

John's Ministry

📖 Luke 3:7-20

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Last time we were introduced to John's call to ministry. John lived a solitary life in the wilderness of Judea for many years, in the area north of the Dead Sea, which is east of Jerusalem near ancient Jericho. Luke 3:1 mentions five Roman rulers that ruled simultaneously when the word of God came to John. The key date is the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. This year is debated as to whether it began with Tiberius' accession to the throne as co-Emperor with Augustus Caesar or whether it began with his first year as sole Emperor. The evidence of Roman reckonings is on the side of his sole reign as Emperor. The fifteenth year would have been AD29. At the same time Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, a fact attested to by an inscription found at Caesarea by the Sea. Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great, was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis. Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene. In 3:2 there were two Jewish rulers that ruled in the land. Annas and Caiaphas were in the high priesthood. The high priest recognized by the Romans was Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas, but Annas was the real power behind him, and the high priest recognized by the Jews based on his heredity. It was during this very complicated political situation that the word of God came to John, a technical phrase referring to His call into ministry. This John was the son of Zacharias, the Levitical priest, and John was at this time living in the wilderness. In 3:3, in AD29, he came into all the district around the Jordan, traversing both sides of the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John's baptism was a water baptism that would bring spiritual renewal in their relationship with God under the Mosaic Covenant. In order for John to baptize someone they needed to repent of the Pharisaic teachings of the Law and bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance. These fruits involved an ethical change in behavior in accordance with the Covenant. The ethical change would prepare the person for the Messiah who would provide forgiveness of sins. By being baptized the person was saying that they would believe in the Messiah when He came. John, therefore, was preparing the people of Israel for the Lord to come. In 3:4 he says this was predicted by Isaiah the prophet and quotes Isa 40:3-5. In verse 4, Luke identifies John as the voice of one crying in the wilderness who would make ready the ways of the Lord, make his paths straight. In 3:5, when the Lord comes, every ravine will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be brought low. This means the earth's surface will undergo a geophysical change such that it is basically flat. Further, the crooked will become straight and the rough roads smooth. This refers to the millennial road system that will make travel

a straight path up to Jerusalem. In 3:6, all flesh will see the salvation of God. They will see God's glorious deliverance of Israel when He establishes them in His kingdom. The verses are Luke's perspective of the Messiah at that time and they are consistent with the vision of the OT prophets. Luke wants us to put ourselves in the shoes of those who experienced these things first hand. They did not see the Messiah coming once to die for sin and a second time to reign in glory. It is only as the story unfolds that we learn that the nation Israel will not prepare for the Lord's coming and as such they will reject their Messiah, crucify Him and go to judgment. Then it becomes clear why Messiah left and will remain absent until a future generation of Israel receives Him.

Tonight, we see the first hint that John and Messiah will be rejected by John's imprisonment. In 3:7, John was baptizing at the Jordan and **he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"** It's interesting that he mentions **crowds** going out to be baptized. Pentecost said, "John's ministry seems to have gained an immediate following, for Luke recorded that crowds came out to be baptized by him."¹ Fairbairn commented on the extent of the impact of John's preaching saying, "The Great Prophet did not prophesy in vain. He moved Israel as Israel had not been moved for centuries....Crowds from the cities and villages, from Judaea and Galilee, Peraea and the land east of the Jordan, Pharisees and Sadducees, priest and Levites, scribes and elders of the people, publicans and proselytes, warriors from the Roman and Herodian armies, came to hear the prophet..."² The words **he began saying** to them are an imperfect in the Greek. The word *began* is in italics to convey that the translators interpreted this as an inceptive imperfect, emphasizing the initiation of this message, perhaps continuing. However, it probably means that whenever people came out to be baptized by John, he said, **You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?** That's not exactly the kind of message one might preach when people entered a local church today. But the value is that the tone and words would shock the audience into considering the question. Sometimes people need to be jolted into considering the times and seasons at hand. And the prophets are well known for using this type of language to electrify their audience. Interestingly, in the parallel of Matt 3:7 it says he said this to "the Pharisees and Sadducees," and not to **the crowds** at large. How are we to reconcile this? Probably John made his remarks to the crowds in general, but they were aimed chiefly at the Pharisees and Sadducees that came among them. The words **You brood of vipers** are designed to convict of sin. The word translated **brood** is γεννημα and means "child" or "offspring." The word **vipers** is simply "snakes," but it is usually used of a venomous snake. The expression **brood of vipers** is only used three other times, in Matt 3:7; 12:34 and 23:33, and each time it is used of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It is an apt term to describe them since they were spewing forth venomous doctrine. Probably the reference to the viper has behind it a reference to the devil, since all false doctrine comes from him. What John may be saying then, is that they were children of the devil, not children of Abraham, and that this was evident from their doctrine.

