

A Historical Study On The Book Of Luke
Teaching #8: The Mission And Message Of John The Baptist Is Not For Us
Luke 1:14-25

Luke 1:14-17

*He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, **15**for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. **16**He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. **17**And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

Nine Facts About John

NOTE: The disciple of Jesus named John and the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth named John are two different people. John the disciple writes about John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, in John 1:6-8, 15, 19-35; 3:22-30.

Fact #1: He would be a joy and delight to Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Fact #2: Many would rejoice because of his birth.

Fact #3: He will be great in the sight of the Lord (Luke 7:28).

Fact #4: He will never take wine or fermented drink.

Fact #5: He will be filled with the Holy Spirit from before he is born.

Fact #6: He will go before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Fact #7: He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children.

Fact #8: He will turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous (the immoral turned to morality).

Fact #9: He will bring back many of **the people of Israel** to the Lord their God.

NOTE: It is vital to understand that John the Baptist’s ministry was to the people of Israel **under the old testament of law**, not to the Gentiles. Ultimately, we see Paul going to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:9) **after the new testament of grace** was put into effect by the blood of Jesus. James, Peter, and John (the disciple of Jesus) went to the Jews. This is why the books of James, Peter, and 1-3 John are grouped together in the Bible.

Each of these **9** Facts are for **1** reason... *to make ready a people [the people of Israel] prepared for the Lord.*

What is meant by *to make ready a people prepared for the Lord?*

To understand what is meant by *to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*, we must understand the Jewish Scriptures and the Jewish people. We need to get into the hearts and heads of the Jewish people and see the book of Luke as they experienced the book of Luke in real time.

Many of the Jewish people built their lives on the foundation of the Jewish Scriptures. The Jewish Scriptures are filled with prophecies and promises about the coming of the Christ to fulfill God's promises to:

- Crush Satan (Genesis 3:15)
- Bless the world through Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3)
- Establish God's kingdom on earth, resulting in justice, peace, and righteousness on earth (Isaiah 9:6-7)
- Send a Savior who would die for the sins of the world and justify many. This king would die, be buried, then rise from the dead and ascend into heaven (Isaiah 53)
- Provide the grace needed for salvation (Isaiah 61:1-2)
- Establish the new testament of grace (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Isaiah 42:6-7)
- Bring forth the new heavens and new earth (Isaiah 65:17-19)

The Jewish people:

- learned these prophecies as children
- lived with them in their hearts, and
- looked forward to their fulfillment.

We looked at 7 of these promises of grace in Luke #6 and Luke #7.

Many of the Jewish people longed for the fulfillment of the prophecies. They knew these prophecies would not be fully fulfilled until the Christ (Savior-King) came.

The Jewish Scriptures foretold that **BEFORE** the Christ would come another would come before him to prepare the way of the Christ.

Isaiah 40:3-5 (New Heart English Bible] says,

*The voice of one who calls out in the wilderness, "**Prepare the way of the LORD**. Make his roads straight. Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be made low, and the uneven will be made level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all humanity will see the salvation of God together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."*

The LORD would bring salvation. The one coming to prepare the way of the LORD was John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

As an adult, John (the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth) identified himself as the one of **Isaiah 40:3-5**.

John, the disciple of Jesus (not to be confused with John the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth), records John's words in **John 1:19-23**.

Now this was John's [the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth] testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."...John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" (see Isaiah 40:3-5)

When the angel Gabriel told Zechariah his son would be the one to go before the Lord to make ready a people for the Lord, Zechariah understood that his son, John, was the one of Isaiah 40:3-5. Zechariah also understood that the coming of the Christ/Messiah to fulfill the promises of grace must be near.

The announcement of the one to come before the Lord to prepare the way for the Lord signaled the soon arrival of the Christ/Messiah and the fulfillment of the promises in the Jewish Scripture. As a result, the announcement:

- Produced within Zechariah joy and delight (Luke 1:14).

