

Lecture 17

Repent, Turn or Burn

Today as we begin I must apologize in advance today will not be as long as I would like. I have had some rough days so I have to pace myself. As we return to the text this week let us remember that to be here is to ask a fundamental question: how is this Jewish and does it differ from the church's understanding. That we are different than the church has to be foremost in our minds. Heather has been reading a Book called **Understanding Judaism: Creed versus Deed** by Benjamin Blech. What does this mean? That what we believe is unimportant? The answer is a resounding "No". What it does mean is that we are interested in being active and focused on Hashem; advancing the kingdom of God is our primary focus. The idea that what we do in our personal life is without consequence is one idea we must reject. Every time we are obedient we have advanced the kingdom of God and every obedient action has eternal consequences, and every word has eternal consequences. For when we speak we witness to Hashem's control of our life. When we witness, even if it is rejected, it will be used by Hashem to advance His kingdom. When we pray our prayers stay with Hashem and are in his hands forever. So as we look at repentance remember that repentance is the journey of a lifetime.

Just before we get to our verses today let us just read over the verses we have covered and refresh ourselves let us read verse 1-10 of chapter 3.

Mat 3:11-12 "I baptize you with water for 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 with fire. (12) His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

This phrase, *I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I*, is loaded with Messianic allusion in the mind of the Jews in the first Century. The first is a call to repentance; to a Jew who was interested in spiritual values, repentance is important. It is important that if we are going to be successful in our walk in service to Hashem we have to know how and that is my business. It is a call of serious self examination,

5 or personal honesty. It is found in the first steps in the 12 step
recovery program invent in AA;

*1.) We admitted we were powerless over alcohol that our lives
had become unmanageable.¹*

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The courage to admit some sin is working in our lives and we are
not in control of it. This leads us to turn to God.

*2.) We have come to believe that a Power greater than
ourselves could restore us to sanity*

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*3) We have made a decision to turn our will and our lives over
to the care of God as we understood God²*

This is really important that we are willing to do what it takes to
get ourselves away from sin. So often we are told to repent without
the how of repentance. The next steps in the 12 steps are the most
important.

20

*4) We have made a searching and fearless moral inventory of
ourselves*

25

*5) We have Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another
human being the exact nature of our wrongs*

*6) We are entirely ready to have God remove all these defects
of character*

30

7) We humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings

*8) We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became
willing to make amends to them all³*

These are the first 8 steps to repentance the question comes how do
we grow? The answer is found in the last 5 steps let us look at
them.

35

*8) We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and
became willing to make amends to them all*

40

*9) We Made direct amends to such people wherever
possible, except when to do so would injure them or others*

*10) We continued to take personal inventory and when we
were wrong promptly admitted it*

45

*11) We sought through prayer and meditation to improve
our conscious contact with God as we understood God,*

¹ 12steps.org

² Ibid

³ Ibid

5 *praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the
 power to carry that out*
 12) *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these
 steps, we tried to carry this message to other addicts, and
 to practice these principles in all our affairs*⁴

10

 These are the steps to spiritual growth and I have found nothing
better to phrase it so simply; if you have something that is better I
would love to see it. Finally the word in Hebrew for repentance is
תשובה it means to turn. Too often in the past we have been told to
15 repent but we are not told where to turn. We are called to repent
and we call others to repent -- to turn from sin to Torah. This is not
the message of the church.

 The Messianic phrase in the second part *but he who is coming
20 after me is mightier than I*. The phrase in Hebrew he who is
coming comes out of Psalm;

*Psa 118:26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the
 LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.*

25

 The Hebrew reads ברוך ה'בא בשם יהוה this was understood
messianically by the Apostles in Matt11:3, 21:9 23:39 and Heb
10:37, and in the Jewish literature is tied to Gen 49:10 in Onkelos
"until the Messiah comes" and then was tied to this phrase in Ps
30 118:26 in particular Midrash Ribbah Song of Songs 2:22 "until he
comes"⁵. So Matthew is telling his Jewish Readers that here is the
one that announces "the Coming One". We have a sense of the
power of his mentioning this as he is saying "This is the Time" that
prophets have looked for and pointed to.

35 The phrase *is mightier than I* -- what could that mean? John
gave them hope of liberation from sin. The Messiah gives that
liberation, His realization of that promise. Today in the Messianic
movement we are talking freedom from sin. Not only are we
telling to repentant we are instructing them how to change their
40 lives by filling it up with Torah. We do not offer any half baked
message -- we offer a complete message.

