

Connect360: A Voice for God

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- *Lesson 1 in the BaptistWay Press Connect 360 unit "The remarkable Journey Begins" focuses on Mark 1:1-8.*

For Christians, preparing for Christmas is preparing for the coming of the Lord. Even if you are not studying this lesson in December, it always is time to prepare for the Lord's coming. The Lord comes to us at every time of year.

Mark gets us ready for the Lord's coming quite abruptly. He does not fool around with shepherds and wise men and angels. He starts by shouting Scripture at us, warning everyone to get ready because the Lord is coming.

Mark looked back into the Old Testament prophets to give scriptural understanding of the story he was about to tell. He told us he was quoting Isaiah. Actually, the Scripture he pointed to comes from two Old Testament prophets. The first part of the quotation in verse 2 is from Malachi 3:1. The second part of the quotation from Isaiah 40:3.

Important task but not the starring role

These prophetic Scriptures help us understand the role of John the Baptist. John was the eccentric preacher who came out of nowhere to let people know the Lord was coming, and they had better get ready! John, the messenger, played the role of a Shakespearean herald who comes onto the stage at the beginning of the play to announce the setting, then exits to let the play begin. John knew he was not the main event. He was there to get people ready for the main event. Once he did his part, he left the stage to

make room for the Lord's appearing.

In some ways, Christians still have the role John had. We are not the star of the play, but we do have a role in pointing to the star of the play. We are still heralds, preparing people for the coming of the Lord. Every word we speak can flatten some mountains that may stand in the way of the Lord coming to someone. Every action we take may fill in some valleys to help another person see Jesus clearly. We are still messengers preparing the way of the Lord.

So, what does it look like to be prepared for the coming of the Lord? You cannot just wake up on Christmas morning having done nothing to be prepared. There are gifts to buy, lights to put up, and trees to trim. All of this happens days if not weeks before the big day.

Going the wrong way

John the Baptist had some ideas about getting prepared for the Lord's coming. First, he preached about repentance. To repent, a person must recognize he or she is going in the wrong direction and turn around and go in the other direction. It is a difficult thing to recognize you are going in the wrong direction. Most people do not appreciate someone telling us we are going in the wrong direction. But people who tell us we are going in the wrong direction are often the best friends we have.

John the Baptist was a friend to people because he told them they were going in the wrong direction. They were sinners. John was courageous enough to tell them the truth. John was that irritating friend who dared to tell them they needed to turn around before they ran off the cliff. He knew they could not be ready for the coming of the Lord until they repented.

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