

GOD'S CALLING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Lesson One

IN THE GOSPELS: JOHN THE BAPTIST

Burden to Impart:

John was called by God to turn His people's heart to their coming Savior, the Lord Jesus. God sent John the Baptist to end the Old Testament age and to begin the New. John told God's people that they should not trust in their religion or heritage to save them (Matt. 3:9). They must repent of their sins, be baptized, and believe in Christ.

Memory Verse: "For this is he who was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying, A voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight" (Matthew 3:3).

Facts to Teach: [Scripture reading: Matt. 3:1-10; extra, Luke 1:5-17, 57-80]

1. The Bible has two great sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament tells us about what God did before the Lord Jesus came. It tells us how God called out a special people for Himself, for His salvation, and for His purpose. These people were the children of Israel, the Hebrews; or as we say today, the "Jews." The New Testament mainly tells us what God did after the Lord Jesus came to the earth. In the New Testament we see how God once again called out a people for Himself, for His salvation, and for His purpose. God's people in the New Testament are the Christians, the church.
2. The New Testament began at a time when God's people, the Jews, had turned their hearts away from Him. They had become disobedient, sinful, hard-hearted, and rebellious. They had failed God's calling.
3. In order to prepare His people for the coming of their Savior, the Lord Jesus, God sent a special prophet named John the Baptist to them. John would speak God's word to them and tell them of their sins. He would also tell them of their need to repent, be baptized, and believe in Christ. He was bold, frank, and filled with God.
4. John was born of godly parents. His father served God as a priest in the temple. John's coming was so important that it was foretold hundreds of years earlier in the Old Testament (Isa. 40:3-4). John was born by a special miracle of God, for His parents were very old. He was filled with God's Spirit even from his birth.
5. John had a very hard job to do. He had to turn the hearts of God's people back to the Lord (Luke 1:16). That meant that John himself had to be fully turned to the Lord. John loved the Lord with all of his heart and lived absolutely for Him. For this reason he was different. He lived in the wilderness. He ate wild honey and locusts. He seemed like a wild man to some. But to those who listened to him, he was the voice of God crying in the wilderness, "Repent!" Those who repented showed it to all by their baptism (Matt. 3:6).