Now the intent of his question, **who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?** is not entirely clear. Is it a genuine inquiry into who might have given them warning? Probably not. The parallel in John 1:19ff says that

priests and Levites were sent out to find out who John was. John probably used this language to convey to them the real purpose of his ministry; which is to **warn of the wrath to come**. The **wrath to come** is a phrase lifted from the OT that refers to the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord was the language used of the OT prophets to refer to the time of trouble that would fall upon the world just prior to Messiah coming in His kingdom. We know this time as the tribulation. It was described in the OT as a time of tribulation, a time of distress, a time of darkness, a time of destruction, a time of unparalleled judgment, and basically aligns with the 70th week of Daniel. So terrible was this time that some rabbis said, "Let Him come, but let me not see Him."³ From John's perspective this time was imminent and Messiah would soon be on the scene to establish His kingdom. This is perfectly normal for an OT prophet. Therefore, he asked, **Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?** in order to warn them of the necessity of preparing for His arrival. The means of preparation was receiving John's baptism with repentance, for apart from repentance they could not escape God's wrath.

In order to demonstrate genuine repentance, John says in verse 8, **bear fruits in keeping with repentance**. Genuine repentance is "a change of mind." They would be changing their mind about the Pharisaic and Sadducean interpretations of the Mosaic Covenant. The new fruits would be the guarantee to John that they had genuinely had a change of mind and had returned to the Mosaic Covenant. The phrase **in keeping with** indicates the consistency of the new fruits with true repentance. Clearly then, John was not interested in a mere ritual of baptism. He was looking for an ethical change of behavior that illustrated repentance. Edersheim said, "... theirs must be a repentance not only in profession, but of heart and mind, such as would yield fruit, both good and visible." What this fruit would look like is described in verses 10-14 in terms of how they treat others.

John, knowing his audience, was quick to follow up saying, **and do not begin to 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**. The Pharisees thought that Abraham was a protection from the wrath of God. Fruchtenbaum explained, "In pharisaic theology, there was a concept referred to as *zekhut avot*, "the merits of the fathers." It taught that any descendant of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was protected from divine punishment simply on "the merits of the fathers."⁴ Because they were descended from the patriarchs they were protected from wrath by their merits. Those of Gentile nations had no such heritage, so the wrath was reserved for them. Bock said, "Such heritage was thought to bring protection from God since judgment comes on the nations, not on the people of Abraham." However, the only real protection would be for the believing remnant of Israel. The Hebrew prophet Amos taught that the non-remnant would not enjoy this protection. 5:18-20, "Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light; As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?" The Jews longed for the day of the Lord because it would mean the destruction of the Gentile nations, but Amos revealed that theology to be incorrect, the non-remnant of Israel would also be destroyed in the day of the Lord wrath. The real issue was not physical descent from Abraham, but spiritual descent, that is, having a faith

like Abraham. Just as Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness, so it was required for all Jews to believe in order to be spared the wrath. John explains this need for faith by saying, **for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.** Perhaps John pointed to some stones on the banks of the Jordan River and reminiscent of the 12 stones the Jews placed there when they crossed the Jordan into the promised land, so John said that **God was able to raise up from these stones children to Abraham** from them. The **stones** are probably a foreshadowing of Gentile salvation, those not descended physically from Abraham, but through faith, spiritually descended from him. And truly when we Gentiles have a faith like Abraham we become children of Abraham. In any event, physical descent was not sufficient for exemption from wrath, but spiritual descent is. Thus, the need for repentance was very real, but the Pharisees and Sadducees did not think they needed to repent.

Yet the need was urgent. John says in 3:9, **Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** John viewed the day of the Lord's wrath as imminent. **The axe** was **already laid at the root of the trees.** Note that the picture is of many **trees**, plural, not one tree, singular. The axe of the Lord was about to cut down a forest of trees. The **trees** represent individual Israelites. The location of chopping would be at the **root** of those trees, not the trunk. The implication being that there would be no possibility of recovery. But importantly, in 3:9b John distinguishes some of the trees from other trees saying, **so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.** It would only be the trees that didn't repent and bear good fruit that would be cut down, those that did repent and bear good fruit would not. Thus, a distinction would be made between the remnant and the non-remnant. Obviously, the non-remnant at the time referred to non-repentant Jews such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, but ultimately any Jew who continued to follow them and not repent as John warned. Not only will they be **cut down** but they will also be **thrown into the fire.** The **fire** is a picture of consuming judgment. It is a note of finality of judgment with no further opportunity. They would end up in the lake of fire. John's point is obvious. Each Israelite needed to make a personal decision to repent or else suffer the consequences. The wrath was imminent; the day of the Lord ushering in the Messiah's coming to establish His kingdom was at hand and Messiah will judge each Israelite based on his or her response. To gain forgiveness of sins and enjoy kingdom entrance they needed to repent immediately and when Messiah arrived, put their faith like Abraham in Him.

