



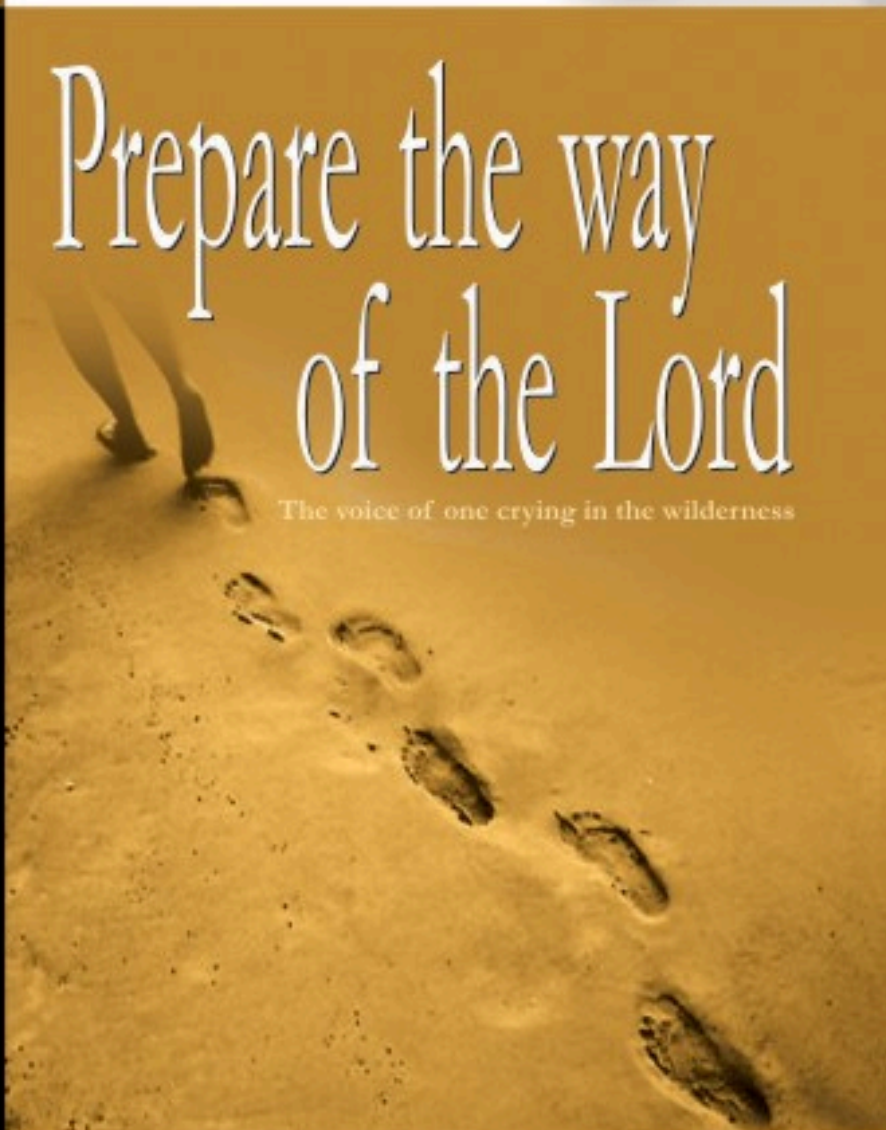
"Behold the Lamb of God that
takes away the sin of the world"



HEALTHCARE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
INTERNATIONAL (SOUTH ASIA) MONOGRAPHS

Prepare the way of the Lord

The voice of one crying in the wilderness



Healthcare Christian Fellowship, South Asia

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The voice of one crying in the wilderness

The Life and Ministry of John the Baptist
A model for HCF

Arul Anketell

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Introduction

Dear Friends,

Greetings in Jesus' Name! We wrote this message 11 years ago in 1999. We decided to reproduce it at the launch of our seven year thrust to see His Kingdom come in the health field at the Core-group Conference in Tansen, Nepal, April 21 – 25, 2010. We trust you will be stirred to action by the HOLY SPIRIT.

Arul Anketell

Your co-worker in Christ

For HCFI South Asia

Introduction 1999

A MESSAGE IN PREPARATION FOR 1999

“The final year of this millennium and the gateway to a new millennium”

Who knows very soon we shall see the Return of the KING of kings and LORD of lords

The whole world is making preparations for the year 2000. The countdown has begun. What most people forget is that it is the beginning of the third millennium after Christ.

Christ Jesus is the central figure in this whole universe.

