

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Theme: *Christ the King*

Outline:

Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the throne by His genealogy.)

Chp. 3 The Herald of the King. (His baptism)

Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne by not yielding to temptation.)

Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne by accurately interpreting the Mosaic law in the Sermon on the Mount.)

Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)

Chps. 11-12 The Rejection of the King.

Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.

Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.

Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.

Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.

Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.

Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.

Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

Matthew 1 gives background detail on the genealogy of Jesus Christ emphasizing that He is the Son of David necessary to be the Messiah. He was to be named “Jesus” which literally means “God-Savior”. They would call His name Immanuel which literally means “God with us”. Thus, as the divine/human Messiah He was born King of the Jews in fulfillment of prophecy as seen in chapter 2.

And in the sovereignty of God as a young Child the family of Jesus moved to Nazareth in Galilee fulfilling the prophecy depicting that He would be a despised person. Nazareth had a bad reputation and people called Nazarene (that is people from Nazareth) were looked down upon with contempt. This was the experience of Jesus in fulfillment of OT prophecy. That brings us to chapter 3 in our study.

Matthew 3:1–12 (NKJV)

1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

“In those days” evidently referring to the days in which Jesus was still living in Nazareth. Prior to the start of Christ’s public ministry this man by the name of John the Baptist burst onto the scene. There had been 400 silent years with no prophetic voice on the scene. Between the prophet Malachi (the last book in the OT) and John the Baptist was a period of 400 years.

Yes, surrounding the birth of Christ there had been some personal and individualized revelation from angels in relation to Mary and Joseph, in relation to the shepherds and the Magi. But as far as a prophetic ministry John the Baptist was the first such prophet in 400 years.

John came preaching in the wilderness of Judea.

John soon became known as “***John the Baptist***” because baptism was so prominent in his ministry. This is true in the Biblical record, and even nonbiblical resources such as Josephus referred to John in this way. It is the idea of “***John the Baptizer***”. But his baptism was not merely an outward ritual as our study this morning will show. His baptism stood for something – namely it symbolized REPENTANCE. It made the statement “***I am a repent***”.

John had a very unique ministry. He did not enter onto the religious scene. He did minister in synagogues or at the temple. Rather he “came preaching in the wilderness”. Now if you hear someone hollering at the top of their lungs in the wilderness you might think they are crazy. But in John’s case it drew an audience.

By the way, John the Baptist is the only preacher in Scripture that does this which sets him completely apart. And this is EXACTLY the way Isaiah prophesied the forerunner to the Messiah would come when he predicted this 700 years in advance as seen in Isa. 40:3.

Slide # 2**Isaiah 40:3 (NKJV)**

3 The voice of one **crying in the wilderness**: “Prepare the way of the LORD; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God.

Who does this? Well, one uniquely called of God who came fulfilling prophecy which in effect serves to affirm the Messiahship of Jesus. The true Messiah must have a forerunner who comes crying in the wilderness. This fits Jesus perfectly. He had just such a forerunner as seen in the person of John the Baptist.

And everything about the ministry of John served as a convicting rebuke to the religious establishment that had become very wealthy, self-righteous, and elitist. The dress, demeanor, message, and place of ministry all were part of the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist.

In fact, the whole scene surrounding the story of Jesus makes a statement. The shepherds associated with His birth were societal cast offs. The Magi who came from the East were Gentiles. God's ways are not man's ways.

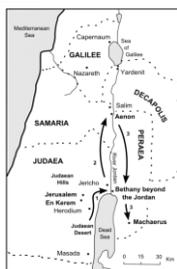
God clearly was not operating according to the status quo of the religious system. He uses the humble. Isa. 57:15 says He dwells with the humble. Paul in 1 Cor. 1:26-29 says the God mainly uses those who in the eyes of the world are foolish, weak, base, despised, nothings. God consistently works contrary to the religious establishment! People are always looking for a success formula and yet God so often does His thing completely outside the box of human thinking.

I mean if you are going to write a book on how to start a movement you would never write your first chapter on the model of John the Baptist. It just doesn't work this way. That would never work! And yet it did!

