

Matthew 3:1-12

The Preaching of John the Baptist

- ◆ At that time John the Baptist came to the desert of Judea and started preaching. “Turn away from your sins,” he said, “because the Kingdom of heaven is near!” John was the man the prophet Isaiah was talking about when he said, “Someone is shouting in the desert, ‘Prepare a road for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel!’” John's clothes were made of camel's hair; he wore a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. People came to him from Jerusalem, from the whole province of Judea, and from all over the country near the Jordan River. They confessed their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan. When John saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him to be baptized, he said to them, “You snakes—who told you that you could escape from the punishment God is about to send? Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins. And don't think you can escape punishment by saying that Abraham is your ancestor. I tell you that God can take these rocks and make descendants for Abraham! The ax is ready to cut down the trees at the roots; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire. I baptize you with water to show that you have repented, but the one who will come after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. He is much greater than I am; and I am not good enough even to carry his sandals. He has his winnowing shovel with him to thresh out all the grain. He will gather his wheat into his barn, but he will burn the chaff in a fire that never goes out.”
- ◆ This message of repentance still needs to be preached in this world full of increasing sin and evil. We need to turn away from our sins, we need to make straight our paths so that the Lord may travel. The Lord doesn't travel on crooked roads.
- ◆ God is not for appearance as us humans are, he uses the humble people who have nothing. John the Baptist was a humble man materially, his food and clothing said it all yet he was wealthy in wisdom and in the word of the Lord; he knew life and was a messenger of God. The ways of the Lord are different from our ways, therefore let's not judge books by their covers but to listen attentively to words.
- ◆ The seduces and Pharisees were pretending to repent from their sins but John warned them of the punishment coming their way if they don't change their ways. Let's not pretend to be what we're not, God sees what's in our hearts and we can't fool him. Let's repent and change our ways so we can be spared from the punishment from the Lord. These people were basing their salvation on being the descendants of Abraham, we too cannot base our salvation on being descendants of prayerful parents rather we need to be prayerful ourselves.
- ◆ The Lord who baptizes by the Holy Spirit and fire will take the good people into his kingdom and all the bad will be thrown into eternal fire.