

Matthew 3:1-12 – The Ministry of John the Baptist, Part 1

Introduction

1. Each Gospel has this historical narrative
2. John the Baptist was the Forerunner to Jesus Christ
3. John preached repentance, salvation, and judgment since the Kingdom of Heaven/God had come and was coming
4. John preached that our fruit bearing behavior was a reflection of our genuine repentance
5. John was called by Jesus the greatest prophet, man born from woman

Main Truth: Continued Repentance is a mark of true belief. One cannot enter into the Kingdom of God without a lifestyle of forsaking sin.

The Voice in the Wilderness (vv 1-3)

1. *In those days...* - Prophetic speech and allusion to the way OT prophets spoke about the coming of the Messianic era
 - a. John the Baptist's arrival on the scene was a fulfillment of prophecy concerning the Messiah
 - b. God was silent between Malachi and John the Baptist
 - c. The Intertestamental Time between the Old Testament and the New Testament spoke to this (**1 Macc 14:41**)
2. John the Baptist's Ministry: Preach the Word & Baptize
 - a. Location of his proclamation: Wilderness of Judea
 - b. Elijah preached in the Wilderness
3. The Heart of John the Baptist's Message: *Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*
 - a. Repentance: Change of Mind, Willful turning from Sin and to Jesus by Grace through Faith
 - i. Repentance is going in one direction toward worldliness and then turning and going the opposite direction toward holiness
 - b. The Kingdom of Heaven/God: Includes The Day of the Lord, God's redemption & judgment, the gathered people of God, the fulfillment of God's promises to King David and his heirs, the pouring out of the Spirit, the inauguration of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31)
 - c. The Kingdom has COME and is COMING
 - d. The Response: Repent!
4. John the Baptist is the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3 – He is the voice for Yahweh crying out in the wilderness
 - a. Context of Isaiah 40: Jews were promised a New Exodus by God to bring out of exile from Babylon

- b. John's Work: Prepare for the Messiah to be revealed
- c. God's people were made ready through Repentance
- d. Isaiah 40: The Voice Prepares for Yahweh to show up – Jesus is Yahweh, the Same God – Jesus reveals God!!!

The Elijah to Come (vv 4-7)

1. All four Gospel writers describe John's clothes and diet, Why?
 - a. Elijah dressed & ate the same as John (**2 Kings 1:8**)
 - b. Jesus identified John as the Elijah who would come
 - c. He ate locusts (**See Leviticus 11:22**)
2. John the Baptist was enormously popular – the people expected one like Elijah to usher in the Messianic Age (**Malachi 4:5**)
3. Mark even states that Herod went to see him preach
4. John was an in your face preacher – very bold
5. Multitudes went to hear John preach, confess their sins and be baptized (Important Note: Baptism was for Gentiles, not Jews)
 - a. Baptism of Jews was radically revolutionary – the Jews considered themselves clean, but needed baptism as well

The Brood (Offspring) of Vipers (vv 8-10)

1. John was a threat to the Religious Leaders of Jerusalem
2. They came to the Baptism, not because they needed to confess Sin or repent and be baptized, but to investigate John
3. Pharisees & Sadducees were religious, but were snakes within
4. They disagreed with one another, but John was their common enemy, for he was a threat to their power
5. John boldly confronts them calling them serpents – this is how prophets speak (**See Isaiah 1:4**)
6. *Who warned you... NOT ME!* – The implications are strong
7. The irony: Since you are here, Repent! And Bear Good Fruit!
8. Christians repent daily & bear fruit from this repentance; believers embrace a lifestyle of repentance
9. John addresses TWO Theological Errors: Salvation by Ethnic Heritage through Abraham & Salvation by Meritorious Righteousness through Abraham
10. John cuts through these errors – Works righteousness and ethnic heritage does not grant one salvation – only Christ!
11. To reject Christ is to be judged with fire in Hell

The Coming Savior and Judge (vv 11-12)

1. John points to the Savior and Judge, Messiah Jesus
2. Jesus is mightier than John – able to baptize with the Holy Spirit & Fire, inaugurating the Messianic age (**Is 11:2, Joel 2**)
3. Jesus brings about the Day of the Lord – redemption for those who receive Him, Judgment for those who reject Him