And

- Caused many in Israel to rejoice at the birth of John (Luke 1:14).

After 400 years of waiting and hearing nothing from God, God sent a message through the angel Gabriel, specifically to Zechariah, telling him his son would be the one of Isaiah 40:3-5 to prepare the way for the Lord (Christ/Messiah).

For other references to John the Baptist, see (Matthew 3:3; 11:14; Mark 1:3; Luke 1:76; 7:24-28; John 1:23).

Part of the angel's announcement to Zechariah was:

*"And he will go on before the Lord, **in the spirit and power of Elijah**, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous..." (Luke 1:17)*

What did the angel mean that John would go before the Lord *in the spirit and power of Elijah*?

Again, we must journey back into the Jewish Scriptures for the information needed to understand what the angel meant by *in the spirit and power of Elijah*.

The prophet Malachi said in **Malachi 4:5**,

*"Behold, **I will send you Elijah the prophet** before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the LORD."*

This prophecy states the LORD will send you (the people of Israel) Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

There is so much in this verse.

Elijah is one of the great, powerful prophets of Israel. He surfaces on the pages of the Jewish Scriptures in 1 Kings 17:1, and his name is used about 94 times in the Bible.

This prophecy seems to indicate that Elijah himself will be sent by the LORD before the great and dreadful day of the LORD. However, we learn from the angel sent to Zechariah that the one to come to prepare the way for the LORD is not Elijah himself but one who will come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

So we discover from the angel Gabriel that it was not Elijah himself who was to come but one was to come in *the spirit and power of Elijah*, meaning he would possess the qualities of Elijah.

The one to come in the spirit and power of Elijah was John, Zechariah and Elizabeth's son. Let's look at a few verses about John being the one to come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Matthew 11:13-14

[Jesus said] *"For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. **14**And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come."* (Malachi 4:5-6)

Matthew 17:11-13

*Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. **12**But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they [the leaders of Israel] did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." **13**Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.*

So we see from the Bible that John is the Elijah who was to come and prepare the way for the LORD.

To understand the message and mission of John, we must understand *the great and dreadful Day of the LORD* of **Malachi 4:5**, which reads (see also Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3; 11:14; Mark 1:3; Luke 1:76; John 1:23)

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the LORD."

What is the great and dreadful day of the LORD?

We get insight into the great and dreadful day of the LORD in Malachi 4:1-2.

Malachi 4:1-2 says,

*"Surely **THE DAY IS COMING**; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire," says the Lord Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. **2**But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves. **3**Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act," says the Lord Almighty.*

- The great and dreadful day of the Lord is the time when God permanently purifies the earth of all sins and sinners, creating an earth where there is no more death, destruction, disease, mourning, crying, problems, pain, hurt, heartache, chaos, corruption, violence, etc... Peace will flow all over the world!
- The great and dreadful day of the Lord is the time when the Christ/Messiah (the sun of righteousness) brings healing to the earth, producing joy in those who revere his name...his name is Jesus.

The name of Jesus is revered when people trust in him for salvation, for there is no other name under heaven that one must be saved than the name Jesus. The apostles of Jesus in Acts proclaimed the name of the Messiah/Christ is Jesus, and through faith in him salvation is given (Acts 2:21; 4:12).

Zechariah, in his praise to God (which contains references to some of the promises of grace) in Luke 1:67-79, references Malachi 4:2 in **Luke 1:78**.

In **Luke 1:78** Zechariah says,

“...because of the tender mercy of our God, by which **the rising sun will come to us** from heaven...”

Zechariah understood the prophecies made by the prophets and recorded in the Jewish Scriptures. One of these prophecies was the coming the Christ/Messiah named **the sun of righteousness** (Malachi 4:2) who would rise as the sun with healing in his wings. Zechariah was praising God about *the sun of righteousness* because he knew the coming of the Messiah/Christ was near since his son, John, was the one to come and prepare the way for *the sun of righteousness*.

