

Matthew 3

Read Matthew 3:1-4: Who was John the Baptist? He had his own disciples. They studied prophecy. What were they expecting and waiting for?

Then the disciples of John reported to him concerning all these things. And John, calling two of his disciples to *him*, sent *them* to Jesus, saying, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”

When the men had come to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, ‘Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?’” And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight.

Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that *the blind see, the lame walk, the* lepers are cleansed, *the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the* poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is *he* who is not offended because of Me.” When the messengers of John had departed, He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings’ courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is *he* of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’ For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a

greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (Luke 7:18-28)

What are some prophecies foretelling what the messiah would do when he came?

Isaiah. 35:3-6: "Strengthen the weak hands, And make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert."

Isaiah. 43:7-9: "Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him." Bring out the blind people who have eyes, and the deaf who have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled. Who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring out their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear and say, "It is truth."

John the Baptist and his disciples studied Isaiah. John may have had access to scrolls since he was from a priestly family.

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Luke 1:5-6)

An alternate translation of Isaiah 40 is: 'Turn back to the path of Jehovah, which is fitting...a desert highway of God and angels.'

In other words, God is coming. We need to get on the path that intersects with his direction.

Elijah is considered to be among the greatest prophets. John has the spirit of empowerment and purpose. He came to reconcile men to each other and to God.

For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1: 15-17)

Read Matthew 3:4-12: John and many prophets wore a hairy garment; which was like the itchy sack cloth worn during repentance. It made you uncomfortable enough to not forget that you on a task; and not kicking back.

at the same time the LORD spoke by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, "Go, and remove the sackcloth from your body, and take your sandals off your feet." And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. (Isaiah 20:2)

John spoke of destruction coming to those who would not change their course. Changing direction and repenting was not based on public impressions. The religious leaders fooled men; but not God. God saw them as poisonous and evil. Any farmer invests his time and resources for a harvest. A fruit tree is judged by its fruit; not its leaves. Our leaves symbolize our public professions and claims. Our fruit is the true test. Jesus came to drink the wine produced from sweet grapes being crushed. Our inner reality is apparent

→ OUTWARD APPEARANCE 'LOOKS FINE'

when we are pressed hard. Repentance is an indicator of our sincerity. Jesus was saddened in experiencing man's bitterness.

And do not hide Your face from Your servant, For I am in trouble;
Hear me speedily. Draw near to my soul, *and* redeem it;
Deliver me because of my enemies. You know my reproach, my
shame, and my dishonor; My adversaries *are* all before You.
Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness;
I looked *for someone* to take pity, but *there was* none; And for
comforters, but I found none. They also gave me gall for my food,
And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. (Psalm 69: 17-21)

Praising God in the storm is what Job eventually did. We need to be overcomers proved under duress. We can be sweet when it does not matter. To *kick and whine* about our life circumstances proves that we are disappointed and rooted in bitterness. Do we *bark* at each other when we are hurting? These are characteristics more-associated with the early stages of a faith walk. Our time on earth is really a purge and refill. This poison has to purge before we are considered sweet enough for the holy Spirit to savor. The Bible identifies our level of sweetness to God as follows:

Gall and wormwood were well-known to the writers of scripture. The substances evoke strong memories to anyone who had ever tasted them. They were both very bitter. Gall was the poppy from which came the juice called opium. Gall was also the bitter bile from the gallbladder. And wormwood was a green shrub, which was used to produce very bitter medicine. The bitter substances in wormwood are absinthin and anabsinthine. Gall and wormwood were well-known because of their wide use.

In the Bible gall and wormwood are used as metaphors for very bitter experiences. Since both substances are very bitter and very potent, they evoke memories of taking very bitter medicine. Descriptions of eating and drinking the substances are metaphors for very bitter experiences. For this reason, the translators have generally erred in giving interpretive translations of the metaphors, such as poison, poison water, or bitterness.

For their vine is of the vine of Sodom And of the fields of Gomorrah;
Their grapes are grapes of gall, Their clusters are bitter. Their
wine is the poison of serpents, And the cruel venom of cobras.
(Deuteronomy 32:32-33)

A baptism of fire has a couple of applications. One is a future of doom and burning in hell.

