"True Repentance"

Matthew 3:1-12
1/8/2017

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1 - 2

***Realize what true repentance is!**

I. The <u>MESSENGER</u> of Repentance (v. 2-6)
(Who qualifies to call others to repentance?

A. A <u>Herald</u> (v. 2-3)

B. A <u>Holy</u> Man (v. 4)

C. A <u>Humble</u> Man (v. 11)

II. The <u>MOTIVES</u> of Repentance (v. 2, 7, 10, 12)
(Why should you repent?)

A. The Promise of God's <u>Kingdom</u> (v. 2)

B. The Prospect of God's <u>Wrath</u> (v. 7, 10, 12)

III. The <u>FRUITS</u> of Repentance (v. 5-6, 8-10)
(How can you see real repentance?)

A. <u>Outward</u> Fruit (v. 5-6)

B. <u>Worthy</u> Fruit (v. 8-9)

C. <u>Good</u> Fruit (v. 10)

IV. The <u>BLESSINGS</u> of Repentance (v. 11-12)
(What is the result of repentance?)

A. "The Holy Spirit" - Salvation (v. 11)

B. "The Garner" - Heaven (v. 12)

CONCLUSION:

"True Repentance"

Matthew 3:1-12
1/8/2017

INTRODUCTION: Verses 1 - 2

V. 1

"In those days" - i.e. In the days the Lord Jesus grew up in the city of Nazareth (2:23).

"The wilderness of Judea" - not a forest, but a barren wasteland or desert containing nothing but rocks and hills and dust (located west of the Jordan River).

John wanted people to turn away from ritualism, worldliness, hypocrisy, and superficiality; therefore, "he brought them away where they would be freer to listen, think and ponder, without the distractions and the misleading leaders they were so accustomed to following" (macArthur, p. 53).

"The message John proclaimed was simple, so simple it could easily be summarized in one word: Repent!" (MacArthur, p. 53).

Note the stress on repentance in verses 1 - 12 -

V. 2 - "Repent ye"

V. 8 - "Fruits meet for repentance"

V. 11 - "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance"

V. 2

~Repent" = from metanoeo. Lit: meta = to change; noeo = the mind

The word "repent" means to change one's thinking; to alter one's opinion and attitude.

In the Jewish mindset it was impossible to change one's attitude without also changing one's actions. Attitude determines action.

Hence, the repentance that John called for was a change of mind toward God, toward sin, and toward your life that would result in a distinctly different way of living.

In other words, repentance was not mere intellectual assent. it was a turning from sin and unbelief and turning to God and His righteousness (I Thes. 1:9).

The two sides of repentance - turning from and turning to:

Is. 55:7 - "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon"

Joel 2:12-13 -"Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil."

Verses on Repentance:

Repentance was the message of Jesus -

Mt. 4:17 - "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
Lk. 13:3 - "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Repentance was the message of Peter -

Acts 2:38 - "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost."
Acts 3:19 - "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

Repentance was the message of Paul -

Acts 26:20 - "But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance."

***Realize what true repentance is!**

I. The MESSENGER of Repentance (v. 2-6)

(Who qualifies to call others to repentance?

A. A Herald (v. 2-3)

The Lord Jesus' message was just like John's - ""Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt. 4:17)

For over 400 years, the thundering voice of a prophet of God had not been heard in Israel.

To break the silence, God sends His man John the Baptize to announce the coming of Christ and the need for repentance.

V. 3

"The voice of one crying" - John was a herald, one who sounded out the announcement of King Jesus' arrival.

John simply viewed himself as a voice for Christ (Jn. 1:23).

John's baptism was authorized from heaven (Mt. 21:23-27), yet the religious leaders rejected it for themselves.

Isaiah's prophecy in chapter 40 will ultimately be fulfilled at the end of the Tribulation (40:2) prior to the Millennial reign of Christ.

Question: Whose way did John prepare?
Answer: The way for Jesus the Lord.

Important note on Christ's deity. The word "Lord" is a quote of Is. 40:3, which is the Hebrew word "Jehovah." Jesus is Jehovah!

B. A Holy Man (v. 4)

"Holy" means set apart.

John was truly set apart, as evidenced by his clothing, diet, and lifestyle.

If John had been worldly, he could never have gained the respect he needed to call others to repentance.

Only a pure man can persuade sinners (Ps. 51:13).

"The same John" - the greatness of John's message is now shown in contrast to the humility of John.

John's wardrobe and diet are given to teach an important point. Don't judge the importance of a man's message by the externals of his appearance (I Sam. 16:7). John did not wear a flashy suit, a gold chain, a balaua watch, and shoes made in Paris.

