

# Matthew 3

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## Matthew 3

Believe in God and be obedient

The foundation of faith is based on faith in the existence of God and the belief that God is omnipotent, loving, wise, and just. This kind of faith is not only an awareness of God's power, but also a deep trust in God's character and attributes.

God is completely trustworthy. His love is unchanging, His wisdom is far beyond our comprehension, His power is boundless, and He is righteous in all things. When we truly believe this, we can let go of our anxieties and fears and commit our lives to God. Complete trust in God, no matter what difficulties we face, God will guide us and keep us.

Faith is trust in God's Word. God tells us that He will never forsake us, and this trust will lead us to choose to follow God's guidance rather than rely on our own strength or wisdom in every choice and challenge in our lives.

Obedience to God's commands is not out of obligation or fear, but out of love. When we deeply experience God's love, our response is to be willing to obey Him. Obedience to God is not pressure, but a natural outpouring of love. Obedience to God enables us to grow in our faith and experience God's leading and blessings. Obedience to God's will will transform our lives from the inside out, so that we can better reflect God's glory.

Obedience to God brings true freedom. When we submit to God's will, we are no longer controlled by sin and our own will, but enter into God's ordained freedom. This freedom is a deep freedom of the mind, a freedom that does not need to be bound by the temptations or difficulties of the world. In obedience, we experience not bondage, but deeper rest and peace.

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Jesus was baptized and immediately came up out of the water. Suddenly the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and landing on him. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: When the voice of God the Father came from heaven, everyone knew that Jesus was not just another person who was baptized. Jesus is the perfect Son of God (in whom I am pleased), and Jesus was baptized to be equal to us, to show obedience to God's will, to fulfill all righteousness, to fulfill his human duties, to God. We see that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit appear at the same time. Jesus set the best example for us to always put obedience to God's will first and foremost in His earthly life, willing to "Father, if it is possible, take away this cup; but not according to my will, but according to thy will" (Matthew 26:39). Such obedience comes from unconditional trust and love for God.

John the Baptist said that his baptism was the baptism of repentance, which had a symbolic meaning and prepared the heart. The kingdom of heaven is coming, the Savior is coming, and John's message has caused a great shock in Jewish society. The "Pharisees and Sadducees," the main sects of Judaism at the time, were hostile to each other, and they "came to be baptized," not genuinely repentant, but believing that they would be protected from God's judgment by being baptized by John.

Repentance means that a person's mind turned away from God and turned away from God must now turn from his heart to God in order to enter the heavenly kingdom. Repentance is not a rejection of evil and conversion from good; Repentance is a change of mind, when our hearts turn to God, and when we bring down the kingdom of heaven. The Son of God had been born on earth to show who He was among men, and the implementation of the kingdom of heaven was coming, so John proclaimed in a loud voice in the Jewish wilderness, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." This "kingdom of heaven" is the scope of God's sovereignty, and it is God's authority manifested throughout the earth to rule in the likeness of heaven.

We are to live out the character of Christ, and we are to fulfill the Great Commission that Jesus entrusted to us when He left the world, so that all nations may be disciples of the Lord. Today, whether it is God's Word telling us that the kingdom of heaven is near, or the world is getting darker and more frequent, natural and man-made disasters are becoming more and more frequent, all of these are reminding us to preach the gospel to those around us while there is still time.

Let's pray together.

Dear Lord, help us to imitate John the Baptist by willingly and silently laying the groundwork for the Lord so that people may turn to God. It also helps us to imitate the humble obedience of the Lord Jesus and to give ourselves to fulfill God's heart. Thank you, Lord! Bless your church and bless your children!

Thank you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

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Amplified Bible

### **The Preaching of John the Baptist**

**3** In those days <sup>[a]</sup>John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the Wilderness of Judea [along the western side of the Dead Sea] and saying, <sup>2</sup>“<sup>[b]</sup>Repent [change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret past

sins, live your life in a way that proves repentance; seek God’s purpose for your life], for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”<sup>3</sup> This is the one who was mentioned by the prophet Isaiah when he said,

“The voice of one shouting in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the road for the Lord,  
[e]Make His highways straight (level, direct)!”

