

## A Pilgrim's Guide

### The Herald and the Prophet - The Ministry of John the Baptist



*Ruach*

(breath of life) Ministries

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## Preparing the Way for Jesus: The Ministry of John the Baptist

A storm comes out a clear blue sky and soaks us as we walk along. We are taken by surprise, but somewhere, far out to sea perhaps, a weather system has been making its way towards us. Few things happen entirely 'out of the blue,' even spiritually.

Some years ago, every man in a village in Algeria received a dream about the Lord Jesus. Behind the scenes, God had been at work preparing for this extraordinary visitation. Way back in the fourteenth century, the preacher Ramon Lull declared that the only way to win Muslims to Christ was by tears prayer and blood. He lost his life, a martyr for the Lord He loved so much – in the very same region of Algeria.

Many hundreds of years later, the seeds that Ramon Lull sowed came to life and burgeoned forth. It reminds me of a particular species of bamboo shoot that needs watering for five years before there is the slightest sign of any growth – but then it shoots up at a truly prodigious speed.

We are going to explore the extraordinary ministry of a man whom Jesus described as the greatest of all the prophets, the one who God entrusted with the task of preparing the way for His Son to come to earth in human form. It was a powerful ministry that warred against the way that almost all the people were living. His ministry constitutes a call to us to prepare the way of the Lord in all that we are doing.

We will then move on to consider a few key issues that are happening in our society today at the social-political level – things that are threatening the freedom of the gospel in our midst, and which require the clear and outspoken challenge of a John the Baptist.

### The call of the prophet

Spiritually, no authentic prophet had brought a living word from God for four hundred years. It seemed as though He no longer had anything to say to His people. So much waiting, with nothing to show for it, tests faith to the limit. Did the creatures of Narnia still believe the prophecies about Aslan when the White Witch had imposed the iron grip of winter on the land?

Do we still believe when God seems exceedingly slow to resolve certain difficulties and to advance certain projects?

Suddenly, (what a wonderful Biblical word that is!) God commissioned John, not to assume the priestly role his father had followed, but to embark on something far more challenging, something that would take him right off the career ladder. There are no slots in the career office earmarked 'prophets of the Most High!' Centuries before, the Lord had commissioned Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and all the other biblical greats so now, after this four hundred-year gap, the Lord was set to revive the prophetic ministry. Little did people realize that this was destined to be the hinge the

whole of spiritual history hangs: the transition point between the old and the New Covenants. The call of a prophet is so significant that it is often specifically recorded in Scripture.

**“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 the 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.”  
And the child grew and became strong in spirit;  
and he lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.  
(Luke 1:76-80)**

From our vantage point today, we can make some sense of why God chose the particular place and time than they did to send His Son to earth. Not only did it fulfill many Messianic prophecies, Roman roads and communication systems also made it possible for the gospel to go out from the Jewish heartland to the ends of the world.

None of this would have been obvious at the time to John, of course. Set aside from birth by an angelic visitation, he lived an obscure life in the utterly inhospitable wilderness, on the spiritual behalf of a nation that had been reduced from a once mighty empire to a downtrodden minion of the all conquering Roman armies, presided over by the cruel Emperor Tiberius.

Knowing that God had called him to play a specific role, John devoted all his energies to the task. As Jesus would do for a much shorter period of time, he followed the Spirit's leading and went out to live in the wilderness and to wait on God. Apart from the dark side of the moon, it is hard to imagine anywhere more inhospitable. But this was the place where God would meet with him. He knows our address, whether we are right in the midst of the action or, humanly speaking, right out of the loop - as Ezekiel was in Babylon and John was on the isle of Patmos.

The Lord knows our address, whether we are right in the midst of the action or, humanly speaking, right out of the loop.

Did the Lord send an angel to give him the message he was to share, as he had done to his father? Did He speak directly or use a series of dreams and visions? We have no idea *how* God spoke to him; the means is less important than the message. What we do know is that God met with him - and when that occurs, things always happen.

In real terms, John's call as a prophet represents promotion, for prophets are highly esteemed by God and the angels, but they are by no means always

esteemed during their lifetime. Paul declared that he often felt as though God had made apostles and prophets the off-scouring of all things, as it were at the very end of the line. (1 Cor. 4:9,13). But John was destined to be the voice in the wilderness, preparing the way for the Saviour, calling the people to turn *from* their sinfulness and to come home *to* their God.

