

GOSPEL OF THE MESSIAH

Message 10

Text: Mark 1:1-11

Date: 3/30/2014

INTRO: In this series of messages, I have outlined the four Gospels as a unit under five points. I have called the first point, 'the introduction of the Messiah to the world'. That is a brief point and we have completed that. Now we are looking at the second point, 'the preparation of the Messiah for the world', and this is our last message on that point. After this we will take a break for some time. My wife and I are undertaking a new venture. We will be going to the Philippines, Lord willing, to minister there for a week. We would appreciate your prayers.

Lord willing, after we are back we will begin the third point and I do not know if I shall ever get through this point. It is a big section which I have called 'the authentication of the Messiah to the world'. Here we will give four lines of evidence that He was in fact the Messiah.

And so, in the last message of our second point we were considering the ministry of John the Baptist. We want to complete that point this morning and then look at the baptism of Jesus Christ. After this, in the Gospel story, the ministry of Jesus Christ begins.

In our last message on the ministry of John we looked at the political and religious climate of the Jewish people when John began to minister. We looked at the purpose of his ministry. He was to expose Israel's sins to her, and bring her to repentance. We also saw that he lived a very simple life-style and we got a little taste of the kind of preacher he was. He was not afraid to point out sin and to deal very strongly even with the preachers of the day. He was calling the nation to repentance. And so, not having completed the point 'the flavor of John's preaching', we pick up there again this morning.

4. The flavor of John's preaching (7-14) Cont'd

We are in Luke 3:7-14. We left off in verse 7, where John said to the religious leaders of the day, "Brood of vipers!" We pick up there now. Note what John further said to them, "Who has

warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" I have mentioned to you earlier that John's reference here to the wrath to come is the tribulation time. It is the time of Jacob's trouble. If you are like I was, I always thought the wrath to come referred to hell. You may wish to do what I did, and that is study every occurrence of where this word for wrath is used and you will doubtless find that most of its uses refer clearly to the tribulation, especially the last and worst part of the tribulation. And you will find no clear reference where it refers to hell.

And now as John is preaching, understanding precisely where they are as a nation, he preaches with great urgency to the people. And when these religious people come, his preaching heats up even more, as John reveals that within they are like venomous snakes. These religious leaders did not think they were snakes. They thought they were the cream of the crop of God's people.

But I want you to notice something else when John said, "Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" There is an indication here that John had preached that the Jews could flee from the wrath to come by repentance. What would John have meant by being able to flee from the wrath to come through repentance? For a number of years, as I read in the OT, several verses stood out to me in light of this question. Go to Isaiah 26. Look at verses 16-18 (read). It speaks of the future time of Israel's trouble, the time of God's wrath. Now look at verses 20-21 (read). Here is the idea that they could come to the Lord and be somehow hidden until the indignation was past. And verse 21 says that the inhabitants of the earth will be punished for their sin. That is the tribulation.

Go to Zephaniah 2 (read 1-2). Here Israel is called to repentance before the tribulation begins. And the last part of the verse says, "It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger." There is the wrath of God. And if you study Revelation 12 you will find that God

will protect some of them for the last 3 1/2 years of the tribulation. Now John may have been preaching from these passages. And the Pharisees and Sadducees were coming to buy insurance in case John's preaching was correct, but there was no true repentance in their hearts. So John says, "You snakes. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Let me make another point here from verse 8. Notice that John knew how to check to see if their repentance was real. How did he do it? He looked for the fruits of repentance! How was it he dared call them snakes? The fruit of repentance was missing! Do you know how much courage it takes to preach like John preached here? How did he know they were there for the wrong reason? It was because nothing had changed in their lives. They wanted the baptism of repentance without repenting! We too want the results of repentance; that is forgiveness, but we too want it without repenting! John knew that when true repentance took place, it would be very visible. It would be very apparent in the lives of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Since there was no evidence of repentance in their lives, then obviously they had not repented.

John wants to see such a change of mind that has brought with it a change of behavior. And he warns them not to think they are OK because they are Jews. Let me put that into language of our day. Do not think you are OK because you go to church. Do not think you are OK because your parents are Christians. Do not think you are OK because you got baptized. Do not think you are OK because you are a church member. You are only OK if you have truly repented! Many Jews thought that because they were Jews by blood, they were OK. When John says God is able of these stoned to raise up children to Abraham, I think he is saying that God does not need them. They need God. God, if He can create everything out of nothing, could then easily make children to Abraham from these stones. Actually, turning the nation of Israel from its sin was probably more difficult than raising up children from these

stones.

