

SHARE THE BIBLE LESSON

WEEK 1

John prepares the way for the Lord

Matthew 3:1-12



DAY 1

Repent to enter Christ's kingdom • Matthew 3:1-4

READ

Matthew 3:1-12

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 3:1-4

Have you ever been on a broken and bumpy road? Is a road like that fit for a king to travel on? In the time of John the Baptist, roads would be repaired and cleaned to get ready for a king. In fact, that was John's job, except he was preparing hearts, not roads. He said, "Get ready," because the kingdom is "near" (Matt 3:2). But if it was near so long ago, why are we still waiting? We are waiting because Christ's kingdom on earth was delayed. It would have come quickly if the Jews had accepted John the Baptist as the coming Elijah. He was not the literal, resurrected Elijah (John 1:21), but he was the Elijah that Malachi had predicted (Luke 1:17; Mal 3:1; 4:5-6). Jesus explained, "If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come" (Matt 11:14). But the Jews were not willing to accept John or his message, so the kingdom was delayed. So we are still waiting for an Elijah to come prepare the way for Christ's second coming. At that time, the kingdom will finally arrive.

ASK

1. Who was the special messenger who prepared the way for Jesus?
John the Baptist.
2. What was John the Baptist sent to do?
Prepare the hearts of Israel for the coming kingdom.
3. What did John say was coming very soon?
The kingdom of heaven.
4. Why was the kingdom of heaven delayed?
The Jews were not willing to accept John or his message.

DISCUSS

1. What are some things you do in order to prepare to receive a special guest into your home?
2. If Jesus returned today, would He find in you a heart willing to receive Him? How should you prepare your heart to receive Jesus?

DAY 2

Repent by turning away from sin • Matthew 3:5–10

READ

Matthew 3:1–12

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 3:5–10

Don't miss John's message: to get into the kingdom, you must repent. **Repentance** means *to turn away from sin and toward God* (Isa 55:7). It means changing your mind, emotions, and will. First, change your mind by confessing your sin, like the Jews did by being baptized (1 John 1:9; Matt 3:6). **Confessing** sin means *agreeing with God about your sin*. Second, your emotions change when you are sad about your sin (Jas 4:9–10), which John's humble clothing illustrated (Matt 3:4). Third, change your will by firmly rejecting sin and choosing to do what is right (Isa 1:16–17). If you do, your behavior will be consistent with your repentant heart (Matt 3:8). Good behavior does not make up for sin or earn forgiveness. Rather, it is evidence that you really have changed the inside (Jas 2:14–26). Because a changed heart always produces a changed life, John rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees for not truly changing (Matt 3:7–10). They thought they were ok because they were descendants of Abraham, but people are saved by repenting, not by being born to the right parents (John 1:12–13).

ASK

1. What did John the Baptist tell people to do?
Repent.
2. What does it mean to repent?
To turn away from sin and turn toward God.
3. Besides confession and sadness, what else is part of repentance?
A desire and choice to turn from sin and do what is right. This is seen through changed behavior.
4. What happens to those who do not repent?
Jesus sends them to be punished in the lake of fire forever.

DISCUSS

1. Point to your head, heart, and hand. Explain how each is included in biblical repentance (mind, emotions, will).
2. Genuine repentance always produces "fruit" (Matt 3:8; Jas 2:17). Can you identify any spiritual fruit in your life?

DAY 3

Repent because Christ is great • Matthew 3:11–12

READ

Matthew 3:1–12

EXPLAIN

The truth of Matthew 3:10–12

Real repentance is hard! Is it really worth it? Yes, because Jesus is worth it. He is the great King. He is the "Lord" (Matt 3:3), which means He is God (Isa 40:3). He shows this by baptizing with a baptism much greater than John's (3:11). First, Jesus **baptizes** believers by *immersing* them in the Holy Spirit. This is such a blessing, because the Holy Spirit unites believers to

Jesus (1 Cor 12:13) and causes them to be full of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22–23). Second, Jesus will baptize unbelievers in fire, which means that those who refuse to repent will suffer forever in the lake of fire (Matt 3:12; Rev 20:15; 21:8). So repent quickly and bow before Jesus the King. God delayed the kingdom on purpose to provide a way for you to be forgiven through Jesus' death (Isa 53:3–5; Dan 9:26), so do not miss your chance to repent and be saved (Rom 11:11; 2 Pet 3:9). It is worth it because Jesus is worth it.