### The prophet's role

John played a vital role by bringing people to such a point of receptiveness that they would be ready to welcome and receive the Christ of God when He came.

Part of the cost of being prophetic intercessors is that we will be burdened by things that people are taking little or no notice of. This is how John and Paula Sandford put it in *The Elijah Task*, in the chapter 'In the spirit and power of Elijah:'

Much of the prophet's work is done in secret, wrestling for people's souls, paying the cost for meetings to be turned into real encounters with the Lord, in which people open up more fully to the Lord.

'When the church is rejoicing and celebrating the victory of our Lord, the prophet is already called to the next battle, the next pit of sorrow. The next work of the Lord is upon him. When the body of Christ is grovelling in pain and repentance, the prophet is rejoicing both that the body is repenting, and that the reward of the Lord's mercy's coming.'

The fact that someone is a prophet does not mean they need to be doing all the speaking or all the prophesying. Often they are simply there as father and mother figures to encourage others to take the centre stage and to do the talking, the

As the Sandfords put it, 'It is with reluctance that many [prophets] step into the public arena; they prefer to do their work in secret, but they know they sometimes have to step forward and respond to the Lord's commission when He wants to get a particular work done.'

praying, the healing, the prophesying and all the other work of ministry. It is their hidden life with God that makes all this both possible and effective.

### What on earth is a 'staret'?

I learnt from Catherine de Hueck Doherty in *Molchanie*, that the Russian Christian tradition is rich in *starets*: pilgrims who are set apart to seek the Lord, but who know in their spirits when the time has come for them to go public and take what God has sown and nurtured in their hearts to others.

The time has come now for John to abandon these desolate places and to move sufficiently close to civilization for people to be able to come and hear what God had entrusted him with. He preached the need for people to be baptized in water that symbolized *repentance for the remission of sins*: a washing of the inner as well as the outer man, even though John himself did not have the authority to forgive people their sins.

Starets' are looked upon as being an inspiration to believers, an example of saintly virtue, steadfast faith, and spiritual peace. According to *Wikipedia*:

The Holy Spirit bestows special gifts onto the *starets* including the ability to heal, prophesy, and most importantly, give effective spiritual guidance and direction. Starets are looked upon as being an inspiration to believers, an example of saintly virtue, steadfast faith, and spiritual peace.

When not in prayer or in voluntary seclusion, starets receive visitors (some who travel very far) and spend time conversing with them, offering a blessing (if the starets is an ordained cleric) and confession, and praying. People often petition the starets for intercessory prayers, believing that the prayer of a starets is particularly effective.

Many of them have a reputation amidst believers of being able to know the secrets of a person's heart without having ever previously met the visitor, and having the ability to discern God's plan for a person's life. This, as all of the starets' gifts, is believed to come from the Holy Spirit acting through the starets.

Most of you who are reading these words have certainly not been called to be starets, but there may be times in our lives when He withdraws us from

God has things in mind that only we can do. May we be prepared to do them!

active ministry in order to spend more intensive time with Himself. Whether on the front lines, or in some more withdrawn position, God has things in mind for us to do. As we are faithful in this, others will be drawn to Him too.

Remind Him afresh today that you are willing to follow wherever He leads.

### **Water that does not put out Fire**

'I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' (Mark 1:8)

It is as if John was saying, 'my baptism is symbolic, only the Messiah's is truly effective.' Elsewhere He declares that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (3:16).

John "exhorted" people to flee from things that lead to judgment. In 3:18, Luke uses the word *laos* to describe the people who came to hear John, as opposed to *ochlos* (meaning any old crowd). This was a potentially responsive group. These would have been the ones who stayed on to hear more of John's message – the proclamation of the 'good news' that lay beyond the serious warnings. (Luke 3:18)

At the height of his powerful ministry to the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century, DL Moody preached to vast multitudes. His American appearance and idioms appeared positively vulgar to the aristocratic class – but his simple and direct way of communicating the gospel touched people’s hearts, from highest to lowest born. (See *Moody*, by Pollock).

### **Sharp axe and winnowing fork: John preaches to the multitudes**

Image wise John the Baptist was far from being a prototype James Bond. Here were no designer-label clothes to tempt people out into the wilderness to visit him. Nevertheless, commoners, Pharisees and Sadducees alike trekked out from as far away as Jerusalem to hear him because they believed this man, so uncompromising in both appearance and message, had something of importance to communicate.

