

Matthew 3

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[0 : 00] I'd like you to turn with me now for a short time to the Gospel of Matthew where we read in chapter 3 and to look at, well, the whole passage, in particular the story of Jesus' baptism.

Let's read at verse 13. Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, I need to be baptized by you until you come to me.

Jesus replied, let it be so now. It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness. Then John consented. 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 lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, this is my Son whom I love.

With him I am well pleased. Jesus' public ministry opens with his baptism at the hands of John the Baptist.

[1 : 14] Jesus takes up a new position, a new role in his life here. He had come into the world not to be a carpenter or a social reformer even or a benefactor, but to save his people from their sins.

We don't know much about Jesus' life as a young boy. Luke tells us one incident. He was age 12, the incident in the temple.

But apart from that, we have no information about his youth. Matthew's account of the life of Jesus springs forward about 30 years from the narratives of Jesus' birth and the immediate threat to his life for which the little family had to flee into Egypt for a while.

Matthew goes straight on from there to the opening of Jesus' ministry and his baptism by John the Baptist. And so, here in the reading today, we have Jesus receiving John's baptism at the River Jordan.

Although John tried at first to dissuade him, Jesus obtained what he wanted. And Jesus, in this way, makes a point of identifying himself with ordinary people, the sinner she had come to save.

[2 : 42] Now, you may ask, this was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. That's what John explained it to be, to mean.

So, why did Jesus want to be baptized? Had he got any sins of which he needed to be made clean or forgiven? And yet, he asks for baptism.

He asks John to baptize him. And he says, let it be so now, to fulfill all righteousness. What did Jesus mean? Why did Jesus do this?

Well, not because he felt that he had some sin of his own for which he needed to be forgiven, for which he needed to repent. But rather because he knows that his God-appointed role in this world is to be associated with the people who do need to repent, who do need to be forgiven.

He had to deal with them. He had to identify with them. They had to identify with him. Because he's the Savior. And later, his identification with them will be complete.

- [4 : 00] When he actually bears their sin. When he is, as Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians, when he has made sin for us. God made him to be sin for us.
- Who knew no sin. Him who knew no sin. That we must be made the righteousness of God in him. So Jesus became totally identified with us. Supposed to be identified with our sins and to be our sin-bearer when he died on the cross for us.
- So thus, this is how Jesus came to do what the angel had said to Joseph before his birth. He will save his people from their sins. So he has to identify with us, the sinners.
- And that's what he's doing when he received baptism here at the hands of John the Baptist at the River Jordan. So by submitting to baptism, Jesus was honoring God's will for him, God's purpose for him.
- And he was saying to the people around, I am with you. I am for you. I'm for you. And later on, he was saying to his disciples, This is my body, which is broken for you.
- [5 : 13] So Jesus willingly, deliberately and publicly undertakes this role for us. To fulfill what was necessary in God's eyes for us to be forgiven and saved.
- Now, there are several points we should remember about Jesus' baptism. Remember, first of all, that it was to fulfill all God's requirements. He said it's to fulfill all righteousness.
- That is, what God required. Jesus identifies with sinners so that he can be identified with our sins and bear our sins, instead of us having to bear them.
- So it was to fulfill all God's requirements. Then also, it was a public announcement of his mission, which was to save sinners. He was doing this publicly. It was a public declaration of why he had come to this world.
- But then also, it was to identify with sinners, with the people he had come to save. But a fourth point to remember is that it was also an example for us.
- [6 : 21] You know, the sign of God's covenant, God's commitment, and of cleansing from sin, baptism. It is an example that we should receive it and publicly identify with him.
- And then also, here Jesus gives baptism his own seal of approval as the sign of God's covenant. The sign of God's commitment to saving people from sin and its consequences.
- Jesus gives baptism his approval. Now, after coming up out of the water, some very significant things happened.
- Verse 16. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment, heaven was opened. He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on it.
- And a voice from heaven said, This is my Son whom I love. With him I am well pleased. Now, there's a word here that is not literally translated.
- [7 : 27] In the original language, as soon as Jesus was baptized, Behold, it says, originally, in the original language, Jesus. Behold, heaven was opened.
- I think the NIV tries to reproduce that by saying, At that moment. It was a very dramatic moment. And we're called to behold. We're called to, Hey, look, look what's happening here.
- Pay attention to this. This is deeply significant. So, at that moment, This significant moment in time, Heaven was opened.
- This is what happened. Heaven was opened. And in Mark's account of this, Mark says, Mark often uses more dramatic language than the other gospel writers. Mark says, Heaven was torn open.
- And this dramatic event happens at a very significant point in history. Just like another point in Jesus' experience, When, at the moment of his death, The curtain of the temple was torn open.

