

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expositional Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew** 8- The Ministry of the Baptist- Part 3

Church April 10, 2022

Matthew 3:1-12

1 Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,

2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

3 For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"

4 Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan;

6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

8 "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Now last time- we were investigating what John the Baptist meant when he said this in, **Matthew 3:7b-12:**

7 ..."You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

... and we saw that John was NOT simply insulting these men. No, God the Holy Spirit, Who walked inside of John, was anointing him to give these men a correct diagnosis of their spiritual Condition before God. So, this is NOT merely John's invective against the Pharisees because he just happened to not like them. No, this Diagnosis was true. And John is giving these men a series of very important Biblical Truths that we need to know today:

1. False Teachers are like poisonous snakes (Vipers)
2. There is a powerful and frightening Wrath of God that is coming that people MUST flee from
3. Repentance ALWAYS brings forth godly Fruit
4. Being a "Child of Abraham" or a "Seed of Abraham" has NOTHING to do with Birthright; Nationality; or Ethnicity

... so, let's look at each one of these:

1. False Teachers are like poisonous Snakes (Vipers)

God the Holy Spirit moved on John the Baptist to infallibly say that False Teachers are like poisonous Snakes (Vipers). And that tells us that we always need to remember that Christianity does NOT teach that people are saved because of what they "do". Christianity teaches that lost people are brought into the Kingdom

of God by what they “believe”; and because of what they “trust in”; and what they “confess”

and NOT by what they “do”. All the “doing” in Christianity is AFTER a person has experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; and has been justified (by Faith alone); and then adopted into the Family of God.

But every false Religion on earth teaches a derivative of the very SAME wrong Concept: that Lost people have to “do” something to earn God’s Favor- so He will save them. But Christianity alone teaches that Jesus did for us- what we cannot do for ourselves- in that He lived a sinless Life; died a vicarious (substitutionary) Death; and rose again on the third day. And so, faith in Jesus and in what Jesus alone has done- is what will bring a lost person into the Kingdom of God. And that is what we mean when we say that we are, “*saved BY Grace and THROUGH Faith- absent any humanly initiated Works.*”

But because we are saved by what we believe and NOT by what we do- then what we believe- *matters*. And that is why it is hard to find anything that is as Bad; and as Wrong; and as Destructive as False Teaching. So, that means two things are true:

1. Salvation is NOT obtained simply because we *sincerely* believe
2. Salvation is NOT obtained because we believe in ANYTHING

No, we must sincerely trust in; and accept; and believe; and have Faith; in the RIGHT thing- the biblical thing. And this is why it matters what we teach; and why it matters what we believe. Because if we put our Trust and Hope and Faith in something God did not do; or in something God did not say- we will remain lost.

So, False Teachers put forth False Teaching. And false Teaching deceives people. False Teaching is like poison and the false Teachers are like poisonous snakes. John the Baptist called the Pharisees and Sadducees- a “brood of vipers” because God didn’t say what these men believed; or what they taught.

Now there is something interesting about all false Teachers- they are never content with merely being deceived themselves. No, they always go to deceive others as well. So, the poison that had taken them away from the true Gospel is now something they are proud of and something they want to teach to a many people as possible. So, ALL false Teachers are Evangelists- *enthusiastically* teaching their brands of False Teaching.

But there is another aspect about “False Doctrine” and “False Teachers” that is frightening. All true False Teachers think they are Right. They are convinced in the “Rightness” of their Beliefs. These men, here in **Matthew 3** were teaching what they honestly believed- and what they were practicing themselves. And that is the insidious aspect of false teaching. So, False Teaching not only deceives the

those who listen- but it deceives the Teachers too. And that is why the one single way to deal with genuine False Teachers is to rebuke them and cast them out of the Church.

But those who waver in what they believe and teach are NOT genuine False Teachers. They are simply wrong about what they say they believe. So, these men are not yet convinced; and are able to repent and rise up out of that false Teaching- even though they are teaching it at this moment. And so, while we categorically reject genuine False Teachers- we should work with and pray for- those who are simply wrong about what they believe and teach.