*And the Lord wants us to get ready. He is coming soon for a prepared people. Before His first coming, the prophet, John the Baptist came to prepare the way. And now with His second coming imminent, the Lord is restoring the **min-istry** and the **message** of John the Baptist. For HCF South Asia, we desire a 'John the Baptist-like' ministry.*

JOHN THE BAPTIST

He was a NAMELESS, SELFLESS, FEARLESS, Prophet of God

Nameless

In John Chapter 1: 19-23, we see an interesting dialogue. The priests and the Levites from Jerusalem came and asked him. "Who are you? They wanted to know His credentials for ministry. His answers exasperated them.

"I am not the Christ"

"I am not Elijah"

"I am not the prophet"

In desperation they asked again, "Who are you? We have to give a reply to those who sent us" And then John gave them this powerful reply.

He said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the LORD,'" John 1:23

A VOICE! A VOICE in the wilderness! Not prophet John, son of Zechariah! Oh! No! Just a voice, a nameless spokesman, but mark you, a spokesman of God and for God.

In this age when men and women both in the world and in the church are so concerned about credentials, this is such a refreshing attitude. Let us approach this decade with a desire to be God's spokesmen regardless of human credentials. It is sad to see both Christian workers and Healthcare workers clamoring after credentials.

Is Healthcare Christian Fellowship (HCF) willing to be "Nameless" and to be HIS VOICE to the Health fields?

Selfless

“The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look the Lamb of God.” When the disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus” John 1: 35-37.

“He must increase; I must decrease.” John 3: 30

We often feel, “He must increase, but I must increase also” But John’s attitude was different. He said “He must increase, but I must decrease”

Another example of his selfless attitude was that John let go his trusted disciples to follow Jesus. He was not concerned to gather a large following for himself. He wanted Christ Jesus to be exalted thereby recognizing his own unworthiness.

He also said that , he was unworthy to loosen the sandals on the feet of Jesus.

In our personal and organizational lives, this quality of selflessness is very important if we are to have as powerful a message as John had.

Fearless (Luke 3: 3-20)

In this passage we see John fearlessly speaking the truth regardless of his audience. He was no diplomat. He was God’s mouth-piece, whether to the ordinary people, the tax collectors or the soldiers.

And then came the million dollar question, “John, what about Herod?” Ordinary mortals would have sidestepped the issue. But with the glow of God’s spirit on him, John fearlessly said, “Herod is an adulterer.” For this he finally had his head removed.

The world and the devil are seeking to intimidate God’s people. The spirit of Jezebel who tried to destroy the prophetic voice in

Elijah's (John's predecessor) time is still very much alive in our society. We must in the power of the Spirit rise up fearlessly to be His spokesmen. The Lord says to us as He did to Jeremiah.

"Get yourself ready! Stand up and say to them whatever I command you. Do not be terrified by them, or I will terrify you before them. Today I have made you a fortified city, an iron pillar and a bronze wall to stand against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, it's officials, it's priests and the people of the land. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you and will rescue you" declares the Lord." Jeremiah 1: 17-19

What a model for HCF!

PREPARATION FOR HIS MINISTRY

John the Baptist was prepared for his ministry in a unique way. We too must allow God to prepare us in His school.

Godly Parents Luke 1: 5 - 10

John was produced through a godly couple. So we can thank God for the late

Mr Francis Grim & Mrs Grim who are sort of parents of HCF worldwide. And also for all godly influences on our lives.

Prophetic word Luke 1: 13 - 17

Even before his birth, the angel of the Lord spoke prophetically over him:

He will be great in the sight of the Lord.

He will be set apart for God.

He will be filled with the Holy Spirit

He will turn the people to the Lord

He will go in the Spirit and power of Elijah

He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children

He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Desert Bible School, Luke 1: 80

“And the child grew and became strong in Spirit; and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel”

Solitude is a must for God’s spokesman. And so John had his secret preparation in the desert. Eugene Peterson says that the effective pastor should be

- Contemplative
- Subversive, (Counter culture)
- Apocalyptic

How can such qualities develop without solitude in God’s presence? Leonard Ravenhill said,

“Let every Christian worker get alone with God for seven days with the Bible as His only book and the Holy Spirit as his only guest and he will either break up or break through into a new realm of effectivity”. The writer once tried this (almost as advised) and found it to be a great blessing.

Simple life style, Matthew 3: 4

“John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair and he had a leather belt round his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.”

We live today in a society where the difference between the “haves” and “have nots” is large. John the Baptist is an example to us. His simple life-style authenticated his message.

