The wilderness is the heart. The voice is crying in the wilderness, "Get the pathway through the wilderness ready." The wilderness is really the heart. It's the sinful heart, the sinful mind through which a path must be made. And that path is the path of repentance. And this is a magnificent analogy of what repentance is like. Here's where it starts. Every ravine shall be filled up. What's that? Low places, analogous to the low, base, dark, hidden things of the heart.

See, repentance involves an honest dealing with the depths of wickedness in your heart and mine. You've got to go down deep into the ugly muck of your sinful life and bring it up. And then he says, "Every mountain and hill shall be brought low." You know, the Jews were not only good at hiding the filth down low, but they were really good at elevating themselves in self-righteous ways, weren't they? You've got to... You've got to knock down the proud, haughty, self-righteous attitudes.

And then you've got to take the crooked places and straighten them out. That's the word *skolios*, from which we get scoliosis, which is a curvature, the devious, the deceitful, the lying, the perverse.

So you've got to dig deep into the filth of the hidden things. You've got to go high and pull down your pride and self-righteousness. Then you've got to deal with all the perverse, devious, deceptions of the heart.

And then he says, "And the rough roads smooth." What's that? I'll tell you. Anything that...anything that's laying out there on the road of repentance. Could be self-love, could be love of money, could be love of the world, could be lust of the flesh, could be indifference, could be apathy, could be unbelief, any of that.

You want to...you want to get the...you want to get the path ready through the wilderness of your heart? Then repent and that means deal with the deep, base, hidden, secret, dark, low things. That means deal with the pride of your life; bring it all down to where it needs to be. Deal with the deception, the perversity, the wickedness, the devious elements and everything else, all the junk laying out there in your life that needs to be wiped clean. See, John is calling for a full repentance. And he says to them, if you do that, look at verse 6, if you will do that, all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

You know what? That's just another way to say the kingdom will come. The whole world is going to see the salvation and if you do that then the nation will be saved and the nation will be exalted and the kingdom will come and salvation will cover the earth, if you do that.

There's a simple message here really. Messiah's arrived and He offers you a kingdom. If you want to be in that kingdom you need your sins forgiven. If you want your sins forgiven you must repent. You have to prepare a pathway through your heart, a path of true repentance, and the Lord will come to that heart and He'll reveal Himself and He'll save that sinner and that nation.

By the way, in verse 6 John quotes from the Greek translation of Isaiah 40, rather than the Hebrew. And he does that so as to include the interpretive rendering of the Septuagint, the Greek translation, which used the word "salvation." In the original Hebrew and in your own Bibles you won't see the word "salvation" in the passage in Isaiah. But that's what it means and the...the translators of the Septuagint interpreted it, added the word "salvation" because that's essentially what is indicated there. All it says in Isaiah 40 is, "You'll see the glory of the Lord." But the glory of the Lord is revealed in Messiah by the salvation of God that He brings. And it was a...it was a right understanding of that passage and that's why the Holy Spirit inspired the writer Luke to include that here.

So what is John saying? You want salvation, you want salvation personally, you want salvation nationally, you want salvation of God to pervade the whole world, you want the kingdom, you want all flesh to see the salvation of God, then repent of your sin and embrace the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. If anyone wants to see the salvation of God, if you want to see the salvation of God, if you want to see God's power to forgive sins, then you have to prepare a path in your heart, a path of repentance of sin, the low sins, the high sins, the crooked sins, the clutter of sins and embrace Christ and His work for you with an attitude of repentance. When you do that, you'll be forgiven and when Israel does that, they'll be forgiven. Sadly, they refused and so the kingdom was not cancelled, the kingdom was postponed and in the future, Romans 11, "All Israel will be saved." The day will come, great war will come, and out of that will come the salvation of Israel, as Zechariah showed us, and then the kingdom of Christ.

But they had their opportunity now in this very hour. John offered it to them as he preached the message of repentance. And so do I offer it to you as one who stands, I guess, in the tradition of

John. I say to you, there is salvation for you, there is the complete forgiveness of sin, but you need to make a pathway through the wilderness of your heart, a pathway of true repentance and embrace Jesus Christ as Savior. That is the constant message we give to the Jew and to the Gentile.

II. Day Two

III. Day Three

Spurgeon personally interviewed every prospective student – he was looking for what he called the clear evidence of the call of God on their lives. In fact, Spurgeon would turn down so many applicants that he earned the nickname, Parson Slayer.

He simply felt concern for protecting the church from unqualified, ungifted, and even ungodly men.

Like the time, a young man came to apply for entrance; Spurgeon writes, and I quote, “His face could have served as the title-page to a volume on pride and conceit. He sent word to me that he must see me at once – without any appointment. His audacity admitted him; and when he was before me, he said, “Sir, I want to enter your College and wish to enter it at once.”

He informed me that as to his preaching, he could produce the highest testimonials, but hardly thought they would be needed, as a personal interview with me would convince me of his ability at once.

His surprise was great when I said, “Sir, I am obliged to tell you that I cannot accept your application.” “Why not?” “Well, I will tell you plainly; you are so dreadfully clever that I could not insult you by receiving you into our student body, where we have nothing but rather ordinary students – you would have to condescend too much in joining us.”

“Well then” he said, “you ought to at least allow me to show my preaching abilities – select any text you like, or suggest any subject you please, and here

in this very room, I will preach upon it.” Spurgeon responded, “Oh, I cannot, for I feel myself unworthy of the privilege.”

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