

THE VOICE OF ONE CALLING OUT

POWER IN PREPARATION [MATTHEW, PART 2] · MATTHEW 3:1-12 · JANUARY 17, 2021 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

SERMON OUTLINE:

"In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'" (Matthew 3:1-2)

John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-4)

- Repentance
- The kingdom of heaven
- The voice (Isaiah 40:3)
- The prophet (2 Kings 1:8)

The Wilderness (Matthew 3:1, 5-6)

- Old Testament backgrounds: Jeremiah 2:2-3; Hosea 2:14-15; Ezekiel 20:35-38
- Turning from self to God
- Stripping and judgment
- Purification and renewal

Brood of Vipers (Matthew 3:7-10)

- Pharisees and Sadducees
- Fruit in keeping with repentance
- True children of Abraham
- The tree about to be cut down

The One to Come (Matthew 3:11-12)

- More powerful and even greater
- A baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you experienced difficulty that has eventually led to something good in your life? What happened?
2. This week we continue our series, "Power in Preparation," looking at the appearance of John the Baptist in Matthew 3:1-12. Begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through His Word, and then, whether you are alone or with a group, read that text aloud.
3. *Background: Based on what we see in verses 1 and 6, and what we know from John 3:23, John baptized in the Judean wilderness just east of the Jordan River near Aenon and Salim.*
4. What is the essence of John's message and people's response to him in verses 2 and 6?
5. Matthew makes it clear that John is both a prophetic figure like Elijah (see 2 Kings 1:8) and also the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy about "a voice" (Isaiah 40:3). Why is this significant?
6. The "wilderness" was associated with repentance, purification, and spiritual renewal in the Old Testament (see Jeremiah 2:2-3; Hosea 2:14-15; and Ezekiel 20:35-38). Why do you think this is the place that John chose to baptize given his message in verse 2?
7. Have you ever experienced a wilderness in your life, both where it seems God is drawing you into a time of purification and ultimately a time of renewal? What was it like?
8. The religious leaders come to John as well (3:7). Why do you think they are there?
9. The closest parallel to John's baptism seems to be proselyte baptism, where Gentiles would shed their previous identity and become "Jewish." Here, John is inviting Jews to become new through repentance and turning to God. How might the religious leaders have viewed John's actions?
10. What is the essence of John's message to the religious leaders in 3:7-10?
11. How might John's words apply in our own day, even within the church?
12. The words in 3:11-12 are probably to the entire crowd of people with John. What is John saying to them about himself and Jesus?
13. What is one thing God is speaking to you through this study of John the Baptist in Matthew 3? If you're on your own, write that down and pray over that this week. If you are with a small group, share your answers with one another before closing in prayer.

DIG DEEPER:

This week dig deeper into the life and ministry of John the Baptist in one or more of the following ways:

- Memorize John's message in Matthew 3:2
- Set aside some time this week to read Matthew 3:1-12 again. Then write, draw, paint, or pray aloud your own response to this series of events in Jesus' life.
- Read more about John's life in the following passages:

Luke 1:5-25, 39-80	Luke 3:1-20	John 1:6-8, 19-34
John 3:22-36	Matthew 11:1-19	Matthew 14:1-12
Mark 6:14-29	Matthew 17:11-13; 21:32	
- Explore Bible maps related to the life and ministry of John the Baptist here: studylight.org/pastoral-resources/bible-maps-archive.html?pn=29.