

Matthew 3

“Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

- John the Baptist

Matthew 3:7

PREVIEW: In Matthew 3, we’re introduced to John the Baptist, whose stern message of repentance prepared the way of the Lord; He is also given the honor of baptizing Jesus.

PRAY: Father, please help me to understand the urgency of the message of repentance that John the Baptist conveyed, warning everyone of the wrath to come.

Journal your prayer here:

Matthew 3 Outline:

The Person of John the Baptist - Read Matthew 3:1-6

The Preaching of John the Baptist - Read Matthew 3:7-12

Baptism of Jesus - Read Matthew 3:13-17

The Person of John the Baptist - Read Matthew 3:1-6

1. Chapter 3 begins with the words, “In those days.” Approximately how much time had passed since chapter 2? To discover this, read Luke 3:23 and find out how old Jesus was when He was baptized.

2. What age did a priest typically begin his service to God? (See Numbers 4:1-3.)

3. We are introduced to John the Baptist in Matthew 3:1. He was related to Jesus through Mary, and was about six months older than Jesus (see Luke 1:36). What was he doing and where was he doing it (v. 1)?

Additional material: Read John the Baptist's profile here:
<http://believe879.com/travelers.asp?traveler=johnb>

4. What was John's message to the people who came to see him (v. 2)? Whose message was identical to John's? (See Matthew 4:17.)

5. **PROPOUND:** John's message is one of repentance. What does it mean to repent?

6. A prophecy from Isaiah 40:3 is used to identify John's mission. What is that mission (v. 3)?

Optional Study: Read Zacharias' prophecies of John's ministry in Luke 1:67-80.

7. **PRODUCE:** Explain how John the Baptist "prepared the way of the Lord."

8. Describe John the Baptist's attire and diet (v. 4). What prophet dressed similarly to John (see 2 Kings 1:8)? Who does Jesus equate with John in Matthew 11:14? (See also Malachi 4:5, Matthew 17:10-13, and Luke 1:17.)

9. Many people came out to see John the Baptist and were baptized by him. What did the apostle Paul say that John clearly communicated when he baptized them (see Acts 19:4; 18)? How did this accomplish John's mission?

11. **PROPOUND:** John was out in the wilderness of Judea. Who went to see him? (See Matthew 3:5, 7.)

The Preaching of John the Baptist - Read Matthew 3:7-12

Many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were coming to John's baptism of repentance. The Pharisees sought to strictly obey the Old Testament, as well as their traditions—which they treated as equal to the Word of God (see Matthew 9:14, 15:1-9, 23:5, 23:16, 23, Mark 7:1-23, and Luke 11:42). The Sadducees tended to be wealthy and held high positions, such as chief priests and high priests. Unlike the Pharisees, they considered only the written Word to be from God. This group denied the resurrection and the existence of a spiritual world (see Matthew 22:23, Mark 12:18-27, and Acts 23:8).

12. John addressed the Pharisees and Sadducees harshly (v. 7). A “brood” is a family of offspring, and a “viper” is a snake: a picture representing Satan (see Genesis 3:1). Jesus addressed the Pharisees very similarly in John 8:44. Who did He say they were in that passage?

13. John referred to “the wrath to come.” Upon whom will this wrath come? (See John 3:36, Romans 1:18, Ephesians 5:6, and Colossians 3:6.) What does the word *wrath* refer to? (See Revelation 16:1.) How can people be saved from this wrath? (See Romans 5:9 and 1 Thessalonians 1:10.)

14. **PROCEED:** Share with the group what the “wrath to come” refers to.

15. What did John tell the Pharisees and Sadducees they needed to bear (v. 8)? What do you think these are?

16. The Pharisees and Sadducees thought that by being physical sons of Abraham (v. 9; see also John 8:39-40), they were qualified for the Messiah's kingdom. How was Abraham justified? (See Romans 4:1-4.) How are we justified? (See Romans 3:28; 5:1, and Galatians 2:16; 24.)

17. **PROPOUND:** John told the Pharisees to “bear fruit worthy of repentance.” Explain what this means. (See Matthew 3:8.)

18. **PROMOTE:** The Pharisees and Sadducees thought they were justified by being sons of Abraham. How does a person become justified before God?

19. A tree is often used in the Bible as a type or model of mankind (see Psalm 92:12 and Jeremiah 17:8). What did John say will happen to certain trees (v. 10)?

20. **PRACTICE:** The tree (man) that doesn’t bear good fruit will be cut down (see Matthew 3:10). How can you ensure that you bear good fruit?

21. **PROPOUND:** What did John mean when he said, “the ax is laid to the root of the trees”? (See Matthew 3:10.)

22. John baptized with “water unto repentance.” What did John say He who is coming after him is going to baptize with (v. 11)? (See also Acts 1:5, 2:1-4, and 11:16.)

23. The winnowing fan speaks of the coming wrath. What did John say will happen to the wheat and the chaff? (See Malachi 4:1 and Matthew 13:30.)

24. **PROPOUND:** What was John referring to when he said, “He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire”? (See Matthew 3:12.)

25. **PROCLAIM:** The message of repentance that John preached is the same as Jesus’ message (see Matthew 4:17). Why is this message one that we should share with our unbelieving friends and family members?

26. **PROPOUND:** Why did John not consider himself worthy even to carry the sandals of the One coming after him? (See Matthew 3:11.)

Baptism of Jesus - Read Matthew 3:13-17

27. Jesus came to John to be baptized. John rightly recognized that the sinless Son of God needed no baptism of repentance (v. 11), and that he was certainly not worthy to baptize his own Savior. What reason did Jesus give for permitting John to baptize Him (v. 15)? (See also 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

28. **PROTECT:** If the Messiah was to provide righteousness for sinners, He had to be identified with sinners (baptized). How did Jesus fulfill this? (See 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

29. All three persons of the Trinity were present at the baptism of Jesus. How are each represented (v. 16-17)?

30. **PROPOUND:** What do you think the phrase “like a dove” means in Matthew 3:16?

PROCESS: Take some time to review the message of repentance preached by John and Jesus.

Think about the urgency of this message.

PRAY: Father, thank You for John the Baptist’s bold example. Please help me to be bold in sharing the message of repentance with my unsaved friends.

Journal your prayer here: