

## Luke 3:7-14

Introduction: this gives us a glimpse into the ministry of John. Repentance always looks the same, while it always looks different.

### John boldly warns possible baptism candidates about God's anticipated wrath—3:7-9

- “Therefore”—because God's Word came upon him (cf. 3:2)
- 1) He **identifies** them—3:7a *“Offspring of vipers!”* (cf. Jesus in Matthew 23:33)
  - a) These are the Sadducees and Pharisees—Matthew 3:7
  - b) They are regarded as being in opposition to God, being both spiritually poisonous and potentially dangerous to others.
- 2) He **questions** them—3:7b *Who warned you<sup>pl</sup> to flee from the coming wrath?*
  - a) John compares the crowd to snakes who flee their desert holes when the heat of a fire drives them out. (NET Bible)
  - b) John is referring to the Day of the Lord, a time of judgment. It will occur during the time of the Tribulation.
  - c) It is not wrong to want to escape God's wrath. But if you want to escape God's wrath, you must do so through God's appointed way.
- 3) He **commands** them—3:8
  - a) Acknowledge your sin—<sup>8</sup> *Therefore, produce fruits compatible with repentance,*
    - i) Genuine repentance manifests itself in concrete action.
    - ii) Matthew 3:2 records, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.”
  - b) Surrender your false security—*and do not begin to say in yourselves* (“don't even begin to think”), *‘We have Abraham as our father.’* (cf. John 8:39)
    - i) Their disobedience to John's immersion would not thwart God's purpose—*Because I tell you<sup>pl</sup>, that God is able from these stones to raise up children of Abraham.*
      - (1) The issue of becoming God's child is not a matter of inheritance, but of God's powerful work.
      - ii) Others depend on something they have done (prayed, baptized, etc.)
- 4) He **warns** them—3:9
  - a) God's sudden judgment stands prepared—<sup>9</sup> *And **even now** the axe is laid to the root of the trees.*
  - b) Destruction by God is imminent—*Therefore any tree that is characterized by not producing good fruit is being cut down and thrown into the fire.*

### John teaches with cultural specific examples of works that demonstrate genuine repentance—3:10-14 (cf. 3:4-5)

- 1) Generally—3:10-11 (those who heard John's words to the religious leaders)
  - Compassionately meet the needs of those around you
  - a) When someone is cold—*“The one who has two tunics must share with the one who has none,*
  - b) When someone is hungry—*and the one who has food must do similarly.*
- 2) Specifically—3:12-14

- a) Tax collectors—3:12-13 (cf. Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10)
  - i) Who were they?
    - (1) The tax collectors would bid to collect taxes for the Roman government and then add a surcharge, which they kept. Since tax collectors worked for Rome, they were viewed as traitors to their own people and were not well liked. Yet John's call moved even them.
  - ii) What did they ask?—3:12 <sup>12</sup> *Then the tax collectors came to be immersed, and said to him, “Teacher, what should we do?”*
  - iii) They are commanded to be compassionately fair toward others—3:13 <sup>13</sup> *And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized.”*
    - (1) He does not tell them to stop being tax collectors, but rather in a business known for insatiable greed and dishonesty he tells them to be men who are honest and who demonstrate integrity.
- b) Soldiers—3:14 (cf. centurion in Luke 7:1-10; Cornelius in Acts 10)
  - i) <sup>14</sup> *Now some soldiers were asking him, saying, “And as for us, what should we do?”*
    - (1) These were likely Gentile men who assisted the tax collectors. (cf. Zacchaeus in Luke 19:8 and the use of false accusations)
  - ii) *And he said to them,*
    - (1) Negatively; don't abuse your position by taking advantage of others through intimidation—“Do not take money from anyone by force or by false accusation,
    - (a) This refers to a procedure by which someone could bring charges against an individual and be paid a part of the fine imposed by the court. Soldiers could do this to supplement their pay, and would thus be tempted to make false accusations.
    - (2) Positively; be content—*and be satisfied with your<sup>pl</sup> compensation.”*
      - (a) Don't grumble and complain. Be faithful and satisfied.
      - (b) The average soldier received 225 denarii/year, from which food, clothing, and weapons were often deducted.
- 3) These three commands—be generous, be honest, and be content—can be summarized in one command: love your neighbor as yourself.

**Take-home truth:** Repentance always looks the same, while it always looks different.