 The next question that comes to mind is what do sandals have
do with anything, *whose sandals I am not worthy to carry*. In
Judaism there were certain rules about how another Jew should
45 treat a Jewish slave or servant this comes from Lev.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Hegg Matthew pg 104

5 *Lev 25:46 ESV You may bequeath them to your sons after you to inherit as a possession forever. You may make slaves of them, but over your brothers the people of Israel you shall not rule, one over another ruthlessly.*

10 From this the Rabbi's developed rules about the how this was applied to a Jewish slave/servant. We should understand that it is also considered that a Jewish person has obligation to keep his brother out of slavery: this comes out of the story of Abraham Gen14⁶. The rules are found in;

15 *...the Sages said: A Hebrew slave must not wash the feet of his master, nor put his shoes on him, nor carry his things before him when going to the bathhouse, nor support him by the hips when ascending steps, nor carry him in a litter or a chair or a sedan chair as slaves do. For it is said:*
20 *“But over your brethren the children of Israel you shall not rule, one over another, with rigour” (Lev 25:46). But one's son or pupil may do so. (cf. b.Ketuvot 96a; b.Eruvin 27b; b.BavaMetzia 41a)*

25 What John is saying is “that I as his servant am not worthy of the most basic task of a servant”. The task which would be the most demeaning will still bring too much honour to me and I am not worthy to do it.

30 The message that it brings to us is this, “Who am I”? Who am I to teach to the children of my God? Who I am that I have been given an understanding of the word of God? Who I am that I have the spirit of the Living God with in me? When we count every service, each act of obedience as a privilege then we will have began to live for him. That we are allowed to live in spite of what
35 we have been and even today we live in spite of what we have done wrong. Then we shall serve for the love of Hashem that is in our reward.

40 *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.* This phrase points to number things in the mind of a person aware of Tanach. Firstly fire and water are linked in Daniel 7:10 “*a river of fire poured out of the throne*⁷”. Then judgment and fire are linked;

45 *Isa 30:27-28 Behold, the name of the LORD cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy: his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: (28) And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the*

⁶ This why Israel went to war when those soldiers had be captured.

⁷ Many translation translated it as *streams of fire*

5 *nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle
in the jaws of the people, causing them to err.*

Tim Hegg makes this observation:

10 *The combination of wind and fire was well in place as a
symbol of judgment in the early Jewish literature as well (cf.
4Ezra 13:8–11). Thus, the baptism of Yeshua as foretold by
Yochanan is not a two-fold baptism (one with the Spirit, and
15 another with fire), but one that is characterized by the judging
and purifying work of the Spirit⁸⁹.*

The idea here is that the two together are cleansing and making
right. This is very important in Judaism to be cleansed and it is for
us as well that we think well to the ways of the cleansing; Eating
20 Kosher, family purity, taking time to pray -- the list can go on but
the idea is simple: that obedience to God is foremost.

The next verse; *His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will
clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but
the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.*" Plays on the idea of
25 judgment and uses a theme well known to the people of his time.
We find the first reference to this in Psalm;

*Psa 1:4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the
wind drives away.*

30 The next references is in Isaiah:

*Isa 33:11 You conceive chaff; you give birth to stubble;
your breath is a fire that will consume you.*

35 The last reference that would have brought to the mind of the
people;

⁸ **8** - Perhaps you would have said to me, `I never went down into the deep, nor as yet into hell, neither did I ever ascend into heaven.**9** - But now I have asked you only about fire and wind and the day, things through which you have passed and without which you cannot exist, and you have given me no answer about them!"**10** - And he said to me, "You cannot understand the things with which you have grown up;**11** - how then can your mind comprehend the way of the Most High? And how can one who is already worn out by the corrupt world understand incorruption?" When I heard this, I fell on my face

⁹ Hegg pg 105

5 *Mal 4:1 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an
oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be
stubble¹⁰. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze,
says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither
root nor branch.*

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So the people would have heard John's words as a reflection of
the Prophets before him. The key thing is judgment in all these
statements of John. He first talks of the Tree that bringing forth the
fruit of repentance a clear play again on Ps 1 and also on Jeremiah
15 17. What Matthew is doing is taking all these themes of judgment
and repentance and pulling together to lay foundation for the
argument that Yeshua is the Messiah then either repent or face
Judgment. It is time to make the decision to turn to Him who
everlasting or burn. For us as we talk to our brother in church that
20 is the stark choice that we must give them. To long Hashem has
been presented as this, a fuzzy teddy bear, which he is not.

¹⁰ Here the word can be also translate chaff