

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S DOCTRINE

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John the Baptist's preaching prepared the hearts of the people for the teachings of Christ. This is the very purpose that God had planned for John, as foretold by the prophets. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. *For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight*" (Matt 3:1-3; see also Matt 11:7-11; Luke 1:13-17; 3:1-6; 7:24-28). John was called "the prophet of the Highest" because he went before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways (Luke 1:76). John's preaching is even referred to as "*the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*" (Mark 1:1-3).

John's teachings to the people, publicans, and soldiers

In Luke 3:10-14, each of John's answers to the people, publicans, and soldiers served this purpose of preparing their hearts for the teachings of Christ. John taught the people, "*He that has two coats, let him impart to him that has none; and he that has meat, let him do likewise*" (Luke 3:10-11). John's answer to the people prepared the people for the teachings of Christ. The New Testament teaches men to have compassion on the poor and to serve those who are in need (Matt 19:21-24; Mark 10:42-45; Luke 14:12-14; Rom 15:26; Gal 2:10; 6:10). This is part of what is "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father" (Jas 1:27). John taught the publicans, "*Exact no more than that which is appointed you*" (Luke 3:12-13). The publicans collected taxes and often extorted money from the people and grew rich. The New Testament teaches men not to love material things, not to steal, to help and not hurt others (Matt 6:24-33; Mark 7:21-23; Luke 12:13-34; 16:13-15; Rom 13:8-14; Eph 4:28; 5:5; Heb 13:5; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Cor 4:16-18; 1 Tim 6:6-11). And John taught the soldiers, "*Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages*" (Luke 3:14). The soldiers had great power and would be naturally tempted to use violence, false accusations, and to extort bribes. All of these things are contrary to the New Testament, and John prepared the soldiers for the teachings of Christ. Christ taught men to not resist evil but to return good for evil (Matt 5:38-48). When the Roman soldiers were converted to Christ, they beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruninghooks and not learn war any more (Isa 2:1-4). This is what ultimately caused the church of Christ to destroy Rome

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(Dan 2:34-35,44-45). The New Testament also condemns all forms of lying and false accusations as well as covetousness, extortion, stealing, cheating and all forms of dishonesty, including bribery. John's preaching in all of these cases prepared the people for the doctrines of the New Testament.

Fruits meet for repentance

Further, John taught that true repentance requires fruits to be brought forth (Matt 3:8; Luke 3:8). Jesus taught the same doctrine. After being taught by Jesus, Zacchaeus repented and restored fourfold what he had wrongly taken from the people (Luke 19:8-9). Paul also taught everywhere that true repentance must be accompanied by works (Acts 26:20). The Ephesians whom Paul taught repented and "showed their deeds" by burning the books containing false doctrine which they used to follow (Acts 19:18-19). John's teachings on repentance prepared the people for the New Testament doctrine of repentance.

Baptism for the remission of sins

Finally, John's baptism prepared the way for the New Testament doctrine of baptism. Baptism was not practiced under the Law of Moses, so this was strictly done in preparation for the New Testament. John's was a "*baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3), as is the baptism of Christ (Acts 2:38). In that way, they are both alike. Both baptisms were based upon faith in Christ, although the baptism of John was based in a belief "on him which should come *after him*, that is, on Christ Jesus" (Acts 19:4), while the baptism of Christ is a *participation* in what Christ has *already done* (Rom 6:3-6). Also, both baptisms were associated with the preaching of the kingdom of God (the church), although John's baptism accompanied his preaching about the kingdom which would *soon come* (Matt 3:1-2), while the baptism of Christ puts one into that kingdom which has *already come*, the church of Christ (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor 12:13). John the Baptist's ministry most definitely prepared the people of Israel for Jesus Christ. Everything was indeed made level, even, and straight, doctrinally and morally speaking (Isa 40:4-5). John's work was followed by the ministry of Christ, and God's glory was truly revealed for all to see (Isa 40:5; Luke 2:10-14; 19:37-38; John 1:14-15; 17:4; 2 Cor 3:5-13,18).