CHAPTER 2

The Forerunner Of Christ

In the ancient world, when a king went to a city or a country, he would usually send certain men to go before him to announce his soon coming and to prepare for his arrival. Such men were known as forerunners or heralds. Likewise, when the KING OF ISRAEL came into the world, God sent a man before Him to announce the coming of the Messiah and to spiritually prepare the nation for His arrival.

What was the name of Christ’s forerunner (John 1:6)? (meaning "the LORD is gracious"). Who gave him this name (Luke 1:13; compare Luke 1:57-63)?

Did the Old Testament Scriptures predict that the Messiah would be preceded by a forerunner who would prepare the way (Isaiah 40:3-5 compared with Matthew 3:1-3 and Mark 1:3; Malachi 3:1 compared with Matthew 11:7-10 and Mark 1:2)?

According to Luke 1:76, what would the forerunner be called?

How did Jesus describe John (John 5:35)?

Who would be converted as a result of John’s faithful ministry (Luke 1:16)?

What priceless treasure would John give to the people of Israel (Luke 1:77)?

What message did John give to those who were baptized by him (Acts 19:4)?

What did Herod the Tetrarch know about John’s character (Mark 6:20)?

Was John a man of prayer (Luke 11:1)?

According to Luke 1:15, John was GREAT in whose eyes?

(Many people are great in their own eyes!) What did our Lord say about John’s greatness (Matthew 11:11)?

According to the Lord Jesus, what is the secret of true greatness (Matthew 18:3-4 Luke 9:46-48)?

Did John know this secret (Matthew 3:11 John 1:19-27; 3:25-30)?

As John constantly pointed away from himself, who did he point to (John 1:29,36)?

The person who faithfully points to Christ (by life and lips) is called a W (John 1:7).

What do you see in the illustration on the next page?
Do you see a turtle? What else do you see? A WITNESS is to be like that ARROW. The purpose of the arrow is to point clearly to the turtle. The arrow does not want to be seen; it wants the turtle to be seen! John was like that arrow:

John the Forerunner
"BEHOLD!"

"THE LAMB OF GOD"

"MAY HIS BEAUTY REST UPON ME
AS I SEEK THE LOST TO WIN,
AND MAY THEY FORGET THE CHANNEL,
SEEING ONLY HIM"

-Kate B. Wilkinson

At a wedding, who is the very center of attention, the bride and groom or the maid of honor and the best man? Does this help us in understanding John’s words in John 3:28-30?

How many miracles did John the Baptist perform during his life and ministry (John 10:41)? Can you think of other men of God in the Old Testament who never performed any miracles?

Why was John cast into prison (Luke 3:19-20; Matthew 14:3-4)? Who did this bold and courageous prophet fear, God or man? How did John die (Matthew 14:1-12)?

John’s influence lasted long after his death. When Paul went to Ephesus on his third missionary journey (about 20 years after John’s death), what did he find (Acts 19:1-7)?

What message did John the Baptist preach (Matthew 3:1-2; compare 4:17,23; 10:5-7)? In general, what kind of people received John’s message (Matthew 21:31-32; compare 3:5-6)?

In general, what kind of people rejected his message (Matthew 21:31-32; compare 3:7-12)?
John commanded the people to **repent** (to change their whole way of thinking concerning sin, self and the Saviour) and therefore his baptism was a baptism of________(Acts 13:24; Mark 1:4). This baptism was an **outward ritual** which symbolized and pictured an **inner reality** of a changed heart and mind.

John the Baptist gave very careful instructions to the multitude which came to be baptized by him. He told them to bring forth therefore ________ **WORTHY OF** (your)

"God has done a work in my heart and I have changed my mind about myself, my sin and my Saviour!"

"The work that God has done and is doing in me is now producing fruits that all can see!"

John's message was this: "Make sure your fruits weigh as much as your repentance. Don't just **say** that you have repented. Don't just **symbolize** your repentance by baptism. Rather, show your repentance by fruits. If you have really repented, then **prove** it! If you are really an apple tree, then **let me see your apples!**"

How could the people **prove** that they really repented (Luke 3:10-11)?

How could the publicans (tax collectors) show that their repentance was real (Luke 3:12-13)?

How could the soldiers give evidence of a changed heart and life (Luke 3:14)?
My fruits do not weigh as much as my (professed) repentance! My lips say one thing, but my life says the opposite (see Titus 1:16; 1 John 2:4; 2:9).

Repentance is an inward transaction that takes place between God and man. It is something that takes place in the heart and mind of a person and it cannot be seen by others. It is impossible to look at a crowd of people and to know which ones have really repented and which ones have not.

Fruit, in contrast to inner repentance, can be clearly seen by others. Fruit is the natural outflow and result of a person being in a right relationship to the Lord. A healthy tree will naturally bring forth good fruit. A healthy believer will do the same.

What warning did John give to those Jews whose fruits would not weigh as much as their (supposed) repentance (Matthew 3:9-12)?

Did the Lord Jesus teach the same thing (Matthew 7:15-23)?

When the church began, were men and women commanded to repent (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 20:21)? Today, does God expect us to produce fruits that weigh as much as our repentance (Acts 26:20)?

Have you really repented? Have you had an inward change of heart and mind [called "repentance"]? Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, how can you show your faith (James 2:14-26)? How can you give evidence to others that you are saved and your sins are forgiven?

IF YOU WERE ARRESTED FOR BEING A CHRISTIAN, WOULD THERE BE ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVICT YOU?

Could a Bible worn with use be brought forth? Could several witnesses testify that you spoke to them about the Saviour? What evidence could your friends submit? Your teachers at school? Your neighbors? Your family members who know you best?