

# JOHN THE BAPTIST COMES TO TOWN

## 2. Calling Men to Come Clean With God

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(1904-1969)

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Last Lord's Day we dwelt at length on the fact that Almighty God laid the axe at the root and that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit was going to be hewn down and cast into the fire. I want to continue our study on the ministry of John the Baptist, "Calling Men to Come Clean With God" and to throw down their arms and to cease their willful violation of God's Holy Law and to submit their lives to the rule and the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ before it is everlastingly too late.

John the Baptist laid the axe of God's coming judgment at the very root of the sinful condition of men and women, and we desperately need again and again all over this country men of the like, of the persuasion, and of the character of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ, to come and insist that men shall come clean with God. There is no excuse now; God Almighty will not accept any plea of ignorance. He commands all men everywhere to repent. John the Baptist said in Matthew 3:2, "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Mark 1:14-15: "Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Acts 3:19, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Read Acts 17:30-31, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead " Luke 13:5, the Saviour Himself says, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

I've been amazed as I go up and down the country to find out how many preachers have found out that repentance is not to be preached to the Gentiles. We have Bible teachers who tell us the Jews were supposed to repent, but that all a sinner has to do now is to simply receive Jesus Christ as his Saviour by what they call simple faith, and they'll be saved. But the Scriptures nowhere separate repentance and faith. Sometimes repentance alone is mentioned, and it always supposes faith; and sometimes the way to God is faith, and it is just mentioned alone, but it always presupposes repentance. Somebody says, "Which comes first – repentance or faith?" I do not know; they come together, but you cannot have one without the other. We desperately need in these desperately wicked days the clarion call to go forth everywhere, for God commands all men everywhere to repent. To repent! That's the desperate need of this hour. Dr. Harry A. Ironside said, "Shallow preaching that does not grapple with the terrible fact of man's sinfulness and guilt – preaching that does not call on men everywhere to repent – that kind of preaching results in shallow conversions. And so we have myriads of glib-tongued professors today who

give no evidence of regeneration whatsoever. They go about prating about being saved by grace, but they manifest no grace in their lives."

Dr. L.E. Maxwell of Prairie Institute yonder in Canada in his great book, *Crowded to Christ*, tells of a young preacher who graduated from one of our Bible institutes, and he went over yonder to India and preached the nice smooth Gospel that he was taught in the Bible institute. The Bible teachers have the dispensations all arranged, and they've got everything fitted nicely into little pockets, you know – this is for that time, the other's for some other time. This young preacher had gone over there and preached his nice little easy believism over yonder in India, and everybody over there had believed. Why, sure! And they took Jesus as their Saviour and put Him up on the shelf with the rest of their gods. And this young man went over there and built a great church membership of people who believed in Jesus, but as he continued to preach he noticed there was no fruit. There was no fruit, there was no zeal, there were no tears, there was no passion, there was no compassion. There was no "ache" to warn men everywhere, and finally in his desperate condition he came to the conclusion that led him to disband his congregation and start at the bottom and begin all over again. Then in-stead of preaching his easy believism, he began to preach the truth as it is in God's Word, that God Almighty demands that men come absolutely 100 percent clean with Him and throw down their arms, and put their shotgun down at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, throw up their hands in utter submission and quit rebelling against the rule of Christ in their lives, quit violating God's Holy Law in their daily walk!

And I wouldn't be surprised if that's not what this nation needs. We have thousands of people who attend some sort of church service this morning; some of you listening to me now – and the earlier it is the better. You'll go to some of these early morning services now so you'll have more time to feed the lusts of that old body and that old mind and that old flesh and that old carnality that's in you. And we're turning America into a Protestant Catholicism, where we go and pay our tribute to a Holy God one hour on Sunday morning, and then we do as we please the rest of that day that God Almighty says is His Day, and is to be kept for the glory of God and the rest of the body. I say to you, my friends, that there is no evidence of regeneration inside unless it is evidenced by the fruits of repentance, an obedient, abundant, abiding, victorious persevering faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in our daily lives!

I tell you now that in spite of the Bible teaching to the contrary notwithstanding, the preaching of repentance is the demand of Almighty God to all men everywhere. Calling on men to repent is not contrary to the preaching of the grace of a Sovereign God, but the preaching of repentance prepares men to be interested in the gracious provisions of God in Christ, wherein He imputes not the sin of the world to men, but puts it on Jesus Christ. We've got lots of people today, especially in this Piedmont section, who are mighty, mighty afraid lest the sinner will have something he can claim a part in and have merit in. But I tell you, there is no merit on the part of a sinner, for that sinner enabled by God's grace to recognize his desperate need.

The Scripture says, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," a man who's covered with putrifying sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head, like the sinner described in Isaiah – the sooner he finds out that he is sick, the sooner he may be calling, screaming for Jesus Christ the Great Physician to put the healing balm of Gilead on his sin-sick soul and rescue him by His marvelous power. My friend, there isn't one bit of merit at all for a

sick man to call for a doctor. There wasn't any merit in the prodigal son who left home and wound up in the hog pen –there was no merit for him to crawl and go back home and say, "Father, I have sinned!" He merited no pardon, but when he did go back and take his place in the dust of repentance, it did put him in a place to receive a pardon and salvation. I tell you, there is no sinner who was ever saved apart from the grace of God. Know assuredly that a sinner can never receive the grace of God who does not recognize (watch it!) his need, and his need is for repentance, and this is not contrary to the grace of God, nor does it limit the grace of God, nor does it accrue merit to the repenting sinner – but it is God's way of preparing the sinner to hear with gladsome ear the good tidings that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

