

The Preaching of John the Baptist

by C.I. Scofield

The sermon emphasizes that human nature is incurably evil and under condemnation, and that true repentance is a change of mind about Christ that bears fruit.

Scripture: Acts 16:31

Topics: "Repentance And Faith", "Salvation Through Christ"

Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the message and mission of John the Baptist, emphasizing his preparatory role for the kingdom and the distinction between his message and the Gospel message of believing in Jesus Christ for salvation. He highlights the importance of true repentance as an energizing principle that bears fruit, contrasting it with false security and self-satisfaction seen in the Pharisees and Sadducees. The heart of the lesson lies in recognizing that human nature is inherently sinful and condemned, with man spiritually dead in sins, emphasizing the need for belief in Jesus Christ for salvation and the consequences of unbelief.

Transcript

(Matt, iii:1-12.)

I. The Analysis.

1. The Message and the Mission of John (verses 1-3, 10, 12).--The position of John the Baptist with reference to Christ is simply defined by himself; he was "the friend of the Bridegroom" (John iii:29), as Abraham was "the friend of God" (James iii:22). He was the last and greatest (Matt, xi:9, 10) of the Old Testament prophets, and to him was given the blessedness of seeing the Bridegroom and of hearing His voice. But John the Baptist's ministry was preparatory to the kingdom, not the church; nor was his message, "repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," a Gospel message. There is no preparatory message for this Gospel age. The Gospel says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts xvi:31).

2. The Test of True Repentance (verse 8).--Repentance is a change of mind about Christ, but true repentance, like true faith, is an energizing principle--it bears fruit (Matt. xxi:28-31).

3. The Two Classes in Especial Peril (verse 9).--The appearance amongst those who sought baptism at the hands of John of Pharisees and Sadducees aroused in John "the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke

i:17). The Sadducees were the rationalists and higher critics of that day (Matt. xxi:23-29), and the Pharisees the strict legalists. In many things they were far apart, and, upon a superficial view, seemed antagonistic, but the Spirit pierced down to their essential unity; they both said, "We have Abraham to our father." They were quite too good by natural descent to be lost. That was their peculiar peril--false security, self-satisfaction. It is the peril of millions to-day.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

But the heart of this lesson must be found in the tenth verse: "Now is the ax laid into the root of the trees." The long trail of human nature is over. Beginning with what the infidel evolutionist, Herbert Spencer, declares to be a scientific definition of heaven, "a perfect being in a perfect environment," man, at the first temptation, fell into sin. Tested thereafter under natural conscience, under human government, under covenant and promise, and finally under law, human nature was shown to be incurably evil. Neither the goodness nor the severity of God availed to produce fruit for God from that tree (Isa. i:2-6, v:1-7; Rom. iii:9-18).

The current theological notion that man is now under probation is wholly misleading and untrue. Man is under condemnation (John iii:18, 19), and spiritually dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. ii:1, 5). The unbeliever is in precisely the condition of a condemned criminal, execution of whose sentence is indefinitely deferred. Before him is, in any event, no matter what he may do, but one prospect-- he must die. But, blessed be God, he may choose the manner of his death. He may believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and then he dies in and with Christ (Rom. vi:2-6; Gal. ii:19, 20), or he may go on in unbelief and find his part in the "lake of fire which is the second death"--a death which is not the extinction of being, but an endless and never consummated dying. But in any event, God, nineteen hundred years ago, ceased to expect anything from human nature. The old tree is hewn down.

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