John neither flattered the great nor assented to the prevailing morality. He warned one and all of the coming wrath of God if people continued to sin. The commoner may not have had the same faults as the Sadducee or the Pharisee, but in God’s eyes they were just as serious.

John uses language as strong as that of any Old Testament prophet before him. He was doing what every prophet must always do, breaking up the fallow ground. (Hos. 10:12). The difference lies in the declaration that is built into his call to repent: the promise that the kingdom of God is at hand.

Things happen when we proclaim Christ in this way. Many of us have done something of the same when we have participated in *Make Way* marches. Not only have bystanders been touched, police have reported the crime rates fell miraculously across cities during the hours these marches were being held. Many are being led to go out on to the streets and practice prophetic evangelism: speaking the things God gives us to the people He brings across our paths.

When it comes to explaining how the coming of the Spirit can have the effect of fire, John turns to an agricultural image. A preacher friend of mine wielded a huge winnowing fork (Luke 3:17) to illustrate what happens when grain is tossed in the air. The heavier grain returns to the threshing floor to be turned into wheat, while the chaff, being lighter, is first separated and then burned up.

God is no squeamish lumberjack. He really is ready to destroy trees that bear no fruit. (Rev. 2:5) As if this threat is not serious enough, there is then added the prospect of fire, a theme that is central to Jesus own ministry: He will baptize with fire as well as with the Spirit. (Luke 3:16-17, cf 12:49-53).

It is not a mixed metaphor to speak here of fire and water in the same breath. Water has long been associated with the refreshing, cleansing work of the Spirit (e.g. Is. 44:3; Ezek 36:25-27; Joel 2:28-29), just as fire is often used to speak of judgment, refinement, and purification. Such is still the twin thrust of the Spirit’s

ministry – though Jesus would later expand the Spirit’s role in more detail, and include the key qualities of comfort, counsel and gifting.

Barren trees will be cast into the fire at length; it is where they belong. Every tree that doth not bear good fruit will be chopped down and cast into the fire. As Matthew Henry puts it, ‘If it serve not for fruit, to the honour of God's grace, let it serve for fuel, to the honour of his justice.’

Think of the kids on the streets who murder for the sake of loose change and mobile phones, and who show no remorse even when they are caught and convicted. Or the child soldiers from Rwanda who went to the Congo, and who have become perhaps the most completely desensitised killers in the world. Do such not perfectly fit the description ‘a *generation of vipers?*’ In Matthew 23:33, a chapter full of stunning denunciations of hypocrisy, Jesus described the Pharisees as a "brood of vipers."

God destroyed this nest of vipers once by water, and He will do so again at the end of time by fire – but now is an age of grace, in which mercy triumphs over judgement. Christ’s love can transform even the most hardened heart. (cf Luke 6:43-45, 13:6-9).

We must let the axe strike the root of the tree and take out our self-life in order that what Christ has designed may shine through.

It is not following external rituals or having a religious background that will be of any eternal use to us. All too many who put their confidence in their religious backgrounds ended up resisting the ministries of both John and Jesus until the very end.

It is not enough not to do wrong either: we are called to die altogether to the old way of living. The axe must go to the root of our whole corrupt nature. There is nothing good enough in us for us to be able to return to.

If we try to live up to God’s way, as so many people try to do, it is like depending on social action for our salvation. It is not that such involvement is not important – it may often be vital, it is simply that it misses the most important point if everything is done by our own efforts. No, it is not enough to have Abraham as our father; we must be born again by the Holy Spirit.

At least there is hope for a tree: if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail. Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant. (John 14:7-9)

### **Wild honey and locusts?**

John the Baptist ate a strange diet, and lived with a hair shirt on, the sharp bristles of the camel skin pricking his conscience and reminding him not to get too comfortable with either the things of this world or its ways. He could never take this mantle off, because he was called to lead people to repentance – to change – to prepare the way.



Although the example of Rees Howells shows us that this sort of thing *can* still happen today, the Lord rarely asks us to follow weird and wonderful outward restrictions. That would usually be 'religious' rather than truly spiritual. What we must realize is that we live in an altogether softer age in which it is all too easy to become wrapped around with easy things. Has this been happening to you?