One day someone heard this LOUD voice crying in the wilderness – the word spread and crowds started coming.

The wilderness of Judea was the barren wasteland area immediately west of the Dead Sea. John probably came preaching along the northern end of the Dead Sea near to where the Jordan river flows into the Dead Sea.

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John appeared in the wilderness of Judea, an uninhabitable region running the entire length of the Dead Sea. We would have thought that such a place was an unlikely area in which to conduct an evangelistic campaign. – **John Phillips**

No kidding! If you send me out there to preach I am really going to wonder what you think about my preaching! This is not the way people do things! This was totally unconventional! But it was a total God-thing. And again, this was perfectly in keeping with the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3 given 700 years before it happened. Only God could do this!

2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

The first recorded word of John’s message is “Repent”. That was the core emphasis of his message!

The call to repentance is important and must not be neglected. It is entirely accurate to say that it is the first word of the gospel.

- Repent was the first word of John the Baptist’s gospel (Matthew 3:1-2).
- Repent was the first word of Jesus’ gospel (Matthew 4:17 and Mark 1:14-15).
- Repent was the first word in the preaching ministry of the twelve disciples (Mark 6:12).
- Repent was the first word in the preaching instructions Jesus gave to His disciples after His resurrection (Luke 24:46-47).
- Repent was the first word of exhortation in the first Christian sermon (Acts 2:38).
- Repent was the first word in the mouth of the Apostle Paul through his ministry (Acts 26:19-20). – **David Guzik**

The word “**Repent**” (Gk. *metanoeo*) literally means “**to change your mind**”. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of direction in the life. Note verse 8 where John tells the religious leaders to “**bear fruits worthy of repentance**”. True repentance is seen in the fruits of a changed life.

John called on the people to repent saying, “**for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!**” Matthew consistently uses the terminology “**kingdom of heaven**” (32 times) instead of the parallel “**kingdom of God**” used in the other gospels (cf. Mt. 19:23-24; Mk. 10:23-25 – Lk. 18:24; Mt. 4:17; Mk. 1:14-15).

So “**kingdom of heaven**” and “**kingdom of God**” are essentially interchangeable. We believe that Matthew used the phraseology “**kingdom of heaven**” because of the Jews sensitivity in using the name God for fear they would use it in vain. So, it was an accommodation to Jewish scruples.

The kingdom is the BIG IDEA in the Scriptures. Dr. Michael Vlach says, “**The kingdom of God is the great and grand theme of Scripture.**” The whole of redemptive history is moving towards the KINGDOM! The kingdom in view is the literal Messianic kingdom prophesied about in the OT Scriptures.

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This title [“kingdom of heaven”], peculiar to Matthew in the NT, is based on Dan. 2:44; 7:13, 14, 27. It refers to the Messianic kingdom promised in the OT, of which Jesus was about to be presented as king. – **Wycliffe Bible Commentary**

This is the kingdom reign of the Messiah on the earth. With the King of the Jews now on the scene the kingdom was being presented to Israel on the condition of “**repentance**” (cf. 2:2). Being at hand means it was imminent with the sense that it was being offered.

The OT Scriptures are very clear that before the kingdom can come there must first be repentance in Israel. Thus, John was calling Israel to repent so that the kingdom could be ushered in. Peter emphasized this very condition to the Jews in Acts 3.

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Acts 3:19–21 (NKJV)

19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so **that times of refreshing may come** from the presence of the Lord,

20 and that He **may send Jesus Christ**, who was preached to you before,

21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which **God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets** since the world began.

Before the kingdom can come, before the Messiah can come and set up His kingdom, there must first be repentance in Israel. Until Israel comes to repentance the kingdom will not come.

Footnote on God's KINGDOM program.

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Overview of God's Kingdom Program

Gen. 1:26-28 – Kingdom mandate – (First Adam).

FAIL – Satan usurper (cf. Lk. 4:6).

Psalm 8:6 – Kingdom mandate destiny continues.