We desperately need what I am talking about this morning. Oh, my soul! Isn't it a tragedy that we try to soften the terms upon which God proffers Jesus Christ to men and women! The terms are repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you and I right here in this city are living in a day of lawlessness. Shameless impenitence marks the actions of this generation of people. You know there is some hope for people as long as the conscience pricks them, and their hearts bleed over their wrongdoing, but people today do as they please and say "Phooey on God." If God gets in their way, they'll import them some Bible teachers to say, "Well, that's not for us today." Or they do something, and they'll say, "Well, I'm not concerned; I'm getting along fine, thank you!" I say that men are in desperate condition now because they are shamelessly propagandizing the fact that they don't give a whoop what God says in His Word about the way they do. They joined the church, took the preacher's hand, were sprinkled or ducked, they went to service once early on Sunday morning; and the priest in Protestant garb will put a little hypodermic needle in their arms and give them a little spiritual cocaine shot, and make them feel better so they can go out and sin some more!

We desperately need some John the Baptists to go up and down the land in our day in all the fury of Sinai's thunders and terrors and shout out again that the Law of God has not been repealed, that God still demands men to repent, and that God still demands men to believe, and God still demands that men surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all the avenues of their lives. We need men now to call men to repentance. We need desperately to read sermons like the Lord preached on the Mount. Now our nation is full of Bible teachers who tell us that the Sermon on the Mount is not for today; it's for the Millennial age, they say, and it's universally ignored now, and they tell us the exalted demands of the Sermon on the Mount will be a lot more easily obeyed in the Millennial age when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover this old earth as the waters cover the sea. But I look you in the face and tell you, my friends, that the Sermon on the Mount is for T-O-D-A-Y, today! And the ethical standards that we are told are too high, and that men cannot possibly live up to them now, are still God's measuring rod for the character of His citizens of the eternal kingdom both in time and in eternity.

Ah, they tell us, we couldn't turn another cheek when somebody slaps us, and when somebody steals our coat, we couldn't give them another, and we couldn't pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us, and we couldn't do this and that and the other that the Scriptures tell us to do. Man's ethical standard today is not too high, and we go up and down the country and whittle down the claims of God Almighty's Holy Law. But I warn you now that A-L-L, all Christ's

teachings are meant by Him on purpose to be unacceptable to this old carnal, godless, dirty, filthy flesh of Rolfe Barnard and everybody else.

You know, the early Christians who became martyrs (most of them) followed through what I'm preaching to you now. They could have muzzled an open confession of Christ until that command could have been more easily obeyed, but they didn't do it. Many of them paid with their lives, but they gained heaven and the glorious hope of Christ in eternity.

Walk the streets of this nation if you don't believe it –see the women sporting their bodies and showing not, it must be done.

I wish God would raise up people to hear me. We are getting on other radio stations to get this message out. I wish God's people who hear me would pray for me. I want an old fashioned baptism of Holy Ghost power. I wish I could burn these warning messages into the hearts of these self-satisfied, God-dishonoring, Christ-rejecting, Holy Spirit-denying and despising, lawbreaking generation of men and women who are going to hell so fast they are kicking up the dust in the devil's eyes, and going to hell listening to us preach.

I tell you, John the Baptist came and said, "God's laid the axe to the root," when men came to him and said "We've been listening to you preach." As we learned last Lord's Day, they came with this one cry, "What must we do? It must be our move now." Oh, my soul! Oh, to hear men once again interested in what the holy claims of God Almighty are. And John the Baptist wielding the sword of truth in the Spirit crossed these people just where they lived in order that the one thing might bring them to the dust of death and the death of self, and therefore resurrection in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The soldiers came and said, "What must we do?" And he crossed them on the thing nearest their heart. The publicans came and said, "What must we do?" And he told them to turn from the thing that was nearest their heart. The Pharisees came and he told them, "Ye generation of vipers! Who hath warned you!" And he told them to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. Ladies and gentlemen, listen to me! All of man's rebellion is usually wrapped up, heads up, in just one thing. These publicans, their rebellion and their lawlessness came to a head (like a boil, you know) over their stealing money. And the same with the soldiers, and the same with the Pharisees. God always crosses a man at the point of his rebellion; and when God's will and man's will cross, something's got to give. If man's will prevails he'll go to hell, but if God's will prevails He'll conquer that sinner. You know, my friend, it's obedience to the command of God – or it's death!

It's to be shut up with all our inability to face our responsibility, and to remember that God before He raises anybody first kills him, and that God demands unconditional surrender to the Lordship of His blessed Son in your life and mine. My soul! I wonder where your rebellion is headed up. I wonder just what one thing comes up before you every time the claims of Christ are pressed upon you. You are willing to give up everything except one thing, and I tell you that that'll go, that'll be cast at the feet of Jesus Christ! You are going to turn in abhorrence and hatred of that, you're going to pull it out of your life and cast it at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, or you are going to eternal hell. That's right, my friend.

How about you, sinner, your rebellion and violation heads up in one place, and you want to go to heaven but you won't drop the sin, and you don't want to go to hell, but you won't drop the sin. I tell you, God Almighty demands that you drop it and throw it at the feet of Jesus Christ and come clean with Him, or you are going to be sent to burn in eternity forever and ever by a God Who loved this world enough to give His Son to die for sinners, but doesn't love it enough to send men to heaven who love sin and hate God. May God help us today, is my prayer.

Revelation 21:8: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

The bitterness of death is SIN unpardoned!