

# Day 3, Matthew 3

by David Servant

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*Repentance is the first step to a relationship with God and is essential for salvation, as it involves turning away from sin and turning to obedience.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 3:8, Matthew 3:11, Luke 13:3, John 1:29, Acts 3:19, 2 Corinthians 7:10, James 2:26

**Topics:** "Repentance", "Salvation"

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## Description

David Servant preaches on the vital importance of repentance in the gospel message, emphasizing that repentance is the starting point of our relationship with God and the only way to be saved. He highlights how repentance involves turning away from sin and turning to obedience, and how a gospel without repentance is not truly biblical. David stresses the need for people to recognize their sinfulness and God's wrath against sin in order to truly repent and turn to God, just as John the Baptist did in his ministry.

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## Transcript

John the Baptist preached repentance, as did Jesus and the apostles. It is through repentance that we begin a relationship with God. There is no other way to be saved. Repentance simply means turning away from sin and turning to obedience. A gospel that does not include the concept of repentance is not a biblical gospel.

Tragically, repentance is often edited from the modern "gospel." It seems old-fashioned to some and contrary to the principle of grace to others. Yet the Word of God has not changed. If we truly believe in Jesus, the Son of God, we will naturally turn from sin and begin to serve Him. The grace that God offers humanity is not a license to sin, but a temporary opportunity to repent of sin and receive forgiveness.

If people must repent to be saved, then we need to help them see their need for repentance. John set a great example. His gospel included the two foundational elements: (1) the sinfulness of humanity, and (2) the wrath of God against sin. Unless people are convinced of those facts, they will have no reason to repent. Unlike many modern preachers, John didn't consider it inappropriate to mention God's wrath (3:7), or hell (3:10-12), or to address his audience as sinners (3:7-8).

John also very skillfully exposed the lies that propped up the false spiritual security of his hearers. He knew that before they could be saved, he had to convince them that they were unsaved. Nothing has changed since then. Most folks today think they are good people who are on their way to heaven. They need to see themselves in the light of God's holy commandments so that they will realize that they are

actually hell-bound rebels.

John proclaimed that, just because one could trace his lineage from Abraham, it was no guarantee of salvation. Similarly, many modern people think their salvation is certain because they had a grandfather who was a preacher or because their parents are Christians. The truth is, however, that God has no grandchildren, just children, and we must come to Him on our own.

John was also very concerned that some of those who were coming to be baptized were not sincere. So he warned them that just a claim of repentance was not enough. Those who have truly repented "bring forth fruit in keeping with [their] repentance" (3:8). Faith without works is dead, useless, and cannot save us (see Jas. 2:14-26).

Notice that John did not introduce the soon-to-come Messiah as someone "who loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." Such a message would not have led people to repent, and thus would not have led them to salvation. Rather, John spoke of Jesus as one who would separate the wheat from the chaff, and who would "burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (3:12). Hardly sounds like "American Jesus," does it?

An interesting note: John's declaration of his unworthiness to baptize Jesus was not based on the fact that Jesus was the Son of God or the Messiah. John did not know that Jesus was the Messiah until after he baptized Him (see John 1:29-34). John's declaration must have been based on Jesus' reputation as a holy man. Remember, Jesus never sinned even once in His life. He always loved God with all His heart, and He always loved His neighbor as Himself. His sinless life was one of the things that qualified Him to atone for our sins. A man on death row can't volunteer to pay the death penalty for someone else.

Jesus received baptism from John to identify with humanity, and not because He needed to repent or have His sins washed away. His baptism was a foreshadowing of His taking upon Himself the sins of the world. Perhaps it would help us to imagine His baptism in this way: Everyone who went in before Him had his dirty sins washed into the water. When Jesus went down into the water, those sins clung to Him. They went down dirty and came up clean; He went down clean and came up dirty. That is a picture of what happened on the cross.

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