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Matthew 3

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Learn the Bible at Home

Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Matthew 3.

Topics.

- John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness.
- Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.
- He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
- Jesus is baptised by John.

The previous chapter: in the previous chapter wise men see the star of Christ, and take gifts of gold, frankincense and, myrrh to Mary. Herod (a Jewish Roman client king of Israel) hears of the birth of the King and has all two-year-old male children killed (the Massacre of the Innocents). Matthew speaks of Rachel weeping for her children and after Herod's death Joseph left Egypt with the child and his mother and travelled to the land of Israel, but being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee and went and lived in a city called Nazareth.

NOTE: for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

MATTHEW 3:1-3

John the Baptist in the Wilderness.

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- **Matthew 3:1-3:** In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.' "

This is cited from the following prophetic words of Isaiah:

- A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." -- NOW GO TO VERSE -- ¹⁰Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him behold, his reward is with him and his recompense before him. ¹¹He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young (Isaiah 40:3-10).
- A voice cries in the wilderness clearly refers to John the Baptist.
- The glory of the LORD shall be revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- All flesh shall see it refers to Jew and Gentiles alike (i.e., the glory of the Lord will no longer be limited to Israel only).
- The Lord God comes with might through His Spirit in Christ
- The LORD'S arm refers to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- God reward is with him means God's salvation is with Christ and in Christ.
- He will tend his flock like a shepherd obviously refers to Jesus.

How amazing is this in the one prophecy Isaiah foretold of both John and Jesus, of John in the wilderness proclaiming the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the uniting of the Jews and Gentiles and of Jesus being the mighty arm of the Lord coming with the Spirit of God as a gentle shepherd with grace and salvation.

Repent: means to recognize the wrong in something that we have done and be sorry and regretful for what we have done so that there is a conviction in the heart and mind to change our sinful ways and our harmful habits. There are two types of repentance, worldly repentance and Godly repentance.

Worldly repentance: is feeling sorry because we have been caught and we know we are going to suffer in some way because of it.

Godly repentance: is being sorry for the hurt we have caused God (through unbelief etc.) or because of the pain and hurt we have caused another human.

The Kingdom of heaven is at hand: the words, "The Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (v1) applies to both the King and the Kingdom, it means the King of God's Kingdom is about to appear. Every kingdom has a king and every king has a kingdom so the two cannot be separated (i.e. if there is no kingdom there cannot be a king and if there is no king there cannot be a kingdom). At the moment the Kingdom is a Kingdom of conscience and faith, but when Christ returns the Kingdom will be a literal kingdom on earth with Christ ruling as the King with those who belong to him.

The spiritual and literal Kingdom of God: the spiritual Kingdom of God existing now by faith in the hearts and minds of those who belong to Christ should not be confused with the literal Kingdom of God coming to this earth and it should always be remembered that the Kingdom is not the way to God, there is door to the Kingdom of God. The door is not the Kingdom and neither is the Kingdom the path to salvation, rather it is the inheritance of those who are already saved in Christ. The door is Jesus Christ he is the royal and golden door and the only way to enter into the Kingdom. Christ was predestined to be the center of God's plan of salvation, and then God predestined that those who from their own free will choose to accept all that Christ is and did and was would be saved and receive the predestined inheritance, the coming literal Kingdom of God. The path to salvation is Jesus he is the golden path and the only way to enter into the Kingdom of faith existing now and the literal future Kingdom that is coming. For further information see the title: Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATTHEW 3:4-6

All Jerusalem and all Judea went to be baptized by John the Baptist.

- **Matthew 3:4-6:** Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

NOTICE: John didn't go to the people they went to him. To qualify for Christian baptism a person needs to repent from their own heart, voluntarily make their own decision before the Lord, confess their wrongdoings and have faith in Christ babies cannot do any of these, which obviously means, that baby christening is not biblical water baptism.

MATTHEW 3:7-9

John rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees.

- **Matthew 3:7-9:** 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? ⁸Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones (Gentiles) to raise up children for Abraham.

Pharisees: means the separated ones, they were rulers of the Jews and the most-strict and by far the most influential sect of the three prominent societies of Judaism that were around at the time of Christ (the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essences). Pharisees loved to wear distinguishing garb so as to be easily recognised and were found everywhere in Palestine not only in Jerusalem. They made three contributions to Judaism so that ultimately Pharisaism and Judaism became almost synonymous. The changes the Pharisees made to the Jewish faith began in earnest after the Babylonian Captivity, the temple worship and the sacrifices had ceased so the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees began to centre the activities of Judaism in Jewish law, tradition and in the religious rites of the Synagogues.

The three changes the Pharisees made to Judaism:

1. **Jewish legalism:** The Scribes who were considered experts in interpreting the Scriptures studied the traditional exegesis of the Law which resulted in it becoming a major part of Jewish thought and giving Jewish legalism a great impetus during the New Testament era. The Pharisees closely associated with the scribes organised the followers of the scribes teaching in the Synagogues thus legalism became widespread in the Jewish faith.
2. **Formalised religion:** the Pharisees formalised the religion of the scribes and their interpretation of the law they placed it into the mind of Jewish faith and the practice of it in the synagogues and religious ceremony. The reason the scribes and Pharisees are often mentioned together in the New Testament is because though the Pharisees were not practical politicians like the more liberal Sadducees, they were the religious leaders of the Jews and the highest qualification for membership into the Pharisees was strict adherence to the Law (Oral or written).
3. **Organisation of Jewish religion:** after the seventy-year Babylonian captivity and the Maccabean Revolt (165 BC) the scribes increased tradition and adapted it with the Mosaic Law, but it was the Pharisees who formulated, developed and organised the scribes’ teachings into Jewish religion itself. This increased focus on law and tradition resulted in separatism and an almost new religion, because much of it was the opposite from what had been handed down in the Covenant by the prophets.