- [8 : 32] Torn apart. At the moment of Jesus' death, The curtain of the temple was torn open. To declare that sinners have been given direct access to God.
- To God's holy presence. Through faith in Jesus. Now here, at his baptism, Heaven is thrown open, torn open.
- To declare with authority that God has come down to save man. God has come down from heaven to save man. Heaven is thrown open. And then, The Holy Spirit, In the form of a dove, Descended, And remained resting on him For a short time.
- The Spirit of God descended like a dove, And lighted on him. Verse 16. This was God from heaven, Equipping Jesus with all the gifts, And all the strength.
- He would need especially, Meekness, And gentleness, And endurance, To undertake the awesome work of saving sinners. Why did the Spirit come down upon him in the form of a dove?
- [9 : 47] Well, perhaps you remember that, It was a dove that brought back to Noah, The comforting evidence that the flood water had gone down. That God's judgment of the world was over.
- Perhaps that's why the dove has come to be the symbol of peace. Here the Holy Spirit rests on Jesus, To declare that God was about to make peace with sinners, Through him.
- Peace with God would be the fruit of the Son's ministry. In particular, The fruit of his death on the cross. Atoning death for our sins. And Jesus later, Drew attention when he spoke in the synagogue.
- He drew attention to what I there had fed about him. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because he has, Announced me, To preach deliverance for the captives, To preach the year of the Lord's favour, The Lord's grace.
- The Spirit of the Lord God was upon him. So the Spirit of God came upon him. And then finally, At his baptism, There is the voice from heaven.
- [10 : 58] This is the voice of God the Father. A voice from heaven said, This is my Son, Whom I love. With him I am well pleased. Here, God in heaven Declares his pleasure with his Son At this particular point.
- At this point when Jesus has associated with sinners. Taken up his role publicly as the Saviour. God is pleased with his obedience.
- And pleased with him As someone perfectly suited to the task Of saving us. He is able to be our sin beaver. God is pleased with him.
- As having all his people united to him. People from all ages of the world's history. United to Christ. Associated with him.
- And made clean from sin. God says, This is my beloved Son. In whom I am well pleased. God pronounces his pleasure and satisfaction With his Son. As baptized by John the Baptist.
- [12 : 01] With all that night. Now this is one of the passages that, One of the many passages in the Bible That revealed God as three in one.
- You notice how here All three persons of the Trinity Conquer, Agree together, They work together, They cooperate In this matter Of man's salvation.
- They all agree. They're all working together. And this chimes in With the rest of Scripture We treat the Bible as a unity. The church always has. You know how Jesus said, I delight to do thy will, O my God.
- Jesus delighted to do God's will, Which was to be our Savior. And Jesus also said, When the Spirit of Truth comes, Referring to the Holy Spirit, He will testify of me.

Jesus said, The Holy Spirit's work will be To draw people's attention to Jesus, Not to himself, But to Jesus, To Jesus as our Savior. So the Holy Spirit works To focus our attention On Jesus, The Savior.

[13 : 16] And, And, Also the Bible says that God so loved the world That he gave his Son, And that God chose us in Christ.

And so we see all three Members of the Trinity Working together. And this is good to remember, Because it reminds us that Our salvation was not Worked out at the At the cruel expense Of our reluctant victim.

Some people present The Bible teaching about The atonement in that light. That Jesus was being victimized By a cruel, Vindictive God. It was God's loving purpose To save us from our sin.

And it was Jesus' intense desire To accomplish that purpose In love. And that means that That if I was If I was praying In Jesus today And our Savior, God looks at us And says, These are my beloved children.

God looks at you As linked to Jesus. And he looks at you In the same light As he sees Jesus himself. And he can say, These are my, You are my beloved children.

[14 : 29] I'd now like you To think with me About two practical questions. The first is, What light does this shed For us on the meaning of baptism?

And the second is, How should we bring up Our baptized children? So first of all, What light does this shed On the meaning of baptism?

What did Jesus' baptism Teach us about baptism today? Well, several things. The first is, That baptism is all about The kingdom of heaven.

If you look back over The earlier verses In chapter 3 of Matthew. Look at the first verse.

In those days, John the Baptist came, Preaching in the desert of Judea And saying, Repent, For the kingdom of heaven Is near, And he baptized the people Who repented.

[15 : 42] So, Repent, For the kingdom of heaven Is near. What's that? Baptism is all about The kingdom of heaven.

