

WEST COLUMBIA CHURCH OF CHRIST



“every disciple that is perfect shall be as his master.” Luke 6:40b

The Church Prepared

No subject is more important than the proper understanding of the establishment of the church built by Christ and purchased with His blood (**Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 20:28**). That's because precious souls are involved—not only yours and mine, but the souls of our loved ones and friends (**Matt. 16:25-27**).

Men may plan and build their own religious institutions, but they are without the blood of Christ and there is no salvation in them. Jesus did not come to make the world religious, nor to simply add something on to existing religion, but He came to give Himself for the divine institution planned by God for lost man's salvation before the world began (**2 Tim. 1:9**).

The inspired apostle Peter said, "**Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved**" (**Acts 4:12**). Just as this great plan of God existed in His purpose and then in the promises and prophecies He made in the Old Testament, so it existed in the preparatory work of John the immerser.

The Way-Preparer: The voices of the Old Testament prophets had been silent for 400 years, when God selected one man in particular to prepare the way for His only begotten and beloved Son to come into the world. That man was John the baptiser whose birth and work was foretold to his father, Zacharias, by the angel Gabriel. The mission, character and purpose of John's coming were stated in these words: "**For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord...And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias (Elijah), to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just: to make ready a people prepared for the Lord**" (Lk. 1:17) [*emphasis GC*].

John's coming was the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy, made some 400 years earlier when Malachi said one would come "**in the spirit and power of Elijah**" (**Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6**). That Malachi spoke of John was confirmed by Jesus. "**Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied unto John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elijah which was for to come**" (**Matt. 11:11-14**). Jesus also said John was a faithful prophet, "**yea and more than a prophet**" (**Matt. 11:9**). He was also a forerunner, reformer, way-preparer and a witness. His miraculous birth, six months before Jesus was born, and his later clothing and food identified him as a special person and a prophet (**Matt. 3:4**). - (*Continued on page 3*)

KEEP YOUR HEART CLEAN IN 2013

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SERMONS THIS SUNDAY:

AM: HARVEY ALLEN

PM: HARVEY ALLEN

"... Baptism doth also now save us,
not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,
but the answer of a good CONSCIENCE towards God," - 1 Peter 3:21

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A Warm Welcome awaits you at all our services. Come see!

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JOIN US IN
NEW TESTAMENT
CHRISTIANITY
TODAY!

SERVICES

Sunday 10 AM Bible Study
Sunday 11 AM, 6 PM Assembly
Wednesday 7 PM Bible Study
Office Phone (803) 794-5320
Nursery provided

Bible Classes for all ages

LADIES CLASS
To be announced

EVANGELIST

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“PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER” - James 5:16

- **REMEMBER IN PRAYER:** Judy Walker, Miles Johnson, Richard Ramkinson, Margaret Herring, Wilson Burton, Betty Mathis, Lamar Reeves, Elma Berrier.
- The **Sailors** request prayers for a friend, **Carie Gullede** whose father passed away. **Carie** and her 3 sons visited several weeks ago. Her husband is in the National Guard full time. Send her a card. Address is on the bulletin board.

“let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” - 1 John 3:18

“AND THEY CONTINUED STEADFASTLY” - Acts 2:42

- Remember to **send cards to our visitors!** Brother **Gamble** posts a list each week of visitors and those of our number who need encouragement.

“let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” - 1 John 3:18

**Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart,
and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned:**

From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;” - 1 Tim 1:5,6

HALFWAY! TJ Bolen (and family) will be here at the end of September (Lord willing) as evangelist to help us here in West Columbia. We're making plans for classes and a **Gospel Meeting in October** some time. It will be good to bring people to visit, as we'll then have a full time man to study with folks. Be inviting people to come visit!

KEEP YOUR HEART CLEAN IN 2013

The Church Prepared - (Continued from page 3)

The **"them"** in these verses are those whom John had already prepared. The material prepared by John was made up of penitent, baptized believers and constituted the church on Pentecost. Hence, we conclude that none of John's disciples who had been prepared before Pentecost were baptized again. If someone disagrees, let him show us who, when, and where.

