

Following Jesus to the Jordan

Text: Matt. 3:1-17

Introduction

- John the Baptist is down at the river Jordan preaching (repentance and baptizing).
- There are many that are bystanders and some who are just passing by, and hear John's preaching about the Messiah's coming.
- Then comes Jesus to the Jordan to be baptized of John (to fulfill the will of God).
- What are we seeing here in following Jesus down to the Jordan and getting baptized?

I. The Prophet Baptizing – (1-4) (PP)

A. (3:1) **wilderness** - not a desolate, desert-like area - *probably small communities or villages*.

- Was country area, John emerged with **cry for repentance**: the ***Messiah is at hand***.
- God uses the wilderness (**quiet places**) to ***prepare and launch the ministry of men***.
- ***Quietness is essential***: "Be still and know that I am God" (**Psalm 46:10**).
- God has a **place for every believer to serve**. John's place was in the wilderness;
- Christ's was in the **cities and synagogues** as well as the countryside.
- Believers should witness / prophets should preach wherever - **wilderness or in city**.

B. (3:2-6) John's message **to the people**: "repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

- Message **fulfilled prophecy** - four hundred years since a prophet had arisen in Israel.
- Malachi had been the last. **John's appearance made a thunderous impact**.
- John preached the **gospel to all**—to the **general public** and to the **religionist alike**.
- No one was excluded from the gospel (Matthew 2:2-6, 7-10, 11-12).

His message included three points:

1. "Repent"

(Luke 13:3) "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish".

2. The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. John meant two things.

- 1) The Kingdom is the Lord's. Jesus is sovereign Lord of the Kingdom of Heaven.
- 2) The Kingdom is of Heaven. It is not of this earth. It is spiritual; it is not physical.

3. Every man is to "***prepare ye the way of the Lord***" (v.3).

(Isaiah 40:3) "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert, a highway for our God".

The cry of the prophet is:

- 1) Man has an inadequate righteousness; therefore, repentance is needed.
- 2) The present world is an inadequate world; therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is needed.

C. Preaching is to be **to the people, not before them**.

- Is to be **affirmative, authoritative**, and **positive**, not uncertain and negative.
- ***Gospel is not open for discussion***; it **not just one of many possibilities; it is God's**.
- (John 8:24) "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins".
- (Acts 4:12) "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved".

D. John's message was the message of a prophet: (v.4)

- He dressed and ate as a prophet;
(2 Kings 1:8) " And they answered him, He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite".
(Leviticus 11:22) "Even these of them ye [the prophet] may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind".

II. The People to be Baptized – (5-12)

A. John's message bore fruit to many people. (PP) (vs.5-6)

- The crowds gathered and listened to his preaching, and they confessed their sins and were baptized (v.6).
- The world should hear, respect, and respond to the messenger of God.
- God forgives sin when a person confesses and repents of his sin.
(Acts 5:31) "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins".
(Acts 13:38) "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins".

1. Confession is necessary; it is part of repentance (v.6).

(1 John 1:9) "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".

(Psalm 32:5) "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin".

(Proverbs 28:13) "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy".

2. A person who says he is innocent and refuses to believe and admit his sin is condemned already (v.6).

(John 3:18) "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God".

(1 John 1:8) "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us".

B. John's message to the Religionists, (PP) the Pharisees and Sadducees - (7-10).

- The religionists were a fact-finding commission sent from Jerusalem to investigate the phenomenal reports about John and his ministry:

John's message was fourfold:

1. Flee the wrath to come.

- The wrath of God was coming upon all who were only spectators (nonbelievers).
- Baptism by itself was not enough, no matter how many baptisms a person went through.
(John 3:36) "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him".

2. Repent.

- Verbal repentance is not enough.
- Just being present in the midst of those who worship God is not enough.

➤ **Repentance requires a change in conduct.**

➤ The religionists rejected the message; **they did not repent.**

➤ Jesus informed us of their decision. What a warning (vs.7-10)!

(Luke 7:29-30) "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him".

Two types people often shut themselves off from God:

1) Persons of **high estate** (those of wealth and social standing).

2) Persons of **religion** (the self-righteous).

(Matthew 6:21) "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also".

3. Heritage is of no value.

➤ The **righteousness of others** cannot make a person acceptable to God.

➤ Each person has to stand before God as an individual.

Many people rest in two deceptions:

(1) the godliness of family or friends, and (2) the righteousness of some good behavior.

(Luke 3:8) "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham".

(John 8:39) "They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham".

4. Judgment is at hand.

➤ **Every tree** that does not bear fruit shall be chopped down and destroyed.

➤ We must never forget that judgment is inclusive; **it includes all.**

➤ It does not matter how high (position) nor how green (appearance) the tree is.

➤ **It must bear fruit or else be removed and destroyed (v.10)**

(John 3:19) "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil".

(Romans 14:12) "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God".

C. John's message to all: (vs.11-12)

1) Christ the Messiah "**cometh**" (v.11); "prepare ye the way of the Lord" (v.3).

➤ Christ is greater. Christ alone is to be exalted. John exalted Christ, not himself.

2) Christ shall baptize – (with the Holy Ghost – Acts 2).

3) **Christ shall judge and purge.** (v.12)

➤ His ministry was both to gather wheat, which is an act of love, and to separate and dispense with the chaff, which is an act of justice.

a. There is a **mixture of wheat and chaff** right now: a **mixture of true profession and false profession**; **true righteousness** and **false righteousness** (v.12)

b. There is a **destiny for both the wheat and the chaff.**

○ The Kingdom of Heaven is the destiny of the wheat.

○ The unquenchable fire is the destiny of the chaff (v.12).

III. The Practice of Baptism— (13-17) (Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; **John 1:28-29**)

1. The startling request of Jesus: To be baptized (v.13)

- **John's baptism** was a call for men to take a stand and to become identified with a life of repentance and righteousness.
- **Jesus needed no repentance;** Purchaser of righteousness, the Ideal Man.
- **His righteousness** was the pattern, that could stand for and cover every man.
- Why would Jesus be baptized? Simply, in His own words, "**to fulfill all righteousness**"

2. The humbling reaction of John: Humility (v.14)

- John argued against Jesus coming to him for baptism.
- Why? John simply said, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?"

He was saying at least *two things.*

1. He was not worthy to baptize Christ.

Christ approached him, he lowered himself, acknowledged he was no comparison.

2. He personally needed the baptism of Christ. He needed what Christ had.

Christ was to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, and John was confessing his need to receive the Holy Spirit and fire from Christ.

3. The godly purpose of Jesus: **To fulfill all righteousness** (v.15)

- Jesus was baptized primarily "to fulfill all righteousness."
 - He was **symbolically predicting what He was going to do for sinful man.**
1. He was going to **fulfill every law of God for man.** (Exodus 29:4-7)
 2. He was going to **pay man's penalty for having broken the law—the penalty of death.**
His immersion was a symbol of His coming immersion into death.
 3. He was **initiating His ministry.** John shows this (John 1:31-34).
The High Priest had always entered his ministry in such a special ceremony (Ex. 29:4-7).

4. The unusual signs of Jesus' baptism (v.16-17)

- a. The heavens were opened (v.16a)
- b. The Spirit descended (v.16b)
- c. The voice of God was heard (v.17)

Close / Inv:

Have You followed Jesus to the place of Repentance and Forgiveness of Your Sins?

Have You Identified with Jesus Christ as Your Lord and Savior – are You Following Him today?

Would You Believe that He came to Save You today – will You come to Him as Your Savior?