

Voice of Baptists

"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." **Isaiah 40:3**

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ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS?

by Harold D. Carver
Buena Vista, TN

"..... and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee."
Acts 23:21b

A most unusual event occurred nearly 2000 years ago. As the shepherds were abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night they heard an unusual announcement by the angels - a SAVIOUR is born. This unique news excited the hearts of the shepherds and they made haste to Bethlehem to witness the event first hand. The announcement by the angels had also included a sign that they might identify the Christ: "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12).

The shepherds responded immediately to the angels' visit. Yes, this was an unusual event surrounded by many unusual circumstances and continues to be the most popular and prominent of all celebrations - CHRISTMAS.

The view of how this most special of all holidays should be observed is as varied as the human race. Christmas for many is nothing more than a time to shop, to party, and to be caught up in the make-believe world of Santa Claus. Much of the business world uses Christmas to boost its sales and move merchandise. Unfortunately, many never recognize or come to know the true Christ of Christmas. Fortunately, some will grasp the opportunity to feast upon the real substance of this special day and will go and see as the shepherds of long ago did. "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto

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JOHN THE BAPTIST

by F. W. Lambert
Westmoreland, TN

THE BAPTIST AND HIS MESSAGE

His coming was in accordance with God's prophetic word. John did not appear on the scene accidentally, but he came according to God's divine plan and as God had foretold he would come.

Isaiah spoke thus of John, "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: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Is. 40:3-5).

Malachi foretells the coming of John and his mission: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to the temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." Mal. 3:1.

HIS NAME

Matthew tells us that this man who was sent according to God's prophetic word was named John, Matt. 3:1. God named him through His angel (Luke 1:13): "But the angel said unto him, fear not, Zacharius: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John." This reference is to the occasion when the angel appeared to Zacharius, the father of John, and told him that he would have a son for whom he and his wife had long prayed. Most often in those days a

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WHAT OF MISSIONS?

by J. H. Smith
Nashville, TN

"For God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:17

We could ask ourselves, what would the world be like without missions? Just suppose God had decided that He wouldn't send His Son into the world; suppose He had said that it would be too sad for Him to deprive Himself of the Son of His love, and see Him go to a sin cursed earth to be rejected of men, to suffer at the hands of sinful men and be crucified on a cross. Of course, our supposing doesn't make it that way. The text tells us that God did send His Son into the world, that the world might be saved, and this means missions; for Jesus Christ was sent, and that means He was a missionary. A missionary is one who is sent. Jesus came and preached His own Gospel. The Saviour Himself declared to men how to be saved. He was the greatest missionary of all times.

JESUS COMPLETED HIS MISSION

Jesus did everything that the Father sent Him to do, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which

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VOICE OF BAPTISTS

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BULLETIN BOARD

CHURCH NEEDS PASTOR

Hauser Baptist Church of North Bend, Oregon covets the prayers of all in behalf of a new pastor. Bro. Roark, the outgoing pastor, is resigning to further mission efforts on the West Coast. Let me encourage you and your church to support this home missionary with your prayers and means.

PRAY FOR GOD TO SEND HAUSER A PASTOR!

Bro. Roark's address is:

Elder Vernon Roark
310 Driftwood Inn Rd.
North Bend, OR 97459

SISTER GREGORY PUBLISHES BOOK

"Apples of Gold in Pitchers of Silver" has just been released from the press. It contains notes of 49 sermons as recorded with pencil and paper as Sister Laura Gregory listened. Today, Sister Gregory is 92 years old. She has been a Christian for 80 years and kept sermon notes of every preacher she heard for more than 50 years. For your copy see a local pastor in your area. Additional copies are available from "Voice of Baptists."

NICE LETTER

I enjoy the paper and look forward to getting it each time. Enclosed is a check.

Mrs. Ethel Smith
Lafayette, TN

GOOD COMMUNICATION

Enclosed please find our check. Hope it will help a little.

Until a few years ago I did not know there were any old time Missionary Baptists outside of Missouri.

I feel the "Voice of Baptists" is one way God's people can communicate.

