

'THE REALLY GOOD LIFE'

(Life of Christ Series)

Studies in Luke's Gospel

The Christ for King Campaign

God's physical entry into human history at the incarnation was followed by almost three decades of relative silence. After the events of His birth, presentation in the temple, escape to Egypt, return to Nazareth and the Passover incident at age 12, we know of nothing spectacular about Jesus' life prior to His baptism. It's not surprising then that a period of public preparation to recognize Jesus as the long hoped for Messiah was in order for awhile before His public ministry began.

Old Testament prophecies predicted that John would be Messiah's campaign manager (*Isaiah 40:3-5, Malachi 3:1,4:5-6*). His role would be to alert the people to their sinful and needy condition so they would be ready for Messiah's ministry when He came on the scene. All four gospels concur that this 'Elijah-like' prophet was 'John' (Jesus' cousin, later referred to as 'the baptizer') (*Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4-6, John 1:23*). John was the last Old Testament prophet who served as a 'prophetic bridge' between Old Testament Judaism to New Testament Christianity. During this transition time John exposed the weaknesses and inferiority of life under the Law of Moses and extolled the coming strengths and glory of a personal relationship to God through Jesus Christ. His campaign to get people ready to receive Jesus focused upon personal responsibility and repentance for sin rather than political emancipation the people had come to expect of Messiah. John's advance ministry may have been just half a year or less before Jesus' baptism and public campaign as Messiah. When Christ began asserting His qualifications for King with miracles and teaching, the people were prepared to make an educated decision about His Messiahship. John was born, raised, lived and died to fulfill his brief vocation of preparing people to choose Christ as Savior and follow Him as Lord.

In our day campaigners come and go; the people make their choice and the election is decided. In the time of Jesus, most of the people decided against Christ for King and the kingdom age was put on hold. But, soon man's term in office as lord of, by and for himself will be over. Just before Jesus' return, we true believers are to be preparing people for that great coming day as John did in his day. Like John, we were born 'again' for this purpose; to be used by the Holy Spirit to call men, women, boys and girls to repentance and salvation. Wise people cast their vote for Christ as Savior and Lord when they ask Him to forgive their sin and enter their heart and soul. A literal, future kingdom under Christ will come someday, but for now He is happy to be Savior and Lord over the territory of each believer's heart and life.

Have you surrendered the region of your soul and life to Jesus? He paid for that spiritual property with His own blood on the cross, so you know its very special to Him. But you must want Him to possess your soul and turn from other things that have been trespassing in your life. Repent (change your mind) about yourself, your sin and who should run your life from now on; then ask Him to take over in your life with the government of grace that is of the Savior, by the Savior and for the Savior. If you are a Christian, your life and testimony should be the campaign button, bumper sticker, and poster sign to draw people to the Savior before election day closes at the end of the age (*John 12:32*).

'ROADWORK AHEAD'

(Preparing the Way for Christ to Be Lord)

John the Prophet's Ministry

Luke 3:1-6

The Old Way

(Irreparable Human Authority)

*"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, **the Word of God came to John** the son of Zacharias **in the wilderness.**"*

3:1-2

Note: Luke's gospel records 7 people key to Messiah's 1st advent: Zacharias & Elizabeth, Mary & Joseph, Simeon & Anna and John the prophet. Next he lists the 7 rulers and authorities that will oppose Messiah's offer of the kingdom of God. Secular and religious unbelief always resists submission to God's King and kingdom throughout history.

Since God's establishment of human government with Noah after the global flood (*Genesis 9:1-18*) all of humanity is expected to submit to human authorities (*Romans 13:1-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 1 Peter 2:13-17*). Unless a government demands that Christians sin or deny their faith, believers are to respectfully comply with the laws of the land. However, wise followers of the Lord Jesus know that human government is very flawed and impotent to fix the problems of this fallen world. Thus, we live by the higher standards of God's holy Word, the Bible, voluntarily as unto the Lord. We know that all forms of government are merely interim until the Lord Jesus Christ returns as King to establish 'a more perfect union' in the coming millennial kingdom era (*Revelation 20:1-6 & 21:1-22:5*).

***Suggested Project:** Read the passages above about Christians and their citizenship. What are some things that are wrong expectations most people have about government? How should we biblically pray for those in authority over us?

The New Way

(Irrefutable Divine Authority)

"...the Word of God came to John..."

"And he (John) went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah..." **3:3-4a**

Despite all the rulers and authorities of government and religion, people now and then go astray from God. Only God-called preachers and teachers of the Word of God can affect real, lasting change in lives and in society. When Christ is about to be glorified, He sends 'people of God' with 'the Word of God' in 'the power of God' to awaken slumbering souls to meet their God.

***Project:** What can you do to get the Word of God into people's lives? Politicians can't do it. Clergymen who don't use scripture won't do it. It's up to us believers to deliver the mail of God's gospel to people who are headed for God's judgment. What are some creative new ways you can get the Word to people you know? (*1 Peter 3:15*)

The High Way

(Irresistible Spiritual Authority)

"...as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" " **3:4-6**

This passage about John the prophet's ministry is an excellent description of what the Christ for King campaign of John was about – recruiting people who want their lives radically changed to please the Lord God. These verses also describe the desire of a 'repentant heart' that is ready for salvation. Repentance is a gift from God to someone He is drawing to salvation and/or greater commitment (*2 Timothy 2:25-26*). It is more than just being 'sorry'; it's being sorry enough to stop the wrong behavior (*see 2 Corinthians 7:9-11*).

***Suggested Project:** Who are the people you aren't sure know the Lord Jesus as Savior? Have you prayed specifically that God will give them repentance (*meta-no-eh-oh* / changed mind) (*John 16:8-11*)? They will not be able to come to Christ without repentance, so try asking for it and see what happens? What are some sins or weaknesses in your Christian life over which you can't get victory? Try praying for God to make you truly repentant about those areas (*2 Timothy 2:24-26*). Be sure to praise Him when victory comes following repentance.