His picture would not be seen on the cover of GQ ("Gentleman's Quarterly) magazine.

John wasn't exactly a knock-out when it came to impressing people with his appearance. He wore no royal robe, yet his message was above that ever given in any royal court; he had not the dress of a diplomat, yet his ministry was greater than every ambassador who ever lived combined!

John looked like the Prophet Elijah (II Ki. 1:8; cp. Zech. 13:4).

Perhaps another reason for John's humble appearance and lifestyle was to attest to the fact that Christ's great Kingdom was not going to come in the worldly way the Jews expected. Christ's humble ministry and lifestyle perfectly matches that of his forerunner, John.

"Leathern girdle" - a leather belt.

"Locusts and wild honey" - the food of a nomad. John sacrificed the luxurious life to serve his Lord as a Nazarite.

John ate locusts for his protein and honey for his carbohydrates.

(Note: locust was kosher - Lev. 11:22).

C. A Humble Man (v. 11)

"He . . . is mightier (stronger) than I" - by comparison John was an ant under the foot of a giant.

"Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (to lift up and carry; a slave's office in Judea, Greece, and Rome - Reinecker, p. 7-8).

John also humbly admitted that he was unworthy to even stoop down and untie the thongs on Christ's sandals (Mk. 1:7; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:27).

Note: Jesus recognized John the Baptist as the greatest man who ever was born of women (Mt. 11:11), yet in comparison to Christ, who came into the world from Heaven, John was insignificant. No wonder John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30).

John sets a blazing example for every minister (by his boldness, his set-apartness, and his humility)

II. The MOTIVES of Repentance (v. 2, 7, 10, 12)

(Why should you repent?)

A. The Promise of God's Kingdom (v. 2)

The reason given for John's urgent appear to repent is that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

"The kingdom of heaven" = Heaven's kingdom; the kingdom from heaven.

For those tired of this world's kingdoms (namely the empire of Rome), John announced the soon arrival of God's kingdom.

"Is at hand" - perfect tense - has drawn near and still is coming closer.

John is not saying that the kingdom has arrived but that it is on its way.

The kingdom was at hand because the King was here! A national repentance among Israel would have ushered in the Messiah's long-awaited kingdom (Mt. 23:37-39).

Problem: They never did repent (Jn. 1:11) as a nation and never did realize how close the kingdom was to coming to earth. Hence our prayer remains, "Thy kingdom come" (Mt. 6:10).

At Christ's second coming the establishment of His kingdom will be fulfilled (Mt. 25:31).

B. The Prospect of God's Wrath (v. 7, 10, 12)

V. 7

The Pharisees and Sadducees had "come" but didn't submit to his baptism (Lk. 7:29-30).

They just observed, no doubt mocked .

They didn't come (like the rest of the people) because they had been warned of God's wrath; they came simply because they were sent from headquarters. They wanted to see what this "maniac fundamentalist" was up to, and how his ministry was so successful.

Beware of the danger of being a spectator only (coming out to meetings only to see what is happening).

Pharisees = religious legalists (glorified the externals of religious - Mt. 23; the name Pharisee means "Separated one")

Sadducees = religious liberals (denied the supernatural - miracles and resurrection - SEE: Acts 23:6-9).

"Who hath warned you" - John knows that nobody has. For they were smugly complacent and indifferent to God's coming wrath.

The Pharisees viewed themselves as being too good to deserve such wrath. And the Sadducees didn't believe in any such thing (didn't believe in a literal hell).

"O generation of vipers" - You offspring of snakes! You children of snakes! The picture is of baby snakes which are the offspring of snakes (thus bearing the same image and likeness).

John is saying to the Pharisees and Sadducees - you are the product of your ancestors. They were vipers, and you are following in their diabolical ways.

Jesus also referred to the hypocritical religionists as "vipers" (meaning full of poison and venom - false doctrine) (Mt. 12:34; 23:33).

"Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

John's question teaches us some important truths about God's wrath (the deep-seated anger of a holy God against sin) -

1. God's wrath is no joke - "warned"

2. God's wrath is to be avoided at all costs - "flee"

   The word "flee" means to escape. To run from with all your might.

   "It suggests the fleeing of snakes from a field when the harvest begins" (McNiele, cited by Reinecker, p. 7).

3. God's wrath is not here yet - "To come" = it is future.

   V. 10 - "Now . . . the axe is laid" - shows the imminency of death and God's judgment.

   God's axe is lying at the base of every man's life. All He has to do is pick it up and swing it once and it's all over!

   We hang onto life by a thin thread. When God says your time is up, He cuts the thread!

   Therefore, "Now is the accepted time, Now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2).