Mr. & Mrs. Jamie Erven
Clinton, MO

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all! We are thankful to God for the opportunity you have given us at "Voice of Baptists" to extend our service for God and His glory through this medium.

It will always be our sincere desire to explain God's word in a truthful and simple manner for a better application to our lives and our lives to His field of labor.

Your prayers and financial assistance have been so faithful. I hope we will ever be worthy of your many kindnesses and much encouragement.

Let me take a minute to apologize for the delay you experience in receiving the paper. It is mostly my fault, but sometimes the mail gets bogged down at one point or another. Please forgive our inefficiency in the past as we endeavor to be more punctual in the future.

The paper has been a real blessing to me as I have read those good articles contributed by the staff writers and others.

It will be our aim in 1983 to be just a small star in guiding someone to seek for the place of refuge, Christ Jesus and to lead wise builders on the Rock to greater construction for Him.

"When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

Matt. 2:9-10

JOHN THE BAPTIST*(Continued from Page 1)*

person had only one name and also a surname as we do in our day. Had that been so in this case, the child's name would likely have been John Zacharius, just as my name is Floyd Lambert. But his name was simply John. It was not John Baptist, as some mistakenly believe.

HIS MISSION AS A MISSIONARY

God sent John on a mission. Our word "mission" comes from the Latin "mitto," meaning "I send." Since the scripture makes it abundantly clear that God sent this man to perform an assigned duty, we are certain that he was a missionary with a specific purpose. He was sent to prepare a people for the Lord. To get ready a people whom the Lord would call and organize into His Church. God sent John to preach His word. God sent him on a mission to baptize Jesus and to baptize persons won to Jesus. God sent him to institute the ordinance of baptism. This great and marvelous preacher was a God-sent missionary.

HIS RELIGIOUS TITLE

God calls this man "the Baptist" (Matt. 3:1). If one should ask, "Why did God call him 'the Baptist,'" the obvious correct answer would be that God called him what he was and that was a Baptist. Because one translation of the New Testament renders this term "the Dipper," some come to think that the only reason God called him **the Baptist** was because he dipped or immersed those who came to him for baptism. It is certain that he dipped, immersed Jesus and all others whom he baptized, for the word baptize means to dip or immerse.

While it would not be incorrect to say that John was called a Baptist partly in view of his outstanding activity of baptizing new believers, neither would it be correct to assert that this could be the only reason. In respect of religion, a man is known not only by his practice but also by his conviction or faith and by his preaching the same. So it was with John. He not only practiced the baptizing of new converts, but he believed that baptism was an important act of identification and testimony for a believer. This was a basic part of his doctrinal faith. Furthermore, John not only practiced and believed the doctrine of baptism, but he also preached it. Therefore, it is entirely correct to state that **John the Baptist** was called a Baptist because of his total ministry of faith and practice and preaching. Baptists of today have just such a ministry. It would be well to note that God did not refer to this missionary and preacher as John the Catholic,

or John the Pentecostal, John the Nazarene, or even John the Christian. I do wish to emphasize that God called this man **John the Baptist**.

John was a rugged preacher of a rugged gospel. He did not resemble a sissy in any respect. He wore the common garb of his day. He did not appear in the manner of some preachers today attired in motley fashion or wearing flashy clothes such as no one else in the community wears. The Scripture says, "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins." (Matt. 3:4). Furthermore, this missionary Baptist preacher ate the common food of his day. We are told in the same scripture, "his meat was locusts and wild honey." He did not have to be petted, pampered, set on a pedestal, or furnished rich and expensive food. John the missionary Baptist preacher preached plainly and boldly. He called things by their right names. When a group of unsaved religionists came to him to be baptized, he refused to baptize them and said, "O generation of vipers who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" John spoke plainly to those hell-bound religionists and called them generation of snakes. We need more plain preaching in which sin is called sin, in which hell is called hell, and in which false doctrine is named as false doctrine. We do not need apologetic preachers. We need more Baptists like John.

ARE YOU READY*(Continued from Page 1)*

us" (Luke 2:15b). They are ready for Christmas because they have a personal relationship with the Christ of Christmas. Are you ready for Christmas?

