

## God's Training Center

“This is he . . . , The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Matthew 3:3).

“[The wilderness] was an atmosphere calculated to perfect moral culture and to keep the fear of the Lord continually before [John the Baptist].”—  
Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 109.

Suggested Readings: Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 459, 460. The Youth's Instructor, January 7, 1897.

Sunday March 14                      1. NOT ONE GREATER

**a. We have studied briefly a few patriarchal examples of country living already, but now let us look at the greatest prophet. What was his name? Matthew 11:11. Why is he described as the forerunner of Christ? Matthew 3:11.**

**Matthew 11:11**

**[11] Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**

**Matthew 3:11**

**[11] I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire:**

**b. Where did the Holy Spirit lead John's parents to live? Luke 1:39, 40. Where did John choose to live as he matured? Luke 3:2.**

**Luke 1:39-40**

**[39] And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;**

**[40] And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.**

**Luk 3:2**

**[2] Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.**

“An angel from heaven came to instruct [Zacharias and Elisabeth] as to how they should train and educate their child, so as to work in harmony with God in preparing a messenger to announce the coming of Christ. As parents they

were to faithfully cooperate with God in forming such a character in John as would fit him to perform the part God had assigned him as a competent worker. . . . The parents might have reasoned that he had a special work to do for the Lord and the Lord would take care of him. But the parents did not thus reason; they moved to a retired place in the country, where their son would not be exposed to the temptations of city life, or induced to depart from the counsel and instruction which they as parents would give him. They acted their part in developing a character in the child that would in every way meet the purpose for which God had designed his life.”—The Signs of the Times, April 16, 1896.

Monday March 15            2. HOW DID JOHN LEARN?

**a. Why were such special instructions given for the upbringing of John? Psalm 86:10, 11.**

**Psa 86:10-11**

[10] For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: thou *art* God alone.

[11] Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

“John was called to do a special work; he was to prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight His paths.”—The Review and Herald, February 18, 1890.

**b. Why was John placed in the country and educated differently than his contemporaries? Luke 1:13–17; Psalm 32:8.**

**Luk 1:13-17**

[13] But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

[14] And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

[15] For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

[16] And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

[17] And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient

to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

**Psa 32:8**

**[8]** I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

“The Lord did not send [John] to the school of the prophets and rabbis. He took him away from the assemblies of men to the desert, that he might learn of nature and nature’s God. God did not desire him to have the mold of the priests and rulers. He was called to do a special work.”—The Review and Herald, February 18, 1890.

“In the educational system there was no place for that personal experience in which the soul learns for itself the power of a ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ and gains that reliance upon the divine word which alone can bring peace, and power with God. Busied with the round of forms, the students in these schools found no quiet hours in which to commune with God and hear His voice speaking to their hearts. That which the rabbis regarded as superior education was in reality the greatest hindrance to true education. It was opposed to all real development. Under their training, the powers of the youth were repressed, and their minds were cramped and narrowed.”—Fundamentals of Christian Education, pp. 438, 439.

“He subjected himself to privation and solitude in the wilderness, where he could preserve the sacred sense of the majesty of God by studying His great book of nature and there becoming acquainted with His character as revealed in His wonderful works. It was an atmosphere calculated to perfect moral culture and to keep the fear of the Lord continually before him.”—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 109.

“The principle of self-denial and self-sacrifice, as revealed in the example of Christ, of John the Baptist, of Daniel and the three worthies, is to pass like a plowshare through hereditary and cultivated habits through all circumstances and surroundings.”—Manuscript Releases, vol. 20, p. 114.

Tuesday March 16

3. HOW TO SEE SIN

**a. Why did John choose the wilderness after knowing what God’s purpose was for him? Psalm 101:3.**

**Psa 101:3**

**[3]** I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it* shall not cleave to me.

“John did not feel strong enough to stand the great pressure of temptation he would meet in mingling with society. He feared his character would be molded according to the prevailing customs of the Jews; and he chose to separate himself from the world, and make the wilderness his home. He denied himself the ordinary comforts of life; his food was simple; his clothing, a garment made of camel’s hair, and confined about the waist by a leathern girdle.”—The Youth’s Instructor, January 7, 1897.

