

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

These notes are edited, but not "book" ready. To the critical eye, mistakes can possibly be found. Therefore, he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: **October 14, 2018**

Sermon Title: **"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand."**

Sermon Series: Matthew

Text: Matthew 3

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Date: October 14, 2018
Title: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand." - John the Baptist
Text: Matt 3:1-12
Theme: God's Kingdom brings Judgment and Salvation.

Introduction:

"The word 'gospel' is sort of a churchy word and literally means 'good news.' It's used for the first four books of the NT, which includes the book of John. John, while incorporating some of the same material as the others, often does it from a different angle. The notion that these books constitute good news implies that there's a potential for bad news, doesn't it? Often we get good news when something has the potential of being bad.

Like the doctor who took his patient into a room and said, 'I have some good news and some bad news.' The patient said, 'Give me the good news first.' 'Well,' the doctor said, 'They're about to name a brand new incurable disease after you.'

Or, the story of Sally, who phoned her husband at work for a chat. 'I'm sorry dear,' he said, 'but I'm covered up today. I don't have time to chat.' Sally replied, 'But I've got some good news and some bad news for you.' 'OK,' he said, 'but could you just give me the good news right now?' 'Okay,' agreed Sally. 'Well, you'll be happy to know that the air bags in our new car work perfectly!'

The gospels bring us good news because we need it."¹

Matthew's Gospel is the good news about Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Seed Promise and the completion of the Blood Picture. Jesus fulfills all promises, prophecies, and pictures in the OT.

In our opening chapters (1-7) there are multiple evidences as to why *Jesus is the Messiah*. Initially, we read of His pedigree (1, 2). Then, we read of His preparation (3, 4). Finally, we read of His preaching (5-7).

Our chapter has two sections. They are interrelated. John is the forerunner to the Messiah. Jesus, as Messiah, confirms John's role by submitting to his baptism. This is that story.

1. What is the **author's structure** of this passage? Please a) show *sections with verse references*, b) state the *author's emphasis*, and c) explain what *strategies* you used to see this structure.

This paragraph has two sections. The first appears as a summary of his ministry overall. It is a general statement concerning his ministry among the people.

Paraginomai occurs three times in Matthew.

- Wise men came (2:1)
- John came (3:1)
- Jesus came (3:13)

I. In those days John the Baptist came (vv. 1-12)

A. John's Ministry among the common people – repent (vv. 1-6)

- John's role as forerunner to the Messiah

“The verb **khrussein** is applied to those who, in the streets, fields, and open air, lift up their voice, that they may be heard by many, and proclaim what has been committed to them by regal or public authority; as the **KERUKES** among the Greeks, and the **PRECONES** among the Romans.”²

“The application of water, was a rite well known to the Jews, and practiced when they admitted proselytes to their religion from heathenism. – Lightfoot”³

1. John's announcement (vv. 1, 2)

- 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.’” (Matt. 3:1, 2).

a. The action called for – “repentance”

What is of interest to us is that this particular word for repentance is never used in the New Testament for believers. This is what the unbelieving are called to do. The believing are called to “put off” not repent. Yet, repentance has become a part of our common evangelical language to the believing.

b. The reason given – “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand

If in John's day the kingdom of heaven is at hand, how much closer and imminent is that same kingdom in our day? Our appeals for repentance among the unbelieving must be equally passionate and pressing.

“Because it has its laws, all the moral precepts of the Gospel: its subjects, all who believe in Christ Jesus: and its king, the Sovereign of heaven and earth. N. B. Jesus Christ never saved a soul which he did not govern; nor is this Christ precious or estimable to any man who does not feel a spirit of subjection to the Divine will.”⁴

“Why is it called the kingdom of HEAVEN? Because God designed that his kingdom of grace here should resemble the kingdom of glory above.”⁵

2. John's appearance (vv. 3, 4)

- ³“For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, ‘THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!’” ⁴Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey” (Matt. 3:3, 4).

Matthew quotes Isaiah 40:3.

“The idea is taken from the practice of eastern monarchs, who, whenever they entered upon an expedition, or took a journey through a desert country, sent harbingers before them, to prepare all things for their passage; and pioneers to open the passes, to level the ways, and to remove all impediments.”⁶

“This passage is taken from Isa 40:3. It is here said to have been spoken in reference to John, the forerunner of Christ. The language is such as was familiar to the Jews, and such as they would understand. It was spoken at first with reference to the return from the captivity at Babylon.”⁷

“A sort of coarse or rough covering, which, it appears, was common to the prophets, Zec 13:4. In such a garment we find Elijah clothed, 2Ki 1:8. And as John had been designed under the name of this prophet, Mal 4:5, whose spirit and qualifications he was to possess, Lu 1:17, he took the same habit and lived in the same state of self-denial.”⁸

3. John’s audience (vv. 5, 6)

- 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” (Matt. 3:5, 6).

There is continuity between these two movements, but the first addresses the people, the second the professional. The first is general whereas the second is specific.

Note the action order.

1. Repent / confess sin
2. Be baptized

All three of those actions are done by unbelievers when they believe. None of those words are then used of believers. Once you have repented and confessed and have been baptized, you will not go back to those rudimentary elements (Heb. 6:1ff).

The believer’s confession is not one of salvation, but one of confirmation. This is who we are and this is what we believe. We are confessors.

Because we have used these words and actions inappropriately in our evangelical churches to describe the Christian life, we have created uncertainty and unnecessary emotional/spiritual upheaval.

When I say believers do not repent or confess, people wrongly assume I am saying believers do not deal with their sin. That is a false assumption. The New Testament teaches that as believers we are to put off our old self and put on our new self. The New Testament teaches we are to always remember the gospel as a memorial. I am no longer a denier; I am a confessor.

