

Matthew 3:7-12. John Warns the Pharisees and Sadducees.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

John the Baptist warns the Pharisees and Sadducees of their sinful condition and calls them to repentance, pointing them to Jesus as the only way of salvation.

Scripture: Matthew 3:7, Matthew 3:10, Luke 3:16, John 14:6, Galatians 2:16, Revelation 6:16

Topics: "Repentance And Faith", "Hypocrisy And Judgment"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches about the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to hear John preach in the wilderness, highlighting their self-righteousness and unbelief. He warns against outward religious acts without true repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for salvation. John fearlessly confronts their hypocrisy and warns them of the impending judgment, emphasizing the need to bear good fruit and believe in the Savior. John humbly points to Jesus as the true Savior who cleanses the soul with the Holy Spirit and separates the wheat from the chaff, underscoring the consequences of rejecting Him.

Transcript

Among the people who came to hear John preach in the wilderness, were many of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Curiosity drew them to hear that famous preacher. It will be well to stop a moment to inquire into the character of these men. They were called Pharisees and Sadducees, not because they belonged to foreign nations, (as we call some people French and some English,) but because they had particular opinions on religious subjects; they belonged to two sects among the Jews.

The Pharisees professed to observe all God's laws concerning sacrifices, tithes, and ceremonies, and also many other laws which men had made; and they thought that by doing these things they would be worthy of places in heaven. Yet all the while their hearts are still full of the love of pleasure, or of money, or of selfishness! Such was the character of the Pharisees.

Are there any Pharisees in these days? There are none of us who do exactly the same things as the Pharisees did, but there are many who have the same kind of human righteousness--they wish to be religious, or at least to appear religious, and therefore they read the Bible, go to church, take the sacrament; and they think they are the better for these works, while their hearts are still full of the love of pleasure, or of money, or of selfishness. There is only one way of salvation--it is by believing in Jesus Christ; when we believe in him, our sins are forgiven on account of his sufferings, and our hearts are made

holy by his Spirit. Are there any of us who are endeavoring to deceive God by a little outward service? Let us give up the vain attempt--God will not be mocked; unless we really wish to forsake all our sins, we are hypocrites, like the Pharisees.

But who were the Sadducees? They were unbelieving men, proud of their learning, and who thought themselves much wiser than common people. They believed that there were no angels nor spirits, and no rising again of the dead; and they sneered at those people who believed all the wonderful things written in the Bible. They only professed to believe the first five books of the Bible, called the books of Moses. Are there any Sadducees now? Alas! there are too many who resemble them. Such people are called infidels, or deists. They have written many wicked books for the purpose of turning the Bible into ridicule. Their writings are poison to the mind, and they have destroyed many souls. There are numerous proofs that the Bible is the Word of God. To mention only one or two; behold the desolation of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews--according to God's prophecies.

When these self-righteous Pharisees and scoffing Sadducees came to hear John preach--was he afraid of them, because they were rich and learned? Did he preach elegant sermons to please them? No! he spoke plainly and faithfully to them. He said, "You brood of vipers!" He called them the offspring of the serpent--or the children of the devil! He said, "Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" He knew that because they were rich and learned, few would dare to warn them of the wrath to come--therefore out of love to their souls, he warned them. He did not tell them there was no hope for them, but he told them there was no time to lose. He knew that when he called them children of the devil, they would answer in their hearts, "We are the children of the pious Abraham, not of the devil; we have Abraham to our father."

When ministers are preaching the truth, people are very apt to be making some excuse in their hearts. John told the Pharisees that they would not be saved because they were the children of Abraham according to the flesh, for God could make the stones into Abraham's children; and God soon did make the Gentiles, whom the Jews despised as though they had been stones, into the children of Abraham in the spirit.

Then John told them of their dreadful condition, while they were bringing forth bad fruit, or doing evil works. The axe, as it were, was ready to hew them down! Could we see death and judgment as near as they really are, we would tremble at the thought of continuing in sin!

Luke tells us in his gospel, (3:15,) that many people began to think that John was, perhaps, the long expected Savior--that is, the Messiah, or the anointed one. Did John wish them to think this? No! he wished no glory for himself; he said that his baptism was nothing compared to that which Jesus would bestow. John could wash the body with water as a sign of repentance, but Jesus could wash the soul with the Holy Spirit--Jesus could even cleanse it, as by fire. There is nothing cleanses like fire; water cannot cleanse the dross from the gold--but fire can. The Spirit of Christ can consume our sins--as fire consumes dross.

Then John showed the terrible consequences of not believing in this Savior. He compared Jesus (v. 12) to a thrasher, who separates the wheat from the chaff. We are accustomed to hear of the meek and gentle Savior--and so he is, for he wipes away the tear of the penitent, and binds up the wound of the broken-hearted. But he is also the holy Jesus--he cannot bear proud sinners, and at the last day his wrath against them will be so terrible, that they will call upon the rocks and mountains to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb! (Rev. 6)

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