

9/24/17

A Voice In The Wilderness

Matt. 3:1-12

There has never been a greater need to preach the word of God with boldness than in our present day that the power of the Holy Spirit to convict the heart of man.

* Such was the ministry of John the Baptist, dynamic, convicting and uncompromising.

Matthew gives to us a vivid picture of the ministry of John through a three-fold lens. Matt. 3:1-12

- I.** The identity of John. vs. 1-4
- II.** The identity of the people hearing John. vs. 5-7
- III.** The identity of false and true repentance by John. vs. 8-12

I. The identity of John. vs. 1-4

A. The particulars about the person of John. vs. 1-2

- 1.** The occasion of the appearance of John is indicated by the phrase “In those days”. vs.1
 - a.** The last incident recorded was the return of Joseph, Mary and Jesus to Nazareth. Matt. 2:22-23
 - 1)** Jesus was at least two years old when they fled to Egypt.

- 2)** They returned after Herod’s death, in the spring of 4 B.C. Matt. 2:19-20

- 3)** Jesus could have been 4-5 years old.

- b.** The time now is thirty years after the birth of John and Jesus.

- 1)** John was six months older than his cousin Jesus. Lk. 1:26

- 2)** Jesus was 12 years old when He was at the temple. Lk. 2:41-50

- 3)** Jesus was thirty years old when He began His ministry. Lk. 3:23

- 4)** This was the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar, between August of 28 A.D. and August of 29 A.D. Lk. 3:1-2

- 2.** The designation about John is “John the Baptist”. vs.1

- a.** His name was given to his father Zacharias by the angel Gabriel. Lk. 1:13

- 1)** No one in the family was named John, so the people questioned the dedication. Lk. 1:60-63

- 2)** The name John “Ioannes” means Yahweh is a gracious giver.

- b.** The word baptist described what he was known for at the time.

- 1)** John was known for administering the rite of baptism, “a baptizer” in the Jordan River. Mk. 1:5

- 3)** John was of the priestly family, but called by God for a special task as the forerunner of the Messiah. Lk. 1, 3

- 4) John was a Nariited, the greatest of the Old Testament prophet according to Jesus. Matt. 11:9-13; Lk. 1:15; 7:27
3. The occupation of John is stated, “came preaching”. vs.1
- a. The word preaching “kerrusso” means to be a herald to proclaim publicly.
- 1) A herald was hired by the state, king or magistrate to make particular proclamations, so the message was not their own, but given to them.
 - 2) The authority was not theirs.
 - 3) They were not responsible for the response to the proclamation.
 - 4) They were only responsible to declare the proclamation.
- b. The message of John was not his own.
- 1) It was given to him by God.
 - 2) He was not responsible for acceptance or rejection of the message.
 - 3) He was only responsible to proclaim the message.
4. The location John was preaching was “in the wilderness of Judea”. vs.1
- a. The desert of Judea is south of Jerusalem north of the Dead Sea, at the Jordan River.
- b. John also baptized in Aenon near Salim, because **much water was** there. And they came and were baptized. Jn. 3:23

5. The proclamation of John, “and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”. vs.1
- a. The message of John was repent “metanoea”, to change your mind about sin and their relation to God.
- 1) It is to see oneself in sin, separated from God, unfit for heaven and in need of salvation. 2Cor. 7:9-10
 - 2) Acknowledging one’s sins, confessing them, abandoning them and whenever possible making restitution.
 - 3) Repentance is the heart of the gospel.
- b. The message is of the Kingdom marked the reality and urgency, “The Kingdom of God is at hand”.
- 1) The phrase indicates the rule of God over the earth promised to the Jewish nation bringing in judgment.
 - 2) The term is unique of Matthew, found 32 times.
 - 3) The “Kingdom of God” is a broader encompassing all the creation of God.
 - 4) The Kingdom is both present and yet future.
 - 5) The church is not the kingdom, yet it is part of the Kingdom, the church will not bring in the Kingdom, but will return with Jesus, who will set up the Kingdom

