

The Kind of Teaching that God Demands
(The teaching of John the Baptist)
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Introduction: How can the gospel reach a corrupt people?

- A. God sent John the baptist to Israel in *the height of corruption*. (Mal 4:5-6; Lk 1:17)
 - 1. What could John do to “make straight the way of the Lord”? (Jn 1:23; Isa 40:3)
 - 2. Some might say: “Political Reform!” or eloquent speeches or lots of money for educational reform or to *seek the comfort of the people* so they will hear!
 - 3. Many would take a “top-down” approach and seek to first get powerful and influential men to “buy-in.”
- B. What did God do? He sent a man that *acted and taught like Elijah!* (1 Kgs 18:21-22)
 - 1. This man fought *by teaching boldly*. There are times when Elijah felt alone.
 - 2. This was not just uncontrolled, angry preaching that came and went.
 - 3. This was a lifetime of teaching that led to others learning and teaching.
Whoever was *willing to learn, day-in and day-out*, would become a “disciple!”
 - 4. From these learners came the apostles of Jesus! (Jn 1:35-37)

I. John the Baptist and the audience he faced

- A. John came at a time of *extreme corruption in Israel*.
 - 1. The leadership was corrupt to the core. (Lk 3:2; Jn 18:13, 24)
 - 2. The openly participated in lies, slander and murder but did not want to enter the Praetorium lest they become “unclean.” (Jn 18:28)
 - 3. These leaders *kept a close eye on both John and Jesus*.
- B. John would *need to be strong against the solid opposition* of many.
 - 1. His work would be similar to what Ezekiel and Jeremiah faced.
 - 2. He *needed a solid foundation* for his conviction that would give him “a forehead of flint!” He knew where to stand! (Ezk 3:7-10; Jn 6:67-68)
 - 3. Many who could not answer him *slandered him behind his back*. (Lk 7:33-35)
 - 4. Consider the challenge of commanding *baptism for the remission of sins!* He had opposition! (Mk 1:4; Jn 1:24-25; Lk 7:29-30)
 - 5. He refused to baptize those who did not repent! They needed to *both understand the purpose of baptism and to have repented* as well! (Mt 3:7-8)
 - 6. This was *not an invitation for open fellowship* among the sects of the day!
- C. There were *a few in Israel* that had good hearts and needed to hear God’s word.
 - 1. How does one reach a good and honest heart? They *plainly present the words delivered by God* with conviction! (Lk 8:15; Lk 3:2-9)
 - 2. This kind of preaching will *immediately bring division!* This is exactly what Jesus wanted. (Mt 10:34-36)
 - 3. Some allowed their *sense of “empathy”* to turn away from bold teaching.
 - 4. The highway leading to Jesus came from *plain, direct and personal preaching* that opened hearts to repentance. (Isa 40:3-5; 35:8-10; Mt 3:1; 4:17)
 - 5. There was a temptation to *become “ashamed”* at such teaching. (Ex. Irvn Lee)

II. The fruit of John's teaching

- A. There were many who diligently sought this teaching. **(Mt 3:4-6)**
 - 1. They did not come to John because of his style or refined manners.
 - 2. They knew enough of God's word to recognize truth. They wanted truth!
 - 3. They were not intimidated to be outside the "mainstream." Both John and his audience were similar to Elijah and his times! **(Mal 4:5-6; Lk 1:15-17)**
- B. Jesus picked His disciples amongst those who first were followers of John.
 - 1. It was John who pointed his disciples to Jesus. **(Jn 1:36-37, 40-41)**
 - 2. They saw Jesus continue in the same delivered words that was given to John.
- C. Jesus used the teachings and practice of John to reveal the hearts of His hearers.
 - 1. Jesus would press the point, if you believed John then you will believe me. Jesus made baptism a focal point to reveal God's consistent authority!
 - 2. How the Pharisees handled the baptism of John would show how they handled authority. They were not after truth but instead sought to protect their position. **(Mk 11:30-33)**
 - 3. At the core of our teaching today must be the seeking of truth through an understanding of authority. **(Jn 7:16-17)**

III. The heart of John the Baptist

- A. John wanted to be used in the service of God.
 - 1. He had no problem with Jesus increasing and his influence decreasing. **(Jn 3:29-30)**
 - 2. Jesus was sensitive to the nature of men who wanted to compare them. **(Jn 4:1-3)**
- B. He would teach the truth to anyone. He did not hold back.
 - 1. The goal of God's teacher is to deliver the word as widely as possible.
 - 2. This eventually led to his death. **(Mk 6:17-18)**
 - 3. Many will not try to teach their family or friends fearing the loss of relationship. Many well understand that there will be losses but also that the Lord will provide. **(Mk 10:28-30)**
- C. As events humbled him, he continued to go to the Lord with his doubt! **(Lk 7:19-20)**
 - 1. A good teacher will keep learning, questioning and praying.
 - 2. John like the apostles still had more to learn. None understood that Jesus would be rejected and would die.
 - 3. Like Elijah, John found answers to his doubts! **(1 Kgs 19:10)**
 - 4. Jesus removes John's doubt by scripture. **(Lk 7:21-23)**
 - 5. Jesus refers to two OT prophecies. **(Isa 35:3-6, 61:1)**
 - 6. Can you see John hearing these things and recalling the scripture and saying "That's right, He is the Messiah!" What did Jesus say about John?
 - 7. Seeking the lost will turn our hearts inside out. It will also cause growth in our own lives as well as help others come to know the Lord.

Conclusion: May each of us find our place in the work of leading men to the Lord!