

Matthew 3: Repentance and Baptism**Summary:**

Matthew 3 begins with the story of John the Baptist. John began teaching repentance and the coming kingdom of God in the wilderness of Judea. The writer mentions that this had been prophesied by Isaiah. In the prophecy, John was to prepare the way for Jesus.

John baptized people as they confessed their sins.

John noticed that the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism and he scorned them. See the Pharisees and Sadducees were leaders of the Jewish community and were not very Godly people. They were so consumed with law, some of which they had created themselves, that they had no concern for people's spiritual wellbeing. So, John tells them about themselves. He says they were only attending baptisms to try to escape God's wrath, but they had none worthy of reformation or restoration, which comes through repentance.

He dares them to say they are worthy because they are descendants of Abraham. He asserts that God could turn stones into children of Abraham if he so pleased. Implying that it meant nothing to be a descendent of Abraham. He goes on to say now that the kingdom of God was coming, they would be held accountable and every person not bearing good fruit (not doing God's will), like these leaders of the Jewish religion, Judaism, would be cut off and cast into the fire.

John begins to explain that his baptism is only a precursor to the real baptism, which is baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire, by Jesus.

Jesus went to John to be baptized and John did not find it appropriate since he believed Jesus was greater than him, but Jesus explained that it was required to make him completely righteous.

After John baptized Jesus, the skies opened and they saw the Spirit of God come down on Jesus and heard a loud voice say this is My son the Beloved, in whom I did delight.

Instructions: Read Matthew Chapter 3 in the King James Version and answer the questions below.

1. What are some deeper ideas and themes you notice about the story in Matthew 3?
2. Does anything stick out to you?

Insights:

- John is teaching the people to turn from their evil ways in preparation for the coming kingdom of God.

Lesson: We must turn from the evil, by separating ourselves from the rest of the world in preparation for the fullness of God's kingdom. See the kingdom is already

- here, but it is not complete. Some have woken up and obeyed God, while others are still living in darkness and deception conjured up by the adversary.
- John's journey had been prophesied and he was to prepare the way for Jesus. What he did was set the expectation of Jesus' coming and his impact on Israel. He had Israel lying in wait of the Messiah, so that when he arrived they were ready to receive him.
Lesson: Some of us have the spirit of John the Baptist. We prepare others to experience God's supernatural power and the coming completion of His kingdom. His kingdom is Israel. Jesus came to restore us, by restoring our memory of who we are that we would return to our Father.
 - In verse 5, we see that Jerusalem, all of Judea, and all the region near the Jordan went to John and were baptized. We learn in modern Christianity that Israel hated, killed, and did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. But this verse tells a different story. We see that all of Judah, Jerusalem, and areas surrounding the Jordan River believed, repented, and awaited Jesus' coming.
Lesson: We have to find the facts in the word of God and not take man's word for it. If it doesn't make sense, it's probably because it's a lie from man. The devil has a way of twisting the word of God to suit his own purpose. The entire Gospel tells of Jesus healing, teaching, and restoring his people, Israel. Then we are told that this same people who had so much faith in Jesus one day decided to crucify him the next. The people who actually crucified him never lost their identity. They are Jews and Romans, that is people who practice Judaism and the Roman Empire, now known as Roman Catholics.
 - Verse 7 through 10, John the Baptist goes in on the Pharisees and Sadducees. These were not Israelites, but were descendants of Abraham who ruled over the people of Israel, most likely Edomite who were descendants of Jacob's twin brother, Esau. He tells them they are not worthy of repentance or reformation; in other words, they were not worthy of being made new. He stated, rather, they would be cast into the fire because they did bad things.
Lesson: John is giving us an inside look at the difference between a Jew and an Israelite.
 - John goes on to say that he baptizes with water, but the one who was coming would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. In Matthew 3:12, he explained the Holy Spirit will gather his people and the fire will burn what is not his.
Lesson: Whoever, for whatever reason, has not accepted the Holy Spirit will not be gathered, but cast into the fire.

Bible Study Note: Holy literally means separate. As each of us take on the Spirit of separation which comes from God, the kingdom is coming into its fullness, it is full when all of God's chosen have taken on this spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit separates the "wheat" which is the good that are of the Father, from the "chaff" which is the bad which are NOT of the Father.

- Jesus demands that John baptizes him. He says that it is required for his righteousness. When he comes up from the water, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus and a voice God says, "This is My son, the beloved. In whom I am delighted."

