

▣ The Ministry of John the Baptist
Matthew 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-18

Introduction (Luke 3:1-2)

Turn in your Bibles to Luke 3. ▣ In verse 1 we are told that the date is the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (~26 A.D.). To a Jew of that time it would have seemed that God had lost interest in His people. While the nation had a brief period of independence under the Maccabees, they were now in subjection to Rome with Pontius Pilate serving as their governor. The glory days of Israel were history of long ago. It had been four centuries since there had even been a prophet. ▣ There had been reports of some odd occurrences some thirty years earlier such as the elderly priest who became mute while serving in the temple, but then regained his voice after his son was born, then about half a year later there were reports of shepherds seeing angels near Bethlehem, and sometime after that there were the magi coming to worship a baby they said was born king of the Jews. ▣ There was hope that perhaps the Messiah had come and many were still looking for Him, yet, nothing had come from those earlier events, so perhaps Herod the Great had killed him when he slaughtered all the baby boys in Bethlehem.

That was the condition of the nation of Israel when John, known as the baptizer or baptist, burst onto the scene about 26 A.D. Recall from our earlier study, that John was in the priestly line of Levites being the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth. (See: *The Coming of the Herald*). When Zacharias named his son John, he also prophesied concerning him, “*And you child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways.*”

▣ **The Voice Crying in the Wilderness** (Matt. 3:1-6; Mark 1:2-6; Luke 3:3-6)

John is now at least 30 years old, the proper age for a priest to begin public ministry, and he does so as the first prophet since Malachi (460-430 B.C.). Everything about John pointed to him being a prophet like those of times long past. In fact, it points to John being a particular prophet. ▣ John came in fulfillment of Isaiah 40:1-5, portions of which are quoted in Matthew 3, Mark 1 and Luke 3. This particular passage occurs at the beginning of a long discourse in Isaiah in which God tells them that though they will be carried off to Babylon (Isaiah 39:6) because of their sins (Isaiah 40:2), there is hope because God is greater than the passing events of history. In fact, He is the one that controls history (Isaiah 40:21-24). Israel was still God's chosen people. He had not rejected them (Isaiah 41:9), and He would help them (Isaiah 41:10). God would send His servant (the Messiah - Isaiah 42:1-3) and He would redeem them (Isaiah 43).

“Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God. “Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her iniquity has been removed, That she has received of the LORD's hand Double for all her sins.” A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley; Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken” (Isaiah 40:1-5).

▣ Notice first that the one speaking does so because God has told him what to say. Luke 3:2 specifically states that “*the word of God came to John . . .*” John did not speak as the Rabbis whose authority was founded on knowing what other Rabbis had said. John spoke because the word of God had come to him.

▣ Next, notice that the one speaking is calling from the wilderness. Luke 3:2 specifically states that “*the word of God came to John . . . in the wilderness.*” John was not among those favored by the chief priests in Jerusalem who spoke in the temple or in one of the synagogues there. Luke 3:3 states that John's ministry was being carried out in “*all the district around the Jordan,*” which Matthew 3:1 further identifies as “*in the wilderness of Judea.*”

▣ Finally, the message of the one speaking is to prepare the way for the king. The call in Isaiah to “*make ready the way of the LORD, Make His paths straight*” is an allusion to the oriental custom of someone preceding the king or a prince and making sure the road was in good condition for the king or a prince to travel upon it. The meaning becomes obvious. The Messiah's herald was to prepare the hearts

of the people for His coming. The hindrances and obstacles that separated the people from the Lord needed to be removed. John's message was that of a prophet, not a rabbinical priest calling people to follow the religious traditions that had been developed by the Rabbis. Luke 3:3 states that John came "*preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*" Matthew 3:2 states that John's message was "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" The people needed to have a change of heart so that they would be ready to recognize and follow the Messiah.

