

John the Baptist

John and the People

Introduction

- As we continue to dig into the message of John the Baptist, we will highlight his interactions with various people.

The Sadducees and Pharisees

- The Pharisees (“separated ones”) were group popular with the common people and strove to observe every command in the written and oral Law.
- The Sadducees (“righteous ones”) were an aristocratic group that often operated more as a political group and accepted the written Law.
- These come to John out of curiosity, not conviction – Matthew 3:7
 - Note – Luke has John addressing the multitudes that had come, not just the Sadducees and Pharisees. He is pointing out the errors in the doctrines, not the people.
- He compares them to serpents – Matthew 3:7
 - May be using the language of Psalm 58.
 - They are “offspring” of serpents – like their fathers before them.
- John wonders how they could in their self-righteousness have come to fear judgment to come – Matthew 3:7
- These leaders expected special treatment, but John gives them the same message he gave to all: repent – Matthew 3:8
- Their heritage from Abraham gave them no special standing with God – Matthew 3:9

The People

- Those that follow John seem to be the common people, poor, or outcasts – Matthew 21:32
- Hearing John’s message of repentance, the people ask a practical question about living out the message - Luke 3:10
- John’s response is that whatever they had beyond their own needs should be given to those without – Luke 3:11
 - This is a broadside against the covetousness and materialism of the day.

The Publicans

- Publicans are those that worked with the Roman government, typically as tax collectors.
 - The Romans practiced a form of tax farming where tax collectors could keep everything they collected above their quota. This of course was full of abuse.
- John's response is that they should only take the taxes due and nothing more – Luke 3:12
 - It is important to note that John does not denounce their work or the Roman government – Romans 13

The Soldiers

- We know that there were soldiers that became Jewish proselytes – Matthew 8:5, Acts 10:1
 - There is some historical debate on this, but it seems likely the soldiers themselves were Syrians and their commanders Romans.
- John's response is that they should not abuse their power, be truthful, and be content with their wages and supplies – Luke 3:14

John's Disciples

- John had disciples ("learners") just as Christ would later have – John 1:35
- Baptism is a requirement – John 4:1
- John had taught them concerning:
 - Purification customs – John 3:25
 - Fasting – Matthew 9:14, Mark 2:18, Luke 5:33
 - Prayer – Luke 11:1
- These teachings were passed down to others:
 - John died in A.D. 28
 - Apollos – Acts 18:24-25 – A.D. 52
 - Disciples at Ephesus – Acts 19:1-7 – A.D. 53