

“That’s My King: The Authority of the Messiah”

Matthew 3:1-17

Last week, Dave let us through a study of the first 2 books of Matthew. The first part of chapter 1, Matthew covers the genealogy of Jesus. You remember why that was important? Matthew wanted to show his audience that Jesus is the Messiah, and more specifically, “the Son of David.” Matthew wanted to show that Jesus inherited the Davidic kingship over Israel. In essence, Jesus comes as the messianic King in the line of David to fulfill the Old Testament, and especially the promises of everlasting salvation.

Dave then covered 5 scriptural proofs that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. (SLIDE)

Today, in the first part of our passage, we get to look at John the Baptist, the one who prepares the way for the Lord, the Messiah’s Herald. Then, we get to see how Jesus Christ, the Messiah, is revealed as the Son of God. Let’s read together Matthew 3:1-17. (SLIDE)

In honor of Dr. Bill Pardue, how would you sum up the main idea of this chapter in one sentence? (SLIDE)

In Matthew chapter 3, we see John the Baptist coming onto the scene and introducing an entirely new day in redemptive history. As a part of this new day, he called people to start over in their lives. Matthew chapter 3 also gives us a glimpse into the inauguration, the first day, so to speak of Jesus public ministry on earth. Remember, about 30 years past between Matthew 2:23 in Matthew 3:1, so we miss almost all of

Jesus early childhood, his teenage years, and even his young adult life in his 20s. Matthew hones in on that which is critical for us to hear and believe.

Something that Brian taught us two weeks ago, to have a greater understanding of Scripture, it is important to remember the context and to whom a book was written. To whom was this written? What did they hear? What did they understand? This is when Scripture comes alive! What was their Scripture? Put this in context, let's look at the last 3 verses of the Old Testament. Turn back just a few pages to the book of Malachi: (SLIDE)

John the Baptist fulfills Isaiah 40:3 and also the prophecies in Malachi about the messenger who prepares the way before the Lord in the prophecies about Elijah. John is described as wearing a garment of camel's hair. Those who saw him, his appearance would have a thought about images of "Elijah". He was to return to prepare the way for God's wrathful appearance. Elijah was described as a hairy man with a belt of leather.

The account of John the Baptist is designed to prepare the reader (us or the first century audience) for the coming of the one who is "mighty" (v. 11). John himself is presented only as the one who prepares the way and announces the Messiah's coming. **John's call for repentance in the light of imminent judgment sets the context in which Jesus' work of both judgment and salvation will be carried out.**

Whenever John the Baptist appears in the rest of this gospel (and indeed in the other gospels) this same perspective will be maintained: while Jesus will be seen as John's successor. Jesus is always the focus of attention. John acts herald and authenticator. ***How do you see that as***

applicable to our lives today? Would John's role be countercultural today? Why so?

John's role is one of great honor and importance, but it is only that of the precursor. But make no mistake, does not mean that John was not important, or no more than a "warm-up act" for Jesus. Going back to what the first century audience new and understood, John was representative of the Jewish prophetic tradition. John played the important historical role in linking God's saving activity in the Old Testament and his saving activity in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

While Matthew presents Jesus as going far beyond John's relatively limited "revival" ministry, he portrays Jesus as speaking with appreciation and respect of John's role and shows a direct continuity between the ministries of John and Jesus. (SLIDE)

- **Jesus had a deep respect and appreciation of John's role (11:7-19)**

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

- **Jesus saw an essential continuity between John's ministry and his own (21:23-32)**

^{23 z}And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him ^aas he was teaching, and said, ^b"By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" ²⁴ Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. ²⁵ The baptism of John, ^cfrom where did it come? ^dFrom heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" ²⁶ But if we say, 'From man,' ^fwe are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was ^ga

prophet.”²⁷ So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And he said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

²⁸ ^h“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in ⁱthe vineyard today.’²⁹ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he ^jchanged his mind and went.³⁰ And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go.³¹ Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, ^kthe tax collectors and ^lthe prostitutes go into ^mthe kingdom of God before you.³² For John came to you ⁿin the way of righteousness, and ^oyou did not believe him, but ^pthe tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward ^jchange your minds and believe him.