Matthew and Luke are not the only ones to affirm that John is the fulfillment of this prophecy. John himself claimed that he was this person in John 1:23. In answer to those who were asking him who he was, John said, "*I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said.*" John came as the one fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah.

▣ Mark 1:2 adds that John the Baptist is also the fulfillment of Malachi 3:1, "*Behold, I send My messenger before your face, who will prepare your way.*" This is the same passage the Zacharias was referencing in his prophecy concerning his son. John the Baptist is the herald of the Messiah. The herald had the specific duty to proclaim (khro[ssw / karossō - translated as "preaching" in Matt. 3:1 and Luke 3:3) loudly and extensively the coming of the King. John was making it known to all through his preaching that the LORD, the king, the Messiah was coming. Though John was preaching in the wilderness, his message was being carried far and wide to others. Matthew 3:5 states that "*Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the districts around the Jordan.*"

▣ John also lived in the manner of a prophet. Not only was he living out in the wilderness instead of a city, his manner of dress and diet resembled that of the prophets of old. Matthew 3:4 states, "*Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locust and wild honey.*" Zechariah 13:4 indicates that a "hairy robe" was a distinctive dress of the prophets, and 2 Kings 1:8 indicates that Elijah's "leather girdle" (belt) was also one of the things that identified him. Like the prophets before him, John's manner of dress was simple.

John's diet was also simple being listed in Matthew and Mark as consisting of locust and wild honey. That does not mean that he did not eat anything else, only that lived simply and ate what was available to him. Honey could be found fairly easily even in the wilderness. Remember that ancient Israel was described as a land that flowed with milk and honey. Locusts were also easily obtained with Leviticus 11:33 listing four different types of these insects that were clean to eat. A more common recipe for them was to remove the legs and wings and then roast or bake them and then add a little salt. I still love the study of insects, but even I would not find that to be appetizing. However, when you are hungry, what does taste matter? And people can develop a taste for things that other people find disgusting. (Hmm - how about a lunch of lima beans, green peas, Brussel sprouts, squid, octopus and sushi?). Unlike other prophets, John also followed Nazarite restrictions from birth. The angel Gabriel had told Zacharias that John "*will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb*" (Luke 1:25).

▣ All of these things show that John was a man with great self-control. He followed all of these restrictions because he had a purpose in life much higher than his own comfort and pleasures. That is an important principle for all Christians since self-control is one of the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:21). While I am not advocating that you follow John's manner of dress and diet, I am saying that each of us needs to be careful of how much the world pushes us into its mold. Why dress according to the styles promoted by pagan and immoral designers - unless of course your desire is the approval of such people instead of the modesty approved by God?

John the Baptist was a priest. He had a right to a home and to be supported by the community when he was performing his priestly service, but John rejected all that in order to follow a higher calling by God. He set aside what he could of had and even what he had a "right" to have in order to be as effective as possible for God. That is a principle everyone in this room has to consider on a daily basis. It takes diligence to fight against the materialism and hedonism that is so important in our society. It is easy to get caught up in the quest for getting more stuff, being comfortable and experiencing more pleasure. What is more important to you than living for God's glory and serving Him? That question is answered by what you are unwilling to set aside in order to walk in greater holiness and be more effective in your service. While only John was called by God to fulfill the prophecies of Isaiah 40:3-5 as the "voice crying in the wilderness," the forerunner of Christ, every Christian is called to live in righteousness and serve the Lord however He has gifted you.

▣ John was able to live and do as he did because he was filled with the Spirit. For John, that began while he was still in his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). While none of us were filled with the Spirit that

early in life, we can be filled with the Spirit now and in fact we are commanded to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18. What does that mean? It is not ecstatic utterances or doing crazy things. It is simply yielding your will to the Spirit of God to walk in obedience to Him. Galatians 5:16-26 explains the evidence of whether you are filled by Spirit or not, for those who walk by the Spirit do not carry out the desires of the flesh for the Spirit and the flesh are in opposition to one another. Those who are filled with the Spirit will demonstrate His fruit in their lives including *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*. The evidence of not being filled with the Spirit are demonstrated by the deeds of the flesh which include *immorality, impurity, sensuality,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these*, (Galatians 5:19–21). Are you filled with the Spirit? Do you walk with Him? Are you obedient to all God wants you to do? If not, then you need to heed John's message.