Jesus is ***the rising sun of righteousness*** who brings salvation from the dreadful day of the Lord to those who trust in him. Those who trust in him will be live eternally in his kingdom and on the new earth.

If you would like to study more about the coming great and dreadful day of the Lord, the day when God cleanses the earth of all sin and sinners (the ungodly and unrighteous) in his consuming fire and ultimately establishes the new earth where there is no more death, destruction, disease, hurt, heartache, mourning, crying, crime, corruption, violence, etc...read:

Matthew 13:24-50; 1 Peter 3:7-13 and Revelation 20-21.

In Romans, Paul refers to the day when God removes all sin and sinners from the earth as the day of wrath (Romans 1:18; 2:5-8; 3:5; 5:9). The good news of grace is that God loves all sinners and took all sin upon himself in Christ (Romans 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Through faith in Jesus, one receives the very righteousness of Jesus, the righteousness needed for eternal life (Romans 3:21-25). Through faith in Jesus one escapes the wrath to come and experiences eternal life (Ephesians 2:1-9). Those who place their faith in Jesus have a new identity, Saint. This means one is righteous, holy, pure, and cleansed from all sins, no longer seen as a sinner by God but as one of his holy ones...one of his Saints!

If you would like to study further on the wrath to come and the salvation God provides, see the following studies on Hebrews:

Hebrews #41: Judgment to Face, Salvation to Bring

Hebrews #49: The Raging Fire of Judgment

Hebrews #55: Do Not Refuse Him Who Speaks

To access these teachings in Hebrews, [CLICK HERE](#).

To access Brad's teaching on the context of Ephesians 2:8-9 (Ephesians #11) concerning the wrath to come and salvation by grace through faith, [CLICK HERE](#).

To access Brad's teachings below in Colossians about the wrath of God, [CLICK HERE](#).

Colossians #24: The Wrath Of God - Part 1

Colossians #25: The Wrath Of God - Part 2

Let's return to Luke and continue our study on John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

Luke 1:14-17

*He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, **15**for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. **16**He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. **17**And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

How would John make ready a people prepared for the Lord? What does it mean to make ready a people prepared for the Lord?

Luke 3:1-15

*In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— **2**during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. **3**He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **4**As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:*

*“A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. **5**Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. **6**And all people will see God’s salvation.’ ” (Luke quotes Isaiah 40:3-5)*

***7**John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8**Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **9**The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.” **10**“What should we do then?” the crowd asked. **11**John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.” **12**Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?” **13**“Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them. **14**Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.” **15**The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah.*

Matthew 3:1-12

In those days **John the Baptist** came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea **2**and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” **3**This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’ ” [Isaiah 40:3]

4John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.

5People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. **6**Confessing their sins, they were baptized [the baptism of John for forgiveness of sins under old testament of law look forward with anticipation of the coming the Messiah; today, the baptism of believers under the new testament of grace looks back to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in **appreciation** they are forgiven through the blood of Jesus, and baptism is **identification** with Jesus and all he did for us] **7**by him in the Jordan River. **8**But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **9**Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. **10**And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **11**The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. **12**“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **13**His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” [Matthew 3:12 is a reference to Malachi 4:1-5 – the great and dreadful day of the Lord; see also Matthew 13:24-50]

What was John’s mission and message as seen in these verses?

1. John’s mission and message was to **prepare** the nation of Israel for the coming of the Messiah/Christ when the Messiah/Christ would execute judgment/wrath upon the earth by removing all sin and sinners from the earth and establishing salvation for the righteous.

He would prepare the nation of Israel for the coming of the Messiah by calling them to repent (acknowledge their sinful condition – we will examine repentance in a future study) of their sins and be baptized in keeping with the Jewish cleansing laws of being washed with water (see Hebrews 9:10; John 3:25). This washing was as symbolism of being washed clean of sins. **John’s baptism looked forward in anticipation to the coming of the Christ** as the people of Israel confessed their sins and were baptized for forgiveness so they would be saved from the wrath to come.

