

“Vipers”

(Luke 3:7-15)

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I. Introduction

A. Three types of “Vipers”

1. The cars in front
 - a. Fastest American made production car
 - b. 0-60 in 3.9 seconds
 - c. 190 mph (on Baldwin)
 - d. 460 H.P.
2. Named after a deadly snake
3. The 3rd and most unlikely type
 - a. People flocking to the Jordan River
 1. To hear this most unusual man
 2. His was a shocking message
 - b. But some real snakes came with the crowds
 1. John the Baptist spotted them in the crowd
 - c. John didn't have anything good to say to them
 1. “You miserable deceitful snakes”
 2. “You offspring of snakes”
 - d. Now that's what we call the “direct approach”

1. Not how to “win friends and influence people”

- e. They slithered away

1. But they wouldn’t forget

2. They wouldn’t rest until they had John’s head on a platter

B. Brief review

1. John the Baptist goes public

2. Preparing to introduce Jesus

*next week

III. Text

A. The Introduction of the Vipers (Luke 3:7)

(7) John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”

1. That seems rude

- a. Who was he addressing?

2. Matthew 3:7 tells us who John spotted in the crowds

(7) But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”

3. The “them” refers to the “Pharisees and Sadducees”

- a. Were the religious leaders of Israel

1. Could have heard a pin drop

2. “What did he just say?”

- b. He called them a “*brood of vipers*” (v.7)

4. “*vipers*”

- a. Small poisonous desert snakes
 - 1. Known for their deceiving appearance
 - 2. They looked like harmless sticks
 - *the key word is “deceitful”
- b. **“brood”**
 - 1. Offspring
 - 2. The sons of a serpent
 - *sons of Satan
- c. **“Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?” (v.7)**
 - 1. When fire strikes the desert or prairie
 - a. Spreads like “wild fire”
 - b. Short, dry grasses
 - c. Brittle, thorny bushes
 - 2. Snakes and scorpions slithering ahead of the flames
 - a. Fleeing the fire (wrath or judgment to come)
 - 3. “Did your father Satan warn you to flee?”
- d. The two principle groups of religious leaders

8. **The Pharisees**

- a. Developed between the Old and New Testaments
 - 1. Helped the Maccabees fight against Greek rule
 - 2. They began with good intentions
 - a. Developed into the Pharisees

1. *means “separatists” or “legalists”

- b. Eventually they separated from....

1. Maccabeus

2. Gentiles

3. Samaritans

4. Heathens

5. Tax collectors

6. Sinners

7. Those indifferent to their cause

8. The normal people

- b. They condemned Jesus for talking to....

1. sinners

2. prostitutes

3. tax collectors

4. non-Jews

5. people like you and me

- c. They prided themselves in their religious life-style

1. When returning from the market place (Mk. 7:4)

- a. Washed themselves

- b. Perchance they accidentally touched a sinner

2. All of their fruit was plastic

- a. Nothing was done with a repentant heart

3. The last message of Jesus addressed these guys (Matt. 23:13-26)

- a. “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!**”
- b. Pronounce 7 “woes” upon them
- 4. Why we all hate “hypocrites”
 - a. Need for authenticity
- d. Their problem....
 - 1. They said they spoke for God
 - a. They looked religious
 - 2. But they lacked the heart of God
 - 3. What about you?????
 - 4. Our quest for authenticity
- e. **You may be a Pharisee if...**
 - 1. You think of religion as a bunch of rules to be obeyed***
 - a. Legalism
 - b. Has destroyed many churches
 - 2. You judge a person’s spirituality on externals***
 - a. Attendance
 - b. Giving
 - c. Clothes
 - d. Separation from sinners
 - 3. You place the traditions of man or the church at the same level as the teachings in the Word of God***
 - a. Examples:
 - 1. Order of service

2. The music
3. Denominational names
4. Manner of dress

4. You have difficulty loving the unlovable

- a. The two great commandments
 1. God
 2. Your neighbor
- b. Do you grieve for lost souls?
- c. Even the most unlovable
- d. Jesus “was moved with compassion”
- e. We’ll be seeing “the heart of Jesus”

