

# Matthew 3 Commentary

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Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
[Another Chart](#) from Charles Swindoll

## THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED BY MATTHEW (shaded area)

Click chart to enlarge

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**Matthew 3:1** Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,

NET Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came into the wilderness of Judea proclaiming,

GNT Matthew 3:1 ν ὁ τα ς μ ραι ς κε ναι ς πα ρα γ νε ται ω ννη ς βα πτι ςτ ς κη ρ σσω ν ν τ ρ μ τ ς ου δα α ς

NLT Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was,

KJV Matthew 3:1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

ESV Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

NIV Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea

ASV Matthew 3:1 And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying,

CSB Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Wilderness of Judea

NKJ Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

NRS Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,

YLT Matthew 3:1 And in those days cometh John the Baptist, proclaiming in the wilderness of Judea,

- **those** - Lu 3:1,2
- **John** - Mt 11:11 14:2-14 16:14 17:12,13 21:25-27,32 Mk 1:4,15 6:16-29 Lu 1:13-17,76 3:2-20 Joh 1:6-8,15-36 3:27-36 Ac 1:22 13:24,25 Ac 19:3,4
- **preaching** - Isa 40:3-6 Mk 1:7 Lu 1:17
- **the wilderness** - Mt 11:7 Jos 14:10 15:61,62 Lu 7:24
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

## JOHN CAME AS A DIVINE HERALD

In the first century a **herald** was a Crier, Messenger or Proclaimer who made a public proclamation for kings, princes and military commanders, which is apropos for John heralded Jesus, who was the rightful King of the Jews (Mt 2:2+), the prophesied Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6+) and the coming conqueror as King of kings (Rev 19:11-16+). The **kerux** served as a close confidant of the king, and would travel throughout the realm announcing to the people whatever the king wished to make known. John understood his purpose for existence and stuck with the divine plan for his life. Certain qualities were required of **heralds**. They must have powerful voices, so voice auditions were often held. Also they had to be capable of calming down an unruly mob, in order to faithfully communicate the command. An honest disposition was also required, as a protection against the exaggeration of a royal decree. Furthermore, **they could make no additions or subtractions from the received message**. Later these heralds were also used to declare the message of a Greek deity or a religious oracle.

**THOUGHT** - Do you know God's plan for your life? Paul writes of every believer that "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (Eph 2:10+). So clearly our goal is to discern the **"good works"** God has pre-prepared for us to walk in!

**Now in those days John the Baptist came** (see [summary of John the Baptist below](#)) - **Moffatt** translates it "came on the scene," and what a "scene" John must have made in his out of vogue "*garment of camel's hair and a leather belt about his waist!*" (Mt 3:4). Mark's presentation of the prophet is even more sudden Mk 1:4+ stating that "**John the Baptist** appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Obviously this phrase "**in those days**" is somewhat vague and there is a divergence of opinions in the answer to the question "what days?", but most consider it to be "a general term that reveals little chronologically but insists that the account is historical." (D A Carson). Luke's passage does give us a general sense of when John came on the scene writing "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar...the word of the Lord came to John...so he began saying to the crowds..." (Lk 3:1, 3, 7+) **Hendriksen** comments that "If John, like Jesus (Luke 3:23), was about thirty years of age when he made his first public appearance, then, since the Baptist was about six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:26, 36), and since Jesus probably began his ministry in late A.D. 26 or early 27, it was likely during the summer of that same year that John had begun to address the multitudes." (BORROW [BNTC-Matthew page 196](#))

The immediately preceding passage in Matthew 2:23+ says Jesus "came and lived in a city called Nazareth." So Matthew skips over the childhood and young adulthood of Jesus and begins chapter 3 "**in those days**" which would be almost 30 years after the end of chapter 2. **Came** (see [full note below](#)) is the idea of he came onto the public scene and what a scene he made - suddenly appearing, strangely dressed, strange diet, strong preaching and calling Jews to be baptized (something usually done for only Gentile proselytes). **Came** "is the [historical present](#) and calls for a vivid imagination on the part of the reader." (Robertson) The **historical present** describes a past event as though it were actually taking place: e.g., "they spoke to him about her" (Mark 1:30). Here the present is a pictorial tense, displaying the action vividly before our eyes. In English we often use the historical present when recounting personal experiences such as "then he says to me". The Gospel of Mark frequently uses historical present - see peculiarities of Mark. Matthew wants us to picture John coming forward, making his dramatic appearance on the desert stage!

**Darrell Bock** on **John the Baptist** - Luke 3:1-20+ contains much uniquely Lucan material. Only Luke details the content of John the Baptist's teaching (Luke 3:10-14+). Only Luke cites Isa. 40:4-5 (Luke 3:4-6+). The lengthened citation (Matthew and Mark cite only Isa. 40:3) means that Jesus' coming offers the opportunity of salvation for all. Only Luke mentions the imprisonment of John so early in the account (Luke 3:19-20). But there are also traditional materials that have clear parallels elsewhere. The warning about judgment to the Jewish leaders has a clear parallel (Luke 3:7-9+; Matt. 3:7-10). The promise of the Mightier One to come has conceptual parallels (Luke 3:15-17; Matt. 3:11-12; Mark 1:7-8). Both old and fresh material describe John's ministry of preparation...This pericope (Lk 3:1-6+) has a twofold purpose: to place Jesus' ministry in the midst of world history (Lk 3:1-2a+) and to set the ministry of John the Baptist in the midst of OT hope (Lk 3:4-6+). The word of God comes to John in the wilderness as his ministry renews God's direct activity for people (Lk 3:2b-3). By beginning in the wilderness, the account picks up where the infancy section left off with John (Lk

1:80+)....**External ancient sources testify to the existence of John the Baptist.** Josephus makes explicit mention of him (**ED**: see interesting discussion of [John the Baptist and Josephus](#)). As Fitzmyer (1981: 451) notes, there is no contradiction between the portrait of Josephus and the portrait of the Gospels. Josephus stresses the political fears that John aroused in Herod, while the Gospels focus on his moral preaching, even against the political leadership. (Baker Exegetical Commentary-Luke)

**Baptist** ([910](#))(**baptistes** from **baptizo** = to baptize) means one who dips or who baptizes and is always used as the surname of John as the "Baptizer" the forerunner of Messiah. Matt. 3:1; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 11:12; Matt. 14:2; Matt. 14:8; Matt. 16:14; Matt. 17:13; Mk. 6:25; Mk. 8:28; Lk. 7:20; Lk. 7:33; Lk. 9:19. Not used in the Septuagint. As noted Jews had the rite of baptism for Gentile proselytes, so here we see John in essence treating the Jews as Gentiles! John is a bold because he is filled with the Spirit Who enables bold declaration!

**John the Baptist** - The NAS uses this specific designation 15x and all but 3 use the noun **baptistes** with 3 in Mark using the verb **baptizo**- Matt. 3:1; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 11:12; Matt. 14:2; Matt. 14:8; Matt. 16:14; Matt. 17:13; Mk. 1:4 ([baptizo](#)); Mk. 6:14 ([baptizo](#)); Mk. 6:24 ([baptizo](#)); Mk. 6:25; Mk. 8:28; Lk. 7:20; Lk. 7:33; Lk. 9:19

**Came** ([3854](#))(**paraginomai** from **para** = beside + **ginomai** = to come to exist) means literally to become near and hence to come on the scene with various nuances - **(1)** most commonly it means to come or arrive at a place, reach a place, be present. **BDAG** adds "to be in movement so as to be present at a particular place" It often indicated an official arrival as the magi in Mt 2:1 (e.g., Mt 3:13; Mk 14:43; Lk 7:4, 20; Lk 8:19; Lk 11:6; Lk 22:52; Ac 9:26, 39; Acts 13:14; Acts 15:4; Acts 20:18; Acts 24:17, 24; 1 Cor 16:3); **(2)** to make a public appearance, show up publicly at a place; the arrival or public appearance of an official personage (Mt 3:1; Lk 12:51 = "Do you suppose that I **came** to grant peace on earth?", Heb 9:11 = "when Christ **appeared** as a high priest of the good things to come"); **(3)** stand by, to come to the aid of (2 Ti 4:16).**(4)** To come against someone usually with a hostile purpose ("who had come" and "against" = epi - upon - Lk 22:52).

**Paraginomai** 36x in 36v - Matt. 2:1; Matt. 3:1; Matt. 3:13; Mk. 14:43; Lk. 7:4; Lk. 7:20; Lk. 8:19; Lk. 11:6; Lk. 12:51; Lk. 14:21; Lk. 19:16; Lk. 22:52; Jn. 3:23; Jn. 8:2; Acts 5:22; Acts 5:25; Acts 9:26; Acts 9:39; Acts 10:33; Acts 11:23; Acts 13:14; Acts 14:27; Acts 15:4; Acts 17:10; Acts 18:27; Acts 20:18; Acts 21:18; Acts 23:16; Acts 23:35; Acts 24:17; Acts 24:24; Acts 25:7; Acts 28:21; 1 Co. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:16; Heb. 9:11

**Paraginomai** is common in the Septuagint so the following are only a sample of over 170 uses - Gen. 14:13; Gen. 26:32; Gen. 32:20; Gen. 35:9; Gen. 45:19; Gen. 50:10; Gen. 50:16; Exod. 2:16; Exod. 2:17; Exod. 2:18; Exod. 8:24; Exod. 16:35; Exod. 18:6; Exod. 18:12; Exod. 18:15; Exod. 19:9; Exod. 20:20; Exod. 36:4; Lev. 14:48; Num. 9:6; Num. 10:21; Num. 14:36; Num. 20:5; Num. 20:22; Num. 21:7; Deut. 18:6; Jos. 5:14; Jos. 9:8; Jos. 9:12; Jos. 11:5; Jos. 18:8; Jos. 21:45; Jos. 22:15; Jos. 24:11; Jdg. 5:28; Jdg. 6:5; Jdg. 8:15; Jdg. 9:31; Jdg. 9:37; Jdg. 11:18; Jdg. 13:9; Jdg. 18:2; Jdg. 18:7; Jdg. 18:8; Jdg. 19:10; Jdg. 20:34; Jdg. 21:2; Ruth 1:19; Ruth 1:22

John the Baptist's Ministry - click to enlarge  
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John's public preaching ended nearly four hundred years of prophetic silence. As **Simmons** says "In this sense his message and ministry marked the culmination of the law and the prophets, but heralded the inbreaking of the kingdom of God (Matthew 11:12 ; Luke 16:16+). So John was truly a transitional figure, forming the link between the Old and New Testaments. He spans the ages with one foot firmly planted in the Old Testament and the other squarely placed in the New."

**John MacArthur** comments that "the coming of the herald (John the Baptist) signified the coming of the King. The beginning of John's ministry signaled the beginning of Jesus' ministry (see Acts 10:37-38+)....Everything about John the Baptist was unique and amazing—his sudden public appearance, his life-style, his message, his baptizing, and his humility. He was born to a mother who was barren. He was a priest by heritage but became a prophet. He forsook his earthly father's ministry for the sake of his heavenly Father's. After spending most of his life in the desert, at the right moment God spoke to his heart, and he began to thunder out the message God had given him in that desert-to announce the coming of the King." (Matthew Commentary)

**Hendriksen** has a poignant picture of the prophet's preaching - His message was not prolix (unduly prolonged) but pithy, not soothing but soul-searching, not flattering but frightening, at least to considerable degree. He was a preacher of imminent doom (see Mt 3:7, 10), a catastrophe that could be avoided only by a, radical turnabout of mind and heart. The gist of his message is given here in verse 2. (BORROW [BNTC-Matthew](#))

**Preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying** - Luke 3:2+ says "the Word of God came to John" and presumably this is the Word that he was preaching. All preachers should do the same. Today preachers hear "the Word of God" from the Bible, so any preaching that is not preaching from the Bible is not likely to be a Word from God! With his last words Paul commanded Timothy "Preach the Word." (2 Ti 4:2+). John did not pick the most populous, popular venue for his preaching tour! In fact John almost certainly did not choose, but surrendered to the leading of the Spirit, Who later led Jesus to the wilderness also! Are we willing to go where God sends us, even if it seems to be like a "wilderness" to us? Do we have an Isaiah 6 mentality of "Here am I. Send me!" (Isa 6:8)? On the map above (click to enlarge) the Judean **wilderness** was the region to the immediate West of the Dead Sea and was an utterly barren desert. John probably preached near the northern end of this region, close to where the Jordan flowed into the Dead Sea (Lk 3:6+). The **wilderness** was probably a full day's journey from Jerusalem and certainly would be an unusual location to herald the coming King, but then God's way are not man's ways...

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. 9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts. 10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; 11 So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:8-11).

**Preaching** (proclaiming) ([2784](#))([kerusso](#) from [kerux/keryx](#) = a herald - one who acts as the medium of the authority of one who proclamation he makes; [kerugma](#) = the thing preached or the message) means to proclaim (publicly) or to herald or act as a public crier - the town official who would make a proclamation in a public gathering. **Kerusso** was used of the official whose duty it was to proclaim loudly and extensively the coming of an earthly king, even as **the gospel** is to clearly announce the coming of the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16+). The Imperial Herald would enter a town in behalf of the Emperor, and make a public proclamation of the message which his Sovereign ordered him to give, doing so with such formality, gravity, and authority as to emphasize that the message must be heeded! (Think about this in regard to the Gospel of God instead of the decree of a man! cf 1Th 2:13+). He gave the people exactly what the Emperor bade him give, nothing more, nothing less. He did not dare add to the message or take away from it. Matthew's uses of **kerusso** - Matt. 3:1; Matt. 4:17; Matt. 4:23; Matt. 9:35; Matt. 10:7; Matt. 10:27; Matt. 11:1; Matt. 24:14; Matt. 26:13.

**Robertson** quips that "he was also the Preacher, heralding his message out in the barren hills at first where few people were, but soon his startling message drew crowds from far and near. Some preachers start with crowds and drive them away!"

**Wilderness** (desolate, desert)([2048](#))([eremos](#)) when used as an adjective, normally describes places which are abandoned, desolate, or unpopulated. The **wilderness** referred to in the Gospels extended from the hill country of Judah on the west to the Dead Sea on the east, and north into the Jordan River valley (click the map above to enlarge and see the Judean Wilderness). The **wilderness** was "indeed a desolation, a vast undulating expanse of barren chalky soil covered with pebbles, broken stones and rocks. Here and there a bit of brushwood appears, with snakes crawling underneath (Mt 3:7)" (Hendriksen BORROW [BNTC-Matthew](#)) In a way *eremos* in this context is a **double entendre** because John was himself in a literal **wilderness** crying and pointing out to the Jewish nation the way out of the spiritual **wilderness** and darkness which had enshrouded the nation of Israel for centuries. **Robertson** adds "There were some people scattered over the barren cliffs. Here John came in close touch with the rocks, the trees, the goats, the sheep, and the shepherds, the snakes that slipped before the burning grass over the rocks." All Matthew's uses of **eremos** - Matt. 3:1; Matt. 3:3; Matt. 4:1; Matt. 11:7; Matt. 14:13; Matt. 14:15; Matt. 23:38; Matt. 24:26.

[The Wilderness - R W Funk - Journal of Biblical Literature - Sept. 1959](#) (allows you to read up to 6 articles free each month)

## JOHN THE BAPTIST SUMMARY

### Related Resources on John the Baptist:

- G J Goldberg - [John the Baptist and Josephus](#)

- [Who was John the Baptist in the Bible?](#)
- [Was John the Baptist really Elijah reincarnated?](#) - (Excerpt click link at left for full explanation) - John did for Jesus what Elijah was to have done for the coming of the Lord, but he was not Elijah reincarnated. Jesus identified John the Baptist as Elijah, while John the Baptist rejected that identification. How do we reconcile these two teachings? There is a key phrase in Jesus' identification of John the Baptist that must not be overlooked. He says, "If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah." In other words, John the Baptist's identification as Elijah was not predicated upon his being the actual Elijah, but upon people's response to his role. To those who were willing to believe in Jesus, John the Baptist functioned as Elijah, for they believed in Jesus as Lord. To the religious leaders who rejected Jesus, John the Baptist did not perform this function.
- [Did John the Baptist lose his faith in Jesus as the Messiah \(Matthew 11:3; Luke 7:19\)?](#)
- [In what way was John the Baptist the greatest \(Matthew 11:11\)?](#)
- [What was the meaning and importance of the baptism of John the Baptist?](#)
- [Why did John the Baptist refer to the Pharisees as a brood of vipers?](#)
- Whyte's Dictionary of Biblical Characters - [John the Baptist](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [John the Baptist](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [John the Baptist](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [John the Baptist](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [John the Baptist](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [John the baptist](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [John the Baptist](#)

**Warren Wiersbe - John the Baptist** was a model preacher. He was a road builder who prepared the way for the Lord (Mt 3:3; Isa. 40:3), and an axman who got to the root of sin and exposed it (Mt 3:10). He was not intimidated by people, nor was he afraid to preach about judgment (Mt 3:12). He was obedient to his Lord and magnified Him in all things (John 3:30). (BORROW [With the Word](#))

**John Broadus** gives a good summary of John - **John the Baptist**.—The most probable date for the beginning of the Baptist's ministry is A. D. 26, say in the spring. (Comp. on Mt 2:19.) The name John (Johanan = Jehovah graciously gave - ED: Others say "Gift of Jehovah") had become common since the time of the popular ruler John Hyrcanus (died B. C. 106); thirteen persons of that name are mentioned in Josephus; and in the New Testament, besides the Baptist and the Evangelist, we meet with John Mark (Acts 12:12), and John of the high-priestly family. (Acts 4:6.) John the forerunner was well known to Matthew's first readers as the 'Baptist,' or Baptizer (comp. 14:2, 8); we find Josephus also ("Ant.," 18, 5, 2) mentioning him as "John, who was surnamed Baptist." This name, the Baptizer, was of course given him in consequence of the remarkable rite he performed, which attracted universal attention, and was repeatedly used as the characteristic representative of his whole work (see on Mt 21:25).—The circumstances connected with John's birth are given only by Luke. Of his history since childhood we only know that he 'was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.' (Luke 1:80+.) His father would be anxious to give to the child of such hopes the best priestly education, and it is probable that he retired to 'the deserts' after the death of his parents, who were of advanced age at the time of his birth. Such a step would be natural only when grown, or nearly so. In the wild region between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, he probably spent his time in religious meditation, ripening for his great mission. Yet that he knew human nature, and observed the men of his own time, appears from Luke 3:10–14+. In this same wild region dwelt the [Essenes](#) (see on Mt 3:7), and here also Josephus ("Life," 2) locates the teacher Banus, with whom he spent three years in seclusion, at a period about thirty years later than John's public appearance. It had been appointed (Luke 1:15+) that from the beginning of John's life he should not 'drink wine or strong drink,' i. e., should live as a Nazirite (Nu 6:1–21), implying extraordinary and lifelong consecration to God's service. A child of the mountains, and living a temperate life in the open air, he probably became strong in body, as well as 'grew strong in spirit' (Luke 1:80+.) Comp. on Mt 3:4. It is probable (see Mt 3:13) that he began his ministry when about thirty years old. **This protracted period of private discipline and preparation in the life both of Christ and his forerunner, is in striking contrast with our own impatience even under the most hurried superficial processes of education.** (Alexander).—That a priest should be called to be a prophet was not strange; comp. Jeremiah and Ezekiel.—For a further account of John, see throughout this chapter, and on Mt 4:12; 9:14 ff.; Mt 11:2–19; Mt 14:1–13; Mt 17:10–13; Mt 21:25, 32. Köhler: "Though the historical information is very limited, there are few persons of whom we can form so clear and lively a conception.... An imposing figure, in whose posture and traits of countenance were depicted iron will, and deep, holy earnestness, yet without passing into hardness. In general, John may be called a classical example of the manifestation of love in the garb of severity. We cannot doubt his profound compassion for the unhappy condition of his people, sunken in sin and exposed to judgment, although it would hardly occur to us to conceive of him as weeping, like the Lord Jesus, over the coming fate of Jerusalem." ([Matthew 3 Commentary](#))

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A number of passages concerning John the Baptist can be somewhat enigmatic or confusing. So here is a good summary by **William Simmons...**

Apart from Jesus Christ, John the Baptist is probably the most theologically significant figure in the Gospels. As was the case with Jesus, his birth was meticulously recorded (Luke 1:5-25+). His entrance into the world was marked by angelic proclamation and divine intervention (Luke 1:57-80). John's birth not only parallels that of Jesus, but echoes the momentous occasion of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:15-22 ; 21:1-7). John is clearly a pivotal figure in the salvation history of God.

Although his formative years were lived in obscurity in the desert (Luke 1:80), his public ministry ended nearly four hundred years of prophetic silence. John was that voice crying in the wilderness preparing the way for the coming Messiah (Isaiah 40:3 ; Matthew 3:3+ ; Mark 1:2-3+; Luke 3:3-6+). In this sense his message and ministry marked the culmination of the law and the prophets, but heralded the inbreaking of the kingdom of God (Matthew 11:12 ; Luke 16:16+). So John was truly a transitional figure, forming the link between the Old and New Testaments. He spans the ages with one foot firmly planted in the Old Testament and the other squarely placed in the New.

**The central theme of his ministry was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near"** (Matthew 3:2+). He was called "The Baptist" because his practice was to baptize those who responded to the message he proclaimed and sincerely repented of their sins (Matthew 3:1+; Mark 6:14; Luke 7:20+).

**John was an end-times prophet.** He conducted his ministry with an eschatological authority that demanded immediate action. He taught that judgment is at hand. The axe is laid to the roots and God will thoroughly purge his threshing floor (Matthew 3:10-12 ; Luke 3:9,17+). And the authenticity of repentance was evidenced in very practical terms: share with those in need, eliminate graft, and prohibit extortion (Luke 3:11-14+).

**John's lifestyle was as austere as his message.** He was an ascetic living in the wilderness, clothed in camel hair and subsisting on locusts and wild honey (Matthew 3:4+ ; Mark 1:6). Unlike Jesus, he expected people to come to him, rather than he going to them (Matthew 3:5).

**John was no "crowd pleaser."** He willingly confronted the hypocrisy of the religious establishment (Matthew 3:7+ ; Luke 3:7+). He did not hesitate to expose the immorality of Herod and chose to die a martyr's death rather than compromise his convictions (Matthew 14:3-12 ; Mark 6:17-29+).

**All of these characteristics portray John as a fiery prophet proclaiming the apocalyptic message of God.** Indeed, Luke says that John came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17+) (ED: see [Was John the Baptist really Elijah reincarnated?](#) ). He goes on to allude to Malachi 4:5+, which states that Elijah will return "before that great and dreadful day of the Lord." In fact, some contemporaries of John inquired if he were Elijah (John 1:21+). The belief that Elijah would return and prepare the way of the Lord can be traced to Malachi 3:1+, Malachi 4:5+. Such belief is also found in the extra-biblical accounts (Apocrypha) of Sirah 48:10, [2 Esdras 6:2](#) f. The Gospels also indicate that many believed that Elijah would come first, and then the Christ (Matthew 11:14 ; 17:10 ; Mark 6:15 ; 9:11 ; Luke 9:8+). **John flatly denied that he was Elijah reincarnated** (John 1:21,25+). Nevertheless Jesus affirmed that Elijah must come first and that he had come in the person of John the Baptist (Matthew 17:11-13 ; Mark 9:12-13). John fulfilled Malachi's prophecy in a spiritual sense, rather than in a literal way.

#### **ADDITIONAL NOTES ON JOHN'S RELATION TO ELIJAH**

**JOHN MACARTHUR** - The question about his being Elijah introduces some important truth. At every orthodox Passover ceremony even today a cup is reserved at the table for Elijah. At the circumcision of orthodox Jewish baby boys a chair is placed for Elijah. The anticipation is that, if Elijah would ever come and sit in the chair or drink from the cup, the Messiah's arrival would be imminent. That belief is based on Malachi 4:5-6, in which the prophet predicts, "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers."....The Elijah prophesied by Malachi was not to be a reincarnation of the ancient prophet. Rather, as the angel of the Lord told Zacharias regarding his son, John the Baptist, the prophesied forerunner would come "**in the spirit and power of Elijah**" (Luke 1:17+). John would not be the ancient prophet come back to earth but would minister in much the same style and power as had Elijah. In that way, as Jesus had told the disciples at least once before, "**[John] is Elijah, who was to come**" (Matt. 11:14). Why then, some wonder, did John himself disclaim being Elijah? When

the priests and Levites from Jerusalem asked him, "**Are you Elijah?...** he said, "**I am not**" (John 1:21). He denied being Elijah because, though he knew of the prophecy of Luke 1, like Jesus, he realized the question was about a literal, reincarnated Elijah. And, though John did not share Jesus' omniscience, he doubtlessly also realized that the questioning of the priests and Levites originated from unbelief, not sincere faith. They were not interested in learning the truth but of finding a way to discredit John, just as they would later seek ways to discredit the One whose way he came to prepare. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Matthew)

**ADDITIONAL NOTE FROM HENDRIKSEN** on the meaning of **in the Spirit and power of Elijah** asking "Does this mean that John was Elijah? The answer is both **"No"** and **"Yes."** Not literally, as is clear from the fact that when John was asked, "**Are you Elijah?**" he truthfully answered, "I am not" (John 1:21+). But figuratively, so that Jesus even calls him Elijah (Mt. 11:13, 14; cf. Mt 17:12; Mark 9:12, 13). The solution is given here in Luke 1:17+: The "**spirit and power of Elijah**" was going to be clearly displayed in John the Baptist. Cf. Elijah's boldness, "I have not troubled Israel but you [Ahab] have" (1 Ki 18:18), with the Baptist's (Mt. 14:4), "It isn't right for you [Herod Antipas] to have her [your brother Philip's wife Herodias]." And see also Mt. 3:7+; Lk 3:7+, Lk 3:19+. (BORROW [BNTC-LUKE page 72](#))

**WARREN WIERSBE** on John like Elijah - In Mal. 4:5–6, God promised that Elijah would come before the dreadful Day of the Lord. The Jews asked John if he was Elijah and he denied it (John 1:21+). Yet, if the Jews had received their King, John would have been that Elijah (see Mt 11:14). John came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Luke 1:17+). John was the last of the Old Testament prophets (Luke 16:16+ = "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John.") and the greatest of them (Mt. 11:7–15; Mt 17:9–13). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**JOHN GRASSMICK** - The presence of [Elijah](#) at the transfiguration (Mk 9:4), the confirmation of Jesus as Messiah (Mk 8:29; 9:7), and His reference to the Resurrection (Mk 9:9) suggested that the end of all things was near. If so, where was Elijah who must come first to prepare the nation spiritually for the Messiah's coming? (cf. Malachi 3:1–4; 4:5–6) Perhaps the disciples thought Elijah's work of renewal would mean the Messiah would not need to suffer. In reply, Jesus made two things clear. First, He acknowledged on the one hand that Elijah does come (lit., "is coming") first (before the Messiah) and restores ("is going to restore") all things through spiritual renewal (Mal. 4:5–6). On the other hand this does not remove the necessity for the Son of Man to suffer much and be rejected (cf. Ps. 22; Isa. 53, esp. Isa 53:3). Second, however (**but** in Greek is a strong adversative), Jesus declared that indeed **Elijah has come** already. In a veiled way Mark recorded how Jesus identified **John the Baptist** as the one who fulfilled at Jesus' First Advent the role function expected of the end-time Elijah (cf. Mark 1:2–8+; Matt. 17:13; Luke 1:17). Jesus gave **John** his true significance which John did not even recognize about himself (cf. John 1:21; Matt. 11:14). (Bible Knowledge Commentary comments on Mark 9:11-13)

**LOUIS BARBIERI** - [Elijah](#) had already come in the person of John the Baptist and his ministry was not recognized. Instead of receiving John the Baptist, the religious leaders had rejected him. As they refused to acknowledge John's ministry and instead rejected him, Jesus too would be rejected. At the first announcement concerning the birth of John, Zechariah his father had been told that he would go before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17). The Lord's earlier words concerning John (Matt. 11:14) affirmed that he would have been the predicted Elijah if the nation had responded in saving faith. Everything necessary to bring in Messiah's kingdom had been performed. The only contingency was the acceptance by the nation of her rightful King. (Bible Knowledge Commentary comments on Matthew 17:10-13)

**JOHN BROADUS** on John the Baptist's similarity to Elijah - It had been predicted, (Mal. 4:5 f.) that Elijah the prophet should be sent before the advent of Messiah to prepare the people for his coming. This was explained by the angel (Luke 1:17) as to be fulfilled in John, who would go before the Lord 'in the spirit and power of Elijah,' and was also declared by Jesus to have been fulfilled in John (see on 11:14; 17:10–13). The ministry of each consisted mainly in severe reproof and exhortation to amendment, and there was something appropriate to such a work in seclusion of life, with rude fare and coarse clothing, and in austerity of manner. "Even his appearance called men to repentance." (Theophylact). This was hardly personal asceticism, but appears to have been designed, like the numerous symbolical acts employed by other prophets, to attract attention, and give greater impressiveness, to the reformer's rebukes of a luxurious and worldly minded generation. It was what we call an "object-lesson." We may imagine the effect when Elijah suddenly issued from his retreats, and, arrayed like some Bedouin or savage Dervish of to-day, stood before a weak and self-indulgent king, with stern look and tone, and harsh words of merited

reproof. And similar must have been the effect of John's appearance and known mode of life. (Comp. Mt 11:8.) Elijah is described as 'an hairy man' (2 Kings 1:8), literally 'a possessor of hair,' and this is best understood as meaning that he wore a garment made of hair, especially as his girdle is mentioned immediately after. This characteristic dress of Elijah appears to have been imitated by succeeding prophets; for we find in Zec 13:4 the prediction of a time when the false prophets would become ashamed of their impostures, and would not 'wear a garment of hair to deceive.' On the part of John, these peculiarities were not a mere imitation of his prototype, for they had the same appropriateness and significance in both cases.—There is little propriety in the notion of some artists and writers that John was attenuated through much fasting. Doubtless he did fast (see on 9:14), but so did many Jews, and not necessarily to attenuation. His out-door life and homely food might (see on v. 2) even promote bodily health (compare Elijah), and physical force seems-naturally implied in his preaching to great crowds in the open air, and boldly facing the most jealous and powerful. John was also like Elijah in that he was not a writing prophet, but left his work to be recorded by others. (Pressensé). ([Commentary](#))

**In this way Jesus acknowledges the central role that John played in God's plan of salvation** He was the greatest born among women because he had the privilege of pointing to the Lamb of God (John 1:29-34+). Yet as the last great prophet of the pre-Christian era, he was the least in the kingdom of God (Matthew 11:11 ; Luke 7:28+).

