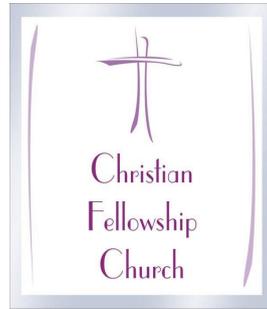


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Ministry of the Word
Sunday 09th February 2020
by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Matthew 3:8-12

Subject: Part 7 – Evidence of Fruit

Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Was John the Baptist right to request that if a person, whomever they may be, if repentant that they should bear fruit? Yes! he was right, but more than that he was scriptural. Sadly even when it comes to Christianity, there are false brethren. So how can we distinguish between real and false brethren? Jesus tells us that it is by their fruit we will know them. But surely there can be false fruit? Yes, indeed there can.

It reminds me of an instance that happened in Italy a long time ago. There was an area claiming grants, I think it was for sheep, from the EU but they were suspected of being on the fiddle. The EU sent a plane over the area and sure enough, there was the sheep. It was not until they inspected the pens closely that they realised they were cardboard effigies, in other words, they were false sheep. In life, that can happen. We can take things for granted, believing that they are kosher, they do want it says on the tin! Until something is said or done that causes us to look more closely and we discover the truth.

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True Repentance is a subject that many say that they understand, but few really practice. Theologian Erich Sauer, in his book 'The Triumph of the Crucified', speaks of repentance as a threefold action, this I found helpful and profound.

"In the understanding it means knowledge of sin; in the feelings it means pain and grief; and in the will it means a change of mind."

Recognition of personal sin is the important first step. But by itself it is useless, even dangerous, because it tends to make a person think that mere recognition is all that is necessary. Remember a hardened Pharaoh admitted his sin in Exodus 9:27, a double-minded Balaam admitted his as we seen in Numbers 22:34, a greedy Achan acknowledged his in Joshua 7:20, and an insincere Saul confessed his which we can read in 1 Samuel 15:24. The rich young ruler who asked Jesus how to have eternal life went away sorrowful but not repentant as we see in Luke 18:23. Even Judas, despairing over his betrayal of Jesus, said to the chief priests and elders, ***"I have sinned by betraying innocent blood"*** in Matthew 27:4. All of those men recognized their sin, yet none of them repented. They were experiencing what Paul called ***"the sorrow of the world"*** that ***"produces death"*** instead of the ***"godly sorrow"*** that ***"produces a repentance"*** (2 Corinthians 7:10-11).

These examples of false repentances may have looked like genuine repentances to onlookers at the time. Yet, the Scriptures are clear that true repentance actually includes a deep feeling of wrongdoing and of sin against God, which then leads to a complete turnaround, a changed heart, a changed mind, changed actions to a changed life. David began his great penitential psalm by crying out in Psalm 51:1,

"Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions."

He not only clearly saw his sin but deeply felt his need to be rid of it. Also in Psalm 32 verse 3 he declared: ***"When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long"*** The marks of a truly repentant heart are fruit in-keeping with repentance, or as Paul described them to King Agrippa, ***"deeds appropriate to repentance"***

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(Acts 26:20). Since the fall, mankind is generally selfish and self-centred, living with only themselves in mind.

It's not just a new phenomenon that we see today. Hence the exhortation that comes through the Bible to those that claim to be born again must bear fruit of Salvation and Sanctification. There needs to be a marked change in their life. This is the only way we can know if they are true brethren. In his parallel account Luke in chapter 3, gave more detailed examples of the kind of fruit John was talking about. To the general multitude John said,

“Let the man who has two tunics share with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise” (Luke 3:11).

To the tax collectors he said, ***“Collect no more than what you have been ordered to”*** (v. 13),

And to some soldiers he said, ***“Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages”*** (v. 14).

There has to be evidence that a change has taken place, not in some areas of life but in all areas. As James pointed out, ***“Faith, if it has no works, is dead”*** (James 2:17).

John said in his first epistle, ***“The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous”*** (1 John 3:7); and that ***“if someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen”*** (1 John 4:20).

The right relationship to God brings the right relationship to our fellow human beings, at least as far as our part is concerned as we see in Romans 12:18. Our actions towards our fellow men are indicators of our true attitude towards God. I am sure if we were to stop and give this thought some consideration, maybe we would see our need to improve our relationship with God.