Are you willing to make sacrifices and go the extra mile for the Lord and His people?

As cardiologists know, it is our heart condition that is all-important. Prophets see through the deceptions we throw up. Most of us have parts of our personality that incline to be calculating. It is a great delight to meet people who are single minded for the Lord. Most of the time, far too little of the Lord's light reaches our hearts in the Western Church. It is as though the overhanging trees (our traditions and lack of hunger and thirst for God's presence) deflect the sunlight before it reaches the forest floor – our hearts.

We need people who are so steeped in the fear and the presence of the Lord that they can take us beyond people's desire to be entertained, and to show us how God really feels about situations.

Paul said of Timothy that he was the only one who really had Christ's interest at heart rather than his own self-interests. May the Lord develop that same spirit in us. (Phil. 2:20-21)

Pharisees and Sadducees were present when John baptised, but we do not find them asking, '*What shall we do?*' They thought they knew what they had to do as well, so they weren't going to take any notice of him. Pride and stubbornness are such enemies of God.

Echoing Isaiah's words, John tells us that every valley will be filled in, and every mountain and hill low'. (Luke 3:5) How does this translate in our own experience?

Perhaps we can represent the mountains as the peaks of our achievements: our mindsets, motivations, and dominant desire. These are the things we revolve around and gravitate towards. If we are not prepared to submit our life and all its doings to the Spirit's searchlight, we will know nothing of the need to bring things to the Cross and die to them so that we can experience his resurrection life beyond them.

What about the valleys? They speak of our times of lowness and depression. God is close to the brokenhearted and He goes to great lengths to raise us up from our times of fear and failure, and to turn even these around for His kingdom, provided that we ask Him to. The rich and self-reliant go empty headed away, but He receives fills and uses the needy who come to Him empty handed.

Lord, let John the Baptist's challenge shake our complacencies. Break wrong patterns, heal the brokenness and equip us to facilitate others to do all that they are called to do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Beware swinging axes**

Axes are fundamentally dangerous things. Yes, wrong ways of thinking must be handed over, and the axe be allowed to cut its way through our life – but once the axe starts swinging, as the Sandfords warn, it can acquire a momentum of its own.

‘It gets out of hand and has an unstoppable life of its own . . . Whatever bit of self-confidence you find to stand on, the swing of the axe of truth finds your hidden motives, and you slip into the pit of despair . . . Many, unsure of trust and grace in Jesus, have fallen into the pit of despair. Invariably in counsel with the depressed we have seen the swing of John’s axe behind the depression . . . where there should instead be freedom in the Holy Spirit.

Because the Lord has come, and sent His Spirit to empower us, we are not meant to remain forever at this stage. That would be like a builder concentrating only on the work of demolition rather than on building. The Sandfords again:

‘We need to abide firmly in the good news, for whoever enters the process of dying to self, and falls back from Jesus to John, gets beheaded! Once the mind and conscience are moved to set in motion the axe of self-perception they never stop. They continue to work even subliminally, seeking weaknesses and guilts which, without faith, destroy us through tension and anxiety. Some have been driven to suicide.

Countless children of God, unable to stop their accusing and excusing thoughts, have been driven to drink, lasciviousness, anything to escape the tensions of guilt. The mind over laden with guilt, incapable of arresting the cutting work of conscience, finally burns itself out. The person can become depressed, manic, catatonic, flipped out in drink or dope, or beheaded by the axe of thought. *But this need never be* if the person has opened his heart sufficiently to the gentle forgiveness and healing love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Claiming with their lips to honour the Lord, they won’t let the slice of the axe though their hearts when it should . . . For them, the facing of their sinful nature ceased when they accepted Jesus as Saviour. Millions of Christians are hiding from God and from their own flesh in the very sanctuary of the Lord!’

Jesus said that since the days of John the Baptist the kingdom is advancing violently (Mat. 11:12). It seems an odd remark from One who more than any other models true gentleness. Yet violence is needed to put the old nature to death and to establish the new life, in ourselves and in others, in societies, and in the way churches and institutions operate. What happens all too often in practice, however, is that people run from this challenge and use the Cross more as a means of escape than a means of transformation.

'If we would grow in our Lord, there is no escape from the sword of truth. We're lazy spiritually . . . This is why prophets of the Lord must rise and stand in the spirit of Elijah . . . Their task is to cut to the innermost being . . . through our encrusted thorns of thought, that the Prince of Peace may call us forth from death to life.'

