



NOTES FOR FURTHER STUDY

Supplemental Texts

Lev. 18:16; 20:21; Isaiah 4:4-6; 10:33-34; 13:9; 30:27; 40:3-5; 59:5-8; 66:24; Jer. 1:2; Hos. 1:1; Joel 1:1; 2:30; Jonah 1:1; Zeph. 1:1; Zech. 1:1; Mal. 4:1-3; Matt. 6:17-20; 11:20; 14:3-5; 23:12; Mark 1:2-3, 8, 15; Luke 5:27-32; 6:43-45; 7:31-35; 15:1; 18:9-14; 19:1-10; 21:20-24-28; Acts 2:38; Rom. 7; 8:1-17; Gal. 5:16-26; Phil. 3:3-11

Study Summary

This passage encapsulates the ministry of John the Baptist. He is given a message of repentance as he preaches about the coming Messiah. His role is to prepare the people to meet Jesus and be ready to receive His message about the coming Kingdom of God. John makes clear that repentance and baptism should bear good fruit in the lives of those who seek God's forgiveness.

Historical & Theological Background

Historical: Wincing (v17) was the process of separating the chaff from the wheat after harvest. After the grain was loosed from the husk it was thrown into the air against the wind. The wind carried off the lighter chaff and the grain fell to the ground. A winning shovel is what was used to toss the grain in the air and clear the threshing floor. The wheat was then stored in a barn and the chaff was burned up.

Theological: "Baptism was a rite of cleansing in a number of religions" but for John and his Jewish listeners it was most likely inspired by the ritual washings of temple worship. It was regarded as an outward sign "signifying the washing away of sin" and was understood to be "a symbolic action ineffective without the appropriate inward attitude." In John's day, the Jews practiced "proselyte baptism," a ceremony for Gentile converts to cleanse them "from the defilement they saw as characteristic of all Gentiles." This may have given John's practice of baptism an added sting as "he applied to Jews the ceremony they regarded as suitable for unclean Gentiles." The practice of baptism is later taken up by Jesus' disciples (John 4:1-2) and becomes the ritual "by which a person is declared a member of the body of Christ," (Matt. 28:19). Baptism does not cause repentance, which is initiated by God alone, or bring salvation, which is the work of God alone. It is rather "an outward act which signifies" the inner working of God's grace "received by the believer." Throughout the NT it is often presented as an important part of people's response to God's offer of salvation in Christ and signifies a believers union with Christ and fellow believers.

DISCUSSION PRIMER

Take some time to share baptism stories. It could be your own, someone dear to you, or a recent baptism that you have witnessed in the church. Share how these moments continue to encourage your faith and remind you of the importance of our unity as the body of Christ. Consider this question: what are the present implications of your baptism? How might you live your life more in line with your confession of repentance and faith?

TEXTUAL INVESTIGATION

LUKE 3:1-20

Big Idea: Repentance and Faith in Christ Changes Our Lives in Practical Ways

Fallen Condition Focus: Misunderstanding Repentance

- What message is John given to preach (v2-3)?
- How does John fulfill OT prophecy? (Isa. 40:3-5) How does he prepare the way for Jesus?
- What is baptism? What is the relationship between repentance and baptism? (See Acts 2:38 and HTB)
- Why does John respond to the crowds with such harsh words (v7-9)? In what were the people placing their confidence (v8)?
- What does the fruit of repentance look like in this text (v10-14)? Why does John give different commands to each group of people?
- What two points does John make to refute people who wonder if he's the Messiah (v16-17)?
- What's the meaning of John's parable in verse 17 (HTB)? How is judgement part of the good news?

Gospel Connection: Read Rom. 8:1-4. How does the work of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit bring about forgiveness of sins and empower us to live a life of fruitful repentance?

TEXTUAL INTERSECTION: How does the text intersect with our lives?

- How does our world define repentance? How would you define it?
- Consider the sort of people coming to John for baptism and read Luke 5:27-32. What is the prerequisite to repentance? How does God bring people to repentance?
- Read Luke 18:9-14. How does the tax collector model repentance? Does his prayer reflect your own prayer life? Why or why not?
- Martin Luther was once quoted saying, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'Repent,' He intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance." What does Luther mean by this? How might we practice this in our own lives?
- Why is it important that our repentance bear good fruit? What good things have come from repenting in your own life?
- What dangers must you avoid in the calling that God has given you? How might you bear good fruit at work? Home? Church?

REPLICABLE QUESTIONS

Read *Luke 3:1-20* and explore together what the passage reveals about:

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| 1) The character and purposes of God? | 4) Our identity in Christ? |
| 2) The fallen human condition? | 5) Our obedience to Christ? |
| 3) The gospel of Jesus Christ? | 6) Our relationship to others |

TEXTUAL APPLICATION: "So, what now?"

Have each participant identify a personal take-away in light of this study. Is there . . .

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| • a command to obey? | • a beauty to behold? | • a mission to fulfill? |
| • a promise to claim? | • a truth to believe? | • an example to follow? |
| • a sin to repent of? | • a service to render? | • a person to tell? |