**John fully accepted his subordinate role to Christ.** He denied that he was the Christ and repeatedly emphasized that he was simply a witness to the Light (John 1:19-23+; cf. also John 1:6-9+ ; John 3:27-30+ ). John stated that Jesus was greater than he, and that Jesus had a more powerful ministry and baptism (Mark 1:7-8 ; Luke 3:16+ ; John 1:26-27+). He did not want to baptize Jesus, but rather desired to be baptized by Jesus (Matthew 3:13-14). John allowed his disciples to leave his own leadership and follow after Jesus (John 1:35-39 +).

**But for all of his greatness, John was merely human.** In this sense he too joined in the popular speculations about the identity of Christ. It may be that John's vision of the Messiah varied so much from what he heard and saw in Jesus, that he came to question if Jesus were really the Christ (Matthew 11:1-2 ; Luke 7:1+). The fact that Jesus was not an ascetic, and that he actively sought the fellowship of publicans and sinners may have been an offense to John and his disciples (Matthew 9:9-17 ; Matthew 11:18-19 ; Luke 7:33-34+). Jesus may have rebuked John in this regard when he said, "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me" (Matthew 11:6 ; Luke 7:23+).

**Finally, even though John was merely a witness serving as a transitional figure, the impact of his life and ministry should not be underestimated.** During his lifetime he had a following of disciples who shared common practices such as fasting and prayers (Matthew 9:14 ; John 1:35-37+ ; Jn 4:1-2+). John's disciples survived his death and spread throughout the Mediterranean world. Apollos was from Alexandria in North Africa and at one point knew only of the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-25 ). Similarly, upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul encountered about a dozen disciples of John. They too had only experienced the baptism of John (Acts 19:1-7). **These instances indicate that the Baptist's movement may have had more influence than what we are able to glean from the New Testament....**

In conclusion, John the Baptist is of great theological importance in the New Testament. He ended nearly four hundred years of prophetic silence and paved the way for the Messiah. In the spirit of Elijah, he preached a message of repentance and baptism. In his darkest hour he questioned if Jesus was the One who was to come, or whether there would be another. He inaugurated a spiritual movement that had influence long after his death and extended throughout the Mediterranean world. ([Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#))

**Matthew 3:2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."**

Hendriksen - "Be converted ("Make a complete turnabout in mind and heart."), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (BORROW [BNTC-Matthew](#))

NET Matthew 3:2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

GNT Matthew 3:2 [κα] λ γων, Μετανοε τε· γγικεν γ ρ βασιλε α τ ν ο ραν v.

NLT Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came to the Judean wilderness and began preaching. His message was, "Repent of your sins and turn to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near."

KJV Matthew 3:2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

ESV Matthew 3:2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

NIV Matthew 3:2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

ASV Matthew 3:2 Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

CSB Matthew 3:2 and saying, "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!"

NKJ Matthew 3:2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

NRS Matthew 3:2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

YLT Matthew 3:2 and saying, 'Reform, for come nigh hath the reign of the heavens,'

- **Repent** - Mt 4:17 11:20 12:41 21:29-32 1Ki 8:47 Job 42:6 Eze 18:30-32 Eze 33:11 Mk 1:4,15 6:12 Lu 13:3,5 15:7,10 16:30 24:47 Ac 2:38 3:19 11:18 17:30 20:21 26:20 2Co 7:10 2Ti 2:25 Heb 6:1 2Pe 3:9 Rev 2:5,21
- **for** - Mt 5:3,10,19,20 6:10,33 10:7 11:11,12 13:11,24,31,33,44,45,47 Mt 13:52 18:1-4,23 20:1 22:2 23:13 25:1,14 Da 2:44 Lu 6:20 9:2 Lu 10:9-11 Joh 3:3-5 Col 1:13
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## REPENT ABOUT FACE!

The command "[About Face](#)" describes the act of pivoting 180 degrees, especially in a military formation. Another English definition says it is "a reversal of direction, of attitude, behavior, or point of view." This is a good picture of repentance that Jesus commands. Jesus continues the call to repentance made by John in Mark 1:4+.

**Repent** is not a **suggestion** which is a proposal offered for acceptance or rejection. John is not giving a "multiple choice!" It reminds me of the phrase "take it or leave it!" **Repent** is the one side of the coin (so to speak) which is balanced by the other side which is fruit-bearing (Mt 3:8, 10), supernatural fruit serving to authenticate whether one has truly repented or just feels sorry about their sin (or sorry they got caught!) with no change of heart or mind.

In a similar passage with a slightly different twist Luke says that John "came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching ([kerusso](#)) a baptism of repentance **for the forgiveness of sins.**" (Lk 3:3+)

**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**- Some favor the translation "be converted." As alluded to in the title above, **repent** is not a suggestion but a command. Repentance is not optional but mandatory! What is interesting is that the command is in the [present imperative](#) which in essence calls one to a lifestyle (so to speak) of repentance. In other words one does not just repent once and "coast" the rest of their spiritual life, but repeatedly practices repentance as needed (which is often for most of us!). After Jesus was driven from His hometown of Nazareth to His future Galilean base of operations in Capernaum, we see Jesus proclaim the same message as John.

From that time Jesus began to preach ([kerusso](#)) and say, "**Repent** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)), for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."(Mt 4:17+, cf Lk 5:32+)

In a similar passage in Mark Jesus adds "**believe**" - "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) and **believe** ([present imperative](#)) in the gospel." ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)).

**NOTE:** **Repent** is a command in all the uses above. Why is that important? It means that you must rely on the Spirit giving you the desire and the power to repent (see Php 2:13NLT+). Repentance is a gift as Paul says in Ro 2:4+ "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" What leads you to repentance? God's kindness! The Spirit is the "Dispenser" (so to speak) of this divine kindness. And again note that in Acts 11:18+ Luke records "When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then,**God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.**" Here we see repentance is granted by God, and so it is a gift of God.

The disciples preached the same message - "'And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" (Mt 10:7) and "They went out and preached that men should **repent**." (Mark 6:12) In Peter's sermon at Pentecost he declared "**Repent**, ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38+, cf Acts 3:19+, Acts 20:21+, Acts 26:18+)

**Repent** (3340) ([metanoeo](#) from **meta** = with, among + **noeo** = to think, exercise the mind <> from **nous** = mind - see study = [metanoia](#)) means to have another mind. **Metanoeo** means to change one's mind in respect to sin, God, and self, from what is wrong to what is right! To turn to God and from sin (Luke 15:7+ = "one sinner who **repents**", 10). **Broadus** observes that "wherever this Greek word is used in the New Testament the reference is to changing the mind and the purpose from sin to holiness." It is not an intellectual decision but a change of mind that issues in a change of behavior. Stated simply repent means "to change one's mind and act on that change (as in Mt 3:8)." In other words fruit demonstrates that a profession (of repentance) is a true possession (of repentance). The corollary is no changed life indicates there has been no changed mind! Don't be deceived by "[easy believism](#)" for the fruit of that belief is eternal death! (Where easy believism fails is its lack of recognition that a person with faith in Jesus will lead a progressively changed life.) This change of mind may, especially in the case of Christians who have fallen into sin, be preceded by sorrow (2Cor 7:8, 9, 10, 11); but sorrow for sin, though it may cause repentance, is not repentance. Repentance involves sorrow for sin, but sorrow that leads to a change of thinking, desire, and conduct of life. All uses of **metanoeo** - Matt. 3:2; Matt. 4:17; Matt. 11:20; Matt. 11:21; Matt. 12:41; Mk. 1:15; Mk. 6:12; Lk. 10:13; Lk. 11:32; Lk. 13:3; Lk. 13:5; Lk. 15:7; Lk. 15:10; Lk. 16:30; Lk. 17:3; Lk. 17:4; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 8:22; Acts 17:30; Acts 26:20; 2 Co. 12:21; Rev. 2:5; Rev. 2:16; Rev. 2:21; Rev. 2:22; Rev. 3:3; Rev. 3:19; Rev. 9:20; Rev. 9:21; Rev. 16:9; Rev. 16:11

One of the best illustrations of **genuine repentance** is found in Paul's description of the saints at Thessalonica...

For they themselves (other believers in Macedonia and Achaia) report about us (Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) what kind of a reception we had with you, and **how you turned to God from idols** (PERFECT PICTURE OF REPENTANCE) **to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven** (PERFECT PICTURE OF BRINGING FORTH FRUIT IN KEEPING WITH REPENTANCE), whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1 Th 1:9; 1:10<sub>±</sub>)

Paul also gives an excellent summary

but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should **repent** and turn to God, **performing deeds appropriate to repentance**. (Acts 26:20+)

Paul declared that he was

"solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of **repentance** toward God and **faith** in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:21<sub>±</sub>)

**C H Spurgeon** wrote that "**Repentance** and **faith** must go together to complete each other. I compare them to a door and its post. Repentance is the door which shuts out sin, but faith is the post on which its hinges are fixed. A door without a doorpost to hang on is not a door at all, while a doorpost without the door hanging on it is of no value whatever. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder, and these two he has made inseparable—repentance and faith)

**J C Ryle** wrote... There can be no true **repentance** without **faith**. You may cast away your old habits, as the serpent casts off his skin—but if you are not resting all upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, and looking to be saved by simple faith in Him, you may be wise in your own eyes—but you are just ignorant of the root and fountain, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, in all true gospel religion. You may tell us you have repented—but if you have not at the same time laid hold on Christ, you have hitherto received the grace of God in vain.

**Related Resources:**

- [What does the Bible say about repentance? What does it mean to repent?](#)
- [What is repentance and is it necessary for salvation?](#)

**Bishop Ryle** offers this descriptive definition of repentance - **Repentance** is a thorough change of man's natural heart, upon the subject of sin. We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin, as soon as we can act and think—just as the bird takes to flying, and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling or education in order to learn deceitfulness, selfishness, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions, or gradually learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude of all children to these evil things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Spirit, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls "**repentance**." The man in whom the change is wrought is said to "repent." ([Repentance](#))

**J C Ryle has a few words of warning regarding repentance** - We must carefully bear in mind that *no repentance can make atonement for sin*. The blood of Christ, and nothing else, can wash away sin from man's soul. No quantity of repentance can ever justify us in the sight of God. "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings." It is of the utmost importance to understand this clearly. The trouble that men bring upon their souls, by misunderstanding this subject, is more than can be expressed.

But while we say all this, we must carefully remember that *without repentance no soul was ever yet saved*. We must know our sins, mourn over them, forsake them, abhor them, or else we shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing meritorious in this. It forms no part whatever of the price of our redemption. Our salvation is all of grace, from first to last. But the great fact still remains, that saved souls are always penitent souls, and that saving faith in Christ, and true repentance toward God, are never found asunder. This is a mighty truth, and one that ought never to be forgotten.

Do we ourselves repent? This, after all, is the question which most nearly concerns us. Have we been convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit? Have we fled to Jesus for deliverance from the wrath to come? Do we know anything of a broken and contrite heart, and a thorough hatred of sin? Can we say, "I repent," as well as "I believe?" If not, let us not delude our minds with the idea that our sins are yet forgiven. It is written, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3+)

#### Related Resource:

- [Great quotes on repentance primarily from Puritan writers](#)

**For** - Term of explanation. This one is easy to understand. Matthew explains why the Jews should repent. In the following passage (Mt 3:3) repentance is described figuratively with the commands to "**make ready**" and "**make...straight**." In short they needed to repent because the King was coming!

**The kingdom of heaven is at hand** - "As close as your hand." While the **Kingdom of Heaven** has several meanings depending on the context, the simplest meaning is the **Kingdom is at hand** because the King Himself would soon be present in the midst of the Jews. And the King was coming with a message of good news describing victory over spiritual enemies but not over national enemies (that would occur at His Second Coming). John was calling for the Jews to repent and prepare for their King. The **kingdom of heaven** was waiting to be ushered in, but Israel was not ready for it! When Israel as a nation rejected their King, the kingdom was taken from them (Mt 21:42–43). Matthew records an almost identical proclamation by Jesus "From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "**Repent** ([present imperative](#)),, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ([eggizo](#))." (Mt 4:17+)

**MacArthur** adds that "Despite many similar warnings by the prophets, many of the people and most of the leaders were not prepared for John's message. What he said was shocking; it was unexpected and unacceptable. It was inconceivable to them that, as God's people, they had anything to do to inherit God's kingdom but simply wait for and accept it. The Messiah was their Messiah, the King was their King, the Savior was their Savior, the promise was their promise. Every Jew was destined for the kingdom, and every Gentile was excluded, except for a token handful of proselytes. That was the common Jewish thinking of the day, which John totally shattered. But John's message was God's message, and he would not compromise it or clutter it with the popular misconceptions and delusions of his own day and his own people. He had no word but God's word, and he proclaimed no kingdom but God's kingdom and no preparation but God's preparation. That preparation was repentance. God's standard would not change, even if every Jew were excluded and every Gentile saved. God knew that some Jews would be saved, but none apart from personal repentance and conversion." (Matthew Commentary)

**Kingdom of Heaven** can be a somewhat complex subject but suffice it to say that it has a**PRESENT REALITY** which awaits a **FUTURE REVELATION**. The **PRESENT REALITY** is that the King is reigning in the hearts of those who have repented and believed in Him. The **FUTURE REVELATION** is the return of the King

of kings to defeat His enemies and establish His Messianic rule on Earth ([Millennium](#)). It is predominantly this latter aspect of the Kingdom of God the nation was expecting and hoping for (cf (2 Sa 7:8-17; Isa. 11:1-9+; Isa 24:23; Jer. 23:5-6; Mic 4:6-7+; Zech 9:9-10; Zech 14:9+; cf. Mt. 20:21; Mk 10:37; Mk 11:10; Mk 12:35-37; Mk 15:43; Luke 1:31-33+; Lk 2:25+, Lk 2:38+; Acts 1:6+)

**THOUGHT** - All who live in the PRESENT REALITY are eagerly, expectantly looking for the FUTURE REVELATION, a mindset that motivates us to order our steps in a manner which is pleasing to the Lord. What (Who) you are looking for will (should) impact what (Who) you are living for beloved! That is why the Spirit inspired the writers of the NT to pen 1 in 30 verses either directly or indirectly describing the [Second Coming of the King!](#) The first century church is said to have greeted one another with the watch word [Maranatha](#). God grant that the church in these last days would do the same, and live accordingly. In Jesus' Name. Amen

**AN ESCHATOLOGICAL OR PROPHETIC VIEW OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD** - One interpretation of **Kingdom of God** is that Jesus the King has arrived and **fulfilled** the prophecy of Daniel in Da 9:25+ "So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress." This passage prophesies the time when Messiah would come to Israel. Israel should have known this was the time from this prophecy, for Jesus Himself said "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes." (Lk 19:42+). And again Jesus declared "you did not recognize the time of your visitation." (Lk 19:44+). The tragedy recorded in all four Gospels is that when Jesus entered Jerusalem to begin His last week of life the Jewish crowds hailed Him as **King** "shouting: "BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD (QUOTING Ps 118:26); Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Lk 19:38+, Mt 21:9-11, Mk 11:8-10+, Jn 12:13+). The problem was that Israel was expecting the Messiah to be a **conquering King**, defeating the Romans, failing to recognize that He first had to be a **Suffering Servant** (Mk 10:45+, Isaiah 53:1-12+) and failing to understand that in that role He did in fact conquer the even more deadly enemies of **death** (1 Cor 15:55-56, 57), the **devil** (Heb 2:14-15+), **Sin** (the sinful flesh) (Ro 6:11+) and the fallen, godless, evil **world** (Gal 6:14+). And He will return as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16+) to conquer all world powers arrayed against Him, His Kingdom and His people. (Rev 19:11-21+, cf Da 2:34-35+, Da 2:44-45+).

**Kingdom** (932) ([basileia](#) from **basileus** = a sovereign, king, monarch) denotes sovereignty, royal power, kingship, royal rule, dominion. Involved in the term is the sovereign authority of a ruler, the activity of ruling, and the realm of rule including its benefits. **Basileia** thus can refer to the territory or people over whom a king rules. There are two kingdoms at war, the **kingdom of this world** (cf "present evil world" Gal 1:4KJV+, James 4:4+, 1 Jn 2:15-17+) headed by Satan (see Lk 4:5-6+, see especially verse 6, cf 1 Jn 5:19+) and the **Kingdom of God** headed by Jesus (cf Jn 18:37+, Rev 19:16+).

**THOUGHT** - Believers are members of the Kingdom of God and are subject to the King, Jesus Christ. Are you still attempting to rule your life or have you willingly submitted yourself to Jesus with the inherent desire to do His will on earth as it is in Heaven?

**Kingdom of Heaven** is used only by Matthew while the other Gospels used **Kingdom of God** - Matt. 3:2; Matt. 4:17; Matt. 5:3; Matt. 5:10; Matt. 5:19; Matt. 5:20; Matt. 7:21; Matt. 8:11; Matt. 10:7; Matt. 11:11; Matt. 11:12; Matt. 13:11; Matt. 13:24; Matt. 13:31; Matt. 13:33; Matt. 13:44; Matt. 13:45; Matt. 13:47; Matt. 13:52; Matt. 16:19; Matt. 18:1; Matt. 18:3; Matt. 18:4; Matt. 18:23; Matt. 19:12; Matt. 19:14; Matt. 19:23; Matt. 20:1; Matt. 22:2; Matt. 23:13; Matt. 25:1. While some teach the terms are different, I agree with John MacArthur that "There is no significant difference between "the kingdom of God" and the kingdom of heaven. The one phrase emphasizes the sovereign Ruler of the kingdom and the other emphasizes the kingdom itself, but they are the same kingdom. Matthew 19:23–24 confirms the equality of the phrases by using them interchangeably." (Compare also **kingdom of heaven** in Matthew 13:33 and **kingdom of God** in Luke 13:20,21)

**Robertson on at hand** - It was a startling word that John thundered over the hills and it re-echoed throughout the land. The Old Testament prophets had said that it would come some day in God's own time. John proclaims as the herald of the new day that it has come, has drawn near (**is at hand**). How near he does not say, but he evidently means very near, so near that one could see the signs and the proof.

**At hand** (1448) ([eggizo](#)) means to draw near in space and/or time. In the present context, there is a sense in

which the Kingdom is drawing near both in space and in time, in the sense that the King of the Kingdom is soon to step on the stage in this great drama of redemption. Draw near is in the [perfect tense](#) which means it has drawn near and is now present. With the King now on the scene the day has arrived. Matthew's uses of eggizo - Matt. 3:2; Matt. 4:17; Matt. 10:7; Matt. 21:1; Matt. 21:34; Matt. 26:45; Matt. 26:46;

**Vance Havner** - The **Kingdom** was coming then in the Person of the Saviour; it was a spiritual Kingdom, the reign of God in the hearts of men. The **Kingdom** is coming soon; it will be a visible **Kingdom** when the King returns (**ED: TO SET UP HIS [MESSIANIC KINGDOM FOR 1000 YEARS](#)**) and once again our message should be "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Christ's message to the church for this hour is "Repent." But who dares to call the average Sunday-morning congregation to repentance? Said Joseph Parker: "The man whose message is Repent sets himself against his age and will be battered mercilessly by the age whose moral tone he challenges. **There is but one end for such a man... off with his head! You had better not preach repentance until you have pledged your head to heaven.**"

**Walter Wessel** explains that "the Lord's kingship is both a present reality (God is exercising his authority now) and a future hope (God will reign in the eschaton—the End—when he finally puts down all opposition to his reign). (Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 8: Matthew, Mark, Luke)

**John MacArthur** describes 4 phases of the **Kingdom of Heaven/God** - God's kingly rule over the hearts of men and over the world may be thought of as having a number of phases. The first is the prophesied kingdom, such as that foretold by Daniel. The second phase is the present kingdom, the one that existed at the time of John the Baptist and that he mentions. It is the kingdom that both John and Jesus spoke of as being at hand (cf. 4:17). The third phase may be referred to as the interim kingdom, the kingdom that resulted because of Israel's rejection of her King. The King returned to heaven and His kingdom on earth now exists only in a mystery form. Christ is Lord of the earth in the sense of His being its Creator and its ultimate Ruler; but He does not presently exercise His full divine will over the earth. He is, so to speak, in a voluntary exile in heaven until it is time for Him to return again. He reigns only in the hearts of those who know Him as Savior and Lord. For those "the kingdom of God is ... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). The fourth phase can be described as the manifest kingdom, in which Christ will rule, physically, directly, and fully on earth for a thousand years, the Millennium. In that kingdom He will rule both externally and internally—externally over all mankind, and internally in the hearts of those who belong to Him by faith. The fifth, and final, phase is the "eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," which "will be abundantly supplied" to all of His own (2 Pet. 1:11). Had God's people Israel accepted their King when He first came to them, there would be no interim kingdom. The kingdom at hand would have become the kingdom of a thousand years, which, in turn, would have ushered in the eternal kingdom. But because they killed the forerunner of the King and then the King Himself, the millennial kingdom, and consequently the eternal kingdom, were sovereignly postponed. (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 56](#))

**Matthew 3:3 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!'"**

NET Matthew 3:3 For he is the one about whom Isaiah the prophet had spoken: "The voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

GNT Matthew 3:3 ο τος γ ρ σπιν ηθε ς δι σα ου το προφ του λ γοντος, Φων βο ντος ν τ ρ μ · τοιμ σατε τ ν δ ν κυρ ου, ε θε ας ποιε τε τ ς τρ βους α το .

NLT Matthew 3:3 The prophet Isaiah was speaking about John when he said, "He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the LORD's coming! Clear the road for him!'"

KJV Matthew 3:3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

ESV Matthew 3:3 For 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.'"

NIV Matthew 3:3 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.'"

ASV Matthew 3:3 For this is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ye ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

CSB Matthew 3:3 For he is the one spoken of through the prophet Isaiah, who said: A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make His paths straight!

NKJ Matthew 3:3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"

NRS Matthew 3:3 This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'"

YLT Matthew 3:3 for this is he who was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'A voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, straight make ye His paths.'

- **by Isaiah the prophet** - Isa 40:3 Mk 1:3 Lu 3:3-6 Joh 1:23
- **Prepare** - Isa 57:14,15 Mal 3:1 Lu 1:17,76
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Matthew** quotes the Old Testament prophecy from Isaiah 40:3

"A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God."

**Luke** gives a longer quote from Isaiah 40...

"As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. 5 **EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED** ("every valley shall be exalted" KJV) , AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH; 6 AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.'" (Lk 3:4-6+, quoting Isaiah 40:3-5)

- Play Handel's masterpiece [Every Valley Shall be Exalted](#)

**For (gar)** - Term of explanation, in this case explaining that John the Baptist had been foretold almost 700 years earlier. **Broadus** adds that "**For** gives the reason why John appeared in the wilderness and bade the people prepare for the Messianic reign, viz., because John is the person spoken of by—through—the prophet ('through,' see Mt 2:17), as destined to do so."

**This is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said**- Recall that Matthew's Gospel is aimed at Jewish readers who would have been familiar with Old Testament prophecies and may have recognized that Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled in John the Baptist (cf other fulfillments - Mt 1:22-23+, Mt 2:15+, Mt 2:17-18+, Mt 2:23+, Mt 4:14-15+, et al). **Broadus** points out that the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3-5 probably had two fulfillments "The immediate reference of the prophecy in Isaiah is probably to Jehovah, as leading his people back through the eastern desert from their captivity in Babylon: the remote reference is to the coming of Messiah, and spiritual deliverance. Here, as often in the prophets ([see on Mt 2:15](#)), there is a typical relation between the history of Israel and that of Messiah."

**THOUGHT** - Remember that nothing more convincingly demonstrates God's control over history than fulfilled prophecy. As an aside there are over 300 [Messianic Prophecies](#) that clearly pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. God has made it very clear to everyone, Jews and Gentiles alike, that Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT prophecies. How foolish to ignore the Old Testament as so many in evangelical circles do today! The great OT [Messianic Prophecies](#) can give faith to those who have never believed and undergird the faith of all who have believed in Jesus (Ro 10:17).

**Related Resources:**

- [Josh McDowell's classic "More than a Carpenter"](#) - good book to suggest to your skeptical friends!
- [How a Jewish man Michael Goldstone met Messiah - site has multiple similar video testimonies](#)

**The voice of one crying in the wilderness** - **Voice of one** is a description of John the Baptist which alludes to his specific mission and the place where his mission was to be accomplished. John was not prepared by God to pastor a church, to write theology books, to compose religious music, etc, but was called to call, to cry out! The [present tense](#) indicates this was John's pattern -- continually crying out. John the Baptist was not [whimpering](#), crying softly and quietly! He was crying out like the **HERALD** ([see below](#)) he was born to be (Lk 1:15, 16, 17+), as one who had a strong voice, a clear message and a Spirit enabled bold demeanor giving public witness concerning the Messiah Jesus Christ. Imagine the Jewish people who walked up and heard John crying out this message at the top of his lungs! It would have been a striking scene.

**Crying** (994)(**boao** from **boé** 995) means raise a cry, crying out loud with unusually high volume as a manifestation of feeling. John's preaching was undoubtedly passionate and full of emotion and feeling. He had

been preparing his entire life for this purpose! And so he cried out from the depths of his heart in hopes that his message would reach the hearts of his Jewish hearers. And lest we miss it, we should emphasize that John was simply a divine mouthpiece, so the One Who was really crying out to Israel was Jehovah Himself. Remember that Israel was the wife of Jehovah and had gone astray from the Mosaic covenant, "My covenant which they broke, although I was a **husband** to them," declares the LORD." (Jer 31:32+). Now after 400 "silent years" God was using His mouthpiece, John the Baptist, calling them "Return, O Israel." (Hos 14:1, cf Jer 3:14, Joel 2:12-13+).