In verse 10 the **crowds** understood the urgency of this message and **were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"** This is a question about preparation. How could they prepare? What did the fruits of repentance look like? The same question came from three groups; in v 11, the general populace, vv 12-13, tax collectors, and v 14, soldiers. Neither Matthew nor Luke nor John record this question and John's answer. And what's interesting is that it's evident from their question that they took John's message seriously and wanted to change their lives. This means they recognized their sinfulness and their need to be prepared for Messiah's coming. The first group in verse 11 is the general populace. They came saying, **"Then what shall we do?"** When they came John would say, **The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has**

food is to do likewise. To share with others is contrary to human nature. Human nature is to hoard wealth. John told them to go contrary to human nature, to **share** wealth, especially with those who are in need. He said the same for **food**. No further explanation was needed. To share with others is an expression of loving one's neighbor. That was the second greatest commandment. This answer is a practical one. There was no need to live an ascetic life or engage in ritual acts or offer more sacrifices. The issue was practical, as it always is; meeting the needs of others is the real fruit of repentance.

The second group, in verse 12 is tax collectors. They **also came to be baptized, and** said, **"Teacher, what shall we do?"** In other words, what does repentance look like for us? A little bit about the tax collection system should be understood to understand John's answer. Bock said, "Taxes in the Roman Empire were a complex affair. There were different ranks of collectors, and there were different taxes to collect. The system of collection was known as tax(or toll) farming. City rulers leased the right to collect taxes to an individual or group, who had bid for this right and had paid for it in advance. Thus, the collector would not only have to collect the tax that Rome had stipulated, but he also would have to add a surcharge to meet his expenses, an additional charge over which he had total control. In most of the empire this job of collection went to wealthy Romans who were designated "publicans." They in turn would hire others to do the actual collection, the "tax collectors" proper... And at times these tax collectors would hire subordinates, becoming "head tax collectors."... As one can see, this system of multiple collectors, each of whom could add his own surcharge, could create great great abuse." Obviously it was quite hated, not only by Jews, but also by Romans. Jews lumped tax collectors in with prostitutes and robbers and excommunicated them from the community. Matthew was one of those Jewish tax collectors that was ostracized by the Jewish community. But interestingly, tax collectors responded to John's ministry. They knew they were sinners in need of forgiveness and wanted to know what they should do to prepare for Messiah?

In verse 13, John answers, **Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.** In other words, they needed to conduct themselves honorably and fairly. Importantly, John did not say that they should quit their jobs as tax collectors. They just needed to perform their jobs honorably and fairly. Bock said, "What John argues is that taxes should be collected without extortion, surcharges, kickbacks, payoffs, or bribes." The issue again was practical righteousness, be honest and fair in your business practices. This was the outworking of repentance for tax collectors.

The third group is in verse 14, the soldiers. **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."** These were Jewish soldiers. There are three possible armies they were a part of. Antipas' army in Perea included foreign troops, some of whom were Jews. Another group of soldiers were Judean police. A third group were soldiers who were hired to protect the tax collectors. This last possibility is intriguing because the question they ask in the Greek in verse 14 is literally, "What should we also do?" As if they may be the protectors of the tax collectors. That they are is supported by the fact that when John

answers he begins by saying **“Do not take money from anyone by force.”** They were both involved in collecting money. These soldiers knew that they were sinners and needed to change their lives in preparation for Messiah's coming. John's response to them is to do three things. First, **Do not take money from anyone by force.** Soldiers are in a position to use force to extort money. They were doing this to help the tax collectors and get kickbacks. But they should not do this anymore. Second, **do not...accuse anyone falsely.** The Greek word *συκαφαντεω* means “to harass, blackmail, shake down, squeeze.” It seems to relate to money as well, blackmailing people to extort money. Third, instead they should **be content with their wages.** The soldier's wage was pretty meager, only supplying enough for basic food and shelter. And it would be tempting to use one's authority to exact money from others in order to supplement their wage. But John says, **be content with your wages.** This would prepare them for meeting Messiah.

