

## PREPARING FOR THE MESSIAH

--MATTHEW 3:1-12--

### INTRODUCTION:

Last Sunday we lit the candle of prophecy which was a call to remember the Old Testament prophecies which spoke of the first advent of Jesus Christ. This same candle of prophecy was to cause us to recall the promises and prophecies of Christ's second advent and in anticipation of that event to discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light, to literally put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

This morning, we lit the candle of Bethlehem which speaks of preparation necessary to be ready for the birth of the Christ Child, but also the preparation for the return of the King in His second advent. Our Scripture this morning focused on the ministry of John the Baptist who was the forerunner, the herald of the coming Messiah. It focused on how he was preparing the way for the Messiah.

#### I. THE HERALD (Matthew 3:1-4)

- a. In the ancient world it was common for a \_\_\_\_\_ to precede the arrival of a monarch.
- b. This passage begins with the words, "*Now in those \_\_\_\_\_*" (Matthew 3:1a, NASB95) and Matthew uses this phrase as a transition between chapter 2 and 3.
- c. John had been miraculously \_\_\_\_\_ to parents beyond the age of childbearing.
- d. For four hundred years there had not been a \_\_\_\_\_ in the land.
- e. Matthew then shows us the prophetic \_\_\_\_\_ that authenticates the ministry of John the Baptist.
- f. Matthew tells us that John the Baptist stood out from the other \_\_\_\_\_ leaders of the day.
- g. John the Baptist's dress, food, and lifestyle were a \_\_\_\_\_ to the self-satisfied and self-indulgent religious leaders.

#### II. THE HEARERS (Matthew 3:5-6)

- a. News of this eccentric \_\_\_\_\_ preaching in the wilderness spread quickly and he began to draw large crowds.

- b. Matthew tells us that they were being baptized by John in the Jordan river as they \_\_\_\_\_ their sins.
- c. John's baptism was \_\_\_\_\_ time.
- d. This act of baptism symbolized before the world that those being baptized realized that their national and racial descent, or even their calling as God's chosen and covenant people, could not \_\_\_\_\_ them.
- e. Not all of these acts of repentance were \_\_\_\_\_; many were superficial and hypocritical.

#### III. THE HEART OF MAN (Matthew 3:7-10)

- a. Among those who were coming out to be \_\_\_\_\_ by John, were some Pharisees and Sadducees.
- b. It is interesting that Matthew informs us that they were \_\_\_\_\_ for baptism.
- c. John was fully aware of their \_\_\_\_\_ and their insincerity.
- d. John was not done; he goes on to tell them that they need to bring forth \_\_\_\_\_ in keeping with true repentance.
- e. Knowing what they were thinking, John continued, "*and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have \_\_\_\_\_ for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.*" (Matthew 3:9, NASB95)
- f. John then spoke of the coming \_\_\_\_\_ and from his words he believed that God's ultimate judgment was imminent.
- g. John was directing his rebuke directly at the unrepentant Pharisees and Sadducees, but his message of judgment is for every \_\_\_\_\_.

#### IV. THE HOPE (Matthew 3:11-12)

- a. John does not end on judgment but also gives a measure of \_\_\_\_\_ in his final comments.
- b. John begins his final words by explaining how his \_\_\_\_\_ differed from that of the Messiah. (Acts 19:4)
- c. The second \_\_\_\_\_ that John mentions is by the Messiah.

- d. John said that the Messiah who was coming is mightier than I, one way He is \_\_\_\_\_ is in His baptism with the Holy Spirit. (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12:13)
- e. The third baptism that John mentions that the Messiah will perform is the baptism of \_\_\_\_\_.
- f. As in the preceding verses, John again gives consolation to believers but \_\_\_\_\_ to unbelievers.

#### CONCLUSION:

What does this have to do with Advent? The second candle is Bethlehem and represents preparation for the birth of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist's ministry was also about preparation, preparing the hearts of people for the coming Messiah-King. John is calling us as well to prepare our hearts to celebrate Christ's birth, but more importantly to prepare our hearts for Christ's second advent, when He will separate the ones who are His from those who rejected Him. His people will go into eternal life, the unsaved into eternal punishment. Now is the time to prepare our hearts for that day. John calls us to repent and turn from our sin and follow the Lord Jesus Christ by faith. John says that true repentance is seen by bearing fruit in keeping with repentance. Where is your heart? Does it need some cleansing? Theologian Erich Sauer writes concerning repentance, "Repentance is a threefold action. In the understanding it means knowledge of sin; in the feelings it means pain and grief; and in the will it means a change of mind."\* True repentance first of all involves understanding and insight, intellectual awareness of the need for moral and spiritual cleansing and change. Second, it involves our emotions. We come to feel with pain and grief the need that our mind knows. Third, it involves the will and the appropriate actions that result from what our mind knows and our heart feels.

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\* Sauer, Erich, *The Triumph of the Crucified*. Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans, 1951. p. 67.