

January 23–29. Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3: “Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord”

Overview

The Savior said, “there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist (Luke 7:28).” Those to whom Jesus spoke must have thought that this was an incredible statement considering all the great prophets. As we go thru this lesson lets consider why the Savior said ths about John.

The Mission of John the Baptist

John held the Aaronic priesthood. We learn about the authority and duties of the Arronic priesthood in the D&C

D&C 84:26-28

26 And the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel;

27 Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John, whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb.

28 For he was baptized while he was yet in his childhood, and was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power.

What are some of the keys and responsibilities found in the Aaronic priesthood?

(holdeth the key of the ministering of angels)

(holdeth the key of the,, the preparatory gospel

Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism,
and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments)

Dallin H. Oaks

“What does it mean that the Aaronic Priesthood holds ‘the key of the ministering of angels’ and of the ‘gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins’? The meaning is found in the ordinance of baptism and in the sacrament. Baptism is for the remission of sins, and the sacrament is a renewal of the covenants and blessings of baptism. Both should be preceded by repentance. When we keep the covenants made in these ordinances, we are promised that we will always have His Spirit to be with us. The ministering of angels is one of the manifestations of that Spirit.”
(CR, Oct. 1998)

What mission was John called to?

(to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord)

John fulfilled the prophecies about an Elias that would prepare the way for Christ

Mark 1:2-6

2 As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

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 Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

Mark begins his gospel stating that John fulfilled the prophecies of Malachi (verse 2) (Malachi 3:1) and Isaiah (verse 3) (Isaiah 40:3)

What does verse 4 tell us that John did to prepare the way for Christ's ministry?

(baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance)

What gives an indication of his success?

(there went out unto him all the land of Judæa... and were all baptized)

In addition to baptizing, John prepared the way for Christ by teaching gospel principles

Luke 3:10-14

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.

What gospel principles did John teach the people in these verses?

Charity, honesty, do not misuse authority

John was so successful that it became a concern of those who were practicing

priestcraft (the Pharisees and Sadducees) because:

They believed that someone must be schooled to teach the gospel but John was not.

They said that the gospel should be taught in the synagogues and temple courts but John taught in the wilderness.

John did not preach for money or the honors of men

wilderness, clothed camel's hair & skin, eat locusts & honey

did not seek for praise of men but taught to look forward to Christ, "whose shoes...".

Lets read what John said to the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Matt 3:7-10

7 ¶ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

9 And think 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.

10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

The JST adds a verse between 7 & 8 and brings insight to the "children of Abraham" statement

JST Matt 3:33-36

33 ¶ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

34 Why is it that ye receive not the preaching of him whom God hath sent? If ye receive not this in your hearts, ye receive not me; and if ye receive not me, ye receive not him of whom I am sent to bear record; and for your sins ye have no cloak.

35 Repent, therefore, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance;

36 And think not to say within yourselves, We are the children of Abraham, and we only have power to bring seed unto our father Abraham; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children into Abraham.

To whom does God extend the blessings of Abraham?

(all believers - Gentiles)

Bruce R. McConkie

"John's stinging rebuke was that 'Of these stony Gentiles, these dogs,' these lowest of all creatures (in the Jewish mind), God is able 'to raise up children unto Abraham.' Our Lord's forerunner is teaching the principle of adoption: that Abraham is 'the father of all them that believe' (Rom 4:11) both Jew

and Gentile; that through belief in Christ all men become 'Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Gal 3:28-29); that all who believe the gospel shall be accounted as Abraham's seed and rise up and bless him 'as their father' (Abr 2:10)." (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 1:120)

John taught that baptism by water was preparatory to baptism by fire

Luke 3:15-16

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:

Marion G. Romney

"The importance of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost is beyond expression. It is the baptism of fire referred to by John. It is the 'spirit birth of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus: 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (John 3:5).

"Receiving the Holy Ghost is the therapy which effects forgiveness and heals the sin-sick soul.

"The hallmark of the church of Christ, distinguishing it from all other churches and forms of worship, has ever been the receiving of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the membership of the Church." (CR, April 1974)

In preparation for His mission, Christ came to John to be baptized

Matt 3:13-17

13 ¶ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

What reason did Christ give for being baptized?

(to fulfill all righteousness)

2 Nephi 31:6-9

6 And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water?

7 Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments.

8 Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.

9 And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them.

What are the reasons that Nephi gives for Christ to be baptized?

(Humble Himself before the Father)

(Show obedience to the Father)

(Show us the way)

(set us an example)

In what way were all three members of the Godhood made manifest at the baptism of Jesus?

(Jesus, when he was baptized he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son)

Gordon B. Hinckley

"I believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost. I was baptized in the name of these three. I was married in the name of these three. I have no question concerning their reality and their individuality. That individuality was made apparent when Jesus was baptized by John in Jordan. There in the water stood the Son of God. His Father's voice was heard declaring His divine Sonship, and the Holy Ghost was manifest in the form of a dove....

"They are distinct beings, but they are one in purpose and effort. They are united as one in bringing to pass the grand, divine plan for the salvation and exaltation of the children of God." (CR, Oct. 1986)

It seems that John single handedly prepared the way for Christ's first coming. Who has the task of preparing for His second coming?

D&C 65:3-5

3 Yea, a voice crying—Prepare ye the way of the Lord, prepare ye the supper of the Lamb, make ready for the Bridegroom.

4 Pray unto the Lord, call upon his holy name, make known his wonderful works among the people.

5 Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth.

What has to happen before Christ can come again?

(his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come)

Who is charged with preparing the way and making the earth ready for His second coming?

(make known his wonderful works among the people)

We collectively must prepare the way for His second coming but the 1st seemed to have been John and John alone.

Christ Calls His Apostles

Mark 1:14-20

14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,

15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

16 Now as he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

17 And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

18 And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.

19 And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.

20 And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.

What lesson do we learn from these early disciples when they were called follow Christ?

(And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him
And straightway... they left their father Zebedee in the ship)

Dallin H. Oaks

"Follow is the word the Savior used when he called his helpers to the ministry. As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two fishermen, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, at work in their vocation. 'And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' 'And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.'

"Here the Savior established a pattern for those he calls to do his work. Acting through his servants, for he has said that 'by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same' (D&C 1:38), he calls us to take time from our daily activities to follow him and serve our fellowmen. Even the greatest among us should be the servant of all. Those who always remember him will straightway assume and faithfully fulfill the responsibilities to which they are called by his servants." (CR, April 1988)

Neal A. Maxwell

"If faithful, we end up acknowledging that we are in the Lord's hands and should surrender to the Lord on His terms—not ours. It is total surrender, no negotiating; it is yielding with no preconditions....

"Suppose Peter had not left his nets 'straightway'? He might have become the respected president of the local Galilean fishermen's association. But he would not have been on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus, Moses, and Elias and heard the voice of God." (CR, April 1985)