Then John lays a very serious truth before them in verse 9 (read). When a tree feller who uses an axe has his axe head resting on the root of the tree, he is ready to start chopping. That is where Israel stood with regard to the 70th week of Daniel and the wrath of God. In 4,000 years of history, they are now just over 2 years from this time. The illustration of the tree feller with his axe laid at the root indicates the chopping, the tribulation is about to begin. And the conclusion is that all those who have not repented are about to be cut down and thrown into the furnace of fire.

After John is done preaching this day, several groups came to question him as to how they should live in light of his preaching on sin. So look at verses 10-14 (read). I expect that these are people who have truly repented at John's preaching and have been baptized by him. And they want to know how they are now to live as true followers of God so that they might escape the wrath of God. And if I were to summarize all his answers, it would be for each one to live right in their own sphere of life. You see, for a tax collector to collect no more than that which was appointed, would indicate something had happened in his heart. This would be fruits of repentance. For the soldiers to not intimidate anyone, or not to accuse anyone falsely, or to be content with their wages, well, that would be fruits of repentance!

You see, every sphere of life that we may live in lends itself to some evil. Business men stand in great danger of not doing proper, godly business. But those who work for them stand in danger of not doing honest work or complaining about the boss. Nothing proves godliness more than righteous living. Every job, every profession has its tests. Christianity is simply doing right.

5. The speculation regarding John's ministry  
(15-18)

Well, no doubt John's preaching caused a lot of talk in the communities of Israel. And they questioned among themselves whether John was possibly the Messiah. So look at verses 15-18 (read). Alfred Eedersheim says, "It was only natural that the hearers wondered whether John himself was the Christ, since he thus urged repentance. For this was so closely connected in their thoughts with the Advent of the Messiah, that it was said, 'If Israel repented but one day, the Son of David would immediately come.'"

Well, John's answer to the people's question as to whether he was the Christ is that he is not. He said that Messiah was coming and he saw himself as so unimportant in comparison to the Messiah that he was not even worthy to tie the Messiah's shoes. He essentially said, "I am not even worthy to be His slave."

But then John told them some things about the Messiah that should have been amazing to them. First He said, "I baptize you with water, but the Messiah will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

Before we look at that, let me ask one further question here; where did the idea of baptism come from? Is it an altogether NT idea? Was baptism or the baptism of repentance John's idea, or was it a totally new concept introduced by John the Baptist?

Well, baptism itself was not a new concept. A baptism in the OT was a ceremonial washing with water. Go to Mark 7 (read verse 1-4). Note verse 2 speaks of 'unwashed' hands. Then note verse 3 speaks of washing their hands. Now notice verse 4 says they do not eat unless they 'wash'. The literal reading is, when they come home from the marketplace they do not eat unless they baptize. Then notice that it talks later about washing cups and pitchers and copper vessels and couches. The word for *wash* is again baptize. Go also to Hebrews 6 (read 1-2). Note that the word baptism is plural. They had numerous baptisms. Because of time, I cannot deal further here with the concept

of Jewish baptism. The internet has a lot of information for those who would wish to study this further.

So baptism was of Jewish origin. But what of the baptism of repentance? Was this John's idea? In John 1:33 John said that God sent him to baptize. This baptism was God's idea. When the Jews tried to trap Jesus and they asked Him by whose authority He did what He did, He said, "I will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things..." And here is His question: "The baptism of John, where was it from: From heaven or from men?" Well, if they answered His question they would trap themselves, so they said, "We do not know." Well, they did know. It was from God. Baptism was all in God's plan. So the baptism of John to repentance was a new thing, but it was not John's idea. It was the Lord that instructed this to be done. I cannot help but think that in baptism like this, God began to prepare for the Church.

And it appears that the baptism of repentance was a symbol of the cleansing of sin which repentance accomplished. When the Church was born in Acts 2, the very first converts to Christianity were baptized and it has been one of the primary ordinances of the Christian Church ever since.

Now, a word about the baptisms spoken of by John. Look at Matthew 3:11 (read). There are two or three baptisms referred to here. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. But what of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? There may be a further fulfillment of this in the tribulation, but certainly there is a partial fulfillment of it in the Church. We note here that it is Jesus Christ that will perform the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It says, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." In Acts 1:5, just before Jesus ascended to heaven He promised that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from then. That was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, the day of the birth of the Church. Every person who truly repents and receives Jesus Christ from

that day forward is baptized into the body of Christ. That is at least part of the fulfillment of what John said here.

There is a second part that must be mentioned. It says that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. There are numerous views of what this fire might speak about. I won't take time to discuss those except to say that I believe John is saying that Jesus will baptize people with the Holy Spirit, which will bring about holy people, and those who are not baptized with the Holy Spirit will be baptized with fire, hell fire. You see, what John saw was that the wrath of God was only a little more than 2 years away. The axe of the tribulation was already laid to the root. Then it would begin to chop, and at the end of that time, those who were not baptized with the Holy Spirit would be cast into hell, a baptism of or in fire.