In 2010 is God leading us to seasons of fasting and simpler living, so we can grow “fat in the Spirit”?

The Word of the Lord came. Luke 3: 1 – 2

“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” Luke 3:1-2

What a powerful verse! Luke the historian evangelist gives such details of the political and ecclesiastical leaders of the day. But then he gives us what was in God’s history book of far greater importance.

The WORD of the LORD came !

The WORD of the LORD came to a man in obscurity!

The WORD of the LORD came to a man in the desert!

In God’s redemptive history this last fact was of far greater significance than the other events and people mentioned.

Caesars and Caiaphases have long been forgotten. But that Word, that message which came to John and which he preached uncompromisingly is still **the most relevant and required** message for this world.

May the Word of the LORD come to all of us in 2010 especially to those who like John are suffering for the cause of Christ.

He was filled with the Spirit

“For he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth” - Luke 1:15.

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her

Prepare the Way of the Lord

womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.” Luke 1:41

John the Baptist was a man filled with the Spirit. This reality and this experience is not a deluxe version of Christianity only for special people. We all are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

As this strategic decade commences let us ask and receive from Jesus Christ, a fresh infilling of His Holy Spirit.

“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice. “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow within him” John 7:37.

HIS MINISTRY

³“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the LORD;

Make straight in the desert

A highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be exalted

And every mountain and hill brought low;

The crooked places shall be made straight

And the rough places smooth;

⁵The glory of the LORD shall be revealed,

And all flesh shall see it together;

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. (*Isaiah 40:3-5*)

Prepare the way

John the Baptist had a very special task. He was commissioned to prepare the way of the Lord for His first coming. He also pointed to the Lord and announced that He was the one who was coming, the promised Messiah. All the prophets would have loved this opportunity. Yet it was John’s special privilege.

So as we approach a new decade and the imminent return of

Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords we too are called like John to prepare the way of the Lord. What a great privilege.

Believers of all centuries would have loved to have lived at this strategic time in history. Let us rise up to our high and holy calling and privilege in Christ.

Prepare for Revival

“See I will send **my messenger**, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; **the Messenger** of the **covenant whom you desire**, will come.” Says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness”
(*Malachi 3: 1-3*)

Hallelujah ! We are at the threshold of the greatest revival in history. Many things point towards this. There is a hush of expectation in the hearts of His dear people. And the above Scripture states, the messenger, (simple ‘m’) prepares the way for the Messenger of the Covenant, (capital ‘M’) to come suddenly to the temple.

Pentecost will seem insignificant in the light of the final outpouring of God’s Spirit and the final ingathering of the harvest. The “God of suddenlies” is waiting to act. Intercessors are pushing the door open and we are all called to play a part. So let us arise and be like John in this crucial hour.

Forceful ministry

“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it” (*Matthew 11: 12*)

John’s ministry and his preaching were forceful. Either you loved him and submitted to his teaching or you hated him and wanted to get rid of him. It was black or white with not much of grey in between.

This characteristic is sorely needed in this age of lukewarmness and compromise even among believers. Both in preaching, prayer, personal counseling and prophetic proclamation may we follow John’s example.

Pointing to Jesus

This was John’s greatest ministry. As I said earlier, all the old testament prophets would have longed to have been able to do what John did. The others spoke of the Messiah. He and he alone of all the prophets could directly point to a person, Jesus, and say, “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” What a priceless privilege!

HIS MESSAGE

John the Baptist was a mighty prophetic teacher. He majored on a few key subjects:

- Repentance
- Judgement
- The Lamb of God

If we are to prepare for His coming in Revival, Restoration and Renewal, then we too need to major on these subjects.

Repentance

The clarion call to “Return to the Lord” needs to be sounded over the health fields of the world. We cannot gloss over sin any longer. Beginning with our own lives, our families, and our fellowships, let us confess, renounce, forsake and turn from sin back to the Living God.

Judgement

We must once again sound the warning in God’s word about the wrath of God against sin and ungodliness. John’s words are a challenge to us.

“John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him. “you brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father! For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire” (*Luke 3 :7 – 9*)

“His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” (*Luke 3:17*)

Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

This was John’s greatest sermon. Just thirteen words. And as

Brother Andrew says, it was for this sermon that he was attested as the greatest of the prophets.

This is the message of the hour! It is the message we need to proclaim into the health fields. The Cross is the central message of the Bible.

