

John the Baptist

- 500 years ago, Martin Luther nailed 95 theses to a church door in Wittenberg in an act that many recognize was the start of the Protestant Reformation
- Theses #1 of 95: When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said "Repent," he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.

Luke 3:1-20 ESV

¹In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ²during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall become straight,
and the rough places shall become level ways,

⁶and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

⁷He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ⁹Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" ¹¹And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." ¹²Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" ¹³And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." ¹⁴Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

¹⁵As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, ¹⁶John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

¹⁸So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. ¹⁹But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, ²⁰added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

God's Saviour brings God's salvation and God's judgment. Our response to the Savior's salvation and judgment ought to be one of continual repentance.

John's Purpose – 3:1-6

John's purpose is to prepare people for the coming salvation of God in His Messiah. Luke locates John's purpose historically, spiritually, and prophetically. ~~Historically~~, God's promise, and therefore John's purpose, comes in the context of history; the word of God is active again. Spiritually, preparation requires repentance. Prophetically, Scripture anticipated John and his purpose.

Historical

The Purpose to which John dedicated himself occurred in history

- 7 rulers mentioned, starting with the most comprehensive and worldly influential rulers and moving on down to region spiritual rulers
- All of the figures are discussed in ancient, secular sources such as Josephus
- The facts indicate that this would be A.D. 29 and they were very complex times both in terms of religion and politics

The historical accuracy of the Bible should encourage and comfort us

Spiritual

Preparation for salvation requires repentance. Thus, John's purpose was to prepare people for the Messiah through a baptism of repentance.

- In A. D. 29, John received a clear revelation from God giving him direction as to his mission – INCITING INCIDENT (the event or decision that begins a story's problem or initiates the action) "the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness"
- Even as God initiates the fulfilment of promises (salvation through a Messiah) he is fulfilling promises (to John's parents. Earlier Scriptures)
- John's purpose is to prepare people through the preaching of repentance through baptism

- Repentance is a reorientation of one's perspective and pursuit from sin to God
 - Bryan Crawford
- Repentance will be part of the Great Commission – **Luke 24:46-47 ESV** and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem"
- Jesus emphasized it – **Luke 5:32 ESV** I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."
- John's call to repentance was a call to prepare by evaluating one's thinking, reorienting one's life, and then living one's life differently
- *There was ultimately no forgiveness in John's baptism* → John's baptism of repentance was pointing to the work of forgiveness that the coming Messiah would accomplish; it points to the cleansing of those who come to the Messiah with faith
- For the pre-cross Israelite, John's baptism represents a renewed approach to God resulting in fruitful living for God and compassion for fellow humans as well as an expectation for the coming salvation and Saviour

Our call to repentance post-cross is still a call to reorient our thinking from sin to God that results in a reorienting of our pursuit in life from sin to God ... more on that later

Prophetic

John's purpose and work to achieve that purpose is seen as the fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture

- **Isaiah 40:3-5 ESV:** A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

Luke, in conveying the historical, spiritual, and prophetic significance of John and his purpose is focusing the reader's attention on the One for whom John is preparing the way. This is also seen in John's preaching.

John's Preaching – 3:7-14

John's preaching is preparatory to its very core. His preaching conveys WHY preparatory repentance is necessary and WHAT preparatory repentance ~~results in~~ results in.

Why is preparation through repentance necessary?

The simple answer: It is necessary because judgment comes with salvation

- Great ice-breaker: "sons of snakes" – poisonous and destructive
- Coming wrath – judgment always come with salvation: Noah, David and Goliath, Esther/Jews and Haman
- Judgment is why repentance is necessary
- Your response to Jesus indicates your position in regards to judgment
- So, John says repent: submitting to John's baptism of repentance is a commitment to change one's life while awaiting the coming salvation...so do it!
- Do not look to ancestry to save you: religious pedigree will get you nothing; genetic alignment will get you nothing
 - You cannot inherit God's salvation – Church kids
- God doesn't require your ancestry or genetics to bring about spiritual life; just as he could bring creaturely life to any dead creation (rocks), he can also bring spiritual life to any spiritually-dead creature
- The judgment is near: the axe is primed to fall, those without fruits corresponding with repentance will be cleared away, when the root is chopped, the tree will fall.
- In light of this, the people desired to know what a repentant person who was awaiting salvation looked like.

