Week 05 is scheduled for study Jan. 23-29, 2023. The subject this week is to prepare to be taught by Christ. As John taught of the coming of the Messiah, so we are about to study his ministry. Are we preparing ourselves for what is to come?

Day 1

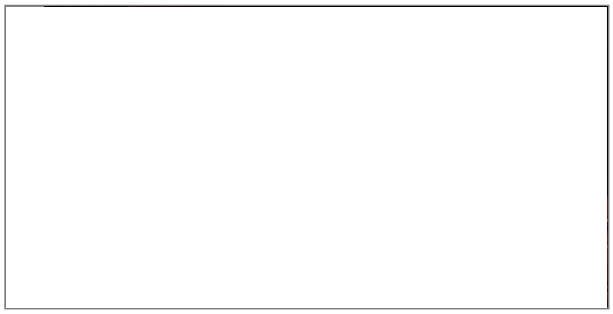
Read Matthew 3; Mark 1; and Luke 3. As you pray for the Holy Ghost to help you understand these chapters, He will give you insights that are especially for you. Record these impressions, and make plans to act on them.

Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:2-18 - Repentance is a mighty change of mind and heart.

Have you ever considered why John the Baptist was needed in the first place? If the Jews had been a righteous people he wouldn't have had to preach the true gospel of Christ to them to prepare them for the coming of their Messiah. They would have already been keeping God's commandments. As it was, they had rejected the prophets many centuries earlier, and what was left of the law of Moses no longer pointed them to Christ, who would save them from their sins, but to a military leader who would deliver them from the Romans. John the Baptist was the first prophet to come to the Jews in more than 400 years.

John used their own scriptures to teach them of the true nature of their looked-for Savior. His main message was for them to repent. In just a few decades they were going to be destroyed as a nation and scattered among the nations of the earth because of what they would do to their own God. For many, many hundreds of years these people were more than just likely to reject and kill the prophets sent to them from the Lord. So John had his hands full to preach repentance to them and make headway in getting the people to repent before Jesus began his own ministry. John the Baptist only had a six months head start on his cousin to get them ready to hear and accept the Lord's message.

John's baptism prepared their minds for the teachings of Jesus, but his baptism wasn't able to enable them to fully repent, for John's baptism was Aaronic only. Full repentance requires the Melchizedek priesthood, which is what Jesus would bring with him. The gift of the Holy Ghost is a Melchizedek ordinance. Only with the gift of the Spirit can the baptism of fire happen. The baptism of fire is the process of being converted. It is what happens when the Spirit changes our outlook, our disposition, our desires. He changes our hearts and brings us joy in the act of doing good and keeping the commandments. Here is a clip of a talk from Elder David A. Bednar that talks about the importance of having the Holy Ghost to fully repent. I encourage you to enlarge this video to full screen. It won't be really clear, but you will be able to read the closed captioning.



John taught the people to prepare for the coming of the Messiah by changing how they lived their lives. He made it clear to them that their lives needed to show evidence of their willingness to change. He referred to these changes as bearing the fruits of repentance. And truly, when we repent we live our lives differently than before. John also warned them that with the coming of the promised Messiah, judgment would follow. If the people were not living the kind of life he wanted them to live, like a tree that had died they would be cut down and cast into the fire.

One of the Jews' most persistent sins was that they took advantage of each other and no longer cared for each other. John warned them that they needed to care for one another and impart of their substance to those in need. Think of that. Of all the things he could have warned this fallen people about, John singled out caring for those who have less or who were in need. This is the same doctrine Jesus preached continually.

I have written an article that focuses on the three types of baptism we all experience. I recommend reading it to learn more about how this mighty change of heart and mind comes about with baptism, and the Holy Ghost's role in the experience. Baptisms of Water, Holy Ghost, and Fire.

Day 2

Read Matthew 3; Mark 1; and Luke 3. As you pray for the Holy Ghost to help you understand these chapters, He will give you insights that are especially for you. Record these impressions, and make plans to act on them.

Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7 - Who were the Pharisees and Sadducees?

Have you ever considered why the Jews created the Pharisees and Sadducees? The very notion of needing such groups as these is based on excessive pride and arrogance. The Jews had already rejected the prophets, so the Lord withdrew them from among the people. They were left completely to themselves. The Lord had told them that one of their great sins, as a people, was looking beyond the mark. They wanted the mysterious, the complicated. They consistently rejected the simple and plain God tried to give them.

When there were no more prophets, a class of educated elites arose over time who professed to have superior knowledge of the law of Moses. They set themselves up as the arbiters of the law. Over time they wrote volumes of commentary on the law - all intellectual - that filled their own desire to be exalted in the eyes of those around them. Theirs was an organization based on self promotion and power. This was the opposite of everything the Savior wanted for his people. Small wonder he spent so many words warning them and the people against their intellectual poison. John the Baptist recognized them for the hypocrites they were and called them out on their behavior from the very start.