And we also need to realize that these men were deceived with their Bibles open. You see, some people are deceived because they never read or study their Bibles. But these men here with John the Baptist read their Bibles- and they were still deceived! And this is *why* Jesus attacked these men the way He did.

You see, satan always attacks people at their *weakest* link. And that is because satan is a coward. But God always confronts people at the point of their greatest strengths- at the very spot they are the most confident of and proud of. So, while satan whispers taunts and tries to bring discouragement to people because of their weaknesses- Jesus confronted the Pharisees at the three points they were the most- proud of:

1. The Temple
2. The Sabbath
3. The Word of God

These men hung their hats on these three Aspects of what was supposedly obedience to the Old Testament. Only it wasn't. These men had little or no connection to the 39 Books of the Old Testament. And so, what they taught and believed- they invented in their own minds. God didn't say it.

So, their Pride and Joy was the Temple in Jerusalem. And so, neither Jesus nor those who followed Him sacrificed an animal in the Temple the entire time He was on the earth. And then Jesus infuriated the Jews by telling them that the Temple- with all of its Man-made glory- would be completely torn down.

The next area of Pride was the False Teacher's fastidious observance of the Sabbath. Now as God was giving the Jews the 1st Covenant- all God had told His people to do on the Sabbath was to rest. Such a lovely word, "Rest". Just rest. Don't work- lay aside the burdens and trials of this life for one day and just rest.

Well, these guys took that simple and beautiful Concept of Rest and they built an entire religion around it. And they had developed and written book after book- volume after volume of what people could and could not do- from sundown

Friday to sundown Saturday. What you could and could not do with your left hand. What you could and could not do with your right hand. How far you could walk on the Sabbath and how to get around that restriction. And all of this became so convoluted that nobody knew what to do.

And so, Jesus went around- completely ignoring everything the Pharisees taught about the Sabbath. And it drove them crazy. And then Jesus said this in **Matthew 11:28-30**:

Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

Now we read this today and we say, “*Wasn’t Jesus being sweet here? He is so precious- telling us to rest in Him!*” And most of the time, we don’t realize the Context of why He said this. Jesus was actually *rebuking* the Pharisees about their false Teaching about the Sabbath. And so, what He was saying was, “*I am the Sabbath! Rest in Me!*”

So, the Truth about the Sabbath is that, under the infinitely superior New Covenant- the Sabbath is NO longer a particular day of the week- it is a Person- the Lord Jesus Christ! And through Sovereign Salvation- weary sinners, may have “*Union with Christ*” and may find, “*Shabbat*” (Hebrew for “Sabbath”)- “Rest”- for their souls!

Finally, the Pharisees also took great Pride in the fact that God had given them the Scriptures. And so, they read and studied the Scriptures. And they rejoiced that they alone knew what the Scriptures meant. So, by default, the average Jew could NOT read and study the Bible himself. He had to go to the Priest and let the Priest tell him what God had spoken in Scripture.

And, sadly, this is the *identical* Path that the Priests in the Roman religious system have taken. For many centuries- the Leaders of the Roman system has *purposefully* withheld the Scriptures from the masses- wrongly concluding that only they have the ability to understand the Bible correctly. But the Reality is that every time the people can read the Bible for themselves- there is a mass exodus from the Roman system into Protestantism- precisely because people realize that the Bible does NOT teach what Rome teaches.

But Jesus insulted the religious hypocrites of His day- to their faces by asking them all the time, “*Have you not read... have you not seen in the Scriptures?*” So, the Truth was the religious Leaders did NOT really know the Scriptures at all. Now how do I know this? Because if they knew what God had spoken in the Old Testament- they would have worshipped and followed Jesus!