**John Phillips** on John's **crying** - "The Hebrews had fallen on bad times quite apart from Roman oppression. Dead formalism characterized their religion. The roots of this formalism, which had been sprouting in Malachi's day, now ran deep. Rabbinical tradition had largely replaced the Bible. John the Baptist knew all about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, the skepticism of the Sadducees, the materialism and opportunism of the Herodians, and the fanaticism of the Zealots. The faith of the fathers, applauded in Hebrews 11, had now become "the Jews' religion" (Gal. 1:13). Someone needed to cut a path through the tangled undergrowth of the deadening, man made tradition. The Messiah was coming! It was high time that someone spoke out. So John became "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." John did not seek the big cities, and he did not stalk the streets of Jerusalem. Rather, he sought solitary, lonely places that were off the beaten track down by the riverside. He did not go to the people. He made the people come to him, and come they did until vast crowds thronged into the wilds to hear him preach...."Make his paths straight!" cried John. It was a clarion call to his own countrymen to clean up their lives and clear away all moral and religious obstacles that might hinder the coming King. (Exploring Series)

**THOUGHT** - Preaching is to be to the people, not before them. It is to be affirmative, authoritative, and positive, not uncertain and negative. The gospel is not open for discussion; it is not just one of many possibilities; it is the truth of God. (POSB)

**In the wilderness** ([eremos](#)) - Luke alluded to the **wilderness** in (Lk 1:80+) describing how John the Baptist "continued to grow, and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in **the deserts** ([eremos](#) = "wilderness") until the day of his public appearance to Israel." John was not the holy Temple in Jerusalem, but the hot desert in Judea. As shown on the map above, the **wilderness** (Mt 3:1+ = "**wilderness of Judea**"; cf Mk 1:4+) refers to the uninhabited desert region to the northwest of the Dead Sea. **MacArthur** adds that "John seems to have preached near the northern end of this region, close by where the Jordan flows into the Dead Sea (Lk 3:6). This was a full day's journey from Jerusalem and seems an odd location to announce the arrival of a King. But it is perfectly in keeping with God's ways (1 Co 1:26-29)." (MSB) **Bock** adds that "Given the Gospel of John's comments, the ministry involved both sides of the Jordan River, since Perea was also included in the ministry (John 1:28; 3:23; 10:40)."

**Wilderness** (2048) see [map of Judean Wilderness](#) and also the note on [eremos](#). (Used 9x in Mark - Mk. 1:3; Mk. 1:4; Mk. 1:12; Mk. 1:13; Mk. 1:35; Mk. 1:45; Mk. 6:31; Mk. 6:32; Mk. 6:35). In a way this word is a **double entendre** because John was himself in a literal **wilderness** crying and pointing out to the Jewish nation the way out of the spiritual wilderness and darkness which had enshrouded the nation of Israel for centuries. **Beitzel** observes that "It is difficult to describe adequately the foreboding desolation and howling barrenness along the shores of the Dead Sea.... If there could be fixed in one's mind the image of the almost-painful sterility of the Sahara or of Death Valley, and then multiply that by a factor of four or more, one might come close to capturing the geographical reality to which he is exposed along the shores of the Dead Sea." (The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands)

**THOUGHT** - Do you feel like you are in the **wilderness** beloved? Then take heart for God can still speak to you even though you feel like you are in a wilderness (see Lk 3:2+)! Today of course He does not speak to us exactly as He did to John, but He still speaks to us through His Word of Truth. So when you are in the wilderness don't throw up your hands but "throw yourself" into His hands, into His Book and beseech Him to speak by His Spirit (see [Illumination](#)). He is ready and willing to speak to you through His Word and prayer. Make sure you first confess (1 Jn 1:9, Pr 28:13) any known sins in order to clear the "static" from the "Heavenly walkie talkie!"

**Make ready** ([hetoimazo](#)) **the way of the Lord** - **Make ready** is a command in the [aorist imperative](#) calling for his hearers to do this now and not to delay or procrastinate. Their need is urgent! **Wuest** says "That was the character of the preaching of the Baptist. His was no pussy-footing, no beating about the bush, no smooth, oily, namby-pamby preaching. The Baptist was a man among men, and his preaching was straight from the shoulder." He is speaking figuratively of course and not calling for them to make a literal path but to make their hearts ready to receive the Lord Jesus. **Wuest** adds "The Ancient of Days was to incarnate Himself in humanity, grow up from a little child to manhood, and offer Himself to Israel as its Messiah, its King. His road needed to be prepared, that is, the hearts of His Chosen People must be ready. John's ministry was to see to it that Israel was ready to welcome its Messiah."

**Broadus** - Great public roads were rare in the East until introduced by the Romans. When an Oriental monarch was designing to Journey into a certain region, he sent messengers in advance to require that a graded road should be prepared. Hence the image, here denoting spiritual preparation. Notice that in Isa. 40:4, every part of the process of grading is mentioned. ([Commentary](#))

Literally the idea was to fill in the holes, remove the rocks and debris and knock down the hills, to make the king's passage pleasant and easy. In this context of course the commands (**make ready** and **prepare**) convey a figurative meaning. So how were John's Jewish hearers to accomplish what he was commanding? John is calling for heart work! As [Guzik](#) says "Building a road is very much like the preparation God must do in our hearts. They are both expensive, they both must deal with many different problems and environments, and they both take an expert engineer." If we compare the parallel passages in Matthew, we see that this quote from Isaiah 40:3 followed John's call to the people to "**Repent**, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt 3:2-3+) It follows that the way to **make ready the way of the Lord** is by personal repentance! And ultimately the only way natural men and women could obey these supernatural commands was by being enabled by the Spirit ([See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!").

**ESCHATOLOGICAL THOUGHT** - It is interesting that in [the Last Days](#), at the end of the [Great Tribulation](#) (Jer 30:7+), the Jews will (belatedly) obey this call of John with national mourning and repentance, Zechariah 12:10-14+ recording "I (JEHOVAH) will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn." And at that time when Israel recognizes and receives her King, Jehovah goes on to declare "I will bring the third part (OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL) through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God (THESE STATEMENTS BY ISRAEL AND BY JEHOVAH ARE THE LANGUAGE OF COVENANT, specifically the FULFILLMENT OF THE NEW COVENANT TO ISRAEL AND TO JUDAH - see Jer 31:31-37+)" (Zechariah 13:9+, cf Ro 11:26-27+)

**Make ready** (2090) ([hetoimazo](#) from **heteos** = fitness - see study of related word [hetoimasia](#)) means to make ready, specifically to make ready beforehand for some purpose, use, or activity. Mark's uses of **hetoimazo** - Mk. 1:3; Mk. 10:40; Mk. 14:12; Mk. 14:15; Mk. 14:16. This same verb is used by Paul who charges us to do some spiritual housecleaning that we might be useful vessels in the hands of the Lord "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, **prepared** ([hetoimazo](#)) for every good work." (2 Ti 2:21+) **Thayer** says when it is used as here to prepare the way (hodos = road) of the Lord, it is used as a figure "drawn from the oriental custom of sending on before kings on their journeys persons to level the roads and make them passable," thus, "to prepare the minds of men to give the Messiah a fit reception and secure His blessings." The verb is plural and is thus addressed to Israel.

**Lord** (master, owner) (2962) ([kurios](#) from **kuros** = might or power, related to **kuroo** = to give authority) primarily means the possessor, owner, master, the supreme one, one who is sovereign and possesses absolute authority, absolute ownership and uncontested power. **Kurios** is used literally 1000's of times in the Septuagint for the name Jehovah or Yahweh.

**THOUGHT** - **Edwards** comments that "The imagery given in verse 3 from Isaiah 40:3-5 is also very pertinent for us. If Christ is going to continue His advance in our lives, then many things must be cleared away. The hills and mountains of pride and unrighteousness must be leveled. The valleys of things we lack must be filled up. Rough spots must be smoothed out until all which hinders us from reflecting God's glory is removed. Then our lives will no longer be a wilderness, but a highway upon which the King of glory may be clearly seen."

**Make His paths straight** - **Make** ([poieo](#)) a [present imperative](#) command (see [need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in the plural thus calling for continual obedience by the people of Israel. As **Wuest** says this obedience "should be a habit with Israel, a constant attitude, not a formal, abrupt welcome and that is all, but a welcome that would extend on and on, an habitual welcome that would be the natural expression of their heart." **Robertson** comments on **paths straight** that "Automobile highways today well illustrate the wonderful Persian roads for the couriers of the king and then for the king himself. The Roman Empire was knit together by roads, some of which survive today. John had a high and holy mission as the forerunner of the Messiah."

**Paths** (5147) ([tribos](#) from **tribo** = to rub, wear down) in secular Greek was used for a path, usually a well-worn track, a beaten path, thoroughfare and thus a defined track or route. A path that is familiar. Only 3x - Mt 3:3, Mk 1:3, Lk 3:4. In the present context **Wuest** notes that "The expression does not refer to a literal path or road

down which the Lord would travel, but to the hearts of the people of Israel, and His entrance among them." In Ps 25:4 David prays "Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your **paths** (Lxx = tribos)." (A GOOD PRAYER FOR ALL OF US!) (cf other uses of tribos in Lxx = Ps 44:18, Ps 139:3 = another good prayer)

Ps 119:105 " Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my**path** (Lxx = tribos)."

Jer 6:16 Jehovah says "Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient**paths** (Lxx = tribos)..."

Micah 4:2+ (IN THE MESSIANIC KINGDOM) "Many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His **paths** (Lxx = tribos)." For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

**Tribos** in the **Septuagint** - Gen. 49:17; Jdg. 5:6; Jdg. 5:20; 1 Sam. 6:12; 2 Sam. 20:12; 2 Sam. 20:13; 1 Chr. 26:18; Job 18:10; Job 22:15; Job 28:7; Job 30:12; Job 30:13; Job 34:11; Job 38:20; Ps. 8:8; Ps. 17:5; Ps. 18:45; Ps. 23:3; Ps. 25:4; Ps. 27:11; Ps. 44:18; Ps. 77:19; Ps. 78:50; Ps. 119:35; Ps. 119:105; Ps. 139:3; Ps. 139:23; Ps. 140:5; Ps. 142:3; Prov. 1:15; Prov. 2:15; Prov. 2:19; Prov. 2:20; Prov. 3:17; Prov. 8:2; Prov. 8:20; Prov. 15:21; Prov. 16:17; Prov. 30:19; Isa. 3:12; Isa. 30:11; Isa. 40:3; Isa. 42:16; Isa. 43:16; Isa. 49:9; Isa. 49:11; Isa. 58:12; Isa. 59:8; Jer. 6:16; Jer. 9:10; Jer. 18:15; Lam. 3:9; Dan. 4:37; Hos. 2:6

**Straight** (2117)(**euthus**) when used as an **adjective** as it is here in Mark 1:3, euthus literally means straight or a straight line and figuratively to what is proper or right. For example, in Acts 9:11+ **euthus** described a literal roadway "the street called **Straight** (euthus)" which was literally straight through Damascus. The use of **euthus** in Mark 1:3 is figurative calling for "straight paths" (so to speak) in one's heart and life (cf Mt 3:3+, Lk 3:4+). **Euthus** is used again in Luke 3:5+ (quoting the **Septuagint** reading of Isaiah 40:4), where we read "the crooked (**skolios** - "crooked" lives) will be **straight** (euthus)" which speaks of heart change, moral/ethical transformation. **Euthus** is also used as **adverb** meaning immediately which is a key word in the Gospel of Mark as evidenced by 11 uses in the first chapter! All Matthew's uses of **euthus** - Matt. 3:3; Matt. 3:16; Matt. 13:20; Matt. 13:21; Matt. 14:27; Matt. 21:2; Matt. 21:3; Matt. 26:74

**THOUGHT** - The cry of the prophet is: (1) Man has an inadequate righteousness; therefore, repentance is needed. (2) The present world is an inadequate world; therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven is needed. (3) Man has prepared an inadequate life for the Lord; therefore, he must prepare the way for the Lord. (POSB)

**Matthew 3:4 Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.**

NET Matthew 3:4 Now John wore clothing made from camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his diet consisted of locusts and wild honey.

GNT Matthew 3:4 Α τ ς δ ω ννης ε χεν τ νδυμα α το π τριχ ν καμ λου κα ζ νην δερματ νην περ τ ν σφ ν α το , δ τροφ ν α το κρ δες κα μ λι γριον.

NLT Matthew 3:4 John's clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey.

KJV Matthew 3:4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

ESV Matthew 3:4 Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

NIV Matthew 3:4 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.

ASV Matthew 3:4 Now John himself had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

CSB Matthew 3:4 John himself had a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

NKJ Matthew 3:4 And John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his

food was locusts and wild honey.

NRS Matthew 3:4 Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

YLT Matthew 3:4 And this John had his clothing of camel's hair, and a girdle of skin round his loins, and his nourishment was locusts and honey of the field.

NAB Matthew 3:4 John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.

NJB Matthew 3:4 This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather loin-cloth round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

- **had a garment** - Mt 11:8 2Ki 1:8 Zec 13:4 Mal 4:5 Mk 1:6 Lu 1:17 Rev 11:3
- **his food was locusts** - Mt 11:18 Lev 11:22
- **wild honey** - Dt 32:13 1Sa 14:25-27
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

John the Baptist

## JOHN'S ODD CLOTHES AND UNUSUAL DIET

**Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist** -"He was outfitted for survival in the wilderness—like a desert monk." (Barton) In the parallel description in Mark 1:6+ the verb "clothed" is in the [perfect tense](#) that indicates John's garb was not his occasional dress when he preached (like a pastor might put on a suit), but his permanent attire. He probably would not make the front cover of "[GQ Magazine](#)!" John's attire was a striking contrast to the flowing robes and lengthened phylacteries of the prideful Jewish religious leaders who do all their deeds to be noticed by men (Mt 23:5) John's distinctive dress would also presage a different declaration than that of the self-righteous Jewish leaders. **Broadus** writes that the "clothing of camel's hair was a coarse cloth made by weaving camel's hair, and such cloth is still often worn in the East by the poor." The wealthy of John's day wore girdles of costly linen or silk, often wrought with silver or gold. John scorned such embellishments preferring instead a simple **leather belt**. **A leather belt** is referred to in the KJV a **leathern girdle** which "was a necessary and almost universal part of an Oriental's dress (Mt 10:9, Acts 21:11), being required to bind the long, loose robe (Mt 5:40), in order to active labor, or rapid locomotion, and it was often very costly and showy (cp. Rev. 1:13). John's girdle was made of leather, cheap and rude, as was Elijah's, (2 Ki 1:8)" (Broadus) "A **camel hair garment** bound with a **leather belt** might suggest poverty in another context, but here it is suggestive of John's prophetic role and stern message of repentance....All in all, John's clothing and diet modeled the message he preached. He was unconcerned with the niceties of wardrobe and food (Mt 11:8, 18), and he called Israel away from preoccupation with such things and toward the Kingdom." (David Turner) As **D A Carson** said "Both Elijah and John had stern ministries in which austere garb and diet confirmed their message and condemned the idolatry of physical and spiritual softness." (EBC) Undoubtedly John's father had told him of the prophetic pronouncement over his life and ministry that he would "go as a forerunner before Him (MESSIAH) in the spirit and power of Elijah." (Lk 1:17+).

**THOUGHT** - Would such an uncouth figure be welcome today in any pulpit in our cities? In the wilderness it did not matter. It was probably a matter of necessity with him, not an affectation. (Robertson) Also consider that some Jews undoubtedly came out of curiosity and heard a call to repent. Are unbelievers curious about your Christian lifestyle and values? As Peter exhorts the believers in his first epistle "**Sanctify** ([aorist imperative](#)) Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pe 3:15+, cf Ro 11:11NLT+).

**Garment** (1742) (**enduma** from **enduo** = put on from **en** = in + **duo** = to sink) literally refers to clothing, especially an outer garment or cloak. In Mt 22:11-12 **enduma** refers to **clothes** that one wears to a wedding. **Enduma** refers to Jesus' clothing after His resurrection (Mt 28:3). Sheep's **clothing** in Mt 7:15 refers figuratively to false teachers. **Enduma** refers to clothing as something we should not be anxious about (Mt 6:25, 28, Lk 12:23). Used to describe the Lord Jesus when He returns and His "**garments** (Lxx = enduma) (are) like the one who treads in the wine press." (Isa 63:2).

**Enduma** - 8x - clothes(2), clothing(5), garment(1). Mt. 3:4; Mt. 6:25; Mt. 6:28; Mt. 7:15; Mt. 22:11; Mt. 22:12; Mt. 28:3; Lk. 12:23.

**Enduma** in the **Septuagint** - 2 Sa 1:24; 2 Sa 20:8; 2 Ki. 10:22; Ps. 69:11; Ps. 133:2; Pr 31:22; Isa. 63:2;

Lam 4:14; Da 3:21; Da 7:9; Zeph 1:8;

**THOUGHT** - John's message was the message of a prophet: he dressed and ate as a prophet. The believer is to be disciplined and to live moderately (Lu. 9:23+; Ro. 12:1<sup>+</sup>) The believer's dress and habits should be adapted to meet the needs of his people (POSB) Spurgeon added "'Lord, let not my meat, my drink, or garments, hinder me in thy work!" Is there something trivial and/or external hindering you for following your calling by the Lord, for as Peter said "each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Pe 4:10-11<sup>+</sup> cf Eph 2:10<sup>+</sup>).



A Yummy Wild Locust

**And his food was locusts and wild honey** - John's diet was nutritious and the price was right in the wilderness. Click the locust above to make him big and somewhat intimidating. I wonder if John ate "[kosher locusts](#)?" Leviticus had put the stamp of approval on locusts declaring "These of them you may eat: the locust in its kinds, and the devastating locust in its kinds, and the cricket in its kinds, and the grasshopper in its kinds." (Lev 11:22<sup>+</sup>) One commentator says modern Bedouins still wear camel hair garments and eat locusts (grasshoppers). Wild honey could be found in abundance, made by the wild bees who nested in the clefts of rocks and in the trees of the valley. Honey is mentioned several times in the OT (Gen 43:11; Exod 3:8; Deut 32:13; Jdg 14:8; 1 Sam 14:25; Ps 81:16; Ezek 27:17)

**Broadus** - The law of Moses (Lev. 11:22) allowed locusts, at least of certain kinds, to be eaten; and a treatise in the Talmud copiously discusses the marks by which 'clean' locusts might be distinguished. To eat these is still common in the East among the poor. The heads, legs, and wings being removed, they are boiled, stewed, or roasted, and sometimes dressed with butter. They are eaten both fresh, and dried, or salted. They are very different from what we call locusts. ([Matthew 3 Commentary](#))

**THOUGHT** - And just in case you are wondering wild honey is basically devoid of protein, so John would have had to depend solely on his locust intake. "The **protein content** in fresh weight is between 13–28 g/100g for adult **locust**, 14–18 g/100g for larvae, as compared to 19–26 g/100g for beef." So let's say an average male needs about 60 grams of protein per day and the average locust weighs 2 grams which means John would have had to eat about 100 fresh locusts each day to achieve his minimum daily requirement for protein!

**Wikipedia** on [locusts as food](#) - Locusts are edible insects. Several cultures throughout the world consume insects, and locusts are considered a delicacy and eaten in many African, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries. They have been used as food throughout history. They can be cooked in many ways, but are often fried, smoked, or dried.

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**Bruce Barton - BEING WEIRD** - John's appearance and lifestyle dramatically contrasted with the people of his day. He looked and lived as he did both out of necessity and to further demonstrate his message. Some people go to great extremes today to demonstrate their loyalty to sports teams: They buy jackets, license plates, ties, and collectibles. Since the days of the early church, faithful Christians have shown loyalty in many ways. Some have adopted clothes and eating habits similar to John's. Some have tried to imitate Peter or other early Christian leaders. Today, with so much loyalty evident on any city block (just count the baseball caps), Christians need "caps" to show their commitment to Jesus. And the Bible suggests the most important emblems: attitudes like loving others, being hopeful under stress, and trusting in God for daily needs. Badges like these show others how faith in the living God makes a difference in your life. What loyalties does your life portray? (Life Application Commentary)

**Related Resource:**

- [What is the Christian view of asceticism / monasticism?](#)

**Matthew 3:5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan;**

NET Matthew 3:5 Then people from Jerusalem, as well as all Judea and all the region around the Jordan,

were going out to him,

GNT Matthew 3:5 τ τε ξεπορε ετο πρ ς α τ ν εροσ λυμα κα π σα ουδα α κα π σα περ χωρος το ορδ νου,

NLT Matthew 3:5 People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John.

KJV Matthew 3:5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,

ESV Matthew 3:5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him,

NIV Matthew 3:5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.

ASV Matthew 3:5 Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about the Jordan;

CSB Matthew 3:5 Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were flocking to him,

NKJ Matthew 3:5 Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him

NRS Matthew 3:5 Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan,

YLT Matthew 3:5 Then were going forth unto him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about the Jordan,

NAB Matthew 3:5 At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him

NJB Matthew 3:5 Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him,

GWN Matthew 3:5 Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole Jordan Valley went to him.

- Mt 4:25 11:7-12 Mk 1:5 Lu 3:7 16:16 Joh 3:23 5:35
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A POPULAR PROPHET

**Then** ([tote](#)) is a favorite term of Matthew to mark transition, here marking resumption of John's presentation to the public, which he had alluded to in Mt 3:1 declaring "John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea." John's topic is not

**Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan - Jerusalem and all** are both [hyperbole](#) (exaggeration for effect) but in any event clearly they were coming in droves, so to speak! (cf "the whole city" in Mt 8:34). The phrase **all the district around the Jordan** means both sides of the Jordan River. Why did John elicit such a response? As Matthew says later in his Gospel the people "all regard John as a prophet." (Mt 21:26) And Israel had been without a prophet since Malachi, and so many responded because they knew that a prophet came with a message from God. Who wouldn't want to hear a man with a message from God? Little did they know that this message would be a call to repent from their sins! The verb **going out** is [imperfect tense](#) which vividly pictures a steady stream of men and women **going out to him**. While we cannot know how many in Israel came out, some commentators have estimated that at least a million people came to see and hear him! John did not use nor need slick marketing techniques to draw a crowd. John was not motivated by the spirit of the age (like so many are today), but by the Spirit of all ages ("eternal Spirit" Heb 9:14+). He was a Spirit filled prophet with an urgent message to a people dead in their trespasses and sins. John's striking presence and stern proclamation elicited quite a response among the Jews. As noted above, it would take about a day to reach John from Jerusalem, indicating they were very motivated to make this trip into an arid, barren place (with snakes)! As **John Phillips** says "John lived for only one thing: to be a voice thundering at the conscience of his age. There was such a ring of genuineness to his voice and such evidence of sincerity in his life that people responded."

**Spurgeon** - The people were expecting a Messiah, and so they went en masse to John as soon as his shrill voice had startled the solitudes. ([Matthew Commentary](#))

And perhaps John became a bit too popular for the likes of jealous King Herod. The **Jewish historian Josephus** writes "Now, when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were greatly moved by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion (for they seemed ready to do anything he should advise), thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it should be too late. Accordingly he was sent a prisoner,

out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death." (Antiquities 18.5.2). Josephus actually wrote more about John the Baptist than he did about Jesus. The influence of John the Baptist is evident decades after his ministry began, as seen in Acts 18:25 and Acts 19:3.

**J C Ryle** has an excellent summary regarding the obvious **popularity of John the Baptist - J C Ryle** - Let us observe, in the third place, how great were the effects which the ministry of John the Baptist produced for a time on the Jewish nation. We are told that, "People from Jerusalem and from all over Judea traveled out into the wilderness to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River." The fact here recorded is one that is much overlooked. We are apt to lose sight of him who went before the face of our Lord, and to see nothing but the Lord Himself. We forget the morning star in the full blaze of the Sun. And yet it is clear that John's preaching arrested the attention of the whole Jewish people, and created an excitement all over Palestine. It aroused the nation from its slumbers, and prepared it for the ministry of our Lord, when He appeared. Jesus Himself says, "He was a burning and a shining light--you were willing to rejoice for a season in his light." (John 5:35.) We ought to remark here how little dependence is to be placed on what is called "popularity." If ever there was one who was a popular minister for a season, John the Baptist was that man. **Yet of all the crowds who came to his baptism, and heard his preaching, how few, it may be feared, were converted!** Some, we may hope, like **Andrew**, were guided by John to Christ. **But the vast majority, in all probability, died in their sins.** Let us remember this whenever we see a crowded church. A great congregation no doubt is a pleasing sight. But the thought should often come across our minds, "How many of these people will reach heaven at last?" It is not enough to hear and admire popular preachers. It is no proof of our conversion that we always worship in a place where there is a crowd. Let us take care that we hear the voice of Christ Himself, and follow Him. ([Commentary](#))

**Matthew 3:6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.**

NET Matthew 3:6 and he was baptizing them in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

GNT Matthew 3:6 κα βαπτ ζοντο ν τ ορθ ν ποταμ π α το ξομολογο μενοι τ ς μαρτ ας α τ ν.

NLT Matthew 3:6 And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

KJV Matthew 3:6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

ESV Matthew 3:6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

NIV Matthew 3:6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

ASV Matthew 3:6 and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

CSB Matthew 3:6 and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins.

NKJ Matthew 3:6 and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

NRS Matthew 3:6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

YLT Matthew 3:6 and they were baptized in the Jordan by him, confessing their sins.

NAB Matthew 3:6 and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

NJB Matthew 3:6 and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins.

GWN Matthew 3:6 As they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

- were - Mt 3:11,13-16 Eze 36:25 Mk 1:8,9 Lu 3:16 Joh 1:25-28,31-33 3:23-25 Ac 1:5 2:38-41 10:36-38 11:16 19:4,5,18 1Co 10:2 Col 2:12 Tit 3:5,6 Heb 6:2 9:10 \*Gr: 1Pe 3:21
- confessing - Lev 16:21 26:40 Nu 5:7 Jos 7:19 Job 33:27,28 Ps 32:5 Pr 28:13 Da 9:4 Mk 1:5 Lu 15:18-21 Ac 2:38 19:18 22:16 Jas 5:16 1Jn 1:9
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## BAPTIZING THOSE CONFESSING THEIR SINS

**And they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins-** **Were being baptized** is in the [imperfect tense](#) (as was **going out** in Mt 3:5) giving the picture of one after another, a veritable **stream** (pun intended) of humanity coming into the **river!** [A B Bruce](#) says "The movement of course was gradual. It began on a small scale and steadily grew till it reached colossal proportions." One baptism after another was symbolic of a new life, but in John's baptism true new life was neither

caused nor obtained, for that would await the coming of Messiah. And as stated below, many of the baptisms were not even truly symbolic, but with time proved to be hypocritical professions, so to speak.

John's baptism was different from the traditional Jewish ritual washings of hands, feet and head, washings which were repeated by the person himself, representing repeated purification for repeated sinning. But John's baptism was the entire body and was a one time event and John was the one doing the baptizing, not the individual (as with their ritual washings). Gentiles who sought to associate with Judaism were baptized one time signifying that they as outsiders were coming into Judaism. Thus for a Jew to submit to a one time baptism like John's baptism was tantamount to them admitting they were outsiders seeking entrance into the people of God! **As they confessed their sins** suggests that their confession of sins occurred at the same time as their baptism.