And all of Jesus' preaching Was about The kingdom of God, The kingdom of heaven. Well, the kingdom of heaven Is basically Having God as your king.

If you think about this Quite practically, Say to yourself, Who's my king? Who's the boss in my life? Who runs my life? Is it yourself? That's the natural way We grow up.

We think of ourselves As being our own master. That's the result Of our fallenness. So, who's your king? The kingdom of heaven Is having God as your king.

Do you Perhaps consider, Maybe you did consider, Maybe some do here still, Do you consider that Personal freedom Is the most basic Of human rights? So you think In terms of human rights, My right, My right is to run My own life.

[16 : 54] To control my own affairs, Especially my money. That's the natural way We think. Look at verse 3.

This is he who was spoken of Through the prophet Isaiah, A voice of one Calling in the desert, Prepare the way For the Lord. Make straight paths For him. The Lord.

Baptism is about Having God as the Lord. It's about preparing A way for the Lord In your life. It's about having him As Lord And walking in the Straight paths That he leads you.

That he takes you. That being a citizen Of the kingdom of God. Having God as your king. And that was the baptism John preached And that Jesus accepted.

So that means He's not just A purely social thing To do with the naming Of the child. It's about salvation. It's about being real With God And honest with God And being actually Made clean from sin And made a new person.

[18 : 06] A person who Accepts gladly That God has the authority Over their life. So first of all Baptism is about The kingdom of heaven.

Secondly Baptism is about Confession of sin And about forgiveness. If you look at Verse 6 Of chapter 3 there Confessing their sins The people who went out to him From all Jerusalem and Judea Confessing their sins They were baptized by him In the river Jordan.

So that's what baptism Is to do with. It's about being honest with God. It's about facing up To the fact That you are Accountable to God For every single thing You've ever done Said or thought.

It's about Admitting that God Is your judge And that God is right. The only way To deal with the fact That we have failed In our accountability To God The only way To deal with that The only way That God has given us Of dealing with it Is to obtain His forgiveness Which is free.

It's to confess Your sins to him To just admit And say I'm sorry Lord God You're right I've done wrong And God's forgiveness Is both free And complete.

[19 : 38] So being a Christian Being a baptized person Is not about Trying to Save yourself By making yourself As good as you Possibly can Some people Try that.

But you never know When you've done enough Do you? It's A treadmill And it's not God's way anyway. God Provides Provided in his son A saviour Whose Blood Makes us clean From all sin.

When you come to God And are prepared To be honest with God Confessing your sins What happens? If we confess our sins The Bible says He is faithful And just To forgive us And to cleanse us From all unrighteousness.

Some people think That it's Humiliating To have to confess Sin. Well it's Not humiliating It's humbling There's a difference Between Being humiliated And being humble.

I don't think God humiliates us But he does Humble us. He makes us real To see ourselves In the light Of his goodness And holiness. And that's humble.

[20 : 52] And you say I have to confess To God That I've not been The kind of person He wanted you to be. When you do that You're being real With God. And that's what That's what It's all about. Being honest with God Confessing your sins.

And it's a wonderful thing That John said there That if we confess Our sins He is faithful And just. Not only is God Faithful to his promise To forgive But he is also Just in forgiving Our sins.

He's not Bricking them Under the carpet. He executed His justice In full On his son When he died for us. And it means That God Would be Unjust If he did not Forgive Those who have Faith in Jesus.

God is faithful And just To forgive us. So Baptism is about Forgiveness of sin And confession of sin.

Thirdly Baptism Is about Producing Fruit In keeping with Repentance. This is about Your life As someone Who has faith in Jesus As your savior.

[21 : 58] Look at verse 3 I'm sorry Verse 8 This is the Pharisees And Sadducees Coming to Where John Was not tithing. He said to them You brood of vipers Who warned you To flee from the Coming wrath?

Produce fruit In keeping With repentance. The Pharisees And Sadducees Seemed to be The kind of people Who believed In building up Their own righteousness By their religious Observances By their good deeds And so on.

They also Prided themselves In their national And ethnic descent. Abraham was their father. They had to be Right with God. So Their faith Was human And self-made.

Their righteousness Was human And self-made. Their hope With God Was based on A human thing A natural thing Rather than A spiritual thing. And you know It's so deceptive To I'm tempted To have faith In natural connections Faith in good works Rather than In God's grace And forgiveness.

If you've got something You can take pride in You cling to that Rather than Give it up And say I've got nothing To be proud of I have to Turn to God For his mercy.

[23 : 21] Produce fruit Jesus said to them John said to them In keeping with Repentance If you produce Fruit in keeping With repentance You will live Independent on God's grace.