2 Sam. 7:12-13 – Kingdom mandate promised through Davidic line.

1 Cor. 15:25-28, 45/Heb. 2:5-9 – Kingdom mandate to be fulfilled in Christ (the Last Adam).

Jesus Christ comes to fulfill the kingdom mandate given in Genesis to Adam, and to fulfill the Davidic Covenant given to David. Ruling the earth for God is still mankind's destiny and it will be fulfilled through Christ. God's plan is for humanity to rule the earth for His glory and this will yet be fulfilled in the Person of Christ and His followers.

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The millennial kingdom will highlight the successful reign of the Last Adam (1 Cor 15:45) in the reign where the first Adam was tasked but failed. When Jesus comes again He will share this reign with those who identify with Him (see Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:4).

– ***Dr. Michael Vlach***

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There must be a successful reign of man and the Last Adam (Jesus) *from* and *over* the realm where God tasked the first Adam to rule.

– ***Dr. Michael Vlach***

The kingdom that Messiah will bring is the Davidic Kingdom which is why Matthew traces Christ's genealogical record back to David and places such an emphasis on it.

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Acts 1:6 (NKJV)

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time **restore** the kingdom to Israel?"

The kingdom the Messiah brings is a RESTORED kingdom, meaning it is a kingdom they once had. What is this kingdom? It is the Davidic kingdom. God promised the throne and the kingdom to David's line forever in the Davidic Covenant (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-17).

Ever since the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC at the time of the Babylonian Captivity there has never been a rightful Davidic king sitting on David's throne in Jerusalem. Finally, the Messianic King came – finally the One to whom the throne rightfully belongs CAME! And what did Israel do? Did they repent? Did they receive the King? No, they rejected Jesus Christ. And so the kingdom has been put on hold.

However, it was legitimately being offered to Israel at the time of John the Baptist on the condition of repentance. This is what John meant when he said, "***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!***"

One more thing: After the death of Christ and the inauguration of the Church the apostles no more spoke the gospel of the kingdom. That has been put on hold. Instead, today what we are holding forth is "***the gospel of the grace of Christ***" (Acts 20:24) or as it is simply called, "***the gospel of Christ***" (1 Cor. 9:17-18). However, Christ in the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 spoke of a future time in the Tribulation Period where the gospel of the kingdom will once again be proclaimed.

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Matthew 24:14 (NKJV)

14 And this **gospel of the kingdom** will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

The gospel of the kingdom was presented to Israel at Christ's first coming on the condition of repentance. They did not repent and so God is now building His Church through the gospel of Christ. When the Church is complete the gospel of the kingdom will then once again go forth.

Suddenly, after 400 years of prophetic silence this prophet John the Baptist burst onto the scene crying out, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!**” To which the question may have well been asked, “**Who is this guy anyway?**” Matthew answers that question.

3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.’ ”

This is that most unusual prophet prophesied about 700 years ago by the prophet Isaiah in Isa. 40:3 who comes crying in the wilderness.

In verse one it says John the Baptist came “preaching”. Really the idea of “preach” here means to herald or to publish. Often royalty in Bible times had heralds that went before them to announce their coming and prepare the way for them to have a grand reception. That is the idea here. The Messiah had His God-ordained herald that went before Him to prepare the way.

[The wilderness] was a full day’s journey from Jerusalem and seems an odd location to announce the arrival of the King. But it is perfectly in keeping with God’s ways (1 Cor. 1:26-29). – **John MacArthur**

But note who John the Baptist was preparing the way for. Yes, he was preparing the way for a KING, but much more than just an average king.

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Isaiah 40:3 (NKJV)

3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the **LORD [YHWH]**; Make straight in the desert A highway for **our God**.”

John was preparing the way for YHWH – the most sacred name for God in the OT. And just so we don’t miss it the text says he called the people to make a “highway for our God”. Who did John prepared the way for? FOR JESUS! Here we have Jesus identified with YHWH which is common in the NT (cf. Ex. 13:21 with 1 Cor. 10:4; Isa. 6:1 with Jn. 12:41; Eph. 4:8 and Heb. 1:10-12 with Ps. 102:25-27). Here we plainly have a reference about YHWH and ELOHIM (God) applied directly to Jesus.