We find a good example of such preparation and readiness as we study the life of a man named Simeon (Luke 2:25-26). Simeon was using his life and spending his time getting ready for the first coming of Christ. We shall use this account for a brief lesson on the importance of our getting ready for the second coming.

Just as surely as the Christ of Christmas has come; just as surely the same Christ is coming again. Just as literally as He came the first time; just as literally is He coming the second time. Therefore, we need to get ready, not only for Christmas on December 25th, but ready for Christ when He shall come again.

Let us now study this man Simeon as described in the Scriptures. We have revealed there at least four characteristics in the life of Simeon as he prepared for the Lord's first coming.

First of all we observe that Simeon

was a saved man. The bible calls him a just man (Luke 2:25). There is only one way to be just in the eyes of God and that is to be saved by the grace of God; to be born again by the Spirit of God. Man does not become justified by his righteousness, but must receive the righteousness of Christ through imputation. Yes, Simeon was a saved man, a righteous man and a just man having been saved by grace through faith.

Have you been saved? Have you been born again? Does God's Spirit live within your heart and bear witness with your spirit? If you must answer no to these questions, you are not ready for Christmas nor for the second coming of the Christ of Christmas.

Those angels announcing the birth of Christ filled the Judean night with songs of "Joy and Peace." "And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Secondly, Simeon was a devout man (Lk. 2:25). Not only had he been saved but he was a devout child of God. He was in a sense a surrendered man. Many have been saved, but failed to surrender their minds, their time, their monies and their lives. It's not enough just to be saved to be ready for Christmas but we must be surrendered.

Simeon was a devout man because he was waiting for the consolation of Israel; that is the coming of Christ. His heart was filled with hope for the coming Messiah. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 Jn. 3:3). When an individual truly believes that Christ may come at any moment, that person usually lives a more dedicated (prepared) life. If we believe as Simeon did that Christ may come at any moment, we, too, will be devout people. A people who are ready for Christmas.

Thirdly, Simeon was a spiritual man. The Holy Ghost was upon him (Lk. 2:25). Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:18b, "be filled with the Spirit." Simeon was filled with the Spirit. Are you filled with the Spirit? Are you enjoying your salvation or are you just enduring your religion? "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9b). Every child of God has the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, but not every child of God is filled with the Spirit. We have the Holy Spirit but does the Holy Spirit have us? If we are not filled with the Spirit, we are not ready for Christmas.

Finally, Simeon was a sensitive man (Lk. 2:26). He was a man listening to God. God was speaking to him through

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WHAT OF MISSIONS?

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thou gavest me to do." John 17:4. Jesus did all that He came to do in person, then He returned to the Father. He preached, He taught, He suffered, He was slain on the cross, the third day He arose, and then ascended to glory to take His seat at the right hand of the Father. What a mission, a completed mission!

Before our Lord left the world He gave authority to His church, which He set up while in the world, to perpetuate missions. When He left He didn't take everything with Him. He left His church, He didn't take it with Him. He left His Gospel here and gave authority to His church to preach it to all the world. Here is what He said when He met with His disciples on a mountain in Galilee: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matthew 28:18-20. But how are we doing about what we have been authorized to do? I have heard great messages preached on the authority given to the church, but authority not used is of little value. God attaches great importance to obedience for His commands. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments." John 14:14.

MISSIONS REQUIRE SACRIFICE

Christ's mission was sacrificial, He made the greatest sacrifice of all times. He was the Lamb of God, and that means sacrifice. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). In God's plan and purpose there are sacrifices to be made, and we are no exception. When God calls someone to go out into some far and destitute field for Him, there is the conflict with our own will, the will of the flesh; and this will has to be brought under. This is not always easy, and it brings on a lot of thinking; and may I add, a whole lot of praying. We must count the cost, and then say as Isaiah said: "Here am I, send me" (Isaiah 6:8). God wants a full surrender. He wouldn't have us to hang onto something at home, even if it is the dearest thing to our heart. But God is so gracious. He will not have us to make any kind of sacrifice that He won't give us good pay in return. The self denial and taking up the cross will bring tears, but see here: "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Psalm 126:6. Yes. God will see to it that we

won't return empty-handed, and He will repay us for all the heartaches, the tears and the giving up of home and dear ones, with fullness of joy. Such is of greater value than all fame and fortune of this earth.