He is the Lamb of God for one person.

cf: Abraham & Isaac - Genesis 22

He is the Lamb of God for one family

cf: Passover - Exodus 12

He is the Lamb of God for one nation.

cf: The day of Atonement - Lev.16

He is the Lamb of God for the sin of the whole world

cf: John the Baptist - John 1: 29

Let us preach Christ crucified, buried, risen, ascended, and coming again soon!

His moment of doubt

"When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come or should we expect someone else?" (*Matthew 11:2-3*)

It is amazing that John the Baptist should have asked such a question. He was the one who pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God. And yet after six months in the dungeon he doubted, got discouraged, disillusioned, and was probably in despair. So the question "*Are you the Christ or should we look for another.*"

How gently and with clarity the Lord cleared John's doubts. And after his disciples left He affirmed to the people that John was the greatest of all who had ever lived up to that time. All this in spite of John's doubts. Oh! The understanding and tenderness of Jesus!

So this should encourage us. Let us keep trusting even in times of darkness, discouragement and difficulty. Let us never doubt in the dark what God has spoken in the light.

“Who among you fears the Lord and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God. But now, all you who light fires and provide yourselves with flaming torches you have set ablaze. This is what you shall receive from my hand; You will lie down in torment” (*Isaiah 50:10-11*)

There is the danger in times of darkness to light our own fires, make our own choices, and go our own ways. But this is disastrous. Let us do what the scripture says and trust in the Name of the Lord and rely upon our God.

John was surely reassured by the words and deeds of Jesus conveyed to him by his disciples. He must have gone to his death with the deep assurance that he had done his part and all was well with regard to the Kingdom.

His Martyrdom

- Mark 6 : 14 - 29
- Matthew 14 : 1-12
- Luke 9 : 7-9

John’s life ended with his head being removed by Herod. And His disciples had to bury a headless corpse. No big funeral. No big speeches. Just a quiet burial by his friends. But we are sure that as he entered Heaven’s portals He was given a glorious standing ovation by the Father Himself, welcoming His faithful messenger. Today we are called to be “*faithful unto death*” so we may receive the crown of life. “The spirit of Jezebel” which also worked in Herodias (the one who asked for John’s head) is still

working in the world. It is a satanic force that tries to manipulate, intimidate and annihilate God's true prophets. But *"God has not given us the Spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind."* We are called to live, not for ourselves but for Him who died for us.

"And he died for all , that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again" (2 Corinthians 5:15)

In living for Him, we too may have to experience the same end as John. But this will be a glorious honour bestowed for all eternity. May the fear of death be banished from our lives as we live wholeheartedly for Him. The words of this song are such a challenge to us.

We pledge allegiance to the Lamb
With all our hearts and all our hands;
We will seek to follow His command
We pledge allegiance to the Lamb.

His memory

What did John leave behind? A movement? A massive church? A popular movement? No! He left behind the legacy of a true prophet of God and the message that this world needs. He pointed all of us to Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

His father Zechariah sang one of the greatest prophetic songs in the Bible. For nine months Zechariah the priest was dumb because of his unbelief. He doubted the Angel Gabriel's promise to him that he was to have a son. But after John was born, the people asked him what they should name him. He should have been Zechariah Junior or some such name. But Zechariah's faith rose and he wrote, "the child's name is John". Immediately while all the people were dumbstruck with amaze

ment Zechariah opened his mouth after nine months of silence and prophesied. The last part of his proclamation is so beautiful.

“To rescue us from the hand of our enemies and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the path of peace” (*Luke 1:74–79*)

He sang about John pointing us to the DAYSPRING JESUS who has visited us.

And so we conclude with the thought that John’s greatest task was to point out and prepare the way for Jesus. As we approach a new decade, let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. And may HCF become like John the Baptist in pointing people in the Health Fields to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus is coming soon!

Let us make preparation and be part of the John the Baptist company that will usher in the KING. This decade is a very special time of preparation.

HCF South Asia

- A voice in the Health field

Can we by the grace of God commit ourselves like John the Baptist to be GOD's Voice in the Health fields? Could there be a greater privilege and purpose?

May the message of the cross, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" be planted in the heart of healthcare and the health fields.



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HCFI
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"We in Healthcare Christian Fellowship International, South Asia have taken John the Baptist as one outstanding model for our ministry. Especially we are challenged by his nameless, selfless, fearless, character. Also we want to join John the Baptist in proclaiming into the health fields of South Asia, "Behold the Lamb of God (Jesus) who takes away the sin of this world." There is no greater or more needed message for this world."

In whom (Christ) are hidden all the treasures of wisdom & knowledge -Colossians 2:3 (NKJV)

Then the Lord replied:

Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. -Habakkuk 2:2,3 (NIV)