

The Baptism of Jesus

Matthew 3:1-17

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Intro

At the end of Matthew 2, Joseph and Mary and the child Jesus were on their way to Nazareth. Jesus would have been about four or five years old. Now, as we come to Matthew 3, it was about 25 years later.

In this chapter we are introduced to John the Baptist. He was not given that title because he was part of the Baptist denomination, that didn't exist at the time, but rather because that was one of the primary aspects of his ministry.

What's interesting is that there had been about 400 years of prophetic silence. Micah was the last prophet of the Old Testament and no one had represented God to the nation of Israel until John the Baptist.

Again Matthew tells us that John was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make ready the way of the Lord; make His paths straight!" In that culture and time, if a great king was to visit a city, they would make sure that the roads were ready; they would make his paths straight.

In other words, John was sent by the Lord as a forerunner of the promised Messiah. His purpose was to prepare the people for the coming of Jesus by calling them to repentance; to prepare their hearts and lives because "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew also tells us that John himself wore a garment of camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and that his food was locusts and wild honey. This should immediately remind us of the prophet Elijah who came to the northern kingdom of Israel during their darkest time and that he also called them to repentance.

The comparison to Elijah is important for us to understand because even before John was born it was prophesied that he would come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

There is a lot in this chapter that's important for us to understand and to apply to our lives as well.

I. Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand

- John's message was simple and straightforward, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
- This isn't exactly what you would call a "seeker friendly" message. Today, there is a movement in the church which some describe as being seeker sensitive. That means that they soften the message so as not to offend anyone. They want people from the world who come into the church, "seekers," to be comfortable and entertained and then introduce the message of Jesus as gently as possible.
- What's interesting is that the purpose of this approach is an attempt to draw large crowds, but when you look at the message of John, there was nothing compromising about it, but John was the one with large crowds. Matthew tells us in verse five that Jerusalem and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan were being baptized by him and confessing their sins.

A. Repent is a good word

- To repent means to turn around, it means to have a change of mind and heart. It means to get off the road of destruction and walk on the road that leads to God; where your eyes are fixed on Jesus.

Hebrews 12:1-2, Let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.

- Some people don't like the word, "repent," because they believe it is offensive.
- But Jesus is not trying to hurt people by calling them sinners; he is trying to help them by allowing them to see that their sin will only bring death to their lives.
- But it's also important to see that Jesus is an equal opportunity offender.

Romans 3:9-12 None are righteous; no, not one.

Illus – Once in a while I'll talk to someone telling me that they are a whatever; you fill in the blank, and wondering if they will be accepted in the church. The answer is that Jesus accepts anyone who desires to come to him, but he didn't call them so that they could stay on the road that leads to destruction, he came to transform them; to make them new.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Such were some of you...

2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

B. Bear fruit in keeping with repentance

- When John saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, "Bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance;"

- We might ask the question, why did they come to John? Answer; because at some point it became the fashionable thing to do because John was highly esteemed and considered to be a prophet.

Illus – When I was teaching at a pastor's conference in Africa and made a call for repentance... eventually everyone stood up and I knew that many felt pressured to stand. But was it authentic?

- John was confronting the very heart of their problem; they had religion, but they had no spiritual reality.
- This is similar to what God was showing us when we studied the life of Josiah; if there is genuine revival, then there will be true change in our lives. "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance" means the same. Let your life demonstrate the fruit of revival as well.
- The Gospel of Luke gives us even more details about the heart that is changed before God.

Luke 3:11-15 Let our lives show that we have been changed.

Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

- John challenged them further by saying, "Do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'"

- That was a common belief at the time; that because they were sons of Abraham, they were therefore right with God.

Illus – When I was a waiter during Bible College, I worked with a Jew and I asked Him how he thought he would get into heaven. “I am child of Abraham,” he said.

- But Abraham walked with God in authentic faith and you can’t get right with God by riding on Abraham’s faith. Each person must have their own relationship to God, by faith receiving forgiveness by the blood of Jesus Christ.
- Paul wrote the same to the church at Galatia...

Galatians 3:6-7, Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

C. Everyone will be baptized with something

- Then, in verses 11 and 12 John spoke of the baptism of Jesus. “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”
- Jesus himself was anointed by the Holy Spirit as we will soon see in our study. But He also promised to send the Holy Spirit to the church.

John 14:16-17, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not seek Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”

- The Holy Spirit is given to all who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

1 Corinthians 12:13, For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves are free, and we are all made to drink the one Spirit.

- But John also said that Jesus would be baptized with fire. There is some debate about what that means, but it seems very clear from what John said next. At the end of the age he will clear his threshing floor and the wheat and the chaff will be separated. In other words, everyone is either wheat that is brought into the barn or chaff that is burned in the fire.
- Therefore, John is preparing the way of the Lord by preparing the people for the good news that Jesus would speak to them.

II. Jesus Comes as the Way to the Father

- John’s purpose and ministry was to make ready a people prepared for the coming of the Lord.
- He did this by calling people to repentance.
- But Jesus came to make a way also, a way for us to come to the Father, to have everlasting life!
- How? Jesus came to John so that he too could be baptized. At first, John tried to prevent Him saying, “It is I who has need to be baptized by You.”
- Then Jesus explained that this was the baptism that would fulfill all righteousness.
- Jesus had no sins to repent of; He came in our behalf, as the representative of our sin.

Romans 8:3-4 God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh

A. Live by the anointing of the Holy Spirit

- Jesus came as a representative of our sin, and he came to show us the way to the Father.
- And he also made a way for us to live in power and authority now on this earth. He himself became our example and as such was anointed by the Spirit of God when he came up from the waters of baptism. In other words, as he is now ready to begin his ministry, he will do so by the anointing of the Holy Spirit on his life.
- This was the same that was said to the prophet Zechariah...

Zechariah 4:6-7, “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts. What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain;”

- John spoke of the fruit of repentance, but there is also the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23, 25, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control... If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Illus – Fruit is the result of the life of God through the Holy Spirit and that fruit is good. Notice it’s not called the vegetables of the Holy Spirit? I just got a box of fresh peaches; compare that to broccoli. Fruit is from the sweetness of life in God, not sour grapes, but the joy.

B. “This is My beloved Son”

- The presence of the Trinity of God is unmistakable here. The prophecy of Isaiah was that John would, “Make ready the way of the LORD.” That’s the name, Jehovah, but it’s a reference to Jesus Christ; the Son of God. Then there’s the Holy Spirit, and a voice out of the heavens of the Father.
- The voice of God said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
- But in coming as God’s representative to us, he also came as our representative to God; that we too might become sons by adoption.

Romans 8:15, You have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba, Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.

- Jesus used the picture of a father and his son to describe how great God’s love toward us really is in Luke 15 and the parable of the prodigal son.

Luke 15:20, 24 “So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him... ‘This son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’”