5. You base your salvation on any of the following

- a. family
- b. church
- c. baptism
- d. nationality

6. You’re critical of others

9. The Sadducees

- a. If the Pharisees were the Legalists...the Sadducees were the Liberals of their day
- b. The religious compromisers
 1. Played the game with Rome

- 2. Didn't believe in the supernatural
- 3. Only believed parts of the Old Testament
 - a. Anti-miraculous
- 4. Didn't believe in a resurrection of the dead
- c. They were rich and powerful
 - 1. The Temple money changers
 - 2. Sold the animals for sacrifices
 - a. Gouged the buyers
 - 3. The group Jesus drove out of the Temple
- d. They were hated by their fellow Jews
- e. They blended into their world
- f. Much of mainstream religion today is controlled by Sadducees
 - 1. They blend in well
 - 2. Socially acceptable
 - 3. Deny the literal interpretation of Scripture
 - 4. Deny the miraculous
 - 5. Deny the resurrection
- g. They take over and subvert fervent ministries
 - 1. Most denominations, colleges and churches were begun by the fervent
 - a. Are eventually taken over by these guys
 - 2. They pride themselves in:
 - a. Being well educated
 - b. Being socially acceptable

- c. Being politically correct
- d. Blending in with the world
- 3. The problem ...they didn't have the heart of Jesus
- h. **You may be a Sadducee if you don't believe in:**

- 1. *The existence of God*
- 2. *The deity of Jesus Christ*
- 3. *Life after death*
- 4. *A literal heaven and a literal hell*
- 5. *The resurrection of Jesus*
- 6. *The return of Jesus*

B. The Imminency of the Judgment (Luke 3:8-9)

(8) Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

- 1. What is "*fruit in keeping with repentance?*"

(9) The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

- 2. Inspecting an apple orchard
 - a. Which trees to keep
 - 1. Fruit bearing
 - 2. The rest doesn't matter
 - b. Finding a tree failing to produce fruit
 - 1. Chop it down
 - 2. Wasting space

3. A fraud
2. “The ax is laid at the root of the trees” (v.9)
 - a. Pruning out non-producing trees and vines
 - b. Chopped down and burned
 - c. Replace with fruit-producers
3. Jesus is coming with the ax
 - a. it is about to happen
 - b. the fire of judgment is imminent
4. Being children of Abraham won’t save them
 - a. God could produce out of these stones

C. The Inquiry from the Crowd (Luke 3:10-14)

(10) “What should we do then?” the crowd asked.

1. Question from the rest of the crowd.....v.10
 - a. A “town hall meeting”
 - a. What should we do then
 - b. What is the **“fruit in keeping with repentance?”**
2. The answer.....v.11-14
 - a. True repentance means a change in your heart and behavior
 1. By their fruit you will know them
 2. The heart of Jesus
 - b. Plastic fruit vs. the fruit of repentance
 1. The Pharisees and Sadducees were producing plastic fruit

c. The fruit of repentance grows out of a changed heart

3. Five examples of an un-changed heart

a. Selfishness

1. Share with those in need.....v.11

(11) John answered, “The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same.”

2. Be ye warmed, be ye fed, but

3. Joanne’s phone call

b. Greed

1. Tax collectors....v.12-13

(12) Tax collectors also came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”

(13) “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

a. Don’t cheat people

b. History of tax collectors

c. Abuse of power

1. Soldiers.....v.14

(14) Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?” He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

d. Deceit

1. Don’t extort money

2. Don’t accuse people falsely

e. Discontent

3. Be content with your pay

D. The Identity of the Messiah (Luke 3:15)

1. What was going through everybody's mind?.....v.15
 - a. Whispers through the crowd
 - b. What would happen next?

(15) The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ.

IV. Summary

A. John went right to the heart of the problem

1. Produced "plastic fruit"
2. Hypocrites

B. Graduation

1. Gunny Sergeant
2. Marine Corps Standards
3. I'm looking for your heart

*Give me your heart