

GOING DEEPER

READ MATTHEW 3:1-12.

ARE THERE ANY REPEATED WORDS AND WHAT ARE THEY?

ARE THERE ANY CONCEPTS OR PHRASES THAT YOU STRUGGLE WITH?

WHY DID JOHN DRESS IN CAMEL HAIR AND HAVE SUCH A STRANGE DIET? (SEE 2 KINGS 1, AND MALACHI 4:5)

HOW MANY YEARS WERE THE “SILENT YEARS” WHERE NO BOOKS OF THE BIBLE WERE WRITTEN? WAS GOD SILENT DURING THIS TIME?

WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORD ‘REPENT’ WHAT DO YOU THINK OF?

CAN YOU THINK OF ANOTHER TIME IN THE BIBLE WHERE A PROPHET SPENT TIME IN THE WILDERNESS CALLING PEOPLE TO REPENT?

WHAT ABOUT JOHN’S APPEARANCE OR MESSAGE ENTICED PEOPLE TO COME BE BAPTIZED IN THE JORDAN RIVER?

CAN YOU THINK OF ANOTHER MAJOR EVENT THAT TOOK PLACE AT THE JORDAN RIVER? WHAT HAPPENED?

DO YOU THINK THAT PHARISEES OR SADDUCEES WERE EVIL? WHY?

WHAT SIGNIFICANCE WOULD JOHN’S REFERENCE TO CUTTING DOWN TREES HOLD FOR HIS HEARERS? (HINT: ISAIAH 11:1-10)

WHEN YOU HEAR ABOUT ETERNAL FLAMES IN THE BIBLE WHAT IMAGE COMES TO MIND AND HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE SHAPE THAT IMAGE?

JOHN SAYS THE COMING KING WILL BAPTIZE PEOPLE WITH THE SPIRIT AND FIRE. ISN’T FIRE ALWAYS A BAD THING?

HOW DOES THIS TEXT INFORM YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF BAPTISM?



MATTHEW EP2: “WET N WILD” - MATTHEW 3:1-12

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, COLLINGWOOD

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MATTHEW’S THESIS: THAT JESUS IS THE CONTINUATION AND FULFILMENT OF THE WHOLE BIBLICAL STORY ABOUT GOD AND ISRAEL, HIGHLIGHTING THAT JESUS IS:



They replied, “He had a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist.” The king said, “That was Elijah the Tishbite.” 2 Kings 1:8

IN THE LAST BOOK OF THE OLD TESTAMENT THE PROPHET MALACHI SHARES A FRIGHTENING IMAGE OF JUDGEMENT SAYING: “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.” Malachi 4:5

FOR 400 YEARS THERE ARE NO MORE PROPHETS IN ISRAEL. AT LEAST NOT RECORDED IN OUR SCRIPTURES. WE CALL THIS THE “SILENT PERIOD”. AND THEN ONE DAY THIS GUY SHOWS UP WEARING SUSPICIOUSLY SIMILAR CLOTHING TO A CERTAIN PROPHET OF OLD.

IN HEBREW THE WORD ‘REPENT’ MEANS “TO TURN AROUND”

IN GREEK THE WORD ‘REPENT’ MEANS TO CHANGE YOUR MIND.

THE LAST KING OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL WAS KING HOSHEA, WHO RULED FROM APPROXIMATELY 732 TO 722 BCE BEFORE THE ASSYRIANS CONQUERED SAMARIA AND ENDED THE KINGDOM.

IN THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH, THE FINAL KING WAS ZEDEKIAH, WHO REIGNED UNTIL THE BABYLONIANS DESTROYED JERUSALEM IN 586 BCE, MARKING THE END OF ISRAELITE MONARCHY.

IT HAD BEEN PROPHESED THAT A RIGHTEOUS KING WOULD RETURN TO ISRAEL WHO WOULD USHER IN A NEW KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

For he is the one about whom Isaiah the prophet had spoken: "The voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight.'" Matthew 3:13

PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES WERE PROMINENT JEWISH RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL SECTS IN ANCIENT JUDEA, DIFFERING MAINLY IN THEIR INTERPRETATION OF JEWISH LAW, THEIR SOCIAL STANDING, AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE AFTERLIFE

THE PHARISAIONS - OR PHARISEES IN ENGLISH - WERE COMMON-FOLK SCHOLARS FOCUSED ON ORAL TRADITIONS AND BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION. THEIR GOAL WAS TO DRAW AS MANY PEOPLE INTO FOLLOWING THE LAWS OF GOD – AS THEY INTERPRET THEM.

THE SADDUCEES WERE A POWERFUL JEWISH PRIESTLY SECT WHO CONTROLLED THE TEMPLE AND REPRESENTED THE ARISTOCRATIC ELITE, CONTRASTING SHARPLY WITH THE PHARISEES BY REJECTING ORAL LAW, THE RESURRECTION, AND DIVINE PROVIDENCE, FOCUSING SOLELY ON THE WRITTEN TORAH AND MAINTAINING TEMPLE RITES UNTIL THE TEMPLE'S DESTRUCTION IN 70 CE

"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:4-5

THE SNAKE LEADS ADAM AND EVE ASTRAY – CASTING DOUBT UPON THE CHARACTER OF GOD & TEMPTING THEM WITH POWER

Even now the ax is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Matthew 3:10

THIS LANGUAGE IS NOTHING NEW. THIS IS HOW THE PROPHETS SPOKE TO THEIR VARIOUS AUDIENCES WARNING THEM THAT IF ISRAEL KEEPS ON ITS CHOSEN PATH IT WILL FACE THE OUTCOME OF ITS DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES.

BY HIS CHOICE OF DIET AND ATTIRE WE KNOW THAT JOHN SEES HIMSELF AS A NEW ELIJAH PREPARING THE WAY BY CALLING PEOPLE TO CHANGE THEIR MINDS AND CHANGE THEIR WAYS.

THE LANGUAGE THE PROPHETS USED IS GROUNDED IN ACTUAL HISTORICAL EVENTS THAT ARE DESCRIBED IN THE HEBREW BIBLE.

IN ISAIAH (CH 10) THE 'FIRE' OR BEING 'CHOPPED DOWN' IS GOD HANDING THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OVER TO ASSYRIA

IN JEREMIAH GOD IS BRINGING A DIVINE FIRE ON JERUSALEM AS GOD HANDS JERUSALEM'S IDOLATROUS LEADERS OVER TO BABYLON

AND IN JOHN'S DAY THE MIGHTY NATION TOWARDS WHICH THEY WERE HEADING INTO CONFLICT WAS THE JERUSALEM LEADERS AND ROME

IN MALACHI 3:1-4 THE GOAL OF THE FIRE IS NOT PUNISHMENT. IT IS NOT EVEN DESTRUCTION. THE GOAL IS PURIFICATION. REFINEMENT.

JOHN IS SAYING, *HERE IS STAND DRESSED IN THE TRADITION OF THE PROPHETS OF OLD, CALLING ISRAEL ONCE AGAIN IN THE LANGUAGE OF MY FOREBEARERS TO REPENT AND FOLLOW YHWH. AND I AM DOING SO WHERE OUR JOURNEY INTO THE PROMISED LAND BEGAN – AT THE JORDAN RIVER*

THIS ENCOUNTER INVITES US TO ASK OURSELVES WHAT OUR BAPTISM MEANS TO US. ARE WE LIVING THE PROCLAMATION THAT IT BRINGS? AND IF WE ARE NOT BAPTIZED, TO ASK GOD IF THIS IS SOMETHING TO WHICH HE IS CALLING US.