

The Forerunner Messenger: Introduction and Overview

I. FORERUNNER MESSAGE: THE PREPARATION MINISTRY

- A. **The messenger calling:** to prepare people spiritually to receive the Lord's leadership by making straight a "spiritual highway of truth" for God—is applicable at Jesus' first and second comings. God is raising up messengers—via speaking, singing, writing, sharing, social media, acting, etc.
- 3Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isa. 40:3-5)*
- 17 ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. (Lk 1:17)*
- 10 For this is he of whom it is written: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You." (Mt 11:10)*
- B. **Optimum environment:** God is establishing the optimum environment for His people to walk in love and purity. God uses the least severe means to bring the greatest number of people to the deepest level of love. What the devil means for evil, God will use for good to train His people.
- C. **John the Baptist:** John the Baptist was raised up by God as a messenger to proclaim the coming of the Lamb of God, repentance of sins, and turning hearts of the fathers to their children *to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Lk 1:17)*. He was the downpayment of the Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah 40 and Mal 3 and 4 and a model for what the Lord wants from messengers before His return.
- D. We want to look at the word of God to see what it says regarding John the Baptist. We will use *Matthew 3* and *11*, *John 1* and *3*, *Luke 1,3*, and *7*, and *Mark 1* to answer 5 questions.
1. What is said about John the Baptist's lifestyle?
 2. What does Jesus say about John the Baptist?
 3. What do others say about John the Baptist?
 4. What does John the Baptist say about himself?
 5. What is the message of John the Baptist?

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE FORERUNNER: THE FASTED LIFESTYLE

- A. **He came preaching in the wilderness:** (*Mt 3:1*) He fulfilled the Is 40 prophecy and was the "voice crying out in the wilderness." The wilderness in biblical times was the place of testing, *encounter with God*, and dependence on Him. It stripped away human supports and revealed both human weakness and God's provision. That's why so many key biblical figures—Moses, Israel, Elijah, John the Baptist, and Jesus—had defining moments there.

1. **Moses** met God at the burning bush in the wilderness of Sinai (Exod. 3).
 2. **Israel** received the Law at Mount Sinai, in the wilderness (Exod. 19–20).
 3. **Elijah** heard the “still small voice” in the wilderness at Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19).
 4. **John the Baptist** preached repentance in the wilderness (Matt. 3:1–3), preparing the way for Christ.
 5. **Jesus** was led into the wilderness to fast and be tempted (Matt. 4:1–11)—echoing Israel’s testing but succeeding where they failed.
- B. **He ate locust and honey:** (*Mt 3:4*) (*Mk 1:6*) John the Baptist ate locusts and wild honey because they were simple wilderness foods provided directly by God. His diet was an expression of his dependence on the Lord and a separation from worldly excess. It was his “daily bread” or “manna from heaven.”
- C. We underestimate the power of the appetite. One of Israel’s problems in the wilderness was their appetite and cravings. This led them to complain and accuse though they were in the midst of supernatural provision.
- Later, when they got tired of manna and longed for Egypt’s variety: “Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: ‘Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!’” (Num 11:4-6)*
- D. Paul exhorts the church to follow his example and weeps for those that are enemies of the cross ... *whose god is their belly.*
- 17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even in weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame - who set their minds on earthly things. (Phil 3:17-19)*
- E. **Clothed in camels hair and a belt around his waist:** (*Mt 3:4*) (*Mk 1:6*) In each area of life, John the Baptist rejects the comfort and honor the world has to offer. His clothing was in direct contrast to those of the Pharisees. The Pharisees made their garments longer and more noticeable than others as a way of showing off superior devotion. Instead of wearing their tassels as a humble reminder of God’s commands, they exaggerated them to attract attention and gain religious status in the eyes of others
- 5 But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. (Mt 23:5)*
- F. John the Baptist lifestyle screams life is more than what you eat, drink, and wear.

III. WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT THE FORERUNNER JOHN THE BAPTIST

- A. **More than a prophet:** (Mt 11:9) Jesus said John was “more than a prophet” because John was *the prophesied forerunner, the immediate herald of Christ, and the greatest representative of the prophetic office*, standing at the turning point between the Old and New Covenants.
- B. **Greatest man ever born of a woman:** (Mt 11:11) This is the testimony of Jesus over John the Baptist’s life. Jesus emphasized a new paradigm for greatness. Focus on being great in His sight rather than in the sight of men. This greatness will be fully manifest in the age-to-come not in this age. It will be based on our heart responses not on natural gifting and resources and is thus, available to all. John the Baptist was fierce in the pursuit of the things Jesus cares about and fierce in rejecting the pursuit of honor and greatness before men.

19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches (encourages) them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:19)

26 Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. 27 Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave. (Mt. 20:26-27)

IV. WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT THE FORERUNNER JOHN THE BAPTIST

- A. **He has a demon:** (Mt 11:18) This is in direct contrast to Jesus’ assessment of John the Baptist. The religious leaders of the day and all those pursuing a life of comfort and honor see John the Baptist life and message as too extreme, unbalanced and unhealthy.
- B. **Herodias sought to kill him:** (Mk 6:19) People get really really violent when they run into a person who proclaims the fullness of the gospel of the kingdom. The kingdom is not of this world. John the Baptist is not of the world. His entire lifestyle and message is in direct contrast to being of the world. Jesus makes it clear that those not of the world will be hated by the world.

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (Jn 15:18-19)

V. WHAT THE FORERUNNER JOHN THE BAPTIST SAYS ABOUT HIMSELF

- A. **...he who comes after me is mightier than I...** (Mt 3:11) In John 1, we get more insight into the revelation John the Baptist had regarding Jesus as he says, **“he who comes after me is preferred before me, for he was before me.”** (Jn 1:15) John the Baptist had the revelation of the eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, made flesh. John the Baptist is clear that Jesus is **“mightier than I.”**

- B. **whose sandals I am not worthy to carry:** (Mt 3:11) In John 1:26, John the Baptist says “*I am not worthy to loose His sandal strap.*” This is not hyperbole for John the Baptist. This is his true heart posture. In 1st-century Jewish culture, sandals were the dirtiest part of a person’s clothing, because walking on dusty, muddy, or manure-covered roads was normal. Untying or carrying someone’s sandals was the task of the lowest servant in a household.
- C. **I am not the Christ... I am the voice spoken of by Isaiah:** (Jn 1:20,23) John the Baptist was clear on who he was and who he was not. Much like Jesus, John the Baptist had disciples and followers. His objective with his followers was to get them connected to Jesus instead of himself. He is so profoundly committed to this assignment that he knows that a day will come where he must be removed from the scenario entirely.
- D. **He must increase I must decrease:** (Jn 3:30) This is the heart posture of the friend of the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom is preoccupied with increasing the affection of the bride for the groom. In the previous verses John the Baptist disciples expressed concerning that people were leaving the ministry of John the Baptist and following the other guy baptizing. John the Baptist is like.. “thats the entire point!”
- E. **I have joy that is full:** (Jn 3:29) John the Baptist source of full joy was the voice of the bridegroom. To hear Jesus’ voice was the premier reward for John the Baptist. Much like Jesus who is “*anointed with the oil of gladness above his companions*” John the Baptist is filled with joy and delight. He is a happy man listening to the voice of the one with the oil of gladness.

VI. THE MESSAGE OF THE FORERUNNER JOHN THE BAPTIST

- A. **THE CROSS:** Behold! The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (Jn 1:29,36)
- B. **THE HOLY SPIRIT:** He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and Fire. (Lk 3:16)
- C. **THE BRIDEGROOM:** He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friends of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice... (Jn 3:29)
- D. **THE KING:** Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand... (Mt 3:2)
- E. **THE JUDGE:** His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire. (Lk 3:17)