

In Those Days Came John the Baptist

Matthew 3:1-6

We've finished Matthew Chapter 1 and 2 in great detail. We've been through each verse in great detail. We've studied the details of the coming of Jesus Christ. We're moving forward in years by a few decades from the birth of Jesus Christ.

Now we're going to see the cousin of Jesus Christ, a man who is about 6 months older than Jesus Christ, who is leading the way for the ministry of Jesus Christ.

John the Baptist Leads the Way

""Matthew 3:1-2

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.""

Now, we're going to focus in on this Scripture for the entire lesson because many false prophets and preachers of lies will use this verse to preach a false Gospel.

"In those days came John the Baptist." In what days? Remember, we are in the Gospel of Matthew and there are four Gospel accounts: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Bible gives us all the details we need to know. "In those days came John the Baptist."

""Luke 3:1-3

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, 2 Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. 3 And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;""

The Gospel of Luke is known for its great detail. When did John the Baptist come preaching in the wilderness?

The Exact Timing of John the Baptist

The Bible says in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. At the time, Pontius Pilate is the governor of Judaea. Herod is the tetrarch of Galilee. Herod's brother Philip is the tetrarch of Ituraea and Trachonitis. Lysanias is the tetrarch of Abilene. The Bible gives us all the rulers in the area and surrounding areas at the time John the Baptist came preaching.

We also see there in verse 2 that Annas and Caiaphas are the high priests at this time.

John the Baptist, in verse 2 there, is the son of Zacharias. In Luke Chapter 1, we see Zacharias is a priest. His wife's name is Elisabeth and she is in the line of Aaron the first priest. The Bible tells us that the parents of John the Baptist, Zacharias and Elisabeth walked in the commandments of the Lord.

But I want you to focus in on verse 3 there as this is where false teaching comes from over and over again.

"And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

The Baptism of Repentance

In Matthew Chapter 3, we see John the Baptist saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In Luke Chapter 3, we see John the Baptist preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

""Mark 1:4

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.""

So, we see Matthew telling us that John the Baptist came saying, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Mark says John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And Luke says John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

This church is a Baptist church. Jesus chose John the Baptist to baptize him because John the Baptist preached the truth. We call ourselves Baptist after that same model of John the Baptist. We preach the truth.

Many people will say that John the Baptist was preaching to repent of all your sin and get baptized in water to receive remission of sins or forgiveness of sins. That's what false teachers will preach and teach.

Now, we really need to know what John the Baptist was preaching. He says repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus is here. Repent ye. Notice that the Bible never said repent of your sin. We use only the King James Version of the Bible here because it is the perfect word of God without error.

We do not add to the word of God. "Repent ye." Those are the words John the Baptist used. The phrase "repent of sin" or "repent of all your sin" or anything close to that is in the Bible. It's not there. Repenting of sin or turning from sin or stopping sin does not save your soul from hell. Can repenting of sin or turning from sin or stopping sin save your flesh from death? Yes it can.

Repenting of Sin Doesn't Save Your Soul

For example, if I was addicted to drugs, I could die from a drug overdose. If I stop that wicked sin and get off the drugs, that may save my physical life. That act of repenting of sin or stopping the drugs doesn't save my soul. It could lead to my soul being saved later because I didn't die and I had the chance to hear the Gospel, believe the Gospel, and be saved forever.

But repenting of sin is a good work that you do. And that work doesn't save you. John the Baptist wasn't preaching to repent of sin and get baptized in water so your soul would be saved from hell. This is what people will say John the Baptist was preaching. But they are liars.

They see the word repent and baptism and they begin teaching that you must repent of sin and get baptized in water to be saved from hell. Again, this is a 100% complete and utter lie. People who come preaching those lies are false preachers sending people to hell. They need to repent of that great sin and stop teaching lies immediately.

John the Baptist led the way for Jesus Christ. John came preaching to repent. Jesus came preaching to repent. Watch exactly what Jesus says here.

""Mark 1:14-15

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15 And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.""

There's a hint at what repenting to be saved actually means. Must you repent to be saved? Yes. But it's not repenting of your sins, stopping sin, or turning from sin. Jesus says, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel."

The Word Repent Has Different Definitions

The word repent has different definitions just as any word in the dictionary has different definitions. If you open a dictionary and you look up a word, you will see many different meanings for most words.

For example, the word "for" or f-o-r, can be a preposition, a conjunction, an abbreviation, or a prefix. The word "for" or f-o-r, as a preposition, has 10 different meanings in the dictionary. The word "for" indicates a purpose such as "a student loan for school." They get a student loan to go to school. A definition of the word "for" as can be seen in any dictionary is "because of."

For example, "I can't sleep for the heat." I can't sleep "because of" the heat. I took a Tylenol for the headache. I took a Tylenol because of the headache. There are many different definitions for most words in a dictionary.

The word repent in the dictionary, just as with every other word, has different definitions. Most people, when they hear the word repent, they will think that it means to repent of sin, to stop sinning, to turn from sin, to feel sorry for sin.

