

Matthew

The Gospel of

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

LESSON THREE

MATTHEW 3

Day 1



Heavenly Father, teach me your ways, prepare my heart through your Spirit to understand your word and to see you revealed in Jesus my Savior.

- Read through chapter 3.
- Chapter 3 is an introduction to the ministry of Jesus. Take note of the ways God prepares Jesus and the people for Jesus' Messianic work.
- What is one truth in today's passage that moves your heart to praise, thanksgiving, confession, action or love for God?

Day 2: Matthew 3:1-6

Scholar's Note: *In those days* links chapter 3 with chapters 1 and 2 and refers to "the days of the Messiah, namely, the days appointed for fulfilling God's plan."¹

1. In one word, what was John the Baptist's message according to verse 2?

-And why did he bring this message?

Picture and Ponder: The “kingdom of heaven” is another theme throughout Matthew. Matthew uses the word “heaven” instead of “God” because he writes for a primarily Jewish audience and in Judaism God’s name is considered too holy to utter or even write. In the book *Sitting At the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*, Ann Spangler comments that Kingdom sounds “like a place or a government of some sort. But it really refers to an ancient sense of the word that describes the actions and dominion of a king—his reign and authority. But what exactly does it mean to say that God’s “kingdom” had arrived in Jesus’s ministry? It means that through Jesus, God was revealing his sovereignty. He was stepping into history and taking charge, defeating the gods of this world through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son.”²

Digging Deeper: In preparing the way for Jesus, John the Baptist called the people to repent. The following scriptures will help us to understand and show us what Biblical repentance is. What do you learn about repentance from these verses?

Psalm 51:4, 14 (David speaking to God) Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment... Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. (NIV 1984)

Psalm 78:34b ...they repented and sought God earnestly.

2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

2 Timothy 2:25b-26 ²⁵...God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

Scholar's Note: Repent- "turning from self and sin to God and grace..."³

Old Testament Ties

Isaiah 40:3 A voice cries, "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

In verse 3, Matthew quotes Isaiah who prophesied about a time when God would bring his people back from exile in Babylon and remove all obstacles on their pathway home. John, as the last Old Testament prophet, fulfills this prophecy by preparing people for the Messiah, who himself would be the path out of the exile of sin and home to God. Only through turning to Jesus in repentance can the obstacles of sin be removed from our hearts and the path be made straight.

*An interesting side note concerning Is. 40:3-The early church even called itself "the Way" on the basis of this verse (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22)."⁴

- How would the call for repentance (the straight path) prepare the way for the Messiah?

- How is this different than the mistaken viewpoint that says you must clean up your life before you come to God?

Scholar's Note: "John's food and clothing signified poverty and austerity...The garb evokes Elijah, another prophet called by God to declare judgment on Israel (cf. 2 Kings 1:8)."⁵

2. What kind of response did John's message get according to verse 5?

Picture and Ponder: At this time in history, there was an "upsurge of apocalyptic, messianic hope"⁶ among the Jewish people. There was enthusiastic expectancy and

hope that God would deliver them from their subjugation to the Romans, vindicating his people and establishing his righteous kingdom. Christopher Wright sets the scene we are reading about in Matthew so well. "So just imagine the stirring of hearts and quickening of pulses in Jewish homes and communities when, into this mixture of aspirations and hopes, dropped the message of John the Baptist, and then of Jesus himself: "The time is fulfilled! [what you have been waiting for as something future is now here and present]; the kingdom of God is at hand! [God is now acting to establish his reign in the midst of you]; so repent and believe the good news [urgent action is required of you now]".⁷



God thank you for stepping into our world through Jesus and making a way for us to turn from our sin and believe!

3. What steps do we see in verse 6 that were part of the call to repentance that John preached?



It is said that confession is good for the soul. But what an understatement that is! It is crucial for the soul! In 1 John 1:8, 9 we read,

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Confessing our sin and turning away from it and to God, through Jesus, brings us eternal and abundant life! The message John preached is still current today. God's kingdom is near and urgent action is required of you—repent and believe!