And this is the very same Truth concerning the false religion of Judaism in our day. The religious Jews of today are deceived. Their religion is a *false* religion that does NOT forgive a single Sin nor save a single soul. And the average Jew of today does NOT understand nor do they strive to obey the Word of God found in the 39 Books of the Old Testament. Again, how do I know this? Because if they did- they would immediately begin to worship and love and obey Jesus. Why? Two reasons:

1. Jesus is the Main Subject of the Old Testament
2. The conversion of the Old Testament saints as recorded in the New Testament

Dr. Luke records what Jesus taught the two men on the road to Emmaus in **Luke 24:27:**

Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

... and the “Scriptures” here is the Old Testament because the New Testament had not been written yet.

But one of the most important things about Luke’s Gospel Record is how meticulous the good doctor was in giving us conversion after conversion of people, who had lived their entire lives under the Old Covenant. But when they came into contact with Jesus- even when He was but a baby- 100% of them worshipped Him. People like:

- Zacharias
- Elizabeth
- The Shepherds
- The Magi
- Simeon
- Anna

... and in each case- without hearing a single Sermon by Jesus; without seeing a single Miracle performed by Jesus; without seeing the Crucifixion or the Resurrection- each of these people believed on Jesus and were saved!

But in order for these people, who lived every moment of their entire lives under the auspices of the Old Covenant- for them to be saved- meant they had to categorically *reject* and *abandon* the Old Covenant- AS BEING FULFILELD! And they had to cease every aspect of the Old Covenant- *including*

animal sacrifice; the Levitical Priesthood; the Sanhedrin Court; and the keeping of the Sabbath.

Yet without hearing Jesus preach; without seeing a single Miracle; without witnessing the Crucifixion or the Resurrection- in each case- we see that these people worshipped Jesus! And that indicates that they had already made the transition from a faithful Old Covenant believer to a faithful New Covenant believer!

For example, when Simeon saw Mary and Joseph bringing into the Temple- the 8-day old baby Jesus- he took Jesus into his arms and began to sing this song:

**Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,
According to Your word;
For my eyes have seen Your salvation,
Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,
And the glory of Your people Israel. (Luke 2:29-32)**

... Simeon called this eight-day old baby,

- ✓ **God's Salvation**
- ✓ **A Light of Revelation to the Gentiles**
- ✓ **The Glory of Your people- Israel**

... which would be blasphemy- UNLESS he was talking about God Almighty! But he was!

And in **Luke 2:36-38**- we see a woman, named, "Anna", who continued to speak of Jesus to those "**who were looking for the Redemption of Jerusalem.**" But think. The only people looking for Redemption are those who know they don't already have Redemption. Yet back in the 1st Century- the Jews did NOT believe they needed to be saved at all. They believed that they were *already* saved- by reason of their Jewish birth. All they wanted was for God to remove the pagan Romans from their land. But Anna, and evidently many others, categorically rejected that thinking; and did NOT believe that they were already saved by their birthright and knew that there was a further Redemption that they needed. And she saw Jesus as being that Redemption!

We have to understand, dear friends, that false Teaching cannot forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul. It is always wrong. It can't be redeemed. All that we can do with false teaching- is to reject it. And after we have confronted them to their face and see that they refuse to repent- ALL we can do with false Teachers is

to reject them, too. Because when false Teaching is present- Lost people stay Lost; and saved people veer off into foolish and harmful things.

So, this had nothing to do with personalities. John the Baptist didn't insult these men simply to be rude or a smart aleck. No, these religious Conservatives were teaching false Doctrine. And nobody on earth has the Right to do that. And that is what made John angry. And so, he confronted them to their face.

And we should be alert and able and knowledgeable about the Bible to the degree that we can follow John's example and do the same.

3. There is a powerful and frightening Wrath of God that is coming that people MUST flee from

Science Fiction¹ teaches that as Science and Technology and Medicine and Human Government continue to evolve- every human Problem will be solved and things like Poverty; Disease; and War along with other forms of human Suffering will be eliminated! So, to those who have bought in to the "world-view" put forth by Science Fiction- things like Sin and Rebellion against God and His Word are meaningless. All that matters to these folk is that they have the Power now to build a Tower, whose height will reach into Heaven itself!