The plain sense is that the God whom John prepared the way before was Jesus. And of course, this is totally consistent with the doctrine of the Trinity as found in the Scriptures. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are equally God – the one Godhead of the Bible.

Repentance prepares the way for a right reception of the Messiah. **“Make His paths straight”** is a poetic way of describing get right – getting straight with God on the basis of repentance.

This fact of the prophesied forerunner is a huge deal because it becomes further proof that Jesus is indeed the prophesied Messiah. All four Gospels unanimously preface the ministry of Jesus Christ with the fact of John the Baptist fulfilling the forerunner prophecy.

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The Gospel Record of the Forerunner

Matthew 3:1-17

Mark 1:1-8

Luke 3:1-20

John 1:6-8, 15-37

4 Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

John was not a sophisticated man. His dress was made of rough camel’s hair and his diet was very basic. Locusts were essentially large grasshoppers eaten by the poorest of people.

He lived off the land way out in the wilderness away from everybody. He did not pursue the comforts of life but rather lived a separated life out in the wilderness where his focus was uniquely on God and his special calling.

This rudimentary and austere life-style was characteristic of prophets in the OT (cf. Zech. 13:4). They did not live a life of self-centered comforts, but rather one of sold-out dedication to God.

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Matthew 11:8–9 (NKJV)

8 But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in **soft garments?** Indeed, those who wear **soft clothing** are in kings’ houses.

9 But what did you go out to see? **A prophet?** Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.

John was a rugged individual who came “in the spirit and power of Elijah” as revealed to his father Zacharias by the angel in Luke 1:17 (cf. Mk. 9:11-12; 2 Kg. 1:8; Mal. 4:5; Mt. 11:14; 17:10-12).

Both Elijah and John had stern ministries in which austere garb and diet confirmed their message and condemned the idolatry of physical and spiritual softness. – ***D.A. Carson***

John lived for one thing: to be a voice thundering at the conscience of his age. There was such a ring of genuineness to his voice and such evidence of sincerity in his life that people responded.

– ***John Phillips***

5 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him

6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

Many estimate that very possibly several hundred thousand people may have come out to hear John preach. For a time it was the happening thing (cf. Jn. 5:33-35).

Remember his “keynote” message was REPENT as noted in verse 2. Repenters would confess their sins. To confess means to admit or to acknowledge. As they admitted their sins and repented (meaning had a change of mind resulting in a change of direction) then John would baptize them. Their baptism was simply identifying them as repenters who were taking John’s message to heart.

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John’s baptism was not the same as Christian baptism, for it was a religious rite signifying confession of sin and a commitment to a holy life in anticipation of the coming Messiah.

– ***The Bible Knowledge Commentary***

The most basic meaning of BAPTISM is that of IDENTIFICATION. In John’s baptism the people being baptized were IDENTIFYING with his call to repentance. They were openly identifying as repenters.

Christian baptism is IDENTIFICATION with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is a testimony of our faith that now identifies with Christ. Baptism doesn’t save us but is a testimony that we have been saved by faith in Christ.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

The Pharisees and the Sadducees were the religious leaders in Israel. They were typically enemies but they joined arms in their enmity against Christ (cf. Mt. 22:15-16, 23, 34-35; Acts 4:1; 23:6).

The word “Pharisee” means “separated one”. They numbered about 6000 and they considered themselves “people of the Book”. They were scholars. They claimed to live according to the law – both written and oral. They were extreme legalists and very self-righteous. In their minds if anyone was saved – they were! But they were also hypocrites – preaching one thing and practicing another. Their spirituality was only “external”.

The Sadducees, fewer in number than the Pharisees, ran the temple and the priesthood. They tended to be very wealthy and considered themselves “intellectuals”. They were the “religious liberals” – liberal rationalists. They held only to the books of Moses – that is the first 5 books of the Bible. They did not believe in the supernatural, in angels or the resurrection. It is often quipped that is why they were **SAD YOU SEE** (cf. Acts 23:6-8).

As the masses came out in a popular movement involving “**Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan**”, these religious leaders not wanting to be left behind also came out to John’s baptism. They probably saw this as “just another religious ritual” that was now popular and so they hypocritically claimed they too were all about wanting to receive the coming Messiah. However, they were NOT repentant – which was the KEY thing John was preaching. You can’t truly receive the Messiah without repentance!

