

Message #5**Matthew 3:1-17**

When we come to Matthew 3, an odd sort of man shows up who announces the arrival of a Divine person. This prophet is the forerunner of Jesus Christ who has the job of introducing Him to Israel, and ultimately the world.

JOHN THE BAPTIST'S JOB WAS TO PREPARE THE NATION ISRAEL TO MEET JESUS CHRIST, THE KING WHO COULD USHER IN ISRAEL'S KINGDOM, AND TO INTRODUCE THE NATION TO JESUS CHRIST.

There is a 30-year gap in the life of Christ between Matthew 2 and Matthew 3. The purpose of Matthew is not to show what Christ did and what toys He played with; it is to show He is King. Therefore we jump from chapters 1-2, which establish He is King, to chapter 3 which introduces Him as King. It is now time for Jesus Christ to be introduced to Israel as her King and the prophet who was given this responsibility was John, who is called by Jesus for this reason, the greatest O.T. prophet (Matt. 11:9-11).

PART #1 – The ministry of John. 3:1-4

(Fact #1) - John came to baptize Israel. 3:1a

The peculiar thing that characterized John's ministry was the fact he baptized Jewish people in the Jordan River. John's baptism is in no way related to "believer's baptism" and as Dr. Gabelien observed: "Christian baptism is not taught in the third chapter of Matthew. How much confusion has resulted from giving it such a meaning, lacing believers into sad legalism" (p. 68). John's baptism was a baptism of repentance in which Jewish people confessed their sins and publicly acknowledged they needed a King/Savior to save them from their sins (Matt. 3:6-8; Luke 3:3) so they could enter the Kingdom which featured the reign of a righteous King.

(Fact #2) - John came to preach to Israel. 3:1b-2

Message #1 - Israel needed to repent. 3:2a

The particular word "repent" is a Greek word which means Israel needed to change her thinking, change her mind concerning what would enable her to inherit the Kingdom. Because Jews were sinners, they did not have the righteousness necessary to enter the Kingdom. Now the term "repent" is not one we are challenged to use in the Grace Age when approaching unbelievers and presenting to them the Gospel. The Gospel of grace uses the verb "believe." In fact, the term repent, when applied to the Grace Age, is more aimed at the believer (Rev. 2-3).

Message #2 - The Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. 3:2b

The Greek literally reads—"the kingdom of the Heavens" is at hand or is near. This is the first of 32 uses of this phrase which is only found in the book of Matthew.

The verb “is at hand” is perfect, active, indicative, which means this—it is a fact that there has been a point of time in the past in which the Heavenly King did arrive (about 30 years prior to this) and He continually is here and near right now. Now please understand this—“the Kingdom of the Heavens” is not the Church. Now the Jews loved message #2—the kingdom of heaven is at hand but they hated message #1—the nation needed to repent.

(Fact #3) - John came authorized by God. **3:3**

It was clearly predicted in the O.T. by both Isaiah (Is. 40:3) and by Malachi (Mal. 3:1) that before Israel’s King and Messiah would arrive, a forerunner would come just before Him and announce Him to Israel.

(Fact #4) - John came unique in his look and diet. **3:4**

John was a rough, tough outdoorsman who would look you in the eye and tell you the truth.

PART #2 – The response of the people to John. **3:5-7a**

The response to John’s ministry is the kind of response most ministers hope for—many people. But along with the common people, **verse 7** says that many Pharisees and Sadducees were also coming to be baptized by John. The Pharisees were rigid, religious separatists and legalists. The Sadducees were unbelieving rationalists who denied supernatural things God did. You and I can be certain of this—whenever and wherever God is at work—religious frauds will show up.

PART #3 – The response of John to the Pharisees and Sadducees. **3:7-12**

(Point #1) - These religious leaders are vipers. **3:7a**

(Point #2) - These religious leaders are heading to wrath. **3:7b**

(Point #3) - These religious leaders needed to repent. **3:8-9**

(Point #4) - Those who do not get God’s righteousness are already judged and will be burned.
3:10

(Point #5) - John’s water baptism is not the baptism that can save you. **3:11**

What those who do not understand Matthew fail to realize is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at Christ’s first coming (Acts 1:5) and the baptism of fire occurs at Christ’s second coming (II Thess. 1:7).

(Point #6) - Jesus will eventually sift out all phonies and burn them in unquenchable fire. **3:12**

PART #4 – The response of John to Jesus. **3:13-15**

Verse 15 makes it clear that Jesus permitted John to do this to “fulfill all righteousness.” What this means is that Christ was the only one who could satisfy all the righteous demands of God and identify with sinners in order to save them.

PART #5– The baptism of Jesus. **3:16-17**

As soon as Christ came up out of the water, the heavens opened. He is the only One who can give access to the heavens and the entire Trinity testified of this reality. Here was Israel's King. Here was Israel's Savior. Here was Israel's Messiah. Here is the only One who can save from sin!