But Sin and Rebellion against God and His Word is NOT meaningless. And the longer the Culture extends its war against all things godly and biblical- the MORE Wrath is being stored up against them. And this is what the Apostle Paul was talking about when he wrote this in **Romans 2:1-11**:

1 Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

6 who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:

¹ Although Science Fiction is mostly looked at as being nothing more than a genre of literature- the foundation of it is the Heresy of Socinianism.

7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;

8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,

10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

11 For there is no partiality with God.

Now look again closely again at verse 5:

But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

... which shows that there is a “Day of Wrath” that is yet to come.

Now there have always been periodic manifestations of the Wrath of God against Evil and Wickedness. All through human History- individuals, groups, cities, regions, and even entire nations have been destroyed suddenly and without warning by a supernatural explosion of the Wrath of God. Sodom and Gomorrah (**Genesis 19:24**); King Herod (**The Acts 12:21-23**); and the Tsunami of 2004 are but three examples of devastating Destruction that came upon people- suddenly- without warning- after they had refused to repent and worship God.

But verse 5 speaks of a “*Day of Wrath*”. And the way this is worded is that this “*Day of Wrath*” is unique; it is different from the normal displays of God’s Wrath that He periodically gives to unrepentant rebels.

66,000 human beings, among whom were around 8,500 Christians, some of whom were on their knees praying in Church when the explosion went off, were instantly eviscerated within mere seconds, when the atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima in 1945. Their bodies along with their clothes and shoes- simply ceased from existing. Approximately 6 million Jews were annihilated during the Nazi rule of Germany and Poland between 1936- 1945. And that is in addition to the almost 100 million, who actually died in the War. Over 1 million Christian Armenians were slaughtered by Turkish Muslims in a sickening holocaust during the 1st World War. In just 100 days back in 1994- Hutus hacked around 1 million Tutsi men, women and children to death with machetes in Rwanda. And almost 3,000 babies are either hacked to death or are burned to death every single day in the United States- all in the Name of Women’s Rights.

Yes, we have seen many examples of the Wrath of God and even of God abandoning a Nation (**Romans 1:24, 26, &28**). We have witnessed the Heavens become brass- as human Atrocities pile up the dead bodies. Yet the Bible teaches that the Wrath that is coming- will make all of that- seem like nothing.

But unlike other examples of the Wrath of God through the Centuries- this one has a Warning to it. And the Warning about this Wrath that is coming has been heralded by faithful Preachers and Teachers for over 2,00 years. And there is only ONE single remedy to escape this frightening Wrath: “Flee”. John the Baptist asked the unsaved religious hypocrites of his day,

...who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

... and THE BEST way to “flee” from the Wrath that is coming is to repent and turn away from Sin and to put all your Hope and Trust and Faith in Jesus and in His finished Work. And then we can run to Jesus and find refuge for our soul when God pours out His Wrath. Other than that- this Wrath is both Certain and Unmerciful.

3. Repentance ALWAYS brings forth godly Fruit

Many people today think of the Concept of Repentance in only one way: to apologize and to say, “*I’m sorry*”. And Repentance *does* include “Sorrow”. But it also involves a whole lot more than merely Sorrow. Look at what the Apostle Paul wrote about Repentance from **2Corinthians 7:8-11**:

8 For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it — for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while —

9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.

10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

11 For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

Now the Issue here is Sorrow. And Sorrow is a Regret; a remorseful Regret about the Sin that we have committed. And Sorrow may *include* us feeling sorry about our Sin and even saying, “*I’m sorry*”. But simply feeling Bad about our Sin and saying, “*I’m sorry*” is not necessarily the Sorrow that Paul is talking about here. And neither is it true Repentance. We must go further.

Now the word, “*Repentance*” has to do with a “*turning away from one thing and a turning toward something else*”. And this turning occurs first- through a profound “change of mind”. And our minds have been changed- by hearing and believing the Word of God. So, by definition, “*Repentance*” involves a change of Behavior- not merely an emotional Regret.