Today, the baptism of believers **looks back to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus in appreciation** of forgiveness of our sins through the shed blood of Jesus when he established the new testament in his blood. Our baptism today is in appreciation for forgiveness and eternal life through what Jesus has done for us in his death and resurrection. It is also identification with Jesus’ in his death burial and resurrection symbolizing our new identity and new life in Christ (Romans 6). Baptism today is a symbol of what our Savior did for us, securing eternal forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. This is why we are baptized in the name of Jesus.

It is the same with the Lord’s Supper.

The Lord’s Supper is the remembrance of Jesus’ death for the forgiveness of our sins and remembrance of his resurrection to bring us eternal life as we await his return.

Not only was John's mission and message to prepare the people of Israel for the arrival of the Christ...

2. John's mission and message was to **present** the Messiah to the nation of Israel as their Savior and King. In **John 1:29-36**, John states:

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "**Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**" **30**This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' **31**I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."*

32Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. **33**And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' **34**I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One." **35**The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. **36**When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "**Look, the Lamb of God!**"

With these words, John is transitioning his ministry of preparing the nation of Israel for Jesus to presenting Jesus to them as their Savior-King.

This transition is seen in John's words recorded in John 3:30, "***I must decrease and he must increase.***"

In **John 1:30-36**, John the Baptist highlights **Isaiah 53** by saying Jesus is the Lamb of God, meaning the one who would die for the sins of the world, to justify many (bring forgiveness, righteousness, innocence, and eternal life), which Paul explains in Romans.

We see the message of justification by grace through faith apart from works, apart from baptism, take center stage in the book of Acts in Acts 13:14-39 when Paul teaches in the Jewish synagogue. He explains to the audience that forgiveness is received through belief in Jesus, resulting in justification (innocent of all sins, righteous) apart from the law of Moses. **This is the word of God's grace.**

This is a major difference in what Paul taught and what John the Baptist taught.

The **word of God for John** the Baptist was **preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.** (See Luke 3:1-2).

The **word of God for Paul** was that forgiveness is received by faith in Jesus.

Let's look at these two differences.

Paul was given the message of grace by the ascended Jesus.

Acts 20:23-24 (Galatians 1:11-12; Ephesians 3:1-6)

*I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. **24**However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete **the task THE LORD JESUS HAS GIVEN ME—the task of testifying to the good news [message/gospel] of GOD'S GRACE.***

Galatians 1:11-12

*I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel [the message of grace that forgiveness is received by faith, justification/righteousness/eternal life is by faith] I preached is not of human origin [nobody on earth taught Paul the message of grace]. **12** I did not receive it [the message of God's grace] from any man, nor was I taught it [by any person on earth]; rather, **I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.***

Acts 26:15-18

*"Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' " 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. **16** 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. **17** I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them **18** to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may **RECEIVE THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS** and a place among those who are sanctified **BY FAITH IN ME.**' "*

Notice the difference between the messages of John the Baptist concerning forgiveness and the message of the ascended Jesus about forgiveness. John's message is forgiveness comes through baptism, and Jesus' message is forgiveness is received by faith.

The ascended Jesus gave Paul the revelation of grace, which is forgiveness is received by faith in Jesus; and through faith in Jesus, a person is justified, meaning declared righteous or innocent of all sins (see Romans and Galatians).

After being given the message/gospel of grace, Paul takes the message or word of God's grace into the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe.

Acts 13:38-49 (Galatian city of Pisidian Antioch)

*"Therefore let it be known to you, brothers, that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you [Acts 26:18]. **39** Through Him **everyone who believes is justified** from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses...*

42 As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people urged them **to continue this message** on the next Sabbath. **43** After the synagogue was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them **to continue in the grace of God.** **44** On the following Sabbath, nearly the whole city gathered to hear **the word of the Lord** [Paul was proclaiming the message of Jesus, the message of grace, as his ambassador – see 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting people's sins against them...Jesus took our sinfulness and offers us his righteousness].

45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and they blasphemously contradicted what Paul was saying. **46** Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "It was necessary to speak **the word of God** [the message of grace – forgiveness and righteousness are received through faith in Jesus] to you first..."

Again, notice the difference between the word of God in Luke 3:2-3 and the word of God in Acts 13:38-46. In Luke, John the Baptist presents forgiveness by baptism; whereas Paul proclaims forgiveness is received by faith in Jesus.

48When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and glorified the word of the Lord [the message of grace, receiving forgiveness by faith, justification by faith], and all [meaning the Gentiles] who were appointed for eternal life believed. **49**And **the word of the Lord** [the message of grace, forgiveness and justification by faith in Jesus apart from the law] spread throughout that region.

Acts 14:1-7 (The Galatian cities of Iconium, Lystra, Derbe)

At **Iconium**, Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue, where they spoke so well that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. **2**But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. **3**So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, **speaking boldly for the Lord, who affirmed THE MESSAGE OF HIS GRACE** by enabling them to perform signs and wonders [the apostles of this time had the power to perform signs and wonders]. **4**The people of the city were divided [over the message of grace]. Some sided with the Jews, and others with the apostles. **5**But when the Gentiles and Jews, together with their rulers, set out to mistreat and stone them, **6**they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of **Lystra** and **Derbe** and to the surrounding region, **7**where **they continued to preach the gospel** [forgiveness is received by faith, justification by faith, righteousness by faith – see Romans and Galatians].

As the message of grace unfolds in Acts, we come across **Apollos** who taught that Jesus was the Christ, but who was also taught people to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the message of John the Baptist

Acts 18:24-26

Meanwhile a Jew named **Apollos**, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures [Hebrew/Jewish Scriptures, Genesis – Malachi]. **25**He had been instructed in the way of the Lord [Jesus is the Christ], and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately [as the Christ], **though he knew only the baptism of John**. **26**He began to speak boldly in the synagogue [telling people to be baptized so their sins could be forgiven]. **When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.**

Apollos was teaching people to believe in Jesus as the Christ and to be baptized, in accordance to John the Baptist's message, for the forgiveness of sins. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they explained to him the more fully the way of God for forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life.

The way of God is the way of grace.

In Acts 13:46, **the message of grace is the word of God**. The word of God is the message of grace, which is forgiveness and righteousness are received by faith apart from the law.

What amazing humility Apollos displayed in learning from Priscilla and Aquila, a wife and husband who made tents (Acts 18:1-3), the fullness of God's message/word of grace.

Notice that Apollos was in Ephesus (Acts 18:24) when he learned about God's grace, though he eventually went to Corinth.

Let's take a look at what Paul told the leaders in Ephesus about **the word of God's grace**.

Acts 20:17-32,

*From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. **18**When they arrived, he said to them: "...Now **I commit you to God and to the word of his grace**, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

Paul taught those in Ephesus the word or message of God's grace. He wrote a letter to the church, Ephesians, explaining the word of God's grace more fully. Now he is exhorting the leaders of the church in Ephesus not to abandon the word of God's grace which was given to him by the ascended Jesus (Acts 20:24).

By contrasting the word/message of God given to John the Baptist concerning forgiveness through baptism and the word/message of God given to Paul that forgiveness is by grace through faith, we see there is a major difference in the word of God given to each of them.

If we are to accurately interpret and apply the Bible, we must understand that the Bible contains periods of time where God's word is given to a certain person for a specific group of people. Other times, God's word or message is a different message to another person for another group of people. Not every message or word from God is for all people or all generations but is only for the group of people to whom God gave it at that time, and it is not to be applied by other people in other times.

Let's look at a few examples.