As these religious leaders came to get baptized John said to them: “**Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?**” Now that is some BOLD preaching! This is speaking truth to power. These were the powerful religious leaders who controlled the religious establishment in Israel. Here we have ONE man taking on the whole system – as it were.

John called them out for what they were. He calls them a “**Brood of vipers**” which is to say a family of poisonous snakes. The serpent is a symbol of the devil (Jn. 8:44). They were of the devil and their false teaching was like deadly poison. Jesus also referred to the Pharisees this way. In Matt. 23:31 He said to them, “**Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?**” (cf. Mt. 12:34; Jn. 8:44).

Gennema (brood) may also be translated “offspring,” signifying descendants or children. Jesus used the same epithet (brood of vipers) to describe the Pharisees on several occasions (Matt. 12:34; 23:33). Vipers (echidna) were small but very poisonous desert snakes, which would have been quite familiar to John the Baptist.

– **John MacArthur**

When John says, “**Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?**” I believe he is speaking very sarcastically.

You see these religious leaders certainly did NOT consider themselves “**poisonous snakes**” and they were not fleeing the wrath to come. It is clear from verse 9 that they thought their security was in their physical relationship with Abraham.

But the point is they should have seen themselves for what they were – a brood of vipers. They should have been fleeing from the wrath to come through repentance and confessing their sins, but they were not.

So John in effect sarcastically JARS their spiritual sensibilities calling them out as spiritual snakes who need to flee from the wrath to come through repentance. This is the point John is making in a sarcastic manner.

John’s rhetorical question takes on a sarcastic nuance: “Who warned you to flee the coming wrath and come for baptism – when in fact you show no signs of repentance? – **D.A. Carson**

By the way Elijah was also a prophet given to sarcasm and remember John came in the “spirit” of Elijah. In 1 Kings when Elijah had a show down with the prophets of Baal, he sarcastically challenged their god to send down fire.

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1 Kings 18:27 (NLT)

27 About noontime Elijah began mocking them. “You’ll have to shout louder,” he scoffed, “for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is daydreaming, or is relieving himself. Or maybe he is away on a trip, or is asleep and needs to be wakened!”

That is sarcasm at its finest and John the Baptist here also used cutting sarcasm. There is a place for it – at least in the ministry of a prophet. By the way those not repentant never appreciate it.

They whine about the “tone”. The unrepentant NEVER appreciate the ministry of a true prophet. The rugged cutting words of John are just too sharp for them! They want lovey/dovey acceptance talk, but John straight talked REPENTANCE!

Footnote: This strongest of language was reserved for the religious crowd – for the phony religious leaders. Of all people, they had no excuse and are most accountable. I believe the hottest hell is reserved for the phony religious leaders. They are the worst. They preach from pulpits, they teach in seminaries, they are called “Holy Father”, Reverend, and the like. They are truly a “brood of vipers!” who have the wrath of God pursuing them.

8 Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

True repentance bears the fruits of a changed life. A true change of mind about sin and about God results in a change of direction in the life. We are not saved by fruit but rather by faith. However, if the faith is real, involving the element of true repentance, then it will be seen in the fruit.

In order to escape the wrath of God’s judgment and go into the kingdom one must come to repentance and this repentance must be real effecting the entire lifestyle of a person. Genuine repentance results in a changed life.

Slide # 17

True repentance was to be demonstrated by the production of good fruit (v. 10), the absence of which negated the baptism and showed the repentance to be spurious. For Matthew, it is good fruit that provides the evidence that one is in right standing with God (i.e., “saved”). (Mt. 7:16-20; 13:3-9;18-23) (emphasis mine)

– ***The Moody Bible Commentary***

The Jews overlooked something very important. They had not properly understood that in order to enter the kingdom one must come to repentance. They thought that as children of Abraham they automatically had a ticket into the kingdom. John turned this on its head claiming that repentance was necessary to escape God’s wrath and enter into the kingdom.

John addresses their error in verse 9.