Jesus says, "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Is Jesus saying to stop all sins and believe the Gospel to be saved. Do you have turn from all your sin to be saved? Do you have to stop sinning before you can be saved from hell? Is that what Jesus said?

In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the word repent, as a verb, has the following definitions:

1. To turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life.
2. To feel regret or contrition.
3. To change one's mind.
4. To cause to feel regret or contrition.
5. To feel sorrow, regret, or contrition for.

One Meaning of Repent is "To Change One's Mind"

One of the definitions of the word repent is to change your mind. So, when Jesus Christ says: "Repent ye, and believe the Gospel," Jesus is saying to change your mind and believe the Gospel. This is what saves you forever. And how do we know that's what the word repent means when John the Baptist says it and Jesus Christ says it? How do we know for sure?

The entire Bible teaches what they are preaching.

We know that John the Baptist wasn't preaching a works based salvation. He didn't say to do the good works of repenting of sin and getting baptized in water to earn heaven. We know Jesus didn't preach a works based salvation. Jesus never once tells us to repent of all our sin and get baptized in water to be saved from all of our sins.

Yes, we are commanded to repent of sin and get baptized in water. These are good works. But we know for sure that our own good works don't save us. But a simple dictionary will tell you the truth.

Repent doesn't always mean to repent of your sin. Repent does not always equal repent of sin. The word stands on its own. This is a simple fact of a language. Repent is a word that stands on its own. One of its definitions is to change your mind about something. "To change one's mind."

""Jonah 3:9-10

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.""

I want you to look closely at that. That is the perfect word of God without error or mistakes. We see that God repents in this Scripture. Look at verse 10 about right there in the middle of verse 10. "And God repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not."

God Repents The Most in the Bible

If God repents, we know that it can't always mean repent of sin. God doesn't sin. He can't sin but yet we see that he repents. We see the word repent and all its different forms in the Bible 112 times in 105 verses. Here's the first time in all the Bible.

""Genesis 6:6

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.""

That's a definition of the word repent. "It repented the Lord." A definition is to feel regret. To feel sorrow. Right before that verse, the Bible says that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. That's wickedness. That grieved God. It repented the Lord.

""Exodus 32:14

And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.""

God was going to punish the people with evil. God doesn't sin. He changed his mind and didn't do it. The Lord repented. That's what the Bible says. So repent doesn't always mean to repent of sin.

In the Bible, God repents more than anyone else. And we know God doesn't sin so repent doesn't always mean to repent of sin.

""Jonah 3:9-10

Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.""

Turning From Sin = Your Good Works

Look at the beginning of verse 10. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way." Turning from your evil way is repenting of sin or turning from sin. The Bible says, "And God saw their works."

Turning from sin is a work that you do. Turning from sin is hard work. If you are addicted to alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs, it's hard work to stop doing those things. Many times, it's very, very hard work. And it's something you do.

""**Ephesians 2:8-9**

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.""

We are not saved by works that we do. The entire Bible teaches this and entire books of the Bible teaches that throughout. We are not saved from hell by the good works that we do such as repenting of sin. We should turn from our sin and follow God's commandments, but we are not saved from hell by repenting of sin or stopping sin or turning from sin. That's a work.

So, what was John the Baptist preaching? What was Jesus preaching? They said to repent. What were they saying? We can see exactly what they were preaching. We don't take a verse that says repent ye and then start teaching the John the Baptist and Jesus preached that you must repent of all your sins and get baptized in water to be saved from all your sins.

Repent and Believe the Gospel

Jesus said, "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." The Gospel is all about Jesus Christ. It's not all about your works. It's the opposite of your works. You are only saved by grace. Grace and works are complete opposites. Repent ye and believe the Gospel means to change your mind about your works saving you and instead believe in the Lord Christ to save you.

John the Baptist preached Jesus Christ for salvation. Not good works. Jesus Christ. You can see for yourself what John the Baptist said over and over again. I'll show you just a few for sake of time.

""**John 1:29**

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.""

Who takes away the sin of the world? It's not you. It's not repenting of sin. John says, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus takes away your sin. Not you.

""**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.""

Those are the exact words of John the Baptist. He preached repentance. He preached that you better change your mind and believe in Jesus Christ. Those are simple statements that don't include repenting of sin or turning from sin.

Jesus Says to Believe in Him for Salvation

Jesus said the same thing over and over again in the same chapter.

""**John 3:15**

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.""

""**John 3:16**

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.""

""**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.""

Being saved from hell has nothing to do with repenting of sin. It has everything to do with Jesus Christ, his sacrifice, and his blood. Not ours.

""**Acts 19:4**

Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.""

John the Baptist Preached to Repent

John the Baptist came preaching to repent. Saying unto the people, "That they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." So, we go back to where we started this lesson and we finish there. Remember, we are going verse by verse through Matthew Chapter 3. We are right there at the beginning of Matthew Chapter 3.

""**Matthew 3:1-2**

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.""

Now you know exactly what John the Baptist meant when he said repent ye. He didn't preach to repent of all your sins to be saved from hell. He preached to change your mind, REPENT, and believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." Hey, change your mind and believe "IN" Jesus Christ. Not in yourself and not in repenting of sin.

Let's pray.