

Day 1

*Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer
Romans 12:12*

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Kipped Card Project

Sunday Morning Crèche

Matthew Study 3 (1-Feb-2017) : Matthew 3:1-17 “?”

Opening Question:

This term we're looking at the NT book "Matthew"

Recap what we have learned so far about Matthew

- Genealogy of Jesus
- Angel foretold Jesus' birth to Joseph
- The Magi visit Jesus
- Joseph and Mary escape to Egypt
- Herod kills all boys in Bethlehem
- Joseph/Mary go to Nazareth

Read Matthew 3:1-17

1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"

4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "**You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.**

11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with[c] the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The Baptism of Jesus

13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Q: How soon after Matthew 2 does this section start? How much time has passed since the end of Matthew 2?

A: seems like about 30 years. So Matthew isn't telling us anything about Jesus' childhood and adolescence

Q: What do we know of John (the Baptist) from here, and anything else we might remember from other bits of the New Testament?

A: Born to elderly couple Zechariah and Elizabeth, both of priestly families (Luke 1:5-25; 39-80). Probably around 6/5BC a few months before Jesus.

He was the link man between the Old Testament line of prophets and the coming of the New Age with Jesus

(Luke 16:16).

His message was of repentance

He was imprisoned for challenging the immorality of Herod Antipas, tetrarch or ruler of Galilee, for committing adultery with his brother's sister Herodias and marrying her.

Herodias' daughter danced before Herod Antipas. It pleased him so he offered whatever she wanted. Her mother got her to ask for John's head.

John the Baptist is mentioned by Jewish historian Josephus

Q: Clive described John the Baptist as "the last of the prophets". What is a "prophet"?

A: *Someone who acts as a mouthpiece for God*

Q: John calls people to "repent" (v2). What does "repent" mean?

A: *It is more than simply an "intellectual change of mind" or "saying sorry" or remorse:*

It means a radical reorientation and transformation of the entire person.

It affects the mind (the intellectual centre),

- the will or conscience (the moral centre),*
- the heart (the emotional centre) and*
- the body (where we live out the "fruits of repentance")*

I think it means honestly wishing that you'd not done the things that were wrong, and honestly resolving not to repeat those mistakes. True repentance leads to change of behaviour

Q: What has repentance to do with the confession of sins (v6)?

A: *Presumably, in order to repent, you have to be aware of what you're repenting of. What does "confession" mean? - coming clean: perhaps with yourself as much as any external confessor*

Q: What is meant by "the Kingdom of Heaven" (v2)?

A: *Old Testament expectation of a divine invitation which would establish justice, crush the opposition and renew the universe.*

The coming Kingdom will involve not just the rule of God, but His judgement.

Q: When exactly does the kingdom of heaven begin?

A: *Matthew 12:28 - It has come as he is demonstrating by means of his miracles and his teaching.*

It came at his death and resurrection. And it will come fully at the end of the Age.

Q: Jerusalem to the river Jordan is just over 20 miles. What made the Pharisees and Sadducees walk that far (7)?

A: *Obviously John caused quite a stir. They may have seen him as a rival. Some may have been genuine seekers as Pharisees were among the first Christians in Acts.*

Q: Who are the pharisees? Who are the Sadducees?

A: *Pharisees with teachers of the law and were associated with the synagogues and common people. Sadducees were the priests of the temple, the Jewish aristocracy, who sided with Rome.*

Q: Why does John single out the Pharisees and Sadducees for rebuke? What does 'We have Abraham as our father' mean?

A: *They thought that simply being Jewish (sons of Abraham) would mean they'd be okay on the Day of the Lord (9). But it's not enough just to put down "Christian" on the census form. They thought "good works" impressed God rather than a change of heart, mind, will, life, that then "produced fruit" in keeping with repentance.*

Q: What does "raise up children of Abraham mean"? (9)

A: *Those who, like Abraham (Genesis 12 ff) were justified by faith in God rather than by following Jewish ritual laws. So the Kingdom is open for Gentiles to open to enter. And the axe is starting to fall on Jews who don't produce "good fruit" as evidence of their genuine repentance.*

Q: What is the difference that John points out in v11 between what he does and what Jesus does?

A: *Baptism in water is an external Mark. Jesus' baptism in the Holy Spirit is an inward reality. The former is an external washing agent. The latter an internal purifying and refining agent i.e. the Holy Spirit.*

Q: The Messiah's coming will separate the grain from chaff. Can you remember Clive talking about the image here of what a farmer does?

A: *Winnowing fork tosses both grain and chaff into the air
The chaff is blown away
The heavier grain fell to be gathered from the ground
The scattered chaff was swept up and burned
The grain was gathered from the floor and stored securely*

This is not just a metaphor: a fearful reality underlies the Messiah's separation. Are we ready for the reality?

Q: Why was John reluctant to baptise Jesus?

A: *John was related to Jesus and John would have known from his parents about the virgin conception. He'd also have been aware of Jesus' life and Scriptural knowledge. (Luke 2:41-52). John was a humble man; conscious of his cousin, he could not detect any sin in Jesus which Jesus needed to repent of and confess. So John thought Jesus should baptise him. Matthew doesn't tell us when John perceived Jesus to be the Messiah. Matthew focuses on Jesus sinlessness and the Father's testimony.*

Q: Baptism appears to be an outward sign of repentance. Why did Jesus want to be baptised at all (and when John wanted Jesus to baptise **him**)?

A: *Jesus says "it is proper" but what does that mean?*

- *this marks the anointing of Jesus (when the Holy Spirit comes to Jesus in a special way) - we may not understand exactly what's going on here but have to assume it's very significant.*
- *Proof to John and others of who Jesus was*
- *fulfilment of prefiguring event in 1 Samuel 16:1-13*
- *serves as a gesture of humility and submission of Jesus to God and the ministry of John the Baptist - public sign that Jesus is committed to the plan that God has made*
- *read Matt 28:19. Jesus asks all who follow him to be baptised (Matt 28:19). Jesus did not ask us to do something that he didn't do himself. Jesus wants to be baptised because it sets an example for his followers, and endorses John's message*

Q: Why did John baptise Jesus - why couldn't he christen him? What's the difference?

A: *christening is an English word that covers the baptism and naming of infants; sometimes terms get confused now though.*

Q: What is the significance of what the voice says?

A: *Confirms to those present that Jesus is God's son*

v17 combines quotes from two OT passages:

- *Isaiah 42:1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my Chosen One in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit upon him".*
- *Psalm 2:7 "He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father."*

These passages have special significance to a Jewish audience:

The Isaiah quote is from one of the "servant songs" in Isaiah. From Wikipedia:

The songs are four poems written about a certain "servant of YHWH." God calls the servant to lead the nations, but the servant is horribly abused among them. In the end, he is rewarded.

Psalm 2 is interpreted as referring to King David, and also the future Messiah who will restore Israel to its former glory.

So (and this would be more obvious to someone raised in the Jewish tradition) God is presenting Jesus as the "suffering servant", the Davidic Messiah, and the son of God.

Q: What effects do the outpouring of the Holy Spirit have on Jesus? What changes does it make?

A: *Doesn't change Jesus' status - but it **identifies** him as the promised servant and son of God and marks the start of his public ministry*

Takeaway

- we are called to **repent** - turn away from past sins and change our future behaviour
- putting down "Christian" on the census form is not enough
- baptism is an outward sign of submission and dedication to God
- Jesus doesn't call us to do anything that he wouldn't do himself