

RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP (LESSON 14)

JOHN THE BAPTIST

What did the disciple-making ministry of John the Baptist look like? John began his prophetic ministry with a relationship with the Holy Spirit. He stepped onto the scene in the Spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17). All disciple-makers who succeeded him in the New Testament had a relationship with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the first priority in disciple-making. Being prepared by the Holy Spirit John preached. His message was simply "Repent..." (Matthew 3:1). Without repentance baptism means nothing. John did not baptize anyone without evidence of repentance (Luke 3:8). "He came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3). Unless a person was willing to repent and confess his sins, he could not be a disciple. John described repentance in practical ways. John told them to renounce their covetousness and greed. If some had more clothes than necessary, John told them to give the extras to those who had none. The same went for food (Luke 3:11). Tax collectors were to collect no more than what was owed (13). Soldiers were to repent of their cruelty and be content with their wages (14). John's preaching was so convicting that people wondered if he was the Christ (15). He acknowledged his unworthiness and redirected his followers to the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. John offered two choices: Repent or face the judgment. To be a disciple of John, one must separate from the world and turn from the traditions of men. Nothing less than a transformed life was acceptable to John. The first "disciples" Paul encountered in Ephesus had been prepared by John (Acts 19:1). They had believed John's message of the coming of Messiah and had repented, but they were unaware the Messiah had come. Paul explained it, and when they believed Paul baptized them in the name of Jesus so they could receive the Holy Spirit. After John introduced Jesus, his discipleship ministry was completed. From that point forward, Jesus chose His own disciples. John's discipleship ministry ended, and the discipleship ministry of Jesus began. John's ultimate priority for discipling is an example of all who would come after him. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).