B. The particular prophetic connection to John. vs. 3-4

1. John was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. vs. 3
 - a. John indicated the Inspiration of prophecy, “For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah.” vs. 3a
 - 1) The prophecy was uttered 700 year before. Quoting the LXX. Is. 40:3
 - 2) The 400 years of silence was broken, through John to declare God had sent His Son, the Seed of the woman. Gen. 3:16; Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23
 - b. John quoted the passage as fulfilled prophecy, “saying: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.’” vs. 3b-e
 - 1) He was to be the forerunner of Jesus “the voice in the wilderness” to prepare the commencement of His ministry as the Messiah, in the power and spirit of Elijah. Lk. 1:17
 - 2) The reference to “make His paths straight” is to the custom of smoothing out the roads of holes and the valleys and hills for the coming of a king or person of great importance.
 - 3) The other three gospels record the same prophecy fulfilled by John. Mk. 1:3; Lk. 4-5; Jn. 1:19-24

- 4) Jesus identified John as the messenger, “For this is *he* of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’” Matt. 11:10; Mal. 4:5
2. John was after the order of Elijah the prophet. vs. 4
 - a. He dressed like Elijah, “And John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist.” vs. 4a-b
* Carmel’s hair was uncomfortable being course, “So they answered him, “A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.” And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.” 2Kings 1:8; Zech. 13:4
 - b. He ate off the land, “and his food was locusts and wild honey.” vs. 4c
 - 1) Certain locusts were allowed to be eaten, they would remove the legs and roast the body to eat it. Lev. 11:22
 - 2) Some believe the locusts were what they call a carob fruit?
 - 3) Wild honey of the fields.
 - 4) Jesus defended John as a courageous man. Matt. 11:7-14; 17:10-13

Illustration

Amos was called to be a prophet, but he was a shepherd and fruit picker. Amos 7:14

Application

1. What has God called you to do in the church?

- a. To teach the word in the kids ministry, Jr. High or High School ministry?
- b. To be part of the witnessing team that goes out to the streets and see people repent?
- c. To be active in missions?
- d. To serve in the women's ministry or the men's.
- e. There is the sound and music ministry, the deacons that usher and keep the church safe.

* "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually **as He wills.**" 1Cor. 12:11

2. Prophecy is the strongest evidence that the Bible is the Word of God.

- a. **"All Scripture** *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2Tim. 3:16-17
- b. "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private **interpretation**, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit." 2Pet. 1:19-21

3. Do you preach the gospel of "repentance" or a watered-down form of the gospel?

- a. A social gospel is powerless.
- b. A psychological gospel is deceptive.
- c. An Emergent gospel is destructive.

* "And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus **Christ** and Him **crucified.**" 1Cor. 2:1-2

The identity of John is a prophet of God!

II. The identity of the people hearing John. vs. 5-7

- A. The first group of people are described as coming from various regions, "Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him." vs. 5
 - 1. Jerusalem was the capital of the nation.
 - a. Jerusalem "Hierosoloma" means set you double peace", 776 times in the Bible.
 - 1) The city of David. 2Chron. 24:15
 - 2) The city of God. Dan. 9:19
 - 3) The holy city. Neh. 11:1; Is. 48:2
 - b. Jerusalem was the religious center of the Jews.
 - 1) The Temple of Solomon stood on Mount Zion.
 - 2) The Temple mount had been enlarged by Herod and elaborately beautified.

- c. Jerusalem was a city under the rule of the pagan empire of Rome.
 - 1) The Jews had no power of their own.
 - 2) The Jews were ruled by an illegitimate king Herod the Great, an Idumean.
 - 2. Judea would indicated the Jews.
 - a. This was the southern portion of the land of Israel and on the west side of the Jordan and north of the Dead Sea.
 - b. This distinguish it from Samaria, Galilee, Peraea, and Idumaea.
 - c. Judaea “Ioudaia”, means “he shall be praised”.
 - 3. All the regions around Jordan indicated the non-Jews or Gentiles.
 - a. This would be the villages on the east side of the Jordan River.
 - b. These were people not welcomed by the Jews, about 20 miles from Jerusalem.
- B.** The people were convicted of their sins and repented, “and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.” vs. 6
- 1. The understanding was that those baptized by John had responded to the preaching.
 - a. That Jew and Gentile were both in need of repentance. vs. 6a
 - 1) Both were sinners before God.
 - 2) Both were under the wrath of God.
 - b. The rite of baptism was not for Jews, but only Gentile proselytes. vs. 6a

