

Matthew 3:1-6

¹In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

²And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

³For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

⁴And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

⁵Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

⁶And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

DISCUSSION:

- In Vs. 2 John is calling for repentance on behalf of the people. What is repentance? What are things we need to repent of personally, nationally and as a Church?
- What did Isaiah say in Is 40:3-5? How does John fulfill what was said? What was John's purpose in the ministry of Christ?
- What things were odd about John's appearance? These represent practical and long wearing clothes, but they were far from comfortable. John evokes the image of Elijah (II Kings 1:8), whom the Israelites were expecting before the day of the Lord

(Mal 4:5-6), though John is not the one spoken of in Malachi. How would you have responded to someone like this?

- Where did the people come from to see John?
- What did John do to those who came? What did they do?
- What is the difference in purpose in the baptisms of John and the baptisms we see in churches now?
- The baptism of John symbolizes repentance. Jews accepting John's baptism were admitting they had been acting as Gentiles that needed to become the people of God genuinely, inwardly. The people were repenting in anticipation of the Messiah's arrival.

Matthew 3:7-12

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

⁸Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

⁹And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

¹⁰And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth

good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

¹¹I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

¹²Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

DISCUSSION:

- The Pharisees were a legalistic sect of the Jews who were known for their rigid adherence to the ceremonial fine points of the law. Their name means "separated ones." Christ rebuked them for using human tradition to nullify Scripture, and especially for their hypocrisy (Matt 15:3-9).
- The Sadducees were known for denying the supernatural, including the resurrection of the dead and the existence of angels. Unlike the Pharisees, they rejected human tradition, accepted only the books of Moses as authoritative and scorned legalism.
- The Pharisees and Sadducees had little in common. Pharisees were

ritualists, Sadducees were rationalists. Pharisees were legalists, Sadducees were liberals. Pharisees were separatists; Sadducees were compromisers and political opportunists. Yet they united in opposing Christ (Matt 22:15-16, 23, 34-35).

- What did John call the Pharisees and Sadducees? What did he mean by this? Jesus called them the same thing in Matt 12:34.
- What is the wrath to come that John is speaking of? Ezek 7:16-19, Zeph 1:18, Rom 5:9, I Thess 1:10.
- What did John command the Pharisees and Sadducees to do in Vs. 8?
- What did he warn them not to do in Vs. 9? Are we in danger in America of the same rationalization? How?
- What does John compare a fruitless follower of God to? What happens to those fruitless trees? Matt 7:15-20.
- What does John say about the one that is coming after him? What does he say is the difference in his baptism and the baptism of the one to come?
- What picture is shown in Vs 12? Who are the wheat and who are the chaff? What happens to each? How should we respond to this?

Matthew 3:13-17

¹³Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

¹⁴But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

¹⁵And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

¹⁶And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

¹⁷And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

DISCUSSION:

- Where did Jesus come from, and what did he want?
- What was John's response to Jesus?
- Read Vs. 15, then read the following quote from MacArthur's Commentary "Through His baptism, Christ identifies with sinners. He will ultimately bear their sins: His perfect righteousness will be imputed to them (2 Cor 5:21). This act of baptism is a necessary part of the righteousness He secured for sinners. This first public event of His ministry is also rich in meaning: (1) it pictures His death and resurrection (Lk

12:50); (2) it, therefore, prefigures the significance of Christian baptism; (3) it marks His first public identification with those whose sins He would bear (Is 53:11, I Pet 3:18); and (4) it affirms His messiahship publicly by testimony directly from heaven."

- Vs. 16-17. Here the fullness of the Godhead is shown. Christ the son in the water, the Holy Spirit descending as a dove and the Father speaking from heaven. This verse clearly nullifies any view of the Godhead other than a Triune God.
- Read Vs. 17, Ps 2:7 and Is 42:1. What is the significance of God quoting the Old Testament passages of the coming messiah?

APPLICATION

- When was the last time you went before the Lord in true repentance? What fruits of repentance are you bearing in your life?
- As you examine your own life, who do you find yourself most like, the Pharisees of the Sadducee? What will you do to change that association?
- We need to view ourselves before Christ as John did, worthy of nothing.

FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

October 9th, 2011

John the Baptist (No, not our kind)

Focal Passage: (KJV)

Cross References: Is 40:3-5, II Kings 1:8, Malachi 4:5-6, Matt 15:3-9, Matt 22:15-16, 23, 34-35, Matt 12:34, Ezek 7:16-19, Zeph 1:18, Rom 5:9, I Thess 1:10, Matt 7:15-20, Ps 2:7, Is 42:1

Central Idea: The introduction of John the Baptizer as a preacher of repentance and preparation for the coming of the Messiah.

Lesson Idea: The repentance of sin and acknowledging of our need for a savior is crucial to our acceptance of that savior when he is made known to us.

Background: From Matthew Henry's commentary. "The contents of this Gospel, and the evidence of ancient writers, show that it was written primarily for the use of the Jewish nation. The fulfillment of prophecy was regarded by the Jews as strong evidence, therefore this is especially dwelt upon by St. Matthew. Here are particularly selected such parts of our Savior's history and discourses as were best suited to awaken the Jewish nation to a sense of their sins; to remove their erroneous expectations of an earthly kingdom; to abate their pride and self-conceit; to teach them the spiritual nature and extent of the

gospel; and to prepare them for the admission of the Gentiles into the church."

Bible in a Year Readings **October 9th, 2011**

October 2: Matt 1, Lk 2:1-38
October 3: Matt 2, Lk 2:39-52
October 4: Matt 3, Mark 1, Lk 3
October 5: Matt 4, Lk 4-5, John 1:15-51
October 6: John 2-4
October 7: Mark 2
October 8: John 5
October 9: Matt 12:1-21, Mk 3, Lk 6

Highlights of the Week:

Matt 1: Genealogy of Christ
Matt 2: Visit of the wise men
Matt 3: The baptism of Christ
Matt 4: The temptations of Christ
Matt 12: Sabbath controversy
Mark 1: Lots, just read it!
Mark 2: The paralytic healed
Mark 3: The appointing of the twelve
Luke 2: Christ is born
Luke 3: The ministry of John
Luke 4: Christ's rejection at Nazareth
Luke 5: The first disciples are called
Luke 6: The Beatitudes
John 2: Christ cleanses the temple
John 3: Christ and Nicodemus
John 4: The woman at the well