

## **Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ** **John the Baptist's Teaching**

Last time...the ministry of John the Baptist begins

His message is as relevant today as it was then:

- Repent
- The kingdom of heaven is at hand
- Prepare for that kingdom

This time...reaction to the message and John's teaching

The reactions to John's message and his teaching are as relevant today as they were then...the Word of God is timeless

His teaching regarding those reactions begins to "prepare the way of the Lord"

### **Matt 3:7-10**

v7 Pharisees and Sadducees...generation of vipers:

Coming out to John the Baptist at the Jordan River were Jews from

- Jerusalem
- Judea
- the Jordan River Valley

Among the Jews coming from Jerusalem were the religious leaders, the Pharisees and Sadducees

Note: Matt (written to the Jews): only the religious leaders  
Luke (written to the Gentiles): leaders and followers

Pharisees:

- socially:
  - middle-class
  - conservatives
  - staunchly anti-Hellenization (adopt Greek culture)
  - dominated the Galilee
- religiously:
  - self-righteous legalists...  
"keeping" the strictest letter of the Law
  - gave equal weight to traditions and the oral law...  
contrary to Deut 4:2
  - not priests of the line of Aaron  
(e.g. Saul of Tarsus was of Benjamin)
  - spiritual –  
believed in angels, demons, and resurrection

Sadducees:

- socially:
  - elitists and aristocrats
    - High Priests, most of the Sanhedrin
    - wealthy and powerful families...
      - "Bush" and "Clinton"
      - "Rockefeller" and "Carnegie"
  - liberals
  - Hellenized, embraced the Greek culture
  - dominated Jerusalem
  - loyal to Rome...to keep their wealth and place of power
- religiously:
  - not spiritual – did not believe in angels, demons, or resurrection
    - Matt 22:23                      test Q: 7 brothers, one woman
    - Acts 23:8                      Paul's divide

Both were known by the common folk as "whisperers"...

- "whispering" in the ears of judges to manipulate the administration of justice
- corrupting and perverting justice with their influence and immorality
- "hissing like vipers" in the parlance of the common man

Pharisees and Sadducees were rivals...oil and vinegar...

but united against a common enemy – Jesus of Nazareth

When John sees the Pharisees and Sadducees coming out to him, he

- confronts them
- goes "on the offensive"  
(Matt 16:18 and Eph 6:10-18)

generation of vipers

- generation:
  - a people group vs a period of time
  - Matt 24:34
- vipers
  - poisonous snake...false teachers
    - Matt 16:1-12
  - hypocrites...wicked and adulterous blind guides
    - Matt 23:1-7...13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29, 33
  - children of the devil, the serpent
    - Gen 3:14-15
    - God declared war on Satan and his children

Who warned you to escape the coming wrath of God?  
Not a “Welcome, brothers, to our gathering this morning!”  
But a “Who invited you and warned you to escape God’s wrath?”  
Mal 4:1-2, 5...the DoL  
The wrath of God upon Satan, his followers, and sin  
At the end of life or the end of the age

Why this un-welcoming reception by John the Baptist, the prophet?  
Why were the Pharisees and Sadducees coming, what was their motive  
and agenda and heart condition?  
The Lord knows and alerts John the Baptist  
John the Baptist is proclaiming the Messiah,  
the Seed of the Woman  
These guys are enemy agents...in need of salvation

What can be said of John the Baptist?

- bold
- courageous
- uncompromising
- faithful
- did not pass the Dale Carnegie course in  
*How to Win Friends and Influence People*

Who do we think we are to escape the judgment of God?

Why should God let us into heaven?

Only one reason: the blood of the atoning sacrifice of His Son  
Jesus Christ  
His work, not our works

Now...

- given citizenship in the kingdom of heaven by grace thru faith in  
Jesus Christ
  - being saved from the wrath of God by receiving the gift of God
- we go “on the offensive” in our mission field!
- Speak the truth in love
  - Be bold, courageous, uncompromising, and faithful
  - Be not offensive...the message is but we are not to be
  - Invite hearers to repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand

v8      fruits meet for repentance:

With a greeting to pin their ears back, John tells the religious leaders what they need to be right with God: repent...and “prove it!”