When somebody says, “*I’m sorry*”- the next Question should always be, “*Sorry about what?*” Is he sorry that he got caught- or is he sorry that he sinned against God- even if he never gets caught? Is he sorry because his wife found out about his Sin- or because he actually sinned? Is he sorry because he is in jail- or because he dishonored God? Is he sorry because he became sick; or because he was publicly exposed- or is he sorry because His Sin belittled God’ Glory? What is it that made him sorry? Because the only Correct thing that should have made him Sorry is that he sinned against God. And only being sorrowful that he transgressed against God- is what will bring about true Repentance. Other than that- his sorrow has to do with the *consequences* of his Sin- but NOT the Sin itself. And if we are not careful- merely being sorrowful over the consequences of Sin and not the Sin itself- will only motivate the individual to Sin more intelligently in the future. In other words, he will simply do a better job of making sure he doesn’t get caught.

But a genuinely sorrowful man- who sorrows over his Sin- will turn away from that Sin- even if he is NOT delivered from the temporary consequences of his Sin.

Now many within the Psychological or Psychiatric fields work hard against the idea of Sorrow- for any reason. They teach that Sorrow is fundamentally unhealthy. And, sadly, many within the modern Church teach the same. They don’t want anybody to be sorrowful over anything- even the most grievous Sins.

But God Almighty teaches that Sorrow is a good thing- yea- it is a Gift of God and a Work of the Holy Spirit- if it is a Sorrow that is “according to the Will/Word of God”.

You see, because we were made in God’s Image- we are *supposed* to be sorrowful when we Sin. Our Sin has offended the God we say we love. Sin has *belittled* the Glory of God- which means more to God than anything else. So, Sin is *supposed* to make us feel terrible. We should never worry about being *too* sorrowful over our Sins. What should bother us- is if we can live contrary to God’s Word on an ongoing basis without experiencing the deep and profound Sorrow that should *always* accompany a genuine believer’s Sin.

So, it is appropriate for a believer in Jesus Christ to be smitten with Grief and sorrowful and remorseful about whatever he did that was against God and contrary to His Word. What is NOT appropriate is for a person, who says he is saved- to be able to sin with impunity and feel no Sorrow at all. That is an individual, who has hardened his heart and a person who

by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, (1 Timothy 4:2)

In this Passage- the Apostle teaches that there are actually two different kinds of “Sorrows”:

1. A Sorrow of the world
2. A Sorrow according to the Will of God

... and Paul said that the “Sorrow” that is of the world- produces Death.

Now right off “jump street” the Sorrow that is of the world is NOT genuine Sorrow- it is a façade; a front; a disguise. So, in that sense the “Sorrow that is of the world” can’t produce a genuine Repentance and in that way- it brings forth Death.

But there is another way in which the Sorrow that is in accord with the world brings forth Death- and it has to do with the difference between “Conviction” and “Condemnation”. When a person is living underneath Condemnation- he has no Hope of ever being able to get on top of it. Condemnation simply beats people to death- with no Mercy. So, Condemnation is simply another word for “Wrath”. And under the Wrath of God- we are way beyond Repentance- and so, there is ONLY Death and Destruction and Penalty- but there is no Mercy.

But with Conviction- the Sin is exposed and clearly articulated- but the guilty person has a way out; a path to walk away from the Sin a path to Repentance. So, Conviction leads a person to change- which leads him to Forgiveness. Condemnation simply brings about the Death of that individual. So, in His Mercy- God deals with His people with Conviction rather than Condemnation- so we may repent and turn from Sin- be forgiven- and live!

Now zero in to verse 10:

For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Here, the Sorrow that has to do with God's Will- brings an individual under genuine Conviction. And Paul says here that this kind of Sorrow- leads an individual to a,

... repentance without regret, leading to salvation

... where "Salvation" is both ordinary Salvation for lost sinners; or a "salvation" (Healing/Deliverance/ Rescue) from that particular Sin- along with its Consequences.

