

In chapter 3, Matthew again establishes that his audience is a people whose hearts have been hardened against the Lord. They should instead be the ones most tied to the Messiah as He arrives.

In verses 1-4, John the Baptist, the Herald of Christ, is introduced. In verses [5-6](#), we see the beginning of a great revival, and in verses 7-12, John confronts the Jewish leaders who had come to where he was baptizing. After this confrontation, Jesus arrives (vv. 13-17). He and John have a conversation, John allows (**ἀφίημι** – *aphiémi*, 863, I permit, suffer) Jesus' baptism, and as the Spirit of God descends on Christ, the heavens open, and the Lord declares His approval.

In Mt. 3:1, Matthew makes certain the reader knows John is the exact person Isaiah is referring to ([Isaiah 40:3](#)), identifying John as “a preacher in the wilderness of Judea,” by quoting Isaiah in verse 3.

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea <sup>2</sup> and saying, “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!” <sup>3</sup> 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!**

<sup>4</sup> Now John had a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

The Jews of the entire region were responding to John's message and being baptized in the Jordan river, (v. 5-6). The “revival” was so significant, that many Jewish leaders had to come to see what was happening, but John recognized the condition of their hearts and rebuked them as soon as he saw them arrive.

<sup>5</sup> Then people from Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the vicinity of the Jordan were going out to him, <sup>6</sup> and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

<sup>7</sup> 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 coming wrath?”

Verse 8 is John's message to the unsaved that harkens to what Christ will later teach about bearing fruit.

<sup>8</sup> Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance.

Because these Pharisees and Sadducees haven't repented from their disbelief, theirs' is to bear the fruit of repentance. His message would certainly have prompted offense as he tells them plainly, that *they are not required by God* to lead His people (v.9).

<sup>9</sup> 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.

Matthew shows that John was also aware of Isaiah's prophecies in verse 11, where he declares the power (**ισχυρός** – *ischuros*, 2478, mighty, powerful) of the coming Messiah, just as Isaiah announced

and Isaiah 40:10a, "See, the Lord God comes with strength (הִזָּק - khaw-zawk', 2389, strong, stout, mighty) and His power (זְרוֹעַ, - zeroa, 2220, arm, shoulder, strength) establishes His rule."

<sup>10</sup> The ax is already at the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

<sup>11</sup> "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.

At the end of this same verse, John mentions the same fire (πῦρ - puri, 4442, the eternal fire) of the Holy Spirit, as the fire that will consume the lost (v. 12). This fire is for baptism when used for the redeemed. For the unrepentant, it is for (κατακαίω - katakaío, 2618, burn up, consume entirely) consumption.

<sup>12</sup> 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 with fire that never goes out."

In verse 15 we see the first act of Christ's ministry. Christ came to the world for the redemption of mankind. He who had no sin took His place among the sinners and submitted to a baptism for sinners. Isaiah 53:12 says He "was numbered with the transgressors; Yet he himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors." Paul provides a more clear understanding of this in Romans 8:3, and 2 Corinthians 5:21. There was no other way "to fulfill all righteousness."

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup> But John tried to stop him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?"

<sup>15</sup> Jesus answered him, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John allowed him to be baptized.

The chapter closes with God's voice (φωνή - phóné, 5456, a voice, sound, noise) "calling" down from heaven. God declared Christ to be His beloved (ἀγαπητός - agapétos, 27, beloved beyond all others by the God who sent Him) in whom He has found delight.

<sup>16</sup> When 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. <sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

Once again, the New is built on the Old, fulfilling all that God spoke through His prophets hundreds of years ago. This can give us the assurance that no matter which "purging" fires we must endure, God's promises will always come to pass. He has always been and ever will be faithful to do what He said He will do.

**Philippians 1:6** (CSB) "I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."