

Isaiah Prophesied This About a Revival in the Desert

Isaiah had prophesied that before the Lord came, a messenger would be raised up in the desert.

Why the desert? Why not the city, the seacoast, or verdant plain?

On about thirty occasions, I have been in the location where John the Baptist ministered. I always marvel that he could attract people down to where he was at 1,200 feet below sea level. Jerusalem is a steep twenty-mile climb up over 3,500 feet, and the Judean countryside is highland area. It is only a 30-minute drive, but try walking!

Perhaps you would not mind the day's walk downhill to where John preached and baptized, but you certainly would not like the walk back up! Who today would walk one day to get to church, and then another day to get back home?

When planning strategically for new church buildings, we want location, location, location. We want to make it easy for people to come, park, and walk to the front door. We are all about access.

That is all well and good, but John was not about access. You had to want to get to him.

God wanted John out in the desert—that is why Isaiah prophesied it 800 years earlier.

Throughout church history, the Holy Spirit has used unusual places to begin powerful spiritual movements: a small town in Germany called Wittenberg where Luther posted his 95 Theses, a mission in London where Wesley felt his heart strangely warmed when he heard someone read Luther's commentary on Romans, a

former stable in Los Angeles converted into the Azusa Street Mission where the Pentecostal Movement caught fire, and a rented opera house in Hot Springs, Arkansas, where the Assemblies of God was born.

God is not impressed with the grandeur of a place. He is concerned about the emptiness in the heart. John addressed that emptiness by passionately proclaiming that God forgives sins.

That is why people went out to John near the place where the Jordan River empties into the Dead Sea. They came because he had an authentic message from God.

When an authentic message from God is wedded to an authentic hunger in the heart, a powerful spiritual movement gets underway.

That is the challenge before us today. Those who proclaim God's Word must do so with conviction and passion. People will not be attracted by those who mumble religious words or simply say interesting things—even if they do so in multimillion-dollar buildings.

On the other hand, the greatest preachers of God's message will see no results if people's hearts are not open to receive, repent, and be cleansed of sin.

A Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I pray for an authentic work of Your Spirit in my church and community. Just like the mass of people from Judea and Jerusalem who came to John, I pray for a great movement toward You in this land.*

Excerpted from Dr. Wood's forthcoming book, Fearless: How Jesus Changes Everything, available in September from Vital Resources.