### **Preaching that cuts to the quick**

Spiritual indifference is a deadly matter, but most of these people knew that they had done wrong – and were prepared to ask what they could do to put matters right. This is such a vital step. John's reply was to tell people it was their duty to share what they had. His challenge was intended to goad people into doing what they could. Food and clothing are the two supports of life; it is so important to be aware of each other's needs and to watch out for each other.

Only Luke records these conversations, (Luke 3:7-18) which open up opportunity for some clear and challenging statements about social justice and responsibility. Of the three groups, mentioned, the tax collectors would have been considered most in need of repentance for the simple reason that their profit came from collecting more than they paid the Romans. Their work alienated them from Jewish society and made them sinful in people's eyes. God had a place and a role for them too, but first they must stop exploiting people.

The soldiers mentioned in Luke 3:14 were probably not Roman but Jewish. Like the tax collectors, their role lent itself to threatening reprisals against people and taking advantage of people in trouble. John challenged them to be content with what they had (cf Hebrews 13:5). Whatever we do or do not have physically, we can be rich in the presence of the Lord.

Whatever we do or do not have physically, we can be rich in the presence of the Lord.

They must neither do violence to their fellow men nor accuse falsely. There is to be no oppression, no pique, no getting even and settling old scores. The soldiers' response indicates just how acutely they felt being ostracized, almost to the point of being outcasts from society. One version puts their contribution rather emotively like this: 'What about us?' John does not tell them to hand in their commission and to desert the army, but urges them rather to live free of these tendencies. God would have a role and a place for them too – right where they were.

John preached a message of repentance that was tailored to the hearts of his hearers. What is the thing that God would speak to you that will help you to draw closer to Him? To repent of doubt or letting fear hold you back? Or something much more specific?

### **Avoiding mistaken identity**

The question that was naturally uppermost in people's minds was whether such a radical prophet might be the Messiah Himself. (Luke 3:15) Yes, he was

deliberately raising people's expectations that the Messiah was coming – but he was taking good care at the same time not to let people mistake him for the Messiah. The Messiah is far more powerful than he is (v. 16), and worthy of so much greater reverence that even the task of tying His sandals is more than he feels worthy of. As Matthew Henry puts it:

'He had no fullness of the Spirit to bestow, nor could command that or work upon that; he could only exhort them to repent, and assure them of forgiveness, upon repentance; he could not work repentance in them, nor confer forgiveness on them himself.'

"He is mightier than I, and does that which I cannot do, both for the comfort of the faithful and for the terror of hypocrites and dissemblers." Christ can, and will, baptize with the Holy Ghost; he can give the Spirit to cleanse and purify the heart. John can only promise them that they shall be safe; but Christ will make them so: John can only threaten hypocrites, and tell the barren trees that they shall be hewn down and cast into the fire; but Christ can execute that threatening.'

### **The transition takes place**

We are drawing near now to the appearance in public of our Lord Jesus. The Sun will not be long delayed now that the morning-star has risen.

John had gathered quite a group of people around him to aid him in his ministry. It was from this group, starting with Andrew, that Jesus' own core group would emerge. (Jn. 1:29-44). Greater love has no preacher than this. John was willing to hold nothing back for himself, but to pass on all that God had blessed him with to the One whom God appointed to take the baton on from him.

Although it is immensely comforting to hear from God, the prophet usually has to travel a very hard route in order to be able to communicate a word from the Lord without allowing anything else to colour or distort it. They have to be dead to their own wishes and presumptions.

The years in the wilderness ensured that John never got so carried away with the crowds flocking around him that it turned his head. His humility is to be marvelled at.

It is good for us all to live as John did, in the awareness that the Bride belongs to the Bridegroom. Suppose a special friend gets married. You willingly let him or her go in favour of their chosen one. To try to hold on to them would be quite inappropriate – the stuff that cults are made of. Our task is to get people following the Lord's heart and leading more closely – not to have them spinning in orbit around ourselves. Some promote themselves far more than they realize. John promoted Jesus, and his reward will be correspondingly greater.