In conclusion to verses 7-14, the basic response to John's warning that the day of the Lord's wrath was on the verge of coming was to ask, “What shall we do?” In response, John gave different responses depending on the audience. First, the general populace should share with others in need. Second, tax collectors should be fair. Third, soldiers should be content with their wages. Such responses would be consistent with genuine repentance and prepare them for the coming Messiah. Interestingly, the Pharisees and Sadducees did not ask “What shall we do?” The reason is because they saw no need for repentance. They considered themselves protected from wrath by the merits of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It was a meritorious system that gave them a false dependence that led to their destruction.

In verse 15 we see the atmosphere created by John's ministry. **Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ.** John's preaching of the nearness of the wrath of God coming and the axe already being laid at the root of the trees led the **people to** become uncommonly expectant of Messiah's advent. The words that **all were wondering in their hearts** indicates not just private thoughts, but public discussion and debate about the identity of John. They thought perhaps John was the Messiah. As it says at the end of the verse, **about John, as to whether he was the Christ. Christ** is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Messiah. They were debating whether John was the Messiah. That this discussion was widespread is evident from the parallel in John 1 where the priests and Levites ask John, “Who are you?” And John confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” They asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” The questioning shows just how impactful John's ministry. They knew he was an important figure. They just didn't know what figure he was. And they kept guessing but they couldn't guess correctly. John himself said, “I am a voice crying in the wilderness. But the news of his ministry spread throughout the land and inevitably some were suspecting he was Messiah, but he was not, he was a voice.

In verse 16 he makes clear that he is not the Messiah. **John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but one is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His**

sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." In effect, John denied that he was the Messiah by saying that his ministry is nothing compared to Messiah's ministry. There are many reasons John could not be Messiah, but he mentions two in particular; one, his baptism was with water but the Messiah's would be with the Holy Spirit and fire, and two, the Messiah was mightier than he. Let's start with the first one, John's baptism was a **baptism...with water**. This was a baptism of repentance that was required in order to prepare for Messiah's coming. It pictured renewal in the individual's relationship with God. Messiah's baptism would be much different. He would baptize **with the Holy Spirit and fire**. **Fire** usually has a very negative connotation, so the baptism **with the Holy Spirit and fire** are two separate baptisms. Further evidence of two baptisms is that in the next verse the explanation is that, "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Those who are baptized with **the Holy Spirit** will be the wheat, gathered into His barn. Those who are baptized with **fire** will be the chaff, burned up with His unquenchable fire. Thus, the Messiah will provide two baptisms. The one for the remnant of Israel is **with the Holy Spirit** and the other is for the non-remnant, which is **with...fire**. One brings salvation and the other judgment. Now, often it is thought that what John was predicting here was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, when the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to baptize and begin the Church. But John was not the prophet of the Church. John was the prophet to Israel.

What happened on the day of Pentecost was, at most, a foretaste of the baptism with the Holy Spirit that will take place upon the remnant of Israel when Messiah comes again. But more likely what happened on Pentecost was an application of the prophecy of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and not fulfillment. A prophecy can only have one fulfillment, and the fulfillment will be at the Second Coming, but it can have multiple applications due to one point of similarity, and that happened in Acts 2. The point of similarity is that on the Day of Pentecost a pouring out of the Spirit took place. (Acts 2:34). However, when this prophecy is fulfilled at the Second Advent, the fullness of Spirit baptism will take place for Israel. All that it will entail is something yet to be seen. But it's only then that the prophecy of John be fulfilled. Clearly John was envisioning the day of the Lord's wrath which would culminate in this baptism of the Spirit upon the remnant of Israel and a baptism of fire coming upon the non-remnant to prepare a people for entrance into the kingdom. Until then there is an application of the baptism of the Spirit for the Church that is similar but not as great. That's the first distinction between John and Messiah; Messiah's baptism is greater.

The second distinction between John and Messiah is related to might. John says, **one is coming who is mightier than I**. The word **mightier** is ισχυροσ, a power or strength word. Here it refers to Messiah's strength. Perhaps this strength is due to His anointing by the Holy Spirit at His upcoming baptism. But whatever it is due to, John sees the Messiah as far **mightier** than himself. Further, John's statement, **I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals**, makes him extremely low by comparison. To get the effect of how low John saw himself, a Rabbinic commentary on the NT Gospels says, "All manner of service that a slave must render to his master, a student must render to his teacher, except that of taking off his shoes." Thus, the one difference in service

between a slave and a student was that only the slave was **to untie** and remove the master's shoe. What John stated was that he was not even fit to do the service of a slave. John was putting himself below a slave. This was a position lower than the lowest possible position. And in comparison to Messiah, he was less than a slave, and if we have a right evaluation of ourselves, we are too.