The Message of the Herald (Matt. 3:1-2, 5-6; Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:3)

▣ The message of John the Baptist is summarized in Matthew 3:2, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" He would then baptize those that did repent. What is Repentance? What does John mean by that and why was it necessary to be done?

Since there is confusion even in evangelical circles about repentance, I want to take a little time to explain it. The first thing to note is that John's call to repentance was nothing new. ▣ Repentance been part of the message and often the basic call of all the prophets throughout Jewish history. What was different about John's warning to repent was that it was being tied directly with coming of the Kingdom of heaven. The motivation and the urgency of John's preaching was the arrival of Messiah in the near future, but his call to repentance was the same as the Jewish prophets of long ago.

Since the idea of repentance comes from the Hebrew prophets, the corresponding Hebrew words for repentance are also important. ▣ They are the words *bwv* / *shub* (to return) and *mjn* / *nacham* (to regret something / repent). The Hebrew prophets saw sin as a turning away from God. With that in mind the prophets called upon the nation to return (*bwv* / *shub*) to Him. This is foundational in understanding the repentance message of John the Baptist for he was speaking to the same people, the nation of Israel, as did the earlier prophets.

The Greek words for repentance are used by John, Jesus and the apostles with the same force as the corresponding Hebrew words. ▣ The Greek words are compound words that combine the preposition, *metaJ* / *meta* (with, after, around), with the *noeJw*, *nou:V* / *noeō*, *nous* word group (mind, think, understand, insight, feel). Thus the word can mean: 1) To change one's mind; to adopt another view; 2) to regret, to feel remorse; 3) to convert, conversion (Kittel, vol IV, pg 976, 999). However, The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament concludes that a complete investigation into the history of the terms for repentance only allow for the call to repentance (*metanoeww* / *metanoeō* and *metavnoia* / *metanoia*) by ▣ John the Baptist and Jesus to give "*new expression to the ancient concept of religious and moral conversion.*" (Kittel, vol IV, pg 1000).

The message of repentance by the earlier prophets involved 1) Turning to obedience to Yahweh's will, 2) Turning to trust in Yahweh and 3) Turning from everything ungodly. Hosea is an example of this. Hosea makes his charges against Israel in chapters 4 & 5. In Hosea 6:1 he calls on them to return (*bwv* / *shub*) to the LORD. In verse 3, Hosea makes it plain that this is not a return to playing religion, but to "*know the Lord.*" Their loyalty has been fickle in the past (verse 4) resulting in judgment (verse 5). In verse 6 he explains that God is not interested in outward show of sacrifice & burnt offerings, but in the inward reality of loyalty and knowledge of God. In Hosea 14 the prophet calls on them again to return (*bwv* / *shub*) to the LORD asking Him to remove their iniquity. Turning back to Yahweh involved turning away from the false things in which they had trusted and returning to place their trust only in Yahweh. Their behavior would be directly related to the object of their trust.

The first two elements of repentance correspond to each other. ▣ You cannot return to trust the LORD if you do not turn from false beliefs. The third element of behavior is the natural consequence of belief. Your actions are directly related to what you believe.

The call of John the Baptist for the people to repent include these same elements. The command of the LORD had always been that His people were to follow Him from the heart and not just with outward compliance. Even back in Deuteronomy 6:4-6 we find Moses commanding the second generation that was about to enter the promised land, "*Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And*

these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.” Moses reinforces this in chapter 10 by telling them LORD was requiring them to fear Him, walk in all His ways, love Him and serve Him with all their hearts and souls and to keep His commandments and statutes (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). ■ Outward obedience is not enough. God wants the heart, the seat of the will, yet, that seems to be the one thing humans want to give Him the least.

