

One of the themes of Matthew's Gospel is that God is faithful to keep His Word.

**God promised to send a prophet to prepare the way of the Messiah
(Deuteronomy 18:18, Malachi 4:5, Isaiah 40:3)**

**John the Baptist is prophet God spoke about
(Matthew 3:1-6)**

Four Aspects to John's Message:

1. John's message shifts the people of Israel from relying on ancestry, rites, and rituals to relying upon the grace of God, repentance from sin, and righteousness that comes from faith not works.

Acts 19:4 (CSB) says, ⁴ Paul said, "John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people that they should believe in the one who would come after him, that is, in Jesus."

"Repentance"

"What is meant is not a merely intellectual change of mind or mere grief, still less doing penance ..., but a radical transformation of the entire person, a fundamental turnaround involving mind and action and including overtones of grief, which results in 'fruit in keeping with repentance.'" - D.A. Carson

"Repentance presupposes that our lives are off course and we need to turn them around. But it also points us in the direction of the Savior, who alone is able to make atonement for our sins." - James Montgomery Boice

John was calling Jews, not just Gentiles, to put their lives back on course with God through confessing sin, trusting in the grace of God for forgiveness, and relying on the promises of God that righteousness was achieved by faith.

"Kingdom of Heaven"

This means that the fulfillment of God's promise has come near in the person of Jesus Christ, and His presence brings the world face to face with the necessity of repentance.

2. John's message calls everyone, including the religious leaders, to a life filled with "fruit that is consistent with repentance." (Matthew 3:8, Luke 3:7-14)

Fruit that is consistent with repentance is a life that has shifted from selfish to selfless, or from sinful to righteous. True repentance results in the pursuit of personal righteousness.

- Selfish people become sacrificial and generous.
- Greedy and deceitful people become honest and trustworthy.
- People pleasers and power hungry people become humble and satisfied.

3. John's message reveals that the Messiah will have the power to purify hearts, and forgive sins.

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4. John's message reveals that the Messiah will divide the world based on the response to His call to repentance and judge those who reject Him.

Jesus is the Messiah that John is talking about

Being a Christian is not based on your heritage, traditions, religious practices, moral positions, or the culture you are raised in.

Being a Christian is about trusting God that Jesus is the promised Messiah and that your forgiveness and righteousness are received by faith because of God's grace.

A fruitless Christian is no Christian at all

Three ways to apply this to us today:

- 1. Quit trying to be the hero of the story and focus on pointing others to Jesus Christ.**
- 2. Quit trying to be a Christian and be converted.**
- 3. Quit resisting the truth and repent and trust in Jesus Christ.**