



World Christian Fellowship

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Matthew 3:10-12

Consequences of refusal to Repentance.

Matthew 3:7-12, *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”⁸ 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.”*

John's message was the message of repentance, the message that was needed to get Israel ready.

Because the tragedy of the matter even though the King was coming and the kingdom was imminent, the people were not ready, and the people could not receive the kingdom.

There was sin in Israel. Israel was lost.
Israel was no different than Gentiles at this point.

That is why John preached a baptism, because baptism was the right which a Gentile proselyte went through to become a part of Israel.

John was saying that Israelites are on the outside looking in.

- The good news, the King is coming.
- The bad news is that they are not ready.
- They got to be converted.

The word “repentance,” literally, is “converted.”
Got to be transformed.

Got to turn their life around and get ready for the King or else they will not be able to receive His kingdom.

They were thinking that they were the children of Abraham, which will save them but John the Baptist preached them that they must not rely on anything other than repentance and faith towards God.

Today we will look at the consequences they will face when they refused to heed the message of repentance by John the Baptist.

V 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 those days, men kept vineyards and orchards.

At the end of the harvest season, the keeper of the vineyard, the keeper of the orchard would go through and check out all his vines and all his fig trees.

The fruitless vines and the fruitless fig trees that were dead and produced no life he would cut down lest he waste his time on them.

An agricultural illustration:

John pictures God, as the farmer coming to find the status of the tree:

The tree where the fruit of repentance is visible.

The tree where the fruit of repentance not visible.

Then He lays the axe at the root. This shows that the axe is resting there waiting to do its work of judgment. The tree without the fruits of repentance is cut down and burned.

Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire

That is the illustration used by our Lord Himself.

John 15:6, *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.*

John here warning them that they can pretend to be running from the wrath to come. They can pretend to be fleeing from the judgment of God.

But if there are no fruit of repentance and they are depending upon their self-righteous and their ancestry of Abraham to save them then they are in a lot of trouble.

Why?

Because the axe is already laid at the root of your tree because there is no fruit.

There is an imminency here.

John says that “Now,”

It is there now. Judgment is now.

John is preaching about judgement of God from the prophetic preaching of the Old Testament, was connected with the coming of the Messiah, just as much as salvation was.

They did not see any great gap like we see salvation now and the great judgment at the end of the millennial kingdom. They did not see all that gap in there. They just were told, as the prophets always had been told, that when the Messiah comes, the Messiah will come for salvation, and He will come for judgment, and they saw it as one. They saw it in unison.

In the temple when Jesus was taken there as an infant Simeon spoke about the judgement.

Luke 2:34, *Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against*

From the very beginning when the baby came, it was judgment and salvation, and they knew it. That was always the word of the Old Testament prophets.

The Old Testament prophets looked to the time of Messiah as a time of great,

- wondrous blessing,
- salvation, and
- great judgment.

They did not necessarily see that there would be a great change or a great gap in between.

Isaiah 11:3-4, *His delight is in the fear of the Lord, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of*

His ears; ⁴ But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

The prophets saw Him coming in great judgment.

Isaiah 61:1-2, *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn,*

The Messiah is going to come, and He is going to preach good tidings to the meek, bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, open the prison to those that are bound. That is the salvation element.

The very next verse says about a day of wrath and day of judgment, both went together.

Joel 3:1-3, *“For behold, in those days and at that time, When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, ²I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of My people, My heritage Israel, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up My*

land. ³They have cast lots for My people, Have given a boy as payment for a harlot, And sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.

John was proclaiming that the kingdom is at hand, but the axe is laying at the root of the tree too.

Gospel of Matthew that as soon as that little baby arrived it was not very long until other little babies were slaughtered. Then there was chaos in Israel, until 70 A.D. the whole nation of Israel was drowned in a bloodbath and the city of Jerusalem literally obliterated from the map.

When John said the axe is laid at the root of the tree the destruction of Jerusalem was only about 40 years away and it would be all over.

There was imminent judgment.

This is always true. There is always imminent judgment because the moment man dies there is judgment. Not the final great white throne judgment.

When you die without Jesus Christ, at that moment you go out of the presence of God forever. That is judgment.

Additionally, God brings about judgment and vengeance even in this life before we die. If you live a life in violation of God's principles, you will suffer consequences here and now.

The bottom line in the book of Proverbs is this: It is going to be good for the good and bad for the bad, here, and later.

Good for the good, bad for the bad, now, and later.

The axe head is at the root of the tree. Of course, ultimately, the great white throne judgment - terrible, and fearful judgment.

So, John had to say judgment is just as near as the kingdom is near. If the King comes, He comes not only to save, but He comes to judge and always the same.

By what you do with Jesus Christ, you determine whether He's the Saviour or the Judge.

- If they continue to hold their ritualism the Pharisees and Sadducees continue to hold their rationalism,
- their self-righteousness, or
- if they feel that the baptism of John is some magic prophylactic that is going cure any of their problems, or
- if they are depending on any work of the flesh,
- if they are depending on going through any religious rite for its own external benefit, or

- if they hold to their descent from Abraham or any of that, the axe is laid at the root of the tree.

They need to repent!

Acts 17:30, *Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,*

Either you repent and make right with God.

The other alternative is that the axe is laid at the root of the tree marked for imminent destruction.

That destruction could come tomorrow if you die.

It can come tomorrow in the consequence of sins that enter your life even if you are alive.

Most of the disease, suffering, pain, and sorrow of the world is the inevitable consequence of sin. Or it will come in a future time when Jesus returns.

Ultimately, it will come at the great white throne, but it is imminent.

Matthew in his gospel he does not record what was their reaction to his call. Matthew's point is just to present John as the messenger of the Messiah, the King but Luke records it for us.

No reaction from the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

Luke 3:9-10, *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.”* ¹⁰*So the people asked him, saying, “What shall we do then?”*

The message was for the Pharisees and Sadducees but they did not react, but the other people are reacting to it. Even though the message was not to them, but they were the ones who were hurting. They were the ones who were afraid. They were the ones who wanted to get it right.

That is the difference between true repentance and hypocrisy repentance. The ones who really cared, they were the ones who said, “What do we do?” As far as we know, the Pharisees and the Sadducees did not say anything.

Luke 3:11-14, *He answered and said to them, “He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.”* ¹²*Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”* ¹³*And he said to them, “Collect no more than what is appointed for you.”* ¹⁴*Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, “And what shall we do?” So he said to them, “Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages.”*

Now, this is not how you become a regenerate person; this isn't how you get right with God.

This is the result of getting right with God.

There were some people who really did care. They were the genuine, not the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They continued the pretence even until the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The people, they wanted the manifest, the fruits of true repentance. And there was a remnant of people baptized by John ready for the coming of Messiah.

Fire:

John expresses the ultimate result of the condemnation in terms of fire.

V 10-12, *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."*

At the end of verse 10, the last five words, "and cast into the fire".

At the end of verse 11, the last three words, "and with fire".

V 12, " His winnowing fan is in His hand".

Verse 10 ends with "fire."

Verse 11 ends with "fire."

Verse 12 ends with "fire."

Fire is a biblical symbol of divine judgment or divine punishment.

Genesis 19:24, *Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens.*

Now here is a good illustration of fire as an emblem and a symbol of judgment. There it was a literal molten fire.

Numbers 16:35, *And a fire came out from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense.*

Fire came and consumed those who had prostituted the priesthood.

A fire just devoured them.

Deuteronomy 4:24, *For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.*

Deuteronomy 32:22, *For a fire is kindled in My anger, And shall burn to the lowest hell; It shall consume the earth with her increase, And set on fire the foundations of the mountains.*

When God gets upset, there is going to be fire.
We see this throughout the Old Testament.

Jeremiah 4:4, *Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench it, Because of the evil of your doings."*

We can see then that fire is manifest by God in judgment. It is a way in which God defines His act of judgment.

Malachi 4:1, *"For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the Lord of hosts, "That will leave them neither root nor branch.*

The Lord says that He will not leave root or branch.

We find the same thing even in the New Testament!
Jesus spoke about it.

Matthew 5:22, *But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Matthew 5:29, *If your right eye causes you to ^lsin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*

Again, the word there, "hell," is gehenna, "the gehenna of fire."

Mark 9:43-44, *If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— ⁴⁴ where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'*

Now here you get the idea of this fire that can't go out.

