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News of His

Vol. 47: No. 2 January 23, 2008

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Guided by His Word,
Serving in His Love

Essential Roadwork

When John the Baptist appeared in the Desert of Judea, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, he fulfilled these words of prophecy:

"A voice of one crying in the desert,

'Prepare the way of the Lord,

make straight paths for him.

⁵Every valley shall be filled in,

every mountain and hill made low,

The crooked paths shall become straight,

The rough ways smooth.

⁶And all mankind will see God's salvation. '" - Luke 3:4-6

Whenever a city bids for the Olympic Games or for the Super Bowl, the organizers of those events look long and hard at the physical improvements to the community that must take place. Promises of millions, even billions of dollars in planned development are inevitably part of the presentation by the bidders, and the social impact of those improvements upon that community endures long after the big event has passed.

There was no more exciting event for an ancient province than a royal visit, especially, if the regal was benevolent and beloved by the locals. But, even if he was not, the whole region could be sure of improvements being made that were typically long overdue. Not the least of these improvements to be made was to the local roads, particularly those that must accommodate the royal entourage. This is what is pictured by the prophetic images of filled-in valleys, leveled mountains and straightened paths that were once crooked.

John's ministry was to be the forerunner, the herald of a coming King from heaven. The necessary work of preparation – the essential roadwork or highway improvement – was national repentance. The kingdom of heaven was at hand, but God's nation was not ready. Those who would be citizens of this new kingdom would need to decisively reorient their lives and values to those of the King. So, John came preaching a

baptism of repentance. In those days, Gentile proselytes were washed with water when they embraced Judaism. Jews, on the other hand, were rarely, if ever, baptized as a way of expressing remorse for having grown indifferent to the true righteousness revealed in God's Law.

John was the first herald of Jesus for that day and for purposes of introducing Him to Israel. But, after John was gone, and after Jesus' life, death and resurrection had secured redemption, the King Himself commissioned new heralds. He initially called twelve men to be His Apostles. Then, by extension and according to the testimony of those Apostles, He commissioned His church to advance His kingdom.

Our witness to the King can only be effective as we demonstrate the fruits of our own repentance to a watching world. The church and her citizens can only make significant impact when, unlike the world around us, we are characterized by contentment over covetousness, peacefulness over hostile striving, purity over instant self-gratification, forgiveness over a spirit of retaliation and mutual love and service over self-advancement.

Any community of "faith" that does not place a high premium on the fruit of true repentance is not embracing authentic faith, for the only faith that saves is repentant faith. Any evangelism that neglects the call to a changed mind and a changed life is not biblical evangelism. It is little more than a "gospel of happiness" that does nothing to acknowledge the true cause of the breach between man and God, and that is the latter's holy hatred of sin.

So, in what kind of shape are the roads leading to your heart? Are they straightened by true repentance? Are they fit for the King?



Karl's Korner