

# The Gospel According to Matthew pt 8

(The message)

I asked this question last week; *“What did John preach? What were the leading themes of his ministry? What subjects did he dwell upon and expound most constantly? With what message did he prepare the way of the Lord?”*

Read verses 1-12 of Matthew chapter 3

In verse 8, John speaks plainly about sin and repentance, we also read that in Mat 3:2. He plainly declared the necessity of repentance, warning religious men not to rest in their religious actions, their religious works. Repentance, turn from and turn too Christ, but dead men can do nothing!

Do we truly understand what repentance is. In reality very few do. Repentance, like faith, is the gift of God. It is that which God gives to us and works in us. As the Ethiopian cannot change his skin nor can the leopard change his spots, a sinner cannot turn himself to God (Jer 13:23) **Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?**

The Lord Jesus Christ **“is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins”** (Act 5:31).

That which Christ gives cannot be mixed with the works of man. There is a false repentance with which multitudes are fooled. A false repentance is that which comes from a sorrow for the consequences our actions, not the causes of sin. True repentance is that which flows from the consciousness of sin itself. False repentance is sorrow that arises because a person fears the punishment of sin. True repentance is a godly sorrow for having offended God. False repentance arises from fear of judgment.

True repentance rises from the revelation of justice satisfied by Christ; (Zec 12:10) **And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.**

I think about the raiment of John, simple, unpolished, straight and narrow, unlike the complicated dress of the religious leaders of that day as well as ours, "Prepare ye the way" remove the obstacles, as in the road to the city of Refuge. Remove the things that may trip up the child of God!

**(Luk 3:3-6) And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.**

Brother Don Fortner wrote, regarding Luke 3:5; *"Like John the Baptist, the prophet is out to pull down the high places, build up low places, and make a way for the Lord. His theological interpretation of holy scripture is not a matter of learned speculation, but of passionate conviction. His preaching is not intended to make sinners feel good about themselves, but to bring them down in the dust before God by the burning, penetrating application of his Word to their hearts. Others may comfort when afflicted; but the prophet afflicts the comfortable. We are trying to accomplish now by pep, publicity, propaganda and promotion what once was done by preaching. The woods are full of trained religious personnel, (they are called preachers!); but we need prophets, men in whom the Word of the Lord burns like fire, men who carry and are weighed down with "the burden of the Word of the Lord"!*

The kingdom of heaven is a kingdom into which one must be born into (Joh 3:5-7) **Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.**

Yet, it is a kingdom, which must be willingly entered by personal repentance and faith (Psa 110:3) **Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.**

Surrender to Christ must be a willing surrender (Luk 14:23-33) **And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper. And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.**

(Mar 8:34-38) **Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.**

**For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.**

**Mat 3:9 “And think 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”.**

What John the Baptist preached is plain, God does not need man, you the clay have no authority to dictate to the Potter, “why makest thou me thus?”, Just because you are of Abraham gives you no right to declare a right to the promise. God almighty is sovereign, independent of man. He told his hearers, “God does not need us. He can do without us. But we cannot do without him.” He said to the Pharisees and Sadducees, “God does not need you to fulfill his promise to Abraham. He can raise up these stones from the Jordan River and make them the heirs of His grace if it so pleased Him.”

What does that mean? It simply and clearly means that God does not need man. Man needs God! It means that no earthly privilege, or performance, or pedigree is a guarantee of divine favor. God has mercy on whom He will. And it means that it is no problem for God to transform hearts as hard and cold as stone into hearts of love and faith as it would be to transform these rocks. The children of Abraham are not Abraham’s natural descendants, but those who, like Isaac, are children of promise and of grace.

In Matthew 3:10; John faithfully exposed the utter uselessness of false religion. Judaism had degenerated into nothing but an outward, ceremonial system of works religion that God was determined to cut down and destroy as a fruitless tree. How his message needs to be heard in our day! All freewill, works religion are useless Damning religions. All ceremonial, ritualistic religion is useless. All useless religion will one day be destroyed. There is only one way to deal with useless religion – “*Come out of her!*” (Rev 18:4) **And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.**

**(2Co 6:14 to 2Co 7:1) Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

Read again Mat 3:11

John the Baptist spoke in plain terms about the person and work of God the Holy Spirit. He preached that there is such a thing as baptism in the Holy Spirit, and that it is the special office of the Lord Jesus Christ to baptize His church into the Holy Spirit. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is not a second work of grace, but a primary work of grace. It is not something we work up in feelings frenzied ecstasy, but something we enter into when we are born of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ baptized His church into the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Act 2:1-4) **And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

That was a one time act. It can no more be repeated than His crucifixion can be repeated. There is no need for a repetition.

However, as we receive the benefits of Christ's death by the new birth, so when sinners are born of God they are born into a spiritual kingdom and forever live in the realm of the Spirit (Rom 8:3-17) **For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.**

**“Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.”** The Spirit of God dwells in us and we dwell in the Spirit. All believers walk in the Spirit. We are led by the Spirit. We are taught of the Spirit. And we have the witness of the Spirit.

And lastly verses 12 of our text in Matthew 3, John clarifies Judgment and Security in Christ our Lord!

Verse 12

John the Baptist spoke plainly about the danger of unbelief and the certainty of divine judgment . He told his hearers of “**wrath to come,**” “**unquenchable fire,**” and “**chaff**” that must be burned.

John spoke of forgiveness; but he also spoke of judgment. He spoke of mercy; but he did not fail to tell sinners of wrath, and of hell, and of eternal torment. There is no profit to sinners for a preacher to keep back what the Bible teaches about hell. Judgment is coming, It is this very truth that highlights the Grace of our Savior! Ether we will stand before the Thrice Holy God and be judged for our works, or we stand in our substitute who has died in our place and taken our judgment upon Himself!

Every unconverted sinner needs to be plainly warned and convinced of the fact that he is hanging over the brink of hell by a thin and frayed thread. One more breath, and he may fall headlong into destruction.

But with That there is good news, John the Baptist told his hearers of the safety and security of all true believers in Christ and by Christ.

As surely as Christ will burn up the chaff in hell, so shall He also gather His wheat into His garner at the day of His appearing. All who are preserved in Christ from eternity by God the Father, “**(to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called**” Jud 1:1) were redeemed at Calvary by God the Son, and shall be born again, called and sealed in time by God the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13-14) **In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.**

And these are kept by the power of God, through faith in Christ (1Pe 1:5),

And our Lord Himself declares "*They shall never perish*" (Joh 10:27-30) **My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one.**

(Joh 6:35-40) **And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.**

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, oh what a foretaste of Glory divine!