Throughout Israel's history, if the people were not in open rebellion against God by actually worshipping other gods, then they were playing religion. The same was true when John the Baptist began his ministry. ■ Some Jews had apostatized from Judaism and had adopted the Greek and Roman world view including giving obeisance to their false gods. The call to repentance was certainly to them. ■ The call to repentance was as equally strong to the many people that were playing religion. The religious leaders of the day had long before abandoned the true worship of and seeking after God. We saw that at the birth of Jesus that stories of angels talking with shepherds near Bethlehem were reported. Simeon and Anna proclaimed all sorts of wonderful things about a baby boy brought to the temple. The magi from the east came looking for *“one born king of the Jews.”* The religious leaders were able to tell them the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but none of them bothered to go see for themselves! They were too busy playing their religious games. (See: *The Birth of The Messiah & Jesus' Childhood*) ■ The common people were ignorantly following the teachings and examples of these religious leaders. They were lost sheep in need of a good shepherd. John's message was to them.

The call to repent is for them to turn back to trusting the LORD alone, obeying Him and forsaking their ungodliness. John the Baptist was calling them to be converted to a changed life. Again, John's father had prophesied he would be the one sent *“to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord”* (Luke 1:17 cf Malachi 4:6). He was calling them to lives that would be radically transformed.

All Christians should understand repentance for it is part of the message we are to proclaim to the world. ■ Repentance was the message of the prophets and John as we have already seen, but it was also the call of Jesus and the apostles. Matthew 4:17 states that Jesus preached, *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* Peter concluded his sermon in Acts 2 and his sermon in Acts 3 with a call for the people to repent. Paul proclaimed repentance from the very beginning of his ministry. In Acts 17:30 he told those on Mars Hill in Athens that *“God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent.”* Paul told King Agrippa in Acts 26:19-20 that he preached to both Jews and Gentiles *“that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.”* Repentance is a common theme in the epistles too (Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:9,10; 12:21; 2 Timothy 2:25; Hebrews 6:1; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 2:5,16,21-22; 3:3,19). Repentance is part of God's message to the world and so it must be included in what we proclaim.

Sadly, there is a lot of confusion even among evangelicals. ■ Some have tried to make repentance a work by which a person turns from sin which then brings salvation. This is usually accompanied by some standard of sins you must conquer in order to be saved. This view is contrary to the gospel because no one can qualify himself for salvation by forsaking sin and walking in righteousness. 1 John 1:8 states in no uncertain terms that a person that says they have no sin is self-deceived and the truth is not in them. We are not saved by our works of righteousness (Titus 3:5), besides, as Isaiah 64:6 states, all our righteous deeds are as a filthy garment before our holy God. We are saved by God's grace, not works (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Others have reacted to this and gone to the other extreme. They are so concerned that any work be involved in salvation that they have defined repentance as simply *“a change of mind”* about Jesus. It becomes just an intellectual assent. ■ However, in order to change my mind about Jesus Christ and believe the truth about Him, then I must also change my mind and believe the truth about myself and my sinful actions and attitudes. True faith in the Lord Jesus Christ does not occur in a vacuum. You must understand and believe who He is and what He has done. Jesus is God in human flesh, was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, willingly died on the cross as the substitute payment for my sin, and was raised from the dead on the third day. That cannot be believed without a corresponding change in belief about yourself and your sin that would make you humble enough to believe that His death was sufficient to redeem you from your sin and seek His forgiveness because of it. Repentance is a change of mind that radically transforms the life. Repentance speaks of conversion. A changed life is the logical consequence of what is now believed.

