

## “What Shall We Do?”

### Luke 3:9-17

Oct. 10, 2021

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**"THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS,  
 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,  
 MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.**
- 5 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED,  
 AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW;  
 THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT,  
 AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;  
 6 AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.'" "
- 7 So he began saying to the crowds who were going out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"
- 8 "Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.
- 9 "Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

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#### Luke 7:24-30

- 24 When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"
- 25 "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces!"
- 26 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet.
- 27 "This is the one about whom it is written,  
 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU,  
 WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'
- 28 "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."
- 29 When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.
- 30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.
- 8 **"Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.**
4. **Their life will change.**
- "If you are truly repenting, then let's see some results."
5. **Their ancestry will not save them. Their religion will not save them. They cannot save themselves. Only Christ can save them.**
- John says, "Don't even go there."
  - There is no protection in Abraham from the wrath to come, only in Christ.
  - There are no spiritual grandchildren. Everyone personally must repent and come to Christ.
  - The only thing you inherited from Abraham was an old sin nature.
  - Religion will damn you faster than anything else.
6. **You are not critical to the plan of God.**
- You don't have God boxed in. You are not indispensable!
  - If God does not save you, He will save someone else, even out of a stone.
  - Notice John does not say that God could do away with the Abrahamic Covenant.
  - Jewishness is no guarantee of salvation, and non-Jewishness is no hindrance from salvation.

## John 8:39

39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.

## Rom 2:28-29

28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.  
29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

## Rom 9:6-7

6 For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;  
7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants,

## Luke 16:24

24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, **Note:** Just as Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness, so it was required for all Jews to believe in order to be spared from the wrath to come.

**9 "Indeed the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; so every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."**

## 7. Judgment will come.

- God is going to cut down many trees (plural), perhaps a forest of trees at their roots.
- But every tree (singular) will be evaluated for their fruit.
- No true repentance – no fruit – no salvation = condemnation.
- In an orchard, if a tree produces no apples it is simply taking up space and will be cut down.
- It doesn't matter if the tree is Jewish or Gentile; what matters is repentance and its fruit.
- 40 years later, Israel will lose a forest of unrepentant trees.
- There will be a few (remnant) who did repent and did bear good fruit.
- What kind of tree are you?

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11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."  
12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"  
13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to."  
14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."  
15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ, John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."  
17 "His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

**John's 7 "spiritual laws" -**

1. **Their condition.**
2. **The wrath of God.**
3. **The escape.**
4. **Their life will change.**
5. **Their ancestry will not save them. Their religion will not save them. They cannot save themselves. Only Christ can save them.**
6. **You are not critical to the plan of God.**
7. **Judgment will come.**

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- 10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"**
- Repentance calls for your life to change.
  - They got the message.
  - **Note:** The Pharisees and Sadducees did not ask "What shall we do?" The reason is because they saw no need for repentance. They were covered in Abraham.
- John addresses 3 groups that come to him.
- Group #1 – the crowds.**
- Ordinary Jewish person, so it applies to all.

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**11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."**

- Tunic - garment worn under the cloak. Loose-fitting, knee length garment worn next to the skin.
- If you have 2, give one away.
- **Be generous.** Give to the one who is in need. Share what you have. Meeting the needs of others is the real fruit of repentance.
- Do so with both your clothing and your food.
- To share with others is contrary to human nature. Human nature is to hoard what you have.
- What were they to do? – Repent. Have a change of heart.
- **Application:** Are you generous with your possessions? Do you share your house, your car, your clothing, your food with others. Do you do it joyfully?

**12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"**

**Group #2 – tax collectors.**

- List of taxes in Palestine: Customs taxes, import and export taxes, toll bridges, crop taxes, sales tax, property taxes, and special taxes when there was a war, or building project or a campaign to finance, taxes to run the government, taxes to fund the military.
- Therefore tax collectors were the most despised and hated of all people in society. Jews lumped tax collectors in with prostitutes and robbers and excommunicated them from the community.
- A rich Roman citizen would buy a tax franchise for a certain area in Palestine. He would then hire subordinates to collect the taxes but he did not pay them.
- The collector then would not only have to collect the tax that Rome had stipulated, but he also would have to add a surcharge to meet his expenses, which was an additional charge over which he had total control.
- That is where corruption and abuse would occur.