Lesson: Even Jesus was required to be cleansed in the baptism by water. I believe he was setting an example for us and he was now 30 years old and had lived before this; so he felt it necessary to be baptized to fulfill righteousness.

Some people think they need to be right to get baptized, both John and Jesus tells us it goes the other way. You need to be baptized to get right! Water baptism is to be the beginning of your fullness of righteousness and baptism by the Holy Spirit will follow it.

Instructions: Take a second look at each of these events in Matthew 3 and find the lessons hidden within each event.

Insights for Application to Life:

- We must repent – that is to turn away from the things that are against the will of God.
- Jesus came to restore the Kingdom, which is Israel. He wants to restore you.
- Much of what we “know” about God, Jesus, and the bible is wrong. If we search for the truth, we will find it in His word, the bible, and it may look nothing like we have been told.
- Israel embraced Jesus, even before he made himself known to them. So even if you can’t see him yet, anticipate his coming into you.
- The Pharisees and Sadducees also attended baptisms, but were told there was no restoration for them, because they did no good and were unworthy. God’s people were preselected, being a descendent of Abraham is not where the promise is. The promise is to descendants of Jacob. That’s you!
- Jesus brought with him the Holy Spirit. After his baptism, he embodied the Spirit of God that we too may embody the Spirit of God. A spirit is an invisible being, power, or energy with a particular purpose, so essentially the Holy Spirit is the being of God whose purpose is to make His Children Holy or separate. Later, we will learn about the Spirit of Truth, the purpose of this Spirit of God is to teach us truth. The Holy Spirit separates and gathers us from those things that are not of God, as described in verse 12, while the Spirit of Truth teaches us the truth of God. See, once he has separated all who are His, he will cast what remains into the fire. Therefore, it would behoove you to take your place, and make yourself separate by accepting the Holy Spirit.
- If Jesus required a water baptism to be made completely righteous, why do you think you can get righteous without the baptism? Get baptized! It means to repent, confess, and be purified under water... Period. When you come up you have washed away your past err, your sin, your imperfection, and put on perfection that is the Holy Spirit.

Another very important lesson in this chapter is that, like Jesus, John the Baptist did not play with the enemy. He told them like it was. No sugar coating! He knew the Pharisees and Sadducees was not his people and, more importantly, not God’s people and he was not afraid to

tell them about themselves. Eventually they beheaded him for it, but that did not stop him from speaking truth.

See, being a child of God has nothing to do with being nice and everything to do with living in truth at all cost. It's not to say go and be ugly to people, but never be afraid to speak truth. Just because we live in a world that despises the truth, it doesn't give us God's permission to avoid or deny it. Loving someone requires truth, not niceness. Anyone can be nice. In chapter 2, Herod was nice when he said he wanted to go and worship baby Jesus. Surely, he did not love him, he only wanted him dead.

So, John teaches us to speak and live the truth, even if it offends those who prefer to live in the lies.

Deep Thought:

1. If you are not baptized, why not?

2. Do you tend to believe the common lies over the rare truth? Yes or No
3. Have you accepted the Holy Spirit? Have you made yourself separate from the world, so that you don't get cast out with it? _____

4. If you have not made yourself separate, what are you holding on to? Is it worth your soul? _____

5. Do you live in and speak truth, even when others would prefer you partake in their lies? _____

Final Thoughts:

Living in this world can be a very confusing experience. The adversary made it that way so we would forget who our Father is. Quite often, the lies appear like truth, truth like lies, good seems bad, and bad seems good.

Therefore, out of trust in the majority, we tend to agree with the majority more frequently than we agree with the truth.

When we were young and wanted to do what everyone else was doing, someone would ask, "If little Mary jumps off the bridge, will you jump too?" We would never say yes, but when we look at the spiritual condition of Israel and the whole world, we see that the answer is in fact yes. We are constantly jumping off of the bridge.

Never turn from the truth, because it's not the lies you've been told. Do your research and you'll find that the truth has been in the bible all along. It's not the truth "they" intended for us to accept, but it is the truth of God.

God's truth in Matthew 3 tells us that Israel and what we know as Jews were two different groups of people. Israel was God's people, while Jews belonged to the adversary. Jesus confirms this time and time again in scripture, particularly in John 8:44.

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

What Jesus says here is also a testament to this very discussion. That the world choose to believe the lies, because truth is not in them. So don't be like the world and believe and live lies, because you think it's easier than living in truth... Believe and walk in truth because it is right and of God!