- ❖ If you have never acknowledged to God that you are a sinner, you can confess your sins right now, turn away from sin and turn to Jesus to save you. Ask him to forgive you and he will cleanse you from all your sin. Submit your life to his reign and find peace and joy that you were created for.
- ❖ As a believer, confessing our sin is part of the rhythm of life with God. How do you practice this rhythm in your life with God? How do you want to grow in this area?

- ❖ Sometimes we recognize sin in our lives, but like many things, we procrastinate and put off confessing it to God, thinking I'll deal with it later. What unconfessed sin are you carrying in your life now? Ask God to help you resolve to make a practice of confessing your sin the moment you are aware of it.
- ❖ Do you ever confess your sins to anyone else besides God? With discernment, how might this be beneficial in your spiritual life?

For Discussion: When dealing with our sin, why does a spirit of self-condemnation or on the opposite end of the spectrum, a cavalier attitude, not reflect true grace? What do these attitudes reveal?



Jesus, thank you for bearing every one of my sins- past and future, when you died on the cross. You paid the ultimate price so that I can be free from the burden of my sin. What a wonderful Savior!

Picture and Ponder: If repentance is our way of life, we search for and then forsake our sins one by one, as the Spirit gives us grace to recognize them."⁸

Day 3: Matthew 3:7-10

Scholar's Note: Pharisees- "[The Pharisees] were closely connected to the oral tradition or official interpretation of the Torah for that day. They were teachers of the law and advocated a scrupulous observance of purity and piety regulations. They saw themselves as "building a fence around the law" so as to help the common people keep its rules,..."⁹

Sadducees- Members of the Sadducees came primarily from the ruling priestly and aristocratic classes. They controlled the temple worship. Many people resented them for fattening their purses and securing their position by collaborating with the Romans. Unlike the Pharisees, they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and they considered only the Written Torah as binding. ¹⁰

4. What will true repentance look like according to verse 8?

Digging Deeper: Repentance is a turning away from sin and to God—a complete about face from our own natural way of living that can only be accomplished by the Spirit of God. Fruit is proof of spiritual life; it is evidence that the Spirit of God lives in you. Galatians tells us what the fruit is that bears witness to true repentance. Underline the phrase that describes turning away from sin and circle the phrase that portrays turning to God.

Galatians 5:22-24 says, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.*



If we see a lack of fruit in our life the temptation is to try harder and to be better. But when Jesus was speaking about bearing fruit, he didn't tell us to try harder. In John 15:5 Jesus says,

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Abiding in Jesus is the source of the growth of fruit in our lives. So don't waste energy trying harder to be better. Put your energy into abiding in Jesus.

- ❖ To abide means: to remain; continue; stay. How will you abide with Jesus throughout your day?

- ❖ Jesus also said in John 15:2, *Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.* Pruning is painful, but it produces more fruit. What are the ways God has pruned you or is pruning you?

- ❖ It is so important in our broken and dark world that followers of Jesus stand out in stark contrast to the hatred, arrogance and divisiveness of this world. Are you recognizable by your fruit or have you been absorbed into the world's

thinking and actions? Spend some time in prayer asking God to give you the longing to abide in Jesus moment by moment and to empower you to be fruitful for his kingdom.

5. Why did the religious leaders presume they would escape the coming wrath of God according to verse 9? What were they putting their trust in?

-Are there ways you presume upon God's grace?



Lord, forgive me for presuming on your grace by not always taking sin in my life seriously, for taking your grace for granted.

6. Why is repentance urgent according to verse 10?

-Do you live with this sense of urgency?

Day 4: Matthew 3:11-12

7. What contrasts does John make between he and Jesus in verse 11?

John

Jesus

Scholar's Note: "The metaphor [in verse 11] ...stems from the rabbi/disciple relationship. The dirt on the feet was unclean, and only non-Hebrew slaves took off or "carried" the master's sandals. Disciples acted virtually as slaves in most aspects, but they were not required to take off the master's sandals (b. Ketub. 96a). Therefore, John is saying, "I'm not even worthy to be his slave." ¹¹



Jesus, I am so unworthy of you. Thank you for the undeserved privilege of being yours and being allowed to serve you! Help me point away from myself and to you. May you be exalted in my life by my words and actions.

Scholar's Note: "Spirit baptism is the life-changing work of God wrought in one's heart. It simply means conversion."¹²

Digging Deeper: In verse 11, *Spirit and fire* are thought to be one idea represented by two words, more like, Spirit-fire. How do these verses in Acts connect spirit and fire?

Acts 2:1-4a When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...

What other symbolism could fire include, as in these verses in Malachi?

Malachi 3:1-3 "Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies.² "But who will be able to endure it when he comes? Who will be able to stand and face him when he appears? For he will be like a blazing fire that refines metal, or like a strong soap that bleaches clothes.³ He will sit like a refiner of silver, burning away the dross. He will purify the Levites, refining them like gold and silver, so that they may once again offer acceptable sacrifices to the LORD. (NLT)

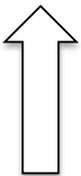
8. Verse 12 is basically a parable. Draw a line connecting the symbols.

Winnowing fork	Unbelievers
Wheat	Hell
Chaff	Believers
Unquenchable fire	Judgment

Day 5: Matthew 3:13-17

9. What was Jesus' purpose in coming to John according to verse 13?
10. What is John saying about himself and about Jesus when he objects to baptizing Jesus?
11. Why did Jesus say John should baptize him? (v.15)
12. Jesus' baptism *fulfilled all righteousness*. Jesus came to earth and obeyed God perfectly in every way and then he offered us his perfect record of righteousness. What did Jesus do perfectly for us, in being baptized by John?

-In what way does Jesus identify with us when he was baptized?



Jesus, what grace, what underserved favor, you poured out on me when you gave me your perfect record! I cannot even repent perfectly, but you did it for me so that God accepts me because of you. Thank you Jesus!

13. How is the Trinity acting together in verses 16-17?

14. God had not spoken to his people in almost 400 years. Now at the inauguration of Jesus' ministry and the new covenant age, what did he reveal to people? (v.17)

Old Testament Ties

This is my beloved Son comes from the Messianic Psalm 2 about the anointing of King David.

Psalm 2:6-7a "As for me I have set my King on Zion my holy hill." I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, You are my Son...

With whom I am well pleased is from Isaiah 42

Isaiah 42:1 Behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him...

The Holy Spirit descending on Jesus anoints Jesus as the eternal King of kings descended from David; and God's announcement from heaven confirms Jesus as his chosen and beloved servant who brings him pleasure. Jesus is the Servant King.

- How does Jesus' example of being a servant king challenge you?



Jesus, the divine Son of God, allowed John to baptize him out of obedience to his Father. He was doing what God required of human beings; and even though Jesus was perfect and didn't need to repent, he fulfilled all righteousness for our sake, so that he could give his record of perfect obedience to all who come to him. As Jesus humbled himself in obedience to the Father, the Father exalted him to those who

were watching, revealing that Jesus was his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased. How full Jesus' heart must have been to hear God's delight in him!

- ❖ If you have given your life to Jesus, you are in Christ and God delights in you too! Take a moment and let that wash over you.
- ❖ Ask God to instill in you a consuming desire to obey him like Jesus did.

15. Preparing for the ministry of Jesus is a theme running through this chapter. How can we, as followers of Jesus, help prepare the way for him in the lives of others? How did God prepare you to receive Jesus?

One Thing: Look back over this week's study. Pick one thing that God impressed on you, convicted you about, or something new that you learned and write it here. How will this truth impact the way you think and act?

¹ Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1)(Kindle Locations 2847-2848). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

² Spangler, Ann. Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus (pp. 197-198). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

³ O'Donnell, Douglas Sean. Matthew (Preaching the Word) (p. 69). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Osborne, Grant R. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1) (Kindle Locations 2905-2906). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

⁵ Doriani, Daniel M.. Matthew (Reformed Expository Commentaries) (p. 53). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Wright, Christopher. Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament. Inter Varsity Press. Second Edition, 2014

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Doriani, Daniel M.. Matthew (Reformed Expository Commentaries) (p. 55). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁹ Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1) (Kindle Locations 2948-2951). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ Spangler, Ann. Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus (p. 268). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

¹¹ Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1) (Kindle Locations 3018-3021). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

¹² O'Donnell, Douglas Sean. Matthew (Preaching the Word) (p. 77). Crossway. Kindle Edition.