And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— where ‘Their worm does not die, And the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire— where ‘Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.’ “For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. (Mark 9:45-49)

The believers get salted (tiny impacts) of fire from this world's furnace; designed to get us to burn off dead and dried up areas in our lives.

IT BECOMES VERY APPARENT WHAT IS IN
YOU WHEN YOU ARE TESTED

Read Matthew 3:13-17: Jesus is providing himself as a living example to us. This includes being baptized. You are not truly considered a man until you are 30 in Hebrew society. Jesus also wanted onlookers to be impacted at his timing. There may not have been any righteous people baptizing in faith before John the Baptist.

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not."

“Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” He said: “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the LORD,”’ as the prophet Isaiah said.” (John 1:19–23)

John the Baptist was the most-righteous normal man in his own right. The literal interpretation: *Sound a proclamation in the wilderness. Turn back to the road in a fitting way that is right for Jehovah. There is a desert highway with God and angels.*

As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings'

houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is *he* of whom it is written:
'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matthew 11:7-11)

As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft *clothing* are in kings' houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is *he* of whom it is written:

Our fruit grows in our footprints (good or bad). What kind of fruit did John the Baptist have? John the Baptist had two disciples watching Jesus get baptized. They were the future Apostles John and Andrew. The purpose of our faith is faith reproduction.

*They were
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disciples
before
Jesus*

'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.' "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (John 1:37-40)

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so *did* another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. (John 18:15)

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3)

Jesus also exemplifies how we must wait on the Spirit to do a work of God. Walking in the Spirit is a hard thing to do some times. It can be denying my own tendencies. WALKING IN SPIRIT CAN BE HARDEST OF TIMES.

What is baptism? It is a joint funeral and birth ceremony. The old passions and self-identity is being surrendered as dead and unable to deliver. I now have an identity as a small part of a large body with a Spirit-led daily purpose according to God's purposes.

and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working

of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions. (Colossians 2:11-13)

Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— (Colossians 3:3-10)

The Old Testament circumcision rite was commenced with Abraham.

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly." Abram fell on his face, and God

talked with him, saying, “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations. “No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his

foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant." (Genesis 17:1-14)

Circumcision is ultimately a sign of faith in Jehovah. The rite itself is not unto salvation. Those uncircumcised who believe are the same as those who are circumcised. Like all Mosaic laws it was mandatory to even live at one time. It is a symbol of the most-cherished flesh being cut off. That which we most-cherish tends to be what infects us with hurtful passions. We have to ~~trust~~ God for our pleasure.

Gentiles and Jews alike can be children by faith in Abraham. He is ^{both Jew} ~~& Gentile~~ appropriately the only person who was both a Gentile and Jew.

Is this blessing then on the circumcised, or on the uncircumcised also? For we say, "FAITH WAS CREDITED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." How then was it credited? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised; and he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, so that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be credited to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also follow in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. (Romans 4:9-12)

For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of

the promise are regarded as descendants..... What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, "I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION." So then it *does not depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED ^[k] THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH." So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires... As He says also in Hosea, "I WILL CALL THOSE WHO WERE NOT MY PEOPLE, 'MY PEOPLE,' AND HER WHO WAS NOT BELOVED, 'BELOVED.'" "AND IT SHALL BE THAT IN THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS SAID TO THEM, 'YOU ARE NOT MY PEOPLE,' THERE THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF THE LIVING GOD." Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "THOUGH THE NUMBER OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL BELIKE THE SAND OF THE SEA, IT IS THE REMNANT THAT WILL BE SAVED; FOR THE LORD WILL EXECUTE HIS WORD ON THE EARTH, THOROUGHLY AND QUICKLY." And just as Isaiah foretold, "UNLESS THE LORD OF SABAOTH HAD LEFT TO US A POSTERITY, WE WOULD HAVE BECOME LIKE SODOM, AND WOULD HAVE RESEMBLED GOMORRAH." What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who *did not* pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is *by* faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law. Why? Because *they did not pursue it by* faith, but as though *it were by* works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written,

“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE,
AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.” (Romans 9:
various verses)