

We're in Matthew Chapter 3:13-end of the Chapter. Questions or comments:

- Is it the water or the Word that forgives your sins?
- Jesus would be baptized to fulfill righteousness but in the past it was to fulfill prophesy.
- What was John's importance? What's his family relationship?
- Who heard the words, "This is my beloved son"? Jesus or others too?
- John says I need you, but you want me to do something for you? He was very obedient.
- Did John and Jesus know each other? They were "cousins". They might have met at the Passover? The relationship--John's mother's name is Elizabeth. Jesus' mother's name is Mary. We find out the two of them know each other because of Luke's Gospel. We're told that in Luke Chapter 1. Mary goes to see Elizabeth. It says "*Even Elizabeth, your relative*". It's not known if she is a cousin, aunt or another relative. What we do know is Hebrew people were very prolific and they had big families, and it's very likely John and Jesus would have known each other. So what does that do for you when Jesus comes up and says; tell John that you need to baptize me.
- Is it descending like a dove – is it a dove descending or like something descending a different way? Does God have a body? The spirit of God would have been coming down in the body of a dove or with the miraculous appearance of a dove. We're not really told, but we know the Spirit of God does not have a body.
- Luke 1:20: In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabrielle to Nazareth. That was Elizabeth who was six months pregnant. John was older than Jesus.
- Was the baptism the beginning of his ministry? It is the start of his public ministry. There is a difference between his ministry and his public ministry. So when Jesus' ministry actually began (Philippians, Chapter 2); He took on flesh. His ministry begins when the Son of God comes into our sinful condition. So He was ministering as a baby; and as a young adult. There are two kinds of public – in the public, and there's public that means formal, on behalf of or put in place.
- Back to Chapter 3: We need to make sure we understand that it is not accidental that John is the first one mentioned in Chapter 3. John is fulfilling a very important role as the forerunner to the coming of the Messiah. And he is dressed and looks a lot like Elijah. Elijah left the Israelites by way of a fiery chariot and horses. It was a miraculous departure and it was the notion that when Elijah returned he would point to the coming of the Messiah, God's fulfillment of the prophesy. So John comes out and he goes to a very peculiar place – the Jordan River. Specifically, he would have been where God's people had already been generations before. Joshua had been at the Jordan River. He was the leader of God's people into the Promised Land.
- So the new era is being introduced but it's being introduced a little bit differently. Jesus may be the new one who saves – Yeshua, (God saves), but He is positioned a little bit differently. The first

“Yeshua” was the prodigy of Moses. Jesus doesn’t come as anybody’s prodigy but He comes as one who is in with the sinners. So the question is why was Jesus baptized and what is the relationship between Jesus’ baptism and our baptism.

We had a question about John’s statement in Verse 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.”* What does that mean? Actually, that’s the clue to tell us what Jesus’ baptism is a precursor to.

- Jesus baptism is a precursor to the last day. The word they use is *Eschaton*, eschological or eschatology. Eschatology means the study of the end times. *Eschaton* means end. The Jews looked forward to when God would finally come and these days would be over and new days would begin. But for new days to begin there had to be an end to the old days. The new covenant speaks about the new era but the new era is transitional between this life and the final time where sin and death are defeated. So when Jesus said he would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire – that’s talking about judgment day. What’s the difference between the Holy Spirit and Fire? Fire images are hell, destruction, suffering, judgment. When judgment came upon Sodom and Gomorra it rained down fire. The Holy Spirit references new life. We’re so Christianized we can’t see it. We don’t realize that the talking about baptizing with the Holy Spirit would mean the divine would come and have fellowship with us and the only way that would happen was to die and go be with God and His Spirit. So when it says *“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire”*, it’s talking about how He will be the final judge. Later on in Matthew Chapter 25, He will talk about how He’s going to divide them into two groups. Sheep and goats. One ends with fire and one ends with fellowship.
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- So Jesus’ baptism is looking ahead, past your baptism, to when the Lord has set aside that day. He will be judge. God’s judge will come among us. The irony is, when He comes, John says I’m not worthy to tie his sandals. Everyone thinks when this guy walks up; everyone is going to fall on their face. When this guy walks up, we’re all going to know that God is right here with us. When this guy walks up, everybody is going to think, I’m no goat! And the irony is, when this guy walks up, He wants to be baptized. Why do you need to be baptized, John asks? You’re different, you’re the judge. And now we start to see what is profoundly significant about what this word “Yeshua”, means--God saves.
- How is He going to save? He’s going to save by coming to our sin. He’s is going to take upon Himself the position of sinner. But wait, that’s not right! You’re not a sinner. You’re the judge of sinners. And this is the peculiarity of discipleship that we are shown. That God’s own method of saving is different than what we would think. It’s not a method of glory; it’s a method of suffering, of humility. It’s not a method of strength; it’s a position of weakness. And this says something about our discipleship.
- What kind of goofy things do we do with little children? We get to their level, talk in their talk. We humble ourselves and in discipleship God saves the world through the weak things - 1 Corinthians. Through the noble things, and the less than noble things. God brings about his mercy through our humanity and that’s pretty amazing because that says that everyone in this room can actually say I’m a

saved one. God's spirit uses me in the life of others. I'm not here to brag about me, I'm here to be used by the Lord to let you know about His love.

