

Proclaimed In Baptism

Text: Matthew 3:1-6; 11-17

INTRO: In our last lesson we had the visit by the Magi and the flight into Egypt and the return of Joseph and Mary and Jesus to Galilee. In Matthew 3 we have the account of the preaching of John the Baptist. The Gospel of Mark starts out with the events in today's lesson while Luke 3 & John 1 mention the events.

Between the writing of the Book of Malachi and today's lesson about 400 years have elapsed. This is called the "silent years," a misnomer because the events are foretold in the 11th chapter of Daniel. It is true that there was not a prophet of God or a word of the Lord during this time. The NKJV Study Bible Notes tell us:

As Christ's forerunner, **John the Baptist** preceded the Lord Jesus in birth, (**he is 5 months older than Jesus**) ministry, and death. Luke describes John's birth (see Luke 1), but Matthew jumps directly into the account of John's proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of heaven. John is called "the Baptist" because he baptized people. Unlike the common practice of proselytes and Jews administering ceremonial cleansings to themselves, John baptized those who came to him professing repentance and identifying with his message.

I. FORERUNNER COMES (Matthew 3:1-6)

A. Identity, Message, Lifestyle (vv. 1-4)

- **Matthew 3:1** "In those days." The days prior to Jesus' ministry. Luke 3:23 tells us that Jesus was about 30 yrs old. About 3 ½ years prior to His death and Resurrection.
- **"The Desert of Judea."** Read on p. 159 (Teacher's Book) the paragraph beginning "The phrase preaching in the Desert of Judea..." When it says a desert place—it was not way out in the sticks, a long way from Jerusalem. It was a place that was not inhabited, a place easy to get to it seems.
- **John came preaching-- Verse 3** takes us back to Is 40:3 (More in a moment). As we have said many times, Matthew especially points his readers back to the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the Messiah because He fulfills the OT prophecies about the promised Messiah.

B. Matthew 3:2 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' John's is a message of repentance. Dr. Warren Wiersbe writes: John's preaching centered on repentance and the kingdom of heaven. The word *repent* means "to change one's mind and act on that change." **Also, use the definition on p. 160 under v 2**

Matthew 3:2 (from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary

For the kingdom of heaven is at hand. This sublime phrase [], used in none of the other Gospels, occurs in this peculiarly Jewish Gospel nearly 30 times; and being suggested by

Daniel's grand vision of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days, to receive His Investiture in a world-wide kingdom (Dan 7:13-14), it was fitted at once both to meet the national expectations and to turn them into the right channel. A kingdom for which repentance was the proper preparation behooved to be essentially spiritual. Deliverance from sin, the great blessing of Christ's kingdom (Matt 1:21), can be valued by those only to whom sin is a burden (Matt 9:12). John's great work, accordingly, was to awaken this feeling, and hold out the hope of a speedy and precious remedy.

- **Matthew 3:3** This verse points us back to Isaiah 40:3—a messianic prophecy. In the ancient world there was a person called a “herald.” He went ahead of the coming of the king—
- **Not only** is the coming of a king heralded, the way is prepared. Wiersbe writes “As roads were repaired, smoothed, straightened, and leveled before a king came, so John was preparing a spiritual road for the Messiah before His arrival. The quotation is from Isa. 40:3, where the prophet announces the need to prepare a highway for the return of the Jewish exiles from captivity to their homeland, Israel.
- **Matthew 3:4** This verse tells up of John’s wardrobe and diet. Matthew 3:4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair [that is, woven of it] and a leather girdle about his loins}-the prophetic dress of Elijah (2 Kings 1:8; and see Zech 13:4). And his meat was locusts - the great well-known eastern locust, a food of the poor (Lev 11:22). And wild honey - made by wild bees (1 Sam 14:25-26). This dress and diet, with the shrill cry in the wilderness, would recall the stern days of Elijah. **(from Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary,** Read last line under v. 4 in Teacher’s book on page 160.

B. Scope, Confession, Baptism (vs. 5-6) All kinds of people came to hear John preach and to watch the great baptismal services he conducted. Many publicans and sinners came in sincere humility (Matt. 21:31-32), but the religious leaders refused to submit. They thought that they were good enough to please God; yet John called them a “generation of vipers.” Jesus used the same language when He dealt with this self-righteous crowd (Matt. 12:34; 23:33; John 8:44).

- **Many** came out, heard the message, confessed their sin and were baptized by John. Repentance not mentioned in vs 5 & 6—but we know it was preached (v. 11) This was a baptism unto a repentance; this is not the same as baptism under the New Covenant. John and Jesus both lived and died under the Old Covenant. The Church did not start until the first Pentecost after Christ’s death and resurrection. This baptism could not save one eternally.

Our printed text jumps to vs 11-17

II. FORERUNNER PREDICTS (Matthew 3:11-12)

A. WHO is coming (vs. 11) The call of John is for people to repent, or turn from their sins. Those who do so then are called on to make a public demonstration of their faith. Today, we do the same—we hear the Gospel, we, by faith, respond to the Gospel, repenting, confessing our sins and being baptized. Today we are saved by grace through faith in baptism for

good works. These people did not do what we do—we live on the other side of the Cross.

B. What He Will Do (v. 11c-12) John tells his hearers what Jesus will do—it looks forward to the Church age, not an event that took place in Jesus' life here on the earth—Jesus said “I will build My Church...(Matt 16:18). The main difference in the baptism of John with the baptism of Jesus that we undergo is the giving of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38). Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit was not given until He left us to go back to Heaven. Paul said that unless we have the Spirit we are not Christians. We receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit (the Holy Spirit Himself) only after we have repented and have submitted to Baptism (forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit come after baptism.)

III. Forerunner Surpassed (Matthew 3:13-17)

A. Baptism by John (vs. 13-15)

- Jesus was not baptized because He was a repentant sinner. Even John tried to stop Jesus, but the Lord knew it was His Father's will. Why was Jesus baptized? First, His baptism gave approval to John's ministry. Second, He identified Himself with publicans and sinners, the very people He came to save. But mainly, His baptism pictured His future baptism on the cross (Matt. 20:22; Luke 12:50) when all the “waves and billows” of God's judgment would go over Him (Ps. 42:7; Jonah 2:3). Thus, John the Baptist bore witness to Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and also as the Lamb of God (John 1:29). Because of John's witness, many sinners trusted Jesus Christ (John 10:39-42)

B. Confirmation by God (vs 16-17) This is one of only a few places in the NT that we see all 3 members of the Godhead present. We see it also in the announcement to Mary concerning the promised birth.

- “he comes up out of the water (Immersion) – We are given, through the eyes of Jesus, a glimpse of the Throne Room of heaven (John also saw that in Rev. 4-6) Another instance is at the martyrdom of Stephen.
- **Matthew 3:17** “This My beloved Son.” On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James and John would hear the same thing accompanied by “hear Ye Him.”

Conclusion.