

“Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord”
(Matthew 3-4; John 1:35-51)

By Lenet Hadley Read

(Explanation of the powerful witnesses teaching Jesus was the Christ continues).

I. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. “For this was he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. (Matthew 3:1-2)

B. As Elijah had been forerunner to Elisha, so John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ.

1. The descriptions of John the Baptist are like Elijah’s.

a. He lived in the wilderness, and near the banks of the Jordan, separated from regular civilization.

b. His dress was like Elijah’s --- a garment made of hair and skins.

c. Both were nourished by the Lord in the wilderness.

d. Both transferred their mantle of authority to him who would come after.

2. Consider that this same description fits Brigham Young and the Saints who also went into the wilderness, who in their early years sometimes wore *buckskin*; who were nourished by the Lord in the wilderness; and who began to build up God’s Kingdom; whose keys will some day be turned over to Jesus Christ.

3. While John the Baptist was *like Elijah*, *he was not the Elijah* who would come in the Last Days as prophesied by Malachi to bring the sealing keys for Latter-day temple work (Matthew 17:9-13).

II. The major way John prepared for the Lord was to preach repentance unto the people.

A. Consider how John the Baptist asked people to repent.

1. Mat. 1:8. “Bring forth fruits meet for repentance.” (If we really are repentant, we will bring forth good fruits).

2. Luke 10-14.”He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none.”

a. Some of our prophets have literally given the coats off their backs to other persons in need, such as President George Albert Smith impulsively putting his best, new coat in a box of goods being sent to Germany after World War II.

b. While visiting East Germany before the Iron Curtain came down, President Thomas S. Monson noticed that some of the larger brethren had difficulty finding clothing that fit. He gave to one the suit off his back. He gave to another his shoes. While arriving in that land with a good suit and good shoes, he left with a white shirt, some trousers, and some worn shoes.

There were actually several occasions. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland paid tribute to him for another. “...the image of him I will cherish until I die is of him flying home from then --- - economically devastated East Germany in his house slippers because he had given away not only his second suit and his extra shirts but the very shoes from off his feet” (*Ensign*, November 2014, p. 42).

B. Consider how our Latter-day prophets truly are prophets who are “voices crying in the wilderness” asking the world to repent and trying to prepare them for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

C. Consider how “The Family Proclamation” is the voice of Latter-day prophets calling repentance to a world who is being deceived and led astray.

D. Consider how we can become more involved in preparing for Christ by repenting and by encouraging repentance.

1. Our good examples are one of the best ways of encouraging repentance.

III. As a Nazarite, or a man consecrated to prepare the way, John drank no wine. This may also witness of us who are called to prepare the way for Christ’s Second Coming. It is a **clue why we, as those Latter-day preparers of the Way, are also asked to drink no wine, in preparation for His return.** For He will bring the new, **pure wine** which will be drunk at His great Wedding Feast.

A. There is evidence that Nazareth was a city where many who were Nazarenes lived, those who had consecrated themselves to the Lord.

IV. Many things about Christ’s baptism carried much significance.

A. Jesus deliberately began His ministry with baptism. There is also much significance in the selection of the site --- the Jordan River.

1. The valley surrounding the Jordan, with the River itself being the lowest point, forms **the deepest inland trench of the earth**; furthermore, the River feeds into the *Dead Sea*, which is 1300 feet below sea level.

a. The first symbolism in baptism is descending into death. Likely Jesus chose these lowest of waters to witness that **in His death He would descend below all things.**

b. In addition, through the experiences of the Children of Israel, the **Jordan River was set as a witness of the barrier between mortal life and Eternal Life, which is Death.** Joshua’s leading Israel through that barrier to inherit a Promised Land testified that Jesus through His Death and Resurrection would lead us to Eternal Life.

c. The Savior entered Jordan’s deepest waters, emerging from them to testify at the beginning of His ministry that **He had come to be the personage and instrument --- the True Joshua, the True Ark of the Covenant --- who would pass through death (symbolized by the Jordan), and be the means by which all might pass through it and inherit Eternal Life.**

d. Thus in order to fulfill all righteousness, through Jesus’ baptism, He set the path for us to follow that we might covenant our willingness to die to our old sins, be cleansed through His atonement, and rise as new beings to a new life with Him.

B. The Witness of the Dove.

1. As Jesus came up out of the waters, the heavens opened and a dove descended, lighting upon the Savior.

a. The dove at Christ’s baptism also witnessed of the peace and truth coming to us if we follow Jesus’ example, be baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost.

b. Remember that after the Flood of Death in Noah’s time, the dove (and its olive leaf) were symbols of a Newly-cleansed Land where peace and truth would reign.

(Matthew 3:16-17; Also D&C 88, described as an “olive leaf,” promises a Comforter and great blessings in the Celestial Kingdom)

c. Consider special gifts of peace and truth you have received since baptism and receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

d. Consider what further joy we will feel in inheriting the Celestial Kingdom where truth and peace will be in total abundance.

C. Temptations in the Wilderness

1. Israel had been expecting a Messiah for centuries. Many false Messiah's had appeared. **Christ's ministry deliberately followed a pattern to demonstrate a parallel with Moses as leader of Israel --- as a witness He was the Greater than Moses; for the Jews expected the Messiah to be like Moses.**

2. Both came up out of Egypt. Both experienced baptism. (Moses with Israel in the Red Sea; Christ in the Jordan River).

3. Both received the accompaniment of a holy light or spirit. (Israel, the cloud and pillar of fire; Christ, the Holy Ghost).

4. Both then experienced temptations in the wilderness; but here there were major divergences. For Moses and Israel had succumbed to temptations in their wilderness wanderings, **while Christ overcame them!**

5. Jesus rejected each temptation by referring to Old Testament scripture. But we must remember He was not just quoting scripture, **He was reiterating His own words spoken through His ancient prophets!**

Jesus was also repudiating false concepts of the Messiah which had developed. (The people were expecting a Messiah who would free them from bondage under Rome and other trials of life).

So through the three temptations Jesus resisted He established the following witnesses:

a. **Like Moses**, He had come to feed men bread in the wilderness--- but **only** with the **spiritual bread of His word and symbolically by His own saving flesh**. (As would later be manifest in the sacrament).

b. **Like Moses**, He would perform miracles --- but **only as purposeful teaching tools of the reality of His salvation**. (Thus He would raise Lazarus from the grave, but only to witness that He Himself would arise from the grave to raise all others).

c. **And finally, He had not come to exercise worldly power or force as Messiah**. Rather than gather men through force or power, He would win the souls of men with Love --- incomprehensible and powerfully irresistible Love.

V. In preparing the way, John bore powerful testimony that Jesus was the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

A. He also bore witness that here, in the flesh, was Israel's Covenanted Bridegroom (Israel had covenanted with God at Mt Sinai. Now they would enter into a new covenant with Him in the flesh (John 3:26-36).

B. John had gained many followers. A lesser man might be reluctant to give up his disciples. But John unhesitatingly sent them to the Greater Master, to worship Jesus. And they did seek the Lord.