<sup>4</sup> Now this same John had clothing made of camel’s hair and a [wide] leather [d]band around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. <sup>5</sup> At that time Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; <sup>6</sup> and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

<sup>7</sup> But when he saw many of the [e]Pharisees and [f]Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the [divine] wrath *and* judgment to come? <sup>8</sup> So produce fruit that is consistent with repentance [demonstrating new behavior that proves a change of heart, and a conscious decision to turn away from sin]; <sup>9</sup> and do not presume to say to yourselves [as a defense], ‘We have Abraham for our father [so our inheritance assures us of salvation]’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children (descendants) for Abraham. <sup>10</sup> And already the axe [of God’s judgment] is [g]swinging toward the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>11</sup> “As for me, I baptize you [h]with water because of [your] repentance [that is, because you are willing to change your inner self—your old way of thinking, regret your sin and live a changed life], but He (the Messiah) who is coming after me is mightier [more powerful, more noble] than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to remove [even as His slave]; He will baptize you [who truly repent] with the Holy Spirit and [you who remain unrepentant] with [i]fire (judgment). <sup>12</sup> His [j]winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear out His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat (believers) into His barn (kingdom), but He will burn up the chaff (the unrepentant) with unquenchable fire.”

## The Baptism of Jesus

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan [River], to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to prevent Him [vigorously protesting], saying, “It is I who need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?” <sup>15</sup> But Jesus replied to him, “Permit it just now; for this is the fitting way for us [k]to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John permitted [it and baptized] Him. <sup>16</sup> After Jesus was baptized, He came up immediately out of the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he (John) saw the [l]Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him (Jesus), <sup>17</sup> and behold, a [m]voice from heaven said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased *and* delighted!”

**Matthew 3** marks a significant turning point in the New Testament as it introduces the ministry of John the Baptist and the public beginning of Jesus' mission. This chapter presents essential theological themes such as repentance, the coming of the Kingdom of God, the role of Jesus as the Messiah, and the confirmation of His divine identity. Here's a breakdown of the chapter, key verses, and theological thoughts.

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### 1. John the Baptist's Ministry (Matthew 3:1-12)

### 1-2:

*"In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'"*

- **Context:** John appears in the wilderness, a significant place for Israel's spiritual renewal. His message is simple yet profound: **repentance** and the **coming of the Kingdom of Heaven**. This reflects the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3, that a voice would cry out in the wilderness preparing the way for the Lord.
- **Key Thought:** John's call for repentance is not just for forgiveness of sin but for a radical change of heart and mind to align with God's reign.

### 3:

*"This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: 'A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"*

- **Context:** Matthew directly ties John's ministry to the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3), showing that John is the forerunner who prepares the way for the coming Messiah, Jesus.
- **Key Thought:** The prophetic fulfillment demonstrates that John's mission is part of God's unfolding plan of salvation.

### 4-6:

John's appearance and lifestyle are described as simple and ascetic: "John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey."

- **Key Thought:** John's lifestyle sets him apart as a prophetic figure, emphasizing humility and detachment from worldly pleasures, which underscores the sincerity of his message.

### 7-10:

*"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.'"*

- **Context:** John sharply rebukes the religious leaders, warning them against false security in their heritage and external religious practices. True repentance, he insists, must result in genuine transformation and fruit.
- **Key Thought:** This is a strong theological statement against mere ritualism and external religiosity. It emphasizes that **true repentance** is about a changed life, not merely a declaration of identity.

### 11-12:

*"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."*

- **Context:** John distinguishes his baptism (a symbol of repentance) from the coming baptism of Jesus (which will be by the Holy Spirit and fire). The **Holy Spirit** symbolizes empowerment for life and ministry, while **fire** represents purification and judgment.

- **Key Thought:** John's words point to a **greater work** that Jesus will accomplish—an inner transformation through the Holy Spirit and a purifying judgment.
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## 2. The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17)

### 13-15:

*"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, and do 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."*

- **Context:** Jesus comes to John to be baptized, though John initially objects, recognizing Jesus' sinlessness. Jesus insists on being baptized to "fulfill all righteousness," which indicates His alignment with God's will and His identification with humanity.
- **Key Thought:** Jesus' baptism is not for repentance but an act of obedience to God's will, marking the beginning of His public ministry. This act of humility and submission is a key moment where Jesus identifies fully with fallen humanity and affirms the righteousness of God's plan.