In Acts 17:30 Paul declared God's command that all men everywhere repent. 2 Peter 3:15 states that God wants all men to come to repentance. Yet, repentance is not a work and you cannot generate it yourself. ■ Repentance is a response to God's work. In 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, Paul explains the

difference between worldly sorrow that produces death and *“the sorrow that is according to (the will of) God produces a repentance without regret, (leading) to salvation . . .”* Repentance is a response to the conviction of sin that is brought by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). Repentance is something that God grants. In Acts 11 Peter explains the conversion of Cornelius and the Gentiles that were with him. The apostles and brethren responded saying, *“Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance unto life.”* In 2 Timothy 2:25-26, Paul explains the manner in which the Lord’s servants are to respond even to those in opposition *“if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.”* John 6:44 makes it clear that no one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him. Repentance is not a work, for a change of mind about Jesus, yourself and your sin only come as responses to God’s grace extended to you.

▣ Many people understood the message of John the Baptist and many were following his call. Matthew 3:5 & 6, *“Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.”* Notice here that people from all around the area were coming to John at the Jordan River. This was not a journey to be taken by the strictly curious. From Jerusalem to the closest location on the Jordan river where John might have been is over 20 miles and a 3,000 foot elevation drop. That is a long and difficult walk. Coming from other areas of Judea may have meant a climb over the mountain range Jerusalem sits on and then down into the Jordan valley. Those making the journey there had to have a serious desire to hear more about what the man of God was saying

The next thing I want you to notice is that the people were baptized as they confessed their sins. Ritual baptizing for ceremonial cleansing was a common practice in Judaism at that time. There were even many pools for it just below the southern end of the Temple Mount so that people could be prepared to go up to the Temple. ▣ However, John’s baptism was not a ceremonial cleansing in that sense. It was closer to the practice of proselyte baptism of Gentile converts to Judaism, except John was baptizing Jews. They were baptized as a sign of their repentance and conversion to follow the Lord from their hearts. The outward washing with water was to signify what had already taken place inwardly. They were confessing their sins and their baptism was a public proclamation that they were willing to obey the Lord, place their trust in Him, and forsake everything ungodly. They were looking for the coming of Messiah and were baptized in preparation for entering that kingdom, a kingdom of hope and judgement.

▣ **The Fruit of Repentance** - Matthew 3:7-10; Luke 7-14

John the Baptizer was definitely not a model for Dale Carnegie’s *“How to Win Friends and Influence People.”* But then, ▣ John was not trying to win friends. He was calling people to repent in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. John could be very abrasive and blunt with the truth as is seen in Matthew 3:7-10, *“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 ‘Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 ‘And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.’”*

▣ Remember that the Pharisees and the Scribes were the ones that were leading the people astray from the true worship of God. The Pharisees did this by promoting self-righteousness through a hollow religion of rituals, and the Sadducees did it by their pragmatic approach to life in which they denied the supernatural aspects of Biblical doctrine and promoted living for the present. Both groups, but especially the Pharisees, were experts at keeping all the outward rituals, and in doing so they thought that they were above the common people. When they hear that there is a prophet of God in the wilderness and he is saying to come and be baptized, they also go out to participate. It was not a problem for them to add another ritual to what they were already doing and especially if it might increase their standing with the multitudes. They were good at appearing to be spiritual and so they could act as if they were leading the people out there and they might also gain the prophet’s approval. Whatever the specific reason, they come to John for baptism and he is aware that they have the wrong motives. He gives them a strong rebuke calling them a brood of vipers implying that they were like the desert viper, which was a small snake that seemed harmless because it looked like a stick, yet it was deadly. The Pharisees and Sadducees outward appearance seemed harmless, but in reality they were full of poison and deadly to true godliness.

▣ John then tells them if they really are going to flee from the wrath to come, then the reality of a change in their hearts would be demonstrated by the fruit of repentance. In verses 9 & 10 he warns them that their trust in being descendants of Abraham was a false hope. The reality was that the axe was already swinging at such false hopes and those that did not bear the fruit God was looking for would be cut down and thrown into the fire. Judgement was already at hand.