You'll live With faith In the saviour As your only saviour And the only hope You've got with God. You'll live with Faith in him And you'll live With confidence in him Because God is well pleased With him.

And if you Live If you produce Fruit in keeping With repentance You'll live a life Of prayerfulness. You'll not be Someone who says Oh I can't pray I can't think of Something to say When I pray to God.

You'll be someone Who wants to talk To God often. Who brings matters Up to God. You'll be someone Also who Feels the need To live a holy life.

You'll admit That you're not perfect. None of us Is made sinlessly Perfect in this life. But we are conscious Of our need To live a holy life. And we're relying On God's grace To enable us To do so More and more.

[24 : 24] You'll be the kind Of person Who turns away From the things Jesus had to die for. You'll produce fruit In keeping with repentance. Jesus had to die For things like lies Or deception Or covetousness.

You know Do you think of the If everything you've got Is a stepping stone To something better? That's covetousness. An attitude That kind of attitude To the material things Of life Which God Graciously gives us.

But sometimes We think of them As In a covetous way. They're mine. And I want to get I want to better myself All the time. Rather than Say to yourself I give God the glory And I'll I'll go the way He wants me to go.

If you're producing Fruit In keeping with repentance You'll Seek to put your own Earthly ambitions On the back burner And your priority Will be To live To please God In the way you speak And think And spend your money In everything else.

You'll live For God's glory And for the good Of others. So baptism Is all about Producing fruit In keeping with repentance.

[25 : 41] And then Fourthly Baptism is about Living in the light Of eternity And of the judgment. Look at verse 11. John said I baptize you With water For repentance That after me Will come one Who is more powerful Than I Whose sand I'm not fit to carry He will baptize you With the Holy Spirit And with fire His winnowing Forth That in his hand Will clear His thrashing floor Gathering his wheat Into the barn And burning up The chaff With unquenchable fire.

Living in the light Of eternity The light Of God's judgment We're accountable To God And we're called To live in the light Of the day When Jesus comes back To this earth.

Not just to live As if time Was going to go on And on and on Forever. How can we do this? How can we live In the light Of eternity And judgment?

Only in the power Of Pentecost. Being baptized With the Holy Spirit That's the new birth Is how We learn To live in the light Of God's judgment.

The Holy Spirit Burns up Those things In your life That are contrary To God's will. That's what he does. These things Have to be burned up. And as people Born from above When he baptizes us With the Holy Spirit And with fire And things that Are sinful In God's sight Will be Will be more and more Burned up Is that what you want?

[27 : 23] Say, What I want. Or do you want Something else? Are you living In the light Of the judgment? Are you living As someone Who has been Born again?

Baptized by the Holy Spirit We're accountable For the lives We're accountable To God For the lives He has given us And God's grace And forgiveness Is not a license To sin It's got to mean The death Of sin in you That's what Salvation means So that is the means And if We don't think In that way If I don't think In that way There's something wrong With my faith So then Baptized people Are concerned With What sin is In God's sight They're concerned With The fact that Jesus Died for their sins The cross of Jesus Is central For their lives And they know How good it is To be forgiven And cleansed Baptized people Are concerned To live according To God's will God's kingdom God's kingdom That applies People depend

On God's Gracious Covenant Commitment To saving them And they go Through their lives Drawing strength From his word From the promises In which God's Covenant Commitment Is couched You go through Your life Drawing strength From God's promises In his word Because it's covenant It's commitment Now then We'll come to The second question And with this We're nearly finished How should we Bring up our children In the covenant I just want to Make two points here The first one To remember is That baptism Is about Parents And children Together When God Made his covenant With Abraham It included His children And he gave Him the sign Of the covenant Which was Circumcision Now in the New Testament God still deals

With people By way of covenant And the covenant Includes The children Of believers It's quite unthinkable If you think of Peter preaching To the crowds In Jerusalem On the day of Pentecost And saying to them God's promises Are to you And to your children And then That he wouldn't Baptise the children He said Oh no Keep the babies Granny can hold the baby While I baptise you It's quite unthinkable The promises are To you and to your children And he baptised Three thousand of them And it's a reasonable effort To assume That there were Children involved In Lydia's household When Paul When she believed And all the members Of her household Were baptised And in the household Of the Philippian jailer Also in Acts 16 Where he believed And all the members Of his family Were baptised It's reasonable to assume

