

September 16, 2012

*“John’s Prophetic, Preparatory, Purposeful, Practical,
Powerful Preaching”*

Luke 3:1-20

I could have said “historical” too, but historical does not start with a “P.” Luke places John’s preaching in its historical context.

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene,² while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. (Luke 3:1-2 NKJ)

I won’t do a study of these characters, we know Pontius Pilate, we are familiar with the Herod brothers and family, and we know from Scripture and history as well that this time was a time of moral, spiritual and political darkness! Christ would be the LIGHT to this time, as He is still to ours and John would be His forerunner.

Here in Luke 3, we have a description of John’s preaching; it is:

I. Prophetic –

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.” (Luke 3:4-6 NKJ)

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 NKJ)

- 1. Something done for kings*
- 2. Jesus is the KING of Hearts*

1. Preparatory & Purposeful – John had a purpose, a specific calling according to Isaiah’s prophecy and that was to Prepare the way of the LORD –

- A. There are valleys in our hearts which need filled – we need more of God, more love to God, more influence of God’s Spirit*
- B. There are mountains that need lowering – PRIDE needs to be put down, mountains of sin require brave faith & repentance, so we might say to them – Mountain be tossed into the sea*
- C. Crooked places need straightening, rough places need smoothing!*

*These are all pictures of, aspects of, repentance –
And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, (Luke 3:3 NKJ)*

2. We are in NEED of such raising and lowering and straightening and smoothing (REPENTANCE) ... even today -

That is why John preached as he did –

- A. He did not call people a “brood of vipers” just to be cool, no he preached to make people feel the REALITY of their sin:*
 - Its extreme depravity*
 - IT, as part of their very nature*
 - IT, as exposing them to God’s great wrath –*

Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (Luke 3:7 NKJ)

- B. He would have them know their sin, and its consequences, as only KNOWING SUCH makes us adequately concerned regarding salvation –*

And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” (Luke 3:6 NKJ)

We never see “salvation” before we realize a NEED for it!

3. He would have them KNOW Salvation, real salvation is evidenced by REAL FRUIT (here referencing the fruit of changed lives) – also fruit of the Spirit –

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23 NKJ)

A. *John warns them not to trust their birthright, when fruit is lacking –*

"Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. (Luke 3:8 NKJ)

B. *What was common in those days was to say "I am a child of Abraham" to many that meant*

- *They were God's people (no matter how they lived)*
- *Automatic in Heaven*

C. *Just going to church, or even a profession of faith in Christ is not enough, God calls for TRUE FAITH and a change of HEART! A true Christian has undergone spiritual heart surgery, he is a different person –*

²⁶ "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

²⁷ "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. (Eze 36:26-27 NKJ)

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2Co 5:17 NKJ)

4. *When John had fulfilled His purpose, God eventually took Him home –*

¹⁸ And with many other exhortations he preached to the people.

¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,

²⁰ also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20 NKJ)

II. *Practical –*

1. *Here is Sunday school class -*

¹⁰ So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do then?"

2. *Here is PRACTICAL APPLICATION -*

¹¹ He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."

¹² Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

¹³ And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you." ¹⁴ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?" So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages." (Luke 3:10-14 NKJ)

III. *POWERFUL –*

1. *John's preaching was powerful (at least in part) because he knew it WAS NOT –*

¹⁵ Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not,

¹⁶ John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ "His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire." (Luke 3:15-17 NKJ)

1. *John's baptism with water, was mere symbol, ceremonial, representative hopefully of the reality of true repentance –*

2. *Jesus is the ONE mightier*

3. *John is not even close, not worth to loose His sandal strap*

4. *Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire*

A. *Men may preach but the POWER, power to repent, the POWER of salvation, the POWER that converts comes from God!*

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. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. (1Co 3:5-7 NKJ)

B. *This is why every minister NEEDS prayer –*

¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- ¹⁹ and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (Eph 6:18-20 NKJ)

⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. (2Co 4:7 NKJ)

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