What does this preparatory repentance look like in real life?

Or, what shall we do to demonstrate that our repentance is sincere? John indicates that a changed heart results in a changed life. (Head-Heart-Hands)

- John sheds light on this for three groups: the crowd in general; the tax collectors, the soldiers
 - For the crowds, repentance results in meeting the needs of others; this is how they would demonstrate true repentance.
 - For the tax collectors, they were to engage in their business fairly.
 - For the soldiers, they were not to extort money or take advantage of their position of power and they were to be content.
- **Bock** summarizes John's teaching what repentance looks like: "John's response to the three groups says to be compassionate, loving, and fair to fellow human beings and not to take advantage of another or leave another in destitution for one's own gain. Rather, one is to be content with what one has. Look to meet needs, rather than to aggravate them."
- We are called to the same thing: repentance. We avail ourselves of God's salvation by repenting.
 - Unbeliever – As recognize that we are supposed be united to God relationally, and as his creatures are to serve him devotedly, we realize that we are separated from God because we have not served him with devotion but rather we have sinned against him. We avail ourselves of Christ work by repenting of our sin and putting our faith in him.
 - Believer – Due to the indwelling sin that plagues the believer—even though we have been born again and justified before God—we still are convicted of our sin and called to repent of our sin. We continue to avail ourselves of our salvation through faith and repentance.

For all of us then we prepare and participate in our salvation—that is all of God—through repentance. But, what does this look like?

APTAT

ADMIT you need God's help, PRAY for help, TRUST in a specific promise, ACT appropriately, THANK God for his work

- A – Admit you cannot repent properly without God's help
- P – Pray for God to help you repent
- T – trust in this promise: **1 John 1:9 ESV** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- A – Act by repenting.
- T – Thank God for his help in your repenting and for the forgiveness that you have in Christ Jesus

How do we repent?

- See your sin (in God's Word and the Spirit's conviction) – Sorrow
- Confess your sin (as specific as possible-verbally, written) – Shame, Regret, Anger
- Seek your forgiveness (prayerfully as God to forgive you) – Gratitude, Love
- Change you actions

Whereas the verses we have looked at already implicitly point to Jesus Christ and the salvation he brings, we now consider John's prophecy or prediction and see how they point explicitly to Christ.

John's Prophecy – 3:15-17

John points to the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, by indicating three ways in which Jesus is superior to him. This was a response to the people who thought he, John, was the Messiah.

John insists that the Messiah is mightier, brings a better baptism, and in a Judge.

The Messiah is mightier

- The OT made it clear that the Messiah would be mighty: **Isaiah 11:2 ESV**
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
- John indicates his own inferiority by comparing himself to a slave or servant who would have to untie the sandals of his master; John was even below that station when compared to Christ. We should all recognize this.

The Messiah brings a better baptism

- The comparison is not with our ordinance of baptism, but rather with Christ's baptism in the Holy Spirit
- Some see two baptisms here: one with the Holy Spirit (salvation) and one with fire (judgment)
 - I'm convinced that there is one baptism: hotdog with ketchup and mustard
- It points to the baptism of the Spirit which comes with faith in Christ and results in a purging; the fire is a refining fire which separates the metal and the dross
- This meshes with the sifting that Jesus does as judge

The Messiah is a Judge

- The salvation that is coming, which includes a baptism with the Holy Spirit, will result in the sifting of humanity.
- Harvested grain is tossed in the air; the breeze blows away the chaff and the wheat falls to the threshing floor; the wheat is collected and the chaff is burned.

John was preparing people for the coming of salvation in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The Messiah is a mighty Saviour...he brings a baptism in the Spirit and fire...he comes as a judge who will punish those who are not saved.

John's Punishment – 3:18-20

John's punishment reinforces the truth his own pointing to Messiah by confirming that John preached faithfully.

- John's faithfulness can be seen in his challenging and rebuking of the moral character and failings of the Jewish leaders
- John endangers himself rather than not address the evil he saw
- John wasn't "successful," but he was faithful
 - Our faithfulness requires that we courageously declare the full gospel including punishment
- Sin seeks to remove the source of exposure!
 - We should seek out sources of exposure – church, life group, individuals, books