The Amplified Bible puts verse 8 like this - ***Bring forth fruit that is consistent with repentance [let your lives prove your change of heart]***. John called forth evidence of the change of mind, heart and will, fruits worthy of repentance or that reflect repentance. True repentance should demonstrate genuine change, in both attitudes and actions. Those who

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claim to know Christ, who claim to be born again, will demonstrate a new way of living that corresponds to the new birth. This was true for John, as well as for the early believers and all who genuinely believe throughout history, presently and in the future. *Can we get things wrong?* Absolutely! but that should not be the habit when we are desiring to live lives that are pleasing to God.

Verse 8 was not just an invitation to show their fruit but at the same time, it was an indictment; because the Pharisees and Sadducees knew a great deal about repentance. One of the basic doctrines of Judaism was that God fully and freely remits the sins of a penitent. The idea that repentance is evidenced by renunciation of sin and by righteous living did not originate with John the Baptist, but had long been an integral part of orthodox Judaism. Faithful rabbis had taught that one of the most important passages in Scripture was Isaiah 1:16-17, *“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless; defend the orphan, plead for the widow”*.

Ancient rabbis were quoted in saying, *“Great is repentance, for it brings healing upon the world. Great is repentance, for it reaches to the throne of God,”* and, *“A man can shoot an arrow for a few furlongs, but repentance reaches to the throne of God.”*

It has also been noted that some rabbis maintained that the law was created two thousand years before the world, but that repentance was created even before the law. The clear meaning of repentance in Judaism has always been a change in man’s attitude towards God which results in a moral and religious reformation of the individual’s conduct. The great medieval Jewish scholar Maimonides said of the traditional Jewish concept of repentance:

“What is repentance? Repentance is that the sinner forsakes his sin, puts it out of his thoughts, and fully resolves in his mind that he will never do it again.”

William Barclay, in his commentary on The Gospel of Matthew gives us this beautiful account:

“The rabbis taught that the gates of repentance never close, that repentance is like the sea, because a person can bathe in it at any hour. Rabbi Eleazar said, “It is the way of the world, when a man has insulted his fellow in public, and after a time seeks to be reconciled to him, that the other says, ‘You insult me publicly, and now you would be reconciled to

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me between us two alone! Go bring the men in whose presence you insulted me, and I will be reconciled to you.’ But God is not so. A man may stand and rail and blaspheme in the market place and the Holy One says, ‘Repent between us two alone, and I will receive you.’”

Such understanding of repentance is basically consistent with the teaching of the Old Testament. Repentance always involves a changed life, a renouncing of sin and doing righteousness. The Lord declared through Ezekiel in Ezekiel chapter 33 verses 18&19:

“When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, then he shall die in it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and practices justice and righteousness, he will live by them.”

Hosea pleaded in chapter 14 verses 1 and 2:

“Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.’”

After Jonah’s reluctant but powerful warning to Nineveh in Jonah chapter 3 verse 10:

“God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, [and] then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it.”

Nineveh brought forth fruit in keeping with repentance.

Do you see and get the point? It is not simply saying words alone, the fruit is the evidence by action. Fruit is always seen in Scripture as manifested behaviour. Fruit or fruits is what the Bible uses to describe the living organic connection with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Fruit is the evidence of our union with Christ. John 15 verse 5 says -

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

Where there is no union there is no fruit and where there is no fruit there is no union. John 15 verse 6 - ***If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.***

Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22); “The fruit of the Spirit is love, so on and so forth”. Love is the source of obedience (not fear or duty). ***“If a man loves Me, he will keep my words”*** (John 14:23). Joy is the fragrant flower of holiness; peace the outcome of trust, patience is the wife of long-suffering and gentleness the daughter of love. Goodness is

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the activity of grace and faith is the faithfulness of courage. Meekness is the lesson of humility that we learn from Jesus and temperance is the discipline of faith.

- Paul speaks of the fruit of righteousness or uprightness *“Filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 1:11).
- Paul speaks of the fruit of holiness; separation to God (Romans 6:22) *“being made free from sin, and become servants unto God, ye have your fruit unto holiness”*.
- The fruit of our lips; thanksgiving; *“let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips”* (Hebrews 8:15).
- The fruit of work—consistency *“Walk worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work”* (Colossians 1:10).
- Paul spoke of his work in conversion and consecration (Romans 1:13); *“That I might have some fruit among you”*.
- The fruit of generosity, ministering to others (Philippians 4:17); *“I desire fruit that may abound to your account”*.
- Fruit unto God; God’s object in saving; *“Bring forth fruit unto God”* (Romans 7:4).