**MacArthur** adds that "That act symbolized before the world that they realized their national and racial descent, or even their calling as God's chosen and covenant people, could not save them. They had to repent, forsake sin, and trust in the Lord for salvation. It is that of which the baptism was a public witness, as they confessed their sins. They had to come into the kingdom just like the Gentiles, through repentance and faith—which included a public admission of sins. We know from subsequent accounts in the gospels that **many of those acts of repentance must have been superficial and hypocritical, because John soon lost much of his following, just as Jesus would eventually lose most of His popularity.** But the impact of John's ministry on the Jewish people was profound and unforgettable. The way of the King had been announced to them, and they had no excuse for not being ready for His coming" (See context in [The MacArthur Commentary](#))

**John Phillips** comments "John's baptism focussed on repentance. John did not want proselytes; he wanted penitents. His baptism could not wash away sin, but his preaching could produce conviction of sin. Those who repented under John's preaching simply, and in a most public way, signified their repentance by being immersed in the Jordan. Cleansing would have to await the ministry of the Messiah." (See [Exploring the Gospel of Mark](#))

**Barclay** - "Baptism was for sinners, and no Jew ever conceived of himself as a sinner shut out from God. Now for the first time in their national history the Jews realized their own sin and their own clamant need of God. Never before had there been such a unique national movement of penitence and of search for God." ([Matthew 3](#))

**Were being baptized (907)**(**baptizo** from **bapto** = cover wholly with a fluid; stain or dip as with dye; used of the smith tempering the red-hot steel, used of dyeing the hair; of a ship that "dipped" = sank) has a literal and a figurative meaning in the NT. The literal meaning is to submerge, to dip or immerse as in water. A study of the 77 NT uses reveals that most of the uses of **baptizo** in the Gospels and Acts are associated with literal water baptism. Mark uses baptizo 4x in this section (Mk 1:4, 5, 8, 9 - twice in v8). All of Matthew's uses - Matt. 3:6; Matt. 3:11; Matt. 3:13; Matt. 3:14; Matt. 3:16; Matt. 28:19

The Greeks used **baptizo** to describe the dyeing of a garment, in which the whole material was plunged in and taken out from the element used. Baptizo was used of the act of sinking ships. **Baptizo** also meant to bathe of a boat which had been wrecked by being submerged and then stranded on the shore. Figuratively, **baptizo** pictures the introduction or placing of a person or thing into a new environment or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition. In this sense baptizo means to be identified with. In some contexts **baptizo** meant to wash ceremonially for purpose of purification (washing of cups - Mk 7:4, Lk 11:38+ = This custom before meals, prescribed by the Pharisees, was not required by the original Mosaic law. See [Ritual Washing in Judaism](#)). Jesus used this verb figuratively to alert his disciples to a coming **baptism of suffering** ("They [disciples] said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized." (Mk 10:39+). This describes them in a sense as "immersed" or "covered over" with suffering (cf Lk 12:50+)!

The **baptism of John the Baptist** was for repentance and was associated with John calling for the people to believe in Jesus (Acts 19:4+) (cf, Mt 3:6, Mk 1:4, 5). In Lk 7:29+ "When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John." This suggests that they were saved. Contrast those in Lk 7:30+ "But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected [[atheteo](#)] God's purpose [[boule](#)] for themselves, not having been baptized [[baptizo](#)] by John." Note that it was not the fact that John baptized in water that they were saved but those who were in fact saved were saved based on their repentance and their belief in Jesus (Who was coming). Those who were genuinely saved exercised faith in the truth they knew of Messiah (before the Cross), which is how all Old Testament saints were saved. ([See](#)

[comments](#) by **Bock and MacArthur** below)

**IDENTIFICATION - James Montgomery Boice** helps understand this figurative meaning of **baptizo** writing that "The clearest example that shows the meaning of baptizo is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. [Nicander](#) says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be 'dipped' (bapto) into boiling water and then 'baptised' (baptizo) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptizing the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism... mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with Him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!" (Bolding added)

**Warren Wiersbe** - When you read about "baptism" in the New Testament, you must exercise discernment to determine whether the word is to be interpreted literally or symbolically. For example, in Romans 6:3, 4+ and Galatians 3:27, 28+, the reference is symbolic (Ed: and figurative) since water baptism cannot put a sinner into Jesus Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can do that (Ro 8:9+; 1Co 12:13; see Acts 10:44, 45, 46, 47, 48+). Water baptism is a public witness of the person's identification with Jesus Christ, while Spirit baptism is the personal and private experience that identifies the person with Christ. The Jews baptized Gentile converts, but John was baptizing Jews! His baptism was authorized from heaven (Mt 21:23-27); it was not something John devised or borrowed. It was a baptism of repentance, looking forward to the Messiah's coming (Acts 19:1-7). His baptism fulfilled two purposes: it prepared the nation for Christ and it presented Christ to the nation (John 1:31). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** - The "Confessing their sins" which went with baptism in Jordan gave it its meaning. Apart from the acknowledgment of guilt, it would have been a mere bathing of the person without spiritual significance; but the confession which went with it made it an instructive sign. John must have inwardly wondered to see the multitudes come; but his chief thought ran forward to his coming Lord. He thought more of him than of "all Judæa."([Matthew Commentary](#))

**Confessed their sins** - To confess one's sins, as they were being baptized, is to agree with God about them. John baptized no one who did not confess and repent of his sins. The word "**confess**" (below) is a compound word meaning "to speak the same thing that another speaks," thus, "to agree with." Thus, confession of sin is more than a mere acknowledgment of sin in one's life. It is agreeing with God as to all the implications that enter into the fact that one has sinned. It is looking at sin from God's point of view, and acting accordingly (repenting of it!) -- putting away of the sin, determining to be done with that sin, something that can only be done in reliance on the Holy Spirit. Our natural man does not truly want to confess or repent. We have to submit to the energizing effect of the indwelling Spirit to give us the desire (to confess) and the power (to follow through) (Php 2:13NLT+).

**Confessing** ([present tense, middle voice](#)) (1843)([exomologeō](#) from **ek** - wholly out from or **ex** = out or intensify meaning [implies full, frank, open confession, openly or publicly] of [homologeō](#) - to say the same thing about from **homos** = same + **legō** = speak) means to speak the same thing that another speaks, to fully agree with someone else in this case agreeing with God that they missed the mark (sinned).

**THOUGHT** - Remember that for believers **confession** is not just **acknowledging** our sin against God, but is **agreeing** with God about the evil of our sin and expressing a desire to "throw off our old sinful nature and our former way of life, which is (being) corrupted by lust and deception (and) instead let the Spirit (continually) renew your thoughts and attitudes." (Eph 4:22-23NLT+).

**Hiebert** notes that **exomologeō** is literally **confessing out**, which pictures the openness and fullness of their confession. "It was a public acknowledgment of sins, although certainly not in full, colorful detail. Confessing basically means "speaking the same thing." They openly agreed with the divine verdict concerning their deeds. True confession implies our willingness to call our sins by the name that God gives them." ([Commentary](#))

The question arises as to whether those being baptized by John were genuinely saved? The short answer is not necessarily. Probably most were not genuinely saved. See the following explanations.

**Darrell Bock** helps us understand John's **baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins** -

The final characteristic mentioned about this baptism is its goal. It is directed *toward*, (eis, for), the **forgiveness of sins**. This statement could be read to suggest that some type of total forgiveness and efficacy

is found in John's baptism that makes the experience one of "becoming saved." However, this understanding reads back more into the event than the time of the event and the presentation of Luke will allow. John is a preparatory figure (Lk 1:17+ = "*It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*", Luke 1:76–77+; Schürmann 1969: 154–57). He prepares a people for God. Most importantly, John says that his baptism is nothing compared to the baptism that the Mightier One brings (Lk 3:16+). **So John's baptism is a prophetic eschatological washing; that is, it is a baptism of promise that looks to the greater baptism of the Spirit** (Schürmann 1969: 158–60). **It points forward to the cleansing that comes to those who respond to Messiah's offer with faith. This association of Spirit and cleansing was mentioned in the OT** (Ezek. 36:25–27+; Zech. 13:1+). The washing in the Jordan adds symbolism, picturing either repentance (Isa. 1:16–17+; Jer. 4:14) or divine cleansing (Ps. 51:7–9+; Isa. 4:2–6+; Ezek. 37:23+; Jer. 33:8+) or, perhaps, both (Nolland 1989: 141). If there be any doubt that Luke understands John in this prophetic and eschatological fashion, a glance at Acts 19:1–10+ ends any such uncertainty. Disciples who know only of John are to accept immediately the baptism tied to Jesus. Acts 19:4+ makes it clear that John's baptism is not complete in itself, but points to faith in Jesus (also Acts 13:24+). Thus, John's baptism represented for its precross Israelite audience a commitment to a new approach to God resulting in a life of fruitfulness for God and expectation of the eschaton....**In short, John's baptism was a step on the way to the Promised One's forgiveness. The repentance in view here will not only make one alter the way one lives, but also will cause one to see "the Mightier One to come" as the promise of God. To submit to this baptism is to confess one's commitment to this perspective. This is the essence of John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.** ([Baker Exegetical Commentary-Luke](#))

**John MacArthur** adds that

"while there were various ceremonial washings in Judaism (cf. Heb. 6:2+), there was no baptism of Jews. But while there was no baptism of Jews in Judaism, the Jews did baptize Gentile converts to Judaism ([Gentile proselytes](#)). Thus, those who "were being baptized by [John] in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins" (Mt. 3:6), were publicly acknowledging that they were no better than the Gentiles. Their sins had separated them from the true and living God (cf. Isa 59:2) and cut them off from covenant blessings. For Jewish people to place themselves on the same level as the despised Gentiles was astonishing, and demonstrates the power of John's preaching. **Unfortunately, few being baptized by John were truly repentant.** The nation would later reject Jesus when He failed to meet their expectations of a political Messiah, who would deliver them from the Romans. Others were superficial from the start....**But those few (Mt 7:13–14+) who acknowledged their sinful condition and alienation from God and turned to Him in repentant faith were saved.** (See context in [Luke Commentary](#))

**Comment** - While there were not many who were saved as a result of John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, there do appear to be some, and below are some examples to consider:

- Acts 18:24-25+ records "Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. 25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John." (**COMMENT:** So either directly or indirectly he had been instructed by John the Baptist. From Luke's description Apollos was clearly saved. Unlike the disciples of John the Baptist in Acts 19:1-7 there is no evidence that Apollos needed to be re-baptized.)
- Another possible example is two of John the Baptist's disciples, Andrew and John, who became Jesus' disciples. John records "Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, 36 and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples (ANDREW AND JOHN) heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." (John 1:35-37+) (**COMMENT:** So obviously Andrew and John believed in Jesus, although exactly when they truly believed is difficult to state dogmatically.)
- In addition Jesus alludes to some who believed - "For **John** came to you ("the chief priests and the elders" - Mt 21:23) in the way of righteousness and **you did not believe him**; but **the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him**; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse ([metamelomai](#)) afterward **so as to believe him.**" (Mt 21:32, cf Mt 21:25)
- In a similar allusion by Jesus we read - "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29 **When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism**

of John. 30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves (Ryle = "they rejected God's offer of salvation"), **not having been baptized by John.** (Lk 7:28-30+)

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**MacArthur** observes that six things demonstrate the true greatness of John.

- (1) He was filled with and controlled by the Spirit, even from "his mother's womb" (Luke 1:15b+).
- (2) He was obedient to God's Word. From childhood he followed God's will, and from it he never wavered.
- (3) He was self-controlled, drinking neither "wine or liquor" (Luke 1:15a+). In his food, dress, and life-style he was temperate and austere.
- (4) He was humble. His purpose was to announce the king, not to act kingly or take for himself any of the king's prerogatives. Speaking of Jesus, John said, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals" (Mark 1:7), and on a later occasion, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30+).
- (5) He courageously and faithfully proclaimed God's Word, thundering it across the wilderness as long as he was free to preach, to whomever would listen. (**ED: MEN AND WOMEN FILLED WITH/CONTROLLED BY THE SPIRIT HAVE THE "FRUIT" OF HOLY BOLDNESS!** cf Acts 4:31+).
- (6) Finally, he was faithful in winning people to Christ, in turning "back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God" (Luke 1:16+). He stands as a pattern for all who seek genuine greatness. (See context in [Matthew Commentary](#))

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**Gotquestions** addresses [the question of the meaning of John's baptism](#) -

Though today the word baptism generally evokes thoughts of identifying with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, baptism did not begin with Christians. For years before Christ, the Jews had used baptism in ritual cleansing ceremonies of Gentile proselytes. John the Baptist took baptism and applied it to the Jews themselves—it wasn't just the Gentiles who needed cleansing. Many believed John's message and were baptized by him (Matthew 3:5–6). The baptisms John performed had a specific purpose.

In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist mentions the purpose of his baptisms: **"I baptize you with water for repentance."** Paul affirms this in Acts 19:4: **"John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus."** John's baptism had to do with repentance—it was a symbolic representation of changing one's mind and going a new direction. **"Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River"** (Matthew 3:6). Being baptized by John demonstrated a recognition of one's sin, a desire for spiritual cleansing, and a commitment to follow God's law in anticipation of the Messiah's arrival.

There were some, like the Pharisees, who came to the Jordan to observe John's ministry but who had no desire to step into the water themselves. John rebuked them sternly: **"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'"** (Matthew 3:7–8). Even the religious leaders needed to repent of their sin, although they saw no need of it.

Christian baptism today also symbolizes repentance, cleansing, and commitment, but Jesus has given it a different emphasis. Christian baptism is a mark of one's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is representative of a cleansing that is complete and a commitment that is the natural response of one who has been made new. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross completely washes away our sins, and we are raised to new life empowered by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Romans 6:1–11).

**With John's baptism, a person repented of sin and was therefore ready to place his faith in Jesus Christ. John's baptism foreshadowed what Jesus would accomplish, much as the Old Testament sacrificial system did. John prepared the way for Christ by calling people to acknowledge their sin and their need for salvation. His baptism was a purification ceremony meant to ready the peoples' hearts to receive their Savior.**

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**G Campbell Morgan** has some interesting comments emphasizing three qualities of John's ministry:

1. First, it was **attractive** " Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan;"

2. Secondly, it was **convictive** "And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins;
3. Finally, it was **invective**. Against the men who constituted the fountain-head of all Israel's trouble Pharisees, Sadducees he flung himself in passionate protest.

**We sometimes imagine that there is nothing attractive in our ministry**, except the winning, wooing note. But there are times when we seem to need again the voice of the herald; and when God finds a John the Baptist and sends him out, his message is full of attractiveness. This is a great picture of attractiveness, of a man with a note of conviction in his message and authority in the way that he deals with sin.

- He came with no theology;
- He came with no philosophy to discuss;
- He came with no new cult to introduce;
- He did not come to ask men to consider a position which they could accept or reject as they pleased;
- He came with the thundering voice of a great inspiration "Repent;"
- His message of God's authority stirred every place, and every one.

Thank God it is true to-day. We do not need one Gospel for the city, and another for the suburbs, and another for the country. Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the villages need the same message. Before Jesus come, John the Baptist must come to the city, and suburbs, and country; and as his message is heard there will be attractiveness in it.

**Then notice, his message was convictive.**

At least men acknowledged the truth externally, and submitted to the baptism which was a symbol of their repentance. Of course it all fell short there. It can never be any more than that. John Baptist can never communicate life. Coming after him is the Sin-bearer, the great tender-hearted King of men, Who does not only produce repentance, but gives life. If we are convinced of sin, thank God for it, but it is not enough. The crowds that thronged the banks of the Jordan, and went down into its waters of baptism, which was a baptism of repentance, were very sincere; but to accept Jesus there must be something more than this.

**Once again, notice the invective note in his preaching.**

Now the leaders were responsible Pharisees and Sadducees. The **Pharisee was a ritualist**; - The **Sadducee a rationalist**. The Pharisee believed in all supernatural things, but imagined that they could be expressed in external things, and that is always the story of **ritualism**. The Sadducees did not believe in angel, spirit, or resurrection. They were **rationalists**, old and hard. These are the forces that damn a people, that blight a nation. John saw them coming; the ritualists and the rationalists, who with their splendid observance of **externalities** and their **inward** corruptness of life, had blighted the whole nation. And John said with roughness, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come," ye kin of vipers? And then, as if he had said: You have come, and you say you repent; but by you, more than by all others, must be manifested the reality of your repentance. "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance;" trust no longer in your physical relationship to Abraham "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." What a message it was! It must have burned and scorched these men. The more one studies it the more glad one is that Jesus' ministry of renewing followed. Thank God that the message to-day is that of this blessed King! ([Matthew 3:1-12](#); [Matthew 3:13-17](#))

**Matthew 3:7 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?"**

NET Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

GNT Matthew 3:7 ὁ δὲ πολλοὺς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων ῥοχμοὺς πῦρ βππισμα ατο επεν ατο ς, Γενν ματα χιδν ν, τ ς π δειξεν μ ν φυγε ν π τ ς μελλο σης ργ ς;

NLT Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to watch him baptize (NOTE THAT THIS IS NOT WHAT THE GREEK TEXT SAYS), he denounced them. "You brood of snakes!" he exclaimed. "Who warned you to flee God's coming wrath?"

KJV Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

ESV Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to

them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

NIV Matthew 3:7 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?"

ASV Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said unto them, Ye offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

CSB Matthew 3:7 When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to the place of his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

NKJ Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

NRS Matthew 3:7 But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

YLT Matthew 3:7 And having seen many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming about his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! who did shew you to flee from the coming wrath?'

NAB Matthew 3:7 When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

- **the Pharisees** - Mt 5:20 12:24 15:12 16:6,11,12 22:15,23,34 23:13-28 Mk 7:3-5 8:15 12:13,18 Lu 7:30 11:39-44 16:14 18:11 Joh 1:24 Joh 7:45-49 9:40 Ac 4:1,2 5:17 15:5 23:6-9 26:5
- **You brood of vipers** - Mt 12:34 23:33 Ge 3:15 Ps 58:3-6 Isa 57:3,4 59:5 Lu 3:7-9 Joh 8:44 1Jn 3:10 Rev 12:9,10
- **who** - Jer 6:10 51:6 Eze 3:18-21 33:3-7 Ac 20:31 Ro 1:18 Heb 11:7
- **flee** - Ro 5:9 1Th 1:10 2Th 1:9,10 Heb 6:18 Rev 6:16,17
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A POPULAR PROPHET PREACHING AN UNPOPULAR PRECEPT

**But when he saw many of the Pharisees** (see [pharisaios](#)) **and Sadducees** (see [saddoukaios](#)) **coming for baptism** ([baptisma](#)) - Broadus observes "with only one article, throws the two parties together as both needing sharp rebuke." The presence of these two rival parties coming together would have been a clue that their intentions were not good (cf [The enemy of my enemy is my friend](#)). **McNeile** observes "Here a strong attraction, there a strong repulsion, made them for the moment forget their differences" We find them united again in Mt 16:1 and Mt 22:23, 34. It is interesting that the parallel passage in Luke 3:7+ has John warning "the **crowds** who were going out to be baptized by him," whereas here he is directing his warning at the religious leaders. Both groups needed to hear and heed his warning! Consistent with his criticism for the Jewish religious leaders, Matthew is the only Gospel writer to repeatedly address the **Pharisees and Sadducees** (5x = Matt. 3:7; Matt. 16:1; Matt. 16:6 = ""Watch out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."; Matt. 16:11 = "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."; Matt. 16:12) Wiersbe adds that "The **Pharisees** were legal literalists who turned the law into a burden; the **Sadducees** were "liberals" who denied much of the OT (see Acts 23:8)." (borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#) )

**Matthew Poole** pointed out four things about the Pharisees.

- They believed that one was made righteous by keeping the law, and they believed themselves to be righteous in this way.
- They often misinterpreted the law.
- They held many traditions to be of equal authority to Scripture.
- They were often hypocrites in their practice, neglecting the core and spirit of the law for aspects of outward observance.

([Guzik](#))

**Spurgeon** - It was strange to see the proud Separatists and the sceptical Moralists come to be baptized; and therefore, as a test, John addressed them with scorching words. He saw that they were serpentine in their motives and viperish in their tempers, and so he calls them "Progeny of vipers": thus would he see whether they were sincere or not. He asks who suggested to them to flee from that wrath of which he was the forerunner, according to the closing words of the Old Testament (Malachi 4:5-6+). This enquiry was not complimentary; but it is no business of the Lord's servants to make themselves pleasing: they must be faithful, and especially so to the great and learned. Thus faithful was John the Baptist, and he was honoured for it by him that sent him.

**D A Carson** - "Many Pharisees and Sadducees may have come for baptism with the ostentation that characterized their other religious activities ... they were showing the world how ready they were for Messiah, though they had not truly repented." (EBC)

**He said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee-** Using the same [epithet](#) as Jesus would later use (Mt 12:34, Mt 23:33), John's sarcastic question must have stung these arrogant serpentine ecclesiastics! In a bit of bitter irony, the vipers themselves were stung! What a picture John describes with this warning -- what happens when there is a fire in the desert? The vipers flee from the heat of the fire to take cover in their holes. God's coming **wrath** would be far worse, beginning with first being cast into [Hades](#) (a "place of torment" Lk 16:28+), and ending with Hades being thrown into the [Lake of fire and brimstone](#) (Rev 20:15+), where "they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Rev 20:10+), Whether this is literal or figurative fire, the effect is to produce eternal torment. John emphasizes this coming **wrath** of God, a truth which should stir a fear in every human heart and in turn motivate a desire for genuine repentance.

Scripture makes figurative use of poisonous snakes and vipers (Dt. 32:33; Isa 59:5; Ps. 140:3) with reference to the wicked. Truth be told, all of us in our natural ([unregenerate](#)) state have "the poison of [asps](#) ([picture](#)) under (our) lips." (Ro 3:13b+, cf Ps 58:3,4) It is also interesting that various politicians and other groups were called "vipers" or "brood of vipers" in Greco-Roman sources (e.g., Aeschylus, Choephoroi 994; Euripides, Ion 1262). (Evans)

**Brood** (KJV - "generation")([1081](#))([gennema](#) from [gennáo](#) = to give birth to, beget, involving generation from [ginomai](#) = to become) is the product of the activity expressed by [gennao](#) and thus means that which is born or produced. **You brood** occurs 4 times - Matt. 3:7; Matt. 12:34; Matt. 23:33; Lk. 3:7.

**Vipers** ([2191](#))([echidna](#)) was an adder or other poisonous snake. **Echidna** is used four times as a figurative description of people - Pharisees and Sadducees (Mt. 3:7; Mt 12:34; Mt 23:33) and the Jewish **crowd** (Lk 3:7). **Broadus** says **vipers** is "a phrase of reproach, describing them as noxious and odious, and perhaps also as insidious." **Echidna** is used once of a literal viper (Acts 28:3+). Echidna referred to small poisonous snakes that lived primarily in the desert regions of Palestine and other parts of the eastern Mediterranean. Because they looked like a dried twig when they were still, a person collecting wood for a fire would often pick one up inadvertently and be bitten, as was Paul on the island of Malta (Acts 28:3+). That particular viper was deadly, and when Paul suffered no harm from the bite, the superstitious islanders thought he was a god (Acts 28:3, 6+). Vipers therefore had the understandable reputation for being both **deadly** and **deceitful**. "Vipers (e.g., the Nicander's viper) were commonly believed to eat their way out of their mother's womb; thus John's calling the crowd "viper's offspring" was even nastier than calling them "[vipers](#)." Serpents would flee a burning field." (Craig Keener) **ESV** note adds that **viper** was "A general term for any of a number of poisonous snakes in Israel, showing that the people had become the seed of the Serpent (Ge 3:15+)."

**Warned** ([5263](#))([hupodeiknumi](#) from [hupo](#) = under + [deiknumi](#) = to show) properly to show by placing under (i.e. before) the eyes. Figuratively it means to show or to make known or to point out and is used in a negative sense meaning to warn. Broadus feels that "**Warned**, is stronger than the original, which signifies to show secretly or partially, and thus to intimate, suggest, indicate, or more generally, to make known."

#### Related Resource:

- [Why did John the Baptist refer to the Pharisees as a brood of vipers?](#)

**John Broadus on the wrath to come** - It was expected among the Jews (as the [Book of Enoch](#) shows), that in connection with Messiah's appearance there would be an outburst of God's wrath upon his enemies, i. e. upon the Gentiles. But John, in accordance with the whole tenor of his teaching, describes 'the coming wrath' as threatening all God's enemies, including impenitent Jews; and this was already implied in Mal 3 (e.g. "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. 4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years." Mal 3:3-4+) and Mal 4 (e.g., "For **behold**, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and **all the arrogant and every evildoer** [IMPLICIT = BOTH JEW AND GENTILE] will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the LORD of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch."...3 "You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the LORD of hosts." Mal 4:1, 3+)."

**From the wrath to come** - There is another touch of sarcasm, for most the Jews believed in **the wrath to come** but they falsely believed it was reserved for the pagan, heathen Gentiles! They needed to look in the mirror! Paul described that in contrast to most of the Jews, many of these despised Gentiles had "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God (PICTURE OF REPENTANCE), and to wait for His Son from heaven (PICTURE OF BRINGING FORTH FRUIT IN KEEPING WITH REPENTANCE), Whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, Who rescues ([rhuomai](#) = RESCUE FROM DANGER!) us from the **wrath to come** ([present tense](#))." (1 Th 1:9-10+) Paul's description of the Gentile rescue by Jesus was identical to John's description in this passage, which reads more literally "**the** ([present tense](#) - continually) **coming wrath**." In short, the picture is that God's **wrath** is already "on its way!" (cf Jn 3:18+) It is imminent! The [present tense](#) is used in a [proleptic](#) sense for so certain is the wrath of God

to come to pass at some time in the future. This phrase is reminiscent of Romans 1:18<sup>+</sup> where Paul writes that "For the wrath ([orge](#)) of God is ([present tense](#) - continually being) revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who (CONTINUALLY, ACTIVELY, WILLFULLY) suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

When the fearful righteous **wrath** of God comes there will be no place for "vipers" to hide, no place for sinners to slide! (cf Rev 6:15, 16, 17<sup>+</sup>, Hos 10:8) The only solution is to "Be saved from this perverse generation" (Acts 2:40<sup>+</sup>) and seek refuge in the Redeemer, "hiding" in Christ (Col 3:3<sup>+</sup>), believing in His **so great a salvation** (Heb 2:3<sup>+</sup>). Considering the fact that Jerusalem would be destroyed some 40 years later, one might think John's warning was about this coming destruction in A D 70. However the **wrath** to which John refers is far worse than the destruction of Jerusalem, describing the final **wrath** reserved for every soul whose name is not found written in the **Book of Life** and thus is thrown into the **Lake of Fire**. (cf Rev 20:10<sup>+</sup> and Rev 20:11-15<sup>+</sup>) For the Jews another aspect of God's **wrath** is the coming **time of Jacob's trouble** (Jer 30:7<sup>+</sup>), which occurs at the end of this present evil age (Gal 1:4<sup>+</sup>), in the last 3.5 year period (cf [Daniel's Seventieth Week](#)) of indescribably horrendous judgments known as the **Great Tribulation** in which 2/3's of the world's Jews will "be cut off and perish" (Zechariah 13:8-9<sup>+</sup>) (For comparison Hitler murdered 1/3 of the world's Jews). Failure to repent will reap God's righteous wrath! Or as someone has quipped "Turn or burn!" (Of course, this is far from a laughing matter!) (See also the dark, dread [Day of the Lord](#) a day of doom)

The prophet John's warning echoes the language of the Old Testament prophets:

**Behold**, the [Day of the Lord](#) is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. (Isa. 13:9<sup>+</sup>);

**Behold**, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; Burning is His anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation And His tongue is like a consuming fire; (Isa. 30:27);

A [day](#) of **wrath** is that [day](#). A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, (Zeph. 1:15).