- 1) But John was baptizing in water both Jew and Gentiles.
 - 2) Water baptism for both was the public witness of their repentance.
- c. The evidence of true repentance was that they were confessing their sins. vs. 6b
- 1) The word confessing “exomologeō”, means to speak out the same thing.
 - 2) To agree with God they were sinners in need of repentance.
 - 3) Both Jew and Gentile agreed they needed to trust the Messiah, the Lamb of God to take away this sins.
- C.** The people were confronted for their hypocrisy. vs. 7
- 1. The sharp contrast between the previous groups of people and those in this verse are as different as night and day, “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism.” vs. 7a
 - a. The word but “de” is adversitive contrasting conjunction.
 - 1) Those from Jerusalem, all Judea and all the region around the Jordan who came out to John were sinners
 - 2) Some repented and others did not, without any doubt.
 - b. These Pharisees and Saducees were also sinners, but they did not think they were.

- 1) Pharisees were separatists, the legalist and ritualists of the Law, hypocrites.
 - 2) Sadducees were the materialists and rationalist, believed only in the Pentateuch, did not believe in spirits, angels, resurrection or punishment.
2. The words of John were a rebuke to them, “he said to them, “Brood of vipers!” vs. 7b-c
- a. John did not call them vipers, but “brood of vipers”.
 - 1) The word brood “gennema”, means children or offspring of vipers.
 - 2) The implication was they were cunning wicked sinners.
 - b. John was telling them they were not related to God, but Satan.
 - 1) The fall came through the serpent, as Satan presented himself as if he cared about Adam and Eve.
 - 2) Jesus told the Pharisees, “You are of **your father** the devil, and the desires of **your father** you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the **father** of it.” Jn. 8:44
 - c. The words of John were a stern castigation, “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” vs. 7d

- 1) John knew they did not believe the message of repentance for their lives.
- 2) The word wrath “orge”, means the righteous indignation of God against sin and sinners, due to His holiness.
- 3) God must punish sin, His holiness demands His wrath and His wrath is justified by His holiness.

Illustration

Two thieves hung on crosses next to Jesus, equally distant, one believed and repented, the other did not!

Application

1. The preaching of the gospel should never be selective in its audience.
 - a. Today many of the churches are on the latest church craze to try to be culturally relative by attempting to have a certain percentage of minority and racial groups.
 - b. They are attempting to demonstrate their love and effectiveness through diversity and all inclusiveness, but at the expense of not preaching the gospel of repent.
 - c. The church is to preach the gospel to all that come to hear the gospel without respect of person and not have as their major concern and goal to make sure they have balanced numbers of races, color or social standing.

- d. The pastor, elders, deacons and people are to witness to the community and pray that God bring people to hear the gospel and be saved.
 - * “And the Lord added to the **church daily** those who were being saved.” Acts 2:47b
- 2. There will always be one of two responses to the gospel, believe it and repent or reject it by disbelief.
 - a. Some will be good moral people, others scared by a life of sin.
 - b. Some will be financially well off, other not so.
 - c. Some will be well educated, others not.
 - d. But the common denominator for all people is that they are sinners and God will give them at least one chance to be saved before they die.
 - 1) “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the **wrath** of God abides on him.” Jn. 3:36
 - 2) “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should **perish** but that all should come to repentance.” 2Pet. 3:9
- 3. The Bible is clear, baptism cannot forgive sin.
 - a. Peter make this very clear. “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine

longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us-- **baptism** (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” 1Pet. 3:18-21

- b. Paul affirms water baptism does not save a person, “Thank God that I **baptized** none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had **baptized** in my own name.” 1Cor. 1:14-15

The identity of the people hearing John are sinners needing to repent to be one with God!

III. The identity of false and true repentance by **John. vs. 8-12**

- A. The proclamation of John to the Pharisees and Saducees was to repent and flee from the wrath of God of God’s judgment. vs. 8-10
 - 1. John said they needed a drastic change in their lives only God could bring, “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance.” vs. 8
 - a. The idea behind the word worthy “axios” is one of equal weight.
 - 1) Repentance “metanoia” is a change of mind bringing forth a change of life.
 - 2) They are seen as equally balanced, a change of mind about God and sin is

