

Matthew's Gospel—Chapter 3

Part 1

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Do only the ***

John the Baptist Prepares the Way: Matt 3:1-12:

1. RSV Matthew 3:1: “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea...” John the Baptist has chosen to preach from the Wilderness. Why? What is the significance of this?
 - a. Read Ex 13:18, Ex 14:11 and Jer 2:6: What big event from the past was the Wilderness associated with?
 - b. Read Jer 9:11-14: Jeremiah was writing during the Babylonian exile. What does this describe as becoming a wilderness?
 - c. Hos 2:13-20: What is the purpose of the wilderness? What does God use it for?

2. Mat 3:2 RSV: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
 - a. ***Repent: The Greek word for this is *metanoein* which means, “change your way of thinking.” In regard to the Kingdom of God and the way it would come, do you think any of the Jews had to change their way of thinking? Or their ways of behaving? How?
 - b. Kingdom of Heaven:
 - 1) Read Mark’s version of this passage in Mk 1:15 and Luke’s in Lk 4:43. What word is different in Matthew’s version and why?
 - 2) ***The Greek word for Kingdom is *basileia*. This can be translated as reign or rule. We often think of the word Kingdom as a place. If the phrase “kingdom of heaven” means “rule/reign of heaven” how does this change your understanding of this?
 - c. “Is at hand”: We will talk more about the implications of this phrase regarding the kingdom in a later lesson.

3. *****Matthew says that John the Baptist was spoken of by Isaiah the Prophet. Read Isaiah 40:1-11.**
- ***This was written by Isaiah the Prophet when the Jews were exiled into Babylon in 586 BC. What is this passage saying to the Jews of the time of the exile?**
 - ***Why does Matthew quote this passage from Isaiah? How does it relate to what is happening in Matthew?**
4. *****Is there any significance to what John is wearing?**
- ***Look up 2 Kings 1:8. Who is this passage about?**
 - ***Look up Malachi 4:1-6: Does this shed any more light on Matthew 3? Are there other images here that relate to Matthew 3:7-12? What does Malachi say will happen on the “great and terrible day of the Lord?”**
5. **Who is John the Baptist?**
- ***What does Jesus say about John? Read Matthew 11.**
 - To make things puzzling, read John 1:19-23. What does this say?**
6. ^{RSV} **Matthew 3:7: “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood (*gennema*) of vipers (*echidna*)! Who warned (to show, indicate, point out, *hupodeiknumi* you to flee (*pheugo*) from the wrath to come?’”**
- Where else is “Brood of Vipers” used in Matthew’s Gospel?**
 - Do a search on the phrase in Biblegateway.com and filter it for Matthew’s Gospel. Who else uses this phrase for the Pharisees?

2) One of these passages mentions heart and mouth. Do a search on the two words heart and mouth (enter “heart mouth” and it will find a passage that has both words in one verse) in Biblegateway.com and filter it for Matthew’s Gospel. Write that passage here:

3) ***What is John’s opinion of the Pharisees and Sadducees? What might John be contrasting the phrase “Offspring of Vipers” with? (hint: verse 9).

b. “Wrath (*orge*) to come.” (Mt 3:7):

1) Look up the word wrath in the Gospel of Matthew in Biblegateway. Can you find it?

2) Let’s go to the Old Testament to see how the word “wrath” is used. Look up the following passages where the word **“wrath” (*orge*)**, occurs and identify who the agent, victim and purpose of the wrath is in each: Ex 15:7,10; Isaiah 10:5; Isaiah 42:24-25; Isaiah 59:1,15-60:1; Jer 21:3-6:

3) ***After reading all the previous passages like Isaiah 42:24-25, what might be the meaning of the “wrath to come?”

c. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Mt 3:7):

1) ***What is John implying with this statement? What is John saying to the Pharisees and Sadducees?

2) John thinks that a period of wrath is coming. What does John think is the means by which one avoids this “wrath?”

3) What has John said is also coming (check Mt 3:2)? How is this related?

7. ***RSV Mat 3:8: “Bear fruit that befits repentance.”

a. ***Look up these passages in Matthew that contain the word “fruit” and write down how they relate: Mat 7:15-21; Mat 13:3-8 (in verse 8, the greek word for grain is fruit):

b. ***Does John 15:1-8 add anything to this?

8. ***RSV Matthew 3:10: “Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

a. ***Look up some places where the word “tree” is used. What do the following passages say that the image of a tree represents?: Psalm 1, Isaiah 10:16-21; Jer 11:13-17; Ez 17:22-24:

b. ***Matthew 21:19-21;33-46 speaks of a tree and of fruit. Read this. How does it relate to Matthew 3?

c. ***After what you have read, what then does it mean to say: “Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

9. *****RSV Matthew 3:12: “His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the granary...”**

a. ***One gathers wheat at a **harvest**. “His winnowing fork is in his hand”—this is present tense. When does the harvest occur? Is it happening at present or is it yet to happen? Read the following reference in Matthew where the word **harvest** occurs: Mat 13:36-43. What does this say about when the **harvest** occurs?

10. RSV Mat 3:11: “...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with Fire.” The word baptize literally means, “to immerse.”
- a. What does this baptizing with the Holy Spirit and with fire mean? Is there a difference between the Holy Spirit and the fire? Can you relate it to the wheat and the chaff? But, first look up the word fire in Matthew to see how it is used: Mt 5:22; Mt 18:8-9; Mt 25:41: