

## **The Gospel According to Matthew**

### Study # 4

## **Chapter 3**

### **Outline**

#### **I. John the Baptist Prepares the Way (3:1-12)**

#### **II. John Baptizes Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17)**

### **Notes:**

#### **Matt. 3:1-4**

John the Baptist was the cousin of Jesus. He was six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:26, 36). He was the forerunner of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. He was prophesied by the Prophet Isaiah over seven hundred years before (Isaiah 40:3). He came to "prepare the way of the Lord." The coming of John the Baptist was also prophesied by Malachi (Mal. 3:1; 4:5-6). John the Baptist typified Elijah in the Old Testament. He was Elijah who is to come (Matt. 17:11-13; Luke 1:17). John the Baptist dressed similar to Elijah (2 Kings 1:8). His clothes were far from comfortable. His food was locusts, which were a permitted food in the Old Testament (Lev. 11:22) and wild honey.

John the Baptist preached a message of repentance. Repentance is a radical change of mind that produces a change of heart and life. "Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation" (2 Cor. 7:8-11). Jesus also at the beginning of His ministry echoed the same message of repentance (Matt. 4:17). God commands men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). It is our responsibility to repent and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15). Repentance is not a work and is a gift from God and produced by God's sovereign grace alone (2 Tim. 2:25; Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8-9). Before conversion, men are spiritually dead and are unable to change (Jer. 13:23). God quickened us and made us alive in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-5).

#### **Matt. 3:5-17**

John's baptism symbolized repentance and faith in the coming Messiah:

*Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."*  
(Acts 19:4)

Those who were baptized by him acknowledged their own sinfulness and their need of repentance to receive the coming Messiah.

Baptism was most likely done by immersion. The Greek word for "Baptism" is "Baptizo" which means to dip and to immerse. No where in the New Testament does the word

"Baptism" mean sprinkling or pouring.

Definition of the Greek word "Baptizo" from The New Testament Greek Lexicon:

1. to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk)
2. to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe
3. to overwhelm

Baptism itself is a symbol and cannot save anyone. Remission of sins is by faith in Christ alone:

*"To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."* (Acts 10:43)

John's baptism differs from Christian baptism which is a symbol of our identification in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-6).

Many from Jerusalem, Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to John to be baptized by him in the Jordan River. Even the Pharisees and Sadducees came to be baptized. But John knew that they were not sincere. He called them "Brood of vipers." The Pharisees were the legalists of John's day and the Sadducees were the liberals. The Pharisees highly esteemed the law but they were hypocrites and self-righteous (Luke 18:9) and unconverted. The Sadducees were religious skeptics who denied such basic doctrines as the resurrection of the body, the existence of angels, eternal punishment and the immortality of the soul (Acts 23:8). Jesus condemned both the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew Chapter 23. John the Baptist told them to prove their repentance by their change of heart and life. He told them not to presume that they are right with God just because they are descendants of Abraham. Salvation is not inherited (John 1:13). John said that if they truly repented than they would bear good fruit (their outward life would prove their new inward nature). Jesus said a "good tree bears good fruit" but a "bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matt. 7:17-19). Those who bear bad fruit will be thrown into the fire, a picture of the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8).

The Pharisees are like present-day professing Christians who are very outwardly religious but are not genuinely saved. They read the Bible, go to church, etc. but they never came to a saving knowledge of Christ. They are "always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7). The Sadducees are like present-day skeptics and professing Christians who deny the Creation, Noah's flood, the resurrection of Christ and other doctrines such as hell, heaven, etc.

John's ministry was only introductory and preparatory for the ministry of the Christ. John was very humble. He confessed that Christ's ministry would be greater than his (John 3:27-31). John said that Christ must increase, but he must decrease (John 3:30).

John baptized with water, which is a symbol of cleansing. But Jesus baptizes with the

Holy Spirit and fire. All true believers in Christ are Spirit-baptized and indwelt by the Holy Spirit upon conversion:

*"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor.12:13)*

The baptism of fire is a symbol of judgment upon the unrepentant. Christ has His winnowing fan in His hand. The wheat symbolizes the believers and the chaff symbolizes the unbelievers. Christ will gather His wheat into His barn "but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (verse 12). "Unquenchable fire" is a picture of the Lake of fire where the fires will never be quenched.

Jesus also came to John to be baptized by him. Jesus traveled approximately sixty miles from Galilee to the Jordan River. This shows how important it was to Him and how important it should be to us. Jesus was the spotless Lamb of God who never sinned (2 Cor. 5:21). But He wanted to be baptized in order to be identified with sinners for He would bear their sins (1 Peter 2:24).

Verses 16 and 17 is the first clear instance of the Trinity in the New Testament. Notice the three members of the God-Head present: The Son being baptized, the Holy Spirit descending in bodily form upon Jesus, and the Father in Heaven expressing His divine approval. The doctrine of the Trinity is taught throughout the Bible. It means that there is one God who eternally exists as three distinct Persons. Each member of the Trinity is a distinct person and fully God. There are not three gods but one God who exists as three Persons. Some references (2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; Gen. 1:26; Gen. 3:22; Isaiah 6:8). The Father is God (Phil. 1:2); Jesus is God (John 20:28); and the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4).

The Father in Heaven expressed His divine approval of His Son. See also as a reference (Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1). The Holy Spirit came upon Christ to prepare Him for ministry (Isaiah 61:1-3).

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