So notice that verse 10 ends with the word fire. So does verse 11 and so does verse 12. And look at how the fire is described in verse 12 (read). The winnowing fan separated the chaff from the wheat and the chaff was gathered into the barns and the chaff was burned up. But I want you to notice what kind of fire it is speaking about. It is 'unquenchable' fire. As I see it, that can only refer to hell fire.

#### 6. The Imprisonment of John (Luke 3:19-20)

We go back to Luke 3 now. In verses 19-20 Luke speaks of the imprisonment of John the Baptist (read). John's imprisonment did not place at this point in time since right after this Luke records that John baptized Jesus. When John was imprisoned he never got out alive. But I think Luke inserts this account of Herod here so that we might see the boldness of John's preaching and what it cost him.

So we will look at these verses here briefly. You will remember that there was another Herod, the one who killed all the male children 2 years old and under, as recorded in Matthew 2. Herod the

tetrarch, mentioned in our verse here and in Luke 3:1 is the son of the other Herod, and he is a wicked man as was his father. And when John the Baptist was ministering and he was very successful in his ministry Herod put him in prison.

Well, Herod's reasons for putting John in prison might have been partially political. The historian Josephus claims that was the case. But the reasons were more likely due to John's reproof of his sinful life and especially his reproof of Herod's marriage to Herodias. Herodias had originally married her uncle, Herod Philip. She then left him and married Herod Antipas, who was her half uncle. In Luke 3 we learn that John the Baptist had rebuked Herod Antipas because he had, among other sins, taken his brother Philip's wife.

Mark 6:18 says that John told Herod it was not lawful for him to have Herodias. Well, no doubt the law John is referring to here is not Roman law. It is the law of the Word of God. Now, according to the Word of God, Herod's marriage to Herodias was unlawful for at least two reasons. First, a brother was not to marry the wife of a brother who had passed away (Lev. 18:16). Only if the brother's wife was childless when her husband died, was a brother to marry his brother's wife (Deut. 25:5) and Herodias had a child by her former husband. The second reason why it was not lawful for Herod to have Herodias was because Herodias' husband was alive. So they were living in adultery. When John said to Herod it was not lawful for him to have Herodias as wife, it would have been unlawful for both these reasons.

So let me ask another question: did the law of God regarding marriage have jurisdiction over such a wicked unbeliever as Herod? Let me put it this way, does the Bible have authority over unbelievers? That has been the position of the Church over the past 2,000 years. The Bible has authority over every human being, no matter of what culture, what country, what family or what religion one may be, the law of God has authority



over all mankind and that included wicked Herod.

Now I propose to you that John the Baptist did not hold to the then present, lenient views of the Jews on divorce. Let me reason that like this: If divorce dissolves the marriage bond, then the divorced person is no longer bound to the previous partner. If that were the case here, and Herodias is divorced from Herod's brother Philip, then she is no longer Philip's wife. So John should not have approached Herod on this, if divorce works. Second, if divorce dissolves the marriage bond, then Herod is not living in adultery with her either. In short, if John had viewed divorce as severing the marriage bond, if divorce works, then John should not have reproved Herod.

Let us dispense here with some special present day theology. Some such theology says, "Do not approach unbelievers about their sin. That is not their problem. Their problem is not sin, it is unbelief. So you have to bring them to faith first, and then the Holy Spirit will work in their lives and convict them of sin." To that I ask, does trusting in Christ for salvation precede repentance, or does repentance precede trusting in Christ for salvation? Well, Jesus answers that question in Mark 1:15. He said, "Repent and believe the Gospel." I cannot take time here to explain the whole doctrine of conversion, but repentance precedes believing the Gospel.

Oh, if only John the Baptist had understood present theology he could have saved his neck, literally. You see, if you take today's views of divorce and remarriage, John the Baptist was a very, very foolish man. If he only could have understood the Word of God in such a way as our modern preachers do, he would not have needed to risk his life! But poor John. Alas, he did not truly understand the law! Why would he approach a dangerous man like Herod about his wife? Herod was not a Christian. In such views as expressed above, John should have first tried to get Herod to believe in Christ. And then, since he had

married this woman in unbelief, he could have been forgiven his sin of adultery, since divorce was acceptable in such cases, and he could now be freely married to Herodias!