Mark 9:47-48, *And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— ⁴⁸ where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'*

Luke 3:17, *His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."*

So repeatedly in the Old Testament and repeatedly in the New Testament, fire is connected with judgment.

They are in danger of eternal fire, of hell, of Gehenna, of judgment, of damnation. It is very serious.

John is not proclaiming that if you do not repent that you are going to miss the blessings from God.

John is preaching that if you do not repent then you are going to burn in hell fire.

The consequences of not repenting will lead you to burn in eternal fire!

There is no way to put that fire out.

Matthew 7:19, *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

Every tree!!

Nobody can escape.

If Satan, as wily, as clever, as powerful as he is, isn't going to escape getting cast into the lake of fire, what would make any man think he could?

V 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."*

This is a threshing floor. The threshing floor was a most unique thing. They would take a hard place in a field, usually where there was rock bed, and they would wet it and wet it and pack it and pack it until it was just very hard.

They would shape it like a saucer so that it was deeper in the middle and then became shallower, just like a saucer. Around the outside of it, they would stack rocks to act as a little wall to keep the grain in. And then when the harvest was done, they would take the bunches - bunch by bunch of the grain, whatever it was - and they would throw it onto the threshing floor.

There would be an ox or oxen, depending upon the size of the threshing floor, and that ox or oxen team would walk around the threshing floor dragging great heavy pieces of wood over the grain which would act in a way to separate the kernel from all the rest of the straw and the dirt and the dust and everything else that was attached. Usually, 30 to 50 feet in diameter would be enough for a single threshing floor, and sometimes there would be many of them.

Finally, they would be left with the hard kernel, and then there would be some of the crusty coating of the kernel and dirt, pieces of straw and so forth, and that had to be separated out.

So, the farmer or whoever was doing it would take this flat shovel and usually they would build the threshing floor on a promontory if there were mountains around where the wind

could blow by easily, or on a great flat field on the front coast, the coast of Sharon.

The Mediterranean breezes, particularly one season of the year, would blow at a certain time in the afternoon. They would take that shovel and lift up all that stuff and they would throw it in the air and the grain would fall straight down and the chaff and the straw and the dust and the rest of it would blow away. Only the grain would fall. This was called winnowing.

Then they will be left with just the grain or the wheat. Bunch by bunch, they went through this process. As the Mediterranean breeze would come from May to September through the harvest time, they would go through this process, the heavier kernels falling straight down.

The Lord Jesus Christ and He has got His threshing floor. "His" modifies the One who comes after me who is mightier than I, and that is Christ.

Jesus has His shovel, and He is throwing these things in the air and the wheat falls straight down, is gathered into the granary. The rest of the stuff blows aside, is picked up and burned with unquenchable fire. By the way, this is a picture of ultimate judgment.

In the ultimate judgment, Christ oversees the whole project, but it is actually carried out by the angels.

The angels actually do the winnowing.

The angels actually do the separating.

The angels are the ones given this unique responsibility.

At the second coming of Jesus Christ, He is going to come in judgment, and He is going to separate.

The good grain goes to the barn.

What is the barn?

Heaven.

The chaff goes into the fire.

What is the fire?

Hell.

Very simple: Heaven and hell.

Good grain into the storehouse, into the barns, into heaven, the kingdom. The godly who repent, they are the good grain. The godly who manifest the fruit of repentance, they are the good grain. The true children of the kingdom, they are the good grain and the rest is chaff.

Psalm 1:4-6, *The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. ⁵ Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ⁶ For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

We see this fearful picture of judgment.
Hell on the one hand and heaven on the other.

The same message stands today.

Jesus came as a saviour or a judge.
To offer heaven or hell,
To blessing or cursing.

You are either wheat to be gathered to the barns or you are
chaff to be burned with unquenchable fire.

Who will make the decision?

You!

You will make the decision by virtue of whether you bring forth
the fruits of repentance or not.

Repentance as we saw last week,
Do you have the knowledge of sin in your understanding?
Do you feel the pain and grief in your emotions?
Do you turn towards God and ask for forgiveness of sin and
made right with God?

Call upon the Lord Jesus Christ to change you from the way you
have been. If that has occurred in your life, if true repentance
and conversion has occurred in your life, you are wheat and you
will be gathered to the barns.

V 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.*

There is a hope!

