

PREPARING THE WAY

Text: Isaiah 40:3 (read vs 1-11)

Along with Luke 3:1-6, Mt 3:3, Mk 1:3
and John 1:23

INTRODUCTION: We often notice the special efforts that are made in preparation for the coming of some high ranking ~~general~~ ^{leader} officer or civilian official. (At the end of 1977 and the beginning of 1978 President Carter ~~made~~ a trip abroad to six nations, leaving on the 29th of December for Warsaw, Teheran, New Delhi, Saudi Arabia, Paris, and Brussels, returning to Washington on the 6th of January. You can be sure that much preparation, effort, and expense ~~went~~ into this trip, because of its importance.)

But there was a trip over 1900 years ago which was much more important than the trip of any president or world leader in all history. It was the visit of God in the flesh to this planet and to his people to reveal himself as the Savior and Redeemer, Lord of Lords, and King of Kings. This was in the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem of Judea. And much careful effort had gone into

PREPARING THE WAY for His visit.

Before His Birth

I. THINK OF THE PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST TO THE WORLD ~~BEFORE HIS BIRTH~~.

A. Galatians 4:4, "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his son, born of woman, ... to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."

1. "When the time had fully come..."

Roman highways

Greek language

Jewish expectancy and religion

B. The ministry of John the Baptist

1. He is identified as the one of whom Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord."

2. John the Baptist was truly a great man, as Jesus Categorically told us in Mt. 11:11, "Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist."

- a. He was disciplined and dedicated.
- b. He was a stern realist concerning right and wrong.
- c. He insisted on complete and forthright public confession.
- d. He required integrity in daily life.

II. PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD IS A WORK THAT MUST BE DONE ANEW IN EVERY GENERATION.

HOW CAN IT BE DONE IN OUR TIME?

A. By changing the social conditions that make difficult the entrance of Christ into our world.

- 1. By lifting the valleys of poverty, ignorance, and prejudice, that embitters and gnaws at the souls of people.
- 2. By lowering the hills of pride and injustice which blinds people.
- 3. By smoothing the rough roads of hardships and oppression, that canker the soul.

B. By personal example.

John was a great personal example of his preaching, a true forerunner of Jesus.

One of the most moving pictures in his life is his acknowledgement that he is only the slave who is not worthy to carry his master's sandals (vs 11).

Only a truly great man could so face and accept his menial place in comparison with the Christ.

We too are called to prepare the way of our Lord by our personal example in Christian living.

c. By the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Eph. 6:15

C. Another important way for PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD is by PROCLAMATION.

1. John was a preacher, a proclaimers.
2. We, too, can proclaim and share the good news that Jesus Christ is come.

3. Words have great power, especially when linked with a consistent life.
The words of John shook the land.
Words inspired by God are mightier than all swords or bombs.

4. We must proclaim the Words of God, that he has come in the person of Jesus Christ his son, to reveal himself to us, and to show us his salvation.

5. One of the first words of this message is "repentance," which implies a radical change of mind, heart, and life. In military language it is the equivalent of "~~Stand~~ About Face."

6. Christ adds to repentance the distinct Christian element, "Repent, AND BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS." (Mk 1:15). This last phrase, which only Christ could incarnate and fulfill, gave the doctrine of repentance a new power and a new hope.

So we are called and challenged to repent, and believe, proclaim, and share the good news, as we today prepare the Royal Road for the coming of our Savior anew to us this Christmas.

> The Rose of Christmas

CONCLUSION: All these efforts are born in faithful devotional prayer.

God has so ordained life that Christ does not come without the preparation that we can make.

Yet, John was not the messiah; he was only the forerunner.

And we are not the King, and our efforts cannot bring in the kingdom. Only Christ himself can give new life.

We can only accept by faith this new life and live it gladly and reverently by His grace. Praised be His name!