“John, the forerunner of Christ, did not expose himself to evil conversation and the corrupting influences of the world. He feared the effect upon his conscience, that sin might not appear to him so exceedingly sinful. He chose rather to have his home in the wilderness, where his senses would not be perverted by his surroundings. Should we not learn something from this example of one whom Christ honored and of whom He said: ‘Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist’ (Matthew 11:11)?”—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 109.

**b. In order to be prepared to speak against sin, what did John have to do? Leviticus 10:10, 11; Psalm 119:48; Ephesians 5:11; Hebrews 5:14.**

**Lev 10:10-11**

[10] And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean;

[11] And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.

**Psa 119:48**

[48] My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

**Eph 5:11**

[11] And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

**Heb 5:14**

[14] But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, *even* those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

“John had a special work to do for God. He was to deal with the sins and follies of the people. In order to be fitted for this important public work, he must qualify himself in private by seeking heavenly knowledge. He must meditate and pray, and by studying become acquainted with the prophecies and the will of God. . . . In the calm retirement of the wilderness, John

became strong in spirit. By his strictly temperate habits he secured to himself physical, mental, and moral health. His discernment was clear, his judgment correct.”—The Youth’s Instructor, January 7, 1897.

Wednesday March 17  
BAPTIST?

#### 4. ANOTHER JOHN THE

**a. We are told that John is representative of another group of people. Who are they? Malachi 4:5, 6; Revelation 18:1.**

**Mal 4:5-6**

[5] Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

[6] And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

**Rev 18:1**

[1] And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

“[John] was a representative of those living in the last days, to whom God has entrusted sacred truths to present before the people, to prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ. And the same principles of temperance which John practiced should be observed by those who in our day are to warn the world of the coming of the Son of man.”—Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene, p. 39.

**b. In what ways are we to imitate the lifestyle of John? Mark 1:1–6.**

**Mar 1:1-6**

[1] The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

[2] As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

[3] The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

[4] John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

[5] And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

[6] And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

“John separated himself from friends and from the luxuries of life. The simplicity of his dress, a garment woven of camel’s hair, was a standing rebuke to the extravagance and display of the Jewish priests, and of the people generally. His diet, purely vegetable, of locusts and wild honey, was a rebuke to the indulgence of appetite and the gluttony that everywhere prevailed. . . . The great subject of reform is to be agitated, and the public mind is to be stirred. Temperance in all things is to be connected with the message, to turn the people of God from their idolatry, their gluttony, and their extravagance in dress and other things.”—Testimonies, vol. 3, p. 62.

“John the Baptist was a man filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth, and if there was anyone who could remain unaffected by the corrupting influences of the age in which he lived, it was surely he. Yet he did not venture to trust his strength; he separated himself from his friends and relatives, that his natural affections might not prove a snare to him. He would not place himself unnecessarily in the way of temptation nor where the luxuries or even the conveniences of life would lead him to indulge in ease or to gratify his appetite, and thus lessen his physical and mental strength. By such a course the important mission upon which he came would have failed of its accomplishment.”— Ibid., vol. 4, p. 108.

Thursday March 18

## 5. THE LAST WORK

**a. What is the last work for the people of God on earth? Matthew 3:1, 2; 2 Timothy 4:2.**

**Mat 3:1-2**

[1] In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

[2] And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

**2Ti 4:2**

[2] Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, such a work as that of John is to be done. God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. . . . As a people who believe in Christ’s soon appearing, we have a message to bear—

‘Prepare to meet thy God’ (Amos 4:12). Our message must be as direct as was the message of John. He rebuked kings for their iniquity. Notwithstanding that his life was imperiled, he did not hesitate to declare God’s word. And our work in this age must be done as faithfully.”—Maranatha, p. 116.

**b. What will be needed to be able to fulfill our commission? 2 Timothy 2:3, 4; Mark 13:13.**

2Ti 2:3-4

[3] Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

[4] No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of *this* life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

Mar 13:13

[13] **And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.**

“The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint though severely tried.” —Conflict and Courage, p. 369.

“In order to give such a message as John gave, we must have a spiritual experience like his.”—Maranatha, p. 116.

“We may refuse to be corrupted, and place ourselves where evil association shall not corrupt our hearts. Individually the youth should seek for association with those who are toiling upward with unfaltering steps.”—The Faith I Live By, p. 234.