The Pharisees became a closely organised group: The Pharisees were very loyal to their own society and to each other, but separate from others and even their own Jewish people, they pledged themselves to obey all facets of the traditions to minutest detail and were sticklers to ceremonial purity. This developed into a feeling of superiority over other nations and people. From this superior feeling as well as religious emotion, pride found its most extreme expression. The Pharisees were haughty and arrogant because they believed they were the only interpreters of God’s word. They made life difficult for themselves and bitter for others, and despised those whom they did not consider their equals. The Pharisees cultivated a national and religious consciousness, which has hardly been equaled. Their teaching that salvation came by maintaining tradition and keeping the law had such a strong influence on the minds of their followers that God’s grace was thought to come from self-effort rather than grace so it was only natural that such a religion would ultimately become a matter of externals and not a faith of the heart.

The Sadducees: the Sadducees became the party favourable to the Roman government as they were more interested in maintaining the political status quo than in the religious purity of the nation even though their political party was made up of the Jewish aristocratic priesthood. They Joined the scribes and Pharisees in their attempt to destroy Jesus and sat in the Sanhedrin with the chief priest, who also was a member of the Sadducees party and condemned Jesus, probably because they feared that a Messianic movement led by Jesus would bring political ruin.

For further information see title:

- Sanhedrin in, Bible Dictionary (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Bear fruit in keeping with repentance: (v8) this is repentance that leads to salvation so it is repentance before God, "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance" means that John will not baptise the Pharisees and Sadducees until they show they are repentant. There must be some form of outward expression or action that shows a person is sorry before God. In the Pharisees and Sadducees case this would mean showing humbleness, compassion and mercy toward those who they considered unclean and inferior to themselves, it would mean replacing their prideful legalistic attitude with love and grace.

Today's modern Gospel: under much of today's modern Gospel with its focus on healing, prosperity and success many make a decision toward Christ, but not through godly repentance, but because the distorted Gospel they hear not only proclaims that Christ will heal all their sickness' and solve all their problems, but will also make them rich and successful in some materialist way, but this is coming to God for what we can get from Him rather than through a humble and repentant heart before Him (no doubt this is one of the reasons why the fall out rate in these churches is so high since this is a false and grossly distorted Gospel).

True repentance produces a changed life and attitudes: The Pharisees and Sadducees believed that because they were descendants of Abraham, they were right with God and even superior to others. It would be like people today believing that because they go to church or attend Mass every week they are saved, but attending religious functions saves no-one. Though fellowshiping together at a Christian church is a good thing, it does not save salvation is only available to a heart that is surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ. Gathering together with other Christians is an outward result of the inward change that has taken place in the heart of the believer.

MATTHEW 3:10-12

John rebukes the Pharisees and Sadducees continued:

- **Matthew 3:10-12:** Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹"I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

The axe is laid to the root of the trees: refers to the Jewish religious leaders (i.e. the Pharisees and Sadducees), they are the root of the Jewish faith, John is saying to them that their downfall is about to come, it has begun not only for them but for any person ministering in the priesthood or the synagogues. Regardless of who they are if they do not show actions that are in keeping with the Lord and His Spirit (i.e. showing kindness and mercy toward others etc.), they will be cast off. John is basically telling the Pharisees and Sadducees if they don't change their ways before Christ comes and show some form of outward action that evidences that they

have repented from their pride, greed for power and lack of mercy toward the poor etc., Christ will consider them chaff and baptise them with a Holy judgment of condemnation and cast them out, but will gather those who are fit for his kingdom.

Baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire: in this context fire is a symbol of total extinction because it destroys everything in its path, John is saying, Jesus will judge the Pharisees and Sadducees according to the Spirit of God's Holiness and condemn them to eternal destruction if they don't show fruit that evidences repentance. For further information see the title:

- Death (What happens when we Die) (ON WEBSITE MENU).

MATTHEW 3:13-15

Jesus is Baptised by John.

- **Matthew 3:13-15:** Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

John and Jesus were still under the law, when a Levite became of age to enter the priesthood they had to go through a washing ceremony before they could enter the priesthood, the Jews clearly understood what washing with water meant and that to minister for God one had to be clean, thus Jesus was fulfilling the Old Testament law and at the same time setting an example for New Testament believers.

MATTHEW 3:16

Jesus is baptized.

- **Matthew 3:16:** And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:9-11) (Luke 3:21-22) (John 1:32-34).

God anoints His beloved Son as the ultimate High Priest.

NOTICE: by God saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" it is clear Jesus did not become God's Son at his water baptism as some teach, but that he was already God's Son. By saying He is pleased with the way His Son has lived, shows that Jesus was God's Son at his birth and not at his baptism.

For further information see title:

- Water Baptism (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