MISSIONS REQUIRE FAITH

God is well pleased when we believe His promises, and He is not pleased when we try to prop ourselves up and not lean upon Him. Too many of His people want to see the end before they start. We can see what God can do as we take one step at a time by faith, go depending on Him for our support, for spiritual support to enable us to do His work, and material support to keep us going physically. Of course, the Lord uses His churches and people to support us materially; and God will touch His people to send to His servants whom He sends, if the servant stays in His will. One of the greatest blessings to me in my missionary work was to experience how God supported us. We didn't have any big, rich organization behind us, and we didn't seek any. A local New Testament church, our church, McFerrin Missionary Baptist Church, set me apart as a foreign missionary. McFerrin Church was a young church, two years old, still small in number, and it wasn't rich. And we went out from her, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, the same way as we find in Acts 13:2-4. This is God's faith plan. Paul and Barnabas were set apart by the church at Antioch, and from there it says, "Being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." And on they went, walking by faith. It was Paul who wrote in later years, "For we walk by faith, not by sight." II Corinthians 5:7.

MISSIONS REQUIRE FAITHFULNESS

If missions are promoted, as the Scriptures require, there has to be faithfulness on the part of missionaries and the churches; but if one missionary fails, or if one church proves unfaithful, this doesn't mean, however, that we are to throw up our hands, for God has people whom we might not presently know about; and if we seek His will He will bring these into view. One dear brother said to me, when we were preparing to go out to Japan as missionaries, Brother Smith, I am uneasy about you and your wife; I am afraid that the churches will prove unfaithful and you will suffer. I appreciated the brother's concern, and I learned that some churches do prove unfaithful; but I found out that God had others that I never knew about before. At one point, as I recall, my wife and I were a little worried because two or three churches stopped their supporting us. I think this was a test of our faith more than

anything else, but it did cause us to pray more earnestly and throw ourselves on the Lord more. Well, in a few days I received a letter from a brother pastor, and he said in his letter that he had heard about us, but that he and the church would like to know more. Enclosed in his letter was a very nice offering that more than made up for the churches who had dropped out. We rejoiced that day because of what God had done. "Great is Thy faithfulness," said the prophet Jeremiah, Lamentations 3:23. I wrote back to that church and pastor more about ourselves, what church sent us out, and something about what we believed; and that church became a regular supporter of our work as long as we were on the field. I could tell of other churches, that I had never heard of before I got to Japan, who became supporters of our work.

I thank God for the dear churches that were with us in our missionary work, who prayed for us, sent us letters of encouragement, and their offerings to supply our temporal needs. I thank God for the dear church that sent us out, McFerrin Church, and for its faithfulness to the servants whom it sent. I don't intend to boast, God forbid, but I have never had the least intention of turning from God's direct, faith plan for missions, as taught in Scripture. If I had, I would have, in the first place, let my Lord down, and I would have let the faithful churches down who gave us support.

ARE YOU READY

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the Spirit because he was the kind of man that would listen. How much quiet time do we spend with the Lord? How sensitive are we to the voice of God? Often times we are too caught up in our personal activities to simply listen to the voice of God. Many times we rush into God's presence with our "want list," and say, "Lord, give me this or give me that, etc."

We as children of God have great need to pause occasionally and simply listen to our heavenly Father. We may not be ready for Christmas until we allow Him to commune with us. Jesus Christ is coming back some day. It may be pretty soon. God still has some sensitive people that are listening and looking for the coming of the Lord. There are yet a few saved, surrendered, spirit filled, and sensitive Christians looking for the coming of the Christ of Christmas. Even now He may be at the door. Are you ready for Christmas? If not, then please get ready. Be saved today, surrender your life, become filled with the Holy Spirit and listen to the voice of God.