Salvation is offered here.

V 8, ⁸*Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance*

John was pleading with them, even though it was a like a rebuke and even though it's a condemning exposure of them, there is in it the possibility where he says "bring forth fruits of repentance."

It is an offer anyway.

They can respond.

There is an invitation there.

V 10, *"Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."*

The implication there is that you could bring forth good fruit.

So, you have an invitation in verse 8.

You have a potential in verse 10.

There is even a promise in verse 12, He will gather His wheat into the barns.

You can come.

You can bring forth fruit.

You can go into the kingdom.

You can be a part of the precious grain for which Christ is now preparing a place.

John 14:1-3, *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

Jesus is going to come back to the threshing floor and pick up the grain and take it to be with Him.

But verse 11 is very specific about the consolation.

V 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.*

Three baptisms are mentioned.

1. John's baptism of repentance.
2. The baptism with the Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ.
3. The baptism with fire.

1. John's Baptism of repentance

John's baptism of repentance was in preparation for Christ's coming.

It was the baptism of a Gentile proselyte. It was saying to Israel, "You are on the outside. You got to get right with God before you can enter the kingdom. Before you can receive the King, there needs to be preparation."

John's baptism was only a preparation, just a preparation.

Acts 19:4, *Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."*

He was just getting them ready. They were going through baptism as a symbol of an inward cleansing as they confessed their sins and they got right with God, so they would be ready when the Messiah arrived.

This was not Christian baptism.

This was pre-Christian.

This was an Old Testament act of faith and repentance.

2. The baptism with Holy Spirit by Jesus Christ

"He who comes after me will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."
That was in connection with Christ's coming.

Christ came, established His church, baptized the church in the Holy Spirit.

3. Baptism with fire

This will be the result of His return, the baptism of fire.

V 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.*

John 3:28-30, *You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'* ²⁹ *He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.* ³⁰ *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

John says that he is not fit to carry His sandals. The word in the Greek for "shoes" signifies that which is bound under, and it is simply a reference to - they used to make a sole for the bottom of the foot out of wood or out of leather, rawhide. They would just put that sole on the bottom of the foot, and they would just strap it to the ankle and the foot.

Of all the things that a slave had to do, the lowest slave on the totem pole, the most menial task of all was to carry his master's

sandals. When the master came home, took off his sandals, he washed his feet, carried his sandals away. That was the lowest task that any slave ever had to do.

When the disciples met in the upper room the night before Jesus was to be taken and captured, they would not do it to each other. It was too low. They were having a fight about who was the greatest in the kingdom, and finally Jesus had to get up and do it Himself.

John says that I am not even worthy to carry His dirty sandals. I cannot even get that high, He's so far beyond me.

It is important that he said that because in Luke 3 we find that people were saying, "Is this the Christ? Are you the Christ?"

John did not want them confused on that.

Here is the great, initial prophecy of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Messiah would completely overshadow John. As to ability, He would be mightier. As to person, He would be worthier. As to work, His would be greater.

Between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ there was such a qualitative difference as would be between the infinite and the finite, between the eternal and the temporal.

John said that he is not even worthy to carry His shoes. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

John 16:7, *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.*

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost and baptized those believers.

Christ literally baptizing them with the Holy Spirit, placing them in the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13, *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*

All believers placed into the body of Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit takes the believer and places him in Christ. It is the unifying thing. It is the act by which we are fused with Jesus Christ. It is the act by which we are fused with every other believer.

They knew the prophecy of Joel that He would come, the Messiah would come, and He would pour out the Spirit on all flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26-27, *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.*

The water and the Spirit there does not refer to physical birth and spiritual birth.

They were waiting for the Messiah and they knew the Messiah would bring His Spirit.

Isaiah 11 prophesied a Spirit with manifold might and power. They were waiting for this - the Spirit's coming. And he says, "It will be not me but Christ who will come, and He will baptize you with His Spirit. He will submerge you in the power and the person of the Spirit of God."

So, John's announcement here is prophetic and it happened in Acts chapter 2.

From that time on the prophecy of Jesus came true.

John 14:17, *the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

John was saying that I am preparing for the Messiah.
My work is only preparatory.