DAY 3 CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

ASK 

1. What did John say about Jesus' sandals?
John said he wasn't worthy to carry Jesus' sandals. Since that was a job for the lowest slave, that shows how great Jesus is.
2. Who does Jesus baptize with the Holy Spirit?
Believers.
3. Who does Jesus baptize with fire?
Unbelievers.

DISCUSS 

1. Why is it dangerous to wait before repenting (Isa 55:6-7)?
2. What would you give in order to get buried treasure (Matt 13:44-46)? What would you give in order to be with Jesus in His kingdom?

DAY 4*What is the "kingdom of heaven"? • Matthew 3:2***READ** 

Matthew 3:1-12

EXPLAIN **The truth of Matthew 3:2**

What is a kingdom? It is the place where a king rules. So what is the "**kingdom of heaven**" (Matt 3:2)? *It is the realm of God's rule.* It is identical to the "kingdom of God" (Matt 19:23-24). This kingdom exists now among believers, because they have accepted God's rule over their hearts (Luke 17:21). However, one day the kingdom of heaven will be established in a literal earthly kingdom (Rev 20:4-6). From the beginning, God designed mankind to rule over the earth (Gen 1:28). But Adam failed (Gen 3), so some future human king still needs to do the job. This king is a human descendant of Abraham (Gen 17:6), Judah (49:10), and David (2 Sam 7:13-16). But He is also God (Zech 14:9) and the Son of God (Ps 2). He will rule from Jerusalem (Zech 14:8), but His reign will be over the whole earth (Dan 2:35, 44). His kingdom will be a time of peace and righteousness (Isa 9:6-7), joy and prosperity (65:17-25). It will be both spiritual and physical, when Israel is cleansed from sin and restored to her land forever (Ezek 37:21-28).

ASK 

1. What is the "kingdom of heaven"?
The reign of God over those who belong to him.
2. Who is part of this kingdom exist now?
Believers: they have accepted God's rule over their hearts.
3. Is part of this kingdom still future?
Yes, one day the kingdom of heaven will come be God's kingdom on earth (Matt 6:10).

DISCUSS 

1. Can you see God's kingdom right now? How can you know it's real (2 Pet 1:16-19)?
2. Think of your favorite things in this world. Now compare that with living in God's kingdom in the new world forever (Rev 21:3-4; 22:1-5). Which one is worth living for?

DAY 5

Isaiah's Prophecy about John the Baptist • Isaiah 40:3-5

READ

Isaiah 40:1-11

EXPLAIN

The truth of Isaiah 40:3-5

Do you like patterns? If I say, “1, 2, 1, 2, 1,” you know “2” comes next because of the pattern. God often acts in patterns. Isaiah 40 was a message for the Jews who would be taken as captives to Babylon. Isaiah encouraged them that God would rescue them from captivity. Years later, God did rescue them (Ezra 1:1-3). But they still did not trust God to save them from their sins, so their return was not glorious (Isa 40:5). Yet that rescue from Babylon was a pattern of a greater rescue to come. So 700 years after Isaiah, John the Baptist fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy about a messenger (Matt 3:3; Mark 1:2; Luke 3:4; John 1:23). John announced the coming of the King who would rescue in an even greater way. Jesus rescues from sin and death so that people can enter God's glorious kingdom forever. Not only will He bring Israel back to God and to their land, but He will also save people from all nations (Isa 49:5-12), so that everyone sees God's glory (52:10). So trust God, because the best is yet to come.

ASK

1. When was John the Baptist's mission declared? *700 years before his birth.*
2. How do we know that John the Baptist was the messenger Isaiah wrote about? *All four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) identify John as Messiah's forerunner.*
3. What does Israel's rescue from Babylon show us about the future? *It shows God will one day rescue Israel—and people from all nations—from all sin and sadness, and bring Israel back to their land forever.*

DISCUSS

1. If you smashed your finger, would it hurt? How do you know? (Because that kind of thing has hurt in the past.)
2. How do God's past actions show that God will one day rescue all of Israel and many others besides (Rom 11:15, 26-27)?

NEXT WEEK

John baptizes Jesus

Matthew 3:13-17

