



The Journey


Lesson #2 The John Baptist Call

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Luke 3:1-18

It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler over Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler over Iturea and Traconitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. 2 Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness. 3 Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had turned to God to receive forgiveness for their sins. 4 Isaiah had spoken of John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming! Clear the road for him! 5 The valleys will be filled, and the mountains and hills made level. The curves will be straightened, and the rough places made smooth. 6 And then all people will see the salvation sent from God.'" 7 When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, "**You brood of snakes!** Who warned you to flee God's coming wrath? 8 **Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.** Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. 9 Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire."






Luke 3:1-18

The crowds asked, "**What should we do?**" 11 John replied, "If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry." 12 Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, "**Teacher, what should we do?**" 13 He replied, "Collect no more taxes than the government requires." 14 "**What should we do?**" asked some soldiers.

John replied, "Don't extort money or make false accusations. And be content with your pay." 15 Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. 16 John answered their questions by saying, "I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 17 He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire." 18 John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people.





The 1st Century World

- The Romans were in charge and were exacting heavy taxation to support their growing government.
- The religious leaders were colluding with the Romans for their mutual benefit.
- There was a common class of people living under the oppression of the Romans and Religious leaders.





The 1st Century World

- The common class was also a growing underclass because they were spending huge sums to keep up with their taxes.
- When taxes were not paid it was expected that the citizen would lose their property, be put into slavery themselves, or lose their children to slavery.
- There were not a lot of protests because the penalty for rebellion was a public crucifixion.





The 1st Century World

- This was a world where the powerful and the connected were getting richer while the common people grew poorer.
- Rome had to keep conquering others to have more taxpayers to support their thirst for more and more things.
- Instead of opening their borders to increase the tax base, they expanded theirs.





The 1st Century World

- In the Roman kingdom Caesar was considered to be God and the one from whom came rights, justice, and good news if there was any.
- It was a world of corruption, inequality, and injustice masquerading as a decent society – perhaps exactly the kind of conditions that would cause people to seek God.





The John the Baptist Call

- Now John shows up in a world of inequality and injustice preaching a message of a counter kingdom.
- His message was, “ This is not the way God intended for this world to work. Reject it and turn to Him for a fresh start.”
- It is as relevant today as it was then.





The John the Baptist Call

- John says the valleys will be filled, the crooked will be made straight, and the rough ways will be smoothed out.
- A very appealing message to a people living under the oppression of the state.
- There is also a ring of immediacy to his offer that made it clear that the new kingdom was imminent.





The John the Baptist Call

- He uses hyperbole to engage his audience – “Who invited you snakes?”. (the schooled Jew knew the connection between snakes and the devil from Genesis 3)
- Point #1 – when people know they have a need they accept straight talk.
- When we know we have a need we want solutions, not salve.





The John the Baptist Call

- Point #2 – John’s question is somewhat rhetorical, “who warned you to flee from God’s wrath?”.
- The answer was the same then as it is today, the Spirit of God is the great warner and convicter.
- He is the One who can penetrate hard hearts and make truth do its work in any circumstance.





The John the Baptist Call

- Luke 1:15 For he will be great in the eyes of the Lord. He must never touch wine or other alcoholic drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth. 16 And he will turn many Israelites to the Lord their God. 17 He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly."





The John the Baptist Call

- Point #3 – The word of God came to John. This was all the authority John or any other prophet ever needs.
- John was a prepared messenger being filled with the Spirit even before birth.
- His message was not complicated, but it was very powerful – “Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”.





The John the Baptist Call

- He called for a baptism of repentance in the land of Israel – one problem with that; only gentiles who wanted to be Jews were baptized.
- John is saying to the Jew – you too need to show your repentance by water baptism. Just being a natural born Jew was not enough to save.
- In effect John is saying that being a Jew is no guarantee of salvation and being non-Jewish is no guarantee of exclusion.





The John the Baptist Call

- Point #4 – the call was a warning of a judgment that will come.
- John's message also included a way of escape from the coming judgment.
- His intent was to afflict the comfortable and then follow up with comfort for the afflicted.





The John the Baptist Call

- When you think about the message we are to carry, like John's, it is not complicated.
- We are sinners – God is going to judge sin – He has provided a way of escape.
- I know the Bible is 66 books and lots of pages of details, but the core is the essence of simplicity.





The John the Baptist Call

- Given that John did not have a worship band, an elaborate sound system, a projector with a Powerpoint message, and not even a Romans road or Campus Crusade for Christ training one must wonder –
- How is it that so many responded to a message so blunt and so offensive to the Jew?
- Simple – God was in it!





The John the Baptist Call

- John had a unique message and calling that he lived out well.
- The take away for us – given that we too are unique and have been called and gifted by God what is to keep us from living out that calling well?
- Do not be distracted.





The John the Baptist Call

- What would happen today if we simply listened to and obeyed God's call?
- How is it that we have the entire Bible, years of training, tons of evangelistic strategy, and yet so little to show for it?





The John the Baptist Call

- John the Baptist had a powerful call to a single mission that he was prepared for from birth by God.
- What if God has been equipping you for a unique ministry all of your life for just this time?





The John the Baptist Call

- Your calling does not have to seem ‘big’ to you.
- Suzanna Wesley – Edward Kimball – and others never knew what answering their call would lead to.
- Just saying





Questions

