

I Know What You're Thinking

v. 15, 16

As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Explain that people wonder if John is the promised messiah. This baptism thing is a little uncommon for the Jews. They understood ritual washing and cleansing but this son of a Levite priest is dunking them in a muddy river. There is no temple here. All of this is out of the ordinary for cleansing in their legacy. And he treats them as a "brood of vipers."

John is quick to answer that the One to come will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. The HS reveals their thoughts to John.

v. 17

"His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Winnowing, threshing, chaff - all tough words that remove things – (the same is true of us – He will remove those things in us that are not like Christ.)

Threshing floor always in a circle to keep the animal moving to trample the wheat. The grain is in the pod and the animal tramples the wheat to loosen the seed from the pod.

The winnowing fork pulls the excess, the chaff, the useless part and just leaves the grain.

Hosea 13:3 mentions this same process. Israel will be dispersed because of their repeated turning from God.

Baptizing with the HS and fire.

Fire burns the chaff - Jesus will separate the saved and the unsaved.

John the Prisoner

v. 18

So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, "added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison."

John proclaims good news and calls sin, sin and baptizes Jesus. John had doubts in prison. As doubts arise, choose to be faithful. Faithfulness does not always promise safety.

Herodias (Herod's former sister-in-law and now wife) calls out Herod to lock up John - more detail on John's imprisonment death can be found in Matthew 14 and Mark 6 - His step-daughter dances for him and he promised to give her what she asks. She asks for John's head on a platter.

When Doves Fly

v. 21-22

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

The Holy Spirit comes on Him in bodily form like a dove.
A signal of Jesus' public ministry has begun.

A voice from heaven - God proclaims Jesus as His Son. (Later when Jesus proclaims that He is God's Son, it has already been established and proclaimed by the Father.)

Isaiah 42:1

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations."

Isaiah 42:1 ESV

Jesus would not need to be indwelt with the HS. Thus it says that that the Holy Spirit descends on Him, not indwells Him. Jesus is already God.

The Holy Spirit is for -

- Setting apart - John chosen for a special role. We have been set apart to bring God glory and share the gospel. What might this look like in your life?
- Convicting sinners - you brood of vipers – John asks, "who told you of the wrath to come?" The Holy Spirit revealed their sin to them. We are not the convicting agents, that is the Holy Spirit's job.
- Empowering ministry - John's life; the disciples; believers. What are you attempting that only God can do? How are you seeing Him work through you?
- Anointing spokespeople - prophets, people who speak not as people pleasers but as truth tellers. How do you know if someone is speaking for God? Does what they say actually follow the truth of God's Word?

Take time to share prayer requests and pray together.