The apostle John describes how to flee from **the wrath to come** writing "He who believes in the Son has eternal life (PRESENT POSSESSION); but he who does not obey (FAITH THAT BELIEVES OBEYS - FAITH ALONE SAVES BUT THE FAITH THAT TRULY SAVES IS NOT ALONE) the Son will not (ABSOLUTELY NOT) see life (IN CONTEXT ETERNAL LIFE WITH GOD - cf 2 Th 1:8,9), but the **wrath** of God abides ([present tense](#) - continually abiding over his head like the proverbial '[Sword of Damocles](#)') on him." (Jn 3:36<sup>+</sup>)

**Wrath** (3709)([orge](#) from [orgaô](#) = to teem, to swell) conveys the picture of a swelling which eventually bursts, and thus describes an anger that proceeds from one's settled nature. **Orge** does not refer to uncontrollable anger to which men are so prone but to God's settled indignation and controlled passionate hostile feeling toward sin in all its various manifestations. **Settled indignation** means that God's holiness cannot and will not coexist with sin in any form whatsoever. **Orge** is not the momentary, emotional, and often uncontrolled anger ([thumos](#)) to which human beings are prone. **Orge** is used primarily of God's holy, righteous wrath but occasionally refers to the wrath of men (see Ephesians 4:31<sup>+</sup>)

**Orge** refers to to an inner, deep resentment that seethes and smolders. **Orge** as used of God refers to His constant and controlled indignation toward sin, while [thumos](#) (which originally referred to violent movements of air, water, etc., and consequently came to mean "well up" or "boil up") refers more to a passionate outburst of rage. **Thumos** type anger represents an agitated, violent anger that rushes forth at a moments notice. As noted the root meaning has to do with moving rapidly and was used of a man's breathing violently while pursuing an enemy in great rage! You can envision their nostrils flaring! In summary, God's **wrath** is His holy hatred of all that is unholy, His righteous indignation at everything that is unrighteous. Uses of **orge** in the Gospels - Matt. 3:7; Mk. 3:5; Lk. 3:7; Lk. 21:23; Jn. 3:36.

**THOUGHT** - The indescribable horror of God's righteous **wrath** ([one of His divine attributes](#)) which is coming upon all men and women who stubbornly resist His gracious call to "be saved" and remain dead in their trespasses and sins should motivate us who are saved from that wrath to boldly, continually throw out the Gospel life line to those who are perishing (Play and watch Fanny Crosby powerful classic [Rescue the Perishing](#) and then do it!). And we can certainly pray for their salvation! I routinely pray for a hidden people group using the [Joshua Project's daily reminder](#) and find myself literally overwhelmed by the statistics on many days where the people group is described as having several million eternal souls and NOT A SINGLE BELIEVER is known in all of those millions. This should break our hearts and stimulate us to plead with God for these otherwise eternally doomed souls! If you need so me additional motivation, take some time to study some of the **Related Resources** below on Eternal Punishment.

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**Guzik-** We can learn much from John the Baptist's preaching, "**Flee from the wrath to come.**"

- This wrath is the wrath of God.
- This wrath is fair and well deserved.
- This wrath is often ignored or disregarded because it is not immediate; it is to come.
- This wrath is not any less certain just because it is delayed and is to come.
- This wrath is terrible when it comes because it is God's wrath.
- This wrath cannot be stood against; the only way to survive is to successfully flee from it.

What John told them to do is also instructive: **flee**.

- To flee implies immediate action.
- To flee implies swift action.
- To flee implies straight movement with no diversions.

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#### **Related Resources on Eternal Punishment:**

- Eternal Punishment
- J C Ryle's discussion of Hell
- [Does hell exist?](#)
- [Where is hell? What is the location of hell?](#)
- [Is hell real? Is hell eternal?](#)
- [What does hell look like? How hot is hell?](#)
- [How can I not go to hell?](#)
- [Is Satan the master of hell? Do Satan and his demons punish people in hell?](#)
- [Who will go to hell?](#)
- [Is hell literally a place of fire and brimstone?](#)
- [Did God create hell?](#)
- [Are there different levels of punishment in hell?](#)
- [How can a loving God send someone to hell?](#)
- [What kind of bodies will people have in hell?](#)
- [Do Jews believe in hell?](#)
- [When was hell created?](#)
- [Why does God send people to hell?](#)
- [Questions about Heaven, Hell, and Eternity](#)

#### **Matthew 3:8 "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;"**

NET Matthew 3:8 Therefore produce fruit that proves your repentance,

GNT Matthew 3:8 ποι σατε ο ν καρπ ν ξιον τ ς μετανο ας

NLT Matthew 3:8 Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.

KJV Matthew 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

ESV Matthew 3:8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

NIV Matthew 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

ASV Matthew 3:8 Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance:

CSB Matthew 3:8 Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance.

NKJ Matthew 3:8 "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance,

NRS Matthew 3:8 Bear fruit worthy of repentance.

YLT Matthew 3:8 bear, therefore, fruits worthy of the reformation,

NAB Matthew 3:8 Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance.

NJB Matthew 3:8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance,

GWN Matthew 3:8 Do those things that prove you have turned to God and have changed the way you think and act.

- **bear**- Mt 21:28-30,32 Isa 1:16,17 Lu 3:8,10-14 Ac 26:20 Ro 2:4-7 2Co 7:10,11 2Pe 1:4-8
- **fruit** - Ga 5:22,23 Eph 5:9 Php 1:11
- **in keeping with**, Jer 7:3-7 26:13 36:3
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SHOW YOUR COLORS!

The English idiom "[show your colors](#)" means to reveal what one truly believes or thinks and so to act in accordance with one's real personality, temperament, or disposition. John demands proof of profession. Producing fruit was a figurative way to describe the lifestyle of one who was truly repentant (cf Mt 3:10; Mt 7:16–20; Mt 12:33; Mt 13:8, 23, 26; Mt 21:19). One is reminded of a similar picture of the "Blessed Man" of Psalm 1 for "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its **fruit** in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers." (Ps 1:3) In a similar picture Isaiah writes "Say to the righteous that it will go well with them, For they will eat the **fruit** of their actions." (Isa 3:10)

**Spurgeon** comments "Act as a change of mind would lead you to do: above all, quit the pride in which you enwrap yourselves, and leave the serpent motives which now actuate you. Lord, save us from a fruitless repentance, which would be only an aggravation of our previous sins."

This bold challenge to the religious leaders, the very Jews who held themselves up as lights to the laity, is more evidence that John carried out his ministry, not in reliance upon his natural strength, but as a man continually filled with the Spirit (cf call on every believer - Eph 5:18) and thus in complete dependence on the supernatural power the Spirit Who enabled him to bear fruit, one of the fruits being "holy boldness," with no fear of serpentine men (Pr 29:25) nor of their possible vindictive [reprisals](#)!

**Therefore** - (term of conclusion) - As Broadus explains "Therefore, presents the exhortation as the consequence of what precedes, or is naturally supplied. "As you profess repentance and wish to be baptized, therefore produce fruit worthy of repentance, and thus prove that you really do repent." This exhortation he might naturally address to all (Luke 3:8), while it was especially appropriate to the Pharisees and Sadducees. It is not probable that he required them to go off and prove their repentance before he could baptize them; he only gave them a special charge."

**Bear fruit in keeping with repentance** - Turn your new way of thinking into a new way of walking. If you truly *think* differently (repent), then you will *walk* differently. Jesus (in the context of true/false teachers) referred to the same principle declaring "You will know them by their **fruits**...every good tree bears good **fruit**." (Mt 7:16-17+). The upshot is if one's life demonstrates no supernatural fruit, one's repentance is a **sham profession** not a **sure possession**! The verb **bear** is **poieo** which literally means to make, to do, to accomplish and is in the **aoist imperative**, so that John is calling for his hearers to do this now, or as the Nike commercial says "**Just Do It!**" Don't delay. Don't procrastinate. Ultimately the only way to truly obey this command is by the supernatural power of the Spirit, and in this case prior to Pentecost He would not be indwelling the "true repenters," but He would still be empowering them to bear supernatural fruit. In Luke 3 the crowds ask John "What shall we do?" and he answered (giving them a sampling of "good fruit")...

And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." 12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages." (Lk 3:11-14+)

Now beloved think about this "**fruit**" John describes. Every one of us is intrinsically, naturally selfish and self-centered and each of John's descriptions of "**fruit**" cuts at our innate selfishness! The only One Who can enable us to truly overcome our "gravity of greediness" is the Holy Spirit, either before or after Pentecost!

**A B Bruce** makes an interesting comment that "Anyone can do (**poiēsate**) acts externally good but only a good man can grow a crop of right acts and habits" (See study of what truly constitutes [Good Deeds](#))

**Fruit** (2590)(**karpos**) is used in its literal sense to refer to fruit, produce or offspring, and thus describes that which is produced by the inherent energy of a living organism. In the NT the figurative (metaphorical) uses predominate and this is particularly true in the Gospels, where human actions and words are viewed as "spiritual" **fruit** growing out of a person's essential being or character. Good fruit is the result of reliance on the

Good Spirit! Matthew's uses of karpos - Matt. 3:8; Matt. 3:10; Matt. 7:16; Matt. 7:17; Matt. 7:18; Matt. 7:19; Matt. 7:20; Matt. 12:33; Matt. 13:8; Matt. 13:26; Matt. 21:19; Matt. 21:34; Matt. 21:41; Matt. 21:43;

Jesus explains **good fruit** in His parable of the soils "And others fell (Mt 13:19 = "word of the kingdom") on the good soil and yielded a **crop** (fruit - karpos), some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. (Mt 13:8) Jesus then explained the parable stating that "the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." (Mt 13:23, see Lk 8:15+, Mk 4:20+, Jn 15:5, Jn 15:8)

The word **in keeping** is the adjective **áxios** which strictly speaking means "bringing into balance" hence describes that which is fitting in the sense that it corresponds to what should be expected. In this case fruit (Spirit wrought **good works**) serve to authenticate the genuineness of one's repentance. One way to depict the meaning of **axios** is to draw out a scale as shown below. The fruit should "balance" the "repentance." No fruit, no repentance.

**Repentance.....Fruit**

Λ

### ANOTHER DEPICTION



So in the picture of scales imagine the "weight" of your **Repentance** on one pan, perfectly balanced by the "weight" of the **fruit** your repentance produces.

**In keeping** (514)(**áxios** from **ágō** = to weigh) strictly speaking means bringing up the other beam of the scales. Having the weight of another thing of like value, worth as much. Counterbalancing - weighing as much (of like value, worth as much). **Axios** means bringing into balance and hence equivalent or equal value/similar worth (Ro 8:18+ = suffering now, glory later, the later far outweighing the former! cf 2 Cor 4:17-18+! **Axios** in Lxx of Pr 3:15, Pr 8:11 - nothing earthly "balances" heavenly wisdom).

There are some in "evangelicalism" who teach that repentance is only a **change of mind**. The problem with this definition is that has nothing to do with one's real attitude toward sin and does not necessarily result in any change in lifestyle. If one's life and deeds do not change, one's repentance is **counterfeit**! Or stated another way true repentance will produce a life-style and behavior that demonstrate the reality of a changed heart.

**Repentance** (3341)(**metanoia** from **meta** = after + **noéo** = to understand) literally means "afterthought" or "to think after" and implies a change of mind. From the NT uses, it is clear that **metanoia** means however much more than merely a change of one's mind but also includes a complete change of heart, attitude, interest, and direction. **Metanoia** is a conversion in every sense of the word. Jesus' teaching would support this conclusion for our Lord declared "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents** (**metanoeo**), than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no **repentance** (**metanoia**)." (Luke 15:7+) Matthew's only other use of metanoia is in Mt 3:11.

**Matthew 3:9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.**

NET Matthew 3:9 and don't think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that God can raise up children for Abraham from these stones!

GNT Matthew 3:9 κα μ δ ξητε λ γειν ν αυτο ς, Πατ ρα χομεν τ ν βρα μ. λ γω γ ρ μ ν τι δ ναται θε ς κ τ ν λ θων το των γε ραι τ κνα τ βρα μ.

NLT Matthew 3:9 Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones.

KJV Matthew 3:9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

ESV Matthew 3:9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

NIV Matthew 3:9 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.

ASV Matthew 3:9 and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

CSB Matthew 3:9 And don't presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that God is able to raise up children for Abraham from these stones!

NKJ Matthew 3:9 "and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

NRS Matthew 3:9 Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.

YLT Matthew 3:9 and do not think to say in yourselves, A father we have -- Abraham, for I say to you, that God is able out of these stones to raise children to Abraham,

NAB Matthew 3:9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

- **do not suppose** - Mk 7:21 Lu 3:8 Lk 5:22 Lk 7:39 Lk 12:17
- **We have Abraham**- Eze 33:24 Lu 16:24 Joh 8:33,39,40,53 Ac 13:26 Ro 4:1,11-16 Ro 9:7,8 Ga 4:22-31
- **from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham**- Mt 8:11,12 Lu 19:40 Ac 15:14 Ro 4:17 1Co 1:27,28 Ga 3:27-29 Eph 2:12,13
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **DON'T TRUST YOUR ANCESTRAL CREDENTIALS**

**And do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'**- John anticipates that they will object to his call for repentance by playing the "ancestor card!" John in effect says don't trust your Jewish heritage! He is countering the prevalent Jewish assumption that just because they had come from the line of **Abraham**, they had no need to fear the **wrath of God** and so they were in no danger of going to Hell! This Jewish belief persisted in subsequent generations (and is even held today by many Orthodox Jews!) as shown by the following entry years later in the [Mishnah](#) "the disciples of Abraham our father inherit the Garden of Eden and inherit the world to come." (m. 'Abot 5:22). In sum, John is saying one's Jewishness is not a "fire insurance policy," (so to speak)! This dangerous presumption will bring about definitive punishment! The principle applies to everyone who considers anything "[salvific](#)" (church membership, belonging to some other "religion," undergoing water baptism, performing so-called good works, having saved parents, etc, etc) other than belief in Jesus Christ is sadly deceived and surely doomed!

**MacArthur** adds that "The rabbis taught that "all Israelites have a portion in the world to come." They spoke of the "delivering merits of the fathers," who passed on spiritual merit to their descendants. Some even taught that Abraham stood guard at the gates of Gehenna, or hell, turning back any Israelite who happened that way. They claimed that it was Abraham's merit that enabled Jewish ships to sail safely on the seas, that sent rain on their crops, that enabled Moses to receive the law and to enter heaven, and that caused David's prayers to be heard." (Ibid)

Some time later Jesus confronted this same false assumption addressing a group of Jews who had ostensibly believed in Him (Jn 8:30), but which would prove to be a false belief as Jesus Himself recognized declaring...

They answered Him, "**We are Abraham's descendants** and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free?'"...."So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. 37 "I know that you (JEWS) **are Abraham's descendants**; (REFERRING TO NATURAL, PHYSICAL DESCENT) yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you (THIS SHOWS Jn 8:30 WAS ONLY A PROFESSION, NOT GENUINE BELIEF). 38 "I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore you also do the

things which you heard from your father.” 39 They answered and said to Him, “**Abraham is our father.**” Jesus said to them, “If you are (TRULY) **Abraham’s children, do** ([imperfect tense](#) - again and again, over and over do) the deeds of Abraham (cf “fruit in keeping with repentance”).... 57 So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen **Abraham?**” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I am.** (THE SACRED NAME OF YAHWEH)” 59 Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple. (John 8:33, 36-39, 57-59+) (**Comment** - Jesus went on to say in John 8:44 that their deeds proved their father was actually Satan! Woe!)

**David Stern** in the **Jewish NT Commentary** writes: “There can be no doubt that in the 1st century c.e. the doctrine was widespread that descendants can benefit and even can claim salvation on the ground of their ancestors’ righteousness. Yeshua’s opponents made exactly such a claim at [John 8:33], Paul’s own opponents obviously were making use of the idea at [2Co 11:22]. Rabbinic literature does well in pointing up Avraham’s faithful and trusting attitude toward God. For example, the **Midrash Rabbah**: “In the ‘olam haba [world to come] Israel will sing a new song, as it is said, ‘Sing unto Adonai a new song, for he has done marvelous things’ (Ps 98:1). By whose z’khut [merit] will they do so? **By the merit of Avraham**, because he trusted in the Holy One, blessed be he, as it says, ‘And he trusted in Adonai’ (Ge15:6).” (Exodus Rabbah 23:5)

**MacArthur** - In Jesus’ story of the rich man and Lazarus, it is overlooked that the rich man in hell addresses **Abraham** as “**Father**,” and Abraham, speaking from heaven, calls the rich man his “**Child**.” But the rich man was then told by Abraham, “Between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us” (Luke 16:25–26+). A child of Abraham in hell was beyond their thinking. The Jews generally considered Gentiles to be the occupants of hell, spiritually lifeless and hopeless, dead stones as far as a right relationship with God is concerned. (Ibid)

Lk 3:8 is a clear warning by John that false (“superficial”) repentance is really no repentance in the sight of God and as such would not deliver one from the impending **wrath** of God. As an aside while the Jews did not inherit saving faith from Abraham, they did inherit their sin propensity from Abraham (cf Ro 5:12+)

John in referring to **Abraham** as their **father** could be alluding to Isaiah 51:1-2 “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, Who seek the LORD: Look to the **rock** from which you were hewn And to the **quarry** from which you were dug. 2 **‘Look to Abraham your father** And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was but one I called him, Then I blessed him and multiplied him.” The Jews could read a passage like this and think “We’re fine for we were hewn from Abraham.” If so, John is dramatically correcting such a false belief.

**MacArthur** - John’s message of preparation for the coming of the King was repentance, conversion, the demand for a completely different life. That must have been startling news for Jews who thought that, as God’s chosen people—the **children of Abraham**, the people of the covenant—they deserved and were unconditionally assured of the promised King. Knowing what they must have been thinking, John later told his listeners, “Do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham” (3:9). God was not interested in His people’s human heritage but in their spiritual life. “What the King wants from you,” John was saying, “is that you make a complete turnaround from the way you are, that you be totally converted, totally changed.” God calls for radical change and transformation that affects the mind, the will, and the emotions—the whole person. John’s point was simple: “You are in the same condition as the Gentiles. You have no right to the kingdom unless you repent and are converted from sin to righteousness.” He called for a true repentance that results in the fruit of a translated life (v. 8) and that includes baptism with water (v. 11a). Failure to repent would result in severe judgment, as Matthew 11:20–24 and 12:38–41 demonstrate.

**For I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham- Vincent** suggests John was “Pointing, as he spoke to the pebbles on the beach of the Jordan.”

**Blomberg** comments that “The reference to “**these stones**” probably reflects an original Aramaic wordplay between **children** (bēenayyāa) and **stones** (’abnayyā) and was no doubt inspired by the characteristically rocky ground that covers Israel.” (NAC)

**Craig Evans** adds an interesting note on **these stones** - It is probable that John is referring to “**these stones**” of Josh. 4, where twelve stones were placed by the Jordan River as a symbol of God’s deliverance of the twelve tribes of Israel: “ ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan ...’ And these twelve stones, which they took out of the Jordan River, Joshua set up in Gilgal, and he said to the people of Israel, ‘When your children ask their fathers in time to come, “What do these stones mean?” then you shall let your children know, “Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground” ’ ” (Josh. 4:2, 20–22). This stone symbolism reappears in the Elijah narrative: “And Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom

the word of the LORD had come, saying, 'Israel shall be your name.' So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD ..." (1 Kings 18:31–32). Like Elijah of old, so now John, the promised Elijah of the last days (Mark 9:13 "I say to you, that Elijah has indeed come"), has placed a monument of twelve stones at the Jordan River and has summoned the tribes of Israel to repent and prepare themselves for the coming of the Lord's anointed. In continuity with this aspect of John's ministry, Jesus appoints twelve disciples (cf. Mark 3:14, 16). **children to Abraham** (v. 9): It is probable that in John's original Semitic diction (whether Hebrew or Aramaic) a word-play lies behind stones and children, for stone in Hebrew is eben and son (or child) is ben. This word-play is found in various Jewish sources (e.g., Josephus, J.W. 5.6.3 §272; Tg. Onq. Gen. 49:24; Tg. Zech. 10:4; Tg. Ps. 118:22; Exod. Rab. 37.1 [on Ex. 27:20]). In effect, the Baptist has said that God can raise up from these twelve **stones** (that represent the twelve tribes of Israel) **children to Abraham**; fulfillment of the Almighty's promises is not contingent upon faithless stewards. They may presume nothing. (Bible Knowledge Background Commentary. Page 72)

**Blomberg** comments "Too often in the history of the church, people have trusted in living in a "Christian" country, being raised in a Christian family, holding membership or even office in a local church, and even in verbal claims to have repented and to have trusted in Christ. Yet without the evidence of a changed life and perseverance in belief, all such grounds of trust prove futile. One cannot determine the number of truly saved people in any given church by simply counting those who have responded to altar calls, received baptism, or become church members." (NAC-Matthew)

**Matthew 3:10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**

NET Matthew 3:10 Even now the ax is laid at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

GNT Matthew 3:10 ὁ ἄξ νῦν ἐστὶν ἔθειον ἐπὶ τῶν ῥιζῶν τῶν δένδρων· καὶ πᾶν ὄν οὐκ ἐπὶ καρπὸν καλὸν κκίπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βλλεται.

NLT Matthew 3:10 Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.

KJV Matthew 3:10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

ESV Matthew 3:10 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.

NIV Matthew 3:10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

ASV Matthew 3:10 And even now the axe lieth at the root of the trees: every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

CSB Matthew 3:10 Even now the ax is ready to strike the root of the trees! Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

NKJ Matthew 3:10 "And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

NRS Matthew 3:10 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

YLT Matthew 3:10 and now also, the axe unto the root of the trees is laid, every tree therefore not bearing good fruit is hewn down, and to fire is cast.

NAB Matthew 3:10 Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

NJB Matthew 3:10 Even now the axe is being laid to the root of the trees, so that any tree failing to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire.

- **already** - Mal 3:1-3 4:1 Heb 3:1-3 10:28-31 12:25
- **the axe** - Lu 3:9 23:31
- **therefore** - Ps 1:3 92:13,14 Isa 61:3 Jer 17:8 Joh 15:2

- **is cut down** - Mt 7:19 Mt 21:19 Ps 80:15,16 Isa 5:2-7 27:11 Eze 15:2-7 Lu 13:6-9 Joh 15:6 Heb 6:8 1Pe 4:17,18
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JUDGMENT IS IMMINENT

**Imminent** is an adjective derived from the Latin word *imminens* from *imminere* meaning to hang or project over. And so literally **imminent** means hanging or projecting over, ready to take place, hanging threateningly over one's head! In the immediate context John is giving a vivid picture of imminent judgment in order to emphasize the urgent need for his hearer to respond to his call for fruit-bearing repentance!

As **Spurgeon** said "No mere pruning and trimming work did John come to do; he was the handler of a sharp axe that was to fell every worthless tree."

**Warren Wiersbe** rightly observes that "God gets to the root of our lives (Mt 3:10), for the root determines the fruit (Mt 3:8)." (borrow [Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament](#) )

**The axe is already laid at the root of the trees-** In the Greek text **already** is in an emphatic position to get across the sense of urgency inherent in John's message! It pictures the axe poised to chop down the trees (the non-repenters). **NLT** paraphrases it "Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised." In keeping with the previous passage, John's metaphor is depicting the people's repentance as like "fruit trees." No spiritual fruit indicates no real repentance. **Robertson** says the axe "is there ready for business." The axe is placed and lain, ready to chop!

Earlier John had declared **"the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand"** (Mt 3:2) and now he couples the nearness of the Kingdom with the warning that the judgment is also near, which is logical because failure to enter the Kingdom of Heaven/God (cf Jn 3:3+) will leave judgment as the only viable (really "non-viable" because it brings eternal death) alternative!

**Adam Clarke** comments that "It has been well observed, that there is an allusion here to a woodman, who, having marked a tree for excision, lays his axe at its root, and strips off his outer garment, that he may wield his blows more powerfully, and that his work may be quickly performed."

**A T Robertson** says "The prophetic [present](#) occurs also with "cut down" and "thrown." (**ED**: Note that **laid** is also in [present tense](#).) The **prophetic present tense** describes what is going to take place in the future as though it were already coming. It implies certainty and thus states with assurance that which is predicted (**cut down...thrown**). The idea is that these events which are future are pictured as if already present.

**Laid** ([present passive](#))(2749)([keimai](#)) means literally to be in a recumbent position, to lie down, to be laid down. Figuratively as in this passage **keimai** means appointed (determined or decided upon) or destined for a particular end, in this case judgment!

**MacArthur** comments that "At the end of every harvest season the farmer would go through his vineyard or orchard looking for plants that had borne no good fruit. These would be cut down to make room for productive vines and trees and to keep them from taking nutrients from the soil that were needed by the good plants. A fruitless tree was a worthless and useless tree, fit only to be cut down and thrown into the fire. Jesus used a similar figure in describing false disciples. "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6). Fruitless repentance is worthless and useless; it means absolutely nothing to God." (Ibid)

**Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire-** **Therefore** ([term of conclusion](#)) marks the inevitable conclusion and certain destiny for all (**every tree**) non-repenters! There are no exception clauses for Jews or anyone depending on their own self-righteousness! John's words are echoed by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount when He declared (context was referring especially to false prophets - Mt 7:15) "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Mt 7:19+) So even as false prophets would be cut down, so too false repenters would be cut down. **The fire** of course especially in the context of Mt 3:12 ("unquenchable fire") is a picture of Divine judgment which will result in doom, destruction (not annihilation) and torment, just as does true fire to flammable objects. And non-repenters are "*flammable*" so to speak! But the tragic irony is they will experience eternal fire but will continue to exist in utter torment! Does this horrendous truth not make you want to pray for the unsaved in your sphere of influence and seek opportunities to share the Gospel before it is too late?!

**Cut down** (1581)([ekkopto](#) from **ek** =from, out + **kópto** = cut) literally means to cut off or from, cutting so as to sever. It means to cause to cease by removing, to do away with, to eliminate. Matthew's uses - Matt. 3:10; Matt. 5:30; Matt. 7:19; Matt. 18:8;

**MacArthur on fire - Fire** is a frequent biblical symbol of the torment of divine punishment and judgment. Because of their exceptional wickedness, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by "brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven" (Gen. 19:24). After Korah, his men, and their households were swallowed up by the earth and "went down alive to Sheol ... fire also came forth from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men who were offering the incense" (Num. 16:32–33, 35). In His role as a righteous Judge, God is frequently called "a consuming fire" (Ex. 24:17; Deut. 4:24; 9:3; etc.). In the last chapter in the Old Testament, Malachi speaks of the coming day that will be "burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze" (Mal. 4:1). John's preaching picked up where Malachi left off, and Jesus Himself often spoke of the fires of hell (Matt. 5:22, 29; Mark 9:43, 47; Luke 3:17; etc.)." (Ibid)

Salvation is not verified by a past act,  
but by present fruitfulness  
- MacArthur

**Bruce Barton** asks "So how are we to bear good fruit? God calls us to be "active" in our obedience. To be productive for God, we must obey his teachings, resist temptation, actively serve others, and share our faith." (LAC) But be careful....

**THOUGHT** - While I agree with Barton's suggestions for fruitfulness, note that he leaves out one critical element of supernatural fruit bearing, and that is the element of supernatural enablement provided only by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Beloved, don't fall into the subtle trap of "**doing**" at the expense of the necessity of "**being**!" In other words, be **BEING** continually filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18+) and then you will be empowered to be **DOING** good (God glorifying) works! E.g., Just try to obey Paul's command by "**doing**" before "**being**" as when Paul commands "husbands, **love** ([present imperative](#)) your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph 5:25+ - see [Need for the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) If we try to accomplish the **doing** without the **being**, we fall into the [trap of legalism](#) which will blunt both the flow of grace and the work of the Spirit. As I like to say to my students, quit "**trying**" and start "**dying**," dying to self (Mk 8:34-35) and living for Jesus by the power of His Spirit. This dynamic will make all the difference in this world and the world to come!

**Matthew 3:11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."**

NET Matthew 3:11 "I baptize you with water, for repentance, but the one coming after me is more powerful than I am— I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

GNT Matthew 3:11 γ μ ν μ ς βαπτ ζω ν δατι ε ς μετ νοιαν, δ π σω μου ρχ μενος σχυρ τε ς μο στιν, ο ο κ ε μ καν ς τ ποδ ματα βαστ σαι α τ ς μ ς βαπτ σει ν πνε ματι γ κα πυρ ·

NLT Matthew 3:11 "I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God. But someone is coming soon who is greater than I am-- so much greater that I'm not worthy even to be his slave and carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

KJV Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

ESV Matthew 3:11 "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 fire.

NIV Matthew 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

ASV Matthew 3:11 I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire:

CSB Matthew 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the One who is coming after me is more powerful than I. I am not worthy to remove His sandals. He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

NKJ Matthew 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto 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 fire.

