

# A Christmas TV Special

## Christmas

Prep and Leading

## Matthew 3:1-10 ESV

<sup>1</sup>In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,  
<sup>2</sup>“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” <sup>3</sup>For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.’”

<sup>4</sup> Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup> Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup> and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

<sup>7</sup> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? <sup>8</sup> Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. <sup>9</sup> And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell

you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>10</sup> Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

I. Prepare the way by **repenting**.

Matthew 3:2 ESV

<sup>2</sup> “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”.

It is entirely accurate to say that repent is the first word of the gospel.



- Repent was the first word of John the Baptist's gospel. Matthew 3:1-2

- Repent was the first word of Jesus' gospel. Matthew 4:14 and Mark 1:14-15.

- Repent was the first word in the preaching ministry of the twelve disciples. Mark 6:12

- Repent was the first word in the preaching instructions Jesus gave to His disciples after His resurrection.  
Luke 24:46-47

- Repent was the first word of exhortation in the first Christian sermon. Acts 2:38

- Repent was the first word in the mouth of the Apostle Paul through his ministry.  
Acts 26:19-20

John told his listeners to make a change of the mind, not merely to **feel** sorry for what they had done. Repentance speaks of a change of **direction**, not a sorrow in the heart.

II. ¶ Prepare the way by washing up.

Matthew 3:5-6 ESV

<sup>5</sup>Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup>and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.



Baptism was already practiced in the Jewish community in the form of ceremonial immersions, but typically it was only practiced among **Gentiles** who wished to become Jews. For a Jew in John's day to submit to baptism was essentially saying, "I **confess** that I am as far away from God as a Gentile and I need to get right with Him."

III. Prepare the way by making **paths** straight.

Matthew 3:3 ESV

<sup>3</sup> For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.’”

This idea is taken from the practice of eastern monarchs, who, whenever they entered upon an expedition, or took a journey through desert country, sent **servants** before them, to prepare all things for their passage. These servants opened the passes, leveled the ways, and removed all **impediments**.

IV. Prepare the way by bearing **fruit**.

Matthew 3:8,10 ESV

<sup>8</sup>Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

<sup>10</sup>Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Matthew 3:8 NLT

<sup>8</sup>Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.

Luke 6:43-45 NLT

<sup>43</sup> “A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. <sup>44</sup>A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thorn bushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes. <sup>45</sup> A good



person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.”