James wrote (1:26-27); *“If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep one- self unspotted from the world.”*

The word ‘religion’ appears four times in the Bible. In verse 26 James speaks of a useless or empty religion; where a person appears to be religious but refuses to control his or her speech. In the book of Acts Paul tells the philosophers in Athens; *“I perceive that in all things you are too religious”* (Acts 17:22).

We live in a world saturated with religion without Christ; religion without the gospel; religion without repentance. The word religion appears 4 times; compare that with the appearance of the names and titles of Christ, and Jesus and Lord which appear 2,269 times! The real secret of practical life-changing religion is the real presence of the risen Savior in the life of the true believer. It’s not religion that is on offer here, it’s a real living relationship with the King of Kings! The message of the gospel of Matthew is that Jesus

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Christ is both the source and power that provides the fruit that God demands! J.R. Miller writes; *“True repentance amounts to nothing whatever if it produces only a few tears, a spasm of regret, a little fright. We must leave the sins we repent of and walk in the new, clean ways of holiness.”*

The Pharisees and Sadducees clearly had not experienced God-given repentance. They knew all about repentance, remember they would have thought the people about repentance, encouraging them to bring sacrifices to the temple... but they did not practice true repentance. They knew repentance. They knew it not as a sentimental sorrow, but as a real transformation of life. They knew it. They knew what it was and they knew they were phonies. The Pharisees and the Sadducees should have known the fruits of repentance. They should have known the works of repentance.

And hence John basically says to this group, *“You have shown no evidence of repentance, but now you have an opportunity to truly repent if you mean it. Show me that you have turned from your wicked hypocrisy to genuine godliness, and I will be glad to baptize you. If you are really running from the wrath to come, if you're really snakes scurrying before the fire, then let me see the fruit of your real repentance. Show me that it's genuine.”* And what are the fruits of repentance? - a transformed life. That's the fruit of repentance.

When people come to us and say they are born again, we will know if they are sincere by the fruits. But John did not stop there, knowing their belief system, he continued in verse 9 *“and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, “We have Abraham for our father.”* Now, don't you hate it when somebody thinks they can read your mind? And what's worse, is when they are right! They believed that simply being Abraham's descendants, members of God's chosen race, made them spiritually secure.

John does not give much hope to those who trust their religious heritage. Many Jews embraced the notion that they were saved by the mere fact that they were Jews. *“We believe in assurance. We believe in eternal security. After all we are the seed of Abraham. We are Covenant people; we are the chosen people.”* Being a descendant from Abraham was

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not a passport to heaven. It was a great advantage in knowing and understanding God's will (Romans 3:1-2; 9:4-5), but without faith in Him that advantage becomes a more severe condemnation. If Abraham himself was justified only by his personal faith (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:1-3), *how could his descendants expect to be justified in any other way?* (Romans 3:21-22). Many Jews of New Testament times believed, and many Orthodox Jews of our own day still believe, that simply their Jewishness assures them a place in God's kingdom. The rabbis taught that *"all Israelites have a portion in the world to come."* They spoke of the *"delivering merits of the fathers,"* who passed on spiritual merit to their descendants. Some even taught that Abraham stood guard at the gates of Gehenna, or hell, turning back any Israelite who happened that way. They claimed that it was Abraham's merit that enabled Jewish ships to sail safely on the seas, that sent rain on their crops, that enabled Moses to receive the law and to enter heaven, and that caused David's prayers to be heard.

That was the sort of presumption John the Baptist rebuked. No descent from Abraham, no matter how genetically pure, could make a person right with God. Many today presume that because they have been born into a certain religion, even a Christian house-hold that they will go to heaven. But this is absolutely not Scriptural, because the bible always teaches that it is about personal repentance and about a personal relationship with Jesus. Out of this relationship comes the real fruit that is spoken of in the Gospel of John chapter 15.

John continued on to say to the Pharisees and Sadducees, You may think you have Abraham as your father, verse 9 - *"For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones."* So John in effect is saying "Big deal! You have Abraham as your father. God can make a child of Abraham out of a rock. You're not so hot." This was really a shock to them. Jesus contradicted similar claims of another group of Pharisees, except in even stronger terms than John's. After they self-righteously asserted,

"Abraham is our father" Jesus said, "If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do" (John 8:39-40).