**13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to."**

- **Note:** John did not tell them to quit their jobs.
- Taxes should be collected without extortion, surcharges, kickbacks, payoffs, or bribes.
- **Be honest.** Only collect what Rome requires, your expenses, and a fair profit. Period.
- If you are guilty of collecting more – Repent. Have a change of heart.
- **Application:** Are you ever in a position to force people to give you more than you deserve? Do you add a little extra to what they owe you to take advantage of someone? Are you honest in your financial dealings with others?

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### John says to do 3 things:

1. Do not take money from anyone by force. (extortion)
  2. Do not accuse anyone falsely. (blackmail)
  3. Be content with your wages. (contentment)
- It's the discontent over wages that turns policemen into criminals. Police department scams, selling of drugs, stealing money off of people.
  - If this is true – Repent. Have a change of heart.
  - **Application:** If you are ever in a place of authority, do you take advantage of other people? Do you exert pressure on someone through unjustified threats to force them to give you what you want? Are you content with what God has given to you?

**14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."**

### Group #3 – soldiers.

- These are people in authority. They carry a sword. Today it is a gun. They have the power.
  - They may have served alongside the tax collectors and received a kickback for using force on people.
- "accuse falsely" – συκοφαντεω** - to harass, blackmail, shake down, squeeze.
- It is extortion, and blackmailing people to gain money.
  - **Be content.** Accept God's will for your life and the financial means He has entrusted you with.

- These are changes in lifestyle. This is what true repentance does – it changes your lifestyle.
- Fishermen, carpenters, housewives, lawyers, and today we have construction workers, engineers, programmers, managers, congressmen/women, Presidents, janitors, teachers, athletes, etc.
- **Question:** If I am a \_\_\_\_\_, and I have a pattern of sinning in what I do, do I repent, do I change, does my heart change?
- Am I **generous** with others? Am I **honest** with my dealings with others? Am I **content** with God's sovereign plan for my life?

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**15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ,**

- They had been waiting and expecting the Messiah to free them from Rome.
- "wondering" – δαλουργομαι** – to think through, to reason, to consider, to weigh.
- Here is a man with a message. He is bold. He preaches with conviction. He has insight and wisdom. He reaches into the heart. He has knowledge and understanding.
  - Maybe He is the Messiah.

## John 1:19-28

- 19 This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"
- 20 And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."
- 21 They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not."  
"Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."
- 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"
- 23 He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."
- 24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.
- 25 They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"
- 26 John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know.
- 27 "It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."
- 28 These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

**16 John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."**

John is going to draw 3 sharp contrasts between himself and the Messiah -

1. He baptizes with water – The Messiah will baptize with the Spirit and fire.
2. He is weak – the Messiah is mighty.
3. He is unworthy – the Messiah is worthy.

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- Anyone can baptize in water.
- The Messiah will have might far greater than I, to do things no human can do.
- In fact John says he is lower than a slave or Gentile who would tie sandals.
- It was beneath the dignity of a Jew to untie a sandal.
- John was a humble man.

## 1 Peter 5:5-6

- 5 . . . clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.
- 6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

## John 3:30

- 30 "He must increase, but I must decrease."

"John had many reasons to be proud, yet he was humble. He had a miraculous birth, a prophesied destiny, a man called to personally fulfill great prophetic promises, a powerful preacher, and a man with a great following."  
- Charles Spurgeon

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- The Messiah will be capable of baptizing with the Spirit and fire.
- This is the Holy Spirit.

## Ezek 36:26-27

26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

- **"with"** would be better translated **"in."**
- Christ will immerse us "in the Holy Spirit."