Likewise, we debate whether one should or needs to be baptized. That issue is never debated in the New Testament; it is always assumed. Believers get baptized. The same with being identified by a local church through membership. That issue is never debated in the New Testament; it is always assumed.

When we start verse 7 there appears to be a shift in tone. He goes from addressing the common people to speaking directly to the professional class of clergy. His tone seems to be sharp.

B. John's Message to the professional clergy – repent (vv. 7-12)

First, the group identified (vv. 7-9)

- They are an ancient threat [vipers]
- They are relying on their ancestry [we have Abraham]

There appears to be intentional reference made to their lineage. Both are blood lined.

Second, the judgment coming (vv. 10-12)

1. John's message speaks to something that is ancient (v. 7 [seed promise])

"The Jews were the seed of the serpent, who should bruise the heel of the woman's seed, and whose head should be bruised by him."⁹

John's strikes at the very heart of their problem. They thought their birth gave them rights. John's calls them to repent of this arrogance.

2. John's message speaks of something that is individually escapable but nationally unavoidable (v. 7 ["flee from the wrath to come"])
3. John's message speaks of something that is imminent and unfolding (v. 10 ["Even now"]).

"The desolation which was about to fall on the Jewish nation for their wickedness, and threatened in the last words of their own Scriptures. See Mal 4:6. Lest I come and smite the earth Urah ta (et ha-arets, this very land) with a curse. This wrath or curse was coming: they did not prevent it by turning to God, and receiving the Messiah, and therefore the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost."¹⁰

4. John's message speaks of something that is thorough (v. 12 ["He will clear His threshing floor"]).

Listen to Malachi 3:1-3.

- ¹ "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. ³ He will sit as a smelter

and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness" (Mal. 3:1-3).

This paragraph sets us up for the baptism of Jesus by John (vv. 13-17).

II. Then Jesus came (vv. 13-17)

Two things happened when Jesus came.

A. First, Jesus confirms John's ministry and message.

B. Second, the Father confirms His Son as Messiah

Chapters 3 and 4 speak to our Lord's preparation for ministry. There is open identification with the Messiah's forerunner and his message and manner of activity. This forerunner is His forerunner and He will openly confirm his message by being baptized by him.

"This saying is expressive of the most profound humility and reverence. To put on, take off, and carry the shoes of their masters, was, not only among the Jews, but also among the Greeks and Romans, the work of the vilest slaves."¹¹

Author's Emphasis:

The kingdom of God is at hand. It is time to make yourself ready for the king's presence.

Author's Strategies:

There are key words in this paragraph: repent, fruit, judgment, and baptism.

2. How does the **context inform the meaning** of this passage? Answer this question using a) the *literary context* (the passages on either side), b) the *historical context* (circumstances and culture of the audience), and c) the *biblical context* (connections to other places in the Bible).

Literary Context:

1 - Jesus is identified as the son of Abraham and the son of David. He is virgin born. Both statements seek to identify Him as God's Messiah.

2 - The visitation by the Magi and His protection from assault and fleeing to Egypt and from Egypt identify Him as the New Israel. Just as God brought the Nation to Egypt for their protection, so also He brought them out of Egypt for their redemption.

3:1-12 the Ministry of the Forerunner

3:13-17 the Baptism of Jesus

"As far as the figure of Jesus is concerned, his submission to baptism reflects, in Matthew's view, the fact that he is perfectly obedient to the will of God."¹²

There is a natural progression from the King's Pedigree (1, 2) to His Preparation (3, 4). His Preparation has Him baptized by the forerunner (3) and tempted by the Devil (4). He will succeed where Adam / Israel failed. After He is vetted, He begins His preaching (5-7).

Historical Context:

Biblical Context:

3. In light of the emphasis of this passage in its context, state the **author's main idea** for *his audience* (in one short sentence).

Jesus as fulfillment must be believed and followed.

4. What parts of this passage **connect to the gospel** of Jesus Christ? What *particular facet of the gospel* is in view? [What are its Christological / Christo-centric contributions?]

Q. How does this descriptive in this chapter contribute to and advance our Christology?

A. Jesus does all that is demanded of Him by His Father.

5. In light of your gospel connection, what **argument** (one short sentence) will you make to **your audience**? What **applications** from this argument will you make for the believer? The unbeliever?

To the believing:

1. Are you putting off your old nature on a regular basis?
2. Are you continuing to confess you can't, but God can, and Jesus did?
3. Have you openly identified with Jesus as King by water baptism?
4. Do you understand how Jesus fully keeps and fulfills all righteousness? Jesus is perfectly sinless.

To the unbelieving:

1. As one who does not believe, will you repent of your sin and confess Jesus as King?
2. Will you accept Jesus as God's Messiah and follow John in obedience [believe and be baptized]?

¹ <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/sermon-forerunner-john-baptist-matthew-3>

² *Adam Clarke's Commentary* on Matthew 3:1.

³ *Albert Barnes' NT Commentary* on Matthew 3:1.

⁴ *Adam Clarke's Commentary* on Matthew 3:2

⁵ *Adam Clarke's Commentary* on Matthew 3:2

⁶ *Adam Clarke's Commentary* on Matthew 3:3

⁷ *Albert Barnes' NT Commentary* on Matthew 3:3.

⁸ *Adam Clarke's Commentary* on Matthew 3:4

⁹ *Adam Clarke's Commentary* on Matthew 3:7

¹⁰ *Adam Clarke's Commentary* on Matthew 3:7

¹¹ *Adam Clarke's Commentary* on Matthew 3:11

¹² Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom*, 48.