That there were Children there too So God promises That the Bible says Are to us And to our children We're in this As families And so This means That we should Seek God's help To bring up Our children To think of Themselves As belonging To God God promises That to them Teach your children To think of them As belonging to God And obviously This involves Praying for them Praying with them Teaching them To come to God Themselves Teaching them God's word To believe God's word And encouraging them To believe in Jesus For themselves Teaching them To think about God And the world As you do And not as the Secular world does It involves Teaching them To think Right And if we're

[31 : 39] Going to do that It involves That will involve Avoiding certain Pitfalls For example Some parents Seem to think That they have To leave their Children To think Out spiritual Matters For themselves To say I mustn't put Pressure on them I mustn't Preach to them Well Just look The secular world Will not leave them To think things Out for themselves Entertainers Will get at them In a very Seductive And predatory way Many different ways Maybe even Educators Will get at them Now I don't Want to make a case For Christian schools Although It may well become A necessity In years to come But I'm thinking Of something Much closer to home I'm thinking Of children Sitting in the Back seat

Of the family car All plugged Into their MP3s Or whatever You call These devices That allow them To listen to Thousands and Thousands and Thousands of Souls And they're all Listening to this And imbibing And being Swamped By The popular Secular culture That's around us Today With all its Romantic notions That the most Basic of values Is personal Freedom And they're Drinking within This notion These assumptions In from the Culture around us I'm thinking Also of Children Exposed Maybe Quite uncritically Not given any Tools with which To think critically About Popular culture They're exposed To it In In much Music And many Films The notion That Love is the Greatest thing That is human Love Not God's

Love So love Is the Greatest thing And to the Notion And we'll come Across this Very common And also That Obeying God's Law Will only Cramp Their style No We need to Invite our Children To encourage Our children To think Critically About The philosophy That's out We need to Help them To see The seedy Side Of the Lives Of those Who have No God But themselves Help them To see That Otherwise Maybe The only Picture They will Get Is the Glutzy Glamour This One It's Of course It's Lies We need To treat Our children As Christians For Baptized Children Treat them As Christians As children Whom God Loves As children To whom God's Promises Are made Encourage Them To think Of themselves As belonging

To God And As accountable To a God Who is loving And just But be careful To be careful Not to vex Your children With An unforgiving Attitude Or with Psychological Pressure Or with Manipulative Smothering And we can Manipulate Children As parents We're not Careful We need To encourage Them To think To be Themselves As people Who think Biblically About God And about Themselves And about The world As God's Life And family Solidarity Helps to Fight Fear Pressure When this As families When this As a church You're here To support One another So let Your children See that Jesus means Everything To you

That he's Not just There for Sundays And most Of the time Young people Will accept Encouragement They'll accept Correction And will Accept advice And use A prayer In one of the Psalms that we've Been saying One of the Psalms we sang Pray to God That his righteousness Will extend To our Children's Children I'll leave These thoughts With you Let us now Sing in Some Psalms Psalm 119 Psalm 119 At verse 33 And the Tune is Doversdale Well it's Nice to have The young People back In the church Again And it's Lovely to Have Three Children

[36 : 41] Here to Be baptized On the Strength of Their parents Faith Now Can any Of you Young people Remember What was The last Thing Jesus Said To his Disciples Before he Went Back up To heaven Yes That's Right He did Yes He did Very good He Commanded them To tell The whole World About him And To call Them to Believe Can you Remember What else He told Them to Do Anybody Else Anybody Else What else Do he Tell them To do Yes That's Right He told Them To baptize People Who believed In the name Of the Father The Son And the Holy Spirit And then

He left Them And he Went up To heaven And where Did he Sit At the Right Hand Of God And that God Is saying To Jesus You're my Beloved Son I'm Pleased With you I'm Pleased With everything You have Done And You're You're King of The Universe That's Where Jesus Is today And that's Who he Is And that's Why We have To call People Everywhere To believe In him And to Commit Their lives To him And so He left Them And went Up to Heaven And sat Down at The right Hand Of God His Father Well A few Weeks Later Peter One of His Disciples Was preaching In Jerusalem And he Told people About Jesus And the meaning Of Jesus Life and Death And he Said to Them Repent And be Baptized In the Name of Jesus Christ For the Forgiveness Of your

Sins Now when An adult Person Has come To faith In the Lord Jesus Christ And wants To be Baptized We ask Him or her Certain questions About what They believe So that they Can make Public Their profession Of faith In the Lord Jesus Christ Christ And when Christian Parents Ask For baptism For their Children We ask Them Similar Questions And we Baptize The children Of believers We don't baptize Everything that Christ But we baptize The children Of believers Because God Has said That His Covenant Promises Are to us And to our Children Till then Liar Amhram Martin