Example #1: Food

Adam, Noah, Moses, and Peter (see Acts 10 for Peter) were each given different instructions/messages by God concerning what they could eat. Those under the food requirements for their specific times were not under the food requirements for those of other times.

Example #2: Law/Grace

God gave the law to Moses for the people of Israel. The Gentiles were not under the law of Moses. The law of Moses has ended and is obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). The **new testament of grace** has been established in the blood of Jesus as is for all people (the writer of Hebrews explains this in his writing to the Hebrews). Paul says in Romans that we are not under law but under grace. It is also why he states in 2 Corinthians 5:17 the old testament of law is gone and the new testament of grace has come (see teachings on **2 Corinthians 3:1-5:21**).

Example #3: Forgiveness

Forgiveness before the cross of Jesus required the sacrifice of animals (see Leviticus). However, Jesus' one-time sacrifice of himself for sins was the final sacrifice for sins, achieving eternal forgiveness that is received by faith in him (see teachings on **Hebrews**). It is important to understand this so the body of Christ, the church – God's family of grace, does **not** apply the teachings about forgiveness in 2 Chronicles 7:14 (see a teaching on **2 Chronicles 7:14**) for the nation of Israel as well as Jesus' teachings to the people of Israel about forgiveness in Matthew 6 and 18.

For teachings on forgiveness before and after the cross, [CLICK HERE](#).

Example #4: Baptism

There were various washings or baptisms required under the law of Moses (the old testament of law) for purification for sins until the time of the new testament of grace established in the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 9:10). The shed blood of Jesus, his death, established the new testament of grace that purifies from all sins (1 John 1:7; Hebrews 1:1-3; Hebrews 9-10). This purification is received by faith (see Acts 15:9).

When John the Baptist was baptizing the people of Israel it was during the time of the old testament of law when various ceremonial washings were in place for the forgiveness of sins and purification from sins. This baptism was continual and in anticipation of the coming Christ who would die for the sins of all people, resulting in forgiveness and purification (the writer of Hebrews explains this).

Baptism following the death and resurrection of Jesus is in appreciation of the eternal forgiveness of sins that is received by faith. This baptism looks back to the cross of Jesus in appreciation of forgiveness; while baptism before the cross looks forward in anticipation of the coming Christ who would die for the sins of the world as the Lamb of God (Isaiah 53). These two baptisms should not be mixed. Forgiveness before the cross followed baptism, while forgiveness after the cross is received by faith and is symbolized in baptism.

In **Acts 19:1-8**, Paul says,

*While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples **2**and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." **3**So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?" "John's baptism," they replied. **4**Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." **5**On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **6**When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues [other known earthly languages] and prophesied. **7**There were about twelve men in all.*

In these verses, we see Paul distinguishing between two different baptisms for two different periods of time.

John the Baptist's baptism was for forgiveness of sins for the people of Israel. Those during the time of John the Baptist would acknowledge their sins in repentance (sorrow for their sins) then be baptized for the forgiveness of sins as they looked forward in **anticipation** for the coming of the Christ, Jesus.

This baptism is no longer in effect.

Now that Jesus has died for all people, securing eternal forgiveness, baptism for the forgiveness of sins has ended. Forgiveness is received by faith (Acts 26:18; 13:38-39; Acts 10:42). Baptism now is an **appreciation** of forgiveness as one looks back on the cross of Jesus where the new testament of grace went into effect when Jesus poured out his blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Our baptism today is an appreciation for forgiveness and eternal life through what Jesus has done for us in his death and resurrection. It is also **identification** with Jesus' in his death burial and resurrection symbolizing our

new identity and new life in Christ (Romans 6). Baptism today is a symbol of what our Savior did for us, securing eternal forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. This is why we are baptized in the name of Jesus.