III. The FRUITS of Repentance (v. 5-6, 8-10)

(How can you see real repentance?)

A. Outward Fruit (v. 5-6)

God is not satisfied with regret or remorse; He wants fruits (obedience).

V. 5

John did not make it convenient for people to hear his message and submit to his baptism - they had to travel from Jerusalem, etc., several miles down to the Jordan River.

V. 6

"Baptized of him" = dipped under water by ("hupo") him; immersed by him.

"Confessing their sins" - the present participle suggests that the public confession occurred at the time of their baptism. A public acknowledgement of sin evidenced true repentance and was a great testimony of the work of God in the lives of people.

Baptism is an outward evidence of an inward change. Regardless of their past, they were now publically identifying themselves with righteousness and with John's message.

B. Worthy Fruit (v. 8-9)

V. 8

"Fruits meet for repentance" - fruits which equal or match true repentance.

True repentance will always be accompanied by corresponding fruit.

"By their fruits ye shall know them" (Mt. 7:20).

Good works are not the roots of repentance, they are the fruits of it.

V. 9

Having a religious heritage does not guarantee you exemption from God's wrath.

Many Jews in John's day pacified (comforted) themselves and took confidence in the fact that they were children of Abraham, therefore supposedly under the automatic blessing of God.

Such confidence was a delusion (Jn. 8:31-39). "The common teaching of that day said that Jews participated in the merits of Abraham, which made their prayers acceptable, helped in war, expiated sins, appeased the wrath of God, and assured a share in God's eternal kingdom." (Ryrie note, p. 1342).

Beware of the danger of thinking that the righteousness of your forefathers and families would cover and suffice for you.

"God is able of these stones" - It's not such a great matter to boast about, that you are a descendent of Abraham. For God could raise up children to him from stones!

C. Good Fruit (v. 10)

At the Great White Throne Judgment, unregenerate man's own works (or absence of them) will condemn him forever (Rev. 20:11-15).

"Cast into the fire" - the fire is speaking of hell and the Lake of Fire.

IV. The BLESSINGS of Repentance (v. 11-12)

(What is the result of repentance?)

A. "The Holy Spirit" - Salvation (v. 11)

"I baptize you with water" - lit. "I baptize you in water"

Bible baptism is always immersion.

"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost" - it is Jesus who, beginning on the day of Pentecost, baptizes people into the Holy Ghost (I Cor. 12:13 - "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.")

"And with fire" - meaning: "and in fire"

This "fire" is not speaking of those who are "on fire for God." Nor is it speaking of the fire that the Spirit gives, but in this context (v. 10, 12), John is referring to the fate of the unbelievers!

Jesus, who is Judge (Jn. 5:22), will by Himself execute Judgment on the evil doers (Jn. 5:27-29).

Three baptisms in Matthew 3:11 -

1. Water - Repentance
2. Spirit - Salvation
3. Fire - Damnation

B. "The Garner" - Heaven (v. 12)

"Fan" = winnowing forks; a fork-like shovel that would scoop up threshed grain and fling it into the air to separate the chaff from the wheat.

EX: the separation of the tares from the wheat (Mt. 13:30, 38-42, 49-50).

"Garner" = storehouse or barn (describing heaven)

"He (Jesus) will burn up the chaff" - chaff often used to describe the ungodly who are judged and condemned

> Ps. 1:4 - "The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."
>
> Ps. 35:5 - "Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them."
>
> Is. 17:13 - "The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind."
>
> Job 21:18 - "They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away."
>
> Mal. 4:1 - "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

"Unquenchable fire" - describing a fire that will never be doused; that will never go out; that will burn forever.

CONCLUSION:

Repentance is a gift of God (II Tim. 2:25 - "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth") (cp. Acts 5:31, 11:18).

True repentance will affect the:

1. Intellect (recognition of sin; understanding of God's holiness and righteous standard)

2. Emotion (a godly sorrow for sin - II Cor. 7:10=11)

   "He that never mourned for sin has never rejoiced in the Lord. If I can look back on my past life and say, 'I have no grief over it,' then I should do the same again if I had the opportunity. And this shows that my heart is as perverse as ever it was, and I ma still unregenerate" (Spurgeon, p. 174)

3. Will (a willingness to turn from sin; a change of direction)

For the unsaved, repentance means basically to turn from anything that is keeping you from turning to Christ 100 %.

For the Pharisee, repentance meant to turn from their man-made religious rules and their self-righteousness and to turn to Christ.

For the Sadducee, repentance meant to turn from their unbelief and financial exploitation in the name of religion, and to turn to Christ.

For the prostitute, drunkard and thief, it meant to turn from these vices which so enslaved their hearts and to turn to Christ.