

Matthew

Chapter 3



As you prepare for this week's study, begin by praying and asking God to open your heart and mind to understand the truths He has for you this week. Then read through this week's chapter, Matthew 3. As you read through the entire chapter, what are your first impressions? What stands out to you?

Mission 119: Search Matthew and listen to the commentary for Matthew 3-4.

Day 1 - The Man in Camel's Hair

Matthew 3:1-12

1) Research these geographical locations in the text. What significance do you find for each?

a) The wilderness of Judea _____

b) The Jordan River _____

c) Jerusalem _____

d) Judea _____

e) The region around the Jordan _____

2) What was the theme of John's preaching? (v.1-2) Summarize it in your own words. What was the "kingdom of heaven"?

3) Quoting from Isaiah 40, what did John call himself? (v.3)

4) How was John's physical appearance and lifestyle described? (v. 4) Why do you think Matthew included this detail?

5) What was the role of John's ministry? (v.6,11)

6) What did John preach to the religious officials? (v.7-10) How might the Pharisees and Sadducees have received this message?

7) Why might John have used the phrase "offspring of vipers" to describe the Jewish religious leaders? (v.7)

8) John tells the religious leaders not to rely on their lineage ("We have Abraham as our father."). Why would this claim have felt secure to them, and why did John challenge it?

9) What did John mean by "bear fruit in keeping with repentance"? (v. 8) What would this look like in practice?

10) **Is there a difference between genuine repentance and superficial remorse, as John challenged the Pharisees and Sadducees? What would each look like?

11) John contrasted his baptism with water to the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. (v.11) What did this show about John's spirit?

12) What was Jesus' role in relation to John's ministry and message? (v.11-12)

13) Matthew used three images to depict judgment. What were they? (v.10-12)

Day 2 - My Beloved Son

Matthew 3:13-17

1) What happened at Jesus' baptism? (v.13-17) List the events in order.

2) What words came from heaven at Jesus' baptism, and who spoke them? (v.16-17)

- 3) When Jesus came to be baptized, John initially objected. (v.14) What did this exchange reveal about how John understood himself in relation to Jesus?

- 4) What do you think Jesus meant by His response to John, "to fulfill all righteousness"? (v. 15) What might "doing what God requires" mean here?

- 5) What was the significance of the Spirit descending "like a dove" and the voice declaring Jesus as God's beloved Son? (v.16-17) What did this moment confirm about Jesus' identity?

- 6) What is the purpose of baptism, both John's baptism and Christian baptism, based on what this chapter revealed?

- 7) **Is there anything in this chapter new to you?

Day 3 - Connecting the Dots...

- 1) What do you think the wilderness signified in the larger biblical story and the Old Testament (think of the Exodus generation, Elijah, places of testing and other encounters with God)?

- 2) How did John the Baptist embody the prophecy from Isaiah 40:3 ("a voice crying in the wilderness")? Read the surrounding context of Isaiah 40.

- 3) What was this passage originally about?

- 4) What was the role of the exile in the story of Israel?

- 5) Read the Scripture passages below. How did each passage frame Israel's relationship with God in terms of wilderness, wandering, and return?

a) Jeremiah 2:1-8 _____

b) Hosea 2:14-23 _____

c) Deuteronomy 32:8-24 _____

- 6) Given the connection between Isaiah 40 (a message of comfort and return from exile) and John's ministry, what might John's appearance "in the wilderness" suggest about what God was doing through him?

- 7) What does it say about the continuity and reliability of God's Word that a prophecy written centuries earlier (Isaiah 40) found fulfillment in John's ministry?

- 8) The image of the ax laid to the root of the trees and the winnowing fork (v.10, 12) draws on Old Testament prophetic imagery of judgment (read Isaiah 10:33-34, Malachi 3:1-3). How did this connect John's message to the prophetic tradition?