▣ What is the fruit of repentance? Simply the acts of righteousness that are the natural result of a changed heart and mind. Luke 3:10-14 records some of the practical examples John told them in answer to their questions. ¹⁰ *And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"* ¹¹ *And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."* ¹² *And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"* ¹³ *And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to."* ¹⁴ *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."*

▣ In summary, the fruit of repentance includes sharing what you have with those in need, is being honest in your work, being content with what you have and not stealing from or lying about others. You should be able to think of many other examples for yourself in your own life because the fruit of repentance is simply the outward works of righteousness that result from a righteous heart. The first demonstration of that change of heart & mind was submitting to baptism.

▣ Conclusions

God is still calling all people everywhere to repent. He wants your life to be radically transformed. If you are not living your life for Jesus Christ, then you need to come to grips with some facts of life. ▣ First, God really does exist and He has a claim on your life. One day you will face Him and He will call you into account for everything you have ever done. Every person has sinned, including you, and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) which includes judgment and eternal punishment (Matthew 25:41). The starting point for a change of mind that brings about a change of life is recognition of your need, and you need God's mercy.

▣ Second, the claims about the person and work of Jesus Christ are true. Jesus is God in human flesh who came and paid the penalty of your sins in His own flesh on the cross. He was buried and then raised to new life on the third day. He is Lord. He is master, and He is to be obeyed.

▣ Third, you cannot earn your way into God's favor. You cannot work your way to heaven. You cannot stand in your own self-righteousness.

▣ Fourth, you must trust in Jesus alone for salvation and let Him give you a right standing before God. He has already paid the penalty for you, will you accept His mercy and gift of grace? Do you believe in Him? Believing the truth about Him and what He has done and trusting Him alone for salvation is what is meant by having faith in Him.

▣ Fifth, if your mind has been changed to believe the truth in these areas, then there will be a corresponding change of mind about everything ungodly. Have you changed your mind about sin? Do you recognize that the sinful pleasures you once sought are abhorrent to God and should be increasingly repulsive to you? The consequence of these changes in your mind will change your view of reality and result in the fruit of repentance which are the good works of righteousness.

If you are here today and God is speaking to your heart on any of these issues, then you need to respond. If you need to repent and find forgiveness in Christ, or if there is some sin you need some help to overcome, or if you just have a need to pray with someone, then talk with one of our church leaders that will be here at the front of the church, or contact me so that we can talk.

Sermon Notes - 4/21/2013

The Ministry of John the Baptist - Matthew 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-18

Introduction

In the 15th year of Tiberius Caesar (~26A.D.), Israel was oppressed & had not had a prophet in _____
_____ had yet come from the miracles reported 30 years before, but there was still hope for a Messiah

The Voice Crying in the Wilderness (Matt. 3:1-6; Mark 1:2-6; Luke 3:3-6)

John, a Levite, was at least 30 - the age a _____ began ministry, and had the characteristics of a prophet

John came in fulfillment of _____ (Matthew 3:3; Mark 2:1; Luke 3:4; John 1:23)

John is speaking because the _____ had come to him (Luke 3:2 cf. Isaiah 40:1)

John is calling from the _____ (Luke 3:2 cf. Isaiah 40:3)

John's message of _____ was the means to "*make ready the way of the LORD*" (Matt 3:2; Isa. 40:3)

John fulfilled the _____ of Malachi 3:1 as the Messiah's herald (Mark 1:2)

John's manner of dress and diet were in keeping with the _____ (Matt. 3:4; cf. Zech. 13:4; 2 Kings 1:8)

John was a man of great _____ - a quality that should be developed by every Christian (Gal. 5:21)

John lived for the LORD because he was filled with the _____ - as should be all Christians (Eph. 5:18)