NRS Matthew 3:11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

YLT Matthew 3:11 'I indeed do baptize you with water to reformation, but he who after me is coming is mightier than I, of whom I am not worthy to bear the sandals, he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire,

NAB Matthew 3:11 I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire.

- **baptize** - Mt 3:6 Mk 1:4,8 Lu 3:3,16 Joh 1:26,33 Ac 1:5 11:16 13:24 19:4
- **but** - Lu 1:17 Joh 1:15,26,27,30,34 3:23-36
- whose - Mk 1:7 Lu 7:6,7 Ac 13:25 Eph 3:8 1Pe 5:5
- **He will baptize** - Isa 4:4 44:3 59:20,21 Zec 13:9 Mal 3:2-4 Mk 1:8 Lu 3:16 Joh 1:33 Ac 1:5 2:2-4 11:15,16 1Co 12:13 Ga 3:27,28
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **COMING ONE BRINGS A DIFFERENT BAPTISM**

**As for me, I baptize** (see [baptizo](#) above) **you with water for repentance** (see [metanoia](#) above) - This has been described at length above. Suffice it to say John's baptism is distinct from Christian baptism which first consists of baptism into (identification with) Christ at the time of the new birth (see Ro 6:3 = "into His death" not into water!) and then is followed by water baptism which serves to symbolize and testify to one's spiritual baptism into Christ by grace through faith.

**MacArthur** comments that that in "John's ministry it (BAPTISM) marked the outward profession of inward repentance, which prepared a person for the coming of the King. As the apostle Paul explained many years later, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus" (Acts 19:4+).

**D A Carson** suggests "John's baptism was "essentially preparatory"....; Jesus' baptism inaugurated the Messianic Age."

**But** - John now makes a clear contrast between his ministry and Messiah's ministry.

**He who is coming after me is mightier than I** - The first difference John highlights is that His baptism was not just with water but with the Spirit. This does indicate John's ministry was mighty, but he does not say how it was mighty. He certainly drew large crowds and spoke boldly, both of which could reflect the might of his ministry. His impact on the public was so mighty that Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, could not ignore him, but had him arrested and eventually executed.

**Mightier** (2478) ([ischuros](#) from [ischuo](#) = to be able) is an adjective which means strong, powerful, mighty (usually referring to inherent physical strength), able, forcible. **ischuros** denotes places "stress on the actual power that one possesses rather than on the mere principle of power." It is notable that **ischuros** is used in the Septuagint to refer to God in Jer 32:18+ which says "O great and **mighty** (Lxx = ischuros) God. The LORD of hosts is His name." And in Jeremiah 33:3 He invites Israel to "Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and **mighty** (Lxx = ischuros) things, which you do not know.' Mark uses **ischuros** to describe the "**strong man**" in Mk 3:27+, who in context is Satan (or Beelzebul - Mk 3:22), and the One Who binds him is Jesus Himself, which shows Jesus to be mightier than John the Baptist.

**And I am not fit** ([hikanos](#)) **to remove His sandals** - John's genuine humility is expressed here. John says he is not worthy to perform even the lowly task of a servant. **Hughes** describes "A rabbinic saying, dated after Christ but very likely contemporary to Christ, stated that disciples ought to do everything for their masters that a slave does, except for one thing—untie his sandals. That was simply too much to ask any Jew to do for another Jew. But John had it right in relationship to Christ. He affirmed that he was not worthy of doing the most personally degrading task for the Messiah." (Preaching the Word)

**G Campbell Morgan** - There is a humility about this; there is a touch of modesty in it; and the difference between a real humility and a mock humility, we all know. Real humility never knows it is humble; mock humility is proud of its humility. I lead you to the external symbol of your repentance; He shall whelm you in the fire-whelming of the Holy Ghost, that burns your sin out of you, and re-makes you. I have to do, said John, with the external thing water, that which can only touch the surface of things; He shall work with fire, that which shall go through everything.

**He will baptize** (see [baptizo](#) above) **you with the Holy Spirit and fire** - Luke's version is identical (Lk 3:16+) but Mark 1:8+ omits the phrase **and fire**. Some take this to represent only one baptism, but others take this to represent two baptisms. I favor the latter. Those who see only one baptism (D A Carson), take the **fire** as a purifying agent. One of the main arguments to support this premise is that there is only one preposition **with** (Greek = en) before Spirit and fire. In other words there is no separate "with" before

fire, which as Carson says "suggests a unified concept, Spirit-fire or the like." However regarding fire notice that John has spoken about **fire** in Mt 3:10 and will speak of it again in Mt 3:12 and in both contexts **fire** clearly speaks of judgment which would be strong support for the use of **fire** in this verse as indicative of judgment.

**Louis Barbieri** comments that "Those hearing John's words would have been reminded of two Old Testament prophecies: Joel 2:28–29 and Malachi 3:2–5. Joel had given the promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Israel. An actual outpouring of the Spirit did occur in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost, but experientially Israel did not enter into the benefits of that event. She will yet experience the benefits of this accomplished work when she turns in repentance at the Lord's Second Advent." (BKC)

**NET Note on With the Holy Spirit and fire** - There are differing interpretations for this phrase regarding the number of baptisms and their nature. (1) Some see one baptism here, and this can be divided further into two options. (a) The baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire could refer to the cleansing, purifying work of the Spirit in the individual believer through salvation and sanctification, or (b) it could refer to two different results of Christ's ministry: Some accept Christ and are baptized with the Holy Spirit, but some reject him and receive judgment. (2) Other interpreters see two baptisms here: The baptism of the Holy Spirit refers to the salvation Jesus brings at his first advent, in which believers receive the Holy Spirit, and the baptism of fire refers to the judgment Jesus will bring upon the world at his second coming. One must take into account both the image of fire and whether individual or corporate baptism is in view. A decision is not easy on either issue. The image of fire is used to refer to both eternal judgment (e.g., Matt 25:41) and the power of the Lord's presence to purge and cleanse his people (e.g., Isa 4:4–5). The pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost, a fulfillment of this prophecy no matter which interpretation is taken, had both individual and corporate dimensions. It is possible that since Holy Spirit and fire are governed by a single preposition in Greek, the one-baptism view may be more likely, but this is not certain. **Simply put, there is no consensus view in scholarship at this time on the best interpretation of this passage**

**Warren Wiersbe** favors two baptisms writing "John mentioned two other baptisms: a baptism of the Spirit and a baptism of fire (Matt. 3:11). The baptism of the Spirit came at Pentecost (Acts 1:5+, and note that Jesus said nothing about fire). Today, whenever a sinner trusts Christ, he is born again and immediately baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, the church (1 Cor. 12:12–13). In contrast, the baptism of fire refers to the future judgment, as Matthew explains (Matt. 3:12). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** on **Holy Spirit and fire** says "Many interpreters take this (**and fire**) to be a part of the **Holy Spirit baptism**, which began at Pentecost and which in that instance was accompanied by "**tongues of fire**" (Acts 2:3+). But the Acts account says that those tongues "appeared to them" (that is, the waiting disciples) "**as of fire**." They were not fire, but looked like licks of fire. In his last promise of the soon-coming baptism with the Holy Spirit, Jesus said nothing about actual fire being a part of the experience (Acts 1:5+). And when, a short time later, Cornelius and his household were baptized with the Holy Spirit, no fire was present (Acts 10:44+; Acts 11:16+; cf. Acts 8:17+; Acts 19:6+). **Other interpreters take the fire to represent a spiritual cleansing** as described in the quotation above from Ezekiel. But nothing in Ezekiel's text, in the context of John's message here, or in the Pentecost reference to the tongues "as of fire" relates to such cleansing. Consequently, it seems best to consider **fire** as representing God's coming judgment, which, as we have seen, is so frequently in Scripture symbolized by fire. In both the preceding and following verses (Mt 3:10, 12+) John clearly uses **fire** to represent judgment and punishment. It is impossible (ED: I WOULD NOT SAY "IMPOSSIBLE" BUT "IT SEEMS UNLIKELY") that the middle reference to **fire** would concern an entirely different subject. Both of the adjoining verses contrast the fates of believers and unbelievers, those who bear good fruit and those who do not (Mt 3:10) and the valuable wheat and the worthless chaff (Mt 3:12+). It therefore seems logical and natural to take Mt 3:11 also as a contrast between believers (those baptized with the Holy Spirit) and unbelievers (those baptized with the fire of God's judgment). (MacArthur New Testament Commentary)

Here is an alternative interpretation by **David L Turner** - "Though some (e.g., Bruner 1987:79–80; Luz 1989:171; Ridderbos 1987:55) see two baptisms here, one in the Spirit indicating salvation and the other in fire indicating judgment, it is preferable to see only one purifying baptism (Davies and Allison 1988:317). In this understanding the phrase, "**Spirit and fire**," is understood as a [hendiadys](#), a figure of speech in which one idea is expressed by two words. This seems to be indicated also by OT texts that associate the eschatological outpouring of the Spirit with both cleansing water (Isa 32:15; Isa 44:3; Ezek 36:25–27; Joel 2:28–29; cf. 1QS 4:20–22) and refining fire (Isa 1:25; Isa 4:4; Isa 30:27–30; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:1–3; Mal 4:1; cf. Acts 2:3; [2 Ezra 13:8–11](#)). So it is best to conclude that the one eschatological outpouring of the Spirit through Jesus will purify and judge. The Holy Spirit has been mentioned as the miraculous agent behind Jesus' conception (Mt 1:18, 20). Now as John speaks of the future, he asserts that Jesus will baptize in the Holy Spirit. Though he would eventually dispense the Spirit to others (Mt 3:11), Jesus presently needs the empowerment of the Spirit for his own mission (Mt 4:1; Mt 12:18, 28). For a perceptive study of the ministry of the Spirit to Jesus see Hawthorne 1991." (Cornerstone Bible Commentary)

**Fire** (4442)(**pur**) refers to literal fire (Mt 13:40; 17:15, etc). **Pur** is used figuratively of God inflicting punishment (Heb 12:29), of disunion (Lk 12:49), of the tongue that kindles strife and discord (James 3:5-6), of trials (1 Pe 1:7, Rev 3:18), at Pentecost (Acts 2:3 = "tongues as of fire"), of burning up useless works (1 Cor 3:10-15), as a description of doing something with great difficulty in Jude 1:23 ("snatching them out of the fire"). **Fire in the**

**context of judgment as in the present passages, the eternal fire, the place of punishment** (Mt. 13:42, 50; Mt. 5:22; 18:9; Mk 9:4 Mt. 18:8; 25:41; Jude 1:7 Rev. 14:10); the [Lake of fire](#) (Rev. 19:20; Rev 20:10, 14, 15; Rev 21:8). All of Matthew's uses of **pur** - Mt. 3:10; Mt. 3:11; Mt. 3:12; Mt. 5:22; Mt. 7:19; Mt. 13:40; Mt. 13:42; Mt. 13:50; Mt. 17:15; Mt. 18:8; Mt. 18:9; Mt. 25:41 = ""Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal **fire** which has been prepared for the devil and his angels."

**Kent Hughes** - I once heard E. V. Hill, the pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, tell of the ministry of an elderly woman in his church whom they all called 1800 because no one knew how old she was. 1800 was hard on unsuspecting preachers because she would sit in the front row, and as soon as the preacher began she would say, "Get him up!" (referring to Christ). After a few minutes, if she did not think there was enough of Christ in the sermon, she would again shout, "Get him up!" If a preacher did not "Get him up!" he was in for a long, hard day! Here John the Baptist's response to misplaced adulation was to "get him up"—a noble task because it is the chief purpose for our existence....John was the greatest of all men, he was having the greatest of all ministries to date, multitudes were at his feet, but he knew that he wasn't worthy to perform even the humblest act for Christ. If we aim to "get him up," we need to "get ourselves down." (Ibid)

**Matthew 3:12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."**

NET Matthew 3:12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clean out his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the storehouse, but the chaff he will burn up with inextinguishable fire."

GNT Matthew 3:12 ο τ π π ο ν ν τ χ ε ι ρ α τ ο κ α διακαθαριε τ ν λ ω ν α α τ ο κ α σ υ ν ξ ε ι τ ν σ τ ο ν α τ ο ε ς τ ν π ο θ κ η ν , τ δ χ υ ρ ο ν κ α τ α κ α σ ε ι π υ ρ σ β σ τ .

NLT Matthew 3:12 He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire."

KJV Matthew 3:12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

ESV Matthew 3:12 His 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."

NIV Matthew 3:12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

ASV Matthew 3:12 whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

CSB Matthew 3:12 His winnowing shovel is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn. But the chaff He will burn up with fire that never goes out."

NKJ Matthew 3:12 "His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

NRS Matthew 3:12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

YLT Matthew 3:12 whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his floor, and will gather his wheat to the storehouse, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.'

- **His winnowing fork** - Isa 30:24 41:16 Jer 4:11 15:7 51:2 Lu 3:17
- **He will thoroughly clear** - Mt 13:41,49,50 Mal 3:2,3 4:1 Joh 15:2
- **He will thoroughly clear** - Mt 13:30,43 Am 9:9
- **He will thoroughly clear**- Job 21:18 Ps 1:4 35:5 Isa 5:24 17:13 Ho 13:3 Mal 4:1 Lu 3:17
- **with unquenchable fire** - Isa 1:31 66:24 Jer 7:20 17:27 Eze 20:47,48 Mk 9:43-48
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## WINNOWING SPIRITUAL "GRAIN"

First the harvested stalks of wheat would be threshed on a stone or hard-packed dirt surface (threshing floor) by oxen dragging heavy timbers over the grain which would result in separation of the chaff ([pix](#)) from the kernels of wheat ([pix](#)). This combination would then be **winnowed**. **Winnowing** is the the act of separating grain from chaff by throwing it in the air allowing the prevalent breezes off of the Mediterranean Sea to carry away the useless, lighter husks (chaff) and allowing the heavier, valuable wheat to fall to the ground. It is also used to remove weevils or other pests from stored grain. Winnow in our English dictionary means to remove from a group until only the best are left. Interesting! In Biblical terms only the "best ones" are only those who are **in Christ**. In this agricultural land, John's picture left no one guessing what he was saying. They knew he was describing a separation and it was not of literal wheat but of human beings! How effective was John's picturesque teaching? The gospel of John gives us a sense of the effect of John's ministry of preparation for the Messiah writing

And He (JESUS) went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there. 41 Many came to Him and were saying, "While John performed no sign, yet everything John said about this man was true." 42 **Many believed in Him there.**" (John 10:40-42)

**Comment:** John records several times that Jews believed in Jesus (John 2:23+ John 4:39,41+ John 8:30 John 11:45 John 12:42) but studying the context of these passages it is clear that not all who **believed** really believed! In other words they had a superficial belief or intellectual belief but it was unassociated with a change in behavior and thus was a false profession. On the other hand, clearly some truly believed in Jesus, but it is difficult to arrive at a sense of how many of those who "**believed**" were genuine. We will have to wait for Heaven for the answer.

**His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor- His...His...He** refer to Jesus Christ. **Thoroughly clear** ([diakatharizō](#) - only Biblical use) indicates that this separation is absolute and complete and there will not be a few "husks" of unbelievers (so to speak) on the threshing floor mixed in with the valuable, believing "wheat"! How sad that people created in the image of God will end their life on earth as nothing more that "chaff" to be burned and tormented forever and ever, regardless of how powerful they were, how many degrees they had after their name, how many humanitarian causes they established, how many books they wrote, etc, etc. Outside of Christ, they are eternally worthless chaff! **Woe!** John presents a vivid picture of the future judgment of Messiah Who will leave not a trace of **chaff** (cf Ps 1:4+). His separation (**winnowing**) of the **the wheat** (repenters) from **the chaff** (non-repenters) is thorough and final as the chaff will be thrown into the **Lake of fire and brimstone** (Rev 20:15+). Even in the Old Testament we see a description of the thoroughness of the removal of the chaff by the Messiah as recorded in the book of Daniel...

"You (DANIEL SPEAKING TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR) continued looking until a **Stone** was cut out without hands (= SUPERNATURAL = MESSIAH AT HIS SECOND COMING), and **I T struck** (SEPTUAGINT = [PATASSO](#) = SAME VERB IN Rev 19:15! THIS IS NOT A COINCIDENCE!) the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold (ALL ELEMENTS OF THE GODLESS GENTILE NATIONS) were crushed all at the same time (BY THE STONE CUT OUT OF ROCK WITHOUT HANDS = MESSIAH AT HIS SECOND COMING!) and **became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found.** (CF "HE WILL THOROUGHLY CLEAR HIS THRESHING FLOOR!") But the **Stone** that **struck** (SEPTUAGINT = [PATASSO](#)) the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (JESUS ESTABLISHES HIS [MESSIANIC KINGDOM](#)). (Daniel 2:34-35+)

Compare John's description in the Revelation - From His (JESUS') mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it **He may strike down the nations** (**STRIKE** IS SAME VERB [PATASSO](#) USED IN DANIEL 2), and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev 19:15-16+)

Isaiah 63:4+ describes this separation in prophetic terms declaring "For the day of vengeance (REFERS TO HIS SECOND COMING) was in My (MESSIAH'S) heart (REFERRING TO HIS SECOND COMING), And My year of redemption has come (BELIEVING "WHEAT" - in context of Isaiah 63 = the [believing remnant of Israel](#)). Daniel also describes this tragic day of future separation of the wicked from the redeemed declaring "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake (RESURRECTION), these to **everlasting life**, but the others to disgrace and **everlasting contempt.**" (Daniel 12:2+) Notice the adjective **everlasting** modifying both life and contempt! While I personally am horrified by this doctrine, passages like this leave little doubt that eternal punishment will indeed be **everlasting!** Let this truth motivate us to share the Gospel, not argue over the doctrine of Hell! Jesus left little room for argument when He plainly declared "These (THE GOATS - Mt 25:31, 32, 33, 41-45), will go away into **eternal** punishment, but the righteous into **eternal** life." (Mt 25:46). Sadly, Jesus could not have been much clearer!

**Winnowing** is a vivid picture of judgment of the Righteous Judge Jesus (cf 2 Ti 4:1+). **John** writes "For not even the Father judges anyone, but **He has given all judgment to the Son..** 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 28 "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and will come forth; **those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life ("WHEAT"), those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment ("CHAFF").** (Jn 5:22, 27-29)

**Marvin Vincent** - The picture is of a farmer at his threshing-floor, the area of hard-beaten earth on which the sheaves are spread and the grain trodden out by animals. His fan, that is his winnowing-shovel or fork, is in his hand, and with it he throws up the mingled wheat and chaff against the wind in order to separate the grain....The whole metaphor represents the Messiah as separating the evil from the good, according to the tests of his kingdom and Gospel, receiving the worthy into his kingdom and consigning the unworthy to destruction (compare Mt. 13:30; 39-43; 48-50).

**Winnowing fork** (KJV = "fan") - A long wooden shovel used for tossing grain against the wind after [threshing](#) so that the lighter [chaff](#) would be blown away, leaving the [kernels](#) to settle in a pile. Shovels were also used for this purpose (Isaiah 30:24). Winnowing is a frequent figure for the Divine sifting and chastisement, Jer 4:11; Jer 15:7 etc.

**NET Note** - A winnowing fork is a pitchfork-like tool used to toss threshed grain in the air so that the wind blows away the chaff, leaving the grain to fall to the ground. The note of purging is highlighted by the use of imagery involving sifting through threshed grain for the useful kernels.

**Winnowing fork** (4425)([ptuon](#)) denotes "a winnowing shovel or fan," with which grain is thrown up against the wind, in order to separate the chaff (Mt 3:12 ; Lk 3:17, no uses in the Septuagint). [Winnowing - Wikipedia](#)

**And He will gather His wheat into the barn**- This pictures believers who bring forth the eternal fruit (cf Jn 15:16) of [Good Deeds](#).

**Gather** (4863)([sunago](#) from [sun](#) = with + [ago](#) = to lead, ) means literally to lead together. To gather (in) or gather (up) (Mt 13:47; 25:24, 26; Lk 3:17; 15:13; Jn 6:12f; 15:6). To bring or call together, gather (Mt 22:10; 25:32; Mk 2:2; 7:1; Jn 11:47; 18:2; Acts 13:44; 14:27; 1 Cor 5:4). To invite or receive as a guest (Mt 25:35, 38, 43). This verb gives us our English word [synagogue](#) a place where Jews pray and worship. We see a gathering for judgment similar to Lk 3:17 in Joel 3:11+ where God is commanding a gathering of unholy (unsaved) Gentiles, not for the purpose of worship, but for wrath, in the [Valley of Jehoshaphat](#), the Valley of Decision, for it is judgment time for the nations of the world is "ripe!"

The picture in this passage reminds one of the eternal "separation" of the righteous from the wicked in Psalm 1...

- 1 How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers.
- 4 The **wicked** are not so, But **they are like chaff which the wind drives away**.
- 5 Therefore the **wicked** will not stand in the judgment, Nor **sinners** in the assembly of the righteous.
- 6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the **wicked** will perish. (Ps 1:1-6-note)

**But He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire**- The wheat would be stored in the granary for later grinding into flour to make bread, but the **chaff** would be raked into piles and burned. Literal **chaff** refers to material consisting of seed coverings and small pieces of stem or leaves that have been separated from the seeds. It refers to anything regarded as worthless, in this case souls who are worthless and useless in regard to eternity. This is a tragic picture of the fate of men created in the image of God, but who steadfastly refuse His offer of salvation in Jesus, and end up eternally worthless! Oh my! This ought to break our hearts as believers and motivate us to share the Gospel with everyone we can while we still can!

**Will burn up** (2618)([katakaio](#) from [kata](#) = intensifies meaning of verb + [kaio](#) = to burn) means to burn up, to consume or destroy by fire. The word denotes a violent consuming heat. It means to burn utterly as of chaff (Mt 3:17, Lk 3:17), tares (Mt 13:30,40), magic paraphernalia after citizens of Ephesus had been saved (Acts 19:19), works believers do in their own strength, for their own glory (1 Cor 3:15), earth (here in 2 Pe 3:10), trees and grass (Rev 8:7), the rebuilt city of Babylon (Re 17:16+, Re 18:8+)

**Chaff** (892)([achuron](#)) refers to the husks and refuse of wheat separated by treading the grain followed by winnowing. This [chaff \(Wikipedia\)](#) or straw was used by the Egyptians to make bricks (with Jewish labor - Ex 5:7, 10-13). Chaff (straw) was also used as fodder and notably, from the Ptolemaic period on, as fuel for

fires. In the Lxx of Da 2:35 **achuron** describes what happens to the godless world kingdoms that become "like chaff" when the King returns as the "Stone" which crushes Nebuchadnezzar's statue.

**Achuron** - 21x in 20v in the Septuagint - Ge. 24:25; 24:32; Ex. 5:7; 5:10; 5:11; 5:12; 5:13; 5:16; Exod. 5:18; Jdg. 19:19; 1 Ki. 4:27; Job 21:18; Job 41:27; Isa. 11:7; Isa. 17:13; Isa. 30:24; Isa. 65:25; Jer. 23:28; Dan. 2:35; Nah. 3:14;

**Unquenchable** (762) (**asbestos** from **a** = without + **sbennumi** = to quench) means literally not extinguished, thus not able to be quenched. Asbestos is used only in Mt 3:12, Mk 9:43 (KJV also has Mk 9:45) and Lk 3:17 with no uses in the Septuagint.

**Fire** (4442) see note above on [pur](#)

### Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him.

NET Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John to be baptized by him in the Jordan River.

GNT Matthew 3:13 Τ τε παραγεται ησο ς π τ ς Γαλιλα ας π τ ν ορδ ην π ς τ ν ω νην το βαπτισθ vai π α το .

NLT Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John.

KJV Matthew 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

ESV Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him.

NIV Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

ASV Matthew 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

CSB Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.

NKJ Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

NRS Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him.

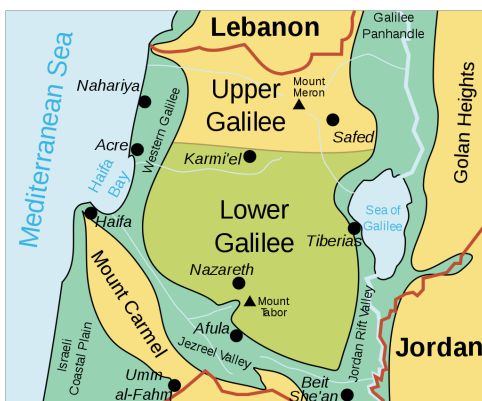
YLT Matthew 3:13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee upon the Jordan, unto John to be baptized by him,

NAB Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

NJB Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus appeared: he came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptised by John.

GWN Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus appeared. He came from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John.

- Mt 2:22 Mk 1:9 Lu 3:21
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



## THE INAUGURATION OF JESUS' PUBLIC MINISTRY

Parallel Passages:

Mark 1:9+ In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

Luke 3:21+ Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,

**R C Foster** writes "The almost complete silence of the Gospel writers concerning the first thirty years of Jesus' life causes the reader to focus his attention on the first public appearance of Jesus. The scant but startling information furnished concerning the birth and infancy of Jesus and His visit to the temple at the age of twelve add profound emphasis to the question—How will Jesus begin His great work? What will be the first significant act which biographers will record?" (Studies in the Life of Christ)

**Then** (5119)(**tote**) is an **expression of time** which means "At that time." When used as an adverb **THEN** is always worth pausing to ponder and query asking questions like "What time is it? What happens next? Why does this happen now?, etc". When **then** is used (as determined by the context) to be an **expression of time** or "time phrase", it usually indicates **sequence** and thus marks that which is next in order of time, soon after that, following next after in order of position, narration or enumeration, being next in a series (See [English definitions](#) or [here](#)). Observing **then** can be very useful in following the course of events in a chapter or paragraph, especially in [eschatological](#) (prophetic) passages

**John MacArthur** on when is **then** - We are not told the exact time to which the **then** refers, and Matthew no doubt uses the term simply to show the general sequence of events. We do not know the precise length of John's ministry, but according to Luke he began preaching "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee ... in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas" (3:1–2). The best assumption is that it occurred in the year A.D. 29, quite a few months, perhaps nearly a year, before Jesus' baptism. John also continued to preach for a while afterward, causing his ministry to be ending as Jesus' ministry was beginning. We know that John was about six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:26) and that Jesus began His ministry when He "was about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23). If John began preaching at the same age, he would have been ministering for about six months when Jesus came to him for baptism. But we have no reason to believe that the two began ministering at the same age. And though we know how old Jesus was when He began, we are given no reason as to why He began at that age. (Matthew Commentary)

**Jesus arrived from Galilee** (See [map which shows Jerusalem](#) or [here](#)) **at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him**- Mark 1:9+ tells us Jesus came specifically from Nazareth in **Galilee**. **To be baptized** is aorist passive infinitive emphasizes purpose. Imagine John's reaction for he had been explaining that Jesus' baptism would be much greater than his, and now suddenly Jesus came to him and asked to be baptized! So Jesus comes to be baptized in public before the Jewish crowds, for Luke records "Now when all the people were baptized Jesus was also baptized." (Lk 3:21+)

**Came** (3854)(**paraginomai** from **para** = beside + **ginomai** = to come to exist) means literally to become near and hence to come on the scene and in this context to make a public appearance, even as did the **magi** (Mt 2:1+) and **John the Baptist** (Mt 3:1+)

**Matthew 3:14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"**

NET Matthew 3:14 But John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?"

GNT Matthew 3:14 ὁ ὠ ννης διεκ λυεν α τ ν λ γων, γ χρε αν χω π σο βαπτισθ ναι, κα σ ρχ πρ ς με;

NLT Matthew 3:14 But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?"

KJV Matthew 3:14 But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

ESV Matthew 3:14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

NIV Matthew 3:14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

ASV Matthew 3:14 But John would have hindered him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

CSB Matthew 3:14 But John tried to stop Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and yet You come to

me?"

NKJ Matthew 3:14 And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

NRS Matthew 3:14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

YLT Matthew 3:14 but John was forbidding him, saying, 'I have need by thee to be baptized -- and thou dost come unto me!'

NAB Matthew 3:14 John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?"

NJB Matthew 3:14 John tried to dissuade him, with the words, 'It is I who need baptism from you, and yet you come to me!'

