“REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN HAS COME NEAR”

Matthew 3:1–17

Key Verse: 3:2

1. Where did John the Baptist preach, and why there? (1) Read verse 2. What did the message of the coming kingdom mean during John’s ministry? Note how it was Jesus’ message also (4:17; 10:7), and, the main message of the whole Bible (e.g. Da7:14; Mt25:34). What does this message mean to us today?

2. Read verse 2 again. How does this news call all people to repentance? What does it mean to “repent” (Isa44:22; Jer4:1) and “make straight paths for him”? (3b; Pr3:5–6) If we are going to repent, why do we also need to confess our sins? (6a; Lev5:5; Ps32:5; Pr28:13; 1Jn1:9) When we repent, how does our attitude change? (2Co7:9–11a)

3. Look at verse 3b. How and why did forerunners prepare the way for kings? How does this illustrate what we, as followers of Jesus, should also do? (Mk6:12) How did John’s ministry fulfill prophecy, and what does this mean to us? (3a)

4. How are John’s clothing and food described, and how were they related to his message? (4) Who went out to hear him, and how did they respond? (5–6) What does this show about John, and, about them? What did it mean to be baptized?

5. How and why did John rebuke the religious leaders? (7–10) Of what were they proud, and how were they mistaken? (Ro2:13,28–29) Note how John mentions “fruit” twice (8,10). What is this fruit, and what happens to those without it?

6. How did John compare and contrast himself to Jesus? (11–12) What does it mean to be baptized with the Holy Spirit? With fire? What will Jesus do with the wheat and the chaff? Who are they? What can we learn here?

7. Why did Jesus insist on being baptized by John? (13–15) What does this show about him? Why did God give Jesus the Spirit of God at this time, what did he say about him, and why? (16–17) What can we learn here?