## 1 Cor 12:13

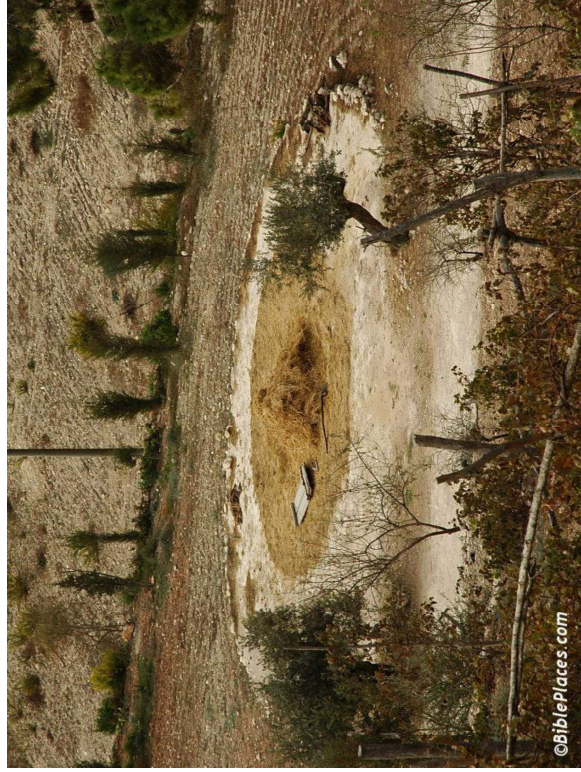
13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

\*You are completely "soaked" with the Holy Spirit at salvation.

- He will also baptize us in “fire.”
- Fire here is the fire of judgment (vs. 17)
- John is saying he does not have the ability to immerse someone in the Holy Spirit, nor does he have the ability to immerse them in judgment. He doesn't have the power to save them and he does not have the power to damn them. He can not send them to heaven and he cannot send them to hell. He is not the Savior and he is not the Judge.
- The first time Jesus came, it was to baptize us with the Holy Spirit. The second time Jesus comes, it will be to baptize the world with fire.

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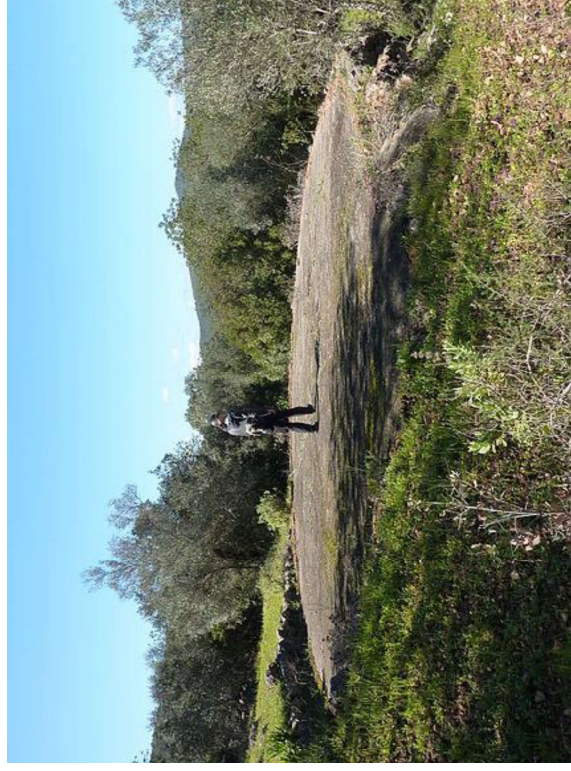


