

The Mightier One

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[0 : 00] We shall now turn to Luke's Gospel, chapter 3. If we could read from verse 15. Luke's Gospel, chapter 3, and from verse 15.

And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not, John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water, but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose.

He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire, whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.

And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people, that Herod the Tetrarch, being reprov'd by him for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, had it yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.

[1 : 55] John's great subject was repent.

He was always preaching repentance. And indeed, it's something that's always relevant. As long as man is a sinner, he needs to repent.

And of course, all of us are sinners. You and I all break God's commandments. We all need forgiveness. We all need a changed life.

And so, John's message is one which is relevant in our day and generation too. God says to you and me, repent.

And John didn't just say repent to those who like to hear that message. He didn't just say it to those who were good, nice, pleasant people, the sort of people who would smile at him and say yes, or who would immediately receive his message.

[3 : 18] He said repent to some people who didn't like it, who hated him for it, who weren't prepared to admit that they were sinners, who weren't ready to face up to their sins.

He even preached repentance to King Herod. Herod the tyrant. It was something very dangerous to do that, but he did it.

Herod was guilty of adultery. He had committed this sin with his brother Philip's wife. Of course, adultery is an affront to God.

Whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder. Adultery is somebody breaking the bond which God has made.

God has brought two people together in marriage. Adultery is one party breaking that bond. And so it's an affront to God.

[4 : 23] It's trying to undo what God has done. And as such, John clearly announced God's word against Herod.

God's word against Herod. Repent. Repent. Give up your adultery. Give up your wicked life. And John was hated for it. He was imprisoned.

And eventually, at the request of Herodias, this woman with whom Herod was committing adultery, he was executed.

So the people, they were seeing this preaching, hearing what John the Baptist was saying.

They were seeing the crowds coming, lots of people being baptized. And they wondered, who is this faithful, fearless prophet?

[5 : 25] Who is this man who is so bold and so ready to speak out against sin? Every sin. All people sin.

And call them, even call the king himself, to repentance. Is he the Christ? Is he the one that our fathers have longed for?

The prophet? The great king? The son of David who is to come? The Messiah? But John didn't preach himself.

John preached one who was mightier than he. He said, He that comes after me, the latchet of his shoes, I'm not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

I'm not worthy even to carry his sandals, to be his slave. He who comes after me is mightier than I. And this was the one that John preached, proclaiming Jesus Christ, Jesus as the Christ.

[6 : 32] He was the one who was a voice in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord, of the Messiah. Now I would like us today to contrast John with Christ.

Because this is what we have in the passage in front of us. John is comparing himself with the Messiah and contrasting himself with the Messiah.

And the first thing that I want us to notice is that John baptizes with water, but Jesus with his spirit and with fire.

John the Baptist preached repentance, called people to give up their sins, to change their lives, to be converted and to profess their conversion by coming and being baptized.

Christ. But his baptism was a baptism with water. He would take some water and sprinkle it over them or perhaps pour it over them.

[7 : 42] It was an outward thing. John couldn't change their lives. And John's baptism didn't transform their lives.

The baptism was a baptism with water. It was an outward thing. It was a sign that their lives were changed, that they had given up their wicked ways.

Therefore they were baptized, vowing that they were going to follow the Lord, that they were going to be different, that they were putting their trust in God and seeking cleansing and washing from him.

The baptism was an outward thing. Baptism with water, an outward sign that spoke of the need for an inward cleansing.

And those who came for this baptism were saying they were trusting in God and looking for that inward cleansing. And of course it's the same with baptism today.

[8 : 44] There are some people who think that if a child is baptized, that child has a better chance, as it were, to get to heaven. And a child dying unbaptized would be lost.

Some people think that if they are baptized that somehow this is some added advantage for them as far as making peace with God. But baptism with water will not save anyone.

And baptism with water doesn't give a person any greater chance of being saved. It's merely an outward sign and you need the inward change to have this symbol performed over you will not change a person.

There are many people who have been baptized and they are godless people. and they end up in hell. But if we consider our baptism in the proper way, if a parent thinks of the baptism of his child and is encouraged by that means to bring up the child for God and recognizes their child as separate, as different, as one who should be God's and is seeking, is washing for the child and is seeking that the child live a new life, a different life, a life for God, is seeking the working of God's spirit in the child, then there's a blessing there as the parent seeks to bring up the child for God. And there's a blessing for the child himself, herself, as that child thinks about their baptism and recognizes their own need to be washed from their sins and their need to live for God and their need to remember that they have been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost to be God's, to be God's people and to be set apart for God.

