



Repentance Tabernacle Church

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John the Baptist!

Lesson Text: Matthew 3:1-12

Focus Verses: Malachi 4:5-6 - ⁵Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ⁶And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Matthew 3:8 - Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

Truth About Covenant: God sent John to call people to repent in preparation for the Messiah.

Covenant Context: As the Old Testament closed, the New Testament opened with a feeling of anticipation. Breaking four hundred years of silence from God, John the Baptist announced the kingdom of heaven was at hand and called for repentance. His role was to point to the Messiah who was about to extend a New Covenant to take away the sin of the world.

The New Testament picks up where the prophet Malachi said it would—introducing Elijah, kind of. The Gospel of Matthew records the appearance of John the Baptist and describes Him in unusual terms (Matthew 3:1-4). This was Elijah-type behavior. Plus, John was prophetically announced in Luke 1:17. The prelude to the Day of the Lord is here; Elijah has come. Jesus Himself, speaking of John, proclaimed that in John, Elijah had “*come already*” (Matthew 17:12). Since that was the case, the Day of the Lord had also arrived, the kingdom of God was breaking in, and the promises of God were manifesting.

Late in John’s short life, he was thrown into prison for speaking the truth to a sinful Herod, and John sent people to Jesus to ask the all-important question: Was Jesus really the arrival of the embodied Day of the Lord or did the long wait continue? Jesus responded by highlighting the fulfillment of Isaiah 35 that detailed the “*signs*” of God’s reign (Matthew 11:4-5). In other words, the fruits of Jesus’ own ministry confirmed the ministry of John. Elijah had come and the Lord had followed.

John was after a repentance that affected the heart and the hands—belief and practice. This type of holistic repentance was the only appropriate way to be “prepared for the Lord.” The truth of repentance rings in our lives today. We too must prepare our hearts to wholeheartedly follow Jesus Christ. The fertile ground in which the seeds of salvation can be sown is a repentant and prepared life. Let us not move past this moment in our walk with God too quickly. We must prepare our lives through repentance if we are to be good ground for God’s Word and Spirit, and this repentance must be in our heart and come out of our hands—our lives must change to be aligned with God.

Jesus’ increase, but John decrease (John 3:30). John willingly decreased because Jesus’ arrival meant John’s prophetic role was complete. God performed what He had promised: The Lord had arrived. However, Jesus declared John to be the greatest prophet (Luke 7:28). John was great because he held the great privilege of announcing the greatest of the Old Testament prophecies: the Messiah is here. He was privileged to announce the kingdom of God’s arrival, but those after John—including us—get to live in the kingdom of God. What a privilege!

Even though John served a temporal, transitional role, his example still serves us well today. John’s entire life revolved around pointing to the one who would ultimately save and make the difference the world so desperately needed. We are called to live out a similar role. The apostle Peter declared we are brought to Jesus Christ so we can proclaim His praises to others (1 Peter 2:9-11). The apostle Paul called us “ambassadors” for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). In Acts 1 Jesus Himself called those who would receive His Spirit *witnesses*. All this adds up to a special purpose for the life of every Christian. **We are to be signposts that lead others to Jesus.** Like John, we must decrease so Jesus Christ may increase. We must point to the one who is greater than we are.

Paul tutored the church of Thessalonica with words from First Thessalonians 5:2-5, 9-11. God’s desire—is to protect and reward His children. We are aware of Christ’s return; First Thessalonians 5:5 teaches that we are “*children of the day*.” Knowing that God’s goodness and patience leads us to repentance, let us come before God wholly prepared for His arrival in our lives and His return to the world. Through repentance let us prepare our hearts for our King to come back.