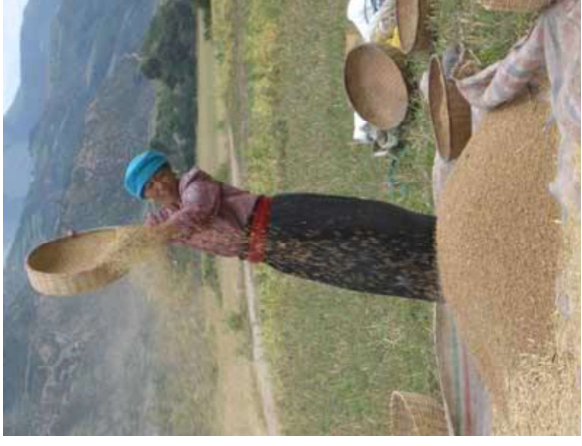
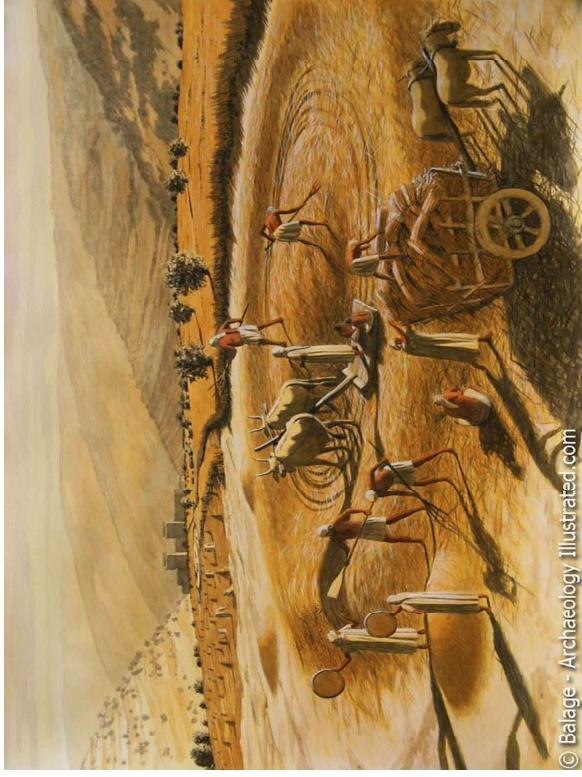
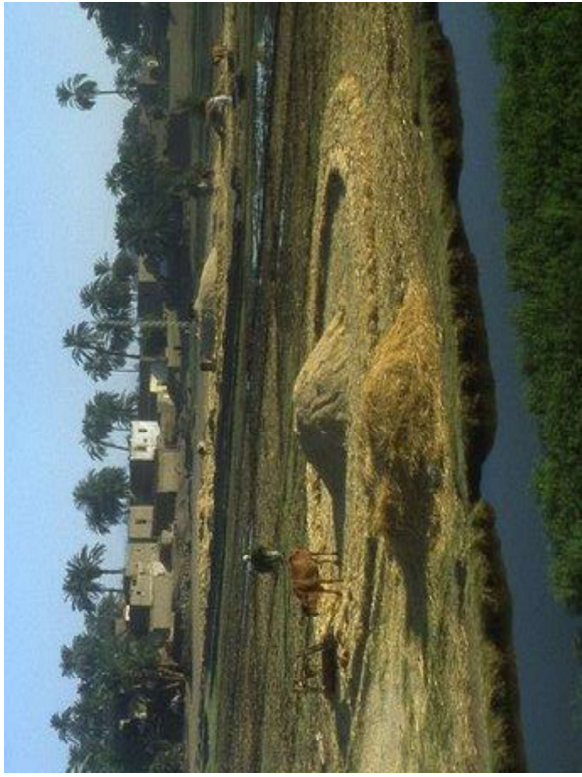
### Acts 2:1-7

- 1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.
- 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.
- 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.
- 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.
- 5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.
- 6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.

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- Here is a picture of final judgment.
- Illustrated by what a farmer does at harvest.





**17** *"His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*

- Here is a picture of final judgment.
- Illustrated by what a farmer does at harvest.
- Those baptized in the Holy Spirit are the wheat and those baptized into judgment are the chaff.

**Mal 4:1**

4 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the Lord of hosts,

**Ps 1:4**

4 The wicked are not so,  
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

- The threshing floor is judgment.
- The separation is complete – no one is left out.
- You either fall in the pile of grain, or the pile of chaff.
- The grain goes into the barn (heaven), and the chaff gets burned up (hell).
- God's method of judgment on something in scripture is fire.

**God will destroy with fire –**

- **tares** (Mt 13:30,40)
- **magic books** in Ephesus (Acts 19:19)
- **works** believers do in their own strength, for their own glory (1 Cor 3:15)
- **earth** (here in 2 Pe 3:10)
- **trees and grass** (Rev 8:7)
- the rebuilt **city of Babylon** (Rev 17:16)
- **"unquenchable"** – **ασβεστος** – unable to extinguish, can not quench. This is different from the illustration where the fire would eventually go out. This fire is eternal.

"John's powerful call for true repentance is just as relevant and needed today as when he first gave it. It is the duty of every true preacher of God's Word to warn his hearers of the danger of false, shallow, non-saving repentance; repentance that is grounded in selfish regret over sin's consequences instead of a desire to be delivered from sin, fails to subdue the love of sin and initiate a passion for holiness, leads to further sin in a hypocritical attempt to maintain the facade of self-righteousness, produces self-deception, leads to a deadly false security, and ultimately hardens the heart, and sears the conscience."

- John MacArthur