9 and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

The Jews in general, and the religious leaders in particular, had a false security depending on the fact that they were Abraham’s descendants through the promised son Isaac (cf. Jn. 8:33-53).

The Jews thought that Abraham was so special that his favor with God sufficed not only for himself but also for them as his descendants. Therefore, they said, “All Israelites have a portion in the world to come” simply by being Jews. They spoke of “the delivering merits of the fathers.” Their trust was in their heritage. Their trust was simply in being Jewish.

John the Baptist rebuked this idea saying they should not think “***We have Abraham as our father***” as if that would deliver them; but rather realize that “***God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.***”

What John meant by saying, “***God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones***” is not real clear. Perhaps he was saying don’t put your stock in being physical descendants of Abraham, rather realize that God is able to take hearts of “stone” and through true repentance make true children of Abraham out of them (cf. Isa. 51:1-2). This is what is necessary!

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Ezekiel 36:26 (NKJV)

26 I will give you **a new heart** and put a new spirit within you; I will **take the heart of stone** out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Whatever the case, John was refuting the idea that physical heritage could save them. They needed a new heart (cf. Rom. 2:28-29). They needed to come to repentance so God could save them and bring them into the kingdom. Abraham’s true spiritual descendants are those who share the same faith as Abraham (cf. Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7, 29).

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Galatians 3:7 (NKJV)

7 Therefore know that **only those who are of faith** are sons of Abraham.

This rebuke from John had to really sting these Jewish leaders. They thought God's wrath was reserved for non-Jews. They thought they were already sufficiently children of Abraham – not vipers. They thought they were already guaranteed a place in the kingdom and did not need repentance. This was JARRING to the core!

10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

The ax is a symbol of judgment that cuts down all who refuse to come to repentance (cf. Isa. 10:33-34). Every person who does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. In other words, all those who do not repent and bear good fruit in keeping with repentance are going to be cut down in the judgment of God and cast into eternal hell fire.

Again, we see the kind of repentance that will enter the kingdom. Genuine repentance is seen in "good fruit". If there is no good fruit – there is no true repentance. The only way to flee from the wrath to come and safely enter into the kingdom is by way of sincere and true repentance. That is why John cried, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" And in effect when on to say if you are going to get there it must be by way of repentance.

Christ's arrival and presence would test all men. Those found fruitless would be destroyed just as a fruitless tree...is cut down and thrown into the fire. – *William MacDonald*

And this principle still applies:

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2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)

9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, **but that all should reach repentance.**

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

John proceeded to contrast himself with the One He pointed to – stressing His overwhelming GREATNESS!

John indicates that his baptism signified repentance. We have already seen it didn't produce it, it simply testified of it. The key issue being the genuineness of repentance. This was John's ministry. He baptized repenters in preparation to receive the GREAT ONE coming after him. In this way he identified them as those who were repentant. Hence, he was called "John the Baptist".

In emphasizing the GREATNESS of this One coming after him John said he was not even worthy to carry His sandals. John was considered by the general populous to be a very holy man – so who could this person be? John's point certainly emphasized His surpassing GREATNESS!

To illustrate the contrast John brings out that he baptized repenters with water; but this One coming after him would baptize "**with the Holy Spirit and fire.**" This coming One would be so great as to orchestrate the baptism of the Spirit and also the judgment of fire. Who could do this but God? Exactly! And that is the point made in verse 3 saying John prepares "the way of the LORD". This One is so mighty and great that in fact He would be able to facilitate what only GOD can do because in fact He would be God come in the flesh!

There is some debate over whether baptizing with the Spirit and fire is two things or one. Some take it that the fire further qualifies the Spirit's ministry in relationship to God's people in the sense that He would bring about a purifying reality. That is theologically true (cf. Isa. 1:25; 4:4; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2-3).

However, both the immediate preceding context in verse 10 and the immediate following context in verse 12 both relate "fire" to the idea of judgment. So, I take it that baptism with fire here means the baptism of God's judgment. People will either experience one or the other. God's people who are repentant will experience Spirit baptism, while those refusing to repent will experience a baptism of fire in the sense of God's eternal judgment. All of this will come from the hand of this GREAT ONE for whom John was preparing the way.