- Verse 17, here is the voice that comes out of heaven and says "My beloved Son". This voice comes from heaven another time – transfiguration. At that time we know definitively that the followers and believers heard. This time does Matthew tell us that people actually hear and see this? No. There is no evidence here. I have to tell you, if I were God, I would have done it differently. We would have made it much more spectacular. God's Son heard the voice, "*And a voice from heaven said, This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.*" We just aren't told. Do the other Gospels have people hearing the voice? Would someone have had to hear it to write it down? Or is Jesus telling Matthew this is what happened?
- What we are told is that heaven opened up. What would it be like if the heavens ripped open today? There is no evidence that the people heard the voice or saw the heavens open. What we do know is this -- God's word tells us that the heavens opened. What does that mean? If a door opens and someone comes through it, what does that say? The two worlds have now connected.
- When John says, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near". I told you the word "kingdom" in Greek is "*basileia*" and that is better translated not "kingdom" but "reign"? Why reign? One word denotes something that is static or stationery. One word denotes movement. Kingdom or reign, which one denotes static? Kingdom. The reign is fluid; God is moving on earth. Matthew is telling us God is moving on earth in a person named "Yeshua", who is there to lead His people. And He is moving not in glory and might but He is moving in humility in a way that puts Him in the place of sinners. So what we see in the baptism of Jesus on one hand is; He is going to be the final judge of hell, fire and spirit, but then he comes in a very non-judge way, a very humble way.
- Does the Spirit only come through baptism? No. We have all kinds of examples in the Old Testament Scriptures where the Holy Spirit falls upon people. If they're not baptized can they be saved? Jesus words in Mark 16: "*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.*" It's not baptism as some ritual activity; it's the Word of God. The water is the physical symbol for us to see what God is doing. So it is the Word that makes baptism effective.
- I don't know if you realize it but the Jordan River is dirty. It's narrow and shallow – knee deep in most places. Certain times of the year it expands and floods and can be a fertile area.
- Was there baptism before this? Yes, there was. "Baptismo" means "to wash". There were all kinds of baptisms before this. Even baptism of chairs... If a Roman soldier had come into your home and sat in your chair, after the soldier leaves, you baptiso it – washed it. They were called swine. They were Gentiles and unclean. You ceremonially cleaned it. If a Gentile would come into the Hebrew family, part of the ritual was baptism. John is not saying to wash your chair or your vase. He's not saying to wash a Gentile. He's saying to wash a Jew and he's telling the Jew to repent and this is controversial. The Sadducees and Pharisees know it. And they're saying what are you talking about? Why do we have to repent? Why do we have to be baptized?

- Dr. Gibbs says at that time in Judaism there were two types of people. There were covenantal nomists. Then there were people like John and Jesus. The covenantal nomists thought you were born a Jew. You were born a child of God. Jesus and John said, no, you were born a child of the devil. What does John say to the Sadducees and Pharisees? You brood of vipers. They are poisonous. They are dangerous.
- Let's fast forward to discipleship today. When your family comes to me and asks will you baptize my baby? Our response is we would love to baptize your baby! We are looking forward to baptizing your baby. We are honored to be used by the Lord in the baptism of your baby. But let's talk about what is baptism. Are you bringing your child to be blessed or to be buried? Are you bringing your child to be killed or to be knighted because you think your child was born a Lutheran and you want to make it more public? I tell you, we are not covenantal nomists around here. Your children are born just like everyone else's children. They are born children of wrath and the only way into the kingdom is through repentance. And John challenged those people who said "well, my generations were members of St. John's and built this church"! What does any of that have to do with this? Repent. That's the call and its challenging conversation because we have to ask the question how any of us get into the Kingdom. And we only get into the Kingdom because of Jesus.
- That was what was so offensive. John was telling the Jews to repent. How dare you tell us to repent? And I would suggest to you, John, just like any pastor, would have been roasted on Sunday afternoons. I tell you, John would say, "You brood of vipers!" You're giving your children and your grandchildren, the most dangerous, poisonous message of all! You're giving them the impression that they're children of god and they're not. And that's where it gets to be very difficult to be in the ministry today.
- Our staff here all has to work together so that it's shared in a loving way that we continue to stay in the conversation. We do not want to pull out the proverbial Bible bat and hit them upside the head. But we have to talk about it because Jesus and John were not covenantal nomists. We've got to talk about what does it mean to come into the Kingdom? What does it mean to live a life of discipleship?