When we become a Christian, at the moment that we are saved, God has granted in Jesus Christ that we are a gift. Christ has determined that with that gift, that He will grant us the Holy Spirit. Every believer is a gift from the Father to the Son. To every one of those believers, the Son grants the Spirit. We are placed in a fusion with Him and the body of Christ.

V 11, "and fire,"

To what does this fire refer?

Some people say that is the Pentecost.

Acts 2:3, *Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.*

It does not say it was fire at Pentecost, it was just tongues. But to appearance, it looked like fire.

It does not say here He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with a tongue that looks like fire, but that is what happened at Pentecost.

Acts 1:5, *for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*

Jesus did not speak of fire. When He told them that the Father was going to pour out the Spirit.

He never made that prophecy when referring to Pentecost.

No such fiery tongues were given at the baptism of the Spirit in the case of Cornelius.

Acts 11:16, *Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'*

I doubt we can tie this fire into the tongues that look like fire of Pentecost, although that would be a natural thing to do if you did not really study it thoroughly.

Jesus, when He spoke of Pentecost, when He spoke specifically of Pentecost, never talked about this fire.

Peter said that what happened to Cornelius, where you do not have that fire or those appearances of tongues indicated at all, Peter said that was a specific fulfilment of the Saviour's promise.

So, His promise relative to Pentecost included no fire.

There are some people who say this is His spiritual purging, that when He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit, there is a fire that purges and cleanses and purifies us.

That is a great idea because nothing in the context would tell us that. That is just a pure guess because there is not one thing in the context to point to that.

It refers to immersing men in fiery divine judgment.

When Jesus comes, He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

We have already seen that in Scripture, fire speaks of God's judgment. It can be used in a refining sense, but it speaks most dominantly of God's judgment and wrath.

These are distinct baptisms. The former, of the Holy Spirit, belongs to all believers, the latter, to all unbelievers.

The former, to those with true repentance and the latter, to those with no repentance.

If fire means judgment

Fire in verse 10 means judgment.

Fire in verse 11 means judgement.

Fire in verse 12 would be really stretching the point for fire to mean something else in the verse in between without the Holy Spirit making a comment on it to show us that it meant something else.

We have three parallel sentences in verses 10, 11, and 12. Every one of them ends in fire.

In each case the fire would be the same. There would be no reason to make any difference - fire of judgment.

In the other two images:

In verse 10, the cutting of the tree.

In verse 12, the burning of the chaff.

Two classes of people are presented, the destiny of each stated separately.

- ✓ Good fruit and no fruit,
- ✓ Collected and burned.

V 12,

- ✓ Wheat and chaff,
- ✓ Gathered and burned.

The same thing.

Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ baptized with the Holy Spirit, those who reject, with fire.

It had been predicted by Malachi that the Messiah would purify the nation. He predicted it. He predicted that when He came, He would come with fire, that He would purify.

Malachi 3:1-2, *“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the Lord of hosts. ² “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire And like launderers’ soap.*

This tells us that He's coming to purify the nations.

How?

By just removing the dross, just cleaning them up a little bit. No.

Malachi 4:1-3, *“For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” Says the Lord of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch. ² But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. ³ You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do this,” Says the Lord of hosts.*

The fire predicted in verse 3 is described as that which burns up, consumes the wicked like stubble.

John the Baptist 400 years later, picked right up where Malachi left off and he says, “Israel, He is coming, and He is coming for salvation, and He is coming to baptize you with the Spirit, but if

you say no to Him, He will come with the baptism of fire, just as Malachi said it 400 years ago.”

The King is coming, and the King is going to respond to the one, verse 8, who "brings forth the fruit of repentance."

The King is going to respond to the one who "brings forth good fruit," verse 10.

The King is going to respond to the wheat to be gathered into the barns, and He is going to baptize those in the Holy Spirit or with the Holy Spirit.

That is the message.

The choice is yours and mine as to which we choose.

No one can make it for us.

We must make it for ourselves.

Luke 12:49, *“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!*

But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I constrained till it be accomplished?

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth?

Luke 12:50-53, *But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!* ⁵¹ *Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.* ⁵² *For from now on five in one house will be*

divided: three against two, and two against three. ⁵³ Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

What in the world is He saying?

He is saying Jesus came to make a difference.

Jesus came to be a fire as well as to be a saviour.

There is going to be a division, sometimes right in a household, right in a family.