Today, baptism is a symbol of forgiveness and righteousness as the water washes over a person. This baptism is being baptized in the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus is the recognition that Jesus has died for our sins, securing eternal forgiveness (Hebrews 9:12), and has risen from the dead, securing eternal life. This is why the writer of Hebrews writes that the new testament is an eternal testament (Hebrews 13:20). Baptism today symbolizes the new testament of grace where forgiveness is eternal, whereas baptism by John the Baptist was under the old testament of law where forgiveness was continual.

Let's look at one final example of what may apply to one group of people but not another group of people.

Example #5: Tongues

In Acts 2, 10, and 19, three groups of people speak in tongues. Tongues was the ability the Holy Spirit gave to some people to speak in the languages of others for the purpose of proclaiming Jesus' death and resurrection and encouraging them to believe in Jesus for forgiveness and justification. This ability is seen in Acts 2. The it is reciprocated in Acts 10 and 19.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 13:8 that tongues would cease when the perfect or fullness comes. We also learn from Paul in 1 Corinthians 12:10 and 30 that not all spoke in tongues. We learn two truths about tongues from Paul in 1 Corinthians 12-13:

- Truth #1 – The ability to speak in the languages of others was **not** given to all people by the Holy Spirit.
- Truth #2 – The ability to speak in the languages of others would **not** last for all time.

If people do not understand that tongues was **not** for all people and for all time, they will fall prey to pastors who teach them that tongues is a sign for salvation or that tongues is the way a believer can have deeper relationship with God by having a "heavenly prayer language."

Both of these teachings cause **doubt** and **discouragement** in believers.

Doubt comes from doubting salvation because of the inability to speak in tongues. Discouragement comes from disappointment of not having a deeper relationship with God since one can't speak in tongues. By understanding the Bible and accurately interpreting it, believers can protect themselves from pastors who would put them under the false law of "Thou Shalt Speak In Tongues."

For a complete teaching on tongues, [CLICK HERE](#).

Also, [CLICK HERE](#) to read, ***You Don't Need To Be Baptized In The Spirit or Speak In Tongues.***

If we do not understand that God put certain practices in place for certain periods of time, such as the previous six examples, we will misinterpret the Bible, miss teach it, and misapply it. However, by understanding that God gives different messages to different people at different times, we can accurately interpret the Bible and properly apply it, or **not** apply it if the message isn't for us.

For teachings on how to study the Bible: [CLICK HERE](#).

Clearly we see from the Bible that the baptism of John the Baptist for the forgiveness of sins is no longer in effect for us today. Our baptism today is an appreciation for forgiveness and eternal life through what Jesus has done for us in his death and resurrection. It is also identification with Jesus' in his death burial and resurrection symbolizing our new identity and new life in Christ (Romans 6). Baptism today is a symbol of what our Savior did for us, securing eternal forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. This is why we are baptized in the name of Jesus.

We also live in the time period of **God's word of grace**.

We do **not** live in the time period of the word of God for John the Baptist or the word of God when he gave the law to Moses. There is a transition from law to grace, from the old testament of law to the new testament of grace that we see in Acts and that is also explained by the writer of Hebrews.

As we study the Bible, we must allow for this transition.

Peter went through the transition. We see in Acts 10 that he continued to follow the food requirements under the law of Moses as well as the social requirements of the law between the Jews and Gentiles. God gave Peter a vision and an experience to reveal to him the food requirements and social requirements between Jews and Gentiles under the law had ended. However, Peter continued to struggle with both during this time of transition, forcing Paul to confront him. Paul writes about this in Galatians 2.

So in conclusion of this study, the mission and message of John the Baptist is over. His message and ministry ended when he presented Jesus to the nation of Israel.

Our message today is the word of grace, and our mission is to communicate the word of grace to all people all over the world because Jesus died for all (2 Corinthians 5:14). He loved us and gave himself for our sins (Ephesians 5:1-2). As a result, God is no longer counting our sins against us. God's forgiveness is received by faith.

All verses are NIV unless otherwise noted.

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Thanks for being a part of this Bible study!

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