

Calling the Bride

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“And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” – John 8:32

John the Baptist and the Bride of Christ

*The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight
Matthew 3:3. Isaiah 40:3*

The prophet Isaiah prophesied of the coming of John the Baptist who was ordained by God to prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah. As John faithfully fulfilled his commission to prepare the people for the first coming of Jesus, so today the bride of Christ has a similar lofty call to prepare the way for the second coming of Jesus.

John the Baptist is a similitude of the bride of Christ, and the cry from his mouth should mirror our own.

Clothed and fed in simplicity, (Matt. 3:4) he was not distracted from his purpose, but remained zealous and focused on his mission.

His message began with the word “Repent” (Matt. 3:2) a word today that is sometimes referred to as the “Old Fashioned” way of calling people to Christ - but it is the Biblical way. Repentance is the essential golden key that one must have to access the gift of grace. The bride who prepares the way must treasure this key and distribute the meaning of it to all who gather before her pulpits.

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” The coming of the Lord is drawing closer and repentance is vital. If we are to be true preparers of the way of the Lord’s coming, we cannot afford to neglect it, or diminish the importance of it in any way.

Jesus commands us to repent (Matt. 4:17). When the disciples were marveling over a catastrophe of a fallen tower and the lives that were lost, Jesus said, “Do you think that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no: but unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish” (Matt. 13:4,5).

Jezebel and her children do not want to repent (Rev. 2:21) so it would seem that this spirit’s prophets and pastors would de-emphasize repentance from their messages.

The dictionary defines repentance as an admitting of sin, which is the first aspect of repentance. We must admit we have sinned and are sinners before we can receive forgiveness. (I John 1:9). Why? God is looking for humility. When Adam and Eve fell, neither one of them could admit it; Adam blamed Eve and God for giving her to him. Eve blamed the serpent. Because neither one could humble themselves to say, “I’m sorry,” God knew that the awful plague of pride from the serpent’s bite had infected his children and from that point on all of mankind would share the same disease.

When we can repent, and when we can admit we have sinned and need our Savior’s forgiveness, we receive His forgiveness; for we are admitting we cannot save ourselves and there is nothing we can do to earn our salvation. This

humility is precious to the Lord. He promises to dwell with a humble and contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18). For those who desire the presence of God in their lives, repentance is a coveted jewel.

The second aspect of repentance is the actual turning from sin, which the believer is able to accomplish because of the living Christ who is indwelling him.

The people asked John. “What shall we do?” John’s message is corrective and the Bride of Christ should echo his response. When the people and the Pharisees approached him, John’s response was seemingly harsh. “You generation of vipers, who warned you of the wrath to come?” (Matt. 3:7).

Was he smiling when he said it? If a pastor today began his sermon with a line like that everybody would probably leave, or if they remained they would in all likelihood not show up again for a second dose. But in those days there was a healthy fear of God that drew people to hear what was on the prophet’s mind.

John sounded a warning and so must we. We can temper our message and say it with a smile and a sense of humor, but we must say it. We must warn them of the “wrath” that will come upon all those who reject Christ and His salvation. (Romans 5:9). And like John we must tell them how God expects his children to live.

If we have been blessed, we must share our blessings with others (Luke 3:11).

We must be honest in our business dealings (Luke 3:12-13).

We should be non-violent, just, and content with what we have (Luke 3:14).

Real love is corrective, for without correction, the Word of God tells us that we are “bastards” (KJV) and not sons (Hebrews 12:8). So like John, the bride will deftly cut through our arrogance exhorting us to bring the fruits of humility and not rely on who we think we are; for all our presumptuous spirituality cannot save us. God will not swing His axe to our feet to humble us if we are already on our knees.

John preached a balanced message, one of love and judgment for the Messiah he declares both gathers and burns (Matt. 3:12); for a message without correction is not love.

The Bride of Christ will not compromise. When Jezebel and the world she loves rebels, like John, the bride receives her martyrdom like a crown. John, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Matt. 11:14), shares this mantle with Christ’s bride in these last hours. Jesus must increase and she must decrease. She dons her royal robes of sackcloth as she testifies in a wilderness of apostasy and compromise. And through her, perhaps the treasure and glory of what true repentance really is can be rediscovered; for the bride seeks the bride in all those who are humble enough to ask, “What shall we do?”

John the Baptist

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and they said to Him, "Are you He that should come, or do we look for another?" - Matthew 11:2,3

He sat alone in the prison of his thoughts. In the darkness of his confinement, the light of his yesterdays was growing dimmer.

"Was He the One, or have I wasted my life? Did I miss it? I can't really tell. My purpose was like an arrow shooting straight from the power of my zeal. Could I have shot past the mark and missed it? Did I fail?"

He had to know, so he sent his disciples to ask Him.

"Jesus, are You the One – or is there another?"

Jesus looked at the men John the Baptist had sent, and He could see the man in prison they had left behind. Feeling the turmoil in John's soul as if it was His own Jesus replied,

"Tell John what you have seen, the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk and the poor have the gospel preached to them. God is here."

And there is no prophet greater than this John who baptized and prepared the way for the coming of Messiah – all alone in desert rags, now locked in chains awaiting death for declaring righteousness.

He left behind no great buildings or wealth to testify of his greatness; only the treasure that God would recognize – the glory of a faithful heart.

Go back and encourage this one and tell him his life wasn't wasted. He declared the One and fulfilled the purpose of his calling, though he struggles to know it now.

He needs a cup of cold water from a friend, a smile and a word, "Well done," like all of us do when the race is so long.

Sitting in the prison of our thoughts, when we ask "Are You the One?" – You send someone with a cup and a testimony.

"Yes, Jesus is the One. Your life serving Him was never wasted. Well done!"

Let there be Light

This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. - 1 John 1:5

"God is light." The light is a reference to God's holiness, His perfect purity.

God speaks through the mouth of His prophet, Moses, which is reiterated by the Apostle Peter. – "You be holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16, Leviticus 11:44, 45).

We are exhorted to be holy like our heavenly Father, we are called to be reflections of His light.

Jesus said, "*The light of the body is the eye: therefore when your eye is single, (focused on the things of God) your whole body also is full of light; but when your eye is evil, your body also is full of darkness.*"

"Take heed therefore that the light which is in you not be darkness.

"If your whole body therefore is full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle gives you light (Luke 11:34-36).

"You are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it gives light to all that are in the house.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16).

We have to let our light shine, which means we have to set aside all those things that prevent the Lord from shining through us, because without Jesus we can do nothing (John 15:5).

He works with the will. We have to want to crawl out from under our bushels and be willing to let Him change us into the holy people He wants us to be. He wants us to be reflections of His love, joy, peace, mercy, kindness, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness, self-control and patience (Galatians 5:22,23).

We can't hope to see others changed, unless we are first willing to be changed.

God said, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3) and created a whole new world. Let Him create a whole new world in you, filled with the light that is your heavenly Father shining through you.

Never measure your success by any other standard other than being in the will of God.