

THE JESUS WAY – Preparing the Way of the Lord

So... **How was it being home for Christmas this year?**

The family gatherings are now over... Relatives from out of town are gone... Decorations are coming down... The spectacle of the holiday has passed!

So now what? **Do we just move on... as if Christmas never happened?**

Think about what it must've been like after that 1st Christmas in Bethlehem...

- The Heavenly Host all disappeared...
- The shepherds returned to their fields...
- All the people that filled up Bethlehem went back to their homes...
- Even the Magi who would come later, would also come and go...
- Even the chaos of fleeing to Egypt & then returning would pass quickly...

So **what now?** Will the significance of what happened in Bethlehem **fade with Christmas?** Jesus' earthly ministry won't start for another 30 years...

The fact is, Christmas draws a crowd... Christmas gets us excited & involved... Christmas has immediate payoff - A Savior is born! But what happens after? **We often go back to our lives until we do it again next year w/nothing changing!**

But think about Mary/Joseph & what they must've felt after that 1st Christmas...

- **"What are we going to do now... we can't go back to the way things were?"**
- **"God has entrusted to us the Savior of the world... we have to be all-in!"**
- **"Is anyone going to help us... now that the spectacle has come & gone?"**

Scripture doesn't give us much between Jesus' birth & Jesus' baptism, when he begins His earthly ministry (30 yrs later)... But there was much happening **"to prepare the way for Jesus..."** **"to make straight the paths of the Lord!"**

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she would be the one to mother Jesus, God's Son, her response was **"Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."**

Did she really know what she was signing up for? It wasn't just giving birth to the Son of God, it was also raising Him, protecting Him, preparing Him for what was to come, also preparing others for His coming as well!

Mary & Joseph couldn't just go home & leave the "after Christmas" work for others to do! There was a lot that needed to be done to get Jesus from Christmas to when He was baptized and started His redemptive ministry!

The same is true for us... in terms of the work that is needed to be done **between Jesus' 1st coming... & His 2nd coming at the end of the age!**

Scripture does give us some notable names, and places, that helped get Jesus from His birth to His baptism:

- The Magi...
- Simeon...
- The prophetess Anna...
- The encounter in Jerusalem where Mary & Joseph lost Him...
- The temple...
- The teachers at the temple, the synagogue, neighbors, family members...

Luke 1:52 – "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."

There were many contributing factors that brought about the outcome of this verse! But besides Mary & Joseph, there was one other person who really help prepare the way for Jesus' mission... **John the Baptist!**

Zechariah gives a prophecy at the birth of John about his son's purpose.

Luke 1:67-80 John would:

- **"be called the Prophet of the Most High"**
- **"Go before the Lord to prepare his ways"**
- **"Give knowledge of salvation to his people..."**
- **"Give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death"**
- **"Guide our feet into the way of peace"**

Luke 1:3-6 John would:

- **"Be the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord"**
- **"Make his paths straight..."**
- **"Every valley shall be filled & every mountain & hill shall be made low..."**
- **"The crooked shall become straight & the rough places shall become level"**
- **"All flesh shall see the salvation of God."**

This was John's purpose from the day he was born, until the day he stepped out of the way because Jesus had come!

John the Baptist, along with Mary & Joseph, gave their lives to the service of preparing the way for Jesus to do His redeeming work!

Are we willing to do the same today? **Jesus is coming again**, and we have been given the opportunity to prepare the way for His 2nd coming! Here are some opportunities to do so...

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Think about what it must've been like after that 1st Christmas in Bethlehem...

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So _____ Will the significance of what happened in Bethlehem _____ with Christmas? Jesus' earthly ministry won't start for another 30 years...

The fact is, Christmas draws a crowd... Christmas gets us excited & involved... Christmas has immediate payoff - A Savior is born! But what happens after? We often go back to our lives until we do it again next year with _____

But think about Mary/Joseph & what they must've felt after that 1st Christmas...

- "What are we going to do now... we _____ to the way things were?"
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Mary & Joseph couldn't just go home & leave the _____ work for others to do! There was a lot that needed to be done to get Jesus from Christmas to when He was baptized and started His redemptive ministry!

The same is true for us... in terms of the work that is needed to be done between Jesus' 1st coming... & His 2nd coming at _____

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