- **The continuity between John and Jesus was even obvious to outsiders (14:1-2, 16:14)**

^vAt that time ^wHerod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus,² and he said to his servants, ^x“This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.

³ ^xNow when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”¹⁴ And they said, “Some say ^yJohn the Baptist, others say ^zElijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”¹

- **Matthew forges close links between John’s preaching and that of Jesus later in the gospel (3:2, 4:17, 10:7)**

John says....^hIn those days ⁱJohn the Baptist came preaching in ^jthe wilderness of ^kJudea,² ^k“Repent, for ^lthe kingdom of heaven ¹is at hand.”¹

^xFrom that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ^z“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”¹⁷

And proclaim as you go, saying, ^d“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”³

RT France points out several parallels in Jesus and John's preaching
(SLIDE)

- 3:7 (brood of vipers) – 23:33 “woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!”
- 3:8 (repentance) – 11:20-21 woe to the unrepentant cities. (He began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, but because they did not repent) 12:41 “the men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.)
- 3:8, 10 (producing good fruit) 7:16-20 – false prophets “you will recognize them by their fruit) 12:33 – “a tree is known by its fruit”
- 3:9 (children of Abraham) 8:11-12 – Faith of the Centurion “I tell you, many will come from East and West and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.)
- 3:11-12 (judgment by fire) 13:40-42 – parable of the weeds “just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and lawbreakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace.”

There ministries and lives also have parallels and other significant ways: both were popularly regarded as profits, both were opposed by the Jerusalem authorities, both were eventually rejected and executed, and both were given burials by their disciples.

The Messiah revealed as God 3:13-17

The first appearance of the adult Jesus in Matthew's story takes place in the context of John's baptism. (SLIDE)

¹³ ^kThen Jesus came ^lfrom Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ ^mJohn would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented

What do you think about the debate between John and Jesus in verses 13-15? Jesus is in fact John's superior, and himself the dispenser of a far more significant baptism. Why does Jesus need to be baptized? Verse 15 indicates that Jesus sees a God-given appropriateness in his receiving baptism from John, but does not clearly explain why. However, in being baptized, Jesus endorses John's ministry and John's message and links his mission to John's.

As you read this, do you think that the baptism is what John is highlighting here? Is the baptism the important theological principle?

For Matthew, the importance of the event is not in the baptism itself, but in the revelation which follows it, which culminates in the declaration that Jesus is God's unique son. (SLIDE)

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, ^othe heavens were opened to him, ³ and he ^psaw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷ and behold, ^aa voice from heaven said, ^r"This is my beloved Son, ⁴ with whom I am well pleased."

Note in Matthew 3:16 the Spirit of God anoints Jesus as Israel's King and Messiah and commissions him as God's righteous servant. This descent of the spirit of God brings to mind well known messianic prophecies in Isaiah which say that God will place his spirit upon his chosen servant. As the spirit now "comes upon him" Jesus is visibly equipped and commissioned to undertake his messianic mission. The one who is to baptize in the Holy Spirit has now been endowed with the spirit.

In Matthew 3:17 the voice from heaven confirms the eternally existing relationship of divine love that the Father and Son share, as well as Jesus identity as the Messianic son of God. This beloved son is the triumphant Messianic King, yet he is also the humble "servant" into whose hands the father is well pleased to place the mission to bring salvation to the nations. This "voice from heaven" gives us access to God's own view of Jesus.

Following Jesus acceptance of John's baptism as the will of God for him, this voice from heaven shows the Father's pleasure in that obedience and also, more fundamentally, Jesus' own unique relationship with His Father. In fact, in the next chapter, we are going to see this unique relationship challenged by Satan himself "if you are the son of God..."

