

Matthew 3:1-12 ESV

Are You Part of the LORD's Master Plan?

Services: Sunday, 12/4 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, 12/5 at 7 PM

Church Year: Second Sunday in Advent – 2016

Advent Wednesdays: Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: **The Bible is true and important**, *but it doesn't tell us everything*; instead, God tells us what we NEED to know. Therefore, a leap of 20-some years is taken from the end of Matthew 2 – *when John was a toddler*, to the beginning of Matthew 3 – *when John began his ministry*. Today, our focus is on **John** – *the one sent to prepare the way for Jesus*, but soon it will be on **Jesus!**

Even before God created He knew all about our sin, *so He devised a master plan to save the world*. Today, we focus on an important aspect of that plan with the ministry of John; He was sent **to** call people to repent, **to** warn them if they did not repent, and **to** point all repentant ones to Jesus!

- The Call to Repent**: ¹ **In those days** [*when Jesus was about 29 years old*] **John the Baptist came preaching** [*thus announcing God's Word*] **in the wilderness of Judea** [*see map; an area that was mostly uninhabited, a reminder of the 40 years in the wilderness, and a symbol of the spiritual condition of Israel*],



² **“Repent, for [because] [has come near the kingdom of the heavens].”** // There is an urgency; **now** is the time; **don't** miss out; **repent!** To be repentant is not a one-time action, it **“indicates a state or condition..., thus a life lived in repentance”** (Lenksi, 93).

2. **The Prophecy:** ³ For this is he [that is, John] who was spoken of ~~by~~ [literally, through] the prophet Isaiah [about 700 years earlier] when he said, “~~The~~ [A] voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’” // Notice that God spoke through Isaiah, so the Bible is God’s Word! Also, realize that we do not have the ability to “Prepare the way of the Lord,” so the Spirit does that work through the Word! Luther wrote that such preparation “consists in the deep conviction and confession that you are unfit, a sinner, poor, damned, and miserable with all the works you are able to do. Where this conviction is [formed], the heart will be opened for the Lord’s entrance with his forgiveness and gifts” (97-98).
3. **The Clothes and Food:** ⁴ Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. // The extra things of life are nice, but they **can** lead us away from Jesus!
4. **The Baptizing and Confessing:** ⁵ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶ and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. // Virtually everyone was going out to John to be baptized. They (1) went out, (2) heard John preach, (3) were moved to repentance by the Spirit, (4) confessed their sins, and (5) were baptized.
- When we confess our sins, we ✓ admit them, ✓ are sorry for them, and ✓ desire to turn from them. *Using that definition, did you confess your sins earlier in today’s service?* **Y N**
 - Have you received God’s absolution; *in other words*, is your trust in Jesus’ finished work for your forgiveness? **Y N**

5. **The Challenge:** ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to ~~his~~ [the] baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? // Since everyone else was being baptized, they may have done so to try to maintain their positions of leadership over the people – **but** \blacktriangleright they were not repentant and \blacktriangleright John let them know it!
- a. ⁸ [Therefore] **Bear fruit in keeping with** [literally, worthy of] **repentance.** // Not “a passing regret... an excuse or two, a wish to be different... a brief outward betterment... [but works that are] sufficient to show the actual presence of repentance in the heart” (108). *Bearing fruit is important; consider these passages:*
- i. Regarding the seed of God’s Word that fell on *repentant hearts*, “...they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15 ESV). Does that describe you? **Y N**
 - ii. Jesus said of God the Father, “He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (John 15:2 NIV). Is God pruning you, *thus getting rid of what is worthless*, to make you more fruitful? **Y N**
 - iii. The fruit of the Spirit begins with love (Gal. 5:22):
 1. Do you love God, *thus you take action to keep His commandments* (Jn. 14:15)? **Y N**
 2. Do you love others, *thus you take action to help them with their needs* (Mt. 22:39)? **Y N**
- b. ⁹ **And do not presume 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.”

// Some trust in their bloodline to get them into heaven, *but JESUS is the only real way to heaven!*

6. **The Warning:** ¹⁰ **“Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees [at the time, “trees” referred to the unrepentant Jews]. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”** // When people are repentant, *that is their nature – not their fruit*. The fruit comes **from** those who are repentant.
7. **The Prophecy:** ¹¹ **“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he [the Messiah] who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire [which pointed ahead to the Day of Pentecost].”** // God sent John to prepare the way for Jesus, which was a key part of His master plan; *then John pointed repentant people to Jesus!*
8. **The Second Warning:** ¹² **His [Jesus’] winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”** // **In verse 11**, John spoke of Jesus’ first coming to save; then, *without any pause*, John, **in verse 12**, spoke about Jesus’ second coming to separate; then to **gather** the believers and **burn** the unbelievers!

Conclusion: Let us pray: Dear Father, *You developed a master plan to save all people through Jesus*; therefore, enable **us** and **all people** to **ever-hear** Your Word, **turn** from all of our sins, **trust** only in Jesus as our Savior, and **go** all-out to bear good fruit! In Jesus’ name we pray...

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