GENERATION OF VIPERS

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God bless you,

Oluwatobi S. Adewuyi
Coordinator

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God bless you!

Topic:
GENERATION OF VIPERS

Bible Text: Matthew 3:1-8

Prayer

Our Heavenly Father we thank you for the gift of life and another opportunity to study at your feet. Lord grant us an understanding heart and retentive memory to assimilate your word in Jesus Mighty Name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

You are all welcome in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I hope you all had a lovely day. Today's study is one that needs to call for a sober reflection for everyone of us to look into our lives. Whether married or not, this is why we must follow it carefully.

Bible Text

Matt.3.1 - In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

Matt.3.2 - and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Matt.3.3 - For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight."'

Matt.3.4 - Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

Matt.3.5 - Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him

Matt.3.6 - and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

Matt.3.7 - 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?

Matt.3.8 - Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

Study

John's ministry started in the wilderness of Judea after he went into a period of total consecration. He began preaching right from the Wilderness, and all Jerusalem, Judea, and the regions around the Jordan went out to meet him to be baptized by him. There was no special message John was preaching; it was the message of repentance, but one that came with power, just as Paul the Apostle said in **1 Corinthians 2:4 KJV:** "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."

Paul preached by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit and power, providing proof that the Spirit and power of God were operating in him. This was what brought people down to their knees. Similar to John's message, it was the power of God working in him that drew people from the city to the wilderness to hear his message and repent from their sins. Despite the messages not being enticing and consisting of crude warnings about the impending judgment of God against sinners, people came to him. It was surprising that even the Pharisees and Sadducees came to be baptized, leaving their positions. However, they could not deny the power of God by which John ministered, convincing them that he was indeed the prophet Isaiah spoke of, as in **Isaiah 40:3 KJV:** "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Since they understood the Scriptures, their hearts compelled them to subject themselves to the truth of it. John was not a flamboyantly dressed man; he did not concern himself with the position or prestige of others. He was a man who delivered his message directly about God. When he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to be baptized, he was not afraid to call them out, as seen in **Matthew 3:7 KJV:** "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

John's statement was a reflection of the Pharisees' lack of full belief in the scriptures prophesying about Christ, leading them to live contradictory lives. Jesus often referred to them as hypocrites, and John, recognizing their deceit, called them a "generation of vipers" due to their deceptive nature.

Who were the Pharisees?

The term "Pharisee" originates from a Hebrew word meaning "separated." They constituted a specific faction within the Sanhedrin, holding a minority of positions as priests. The Sanhedrin, comprising 70 seats, included both Pharisees and Sadducees. Despite their minority status, the Pharisees

exerted significant influence due to popular support. The Pharisees accepted the written word as divinely inspired, primarily the Old Testament during Christ's earthly ministry. However, they elevated oral traditions to equal authority with the written word (logos), deviating from the written word. This practice drew criticism from Jesus, as seen in **Mark 7:7 KJV:** "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

They were known for preaching without practicing, advocating the observance of over 600 laws of Moses but failing to uphold these themselves. Jesus criticized them in **Matthew 23:3-4 KJV**, saying, "For they say, and do not... they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

The harsh characterization by John, referring to them as a "generation of vipers," underscores their deceitful teachings that could lead unsuspecting souls astray, akin to a venomous bite with perilous consequences. Within the Pharisees, there were scribes whose responsibility involved studying, transcribing the law, and writing commentaries on it. While all scribes were Pharisees, not every Pharisee held the role of a scribe.

Who were the Sadducees?

The Sadducees, sometimes called "Zadokites" or "Tzadikim," derived from the Hebrew word "sadaaq" meaning "to be righteous." They constituted a religious-political group with significant influence among the Jews in Israel during Jesus Christ's time. Associated with the aristocratic class, they held powerful positions and were deeply connected to temple affairs in Jerusalem. Unlike the Pharisees, the Sadducees were wealthier but struggled to relate well with the masses. They formed the majority in the Sanhedrin, the ruling council with 70 seats. The Sadducees prioritized the authority of the written word of God, particularly the books of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). While many Sadducees were priests, not all belonged to this group. Initially indifferent to Jesus during his early ministry, they later became concerned about potential Roman attention and interference. Due to their focus on political matters, they exhibited rudeness, arrogance, and a hunger for power. Quick to dispute with those who disagreed, John, recognizing these traits, added "generation of vipers" to his description, emphasizing their problematic nature regardless of their status.