Genuine repentance is a change of heart and lifestyle that is

- broken and humble
- heard and seen
- sustainable and enduring

in all circumstances

- good times and bad
- “easy” situations and difficult situations
- under pressure and when no one is watching/will ever know

Genuine repentance for the remission of sins bears fruit  
(evidence, “certifiable proof” before God and man)  
that is pleasing to the Father in heaven

Godly sorrow...”Woe is me, I am undone!”

vs

worldly sorrow...”I am sorry I got caught, I regret the consequences I  
have suffered for getting caught...  
but I am going to do it again,  
only more sneakily so I don’t get caught again.”

Example: If living in sexual sin

- fornication
- adultery
- homosexuality
- pornography

repent means to

1. Stop immediately
2. Turn back to Jesus...move out of that sinful relationship now
3. Remain pure...only by the strength of the indwelling God

Other examples: “master-ed” by/in bondage to drugs, alcohol,

Fruit of repentance cannot be faked

Time will tell

Circumstances will tell

Trials and temptations will tell

Fruit of genuine repentance...a refreshing of the spirit...is needed to be saved  
from the wrath of God to come

Repentance without Godly sorrow and fruit is for show only and is worthless

Life-changing sorrow and repentance is what we must do to escape judgment

v9 think not...Abraham to our father:

Alerted by the Holy Spirit regarding the motives, agenda, and thoughts of the Pharisees and Sadducees, John continues “on the offensive”

“Don’t think for one moment that you are OK with God, and therefore will escape His judgment, because you are Jews.  
Being Jewish does not save you.

Being related to Abraham offers you no covering for your sins...  
he is not your protection from the wrath of God.  
There is no hiding behind Abraham from God’s wrath;  
we can hide only behind the Messiah.

Keeping the sign of the covenant with Abraham...circumcision...  
does not cover your sins.

Because circumcision is of the heart, not the flesh.

Deut 10:16 so said Moses!

Jer 4:4 so said Jeremiah before judgment fell

Rom 2:28-29 so says the Holy Spirit via a Pharisee, son of a Pharisee

Abraham has no coattails...salvation from judgment is a 1:1 with God,  
salvation is not “national”

The promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendents belong to  
those who believe God as did Abraham

Gen 15:1-6

Heb 11:8-19 obedient action, by faith vs sight, convinced/content

John 8:56

Righteousness is by faith, not by the Law (Abraham was pre-Law)  
or by works (Gal 3)

God is more than able to keep His promises to Abraham and make  
descendents from these dead stones.

Your spiritual pride in having received the Law and in having a  
Blue Ribbon genealogy will kill you.

Your self-righteousness and your relational carelessness with God will  
condemn you.

Your false doctrine (the merit of Abraham and Moses saves all Jews)  
deceives you.

Your outward religious observances are hated by God, as were those of  
your forefathers (go read Is 1).

In your current spiritual condition, you are no different than the  
Gentiles!”

Don't think any of us are exempt from judgment because we are

- American
- born into a Christian family
- our ancestors were believers
- going to church etc
- belong to a Christian religion

v10 the axe...root of the trees:

Only fruitful trees are allowed to "take up space and water" and grow  
Unfruitful trees are good-for-nothing and will be cut down and burned...  
in hell and then LoF

Only fruit pleasing to the Father is worth anything

- brokenness vs self-reliance (Ps 51:16-17)
- belief/trust in, lean on His Son (John 6:28-29)
- the Life of His Son (Gal 2:20, Gal 5:22-23, John 15:1-5)

To reject Him who was cut off for our sin (Dan 9:26a, Is 53) is to be  
cut off forever

Heed the warning!