In verse 17 he explains the two baptisms of Messiah, **His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.** This is the familiar imagery of the harvest. The farmer would harvest the grain and place it on a threshing floor, tossing it in the air to separate the wheat from the chaff. Then he would gather the wheat into the barn and burn the chaff with fire. The farmer is the Messiah. His threshing floor is the judgment where the separation is made. The wheat is the believing remnant gathered into His barn, which is the kingdom. The chaff is the non-remnant that are burned up with unquenchable fire. These things relate to Messiah's Second Coming, though for John he only saw one coming.

In verse 18, **So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.** The **gospel** is "good news ." The good news at this time was that the Messiah and what He brings, forgiveness of sins, was near.

And then in verses 19 and 20 Luke quickly wraps up his reporting on the ministry of John, **But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done, Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.** The **Herod** referred to here is Antipas, also known as "Herod the Fox." According to 3:1 he was **tetrarch** of "Galilee." John did not hesitate to **reprimand him because of Herodias, his brother's wife.** **Herodias** had been the wife of his brother, Philip, but they divorced and Antipas married her. This violated the command of Leviticus 18:16 that one should not marry a near blood relative. But not only did John reprimand him for this marriage, but **because of all the wicked things which Herod had done.** None of these are listed, but Antipas had a very evil career. And to top it all off verse 20 adds the worst crime he ever committed was **he locked up John in prison.** For the time being John would remain alive, but it would not be long before John would be executed by beheading according to the wishes of **Herodias** expressed through her daughter's request. So very abruptly John's ministry comes to a close. This foreshadowed the nations response to Messiah as well. He would be rejected and crucified just as John.

In summary, John came to fulfill the role of forerunner of Messiah. His role was to prepare the people for the Messiah's arrival. To do this he proclaimed a baptism of repentance, requiring people to change their lives to make ready the way of the Lord. In verse 7, crowds of people came out from all over Israel to be baptized by him. His message to them was designed to electrify the streets of Israel, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Among the crowds were the Pharisees and Sadducees, those the Gospel authors consistently refer to as the offspring of the devil. The wrath of the day of the Lord was near and so in verse 8, they needed to bear fruits in keeping with repentance. They should not say to themselves, "We have the merits

of Abraham" and are therefore exempt from wrath, for God is able to raise up spiritual children that are not descended from Abraham, any and all Gentiles who have faith. In verse 9 the need for repentance was urgent, "Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree or individual, that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." These would be the non-remnant, destined for destruction. In verse 10 the crowds were asking him, "What shall we do?" His answer in verse 11 to the general populace was to share with others, something contrary to nature. In verse 12 and 13 the tax collectors who came to be baptized were asking "What shall we do?" His answer to them was to be fair in their exacting of taxes. In verse 14 some soldiers asked, "What shall we also do?" They were probably connected to the tax collectors, so the answer is along the same lines. They should not use force or blackmail to exact money, but rather be content with their wages. By doing these things they would manifest true repentance and preparedness to meet the Messiah. In verse 15, the ministry of John caused quite a stir and people were expecting the Messiah and discussing whether John was the Messiah. But in verse 16 John answered that he was not the Messiah for two reasons; his was a baptism of water while Messiah's was of the Holy Spirit and fire; and Messiah was mightier than he. In verse 17, when Messiah comes, He will come as Judge and divide the remnant from the non-remnant, and take the remnant into the kingdom but the non-remnant will go to eternal fire. In verse 18 Luke summarizes John's ministry as one of preaching the good news to the people that Messiah was near and He would provide forgiveness of sins. In verses 19-20 John's ministry is quickly summed up, his reprimand of Herod Antipas, resulted in him being thrown in prison, later to be executed by beheading. Thus, the stage was set for Messiah to come, the one John would point out as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

In conclusion, what can we learn? First, there was an initial excitement at the preaching of John. There is often initial excitement over the things of Christ. But obviously it quickly wore off. This is always a danger. One must continue to be stirred up to zeal and couple that with expanding knowledge to continue faithfully. Second, repentance is a genuine Christian response to personal sin. While the example given in Luke is to the Jews living under the law and the purpose is in preparation for the coming Messiah, the same meaning and effect of repentance is a genuine part of the Christian life. The Christian is to repent when he has sin in his life. This should result in a change of behavior. True repentance always results in a change of behavior. Third, proclaiming a message of repentance is not popular. John was eventually locked away. If you try to tell people they need to change their life, they won't like it.

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 87.

² Quoted by J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 88.

³ *Sanhedrin*, 98b, in *The Babylonian Talmud*, 665.

⁴ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Yeshua: The Life of Messiah from a Jewish Perspective*, 500.