Well, I speak facetiously of course, not factually. The facts are these: if a man takes another man's wife while the other man is alive, he is committing adultery, a sin that must be repented of before one can be saved. Whether he is a believer or not does not change this sin any more than it changes drunkenness. Surely we cannot fail to note some very clear messages here. When unbelievers marry, adultery is still adultery! That is the problem. It is sin. Second, the law, the Word of God, has authority over unbelievers just as well as over believers. It is not a new teaching among Christians that the Bible is in authority over all of mankind. When is drunkenness wrong? Only after one is a believer or before as well? When is lying wrong, only after one is a believer or before as well? When is adultery wrong, only after one becomes a Christian or before as well? Can drunkenness be forgiven? Yes, but only after repentance, which means the drinker gives up alcohol. Can a liar be forgiven? Yes, but only after repentance. Can an adulterer be forgiven? Yes, but only after he or she ceases to live in adultery. How much plainer can things get?

I listened to a message recently that said that if a person is divorced 2 or 3 or 4 times, the Lord doesn't make things worse. And what would make things worse? Requiring the person to leave his present wife, or requiring him to go back to their first wife! But what did John the Baptist conclude with Herod and Herodias? His conclusion was that they were living in sin. But let me tell you what truly makes such a marriage worse. When you comfort a person living in such sin and say, "Now that you are a believer you can live with this last woman you have chosen. You can stay her. We don't want to make things worse." But when we counsel like this, things are made much worse; for now the person becomes cemented in sin. If our common present theology on this

subject is right, John was a very foolish man. Surely it is safer to conclude that he was a very honest, faithful, courageous preacher, and was right about Herod's sin!

Well, before we move on, let me give you a brief synopsis of the life of John the Baptist. He was promised to Zacharias when Zacharias one opportunity came in his old age to offer incense in the temple. His conception was miraculous. We read of his birth and naming and that he was blessed by God as a child. Then we lost track of him entirely until our present text, which took place when he was about 30 years of age. We have now seen his fiery zeal and his faithfulness in confronting sin in both the sacred and secular leaders of the day. And Luke, skipping ahead a bit, tells us of the consequences of his preaching. He was imprisoned by Herod at a place across the Dead Sea. But we will meet John again before his imprisonment actually happens, and we will see in later messages what happens to him.

#### F. The Baptism of the Messiah

We come now to our very last point in this part of the series, 'The Preparation Of The Messiah For The World.' It is the baptism of Christ. Let us begin by reading Matthew 3:13-17 (read).

I am glad I have had a number of years of ministry before I took on preaching through the Gospels for I have had to ponder many of these points before. One of those things I have pondered is this question: Why did Jesus need to be baptized? William Hendriksen says to this question, "The answer has not been specifically revealed to us."

Well, let us begin by a simple deduction that will help us. We can very safely conclude that Jesus' baptism was not a baptism of repentance. Only sinners need the baptism of repentance. As far as I can find, there is then only one other thing His baptism could have symbolized, and that is death burial and resurrection. For sinners, baptism pictures cleansing from sin and death burial and resurrection. For Christ, it can only picture the latter.

I believe that very early in the Gospels we get precursors of the Church. We get it in the numerous references made to the Gentiles already. But here I find a very large precursor. Baptism was the very first thing practiced after people were saved on the day of Pentecost, the day of the birth of the Church. It remains to this day as one of the primary ordinances of the Church.

Now notice what Jesus said in Matthew 3:15 (read). He said it was fitting for Him to be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. Jesus did not sin and did not need to repent. But He did need to do that which was right just as well as all others. And He said it was right to do this. Doing right is righteousness. And I believe that right here, before He began to minister, He realized that He would be killed and would be resurrected. I believe He knew the Jews would reject Him and that God would begin the Church. And right here, He prepared for that.

Now I have no doubt that when Jesus was baptized here, just as the Jews did in their baptisms, He was submerged in the water. I believe that immersion pictures both the washing from sins and death burial and resurrection better than any other form of baptism.

Verse 16 then tells us that the Holy Spirit descended like a dove and landed on Him. Now the dove is a very timid bird. It will only land where it is safe. It is easily frightened away. And I believe what makes it safe for the Holy Spirit to dwell in a person is when sin has been dealt with in that person. It is instructive then, that the third Person of the Triune God is primarily called the **Holy** Spirit in the NT. Romans 3:4 says that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. And here, at His baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus Christ and He was anointed for ministry.

And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Here we have the Triune God; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit." It is after this that

Jesus' ministry officially begins.

CONCL: Well, that brings to a close our second point on the life of Christ, which I called, 'The Preparation Of The Messiah For The World.' We have seen numerous events in the lives of both John and Jesus from before conception until they both reach about 30 years of age.

When we come back to this, we will begin on a point I have called, "The Authentication Of The Messiah To The World." Anyone that will sincerely study this next section of the Gospels will have to conclude that Jesus Christ is truly the Messiah! He is the Son of God!