

LUKE Lesson 7

The Message and Ministry of John the Baptist: Chapter 3:1-20

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John's purpose was to go forth at the proper time as a witness for Christ; the true Light of the World (Jn 1:6-18). He preached that the true Light that offered salvation to all men would be ignored by the world He created (Jn 1:10), rejected by the nation He called (Jn 1:11, Lk 19:14, Acts 13:46), but believed on by "as many as received Him" (Jn 1:12). John's message to the crowds in general was Repent, make ready the way of the Lord, and submit to baptism as proof of repentance. He also had a specific message for certain groups (Pharisees, publicans, soldiers, new converts, etc) which we will discuss.

- VS 1** We are told the exact historical time period of the events of chapter three.
1. Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1) is gone. Tiberius Caesar is ruling.
 2. The kingdom of Herod the Great (Matt 2) has been divided into four parts ruled by four governors:
 - a. Herod Antipas: governor over Galilee.
 - b. Philip: governor of Ituraea and Trachonitis.
 - c. Lysanias: governor of Abilene.
 - d. Pontius Pilate: governor of Judea
- VS 2** There are two High Priests serving at the same time. Annas (the elder) and Caiaphas his son-in-law (see Jn 18:13). It was not unusual for two High Priests to serve at the same time (2 Sam 8:17, 15:35, 2 Ki 25:18).
- VS 3** John preached "**the baptism of repentance FOR the remission of sins.**" That doesn't mean that baptism is the way to get forgiveness or remission of sins. The Jews already had forgiveness through the Old Testament (O.T.) sacrifice of animals (Heb 9:22), but they didn't have their sins taken away (Heb 10:4, Exod 34:7). The Jews' "**remission of sins**" resulted from O.T. blood sacrifices, NOT from water baptism. John is telling people to get baptized (for) "**BECAUSE OF**" the remission of sins, NOT "**TO GET**" remission of sins. Water can't do that.
- Colossians 1:14** teaches that through Christ's blood we have redemption—as well as "forgiveness of sins." Redemption means the sin debt is completely satisfied; you are cleared of the guilt of sin. That's in addition to forgiveness, not synonymous with it. (New Bibles remove Christ's blood from the verse, making redemption and forgiveness appear to be the same, but they're not).
- Romans 3:25** and **Hebrews 9:15** teach that remission (sins forgiven) had already been obtained through the Old Testament sacrifices, but redemption (sins gone) came only through the blood of Jesus Christ.
- 4-6** This verse is a quote from Isaiah 40:3-5. Verse 4 applies directly to the First Advent; John was the "**voice of one crying in the wilderness.**" Verses 5-6: valleys filled, mountains brought low, etc. will occur at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ (see Malachi 4:5, Deut. 33:2, Jude 14).
- VS 7** John's speech was strong, much like Jesus Christ's (Matt. 23:33, 16:13-14, 23:17, 19, 26, 25:41, John 8:44, Luke 13:32) and like the Lord in the Old Testament (Prov. 1:26, Psalm 50:22, Isa 63:3).
- VS 8** To "**Bring...fruits worthy of repentance**" means that your works should show that you really mean it when you say you repent (you're turning from sin and turning toward God). This applies to the New Testament Christian as well (Acts 26:20, Eph 2:10).

Don't say, "**We have Abraham to our father**" (see John 8:33, 44). Abraham was Ishmael's father, but Ishmael wasn't the son of promise (Gal 4:23, 28). Abraham was Esau's father, but Esau despised the things of God. Boasting of Jewish ancestry can't save a person (Matt 8:11-12).

"God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Jesus is **"the Rock"** (1 Cor 10:4), **"and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed..."** (Gal 3:29). (See 1 Pet 2:5-8).

VS 9 A tree that doesn't produce fruit is only good for firewood. This verse is a reference to the fire that will burn up the wicked at Christ's return (Matt 13:49-50, 2 Thess 1:7-9, Mal 4:1)

10-14 "What shall we do?" What are the **"fruits"** (vs 8) that we ought to produce to show our repentance?

- To the people in general: give to those who have a need if you can meet that need.
- To the publicans: do your job; collect the tax, but only take what is required by the government.
- To the soldiers: No violence against the common people, don't lie, be content with your pay.

VS 15 John's strong speech made people wonder if he might be **"the Christ."** John's gospel (1:19-21) tells us that they also thought he might be Elijah or "that prophet" (Deut 18:18). John replied "I'm a voice..."

VS 16 John quickly answered them to dismiss the notion that he was anything more than a messenger (Mal 3:1) heralding the true King. He knew Christ **"must increase"** while he himself **"must decrease"** (John 3:30). He was **"the friend of the bridegroom"** (John 3:29) rejoicing in the union of the bride and groom.

"I indeed baptize you with water..." Why? To manifest Christ to Israel (John 1:31). John's baptism should have shown the Jews that their Messiah came from heaven through the **"great deep"** (Gen 7:11), the **"waters that be above the heavens"** (Psa 148:4) and beneath the throne of God, to free them from the bondage of sin (as the Prophet like unto Moses—who guided the people through the Red Sea). When Jesus comes again, He'll take us through those waters into Heaven.

"One mightier than I cometh..." John knew Jesus was the eternal Son of God. He was physically six months older than Jesus, but he said Jesus **"was before me"** (John 1:30). The apostle John wrote that Jesus was God the Creator (John 1:1-3). John counted himself a sinner not worthy to unloose Jesus' shoes—because Jesus was not a sinner.

Jesus **"shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."** This is what He provided at His first advent. Through faith in His sacrifice at Calvary, you are saved, and baptized with the Holy Ghost.

Jesus **"shall baptize you...with fire."** You don't want that baptism. If you don't receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, hellfire baptism is what you'll get. (note: "tongues as of fire" in Acts 2:3-4 is not fire).

VS 17 This verse describes the baptism of fire in verse 16. The wheat (saved) is gathered. The tares (unsaved) are burned **"with fire unquenchable."** (Acts 2:19, Matt 13:30, 49-50, Mark 9:44, 46, 48).

VS 18 John was a preacher (Mark 1:4, 7). A teacher imparts knowledge from the Bible. A preacher urges people to comply with God's commands. It involves reproof, rebuking, and exhorting (2 Tim 4:2 Tit 1:13).

19-20 Herod (Antipas) actually **"feared John"** and **"heard him gladly"** (Mark 6:20) because he knew John was preaching the truth about his adultery with Herodias, his brother's wife when he reproved him (convinced him it was sin). Herod put John in prison. Herodias schemed to get John killed (Matt 14:1-10, Mark 6:17-28).