

## ***The Church that John the Baptist Prepared***

Being an examination of the Bible's testimony  
Concerning the life, ministry, and theology of the Messiah's forerunner

By Joel Grassi

The LORD Jesus Christ said, "*Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.*" Those who claim to hold the LORD Jesus Christ in high esteem must also hold in high esteem that which Christ held in high esteem. The man most highly esteemed of Christ was His forerunner John. Christ's highest estimation of John the Baptist makes him worthy of intense, detailed study, especially among those who have chosen to bear the title "Baptist."

When the Biblical Record of John the Baptist is examined, it becomes clear that John the Baptist was a Baptist, that his Gospel was the same as Christ's, that his baptism was the one baptism of the NT, and that his theology is significant to NT ecclesiology because he prepared the church which Christ built. Christ's church did not fall out of heaven to Him. Rather, the disciples of Christ were passed to Him via the hands of John the Baptist. These men, therefore, had been prepared by John.

The Biblical Record must be the final authority for assessing the significance of John the Baptist. An outline for studying John may be built around the first statement on him in the New Testament. Matthew 3:1 says, "*In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying.*" From this verse may be developed an outline which examines the background of John the Baptist ("*In those days*"), his presentation in the New Testament ("*came John the Baptist*"), his ministry and baptism ("*preaching in the wilderness of Judaea*"), and his theology ("*and saying*").

### *"In those days"*

The background to John the Baptist must begin with the earliest recorded mention of him, namely the Old Testament Prophets of Isaiah and Malachi, who present John as one who shall prepare the way for Christ. Also, the four hundred silent years, the first century culture in which John was born, and the personage of his parents all provide valuable background information and contribute to John's fulfilling the office of forerunner.

### *"came John the Baptist"*

The NT presentation of John the Baptist occurs in each of the four Gospel Records as well as the Book of Acts. In Matthew, John is seen as the herald of the King. In Mark, John is the starting point of the NT who quickly prepares the way so that Christ may begin His ministry. In Luke, the preparation to John's coming is shown along with his biographical information. In John, John's Christ-centered preaching is brought forth, stressing Christ's deity as well as man's responsibility to believe on Him. And in Acts, John's influence is felt on the NT churches and Apostles.

*“preaching in the wilderness of Judaea”*

The NT testifies to the ministry of John the Baptist. His purpose was to make preparation for Christ. His message was the Good News of Jesus Christ. His baptism was the one, believer’s immersion of the NT. His disciples were fit to become disciples of Christ. His practices were distinctively Baptist. And his martyrdom set the tone for all of Baptist history.

*“And saying,”*

John the Baptist was a Biblical, NT theologian. John the Baptist gave teaching relative to the doctrines of Bibliology, Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.

Relative to Bibliology, John had much preparation in this field. He was commissioned by the God of the Bible, filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb, grew up the son of a saved priest, spent his ministry as a Bible preacher, and rooted his entire ministry in the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures. His practice relative to Bibliology was to place emphasis on the Words of God, to base his authority in those Words, to testify to the availability of those Words, and to receive those Words as the very Words of God.

Relative to Theology, John the Baptist was a Trinitarian, believing in the Triunity of the Godhead. He saw God as omnipotent, holy, wrathful, merciful, gracious, truthful, and transcendent.

Christology was the keynote doctrine of John the Baptist. He testified to the many attributes of Christ, including His deity, preexistence, eternal Sonship, holiness, and humanity. John also testified to the many acts of Christ, particularly His substitutionary work as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, as well as His work of Spirit baptism and fire baptism.

John was also known for his doctrine of Pneumatology. He had a unique relationship with the Holy Spirit, his preaching was marked by an emphasis on the Holy Spirit, and he gave the first teaching in the NT on Spirit baptism.

John’s doctrine of Soteriology, though disputed by some, is clear in Scripture. Zacharias testified of his son’s doctrine of Soteriology. Mark claims that the NT era of salvation began with John. John and the Saviour had concurrent ministries. The Saviour endorsed John’s Soteriology on several occasions. John’s disciples were saved men at the time they left John to follow Christ. The Apostles endorsed John’s doctrine of Soteriology. John’s own statements on Soteriology speak for themselves. And arguments against John’s doctrine of Soteriology can be answered.

John the Baptist’s ministry is relevant to NT Ecclesiology, though there may be some distinctions. While John prepared Christ’s church, it is Christ Who did the building. John’s disciples were an assembly of immersed believers. They had received John’s baptism and never received another all the while they followed Christ.

Finally, John’s Eschatology shows a literalist hermeneutic relative to the Messianic kingdom, the future fiery wrath of God, and the certainty of Christ as Judge of man.

The men whom Christ shepherded had been prepared with this man’s theology.