A Holy Temple Of God: A temple is a place where a god dwells. The **"house of God,"** where the only true and living God dwells, is the church of Christ (**1 Tim. 3:15**). With the material prepared by John, and those added on Pentecost, there arose a holy temple in the Lord, a **"habitation of God through the Spirit,"** fitly framed together (**Eph. 2:19-22**). That it was **"fitly framed together"** suggests that the material had already been prepared.

When God's house in the Old Testament — the temple — was built, David wanted to build it. But God would not allow him to do so because he was a man of blood or war. Solomon was allowed to build the temple of God, but David prepared all of the material (**1 Ki. 7:51**).

When Solomon set up the temple, the Bible says there was not the sound of either axe or hammer, because the stones were prepared beforehand and simply set in place (**1 Ki. 6:7**). That's a picture of the work of John in preparing the material of which God's New Testament temple — the church — was built.

- Gary Colley, Gospel preacher, Getwell church of Christ, Memphis, Tennessee

The Church Prepared - (Continued from page 1)

John Was Not A Christian: In his humility, John did not profess to be the Christ, but only a **"friend of the bridegroom"** (**John 3:26-31**). Neither John, nor any other person of his time could be a member of the church, or kingdom, because Christ had not yet established it. Jesus did not promise to build His church until two chapters after the account of John's beheading (**cf. Matt. 14 and 16**).

Men were looking for the kingdom to soon be established and tried to **"take it by force."** They were eager to enter the kingdom, but had the mistaken idea that Christ's kingdom would be a temporal one to be entered by force.

The Pharisee, Nicodemus, who was a ruler of the Jews, was taught by Christ that men would have to be **"born of water and of the Spirit"** in order to enter this kingdom (**Jn. 3:3-5**). A "birth" consists of a begetting and a coming forth. That's what Jesus meant when He said **"water and of the Spirit."** One is begotten by the Spirit through the word of God (**1 Pet. 1:22-23**) and comes forth in birth when he is baptized. When the figure of a birth was removed from Jesus' words, he was simply saying, **"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved"** (**Mk. 16:16**).

How John Prepared The Material For The Kingdom: Eastern monarchs always sent heralds before them to clear obstacles, make bridges over valleys and level hills. So it was with John as the one who prepared the way for Christ. He was to do his work before Jesus came as King of kings so that he might bring people back to the obedience of God, remove the Jews' trust in self, their pride, and hypocrisy, and make ready a people for Christ.

In **Isaiah 40:1-8**, John is described as **"...the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain..."** Many people conclude that because of the horrible wickedness of the world at that time (**Rom. 1:18-25**) the Lord would have been murdered before His time if John had not prepared the way.

John prepared a people for the Lord by first teaching them to believe on Him who was to come after him (**Jn. 1:7; Acts 19:4**). He did not teach the false doctrine of "faith only," but also taught his hearers to repent and confess their sins and be baptized (**Matt. 3:12, 6**). Baptism — then as well as now — was for the remission of sins (**Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; Acts 2:38**). In their acts of obedience, John gave to them the **"knowledge of salvation...by the remission of their sins"** (**Lk. 1:77**). Men in John's day could reject the counsel of God by not hearing and following his instructions, just as men can today by not following God's will (**Lk. 7:29-30**). Paul said those whom he taught and who had thrust the word of God from them judged themselves **"unworthy of everlasting life"** (**Acts 13:45-46**). But those who **"justified God"** by being baptized of John, and who were baptized in the name of Christ after Pentecost, acknowledged the divine wisdom of God in sending John to prepare a people for the Lord.

Jesus Came To "His Own": The Bible says those prepared by John's baptism were born, not of blood, the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (**John. 1:13**). These cleansed ones who looked forward to the death of Christ were those who were called Christ's **"own"** (**John 1:11**). Those who were prepared by John and received Christ when he came to **"his own"** were given **"power to become sons of God"** when the church of Christ was established (**John 1:12**). Those whom John prepared were set into the church without any further acts of obedience because they were **"already clean"** (**John 15:3; cf. Acts 18:24-28**).

Referring to those who obeyed the gospel on Pentecost, the Bible says, **"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls"** (**Acts 2:41, 47**). - (Continued on page 2)