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Our Lord went on to say that their deeds proved their father was actually Satan. The Jews generally considered Gentiles to be the occupants of hell, spiritually lifeless and hopeless, dead stones as far as a right relationship with God is concerned. It may very well be that John played on that figure in declaring that *“God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham”*, That is, true children of Abraham who come to the Lord as Abraham did, *by faith!* The Pharisees and the Sadducees were headed for hell because they were relying on being descendants of Abraham for their eternal security. What a statement John made. You see, it minimizes the importance of being a son of Abraham. If God finds a son who has become a rock; He'll find a rock that He can make a son out of. It reminds me of the Roman centurion asked Jesus to heal his servant simply by saying the word, Jesus replied,

“Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom [i.e., Israelites] shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:10-12).

Human beings are incurably religious. But what is the difference between religious and having a relationship with God in Christ? Everything, including eternal security.

John goes on to tell them the consequences of rejecting the message in verse 10-

“And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

In John's preaching, as in the Old Testament prophets, judgment was closely connected with salvation in the coming of the Messiah. Those men of God saw no gap between His coming to save and His coming to judge. Isaiah wrote of the *“shoot”* that would

“spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots” who would *“decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked”* (Isaiah 11:1,4).

Speaking again of the Messiah, Isaiah wrote,

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“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted;... to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa. 61:1-2; also see. Joel 3).

Simeon said of Jesus in the Temple:

“Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel” (Luke 2:34).

Israel experienced a foretaste of God’s judgment in the ravaging of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, which was only about forty years after John the Baptist preached. Every unbeliever likewise faces a certain judgment when they die, and even before death, people may suffer judgments from God because of sin and rebellion. As the book of Proverbs repeatedly reminds us (Proverbs 1:32-33; 2:3-22; 3:33-35), God makes certain that ultimately, and even to a great extent in this life, the good will reap goodness and the evil will reap evil (Romans 2:5-11).

John was telling these people that God’s ultimate judgment was imminent because the Messiah had arrived. The axe was already laid at the root of the trees, it was ready; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit would be cut down and thrown into the fire.

At the end of every harvest, the farmer would go through his vineyard or orchard looking for plants that had bared no good fruit. These would be cut down to make room for productive vines and trees, keeping them from taking good and useful nutrients from the soil that were needed by the good plants. A fruitless tree was a worthless and useless tree, fit only to be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Fruitless repentance is worthless and useless; it means absolutely nothing to God. Fire is a frequent biblical symbol of the torment of divine punishment and judgment. Because of their exceptional wickedness, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by *“brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven”* (Genesis 19:24). After Korah, his men, and their households were swallowed up by the earth and *“went down alive to Sheol, fire also came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense”* (Numbers 16:32-33,35).

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In His role as a righteous Judge, God is frequently called *“a consuming fire”* (Exodus 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3). In the last chapter, in the Old Testament, Malachi speaks of the coming day that will be

“burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze” (Malachi 4:1).

John’s preaching picked up where Malachi left off, and Jesus Himself often spoke of the fires of hell for example: Matthew 5:22, 29; Mark 9:43, 47; Luke 3:17.. While John was speaking specifically to the unrepentant Pharisees and Sadducees, his message of judgment is applicable to every person.

The expectation is clear that every tree would bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit; The barren tree, the fruitless tree, still has one valuable purpose; it can be used as firewood. Anyone who refuses to turn to God for forgiveness and salvation, can have no evidence, no good fruit, of genuine repentance. Salvation is not verified by a past act, but by present fruitfulness. John informs his audience that the time is fast approaching when God would test every human life for good or bad fruit. *What is the test?* The coming of Christ, the presence of Jesus, the message of Jesus, the arrival of Jesus would test all men. *How do I pass the test?* Well it depends what you do with Jesus. *What will you do with Jesus?* Those found fruitless would be destroyed. The presence of fruit or the absence of fruit is the test.

With the message of judgment John also gives a measure of hope and consolation in verses 11: *“As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”*

John points to ‘The One’ coming after him, which is the Messiah, who is Jesus. John acknowledged that Jesus is mightier than he. So much so, that John felt that he was not fit enough to remove his sandals. One of the menial tasks of a slave in those days were removing the sandals of his master and any guests, then washing their feet. This is why putting on the sandal, or binding the sandal or loosing the sandal or carrying the sandal is a proverb for the most menial or humble service. It was the symbol Jesus Himself used in

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teaching His disciples to be servants (John 13:5-15). The humility of John, one of his spiritual marks, was evident in this description of the One he heralded and is consistent with his expression in John 3:30 that ***“He must increase, but I must decrease.”***

Now John explains the profound and significant differences between John’s ministry and the ministry of the Messiah! He explained that his baptism differed from that of the Messiah: ***“I baptize you with water for repentance”*** which we have already dealt with, but now he continues to describe what the Messiah will do. John’s ministry was to prepare people to meet the King with a message of repentance; but the King’s ministry would be to exercise a ministry on men’s hearts; an immersion with the Holy Spirit and fire! The Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus to His disciples as

“another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you” (John 14:16-17).

At Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) and during the initial formation of the church (Acts 8:5-17; 10:44-48; 19:1-7), the promised Holy Spirit did come upon the disciples, baptizing them and establishing them in the body of Christ. Though without such dramatic attending signs, every believer since that time is baptized into the church by Christ with God’s Spirit.

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

John’s word about the Holy Spirit must have been comforting and thrilling to the faithful Jews amongst his hearers, those who hoped for the day when God would ***“pour out [His] Spirit on all mankind”*** (Joel 2:28), when He would ***“sprinkle clean water on [them],” and “give [them] a new heart and put a new spirit within [them]”*** (Ezekiel 36:25-26). In that day, they would at last, be baptized in the very power and person of God Himself.

The fire John mentioned that Jesus will also baptise in, is not explained clearly here, but many interpreters take this to be a part of the Holy Spirit baptism, which began at Pentecost and which in that instance was accompanied by ***“tongues of fire”*** (Acts 2:3). But the Acts

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account says that those tongues *“appeared to them”* (that is, the waiting disciples) *“as of fire”*. They were not fire, but looked like fire. In his last promise of the soon coming baptism with the Holy Spirit, Jesus said nothing about actual fire being a part of the experience (Acts 1:5). And when, a short time later, Cornelius and his household were baptized with the Holy Spirit, no fire was present (Acts 10:44; 11:16; cf. 8:17; 19:6).

Other interpreters take the fire to represent a spiritual cleansing, as described by Ezekiel. Fire is also seen in the scripture as testing and affliction as seen in 1 Peter 1 verse 7

‘that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ’

Fire burns; fire refines! Fire separates through severe, drastic, dramatic measures. The true Israel would experience a further radical separation; both from the ungodly and the residual sins or remaining sins! John’s ministry was temporal, partial—to make preparation; but the King, the Messiah, would reach further. In verse 12, John gives consolation to believers but warning to unbelievers: *“And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”*

In Palestine, as in many other parts of the ancient world, farmers made a threshing floor by picking out a slight depression in the ground, or digging one if necessary, usually on a hill where breezes could be caught. The soil would then be wetted and packed down until it was very hard. Around the perimeter of the floor, which was perhaps thirty or forty feet in diameter, rocks would be stacked to keep the grain in place. After the stalks of grain were placed onto the floor, an ox, or a team of oxen, would drag heavy pieces of wood around over the grain, separating the wheat kernels from the chaff, or straw. Then the farmer would take a winnowing fork and throw a pile of grain into the air. The wind would blow the chaff away, while the kernels, being heavier, would fall back to the floor. Eventually, nothing would be left but the good and useful wheat.

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In a similar way the Messiah will separate out everyone who belongs to Him and, like a farmer, He will gather His wheat into the barn, where it will be forever safe and protected. Also in a similar way to the farmer's, He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. The long-awaited Messiah would Himself perform both functions, though not in the time and sequence that John and the prophets before him may have thought. The final separation and the ultimate judgment will be only at Christ's second coming, when the unsaved

“will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life”

(Matthew 25:46).

So what is **John's timeless message? Repent. Surrender. Trust.** There is no such thing as a salvation separate from repentance or a salvation that refuses forsaking sin and surrender and trust. An old time preacher (John G. Lake) used to say; “Quit swearing, quit wrestling. It is not TRY but Trust.” Spurgeon the Prince of Preachers said, “Trust Jesus, and you are saved.

Trust self, and you are lost.” What marks true repentance? Fruit, The fruit of the Spirit.

Robert Falconer tells the story of his witnessing among the destitute people in a city and reading the story of the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tear and wiped His feet with her hair. While he was reading he heard a loud sob and looked up at a young, thin girl whose face was disfigured by smallpox. After he spoke a few words of encouragement to her she said, “Will He ever come again, the One who forgave this woman? I have heard that He will come again. Will it be soon?” Falconer replied. After sobbing again uncontrollably, she said, “Sir, can't he wait a little while? My hair ain't long enough yet to wipe His feet.”

But Jesus' return will not happen when we are ready, but when it is His time. Are you ready to meet the King?

Amen.