

Lessons From John's Ministry

Intro: There are several lessons taught in the account of John the Baptist ministry as recorded in Matthew 3. In this lesson, let us note, examine, and learn several of these lessons.

I. THE KINGDOM HAS ALREADY COME.

A. John preached the kingdom was at hand.

1. Mat. 3:1-6 ¹“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, ²And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. ³For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. ⁴And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, ⁶And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”
2. Jesus also preached it was at hand; Mat. 4:17 ¹⁷“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

B. The kingdom was prophesied in the Old Testament.

1. 1 Sam. 7:12-13 ¹²“And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.”
2. Dan. 2:44 ⁴⁴“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

C. The fulfillment of the kingdom prophecies in the Old Testament found their fulfillment in the church in the New Testament.

1. Jesus equated the two; Mat. 16:18-19 ¹⁸“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”
2. Christians were in the kingdom.
 - a. Col. 1:13 ¹³“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:”
 - b. Rev. 1:9 ⁹“I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”
3. Heb. 12:22-23, 28 ²²“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, ²³To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel. ²⁵See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not* we *escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: ²⁶Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. ²⁷And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:”

II. TRUE ISRAEL IS NOT PHYSICAL ISRAEL

- A. Mat. 3:7-10 ⁷“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: ⁹And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say

unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. ¹⁰ And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

B. Physical Israel was never the ultimate goal.

1. Gen. 12:3 “³ And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”
2. The salvation of man through Christ was the ultimate goal and physical Israel was simply the avenue through which it would be achieved.
3. Gal. 4:4-5 “⁴ But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁵ To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

C. True Israel is the church.

1. John 10:16 “¹⁶ And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, *and* one shepherd.”
2. Romans 2:28-29 “²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: ²⁹ But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.”
3. It was those who had the faith of Abraham; Rom. 4:9-12 “⁹ *Cometh* this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. ¹⁰ How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. ¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: ¹² And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had* being *yet* uncircumcised.”

D. The Premillennialists and Zionist today physical Israel and their obtaining the physical land of Canaan the ultimate goal.

III. PEOPLE OFTEN ASK FOR THINGS THEY DO NOT REALLY WANT OR NEED.

A. Mat. 3:11-12 “¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with* fire: ¹² Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

B. Pentecostals today ask for the baptism of fire.

1. The context of “fire” is that of punishment:
 - a. Mat. 3:10 “¹⁰ And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”
 - b. Mat. 3:12 “¹² Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”
 - c. It has reference to eternal torment in hell fire.
2. Consider that John was speaking to a mixed audience.
 - a. Some were believers; Mat. 3:5-6 “⁵ Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, ⁶ And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”
 - b. Some were the Pharisees and Sadducees; Mat. 3:7 “⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

C. Pentecostals (and some brethren) ask for the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was never promised to all believers.
 - a. John does not promise such here.
 - (1) There are three baptisms involved in this passage.
 - (a) Some would receive baptism of fire.
 - (b) Some would receive Holy Spirit baptism.
 - (c) Some would receive water baptism.
 - (2) We learn elsewhere who the some are that would receive Holy Spirit baptism.
 - b. Jesus does not promise such.
2. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was only promised to the apostles.
 - a. John 20:22-23 ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: ²³ Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”
 - b. Acts 1:4-5 ⁴ And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. ⁵ For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”
3. It is not needed by anyone today.
 - a. Its purpose was to effect revelation and confirmation.
 - b. We have the completed revelation of God in the Bible.
 - c. It has been confirmed during the first century, thus does not need re-confirming.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF JESUS' BAPTISM

- A. **Mat. 3:13-17** ¹³ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. ¹⁴ But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? ¹⁵ And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. ¹⁶ And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: ¹⁷ And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”
- B. **Consider the purpose of John's baptism.**
 1. Mark 1:4 ⁴ John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”
 2. There is a two-fold aspect:
 - a. Remission of sins
 - b. Repentance.
 3. Jesus did not commit sin, thus did not need to repent.
 - a. Heb. 4:15 ¹⁵ For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin.”
 - b. 1 Pet. 2:22 ²² Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:”
 4. Thus, Jesus' baptism was an exception to the rule.
- C. **Jesus' baptism was to “fulfill all righteousness.”**
 1. Mat. 3:15 ¹⁵ And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.”
 2. What does that mean?
 - a. It is doing righteousness; 1 John 3:7 ⁷ Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”

b. Righteousness is:

- (1) Psa. 119:172 ^{“172} My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness.”
- (2) Rom. 1:16-17 ^{“16} For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
- (3) Thus, it is doing all that God commands.

c. God had commanded John to baptize, Jesus was obeying God's command.

D. Jesus' baptism also gave validity to John and His teaching.

1. In fulfilling all righteousness, Jesus is attesting to the fact that John's ministry is a command of God.
2. John 1:6 ^{“6} There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.”

Conclusion: Jesus asked an all-important question to the chief priests and elders recorded in Matthew 21:25 ^{“25} The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?” The question today regards the baptism of Christ: Is it from heaven or men? If it is from heaven, and it is, then you should submit yourself to it in obedience to God.