Get right with God by agreeing with Him about your all-wrong nature and  
crying out in your brokenness as did Isaiah in Is 6:8

Being right with God comes from the heart, not from a birth certificate or  
a resume. (our resume is Is 64:6)

### **Luke 3:7-14**

v7-9 he said to the multitudes:

Again, Matt is written to the Jews and had only the religious leaders in view  
Luke is written to the Gentiles and has the leaders and their followers in view

The multitude is comprised of 4 constituencies

1. the religious leaders, the Pharisees and the Sadducees
2. the people
3. publicans
4. the soldiers

In these verses, John the Baptist is speaking within earshot of all 4 constituencies  
but these words are being spoken

- directly to the Pharisees and Sadducees
- indirectly to the Jews following their leaders and their doctrines

In addition, John has teachings for the other 3 constituencies in the multitude

v10-11 the people...What shall we do:

John the Baptist next addresses the non-leader portion of the multitude – the common folk

They have heard his

- message
  - repent
  - the kingdom of heaven is at hand
  - prepare your heart for this kingdom
- teaching
  - bring forth fruit as evidence of repentance
  - do not think you can “hide behind” Abraham...being Jewish will not save you on Judgment Day
  - God is VERY serious about this

They have confessed their sins and been baptized...received the message

Now, regarding the teaching...”What shall we do?”

How do we bring forth fruit pleasing to God?

How do we share in the promises given to Abraham?

What do we do to have our sins covered?

The Holy Spirit’s answer thru John the Baptist:

- Fast, afflict your soul in a way pleasing to God (Is 58:6-8)
- Love your neighbor (Lev 19:18, Matt 22:36-40, John 13:34-35)  
because love covers a multitude of sin (1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 4:8)

v12-13 publicans...exact no more:

Publicans were Tax Collectors, zealous IRS agents

Rome hired locals who knew the economy, people, etc rather than sending trained agents

Rome then gave each tax collector a quota...and expected him to meet his quota!!!

Anything he collected/exacted above his quota was his compensation for employment

Publicans were

- very often abusing their power to exact great wealth for themselves
- hated as traitors (Levi/Matthew was a publican)

Being Jewish, and being hated by their own people, they were very interested in all the goings-on at the Jordan River with this wild man and were a part of the multitude

They also have

- heard John's message
- heard John's teaching
- been pricked in their heart by what they have heard
- respectfully call John, "Master"
- the same question as the common folk – What then shall we do?

John's answer to them:

- Love your neighbor
  - Do not covet your neighbor's goods
  - Do not steal from your neighbor
- Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's (Matt 22:21) but do not abuse the power of your office (Rom 12:10, 1 Tim 5:21)
- Know that you do have a Master (Matt 23:10, Col 3:22 – 4:1)

v14 the soldiers...violence...wages:

The 4<sup>th</sup> constituency hearing the message and teaching of John the Baptist is the soldiers

Not Roman soldiers, but Temple guard/soldiers that report to the Chief Priest

And they have the same humble question as the common folk and the publicans – What shall then we do?

Note: Only the prideful and self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees did not ask this question...they were blind to the reality that they too needed to ask it

John's answer to them:

- Love your neighbor
  - Do not oppress the weaker person
  - Do not abuse your power by "throwing your weight around"
    - inflicting violence, using excessive force
    - accusing falsely and perverting justice
- be content with your wages
  - Phil 4:11-13
  - If all I had was Jesus, would He be enough?

Acts 2:37-42

Acts 16:30



So today, having heard the teaching of the Word of God: What shall then I do?

- Repent
- Bring forth fruit proving repentance
  
- Stop hiding behind false saviors such as religion and heritage
  
- Love your neighbor as you love yourself
  
- Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and render unto God what is God's
- Learn to be content
  
- Go forth and preach the Good News of Jesus Christ
  - Without compromise
  - Speaking the truth in love
  - With boldness (by the promise of the Father)
  
- Continue steadfastly
  - in apostle's doctrine
  - fellowship
  - breaking of bread
  - prayer