### **The highest price possible**

'He must increase but I must decrease.' (John 3:30)  
Standing for truth is sometimes more important than life itself. The authenticity of John's words moved many to repentance – but they aroused resentment in others. Herod and his family so hated being reproved by John that he ended up sending him to the dreaded fortress first to be imprisoned and then beheaded.

The will of God often calls us to the zone of maximum conflict and pressure.

John was Christ's forerunner in suffering as well as in preaching; he had spent about a year and a half preparing people for Christ, but now he must give way to Him. The Sun has risen, so the morning-star disappears. Now the nation was deprived of his instruction and counsel. How hard this must have been for all godly souls to bear, even for his cousin Jesus. It must have appeared a sad and premature end for a fine ministry that had brought hope to many.

Those who live in close obedience to the Lord's ways have a quality about them that is appealing to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, but which is anathema to those who are hostile to God's ways.

Herod and his scheming family appeared to have won – but God was already on the move. When the witch slays Aslan on the stone table, she imagines she has won the final victory. But death could not hold Aslan, any more than the beheading of John the Baptist spelt the end of God's cause on earth.

### **The highest praise possible**

'True greatness is an inner self-emptying which manifest itself in service to others.'

Jesus' assessment of John is that he was the greatest of all the prophets. It is the highest praise possible. (John 5:35, cf Matt 11:9,11). The fact that John went through a period of perplexity in prison in no way decreases his spiritual standing. All of us, if deprived of light, vitamins and fellowship are likely to experience sharp dips in our faith levels – especially if, like John, we have been holding on to some idea of a Messianic kingdom on earth. Jesus' carefully weighted response to John's concern queries were intended to set such wrong perspectives to right. (Luke 7:20-23)

John was a great prophet even though he did no recorded miracles. It is important to spell out that New Testament prophets (unlike some of their Old Testament counterparts) are not the same as miracle workers (just think of Moses!) Philip's four daughters were prophetesses but we have no record of any signs and wonders done by them. Even Agabus did not necessarily do any miracles. They are primarily facilitators and enablers.

We have been so grateful that the Lord has sent a number of such people into our lives; people who hear the Lord in key ways at key times. They provide reference

points and steering touches for our lives, as well as providing an accountability system.

Jesus is quite content to work with the few, the least and the last. It is not necessary to produce evidence of miracles, size of bank balance, a place on the podium to do well in His kingdom. If you are following after God, things will grow around you, like the bamboo shoot we spoke of earlier that suddenly comes to life. When we have finished our earthly pilgrimage, may He say of us, 'Well done, faithful one: you have accomplished all that I created you to be and to do.'

As surely as John fulfilled his ministry and prepared the way for Jesus, we must fulfill ours, too – and live with just one audience in mind

## Appendix: Preparing the way of the Lord

The Hebrew word for prepare is 'pannu'. It speaks of removing all the obstacles that stand in God's path. It is God who does the moving of the obstacles, but we must play our part. If you are facing blocked paths at the beginning of this New Year, how about using some of these verses to raise your expectations?

No eye has seen,  
no ear has heard,  
no mind has conceived  
what God has **prepared** for those who love him"  
but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. (1 Cor. 10:2)

In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to **prepare** a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going. (John 14:2-4)

"Don't worry," Elijah said to her. "Go on and prepare your meal. But first make a small loaf from what you have and bring it to me, and then **prepare** the rest for you and your son. For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land.' "(1 Kings 17:13-14)

Moses went down the mountain to the people and **prepared** them for the holy meeting. (Exod. 19:14 Msg)

With all my resources I have provided for the temple of my God. Now, who is willing to consecrate himself today to the LORD?" (1 Chron. 29:3,5)

Sing to God, sing praises to his name; **prepare** a way for Him who rides on the clouds. His name is the Lord – be glad in his presence! (Ps 68:4 TEV)

"I myself will **prepare** your way, leveling mountains and hills. I will break down bronze gates and smash their iron bars. (Is. 45:2 TEV)

It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to **prepare** God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:11-13)

Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus **prepare** (clear) the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. (1 Thess. 3:11-13)

I'm passing this work on to you, my son Timothy. The prophetic word that was directed to you **prepared** us for this. All those prayers are coming together now so you will do this well, fearless in your struggle, (1 Tim. 1:18 Msg)

"Now get yourselves ready. I'm sending my angel ahead of you to guard you in your travels, to lead you to the place that I've **prepared**. (Exod. 23:20 Msg)

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