Errors of the pharisees and Sadducees

1. The Pharisees gave oral tradition equal authority to the written word of God.

b. The Sadducees were extremely self-sufficient to the point of denying God's involvement in everyday life.

2. a. Pharisees often resisted Hellenization. i.e not wanting to have anything to do with non-jews (the Greeks)

b. The Sadducees denied any Resurrection of the dead which was why they denied the fact that Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead.

3. a. The Pharisees did not practice what they preached.

b. The Sadducees denied the afterlife holding that the soul perishes at death, no punishment, no reward after death

4. a. The Pharisees were self-righteous thinking they were righteous because they kept the law or part of it so they did not measure up to God's standard of holiness.

b. The Sadducees denied the existence of a spiritual world i.e Angels and demons

5. a. The Pharisees love to be called Rabbi in their pride.

b. The sadducees were proud, rude, and power hungry.

John did not spare their hypocritical lifestyles but pointed it out point blank by calling them a brood of vipers asking them why they took warnings to flee from the wrath to come. Assuming it were today, had John made such statements, many would have risen to accuse him of condemning people, claiming he was not behaving like Christ. However, the Pharisees and Sadducees humbled themselves and repented, even though it is evident that many of them did not truly repent, continuing to withstand Christ during His earthly ministry. Many accepted the ministry of John the Baptist but rejected the ministry of Jesus Christ, the one whose way was prepared by John, just because they held their own beliefs in their hearts. Unfortunately, we are in a generation filled with vipers who will not heed warnings to flee from the wrath to come. Looking at the errors of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, it is clear that many today operate under the spirit of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. These are those who teach doctrines as commandments of men, neglecting the true commandments. They believe in a sort of superstition and will by no means forsake it. They hold onto oral traditions passed from one generation to another, embracing fables. As Titus says in **Titus 1:14 KJV**, "Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth," it is made clear that

these commandments of men are from individuals who turned away from the truth.

Today, we have those who have also turned away from the truth and given in to things that do not amount to righteousness, failing to encourage godly lives. Now is the time to check your life. Are you not also one of the generation of vipers? Are you living hypocritically? Do you still hold onto cultural beliefs in place of biblical truths? Some claim Christianity does not forbid participation in rituals rooted in their traditions. These are a brood of vipers that must repent.

The word of God supersedes any tradition and culture of men. Beware!

We have come to the end of this study. Please attempt the following questions if you understood the teaching

1. How did the Pharisees and Sadducees respond to John the Baptist's strong statements, and what was the underlying issue with their repentance?

2. In what ways do modern-day individuals exhibit behaviors similar to those of the Pharisees and Sadducees, as highlighted in the teaching?

3. According to Titus 1:14 KJV, what warning does the apostle Titus give regarding certain teachings and commandments prevalent during his time, and how does it relate to contemporary issues discussed in the teaching?

Invitation

If you know that you are still living in sin and you are ready to repent and begin to live your life in strict obedience to God so that you can overcome every sin in your life to make heaven, please place your right hand on your chest and say this prayer with your mouth.

Say,

"Lord Jesus, I accept You as my personal Lord and Savior. I believe that You died for me and took away my sins so that I will not face the penalty of them. I surrender my life to You today, and I make a decision to obey and follow You. Come into my life now and accept me as Your child. Thank You for saving me, in Jesus Christ's name I pray, Amen."

Congratulations, now you are saved. If you prayed this short prayer, please WhatsApp +2347067511039 and let me know that you have just been saved. I want to have a word with you. God bless you!

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