

New Name - Same Teaching!

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After several months of collecting possible names for our magazine, we have finally chosen *Forerunner*. Many thanks to all of you who suggested possible titles, but we could only choose one.

We knew how important a name is—that its impact should be positive, progressive, thought-provoking and descriptive of our objectives. Many names fit one or two of these categories, but only *Forerunner* satisfies them all.

That is not to say that we chose *Forerunner* immediately! At first we associated it only with a title of Christ (Hebrews 6:20), but after more reflection we realized that its biblical application was much broader. And, as it grew more to our liking, we found that it reflected the purposes of the Church of the Great God.

Prodromos, the Greek term translated "forerunner" in the Bible, designates one who goes ahead of a larger party, implying that the rest will follow. It can be applied to scouts, guides, messengers, front-runners of a race or ships that lead others into a port. In classical Greek writings, *prodromos* is used metaphorically of firstfruits!

Fits Our Purpose

Over the centuries the English word has become a synonym for herald, advocate, announcer, crier, courier, envoy, ambassador and harbinger. In Old Testament times kings sent forerunners ahead of them to announce their coming as they traveled through their realms. This is the sense of the well-known passage in Malachi 3:1:

"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.

John the Baptist fulfilled this role before Christ's first coming (Matthew 17:12-13). He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight'" (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; John 1:23). He brought an urgent message of the imminent coming of the Kingdom of God and the need to

repent, turn from sin, and change one's entire attitude and way of life. . . . But the repentance had to be real and thorough; the repentant person had to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8). . . . It was a stern, fiery, fearless warning of imminent doom from which escape was possible only by prompt and genuine repentance matched by thorough obedience to God's will. (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, p. 1109)

As a church we are constrained to preach the same message during a similar time, before the second coming of Christ. The subtitle of this magazine clearly illustrates our purpose: "Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God." Part of this preparation takes the form of encouraging our readers to go on

to perfection (Hebrews 6:1-3) and to be holy as God is holy (I Peter 1:13-16), which includes genuine repentance and thorough obedience to God's will.

John the Baptist was a type of another servant of God: Elijah the prophet. Sent to a nation that had nearly forgotten God (I Kings 19:18), Elijah's major work was to restore a true understanding and worship of God to Israel. In his famous challenge to the prophets of Baal and Asherah on Mount Carmel, he asked the children of Israel, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him" (I Kings 18:21). Later in his prayer, he said, "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again" (verse 37).

This too has been a major part of our instruction: restoring to God's people a true image of God (Hebrews 1:3) and a more acceptable worship of Him (John 4:24). Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong urged his successor to "Get the church ready!" We have taken his words seriously—as a statement of purpose and *raison d'etre*. The starting point in preparing for Christ's return is understanding the greatness and holiness of God Himself. Since a person's behavior changes to live up to the image of his god, we need the most complete and true understanding of God so we can live according to His will. And only after gaining this vantage point can we begin a growing and fulfilling relationship with Him.

Amos prophesied that Israel, though punished severely for their apostasy, would still not return to God. At the end of this prophecy, God thunders, "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!" (Amos 4:12). God is still thundering this warning, though in a much more positive sense with us. He has awakened us in time to make the changes necessary before His Son's return. *Forerunner* will strive to help in this regard as the time grows ever shorter.