

Matthew 3

Chapter 3 is the Passover chapter in Jesus identification with Israel. John the Baptist is a Moses figure calling people out of captivity. The call is for those who are willing to walk in the light and humbly confess their sins. Jesus, like Moses will define the Law and lead his people to the promised land of the Kingdom.

“¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. ⁴ When he puts forth all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ And a stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” **John 10:1-5**

D. His ambassador (3:1–4:11) Jn.10:1-6

1. He identifies the true sheep (3:1-12)

a. Their confession (3:1-6)

¹ Now in those days John the Baptist *came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³ For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, " *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ' Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight!'*" ⁴ Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; ⁶ and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

- John's purpose is to call out from Israel a remnant that has a heart for the Kingdom and the King. The emphasis on the discipline of captivity in chapter one is the context for John's call for humble repentance.
- John's dress and manner show the posture of repentance that excelled Jews were to take.
- Water baptism as practiced here is not taught in the Old Testament although it closely resembled the water purification rituals of the temple where people and things were ceremonially cleansed with water. Water baptism of individuals had become a part of the initiation of Gentiles into the family of the Covenant people, Israel.
- The baptism in this chapter is unique to Jesus' relationship with Israel and not to be confused with Christian baptism which is practiced in Acts.

b. Their conduct (3:7-12)

⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; ⁹ and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰ "And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree

therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 "And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

- John's commentary on the significance of his baptism and the repentance that it represents is triggered by those who have the form (pride of traditional identification with Abraham) but not the repentance that is a part of the true spiritual wheat. Jesus' coming is described as a ministry of Israel's God in separating the wheat from the chaff. One will receive the Spirit and the other will receive the wrath of a judgment of fire.
- It is interesting to note that the religious leaders of Israel were not present at the birth of Jesus but were interested in the coming kingdom.
- The baptism of John was viewed as Passover experience, separating the truly repentant from those who would see God's judgment.
- Repentance consists of more than outward signs of identification with a new group.
- There are two distinct water baptism's that should not be confused.

2. He identifies the true shepherd (3:13-17)

a. He is authenticated by the prophet (3:13-14)

13 Then Jesus *arrived from Galilee at the Jordan {coming} to John, to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"

- Jesus' baptism is unique and it represents His identity with the people of Israel that he came to save.

b. He is associated with the sheep (3:15)

15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit {it} at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he *permitted Him.

- Jesus makes it clear that righteousness is not so much a matter of living a perfect (sinless) life as it is, walking in the light (being honest with oneself and God) about the truth of our condition.

c. He is anointed with the Spirit (3:16)

16 And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, {and} coming upon Him,

- This event marks the official beginning of Jesus public ministry.
- The coming of the Spirit is best understood as an empowerment for service in the same way that the prophets of the Old Testament were anointed for ministry.

d. He is approved by the Father (3:17)

17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

- The voice of the Father is a dramatic endorsement of Jesus leaving no doubt that Jesus' story is working as planned.

INSIGHTS AND LESSONS FROM THIS CHAPTER

- **IN THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF MATTHEW WE WILL SEE JESUS AS A SHEPHERD WHO IDENTIFIES WITH HIS PEOPLE, ISRAEL AND WITH US. HE IS THE HIGH PRIEST WHO SEEKS TO SHARE OUR WEAKNESS AND COMFORT US IN OUR PILGRIMAGE. IN DOING SO, HE INVITES OUR HONEST ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF OUR NEEDINESS AND OUR WILLINGNESS TO EMPATHIZE WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**
- **A QUESTION THAT WE MUST ANSWER IS THIS – ARE WE WILLING TO BE HONEST WITH OURSELVES CONCERNING OUR NEED TO REPENT?**