

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)?

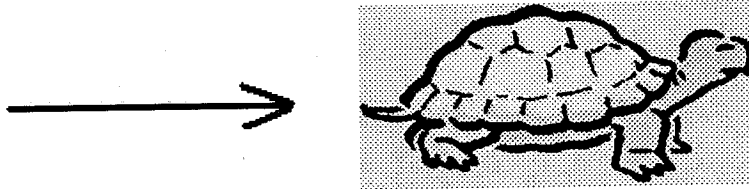
_____ According to the Lord Jesus, what is the secret of true greatness (Matthew 18:3-4 Luke 9:46-48)?

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

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?

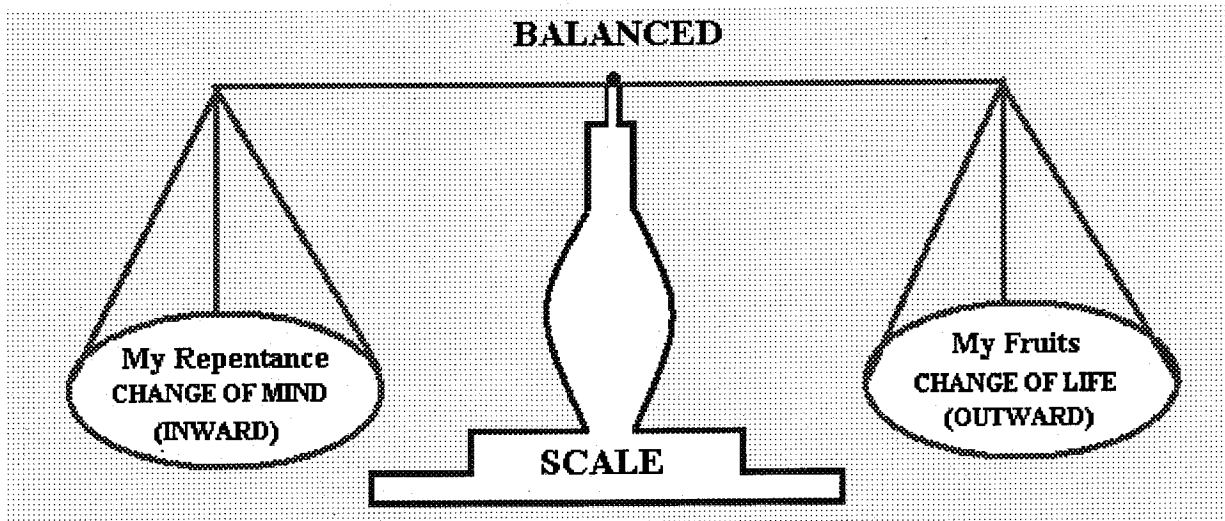
How many miracles did John the Baptist perform during his life and ministry (John 10: 41)? _____ Can you think of other men of God in the Old Testament who never performed any miracles? _____

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 Baptizer gave very careful instructions to the multitude which came to be baptized by him. He told them to bring forth therefore _____ **WORTHY OF** (your) _____ (Matthew 3:8). The Greek word translated "worthy of" means "corresponding to, equal in weight to, weighing as much as," and it was used to describe that equal condition when two weights are "**BALANCED**" on a scale:



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

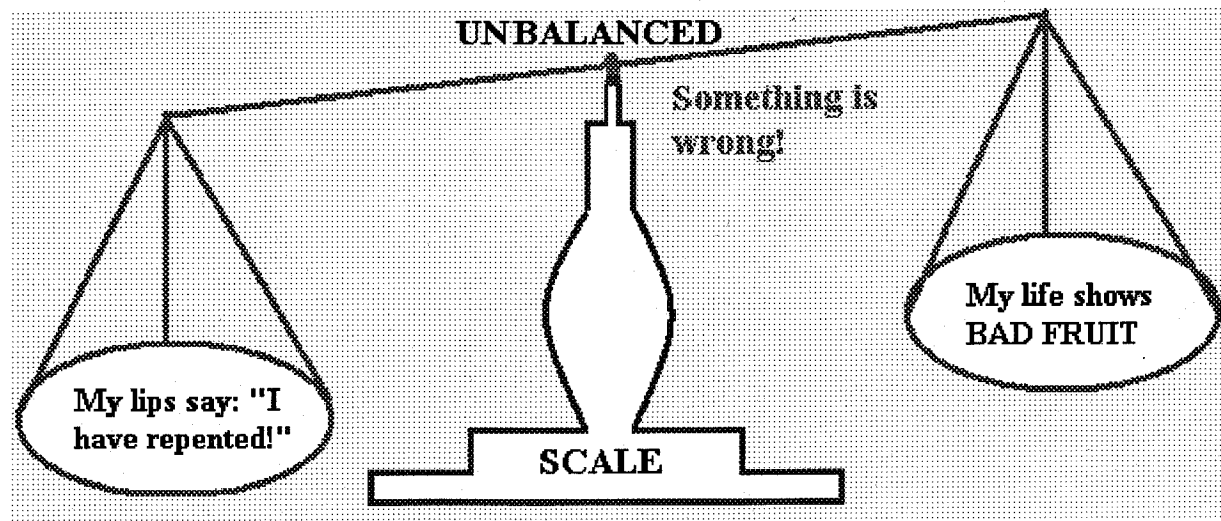
"The work that God has done and is doing in me is now producing fruits that all can see!"

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 what 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?