

Matthew 3:7

Authorized King James Version (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?

Analysis

John's denunciation of religious leaders as a 'generation of vipers' strips away their pretense of covenant privilege. The serpent imagery recalls Genesis 3 and Satan's deception, suggesting these leaders were the devil's children despite their religious pedigree (John 8:44). His question about who warned them implies their presence was insincere—fleeing future wrath without true repentance. This demonstrates that religious profession and heritage mean nothing without heart transformation.

Historical Context

Pharisees were laymen zealous for Torah and oral tradition. Sadducees were priestly aristocrats who denied resurrection and angels. Despite their differences, both groups trusted in ethnic descent and religious performance rather than genuine repentance.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does John's harsh rebuke challenge the assumption that religious heritage or position equals right standing with God?
2. What is the difference between fleeing wrath out of fear versus repenting from genuine conviction of sin?

Interlinear Text

Ἰδὼν	δὲ	πολλοὺς	τῶν	Φαρισαίων	καὶ	Σαδδουκαίων
when he saw	But	many	G3588	of the Pharisees	and	Sadducees
G1492	G1161	G4183		G5330	G2532	G4523
ἐρχομένους	ἐπὶ	τὸ	βάπτισμα	αὐτοῖς	εἶπεν	αὐτοῖς
come	to	G3588	baptism	unto them	he said	unto them
G2064	G1909		G908	G846	G2036	G846
Γεννήματα	ἐχιδνῶν	τίς	ὑπέδειξεν	ὑμῖν	φυγεῖν	ἀπὸ τῆς
O generation	of vipers	who	hath warned	you	to flee	from
G1081	G2191	G5101	G5263	G5213	G5343	G3588 G575
μελλούσης	ὀργῆς;					
to come	the wrath					
G3195	G3709					

Additional Cross-References

Matthew 12:34 (Parallel theme): O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Romans 1:18 (Judgment): For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Matthew 23:33 (Parallel theme): Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

1 Thessalonians 1:10 (Judgment): And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Romans 5:9 (Judgment): Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Matthew 16:6 (Resurrection): Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Matthew 22:23 (Resurrection): The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,

1 John 3:10 (Parallel theme): In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

Jeremiah 51:6 (Parallel theme): Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.

Jeremiah 6:10 (Parallel theme): To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.