- balanced out by a life obeying God and not living for sin any longer.
- b.** The evidence of repentance is called fruit, not works.
 - 1)** Fruit is something that is produced naturally after its kind.
 - 2)** An orange tree gives oranges, not nuts, confirming it is a genuine orange tree.
 - 2.** John warned them against self-deception, “and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’” vs. 9a-b
 - a.** They were relying on their national heritage of Abraham.
 - b.** They were trusting their standing before God by their connection to Abraham.
 - 3.** John reproved them sharply for their smug self-righteousness, “For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.” vs. 9c
 - a.** He spoke with the complete authority of God as His prophet, “I say to you”.
 - * The implication is they were wrong.
 - b.** He told them God was not interested in merely creating national Jews, He could do that from stones.
 - * God wanted to make them children of God by repentance.
 - 4.** John pronounced the impending judgment of God over their lives if they did not repent, “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.” vs. 10
- a.** The ax “axine” is singular, God is the judge over their lives.
 - b.** The axe is laid to the root “rhiza” the life source, referring to their final judgment.
 - c.** The trees “dendron” are plural, all Jews who are unrepentant.
 - d.** There is no exception, Jew or Gentile, every tree not bearing fruit of repentance is cut down, destined to fall under the judgment of God, “thrown into the fire” indicating the urgency to repent.
- B.** The description of John of those who do repent and those who do not repent. vs. 11-12
- 1.** John indicated the distinction between himself and the Messiah, Jesus. vs. 11
 - a.** His ministry was to prepare the way for Messiah, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance” emphatic.” vs. 11a
 - b.** He was inferior to the Messiah, Jesus, “but He who is coming after me is mightier than I.” vs. 11b
 - c.** He was the servant of the coming Messiah, “whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.” vs. 11c
 - d.** He offered an outward ritual of water baptism as evidence of inward reality in faith, but the Messiah Jesus would bring

about the inward enablement of their faith to transform their lives, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” vs. 11d

* There is one article for both the Holy Spirit and fire, indicating the new life and refining work through sanctification!

2. John explained people fall into one of two categories, saved or lost. vs. 12
 - a. The imagery to illustrate the separation is the threshing of wheat., “His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor.” vs. 12a-b
 - 1) The threshing would take place on a high elevation and a flat area.
 - 2) The wheat would be trampled to break the husk and thrown up in the air and the wind would carry away the chaff and separating from the wheat.
 - b. The application is the separation of the saved from the lost, “and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” vs. 12c-d
 - 1) The wheat represents the believer, who will be gathered into the barn to live eternally with God.

- 2) The chaff represents the unbeliever, who will eternally separated from God and punished.
- 3) The phrase unquenchable fire “asbestos”, refers to eternal fire to punish the damned by their rejection of the gospel and refusal to repent in the Lake of fire or Gehenna.
- 4) The Valley of Hinnom on the south of Jerusalem was a fitting symbol where all the filth, dead animal and trash of the city was burnt, the fire was not quenched, but burned constantly.

Illustration

One day Satan was talking to a man and the man said to Satan, “I don’t believe in sin”, its OK Satan said. “I don’t believer in hell”, its Ok Satan said again. “I don’t believe in eternal punishment”, it is OK, you don’t have to believe in anything!

Application

1. The are many people who believe they are going to be in heaven.
 - a. Based on their moral or ethical life-style.
 - b. Based on being raised in a Christian home or raised in the church.
 - c. Based on being baptized as an infant.
 - d. Based on the good works they have done.
 - * “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by

works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of **regeneration** and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” Tit. 3:4-7

2. There are so many people going to churches that Pastors do not warn them of the judgment to come and the need of repentance, listen to Jesus.
 - a. They are lost themselves, “But **woe** to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.” Matt. 23:13
 - b. They are all about money, “**Woe** to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation.” Matt. 23:14
 - c. They want to raise up disciples after them, “**Woe** to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” Matt. 23:15
3. Jesus spoke more about hell and the Lake of fire than heaven because of its horrible eternal condition, listen who will spent eternity there.

- a. “Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the **lake of fire** burning with brimstone.” Rev. 19:20
- b. “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the **lake of fire** and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” Rev. 20:10
- c. “Then Death and Hades were cast into the **lake of fire**. This is the second death.” Rev. 20:14
- d. “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the **lake of fire**.” Rev. 20:15

The identity of false and true repentance by John is distinguishing those separated from God for all eternity or with God!

Conclusion

Matthew has given a vivid picture of the ministry of John though a three-fold lens.

- I. The identity of John is a prophet of God!
- II. The identity of the people hearing John are sinners needing to repent to be one with God!
- III. The identity of false and true repentance by John is distinguishing those separated from God for all eternity or with God!