### 16-17:

*"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 alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"*

- **Context:** Jesus' baptism is accompanied by a divine theophany—God the Father's voice and the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove. This scene provides a visible confirmation of Jesus' divine sonship.
  - **Key Thought:** This moment reveals the **Trinity**—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—fully present and in unity. The Father's words affirm Jesus' identity as the **beloved Son** and His mission as the chosen one of God.
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## Key Theological Thoughts from Matthew 3

### 1. Repentance and the Kingdom of God

The core message of John's ministry is repentance in preparation for the arrival of God's kingdom. Repentance is not merely a one-time act but an ongoing process of turning away from sin and toward God's rule. The **Kingdom of God** is both a future reality (to be fully realized at the return of Christ) and a present reality that calls for transformation in the hearts of believers.

### 2. Jesus as the Fulfillment of Prophecy

Matthew emphasizes that Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. In **Matthew 3:3**, John is shown as fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3. Jesus' role as the Messiah is clearly established in His baptism, where God the Father affirms Him as His Son, and the Spirit descends on Him, equipping Him for His mission.

### 3. The Baptism of Jesus and the Trinity

Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3 reveals the **Trinity** in action. The Father speaks from heaven, the Son is baptized, and the Spirit descends like a dove. This moment not only confirms Jesus'

identity as the Messiah but also demonstrates the harmony and unity of the Godhead in the work of salvation.

#### 4. **Righteousness and Obedience to God's Plan**

When Jesus says that His baptism is to “fulfill all righteousness,” He is signaling His complete obedience to God's will. This underscores the theological truth that **righteousness** is not based on human effort but on obedience to God's divine will. Jesus' obedience to the Father's plan inaugurates the fulfillment of God's redemptive purpose for the world.

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### **Spiritual Influence and Applications**

#### 1. **True Repentance**

The call to repentance is central to Christian life. **Repentance** is not just about feeling sorry for sins but involves a complete transformation of the heart and mind. Christians are called to examine their lives continually and turn away from sin to embrace God's rule. John's rebuke of the Pharisees and Sadducees warns against superficial religiosity and calls for **authentic change**.

#### 2. **Humility in Service**

John's humility in recognizing Jesus' greatness (3:11-12) offers a powerful spiritual lesson. John acknowledges his unworthiness and points others to Jesus. Believers are similarly called to **humility**, recognizing that Jesus is the source of all salvation and goodness in our lives.

#### 3. **The Role of the Holy Spirit**

Jesus' baptism, and the subsequent descent of the Holy Spirit, emphasizes the importance of the **Holy Spirit** in the life of a believer. The Spirit empowers believers for ministry, purifies them, and leads them into all truth. Just as Jesus was anointed by the Spirit for His earthly ministry, so too are believers empowered by the Spirit to live out God's calling.

#### 4. **Living in Obedience**

Jesus' submission to baptism—despite being sinless—teaches believers the importance of **obedience** to God's will, even when it's difficult or unclear. The ultimate expression of love for God is **obedience** to His commands. Christians are called to follow the example of Jesus, living in submission to the Father's will.

#### 5. **Affirmation of Identity in Christ**

The voice from heaven declares, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (3:17). This declaration is not only for Jesus but also serves as an affirmation for all believers that their **identity** is rooted in being children of God. When believers are baptized into Christ, they too are affirmed as beloved children of the Father, with whom He is well-pleased.

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### **Conclusion**

Matthew 3 serves as a pivotal chapter in the Gospels, laying the foundation for the mission of Jesus and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. It emphasizes the need for **true repentance, obedience to God's will**, and the **empowering presence of the Holy Spirit**. The chapter highlights key theological truths about Jesus' identity as the Son of God and the Messiah. Spiritually, it calls Christians to live out their faith with humility, authenticity, and in full reliance on the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, the message of Matthew 3 invites us to

