Preparing for the Way / Prepared for the Way
Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-18; John 1:15-31

Character of the Man of God
Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. **5** And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.
Luke 3:4 As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **5** Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways *shall be* made smooth; **6** And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.
Matthew 3:4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

Preaching Repentance
- John is known for baptizing so much that his name became attached to the practice.
- The mode of baptism comes from the meaning "to immerse" or "to dip."
- Baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus
    - Romans 6:3-4 – **3** Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? **4** Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
    - Colossians 2:12 – Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.
- Baptism of Repentance – practiced in this text
- Baptism of the Redeemed – practiced today
- Baptism of the Redeemer – John's baptism of Jesus
- All the land gathered at the river from the wilderness for the baptism of repentance, preparing for the coming Messiah.

Prophecy of Repentance
- John fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy as the herald of Christ.
    - Isaiah 40:3-5 – **3** The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye 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 shall be made low: And the crooked shall be made straight, And the rough places plain: **5** And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see *it* together: For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken *it*. The humble will be exalted; the high-minded will be brought low; the crooked will be made straight through repentance; the rough areas of life will be smoothed over by the peace of God; and the world will know God's salvation.
    - Amos 4:12 – Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: *And* because I will do this unto thee, Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.
    - Hosea 10:12 – Sow to yourselves in righteousness, Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground: For *it is* time to seek the Lord, Till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

- Matthew 24:44 – *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

Posture of Repentance

- John was real.
- His dress wasn't flashy to be appealing.
- His appetite wasn't fleshly.
    - Luke 9:23 – And he said to them all, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*
    - Romans 8:13 – For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.
    - Romans 12:1 – I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.
    - Galatians 5:24 – And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Conviction in the Message of God

Luke 3:7 Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **8** Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. **9** And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.**10** And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? **11** He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. **12** Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? **13** And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. **14** And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your wages.

Rebuke and Warning

- John quickly rebuked the religious leaders who hypocritically came to him for baptism.
- He called them out for who they had become "vipers" and warned them of the wrath to come.
    - John 3:36 – He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.
    - Ephesians 5:5-6 – **5** For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. **6** Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.
- John's call included the need to repent and express that repentance by fruits worthy of repentance.
    - Luke 13:3 – *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*
    - Colossians 1:10 – That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;
- His rebuke came with a warning against pride from their identity in Abraham.

- Luke 18:9 – And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:
- Proverbs 21:2 – Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes: But the Lord pondereth the hearts.

Ruling on Wrath

- The judgment that he warned against in his rebuke was not to be delayed, "is laid"
- The tree is not yet cut down and wrath has not yet fallen, but the time is now.
- Trees without fruit worthy of repentance will be cast into the fire.
  - Hebrews 6:8 – But that which beareth thorns and briers *is* rejected, and *is* nigh unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned.
  - 1 Peter 4:17-18 – **17** For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it* first *begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? **18** And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?
  - Revelation 21:8 – But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Response to the Word

- Turn selfishness into selflessness with mercy and charity. 10-11
- The publicans were tax collectors and were told to live in grace rather than greed. 12-13
- The soldiers were the police of the day and were charged with bringing peace rather than exalting power, bearing witness rather than wrongful accusations, and living in contentment rather than complaints. 14
  - Philippians 1:9-11 – **9** And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; **10** That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; **11** Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.
  - Galatians 5:22-23 – **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, **23** Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.
  - Ephesians 5:9 – (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)
  - James 3:17 – But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

Charge to the Messiah of God

Luke 3:15 And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; **16** John answered, saying unto *them* all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: **17** Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. **18** And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.

Expecting the Messiah

- The spiritual success of John's ministry and the supernatural expectation of the coming King led people to see John as the Messiah.
    - John 1:19-20 – **19** And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? **20** And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.
    - Acts 1:5 – *For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*

Exalting the Messiah

- John refuted the public's claims in four ways.
- First, John elevates Christ to a position where John was not even good enough to serve him in the lowest task.
    - John 3:30-31 – **30** He must increase, but I *must* decrease. **31** He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.
- Second, John separates the baptism of repentance and the baptism of the redeemed.
    - John 1:33 – And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.
- Furthermore, John emphasizes the Messianic position of eternal judgment compared to his spiritual rebuke.
    - 1 Corinthians 12:13 – For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Eternity with or without the Messiah

- Third, John clarifies that Christ will protect the redeemed from judgment when He gathers all believers prior to the judgment by fire.
    - Matthew 13:30 – *Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*
- Fourth, only Christ can render an eternal judgment on all who reject Him as Savior.
    - Matthew 25:41 – *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:*
    - Malachi 4:1 – For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; And all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, That it shall leave them neither root nor branch.
    - Mark 9:48 – *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*
- John's message was not complete, but how could anyone have enough time to tell all there is to know about Jesus' goodness?
    - John 20:30 – And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:
    - John 21:25 – And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.