

Character Study: John the Baptist
Part 2 – His Message
Matthew 3

What's happening?

- John the Baptist preached wholeheartedly as he prepared people for the coming Lord. His message was “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (3:1-2). The word “repent” means to “change one’s mind,” which brings about a change of action. John was calling the rebellious Jewish people to repent of their sins, and he was doing so with urgency in light of the fact the kingdom was at hand.
- Those who repented were baptized by John in the Jordan River (3:5-6). (His name/title literally means, “John, the one who baptizes.”) Baptism is a ceremonial act of immersing someone in water for the purpose of identifying them with something. In the case of John’s baptism, he was baptizing those who embraced the call to repent in light of the Lord’s arrival, thus identifying them with the anticipation of Jesus Christ.
- John exposed the error of some Pharisees and Sadducees who believed that their national heritage (being descendants of Abraham) was sufficient to prepare themselves for the kingdom. (3:7-10)
- John pointed the people to Jesus, who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire (i.e. those who repented would receive the Holy Spirit, those who did not would receive judgment). (3:11-12)
- When Jesus first arrived on the scene, He had John baptize Him. This was not out of a need for repentance (as He was sinless), but to be identified with (and show support of) John’s message. At His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and the Father announced He was pleased with His Son. (3:13-17)

What's God doing?

> God used John’s message to serve two purposes: (1) to call the people to repentance (preparing their hearts to receive Christ), and (2) to cause anticipation of the work God was about to do (note Acts 19:4).

What's to learn?

→ The goal of John the Baptist was simple; it was to prepare people to meet Jesus. What greater honor and privilege could there be! How focused are you on preparing people to meet Jesus? Have you ever considered the fact that what people hear from you and see in your life can be used by God to prepare their hearts to receive Christ!

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