Spirit baptism anticipates the birth of Church on the Day of Pentecost. Note this connection. In the OT God promised that He would pour out His Spirit (cf. Joel 2:28-29). On the day of Pentecost the Spirit came as seen in Acts 2:1-4. Peter describes this as a partial fulfillment of what the Joel prophesied in the OT as seen in Acts 2:16-18 (cf. Ezek. 36:25-27; 39:29). But then Peter went on to say:

Slide # 21**Acts 2:33 (NKJV)**

33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, **He poured out this** which you now see and hear.

This pouring out/baptizing of the Spirit was brought about by Jesus! (cf. Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33) It started with the Jews, and then included the Gentiles, and became normative for every believer (cf. Rom. 8:9). Spirit baptism was initiated by Christ and going forth applies to every believer. As Paul says in 1 Cor. 12:13, “***by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.***” This is the glorious reality shared in by all God’s people in the Church Age.

Throughout the Old Testament prophecies the Holy Spirit is associated with the coming of the Messiah. It is one of the marks which identifies Him (Isaiah 32:15; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26-27; 37:14; Joel 2:28-19). – ***Stanley Toussaint***

But a judgment day is also coming which will also happen at the hand of Christ. It is Christ in Rev. 5 that is worthy to open the seals of judgment on the world. In John 5:22 Jesus said the Father, “***has committed all judgment to the Son.***” One day it is Christ Himself who will say to the lost, “***depart from Me, you cursed into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels***” (cf. Mt. 7:21-23; 25:41; Mal. 3:2-5).

12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Who has the winnowing fan, who will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn, who will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire? Well, it is none other than the one coming after John Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Again, this is describing what only God can do emphasizing that Jesus is MESSIAH-GOD!

The Messiah would separate the wheat from the chaff. The winnowing fan was a fork/shovel like instrument used to toss wheat and chaff into the air. The wind blew away the chaff while the heavier grain fell into a pile to be collected into the barn.

This is descriptive of the Messiah ultimately separating true believers – true repenters from unbelievers – non-repenters. The wheat gathered into the barn represents repenting believers brought into the kingdom. The chaff that is burned up represents those unrepentant who will be turned into hell.

Note the emphasis of that the chaff will be burned with unquenchable fire – meaning it never goes out. This is descriptive of eternal hell fire (cf. Isa. 34:10; 66:24; Jer. 7:20; Mt. 5:29).

John was a no-nonsense prophet/preacher. He told it like it is. If you want to see the kingdom you must repent. Only those who receive the Messiah with repentance will escape from the wrath to come. True repentance is seen in the fruits of change borne out in the life. The Messiah is so GREAT that He baptizes with the Spirit and with the fire of God's judgment. It is He who will ultimately separate the wheat (true believers) from the chaff (unbelievers). Indeed, He is Messiah-God. As prophesied by Isaiah John the Baptist was His forerunner who in calling the people to repentance prepared the way for the LORD and that LORD is Jesus!

In 1951 Comedian Red Skelton took a party of friends with him in a plane to Europe where he was to perform in London. As they were flying over the Swiss Alps 3 of the plane's engines failed. The situation looked grave (no pun intended). People began to PRAY!!!

Skelton went into one of his best comic routines to try and distract them. The plane was losing power and coming closer and closer to the mountain. At the last moment the pilot spotted a clearing and was able to land the plane.

Skelton broke the relieved silence by saying: "Ladies and Gentlemen, you may now return to the evil habits you gave up 20 minutes ago."

That my friends, does not represent true repentance. That is not indicative of a true saving faith. To truly receive Jesus as Lord and Savior involves genuine repentance that is a life changing reality. Receiving Christ in John's day involved repentance and it does in our day as well. The only way to genuinely receive Christ is by repentant-faith – that is a life changing kind of faith. Have you repented of your sin and believed on Christ as your Lord and Savior?

Paul summarized his gospel ministry to King Agrippa by saying that he told people far and wide "***that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.***" (Acts 26:20). Does this describe your life? If not repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thus flee from the wrath to come.