[10 : 49] Baptism in and of itself is just an outward thing. We must view it in the proper way. We must mix it with faith. We must look to God and to God's salvation and to what the baptism symbolizes.

Roman Catholic priests, they think that they're, that they have this magical power that when they baptize a child, that the child is immediately sanctified, that that child is immediately regenerated. And yet it's so obvious that this hasn't taken place because so many of those who are baptized by Roman Catholic priests are no better, no better at all than those who have never been baptized.

They are criminals too, some of them, and drunkards and drug addicts and all the rest of it. Mere baptism with water will not change anybody.

It will not save anybody. It does not regenerate. John said, I indeed baptize with water and that's all the church can do, baptize with water.

[12:07] But then he points to another, the Lord Jesus Christ, who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Jesus, his baptism is quite different. When Jesus baptizes us, it's an inward thing. It's the Holy Spirit working in our hearts, convicting us of our sins, making us to see that we are sinners and to hate sin and to turn from it, to turn to God.

When Jesus baptizes us, his Holy Spirit comes into our lives. regenerating us, recreating us, making us into new people, born again by the Spirit of God.

When Christ baptizes us, his Holy Spirit starts to sanctify us and starts working in our lives a work of grace.

and those who are baptized by Jesus Christ are different. Every single one of them is different from those who are not baptized.

[13:30] The baptism of Jesus, that baptism with the Spirit does make a difference because the Holy Spirit, that powerful third person of the Trinity comes into our lives, works in our hearts and lives.

That soul-transforming work. Jesus baptizes with the Spirit and with fire, a fire that burns up the dross, the rubbish, the sin, the filthy ways.

when the Holy Spirit, when Jesus comes with his baptism, it's a baptism of fire. And sometimes there's suffering in that fire and there's purging, there's trials and tribulations.

But the purpose of it is that we might be sanctified, that we might be made holy and we shall be made holy when Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

sometimes it's painful, yes. It hurts us sometimes. There are sins that we have to be broken away from.

[14:46] There's pride that has to be subdued. There's bad temper that has to be stamped down under our feet. There's idolatry that has to be rooted out.

A baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire. A fire that purifies, that purges, so that at the end of the day you will be like silver or like gold that has been purged and purified in the fire.

There's another sense in which we can talk of a baptism of fire. A baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire also means an empowering and enriching of the individual so that the person becomes a bright and shining light.

So that the person has fire as it were in them. Just as it was on the day of Pentecost when there was that great baptism of the Holy Spirit and of fire.

You remember how the Holy Spirit came down on the disciples there and how there rested upon them cloven tongues as of fire and they had new power and new charisma and new giftedness.

[16:16] God's Spirit rested upon them and powering them setting them on fire for God. When we are baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire we have this power of God in our lives.

Yes transforming ourselves changing us but able also to change others to affect them and to affect them in a saving way.

What about you then? Have you been baptized outwardly with water? I'm sure you have most of you.

Most of you here have been baptized with water but have you been baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire? Because at the end of the day this is the only thing that really matters.

The other baptism is just a need it's a pointer it's a symbol a sign but what you need what all of us need is to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

[17:28] God's Holy Spirit coming down upon us coming into our lives changing us converting us making us into new people working in us and through us purging and cleansing us working out towards others also and setting others on fire for God too.

You see here the contrast between John and Jesus John says I baptize with water but he who comes after me he's mightier than I he's far greater than me he's not a mere man he is the Messiah he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire this is the one we worship we don't worship man we don't trust in a minister or a priest or in John the Baptist or any other mere man we look to the Lord Jesus Christ the mighty one the glorious one the one who is all powerful the one who baptizes with