But now look closely again at verse 11:

For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

Genuine Sorrow (according to the Will of God) leads to genuine Repentance (a change in Behavior due to a change of mind). And a genuine Repentance- ALWAYS bears godly Fruit. Here, the Apostle teaches us about the six Fruit of genuine Repentance:

1. **what vindication of yourselves**
2. **what indignation**
3. **what fear**
4. **what longing**
5. **what zeal**
6. **what avenging of wrong!**

The Bible teaches that the individual, who has genuinely repented and who has received God's Forgiveness- bears the unmistakable Fruit; and the unarguable Proof that he has indeed repented and been forgiven. He now hates the Sin he was one time a part of. And he demonstrates that hatred not merely with words- but with action- by seeking out ways and paths that led to that Sin that have been in his Life and rooting them out.

He then demonstrates a renewed "Fear of the Lord"- a righteous and godly Respect of God and the Things of God. He then begins to long to be near God again as he was when he was first saved. And that longing is accompanied with the zeal that empowers it.

And finally, a truly penitent individual will seek out every vestige of that Sin found anywhere in his life or the Lives of his brethren and he will be faithful to warn others about the insidious aspects of Sin.

These are the fruits that the Holy Bible teaches will accompany all those who have truly sorrowed over their Sin; repented of it; and have received God's gracious Forgiveness.

But John the Baptist taught that there should also be outward, visible, and tangible Fruit stemming from genuine Repentance:

Luke 3:10-14

10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"

11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."

12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to."

14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."

And in checking with some early Church Fathers (prior to Nicene 325AD), I found that the Church expected these tangible and visible Fruits in every individual who had genuinely repented and was now born again and justified- BEFORE they would baptize them!

4. Being a "Child of Abraham" or a "Seed of Abraham" has NOTHING to do with Birthright; Nationality; or Ethnicity

The Baptist said to the Jews:

7 ..."You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

So, entrance into the New Covenant requires a radical departure from the way the Old Covenant operated. The New Covenant is NOT merely a

DIFFERENT Covenant- but a completely “New” one. The Prophet said this about it in **Jeremiah 31:31&32:**

**31 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,
32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord.**

So, the New Covenant will NOT be “**like the covenant which I made with their fathers**”. Why? Because the Jews broke that Covenant with God. Now in saying that- I do NOT mean that Jews cannot be saved today; or that we should treat them badly; or persecute them. We should earnestly pray that they be saved. But the single BEST way to do that- is NOT to help them remain comfortable with their false religion; or to help them resurrect the Old Covenant. The single best way to see Jews saved- is to do for them what we do for everybody else- preach the glorious Gospel to them!

But what I DO mean to say; and what the Bible means to say; is that the New Covenant is an infinitely *superior* Covenant; based on infinitely *superior* Promises; brought about through an infinitely *superior* Sacrifice; offered by an infinitely *superior* High Priest!

And that means there are many aspects about the Old Covenant that we need to understand that are NO LONGER APPLICABLE TO US TODAY. Like, Animal Sacrifices; the Levitical Priesthood; and the Sanhedrin Court; and the Temple in Jerusalem. These things have been *forever* abolished; and are not only completely unnecessary for the Christian- they have also been eternally *replaced* with “better things” than these. Eternal things. Heavenly things.

And John the Baptist knew this. And so, he told these unsaved religious Leaders,

The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

... and the “**good fruit**” to which John was referring here is that these Jews- must first accept; and then trust; and then love; and then obey- Jesus- as being God Almighty in human flesh. And they must see Him as being the fulfillment of the Law. And they must run to Him for a rescue from the Wrath of God. And they must confess that they are lost and undone and heading for Hell. And then and only then will God save them. And THEN, John says, he will baptize them!

My friends, I tell you that the ends of all things are upon us. And we are living in a time of great Compromise and great Upheaval and great Change. Truly there is a great Shaking of not only Heaven itself- but of the earth also. And so, now, more than ever, we need to know what God has spoken. And we need to know what we believe and why we believe it. And we need to see Jesus as the Treasure of the Universe and we need to run to Him for Rest; and for Safety; and for a Rescue from the frightening Wrath of God that is going to be poured out without measure. Because John said,

10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.