

Luke 3:1-14 ESV

Are You an Active Volcano?



Sunday, December 6 at 8:00 & 10:45

Second Sunday of Advent – 2015



During Advent: Wednesday Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Jesus Christ: With each passing moment we are drawing *closer and closer* to the moment when we will stand before our *powerful* and *holy* Savior! So ***now*** is the time for repentance; long ago God spoke through John the Baptizer to call for repentance; today God is speaking through all who rightly handle His Word of Truth!

Today we focus on *the ministry of John the Baptizer* and *the response of the people who heard his teaching*.

1. **God's Word is Real and Specific History:** ¹ In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness [*the area just west*

of the Dead Sea]. // So John, the miracle-child of Zechariah and Elizabeth, was called by God to prepare the way for Jesus. Based on what is known about Caesar, Pilate,



Herod, Philip, Lysanias, Annas, and Caiphas, it is most likely that John received his call to serve in A.D. 26.

2. **God's Call through John for Repentance:** ³ And he [John the Baptist] went into all the region around the Jordan [just to the north of where he was living], proclaiming a baptism of repentance [μετάνοια] for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁵ Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, ⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" //

- a. What was John's task? To improve the roads by
 - ♦filling in the valleys *by using* the mountain tops,
 - ♦straightening out the curves, and ♦laying down new pavement. Yes, *but in a spiritual sense!* God was at work through John's preaching—to cause sorrow, and through John's baptizing—to give His gift of forgiveness.
- b. What is repentant sorrow? It's a *deep regret*; it's a ***too late*** regret; it could be expressed with a prayer like this: "Dear God, if only ***somehow, someway*** I could turn back the clock and have another chance *I would never do that again!*"¹
- c. What does repentance require? These are the words of **Dr. Arndt**, a former St. Louis Seminary professor: Repentance requires "a change with respect to sin, [thus] a recognition of its deadly nature, and a change with respect to God, [thus]

¹ Those could be the words of many who – while texting and driving – have accidentally killed other people (watch some videos at: www.ItCanWait.com).

the realization that God [is] granting forgiveness to all who approached Him in humble faith” (111).

3. **John’s Strong Preaching:** ⁷ He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, **“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” //**
- a. Who were John’s hearers? He did speak to the crowds – *since everyone needs to hear God’s law*, but, from **Matthew 3:7**, we discover that his *primary focus* was on the *Pharisees and Sadducees* – leaders of the people, *who strictly kept God’s law to gain their salvation*.
 - b. Who’s your daddy? *That was the issue John was addressing!* The leaders came to this conclusion: *Since we are descendants of Abraham, then we are also the children of God. They were thinking physically, but what really counts is spiritually!* So what did John call them? **“You brood of vipers!”** In other words, *“You children of snakes, you followers of Satan!”*
 - c. What was missing with the leaders? They had **no fruit, no indication** of sorrow and faith! So imagine you own an apple orchard and it’s harvest time; all of your trees have apples except for two; you have carefully pruned and fertilized

them for several years, *yet still no fruit!* So what are you about to do? *Cut them down; then throw them into the fire!*

4. **Believers Want to Honor the Lord:** ¹⁰ **And the crowds** *[those who were sorry for their sins and had faith in the coming Messiah]* **asked him, “What then shall we do?”** ¹¹ **And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.”** ¹² **Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”** ¹³ **And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.”** ¹⁴ **Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”** // Those actions and countless more are the FRUITS of repentance, *when they come from sorrow and faith!*

Conclusion: So, are you an active volcano? According to National Geographic, **“About 1,900 volcanoes on Earth are considered active, meaning they show some level of activity and are likely to explode again. Many other volcanoes are dormant, showing no current signs of exploding...”** So how does that relate to repentance? As an active volcano has *real activity on the inside which shows on the outside*, so repentant people are similar; **by God’s grace** they are, on the inside, *sorry for their sins and trusting in Jesus* and, on the outside, *trying to live in agreement with the Bible!* May such realities be *more and more present in our lives* as we draw closer and closer to Jesus’ coming! **Amen!**