The Message of the Herald (Matt. 3:1-2, 5-6; Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:3)

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Repentance has been part of the message of the Jewish prophets throughout _____

bwv / shub (to _____) & mjn / nacham (to regret something / repent) -

metanoeww / metanoēō & metavnoia / metanoia = change of mind / regret / _____

As used by John and Jesus = "*new expression to the _____ concept of religious & moral conversion*"

You cannot return to trust the LORD if you do not turn from _____ beliefs

Outward obedience is not enough - God wants the _____ (Deuteronomy 6:4-6; 10:12-16)

John's call to repentance (turn to trust & obey the LORD) was to apostates, the religious & the _____

Repentance was the message of John, _____ & the apostles (Matt. 4:17; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; Heb. 6:1)

It is contrary to the gospel to equate repentance with turning from sin in order to _____ for salvation

The nature of belief requires a change of mind to result in a change in the _____

Repentance is a _____ to God's work - 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; John 16:18; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; John 6:44

Many people made the _____ journey to hear John's message and be baptized by him (Matt. 3:5-6)

John's baptism of repentance was not ceremonial cleansing, but closer to _____ baptism

The Fruit of Repentance - Matthew 3:7-10; Luke 7-14

John was not trying to win friends, but _____ people for the coming of the Messiah - Matthew 3:7-10

John was abrasive with the Pharisees & Scribes for they were the ones leading the people _____

A truly changed heart would be demonstrated by the _____ of repentance - blood lineage cannot save

Luke 3:10-14 - practical examples of the fruit of repentance

_____ what you have with those in need

Being honest in your work

Being _____ with what you have and not stealing from or lying about others

Conclusions

God is still calling everyone everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30)

1) God really does _____ and will hold you accountable for everything you have ever done

2) The claims about the person and work of Jesus Christ are _____

3) You _____ earn your way into God's favor

4) You must trust in the person and work of _____ Christ alone for forgiveness and salvation from sin

5) True repentance (change of mind) will have a corresponding change of _____

KIDS CORNER

Parents, you are responsible to apply God's Word to your children's lives. Here is some help.

Young Children - draw a picture about something you hear during the sermon. Explain your picture(s) to your parents at lunch. **Older Children** - Do one or more of the following: 1) Write down all the verses mentioned in the sermon and look them up later. 2) Count how many times "repent / repentance" is said. Talk with your parents about the meaning of repentance and the difference it should make in a life.

THINK ABOUT IT!

Questions to consider in discussing the sermon with others. What do you think it would have been like to have been a devout Jew in the fifteenth year of Tiberias (Luke 3) before John the Baptist began his public ministry? How would his public ministry have changed things? What New Testament passages state that John was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 40:1-5? In what ways does John fulfill those prophecies? In what ways did John's manner of life demonstrate that he was a prophet? How did John demonstrate a life of great self-control? In what ways is self-control important in living as a Christian? What does it mean to be "filled with the Spirit"? How important is this and how does a Christian become filled with the Spirit? What is basic meaning of the Hebrew words for repent? What is the basic meaning of the Greek words for repent? How important was repentance in the messages of the Hebrew prophets? What were the elements of repentance in their messages? How is John the Baptist's call to repentance the same as the prophets of old? What role did repentance play in the messages of Jesus and the apostles? Why is repentance not a work that qualifies you for salvation? Explain. Why is repentance more than a "change of mind about Jesus" - an intellectual assent? Why must true repentance also affect the way a person lives? Look up the following passages and explaining the nature and source of repentance: Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:15; 2 Corinthians 7:9-10; John 16:8; Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25-26; John 6:44. How difficult would it have been for someone from Jerusalem to have gone to hear John and be baptized by him? Why was John so abrasive and blunt with the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 3:7-10? What is the "fruit of repentance"? List the examples given by John in Luke 3. What changes in a life do you think would be the natural result of believing the truth about person and work Jesus Christ? Explain.