**John** - Lu 1:43 Joh 13:6-8

- **I have** - Joh 1:16 3:3-7 Ac 1:5-8 Ro 3:23,25 Ga 3:22,27-29 4:6 Eph 2:3-5 Rev 7:9-17
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## JOHN ATTEMPTS TO HINDER JESUS

John's resistance to baptizing Jesus is recorded only by Matthew.

**But John tried to prevent Him** - It is interesting that John recognized Jesus immediately, but it is not clear how John had come to know Him (cf his recognition in Jn 1:29+ - and why would the One Who takes away sin need baptism?). **Prevent** is **diakoluo** (**dia** = intensifies **koluo**= hinder) used only here in the Bible and means he attempted to keep this from happening. The idea of the verb is to thoroughly impede or utterly forbid and in the **imperfect tense** indicates that he was persistent in efforts to keep this baptism from happening. **Broadus** says "The verb rendered 'hinder' is compounded with a preposition, which increases its force, 'was completely hindering,' 'earnestly sought to hinder.'" Why is John trying to prevent Him? John somehow knew that Jesus had no need for a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins (cf Mt 3:2, 6, 11) so in effect Jesus did not meet the requirements for John's baptism! Jesus had no need to repent for he had never sinned.

2 Corinthians 5:21 He made Him **who knew no sin** to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, **yet without sin**.

Hebrews 7:26 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, **holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners** and exalted above the heavens;

1 John 3:5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and **in Him there is no sin**.

**Robertson** adds "The two men of destiny are face to face for the first time apparently. The Coming One stands before John and he recognizes him before the promised sign is given."

**Saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"**- The 3 pronouns are all emphatic (**I...You...You**) which emphasize John's sense of **bewilderment** and confusion. John expresses his surprise as he explains why he is resistant to baptize Jesus. John knew he was a sinner and like those he was baptizing was in need of confession and repentance. John's surprise and question recall Simon Peter in the Upper Room when Jesus sought to wash Peter's feet prompting him to say "Lord, do You wash my feet?" (John 13:6) **Broadus** adds "In like manner, John's mother had felt unworthy of a visit from the mother of her Lord - "And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?". (Luke 1:43+)

Some like **France** think "It was as if John said to Jesus, "I need your Spirit-and-fire baptism, not you my water-baptism." Most commentators however think this is not likely to have been John's meaning. In context, John is baptizing in water and Jesus asked to be baptized in water and it would be more natural to then see John asking Jesus to baptize him in water for he knew Jesus was more righteous.

**Warren Wiersbe** addresses the question of why Jesus "needed" to be baptized: First, His baptism gave approval to John's ministry. Second, He identified Himself with publicans and sinners (BECAUSE THESE WERE ONES BEING BAPTIZED), the very

people He came to save. But mainly, His baptism pictured His future baptism on the cross (Matt. 20:22; Luke 12:50) when all the "waves and billows" of God's judgment would go over Him (Ps. 42:7; Jonah 2:3).([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

**Matthew 3:15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.**

NET Matthew 3:15 So Jesus replied to him, "Let it happen now, for it is right for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John yielded to him.

GNT Matthew 3:15 ποκριθε ς δ ησο ς ε πεν πρ ς α τ ν, φε ς ρτι, ο τω ς γ ρ πρ πο ν σ τ ν μ ν πληρ σαι π σα ν δικαιο σ νη ν. τ τε φ η σιν α τ ν.

NLT Matthew 3:15 But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires. " So John agreed to baptize him.

KJV Matthew 3:15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

ESV Matthew 3:15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

NIV Matthew 3:15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

ASV Matthew 3:15 But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffereth him.

CSB Matthew 3:15 Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him to be baptized.

NKJ Matthew 3:15 But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

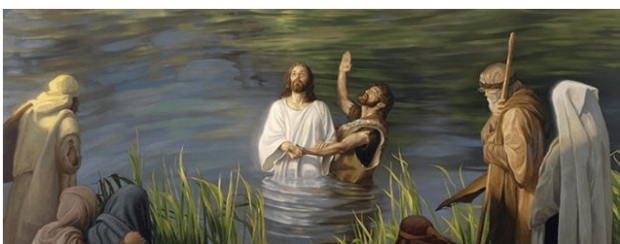
NRS Matthew 3:15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.

YLT Matthew 3:15 But Jesus answering said to him, 'Suffer now, for thus it is becoming to us to fulfil all righteousness,' then he doth suffer him.

NAB Matthew 3:15 Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him.

NJB Matthew 3:15 But Jesus replied, 'Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we should, in this way, do all that uprightness demands.' Then John gave in to him.

- **Permit** - John 13:7-9
- **for** - Ps 40:7,8 Isa 42:21 Lu 1:6 Joh 4:34 8:29 13:15 15:10 Php 2:7,8 Heb 7:26 1Pe 2:21-24 1Jn 2:6
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



"Permit it at this time"

**But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit ([aphiemi](#)) it at this time - Permit** is a command in the aorist imperative meaning do this immediately! Jesus did not have to be baptized, but choose to be baptized.

**For ([gar](#))** is a term of explanation. Jesus explains why John should baptize Him.

**In this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness([dikaiosune](#))." Then he permitted ([aphiemi](#)) Him** - John clearly

understood and accepted Jesus' explanation. Commentators have less understanding and so several interpretations are offered (see below).

**Fulfill** (complete) ([4137](#))([pleroo](#)) means to bring to completion or to meet the requirements of. Fulfill is a key word in Matthew especially speaking of fulfilled prophecy. Matthew's uses - Matt. 1:22; Matt. 2:15; Matt. 2:17; Matt. 2:23; Matt. 3:15; Matt. 4:14; Matt. 5:17; Matt. 8:17; Matt. 12:17; Matt. 13:35; Matt. 13:48; Matt. 21:4; Matt. 23:32; Matt. 26:54; Matt. 26:56; Matt. 27:9;

**Righteousness** ([1343](#))([dikaosune](#) from [dikaos](#) = being proper or right in the sense of being in accordance with what God requires) is the quality of being upright. In its simplest sense [dikaosune](#) conveys the idea of conformity to a standard or norm and in Biblical terms the "standard" is God and His perfect, holy character. **Dikaosune** is rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men. Matthew's uses of **dikaosune** - Matt. 3:15; Matt. 5:6; Matt. 5:10; Matt. 5:20; Matt. 6:1; Matt. 6:33; Matt. 21:32. Righteousness is a major topic in Matthew - Righteous ([dikaos](#)), righteousness ([dikaosune](#)), and to be righteous ([dikaioo](#)) occur more than two dozen times in Matthew, far more than in Mark (twice) or Luke (seventeen times)

**John Broadus on fulfill all righteousness** - It was proper for all devout Jews to be baptized; therefore it was proper for Jesus. If one so deeply, though hitherto quietly devout, had stayed away from the ministry and baptism of the new prophet, it would have been setting a very bad example, unless explained; and explanation of his future position and work could not then be given, even if it was then entirely plain to his own mind. Notwithstanding the peculiar mission of John and Jesus, it was becoming that they should fully perform everything righteous.

**Barbieri** asks "What did Jesus mean? The Law included no requirements about baptism, so Jesus could not have had in view anything pertaining to Levitical **righteousness**. But John's message was a message of repentance, and those experiencing it were looking forward to a coming Messiah who would be righteous and who would bring in **righteousness**. If Messiah were to provide **righteousness** for sinners, He must be identified with sinners. It was therefore in the will of God for Him to be baptized by John in order to be identified (the real meaning of the word "baptized") with sinners." (BKC)

**J Vernon McGee** answers the question **Why was Jesus baptized?** -- There may be several answers, but the primary reason is stated right here: **it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness**. Jesus is identifying Himself completely with sinful mankind. Isaiah had prophesied that He would be numbered with the transgressors (see Isa. 53:12). Here is a King who identifies Himself with His subjects. Actually, baptism means identification, and I believe identification was the primary purpose for the baptism of the Lord Jesus. Again, the reason Jesus was baptized was not to set an example for us. It was not a pattern for us to follow. Christ was holy He did not need to repent. You and I do need to repent. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He was baptized to completely identify Himself with humanity. (Thru the Bible commentary)

**Ryrie** agrees that "Jesus fulfilled all the righteous requirements to be Israel's Messiah. Also, by allowing John to baptize Him, He identified with sinners whom He came to save, though, of course, He Himself had no sin to repent of.

**MacDonald** writes "He felt it appropriate that in baptism He identify Himself with those godly Israelites who were coming to be baptized unto repentance. But there was an even deeper meaning. Baptism for Him was a ritual symbolizing the way in which He would fulfill all the righteous claims of God against man's sin. His immersion typified His baptism in the waters of God's judgment at Calvary. His emergence from the water foreshadowed His resurrection. By death, burial, and resurrection, He would satisfy the demands of divine justice and provide a righteous basis by which sinners could be justified. (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** writes that "Christ was here identifying Himself with sinners. He will ultimately bear their sins; His perfect righteousness will be imputed to them (2 Cor. 5:21). This act of baptism was a necessary part of the righteousness He secured for sinners. This first public event of His ministry is also rich in meaning: 1) it pictured His death and resurrection (cf. Luke 12:50); 2) it therefore prefigured the significance of Christian baptism; 3) it marked His first public identification with those whose sins he would bear (Isa 53:11; 1 Pet. 3:18); and 4) it was a public affirmation of His messiahship by testimony directly from heaven. (BORROW [MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - Jesus was not baptized to confess any sins (v. 5), since He was sinless. His baptism was His presentation to Israel (John 1:31) as well as a picture of His future baptism on the cross when "all the waves and billows" of judgment would go over Him (Matt. 20:22; Ps. 42:7). The baptism of John looked forward to the coming of Messiah (Acts 19:1-7). Christian baptism today looks back to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and witnesses of the believer's identification with Him (Col. 2:12; Acts 10:47-48). (BORROW [With the Word](#))

**David Turner** - It seems best to conclude with others (Carson 1984:105-108; Davies and Allison 1988:325-327) that Jesus fulfilled all righteousness by fulfilling the OT pattern and prediction about the Messiah. In Jesus' baptism, he and John fulfilled the OT by

introducing the Messiah to Israel. This baptism, an inauguration of Jesus' ministry to Israel, led immediately to OT fulfillment in that the Spirit, as a dove, came upon the Messiah (Isa 11:1–2; 42:1; cf. Matt 12:18, 28) and the Father endorsed his Son in the voice from heaven (Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1; cf. Matt 17:5). In baptism, Jesus as the servant proclaimed and exemplified the righteousness envisioned by the prophets. Additionally he identified in baptism with the repentant righteous remnant within the nation of Israel (cf. Mt 3:5–6). Though he had no sin to confess, his baptism nevertheless demonstrated his humility and anticipated his ministry to lowly but repentant people (cf. Mt 2:23; 11:19; 12:20; 21:5). (SEE [The Gospel of Matthew - The Gospel of Mark - Page 62](#))

**NIVSB** has a good summary of the reasons for Jesus' baptism - (1) The first, mentioned here, was "to fulfill all righteousness." His baptism indicated that he was consecrated to God and officially approved by him, as especially shown in the descent of the Holy Spirit (v. 16) and the words of the Father (v. 17; cf. Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1). All God's righteous requirements for the Messiah were fully met in Jesus. (2) At Jesus' baptism John publicly announced the arrival of the Messiah and the inception of his ministry (Jn 1:31–34). (3) By his baptism Jesus completely identified himself with humanity's sin and failure (though he himself needed no repentance or cleansing from sin), becoming our substitute (2Co 5:21). (4) His baptism was an example to his followers. (BORROW [NIV Study Bible](#))

**Matthew 3:16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,**

NET Matthew 3:16 After Jesus was baptized, just as he was coming up out of the water, the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on him.

GNT Matthew 3:16 βαπτισθε ς δ ησο ς εθ ς ν βη π το δατος· κα δο νε χθησαν [ατ] ο ο ρανο , κα ε δεν [τ ] πνε μα [το ] θεο καταβαν σε περιστερ ν [κα ] ρχ μενον π ατ ν·

NLT Matthew 3:16 After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him.

KJV Matthew 3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

ESV 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;

NIV Matthew 3:16 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.

ASV Matthew 3:16 And Jesus when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him;

CSB Matthew 3:16 After Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on Him.

NKJ Matthew 3:16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

NRS Matthew 3:16 And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.

YLT Matthew 3:16 And having been baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water, and lo, opened to him were the heavens, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him,

- **Jesus** - Mk 1:10
- **behold** - Eze 1:1 Lu 3:21 Ac 7:56
- **he saw the Spirit** - Isa 11:2 42:1 59:21 61:1 Lu 3:22 Joh 1:31-34 3:34 Col 1:18,19
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE HEAVENLY VISION JESUS' MINISTRY INAUGURATED

This is the first clear expression of [the concept of the Trinity](#) in the New Testament.

**After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately ([euthus](#)) from the water** (Mark 1:10+) - A simple reading of this text certainly

suggest Jesus went under the water. Alternatively, this could also picture Jesus leaving the water and going up on the bank of the river.

**Came up** (305)(**anabaino**) indicates movement towards a destination. The **first use of anabaino** describes Jesus coming up out of the water after baptism (Mt 3:16, Mk 1:10+) and later Jesus "went up to the mountain" (Mt 5:1) in preparation for one of the greatest sermons in history (Sermon on the Mount).

#### Related Resource:

- [What is the proper mode of baptism?](#)

**And behold, the heavens were opened** - The opening of heaven is a frequent apocalyptic motif found in the giving of revelation (Read Ezek 1:1; John 1:51; Acts 7:56; 10:11; Rev 19:11.) as is a voice from heaven. (Read Isa 6:4, 8; Ezek 1:25, 28; Rev 4:1; 10:4, 8; 11:12; 14:13.). It is interesting that the **heavens were opened** to mark the inauguration of Jesus' earthly ministry to **accomplish redemption of mankind**, while in Revelation 19:11+ the **heavens** are opened to mark the return of Jesus to **accomplish His redemption of the earth** (cf Rev 5:9-see [commentary](#) = Garland writes "the redemption in view [in Rev 5:9] is both *soteriological* -- individual souls are reconciled to God and *eschatological* -- the original creation will be restored at last.")

**Behold** (2400) (**idou**) is a word used to grasp the reader's attention. See [short excursus](#) on this word below.

**Opened** (455)(**anoigo** from **ana** = again + **oigo** = to open) means to open, to open up, to open again, to give access to and is the verb used by Luke in Luke 3:21+. Mark (Mk 1:11+) uses a different verb **schizo** which also describes the "opening" (tearing) of the veil of the Temple when Jesus died on the Cross (See discussion of **schizo**). While Matthew and Luke say the heavens **opened** using the aorist tense, Mk 1:10+ uses the **present tense** (**He saw the heavens opening**) which vividly describes this **opening** as a process as if the **heavens** were being split apart like a garment (cf use of **schizo** in Lk 5:36+ and King Hezekiah in Lxx of Isa 37:1 "**tore** his clothes"). Humanistic rationalization speculates the **heavens were opened** as everything from flashes of lightning to clouds moving and exposing the sun. No, it was not **natural** but **supernatural**! God in effect "**tore**" open **the heavens**! Imagine what must have gone through the minds of all those present to witness this dramatic event! Lk 3:21+ adds the detail that this opening of the heavens occurred "**while He was praying**". The verb **schizo** used by Mark is more vivid than the other two synoptists and is the same verb used for tearing of the Temple veil from top to bottom (Mt 27:51, Mk 15:38. Lk 23:45+). **Griffith** says that "Just as the veil of the Temple was rent in twain to symbolize the perfect access of all men to God ([Hebrews 10:19,20+](#)), so here the heavens are rent asunder to show how near God is to Jesus, and Jesus is to God."

#### OTHER HEAVENLY OPENINGS -

As Stephen was about to be martyred he declared "**Behold**, I see **the heavens opened up** (**dianoigo**) and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56+)

In Acts 10:11+ Peter "saw **the sky opened up**, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground."

In the Revelation the apostle John writes "And **I saw heaven opened** (**anoigo**), and **behold**, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war." (Rev 19:11+, cf also Rev 4:1+, Rev 11:19+)

It is interesting to note Isaiah's prayer for divine intervention, which some think will be the type of prayer that the redeemed remnant of Israel will be praying during the [Great Tribulation days](#), the Time of Jacob's Trouble/Distress (Jer 30:6+). "**Oh, that You would rend** (Lxx = **anoigo**) **the heavens and come down**, That the mountains might quake at Your presence" (Isa 64:1)

**And he saw the Spirit of God descending** (**katabaino**) **as a dove and lighting on Him** - Luke 3:22+ has "**in bodily form like a dove.**" Matthew says John the Baptist **saw the Spirit**. Did everyone present see the Spirit? I do not know. The text does not say. The descent of the Spirit **as a dove** indicates He was not a literal dove ("**AS**" IS A [TERM OF COMPARISON](#) KNOWN AS A [SIMILE](#). Mark 1:10+ has "LIKE A DOVE"). In some way, the coming down of the Spirit was made visible to John, or otherwise he would have been able to see Him (cf Jesus' description of Him in John 3:8+ where Jesus indicates we cannot see the Spirit just as we cannot see the wind). Clearly John saw this most amazing event for the apostle John writes

John (THE BAPTIST) testified ([martureo](#) = GAVE A WITNESS) saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who

baptizes in the Holy Spirit (IN OTHER WORDS THE SIGN JOHN WITNESSED WAS SUPERNATURAL PROOF OF JESUS' MESSIAHSHIP - JUST AS GOD HAD TOLD HIM). I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God." (Jn 1:32-34+)

**Comment** - Note the description that the Spirit "**remained upon Him.**" Was this "remaining" something that was visible, like a "halo" over Jesus' head??? There is nothing in the NT which would suggest that Jesus walked around with a halo or an aura or a dove-like glow over His head. The idea is that the Spirit's abiding presence was with the Man Jesus, continually empowering His ministry. In that sense the Spirit remained upon Jesus. Notice also that this statement by John in essence fulfills the prophecy uttered by Isaiah...

**The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him** (Lxx = [anapauo](#) used figuratively here of the Spirit's resting in place, remaining -- [anapauo](#) is used in this same sense in 1 Pe 4:14+), The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. (Isaiah 11:2+) (Isaiah's point is that that He would be supernaturally energized by the Spirit!)

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; (Isaiah 61:1+ quoted in Luke 4:18+)

"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. (Isaiah 42:1)

**NET NOTE** - Isaiah 42:1–7 contain the first of Isaiah's "servant songs," which describe the ministry of a special, ideal servant who accomplishes God's purposes for Israel and the nations. This song depicts the servant as a just king who brings justice to the earth and relief for the oppressed.

So **the Spirit of God** came upon Jesus, an event Peter (see below) describes as an anointing from the Father. This anointing signified the inception of Jesus' ministry, that the Spirit was on/in Jesus and Jesus was supernaturally empowered by the Spirit (Acts 10:38+ below). He was given this supernatural **power** at the beginning of His public ministry and it was primarily in reliance on the power of the Spirit that Jesus carried out His ministry (even to the bitter end "Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself" Heb 9:14+) To be sure, there were some unique events such as walking on water, reading minds of men, performance of miracles like water to wine, etc. But what Peter says below is that Jesus ministered in the power of the Holy Spirit. See also Luke 4:1+ and Luke 4:14+ which describe the role of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of Jesus' ministry just after His baptism by John.

**THOUGHT** - Here is why I am belaboring this point -- Jesus did this to give us His perfect example to follow, the very thing we are commanded to do, Paul writing "**Be** ([present imperative](#)/ - command to continually be) imitators of me, **JUST AS I AM OF CHRIST.**" (1 Cor 11:1+). Yes, Paul was unique and undoubtedly the greatest of the apostles, but even he states that he imitated Jesus' example of the need to be filled with and rely on the power of the Spirit to live the supernatural life. Beloved, if you are experiencing less than the John 10:10b "abundant life," perhaps it could be because you have never really understood that you had been commanded to imitate Jesus and that when you did His Spirit would enable you to live a supernatural, abundant life! So how can you obey Paul's command to be an imitator of him as he was of Christ? The simple answer is by the Spirit and **ONLY BY THE SPIRIT!** There is NO PLAN B (so to speak) for living the supernatural Christian life! [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) (or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!") See also [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#) See [more discussion of this vitally important topic below.](#)

The question is what is the significance of the Spirit **descending upon** Jesus? Did Jesus not have the Spirit indwelling Him? Of course He did, for Jesus always had the Spirit. So while there may be several answers, one that strikes me is that this event presents a pattern for believers to live a supernatural life. **Spurgeon** affirmed that "It was the Spirit of God who gave success to Jesus Christ's ministry." In short, the descending of the Spirit on Jesus demonstrates that from the outset of His public ministry Jesus is giving us His pattern of perfect reliance on the empowering presence of the Spirit to fulfill ministry. As discussed below, for believers to successfully fulfill the "**good works**" ministry that God has pre-prepared for them in Christ Jesus (read Eph 2:10+, cf 2 Ti 2:21+), they need to learn the secret of relying **wholly** on the **Holy** Spirit!

**F B Meyer** rightly points out the analogy - "What this scene was in the life of the Lord, Pentecost was for the Church. Then she was anointed for her divine mission among men; the unction of the Holy One rested upon her, to be continued and renewed as the centuries slowly passed." (From "Behold My Servant" Isaiah 42:1)

**Peter** in essence summarizes Jesus' 3 year ministry and in so doing alludes to the Spirit's anointing of the God-Man Jesus:

Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, 35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. 36 "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)(**ED: THE WORDS OF ALL WOULD HAVE MUSIC TO THIS GENTILE'S EARS!**)– 37 you yourselves know (MEANS TO KNOW BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT) the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee (SO HERE PETER STATES THE BEGINNING OF JESUS' MINISTRY), after the baptism which John proclaimed. 38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how **God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power**, (SEE [NOTE BELOW](#) ON ANOINTED) and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him (**ED: YES THE FATHER WAS WITH HIM, BUT THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS ALSO WITH HIM EMPOWERING HIM**). 39 "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. (HERE PETER DESCRIBES THE CULMINATION OF JESUS' 3 YEAR MINISTRY) 40 "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, 41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. (WHAT PETER HAS JUST DESCRIBED IS THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL) 42 "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify (WHY SOLEMNLY? READ ON - A JUDGMENT IS COMING!) that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. 43 "Of Him all the prophets (REFERRING TO THE [OLD TESTAMENT MESSIANIC PROPHECIES](#)) bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins." (Acts 10:34-43+)

**Comment - Anointed** in Acts 10:38 is [chrio](#) which means to consecrate/set apart for sacred work as by unction. The idea is to assign a person to task, with implication of supernatural sanctions, blessing, and endowment. And so fittingly Jesus is also given the title of [Christos](#) (from [chrio](#)), also called the [Messiah - Anointed One](#). John uses the related word [chrisma](#) describing the believer's anointing in 1 John 2:20+ and 1 John 2:27+ which in context refers to our "anointing" with the Holy Spirit, this "anointing" occurring the moment we were regenerated by grace through faith. Have you ever considered yourself to be an anointed saint? You are! See interesting CARM.org article [1 John 2:27, You are anointed of God](#) and here is a brief quote to "wet your appetite" - "It is this anointing that opens your mind, teaches you, guides you, calls you to pray, empowers you, and enables you to be stronger Christians, more powerful Christians. Not just people who are saved, but people who are saved, indwelt, and empowered."

The question arises whether the Spirit descended while Jesus was still in the water? Mark's reading would suggest that is the case, but read Matthew's version "After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and **behold** ([idou](#) = calls for special attention to this event!), the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him." (Mt 3:16) The word "**from**" is [apo](#) which speaks of separation and thus it would support the interpretation that the Spirit descended on Jesus after He had departed the water. This is not a major theological [high-water mark](#) (pun intended), but it does bring into question the accuracy of [paintings such as the one by Grigory Gagarin](#).

**One other point** - While the Spirit came on Jesus after His baptism, this in no way means that the Spirit comes upon men or women in association with water baptism. The Spirit comes upon (and in) believers the moment they are saved/regenerated by the Spirit, and this occurs when by grace they believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Faith alone saves a soul from Hell. The act of water baptism absolutely does not save a soul. However performing this act can deceive a soul into thinking they are saved if they have been instructed by someone they respect that they need to undergo water baptism in order to be saved. I was baptized 3 times, first as an infant, next after completing Lutheran confirmation (age 12), and finally at age 40 **after** I had personally received Christ as my Lord and Savior (about 3 weeks earlier). My third baptism was in essence a testimony and celebration of the redeeming work of Christ performed several weeks prior. It was a testimony that I had been saved by grace through faith.

**R C Lenski** on Jesus' baptism - The truth is: no new relation was established; what happened was an act of God, that great act by which he inaugurated Jesus into his mighty office of Prophet, High Priest, and King....We are not told what became visible when the heavens were suddenly opened as we are told in the cases of Ezekiel and of Stephen. We may say that the heavenly glory became visible, and that Jesus, John, and any others who were present beheld its radiance (cf Jn 1:32-34) (BORROW [The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel PAGE 48](#))

#### **Related Resources:**

- [Why was Jesus baptized? Why was Jesus' baptism important?](#)
- [Is baptism necessary for salvation?](#)
- [Does 1 Peter 3:21 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?](#)
- [Does Galatians 3:27 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?](#)

- [Does the Bible teach believer's baptism/credobaptism?](#)
- [Does John 3:5 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about infant baptism / paedobaptism?](#)
- [Does Mark 16:16 teach that baptism is necessary for salvation?](#)

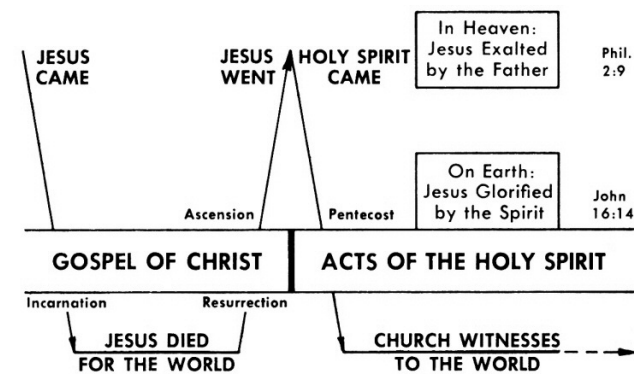
**Behold** (2400) (**idou**) is a word used to grasp the reader's attention. See short excursus on this word below. is the second person singular aorist middle imperative of eidon which means to see, perceive, look at. In the NT **idou** is used as a demonstrative particle that draws attention to what follows. **Idou** in the **middle voice** means "you yourself look, see, perceive!" The **aorist imperative** is a command emphasizing "Do it now! Don't delay!" **Spurgeon** reminds us that "**Behold** is a word of wonder; it is intended to excite admiration. Wherever you see it hung out in Scripture, it is like an ancient sign-board, signifying that there are rich wares within, or like the hands which solid readers have observed in the margin of the older Puritanic books, drawing attention to something particularly worthy of observation." I would add, **behold** is like a divine highlighter, a divine underlining of an especially striking or important text. It says in effect "Listen up, all ye who would be wise in the ways of Jehovah!" **Zodhiates** writes that **idou** is a "demonstrative particle. "Lo and behold!", serving to call attention to something external or exterior to oneself; usually used at the beginning of a clause or only with kai (and), before it, but sometimes in the mid. of a clause before words which are to be particularly noted (Mt 23:34; Lk 13:16; Acts 2:7). ([The Complete Word Study Dictionary](#)) **Idou** is used by the Biblical writers to (1) prompt or arouse the reader's attention (introducing something new or unusual), (2) to mark a strong emphasis ("Indeed!" Lk 13:16) and (3) to call the reader to pay close attention (very similar to #1) so that one will listen, remember or consider

**THOUGHT** - Dear reader, have you experienced this "Behold" in your life? If not, then read Acts 4:12, 16:31, Romans 10:9, 10, John 1:12, 13, Ephesians 2:8,9,10 so that you too might "**Behold**" the glory of the risen Son in your life (see the following comment) and experience a brand new life in Christ. Baker says that **behold** emphasizes the dramatic aspect of the change in 2Co 5:17 - as if the reader is watching it occur, almost like observing a sunrise (Ed: It is early in the morning as I write this note. I am on the Texas coast overlooking the Gulf of Mexico and the bright orange sun has literally just peeked over the distant horizon of the ocean - and my reaction was literally to stop and **behold!** And then to praise Him for His glory. Ps 19:1). One minute it is dark and hazy, the next, the sun has popped out and one "beholds" its wonder as it transforms the shimmering landscape (Ed: As I watch the sun slowly rise in over the ocean, the shimmering waves shout out "Glory to God in the highest!"). (Baker, W. R. 2 Corinthians. The College Press NIV commentary. Joplin, MO: College Press Pub) (Bolding added)

**Matthew** uses **behold** about 62 times out of a total of 162 uses in the NT so he clearly likes this demonstrative particle - Matt. 1:20; Matt. 1:23; Matt. 2:13; Matt. 2:19; Matt. 3:16; Matt. 3:17; Matt. 4:11; Matt. 7:4; Matt. 8:24; Matt. 8:34; Matt. 9:10; Matt. 10:16; Matt. 11:10; Matt. 11:19; Matt. 12:2; Matt. 12:18; Matt. 12:41; Matt. 12:42; Matt. 12:46; Matt. 12:47; Matt. 12:49; Matt. 13:3; Matt. 17:3; Matt. 17:5; Matt. 19:27; Matt. 20:18; Matt. 21:5; Matt. 22:4; Matt. 23:34; Matt. 23:38; Matt. 24:23; Matt. 24:25; Matt. 24:26; Matt. 25:6; Matt. 26:45; Matt. 26:46; Matt. 26:47; Matt. 26:51; Matt. 27:51; Matt. 28:2; Matt. 28:7; Matt. 28:9; Matt. 28:20;

**MORE DISCUSSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN JESUS' MINISTRY AND OUR NEED FOR THE SAME POWER** - In the **schematic below** Jesus came (incarnation and first 30 years basically in seclusion) and then came to the Jordan to inaugurate His 3 year public ministry (not specifically shown). The Spirit coming upon Jesus in essence "**anointed**" Him with the Spirit and with power to successfully carry out his 3 year ministry. Here was the perfect Man presenting us with the perfect pattern to imitate, even as John says "the one who says he abides in Him (CHRIST) ought (MUST) himself walk (LIVE) in the same manner as He walked."(1 Jn 2:6<sub>±</sub>). How did Jesus walk these 3 years? Filled with the Spirit (cf Lk 4:1<sub>±</sub>) and with the power of the Spirit (Lk 4:14<sub>±</sub>). And so just as Jesus' relied wholly on the Holy Spirit for His supernatural ministry, so too all believers must rely on the same Spirit and same power (Acts 1:8<sub>±</sub>) to live a supernatural life for the glory of God. Note in the schematic when Jesus left (ascension after crucifixion and resurrection), He sent the promise of the Spirit from the Father (Lk 24:49<sub>±</sub>, cf Jn 14:16-17, Jn 15:26, Jn 16:7, Acts 2:33<sub>±</sub>) which was dramatically demonstrated at the Feast of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-4ff<sub>±</sub>. Subsequently the reception of the Spirit and power is the experience of every believer at the moment of conversion (cf Ro 8:9+, 1 Cor 12:13). See more discussion of this critically important Biblical truth - [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#) and [A Spirit Filled Church](#).