the Holy Spirit and with fire secondly notice that John warns and threatens but Jesus punishes John cried repent give up your sins turn away turn away from your idols turn from your deceitfulness your stealing and your oppression and your extortion and your violence give up your adultery give up your hypocrisy and he warned them of the wrath to come that was all John could do he could just speak warn call people away from their sins tell them tell them tell them of the danger they were in tell them to change their lives but then Jesus whose fan is in his hand and he will thoroughly purge his floor and gather the wheat into the garner but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable John could speak and warn and threaten but Jesus his fan is in his hand he will truly purge his floor he will separate the wheat from the chaff the good wheat that will be separated from the chaff sometimes chaff can look very like good wheat it's got the outward shell it's got the appearance but there's no care now the inside is missing hypocrites people who are outwardly religious good looking and all the rest of it but the inside is missing the heart is not there Jesus will use his fan to blow away the chaff to blow it away to unquenchable fire to be burned up in that place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched but the good wheat he will gather it into his garner into the storehouse of heaven what's the difference between Jesus and John John preaches John warns and threatens Jesus judges Jesus separates Jesus punishes and Jesus blesses I wonder are you like the chaff an outward veneer of religion generation of vipers cries John who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come who hath warned you to turn and to put on the appearance of religion who hath warned you to stay away from certain excessive sins who hath warned you to pretend that you are religious who hath warned you to start coming to church and being baptized generation of vipers seed of snakes you've got to be changed it won't do to remain a snake you've got to be changed into a child of God it doesn't do to continue a viper at heart you mustn't remain as the chaff with a mere shell of religion that won't do who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come so that you're as it were putting on this coat of religion that won't do be a complete and thorough work as he will separate the wheat from the chaff are you chaff or are you wheat how much greater then

[24 : 12] Jesus is than John Jesus the judge of all the earth Jesus the one who will separate the sheep from the goats the one who will separate the righteous from the wicked the true Christian from the person who isn't a Christian at all how much greater Jesus is the one who will punish the wicked all who do not receive him and give their lives to him and who will reward and richly bless all who love him and trust in him are you today then worshipping this great Christ honouring and adoring him the one who is greater than John greater than any mere man or are you like Herod clinging on to your sins on the one hand perhaps sometimes admiring

John and admiring Jesus but at the same time loving your own secret sins thirdly Jesus John was a prophet but Jesus is the son the son of God John was a great preacher he went round proclaiming God's word calling people from their sinful ways he was a baptizer baptizing people as a sign that they had changed that they had given up their sins a prophet as Jesus says on another occasion among those born of women there have not arisen a greater than John the Baptist he was the greatest that there was up to then ah yes but he was inferior to

Jesus very much so inferior to Jesus God says of Jesus this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased not a mere prophet but God's only begotten God's beloved son Jesus here submits to the baptism of John that in itself was something highly significant John said repent of your sins come and be baptized Jesus came to be baptized John said what are you coming to be baptized for you're not a sinner I need to be baptized of you I John am a sinner but you're not Jesus says suffer it to be so now it must be done this way in this way we must fulfill all righteousness you see John John wasn't realizing fully what was happening

Jesus was identifying with our sins he was taking our sins and taking our sins upon himself he was fully identifying with us and Jesus wants to be baptized he wants to show that now he is beginning his public ministry fully identifying with our sins that's the tremendous significance of the baptism Jesus is there saying the spotless son of God is saying I am taking my place alongside sinful humanity I am taking the sins of men women upon myself Isaiah had prayed many years before this oh that thou wouldst drain the heavens and come down and now we see that prayer answered the heavens are opened they were opened at an earlier date when

Christ himself came down born of the Virgin Mary and now they're opened again at the baptism and the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove and rests upon Christ and the voice of God reigns the heavens and comes down this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased hear him listen to

him obey him trust in him the Holy Spirit came down in order to equip Jesus to strengthen him to uphold him behold mine elect to my uphold my servant to my uphold my elect in whom my soul delight the Holy Spirit comes down to uphold Christ to equip him to strengthen him for the work and the voice of

[29 : 38] God calls men and women to recognize Jesus my beloved son in whom I am well pleased Jesus was loved by the father John was a sinner but Jesus was perfect God was in everything well pleased with his own son delighted with his son now even the godliest of men grieve God from time to time John would too John had sin in his heart but the Lord Jesus he was the beloved son in whom God was well pleased so we see here the one who is greater than

John not a mere man but one who was even greater who was God and man here we have the one who doesn't just baptize with water but baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire doesn't just threaten but will judge the world and punish the wicked the one who was not just a prophet but the very son of God the one in whom God was well pleased this is the one that we worship the one we must trust in to whom we must look our lives must be given to him God grant that each one of us will know what it is to trust in Christ to follow him to recognize them as different as separate and special giving our lives totally to him let us pray oh lord our god we praise thy name we thank thee for our savior came into this world died on the cross for us we thank thee for him who baptizes us with the holy spirit and with fire we thank thee for him who is mighty both to save to reward and also to punish whose word will be performed we thank thee for him the beloved son in whom thou art well pleased oh may we see him may we see him with something of the glory that belongs to him may we bow before him acknowledging him as our saviour and lord pardon us our sins for jesus sake amen