

Make Straight The Way Of The LORD

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When John the Baptist was questioned about who he was **“He confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Are you Elijah? He said, I am not. Are you the prophet? And he answered, No. Then they said to him, Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself? He said: I am The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the LORD, as the prophet Isaiah said”** (John 1:19-23). John, in his response, had referred to the prophecy that states **“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God”** (Isaiah 40:3).

John certainly did help to prepare the way for Jesus Christ, but that was not how he answered. The setting of the prophesy in Isaiah is the establishment of the kingdom of God rather than the New Testament ministry of Jesus Christ. The passage continues **“Every valley shall be exalted, And every mountain and hill shall be made low; The crooked places shall be made straight, And the rough places smooth; The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, And all flesh shall see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken”** (Isaiah 40:4-5). That the setting is the millennium is reinforced with **“Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, And His arm shall rule for Him; Behold, His reward is with Him, And His work before Him”** (verse 10).

A number of passages in Isaiah relate closely to this and are important in understanding the meaning of John’s response. Chapter 52 states **“Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men”** (verses 13-14). Jesus Christ is His Father’s Servant.

Isaiah 53 continues **“Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”** (verses 1-3). The entire passage is a prophesy of the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ but God the Father is also being referenced. **“Smitten by God, and afflicted”** (verse 4), **“the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all”** (verse 6), **“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him”** (verse 10), **“My righteous Servant”** (verse 11), and **“Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great”** (verse 12), are all references to the Father working through Jesus Christ. Importantly, **“the arm of the LORD”** in Isaiah 53, and **“His arm”** who will rule for Him in Isaiah 40, are as well.

Another passage in Isaiah that directly relates to what John the Baptist proclaimed declares there will be **“a highway”** by which Israel will be gathered to the LORD in Zion. **“It shall come to pass in that day That the LORD shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people...He will set up a banner for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart, And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, And Judah shall not harass Ephraim...There will be a highway for the remnant of his people Who will be left from Assyria, As it was for Israel In the day that he came up from the land of Egypt”** (Isaiah 11:11-13,16).

The reference is to Israel and Judah being gathered and joined together with David as their king at the beginning of the millennium (Ezekiel 37:15-28).

An additional related passage in Isaiah states **“A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray. No lion shall be there, Nor any ravenous beast go up on it; It shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away”** (35:8-10).

The highways mentioned in Isaiah 11, 35, and 40 and **“the way”** of John 1, are all the same. Also, the references to **“the LORD”** and **“the Lord GOD”** in Isaiah 11,35,40 and 53 are the same as well. Scripture states **“the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other”** (Deuteronomy 4:39) and **“You alone are the LORD”** (Nehemiah 9:6). Other similar references state **“You, whose name alone is the LORD, Are the Most High over all the earth”** (Psalms 83:18) and **“O LORD our God...You are the LORD, You alone”** (Isaiah 37:20) and **“I am the LORD, and there is no other”** (Isaiah 45:18) and **“I am the LORD your God and there is no other”** (Joel 2:27).

YHWH is a personal reference to God the Father. There is no “the” in the Hebrew text in association with it. In the Hebrew, God is not “the YHWH”, He is just “YHWH”. Adding a “the” gives the impression of it being a title that might be shared, rather than a personal reference or name. George Washington was the first President of the United States. His title was “the President” and not, “the George”. The scriptures mean what they say: There is only one YHWH. Jesus Christ is God, but He is not the Lord GOD, the Lord YHWH. The LORD that John was ultimately preparing the way for is God the Father. The Father is coming to rule on the earth at the beginning of the millennium (Isaiah 43:5-11; 48:35).

Mark, in referring to John the Baptist, combined Isaiah 40:3 with Malachi 3:1. He recorded **“Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness; Prepare the way of the LORD, Make His paths straight”** (Mark 1:1-2). The fuller passage from Malachi is **“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, Says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire And like fuller’s soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness”** (3:1-3).

In Malachi, the LORD of hosts sends the Lord in judgment. The wording is similar to Ps 110 where it states **“The LORD said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!”** (verses 1-3). In both passages **“LORD”** is YHWH and **“Lord”** is a form of Adon. In both cases it is God the Father sending Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Messenger of the covenant and he will come suddenly, not at His first coming, but at His return, to rule with God the Father in the kingdom.

John did help prepare the way for Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:4-5) but the referenced prophecies in Isaiah and Malachi point to the establishment of the kingdom. As it states in the book of Revelation **“Then the**

seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He [the Father] shall reign forever and ever” and “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned” (11:15,17-18).

The LORD for whom John the Baptist was ultimately preparing the way, was God the Father.