- 9) John's baptism took place in the Jordan River. Read the following passages. What significance did the Jordan carry in Israel's history?

a) Joshua 3 _____

b) 2 Kings 2 _____

- 10) At Jesus' baptism, the voice from heaven echoed language from Psalm 2:7 ("*You are My Son.*") and Isaiah 42:1 ("*My chosen one, in whom I delight.*"). How did these Old Testament texts (one royal/messianic, one about the Servant) shape our understanding of who Jesus was?

- 11) How did the descent of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism connect to Old Testament expectations of the Spirit's presence resting on God's anointed? (Isaiah 11:1-2, 61:1)

- 12) Considering Israel's history of exile and longing for restoration, what might it have meant that Israel's true representative (Jesus) now stood in the Jordan, the very place tied to entering into God's promises?

- 13) How did Matthew 3 function as a hinge between the Old Testament story of Israel and the new thing God was doing in Jesus?

Day 4 - Walking the Way of Jesus

- 1) John called people to repentance in preparation for the kingdom of heaven. Is there an area of your life where you've been avoiding genuine repentance, perhaps offering surface-level remorse instead of real change?

- 2) **The Pharisees and Sadducees relied on their heritage ("We have Abraham as our father.") rather than genuine transformation. Are there things you lean on for spiritual security, such as religious upbringing, church involvement, family faith, that might be substituting for your own relationship with God?

- 3) **John called people to "bear fruit in keeping with repentance." What would it look like for your repentance to produce visible fruit in your daily life this week?

- 4) Jesus submitted to baptism not because He needed to repent, but to identify with sinful humanity and "fulfill all righteousness." How did Jesus' willingness to identify with us shape how you understand His love?

- 5) Because of your baptism, what do you think God's requiring of you in your everyday life?

- 6) **The voice from heaven affirmed Jesus as beloved before He had done any public ministry. How does knowing your identity in Christ as "beloved" (rather than something you earn) change how you approach your faith and daily life?

- 7) **John's ministry took place in the wilderness, a place of testing and dependence on God. Is there a "wilderness" season in your life right now? How might God be using it?

- 8) The crowds came to John confessing their sins openly. Is there a place in your life - a relationship, a community, a counselor - where you need to practice this kind of honest confession rather than hiding?

- 9) John pointed away from himself toward Jesus ("He who is coming after me is mightier than I."). Where in your life might you need to point others to Jesus rather than to yourself?

- 10) **The Spirit descended on Jesus and empowered His ministry. How are you depending on the Holy Spirit's presence and power in your own life, rather than relying on your own strength?

- 11) This chapter marked the beginning of Jesus' public identity and mission. As you reflect on your own baptism (or consider what it represents), how does it mark the beginning of your identity as God's beloved child, and how does that shape the way you live?

- 12) **What key point did you learn this week about walking the way of Jesus?

Day 5 - What Do You Think?

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33, NIV)

Today, read chapter 3 with a seeking posture, and be attentive to where God is forming your heart, reordering your priorities, and inviting you into His kingdom life. As you do, take time to reflect on how God's living Word is at work in your life.

Use the questions below to notice where you sense His invitation, conviction, or encouragement. You do not need to answer every question each week. Instead, choose two or three that stand out and spend time with them. Pay attention to where God is leading you toward deeper trust, understanding, and transformation.

- 1) What part of God's redemptive story became larger, stranger, or more beautiful after studying this chapter?

- 2) **What insights gained from this chapter challenged you to think or act differently?

- 3) **Where do you see yourself in this story? Are you the hero, someone in the crowd, or someone in need of the grace being revealed?

- 4) What part of God's kingdom seemed upside down in this passage compared to the kingdom of this world?

5) Did any mystery remain unresolved after reading this chapter? Rather than solving it, how might living with that mystery deepen your trust in God?

6) **What invitation did Jesus extend here to experience transformation in your life?

7) If we lived out the truths we've read about in this chapter in our families, workplaces, churches, and neighborhood, what might become more beautiful about our community? What might become uncomfortable?
