

Matthew Chapters 3-4 – Pre-Ministry Testimony of Jesus – Part 2

Review

Matthew begins with the genealogy and the birth of Jesus the Messiah focusing upon the line of Joseph and how Jesus' birth was foretold in Scripture. Matthew 2 is about His early life. The emphasis is still not on the words or actions of Jesus Himself, but on the circumstances and actions of others that demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah.

In Matthew 3:1-12, we are introduced to John the Baptizer. Context is very important when coming into this section. We must remember that John is a well-known figure throughout Israel and the diaspora – the dispersed Jews in Gentile regions. Introducing John at this time is consistent with all the accounts of Jesus: Mark 1, Luke 3, John 1.

John was regarded universally as a prophet and his testimony, message, and the One to whom he points are very compelling evidence that Jesus is the Messiah. The implication of the four accounts is that without John the Baptizer's testimony, the messianic claim for Jesus is incomplete.

Why is John so important? In order to understand that, we need to remember Elijah. Elijah was a great prophet in 1 Kings 17-22; 2 Kings 1-2. He was taken up to heaven and God gave his mantle to Elisha.

In Malachi 4:5, the prophet reiterates the clearing of the way for the Lord from Isaiah 40:3-5, now identifying that the one who comes will be in the spirit of Elijah. The reference to his attire is represented in 2 Kings 1:8 as being the same vein as Elijah. His diet demonstrates that he had no luxury in this life and his resources were from the Lord only.

The baptism of John was to prepare Israel for their Messiah King. His baptism and message were not about reconciliation before God as individuals but a national preparation. They need to change their minds because the Messiah and His Kingdom are at hand. Israel was implored to reconsider, change their mind, realize their error, and prepare for their Messiah.

The Messiah's objective was to come, be accepted as the suffering servant, raise from the dead in His glory, and be accepted as the King; then the Messiah would judge (destroy the enemies of God and Israel) and save the righteous into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The preparation of Israel for the Kingdom of Heaven was for a real earth-bound kingdom. This is not a referent to a spiritual kingdom. This is a promise to restore Israel to full prominence and to have all the kingdoms be subject to Israel.

What is the baptism of John?

John did use water, immersing them in his teaching and immersing them into water. We need to observe into what they are being immersed. This is an immersion in water, why? Is getting wet and immersed in water accomplishing anything in John's ministry? Or is the reality that of *metanoia*?

This water baptism seems to be ritualistic, having the person who is immersed into water being identified with John's call to repentance. The message of John the baptizer was not to only believe differently but also to do the things worthy of that change of mind (bear fruit). Without both of these, the person would be cut down, destroyed, and left out of the Kingdom of Heaven.

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The Baptism of Jesus

Read Matthew 3:13-17

Three points we need to observe:

1. Emphasis in Scripture
2. Humility of Jesus
3. Purpose of the baptism of Jesus

The baptism of Jesus is recorded in all the Synoptics, and it is alluded to in John.

This is one of 12 events that are common in all four Gospels. The first one is the ministry of John the Baptizer and the second is the baptism of Jesus. The others will be discussed as they come up. The emphasis that is placed on this event tells us of its importance.

Mark 1:8-11

Luke 3:21-23

John 1:29-34

The humility of John and Jesus

Two people who are sent by God both recognize the mission and authority of the other. John first tries to stop Jesus, claiming that he needed to be baptized by Jesus (quick question, baptize with what?).

Jesus then submits to John to be baptized in water, stating that this act is to complete all righteousness.

The word *fitting* (πρέπω prepō) means fitting, becoming, congruous. The word always implies an openness. Therefore, Jesus intends something that demonstrates all righteousness and is not hidden.

Jesus being baptized by John openly displays what is right and demonstrates His humility towards the message and responsibility of John.

The purpose of the baptism of Jesus

The reason that Jesus is baptized here is nothing short of controversial.

Chuck Smith: Jesus set aside his [John's] objections, declaring that it was necessary that He set an example. Because He had nothing to repent, John hesitated, but Jesus was doing it actually as an example to set before us that example and it declares. What does baptism declare? Baptism declares the superiority of the spiritual over the material: The life of the Spirit over the life of the flesh.

That is what baptism does represent; the death of the fleshly life, the old life, the old nature, the old ambitions, the old desires: dead, buried. And the new life coming up out of the water, the life of the Spirit. It is superior to the life of the flesh.

David Guzik: It wasn't that this one act in itself fulfilled all righteousness, but it was another important step in the overall mission of Jesus to identify with fallen and sinful man, a mission that would only finally be fulfilled at the cross.

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David Brown: The meaning is obvious enough; and the same sense is brought out by "all righteousness," or compliance with everything enjoined, baptism included. The import of circumcision and of baptism seems to be radically the same. Jesus is saying, "Thus do I impledge Myself to the whole righteousness of the Law--thus symbolically do enter on and engage to fulfil it all."

Don Stewart: Jesus submitted to water baptism to establish a pattern for believers. The baptism of Jesus Christ was unlike the baptism of anyone else. Jesus, the sinless Lamb of God, had nothing to confess yet He submitted to John's baptism. In doing so it was a fulfillment of the righteous requirements of the Law of God. Therefore, in obedience to Him, we should also be baptized in water to make a public profession of our faith.

In our studies of baptism, we discovered that water baptism did not do nor represent what these men say it does. The fact that they state that Jesus is our example in believer's baptism or that this emphasizes spiritual life over fleshly life (by doing something fleshly) is utterly false.

Brown and Stewart both state that Jesus was fully submitting to the Law and/or ordinances of the Law. Which law mentions anything about baptism or washing in this manner?

Consider the text to understand why Jesus was baptized.

1. Identification – Jesus identified with both Israel and the sin of Israel. Israel had the need to change their mind and fix their behavior to prepare themselves for their Messiah and the Kingdom of Heaven. The leaders of Israel, especially the King, interceded for and dealt with the sin of the people.
 - a. Exodus 32:9-14
 - b. Isaiah 6:5
 - c. Daniel 9:5-6
2. Identification of the Messiah by John (John 1:29-34)
3. The Holy Spirit overtly and publicly anointing Jesus and remaining upon Jesus
 - a. Authentication of the identification of Messiah to the people
 - b. Marker of Jesus's public ministry being empowered by the Holy Spirit
 - c. Jesus never evoked His own deity and did not act as God, rather He did and said what the Father said as directed and enabled by the Holy Spirit
 - i. This is the point and effect of the temptation of Jesus
 - ii. Matthew 12:18-21, 31-32
 - iii. Luke 3:21-23
 - iv. John 5:19, 8:42
 - d. Jesus was then led by Spirit
 - i. Matthew 4:1
 - ii. Mark 1:12
 - iii. Luke 4:1, 14-21
4. Identification of the Son by God the Father
5. Confirmation of the prophetic promises of the Hebrew Scripture (The Anointed One)