

ACLCL Christian clergy look at the mission of John the Baptist in New Jersey

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A group of Christian clergy took a fresh look at the mission of John the Baptist during a pastors' forum organized by the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLCL) of New Jersey.

Rev. Dr. Michael Sykes, Pastor of the United Missionary Baptist Church in East Orange, New Jersey, led a discussion with nine clergy guests at the forum, titled "John the Baptist and the Second Coming of Elijah." The program was held on July 8, 2016, at Dr. Sykes' church.

"Rather than make our own assumptions, we should stick to the scriptures," Dr. Sykes said. As the presentation continued, the participants could understand the possibility that John had not fulfilled his mission of preparing the way of the Lord.



Looking at the passages of Malachi 4:5-6 and Luke 1:17, Dr. Sykes pointed out what John's mission was. In addition, Jesus' own words clarified that John had not fulfilled his mission in Matthew 11:11: "*Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*"

Dr. Sykes explained that John's father, Zachariah, a high priest, had wealth, power, and authority. He knew the law and therefore was well-respected by the Jewish people. If John had said that Jesus was the true Messiah and relinquished his ministry to follow Jesus, the Jewish people would have accepted Jesus, Dr. Sykes said, because Zachariah's position and authority gave John's word credibility.

Then Dr. Sykes used a contemporary example: "If I said that Father Moon is anointed by God, would you believe me? However, if T.D. Jakes proclaimed that Father Moon is anointed by God, everyone would believe it." The issue is one of credibility, he explained.



"It is very important to recognize our role and ministry," he continued. "God calls people to different aspects of ministry. He calls some to help drug addicts, others to deal with the poor and still others to evangelize or preach.

"If God has not called to you to do that ministry, it will become dysfunctional. It won't flourish," Dr. Sykes said. "There are pastors who pastor, but God did not call them to be pastors. They make good evangelists but not good pastors. There are also a lot of evangelists who make good pastors but not good evangelists."



Dr. Sykes concluded by stating that John's ministry was not to condemn Herod's adulterous relationship. Even though he was right in preaching against sin, that was not the ministry for which God had called him. His true ministry was to prepare the way of the Lord, as noted in Luke 1:76-79:

"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."