The Pharisees and Sadducees represent the wisdom of the world - Godless and self promoting. We have such people among us today as well. They just go by different titles. Many are in government and are working to supplant religion with government oversight to cement their control over the people. There are even some in the Church who focus on the academics of the gospel, forgetting the spirit of the laws God has given us. Anytime we lose the spirit of humility and our dependence on the Holy Ghost for guidance, we join their ranks.

Day 3

Read Matthew 3; Mark 1; and Luke 3. As you pray for the Holy Ghost to help you understand these chapters, He will give you insights that are especially for you. Record these impressions, and make plans to act on them.

Matthew 3:11, 13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:15-16, 21-22 - Jesus Christ was baptized to "fulfil all righteousness."

The role of Jesus as our Redeemer and Savior was to subject himself in all things to the will of our Father in Heaven. This was his mortal duty, one he took very seriously. We look at his perfect and untainted life and ask ourselves why he had need of baptism, since he had no need to repent. But that is the wrong question to ask.

The point of Jesus' ministry was to demonstrate obedience to God in all things and in all ways. He was setting the example of what we should be doing. How could he do that if he were to refuse the basic covenant of baptism, where the point is to promise to be obedient to the Lord in all ways, places, and at all times? Baptism is the first of the covenants we make with God, and the introduction to discipleship. Yes, we covenant to follow Christ, but he covenanted to emulate the Father in all things as an exemplar for us. His baptism was a must. He never exempted himself from any of the demands of the gospel he brought. Instead, he exemplified all the characteristics and behaviors that gospel promotes. Even in the most basic ways and principles Christ showed himself to be the most obedient of all.

Day 4

Read Matthew 3; Mark 1; and Luke 3. As you pray for the Holy Ghost to help you understand these chapters, He will give you insights that are especially for you. Record these impressions, and make plans to act on them.

Matthew 3:16-17; Mark 1:8-11; Luke 3:21-22 - The members of the Godhead are three separate beings.

There is a lesson to be learned in studying the members of the Godhead. At one point in his ministry Jesus offers what is called his intercessory prayer where he pleads with the Father that all of us may be as united in thought and in deed as the members of the Godhead are. By the time the great apostacy had taken place, this unity Christ prayed for was misinterpreted as the members of the Godhead being all the same being. Hence we gained the concept of the Trinity (which is never taught in the Bible). But the members of the Godhead have always been three separate people doing the same work in cooperation with each other. This is the same principle of unity Jesus always preaches to the members of the church today. Zion is a unified people, and Christ wants us to become a Zion people.

Here are some articles that discuss the roles of the members of the Godhead. I include them as optional reading.

Godhead – Part 1 of 4 Definition of God

Godhead - Part 2 of 4 God the Father

Godhead - Part 3 of 4 Jesus Christ

Godhead - Part 4 of 4 The Holy Ghost

FHE/Personal Study

Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22 - Well pleased

The most important thought here is that we need to separate ourselves from Christ. He was perfect and the scriptures tell us the God was "well pleased" with him. We are not perfect, hence it is somewhat logical to assume that God is not well pleased with us. That isn't true. We may not be perfect like our exemplar, but that doesn't mean the

Lord can't be pleased with our progress as we work to repent and follow Christ's examples for us.

I have had at least two experiences in my life where I became concerned that I was acceptable to God at that stage of my life. I sought to know where I stood with Him through prayer. After much pondering, reflection, and praying I received an undeniable witness that at that moment in time God was pleased with my efforts to be obedient. I was not perfect. I still had sins, but was striving to put them behind me. This experience has happened twice in my life, so I know it wasn't a fluke when it happened. I know the Lord loves me and is pleased when I am honestly and humbly doing my best to be obedient in all I know to do. Knowing that God is pleased with you gives you confidence that you can indeed continue to do what we are commanded to do in the gospel of Christ. It instills within us the power that comes with a more personal knowledge of God and our standing before Him.

I fully believe that if you have done all you can to bring your life in line with the commandments, and are reading, studying, and doing all you can think of to live a Christlike life, you can receive this same kind of approbation by our Father. I think He loves to bless us with His approval. But how often do we actually seek confirmation of that approval? Too often I think we just assume we never measure up and that He is never really pleased with the work we are putting in to become like Christ. In that respect I think we cheat ourselves out of the comfort that comes from knowing that we are pleasing to God. I encourage you to seek that approval. If nothing else you will feel of His love for you, and that, in and of itself, is empowering and encouraging.

Click the link below to

print a PDF copy of the article.

NT05-2023 – Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord

Week 05