**THOUGHT** - Are you trying to live the Christian life in your own (old) natural power, or the Spirit's (new) supernatural power? Are you attempting to fulfill your ministry in your power or in reliance on His power? The former leads to utter futility, the latter to unbelievable fruitfulness!



Click chart to enlarge

**HERETICAL ERROR - Robertson** says "The Cerinthian Gnostics took **the dove** to mean the heavenly *aeon Christ* that here descended upon the man Jesus and remained with him till the Cross when it left him, a sort of forecast of the modern distinction between the Jesus of history and the theological Christ." **Hiebert** adds "Cerinthus (c. A.D. 100), a late contemporary of John the Apostle at Ephesus, separated Jesus from Christ. He taught that the "Christ spirit" came upon the man Jesus, the son of Joseph and Mary, at his baptism and empowered his ministry but left him before his crucifixion; it was only the man Jesus who died and rose again. Cerinthus thus rejected the doctrine of the incarnation and consequently obliterated the Christian doctrine of the atonement."

**Related Resources:**

- [Commentary notes](#) on 1 John 4:2
- [What is Cerinthianism? | CARM.org](#)
- Dr Wayne Grudem's outline on the [The Humanity of Christ](#)
- [Is Jesus God in the flesh- Why is it important that Jesus is God in the flesh?](#)
- [Why is the humanity of Jesus important?](#)
- [What is the meaning of the Incarnation of Christ?](#)
- [What does incarnate mean? How was Jesus God incarnate?](#)
- [How can the Incarnation be reconciled with God's immutability?](#)
- [What is the hypostatic union? How can Jesus be both God and man at the same time?](#)
- [Cerinthus - Wikipedia](#) = "Cerinthus distinguished between the man [Jesus](#) and the [Christ](#). He denied the supernatural [virgin birth of Jesus](#), making him the biological son of [Joseph](#) and [Mary](#), and taught that **the Christ** descended upon Him in the form of a dove from the Supreme Ruler at baptism and left Him again at his crucifixion—never to embody the flesh.(See Irenaeus, [Against Heresies, 1.26.1](#))

**Matthew 3:17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."**

NET Matthew 3:17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my one dear Son; in him I take great delight."

GNT Matthew 3:17 καὶ ἄκουσεν φωνὴ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ λέγουσα, Οὗτός ἐστιν υἱός μου ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐκταῖ.

NLT Matthew 3:17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

KJV Matthew 3:17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

ESV Matthew 3:17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

NIV Matthew 3:17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

ASV Matthew 3:17 and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

CSB Matthew 3:17 And there came a voice from heaven: This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him!

NKJ Matthew 3:17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

NRS Matthew 3:17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

YLT Matthew 3:17 and lo, a voice out of the heavens, saying, 'This is My Son -- the Beloved, in whom I did delight.'

NAB Matthew 3:17 And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

NJB Matthew 3:17 And suddenly there was a voice from heaven, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him.'

GWN Matthew 3:17 Then a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love-my Son with whom I am pleased."

- **behold** - Joh 5:37 12:28-30 Rev 14:2
- **This** - Mt 12:18 17:5 Ps 2:7 Isa 42:1,21 Mk 1:11 9:7 Lu 3:22 9:35 Eph 1:6 Col 1:13 2Pe 1:17
- [Matthew 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## THE FATHER'S SEAL OF APPROVAL

**And behold** (see [idou](#) above) - As we have noted behold is used to grab our attention to what follows. In this case it hardly seems necessary, for God the Father speaking audibly from His throne room in Heaven ought to be sufficient to arouse the attention of even the sleepest saint!

**A voice out of the heavens said** - The text does not state it, but clearly this is the voice of God the Father in Heaven speaking to God the Son Who has become incarnated as fully Man, even as God the Spirit has just descended upon Him. There it is as clear as day - THE TRINITY. Someone said of the crucial doctrine of the Trinity - If you try to understand it, you'll lose your mind, but if you try to deny it, you will lose your soul!. That saying may be slightly exaggerated, but the gist of it is absolutely true. A good modern example of those who try to deny the Trinity is the so-called "Jesus Only" movement ([see below](#)). This is the first of three recorded occasions when the Father spoke from Heaven. The second was when Jesus was transfigured (Mt 17:5, Lk 9:28-36<sub>±</sub>), and the third was during His last week before the cross (John 12:28).

Jesus declared "And the Father who sent Me, He **has testified** of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. (John 5:37)

**Guzik** - In this God the Father also expressed His approval of Jesus' life up to this point. "By the divine proclamation at the baptism God announced the presence of the King, and set the seal of His approval on the years already lived." (Morgan)

**"This is My beloved Son** - Note the fact that God calls Jesus His Son indicates that He Himself is God the Father. "God the Father loves God the Son, and communicated that love by God the Holy Spirit." (**Guzik**) In His declaration of divine love, God affirms that Jesus is His Son. Therefore Jesus is God. Folks say Jesus never claimed to be God (which is incorrect) but this testimony is as good, for it comes from the Father Himself. Jesus is God. Period!

**Beloved** (27) ([agapetos](#) from [agapao](#) = to love, [agape](#) = unconditional love borne by Spirit - Gal 5:22<sub>±</sub>) means beloved, dear, very much loved. **Agapetos** describes the love of another, this love being called out of the "giver's" heart by preciousness of the recipient of the love (the "beloved"). **Agapetos** describes "one who is in a very special relationship with another" (BDAG) and in secular Greek is used mostly of a child, especially an only child to whom all the love of his parents is given (cf use by the Father describing His only Son and Abraham describing his "only son" in Ge 22:2). In the context of the New Testament agape love speaks of God's divine and infinite love, a love that seeks the ultimate spiritual welfare of the one loved.

**NET Note on beloved Son** - Grk "my beloved Son," or "my Son, the beloved [one]." The force of agapetos is often "pertaining to one who is the only one of his or her class, but at the same time is particularly loved and cherished."

The first 7 uses of **agapetos** in the NT are of God the Father speaking of Jesus, His **beloved** Son (Mt. 3:17; Mt 12:18; Mt 17:5; Mk. 1:11; Mk 9:7; Mk 12:6; Lk. 3:22<sub>±</sub>) and as Friberg says these uses describe "One not only greatly loved but also unique, the only one of a class." This usage by God to describe His only Son, the Son of His love, gives you some idea of the preciousness of the word **beloved**! This truth makes it even more incredible that believers are referred to as "beloved of God." ([Ro 1:7+](#)). It is so easy to forget this incomprehensible truth!

The psalmist prophesied of the Father's blessing of His Son...

"I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. (Ps 2:7-8)

**John Trapp** - "God so loved his Son, that he gave him all the world for his possession, [Psalm 2:6,7,8](#); but he so loved the world, that he gave Son and all for its redemption."

**J C Ryle** - That voice was the voice of God the Father. It declared the wondrous and ineffable love which has existed between the Father and the Son from all eternity. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand." (John 3:35+) It proclaimed the Father's full and complete approbation of Christ's mission to seek and save the lost. It announced the Father's acceptance of the Son as the Mediator, Substitute, and Surety of the new covenant. There is a rich mine of comfort, in these words, for all Christ's believing members. In themselves, and in their own doings, they see nothing to please God. They are daily sensible of weakness, shortcoming, and imperfection in all their ways. But let them recollect that the Father regards them as members of His beloved Son Jesus Christ. He sees no spot in them. (Song 4:7.) He beholds them as "in Christ," clothed in His righteousness, and invested with His merit. They are "accepted in the Beloved," and when the holy eye of God looks at them, He is "well pleased." ([Commentary](#))

**in whom I am well-pleased** - The other synoptic Gospels record the testimony of the Father regarding His Son at His [transfiguration](#)...

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; **listen** ([present imperative](#)) to Him!" (Mt 17:5)

Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One; **listen** ([present imperative](#)) to Him!" (Luke 9:35+)

**THOUGHT** - Note the addition of the command "**Listen to Him**" (calling for this to be a lifestyle) which would have been directed to the 3 disciples (Peter, James and John) who were with him. By application, this command should be obeyed by us today as His disciples! Are you listening to Him? Are you daily in the Word, so that you might hear His voice? Are you relying on the Spirit to enable you to obey the command? Or are you vainly trying to obey the command by relying on your own natural power? If so, you are destined to fail. Only as we learn to rely wholly on the Holy Spirit will we be enabled to successfully keep this command (and for that matter any of the 100's of commands in the NT!) [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands.](#)

**Well-pleased** (take great delight)([2106](#))([eudokeo](#) from **eu** = well, good + **dokeo** = to think) means literally to think well of and so to be well pleased, to take pleasure or delight in. To **delight** means to take great pleasure, to give keen enjoyment, to provide a high degree of gratification. Note that five of the first six uses of **eudokeo** refer to the Father's taking pleasure in His Son (Mt 3:17; Mt 12:18; Mt 17:5; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22+; cf 2 Pe 1:17+).

**John MacArthur** has an interesting comment considering that Jesus had come to give His life as a sacrifice for sins (Heb 10:12+, cf Heb 9:26+) - "God had examined, as it were, His beloved Son, who would offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of those with whom He was willing to identify Himself. No imperfection could be found in Him, and God was delighted." ([Matthew 1-7 Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**J C Ryle** applies this truth to believers today - There is a rich mine of comfort, in these words, for all Christ's believing members. In themselves, and in their own doings, they see nothing to please God. They are daily sensible of weakness, shortcoming, and imperfection in all their ways. But let them recollect that the Father regards them as members of His beloved Son Jesus Christ. He sees no spot in them. (Song 4:7.) He beholds them as "in Christ," clothed in His righteousness, and invested with His merit. They are "accepted in the Beloved," and when the holy eye of God looks at them, He is "well pleased." ([Commentary](#))

**L O Richards** adds that **well pleased** means, "among other things, that Jesus was fulfilling the Messianic role to which God had called him. In contrast, God was not pleased with the sacrifices and offerings of the OT system (Heb 10:6, 8+). They could not be established in His purpose as a way to cleanse humanity from sin." ([Expository Dictionary of Bible Words](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [What does the Bible teach about the Trinity?](#)
- [What are some popular illustrations of the Holy Trinity?](#)
- [How can there be subordination / hierarchy in the Trinity?](#)
- [How is the doctrine of the Trinity not tritheism?](#)
- [What is Trinitarianism? Is Trinitarianism biblical?](#)

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**HERESY - DECEITFUL SPIRITS AND DOCTRINES OF DEMONS - "Jesus Only"** or Oneness Pentecostalism teaches there is no Trinity, just different "modes" but a verse like this shows how utterly ridiculous, foolish and deceived such a belief actually is! Is Jesus a ventriloquist, throwing His voice into the clouds so that it speaks words of affirmation to Himself? This shows how far some cults go to twist the truth of Scripture. What is dangerous about the Oneness Movement is it looks so much like the "real thing," and it is easy to fall into this cultish system! It is always best to let the Scriptures speak for themselves and in this passage a simple reading/understanding of the text shows that Jesus is not the Father and the Father is not Jesus. Could it be more clearly/plainly portrayed? I think not! **Gotquestions** adds "The "Jesus Only" movement, also known as Oneness Pentecostalism or oneness theology, teaches that there is only one God, but denies the tri-unity of God. In other words, oneness theology does not recognize the distinct persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It has various forms—some see Jesus Christ as the one God, who sometimes manifests Himself as the Father or the Holy Spirit. The core doctrine of Oneness Pentecostal / Jesus Only is that Jesus is the Father and Jesus is the Spirit. There is one God who reveals Himself in different "modes." As an aside a popular singing group in Christian contemporary music is named Phillips, Craig and Dean, a group which has apparently espoused teachings of the Jesus Only movement ([See discussion of their doctrinal beliefs](#)). The point is that in these "[last days](#)" every true believer needs to be a BEREAN (Acts 17:11<sup>+</sup>) who is taking in solid food (PURE MILK OF THE WORD - 1 Pe 2:2<sup>+</sup>) which is "for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil." (Hebrews 5:14<sup>+</sup>).

- [What are the Beliefs of Jesus Only/Oneness Pentecostals?](#)
- [What is Oneness doctrine? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the United Pentecostal Church? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is Sabellianism \(Modalism\)?](#)
- [Sabellianism, Modalism, and Monarchianism](#)
- **Dr Wayne Grudem's** discussion of the **Trinity and Modalism** in his online text [Systematic Theology - scroll down to page 199](#) - "Modalism gains its attractiveness from the desire to emphasize clearly the fact that there is only one God." (Grudem)

## Baptize, Baptism Kenneth Wuest

These two words are not native to the English language. Therefore, they do not have any intrinsic meaning of their own. The only rightful meaning they can have is the one that is derived from the Greek word of which they are the spelling. The verb is spelled baptizō (βαπτίζω), from which with a slight change in spelling we get our word "baptize." The noun is baptismos (βαπτισμός), and taking off the last letter, we have "baptism."

We will study these words first in their classical usage. The word baptizō (βαπτίζω) is related to another Greek word baptō (βαπτω). The latter meant "to dip, dip under." It was used of the smith tempering the red-hot steel. It was used also in the sense of "to dip in dye, to colour, to steep." It was used of the act of dyeing the hair, and of glazing earthen vessels. It was used as a proverb in the sense of "steeping someone in crimson," that is, giving him a bloody coxcomb. It meant also "to fill by dipping in, to draw." It was used of a ship that dipped, that is, sank. Baptizō (βαπτίζω), the related word meant "to dip repeatedly." It was used of the act of sinking ships. It meant also "to bathe." It was used in the phrase "soaked in wine," where the word "soaked" is the meaning of baptizō (βαπτίζω). It is found in the phrase "overhead and ears in debt," where the words "overhead and ears" are the graphic picture of what the word meant. The word here means therefore "completely submerged." Our present day English equivalent would be "sunk." A baptes (βαπτες) is one who dips or dyes. A baptisis (βαπτισις) is a dipping, bathing, a washing, a drawing of water. A baptismos (βαπτισμός) is that which is dipped. A baptisterion (βαπτιστεριον) is a bathing place, a swimming bath. A baptistes (βαπτιστες) is one that dips, a dyer. Baptes (βαπτες) means "dipped, dyed, bright colored, drawn like water."

Baptizō (βαπτίζω) is used in the ninth book of the Odyssey, where the hissing of the burning eye of the Cyclops is compared to the sound of water where a smith dips (baptizo) a piece of iron, tempering it. In the Battle of the Frogs and Mice, it is said that a mouse thrust a frog with a reed, and the frog leaped over the water, (baptizō (βαπτίζω)) dyeing it with his blood. Euripedes uses the word of a ship which goes down in the water and does not come back to the surface. Lucian dreams that he has seen a huge bird shot with a mighty arrow, and as it flies high in the air, it dyes (baptizō (βαπτίζω)) the clouds with his blood. An ancient scholium to the Fifth Book of the Iliad makes a wounded soldier dye (baptizō (βαπτίζω)) the earth with his blood. In Xenophon's Anabasis, we have the instance where the Greek soldiers placed (baptizō (βαπτίζω)) the points of their spears in a bowl of blood.

We come now to the usage of these words in Koine Greek, giving examples from the papyri, the LXX, and the New Testament.

In secular documents of the Koine period, Moulton and Milligan report the following uses of baptizō (βαπτίζω), "a submerged boat,

ceremonial ablutions, a person flooded or overwhelmed in calamities.” They say that the word was used in its metaphorical sense even among uneducated people. A biblical example of this use is found in our Lord’s speaking of His Passion as a “baptism” (Mk. 10:38). These scholars report the use of baptō (βαπτω) as referring to fullers and dyers. The word is used of colored garments, and of wool to be dyed. The word baptisma (βαπτισμα) is found in a question regarding a new baptism someone is reported to be preaching. This use of this noun is peculiar to the N.T., and to ecclesiastical writers.

In the LXX we have in Leviticus 4:6 the words, “And the priest shall dip (baptō (βαπτω)) his finger in the blood, and sprinkle (prosrainō (προσραίνω)) of the blood seven times before the Lord.” Here the word baptō (βαπτω) is found in juxtaposition to prosrainō (προσραίνω), a verb closely allied to prosrantizo, baptō (προσραντίζω, βαπτω) meaning “to dip,” the latter verb “to sprinkle.”

In the N.T., we have the rich man asking that Lazarus dip (baptō (βαπτω)) his finger in water and cool his tongue (Luke 16:24). In Heb. 9:10 baptisma (βαπτισμα) is translated “washings” and refers to the ceremonial ablutions of Judaism. In Mk. 7:4 baptisma (βαπτισμα) is used of the ceremonial washing of cups, pots, brazen vessels, and tables. Baptisma (Βαπτισμα) is used in Mt. 3:7, and baptizō (βαπτίζω) in Mt. 3:16, and I Cor. 1:14, of the rite of water baptism. In Mk. 10:38 our Lord speaks of His sufferings on the Cross as the baptisma (βαπτισμα) with which He is to be baptizō (βαπτίζω).

In these examples of the various uses of the words baptō (βαπτω) and baptizō (βαπτίζω) we discover three distinct usages, a mechanical one, a ceremonial one, and a metaphorical (μεταφορικῶς) one.

The mechanical usage can be illustrated by the action of the smith dipping the hot iron in water, tempering it, or the dyer dipping the cloth in the dye for the purpose of dyeing it. These instances of the use of our Greek word, give us the following definition of the word in its mechanical usage. The word refers to the introduction or placing of a person or thing into a new environment or into union with something else so as to alter its condition or its relationship to its previous environment or condition. While the word, we found, had other uses, yet the one that predominated above the others was the above one. Observe how perfectly this meaning is in accord with the usage of the word in Romans 6:3, 4, where the believing sinner is baptized into vital union with Jesus Christ. The believing sinner is introduced or placed in Christ, thus coming into union with Him. By that action he is taken out of his old environment and condition in which he had lived, the First Adam, and is placed into a new environment and condition, the Last Adam. By this action his condition is changed from that of a lost sinner with a totally depraved nature to that of a saint with a divine nature. His relationship to the law of God is changed from that of a guilty sinner to that of a justified saint. All this is accomplished by the act of the Holy Spirit introducing or placing him into vital union with Jesus Christ. No ceremony of water baptism ever did that. The entire context is supernatural in its character. The Greek word here should not be transliterated but translated, and the translation should read; “As many as were introduced (placed) into Christ Jesus, into His death were introduced. Therefore we were buried with Him through the aforementioned introduction into His death.” The same holds true of I Cor. 12:13 which should be translated, “For through the instrumentality of one Spirit were we all placed into one body.” It is because we so often associate the English word “baptism” with the rite of water baptism, that we read that ceremony into Romans 6. A student is one of the writer’s Greek classes who is a Greek himself, who learned to speak that language as his mother tongue and studied it in the schools of Greece, stated during a class discussion that the Greek reader would react to the Greek text of Romans and the word baptizō (βαπτίζω) as the writer has. The purely mechanical usage of our word is seen in the following places: Mt. 3:11 (second occurrence); Mk. 1:8 (second); Luke 3:6 (second), 16:24; John 1:33 (second), 13:26; Acts 1:5 (second), 11:16 (second); Rom. 6:3, 4; I Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:12; Rev. 19:13.

Before listing the places where the word occurs in its ceremonial usage, we will trace the usage of baptizō (βαπτίζω) back to Levitical washings. In the LXX (Lev. 14:8, 9, 15:5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 16, 18, 21, 22, 27, 17:15, 15:13, 16:4, 24, 28) the word “wash” is louō (λουω). This Greek word is found in Acts 22:16 in connection with the word baptizō (βαπτίζω) in the expression, “Be baptized and wash away thy sins.” According to Mk. 7:4 “washing of cups” (baptizō (βαπτίζω)), Lk. 11:38, and Heb. 9:10, where baptizō (βαπτίζω) is used, that word seems to have been the technical term at the time for these washings. Expressions like those in Isaiah 1:16, and the prophecies like those in Ezek. 36:25, 37:23, and Zech. 13:1 are connected with the Levitical washings. These washings and the prophecies are connected with the purification which followed the act of expiation or cleansing from sin (Ex. 19:14; Lev. 13:14; Heb. 10:22, 23). Thus, that which the word baptizō (βαπτίζω) stood for was not unknown to the Jews. While the ceremonial washings of Leviticus were performed by the person himself, with one exception, and that was where Moses in installing Aaron and his sons as priests, himself washed them (Lev. 8:6), John baptizō (βαπτίζω) his converts himself.

Baptizō (Βαπτίζω) in the ministry of our Lord and John was, like the theocratic washings and purifications, a symbol whose design was to point to the purging away of sin on whom the rite was performed (Mt. 3:6; John 3:22–25). John’s baptism was in response to the repentance of the individual (Mt. 3:11). It was connected with his message of an atonement for sin that was to be offered in the future, and the necessity of faith in that atonement (Acts 19:4).

John’s baptism had looked ahead to a coming Saviour. Paul’s baptism, or Christian baptism now looks back to a Saviour who has died and who has arisen again (Acts 19:5). That the rite of water baptism is the outward testimony of the inward fact of a person’s

salvation, and that it follows his act of receiving Christ as Saviour and is not a prerequisite to his receiving salvation, is seen in the use of the preposition eis (εἰς) in Mt. 3:11 where the translation should read, "I indeed baptize you with water because of repentance." While the act of Christian baptism is a testimony of the person that his sins have been washed away, it also pictures and symbolizes the fact of the believing sinner's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:), for baptizō (βαπτίζω) means, "to dip, to immerse." It never means "to sprinkle." The Greeks had a word for "sprinkle" namely, rantizō (ἀντίζω). The two words, baptizō (βαπτίζω) and rantizō (ἀντίζω) are used in juxtaposition in Lev. 4:6.

The following are the places where baptizō (βαπτίζω) is used of the baptism administered by John the Baptist and by the disciples of our Lord under the dispensation of law. Mt. 3:6, 11:1 (first mention), 13, 14, 16; Mk. 1:4, 5, 8 (first mention), 9; Lk. 3:7, 12, 16 (first mention), 21, 7:29, 30; John 1:25, 26, 28, 31, 33 (first mention), 3:22, 23, 26, 4:1, 2, 10:40; Acts 1:5, (first mention) 11:16 (first mention), 19:4 (first mention). The noun baptisma (βαπτισμα) when it is used of the baptism in the dispensation of law is found in the following places: Mt. 3:7, 21:25; Mk. 1:4, 11:30; Lk. 3:3, 7:29, 20:4; Acts 1:22, 10:37, 13:24, 18:25, 19:34.

The word baptizō (βαπτίζω) is used of the ablutions of the Jews which were extra-Biblical, and which were called the traditions of the elders (Mt. 15:2), in Mk. 7:4, Lk. 11:38. The noun baptismos (βαπτισμος) is used in connection with the same practices in Mt. 7:4; Mk. 7:8. It is used of the Levitical ablutions in Heb. 6:2, 9:10.

Baptizō (Βαπτίζω) is used of Christian baptism in Mt. 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41, 8:12, 13, 16, 36, 38, 9:18, 10:47, 48, 16:15, 33, 18:8, 19:5, 22:16; I Cor. 1:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 15:29. Baptisma (Βαπτισμα) is used in I Pet. 3:21 of Christian baptism.

The metaphorical use of baptizō (βαπτίζω) we find in Mt. 20:22, 23; Mk. 10:38, 39; Lk. 12:50. A metaphor is the use of a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea in place of another by way of suggesting a likeness or analogy between them, for example, "the ship plows the sea." In the above passages, our Lord is speaking of His sufferings in connection with the Cross. He speaks of them as a baptism. The words were uttered while He was on His way to Jerusalem to be crucified. John the Baptist had announced His coming and had baptized the multitudes. Our Lord's disciples had been baptizing during the three years of His ministry. The words baptizō (βαπτίζω) and baptisma (βαπτισμα) which are used by Matthew, Mark, and Luke had by that time become the technical and common Greek words used to describe the rite administered by John and our Lord's disciples. Our Lord used the rite of baptism as a metaphor to speak of His coming sufferings. Just as a convert was plunged into the baptismal waters, He was about to be plunged into His sufferings. Just as the person would be immersed in the water, so He would be overwhelmed by His sufferings. Just as the person would come up out of the water, so He would be freed from His sufferings and arise from the dead.

There is one passage in which baptizō (βαπτίζω) is found that we have not classified. It is I Cor. 10:2 "were all baptized unto Moses." Expositor's Greek Testament has an illuminating note on it. " 'The cloud' shading and guiding the Israelites from above, and the 'sea' making a path for them through the midst and drowning their enemies behind them, were glorious signs to 'our fathers' of God's salvation; together they formed a washing of regeneration (Tit. 3:5), inaugurating the national life; as it trode the miraculous path between upper and nether waters, Israel was born into its Divine estate. Thus 'they all received their baptism unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea' since in this act they committed themselves to the guidance of Moses, entering through him into acknowledged fellowship with God." (From Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament) ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)