

# The Baptised King (Matthew 3)

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hey PCBC English, great to be here. Why don't we pray and let's ask for God to help us as we look at Matthew chapter 3.

Let's pray together. Father, your word is amazing. We see your son Jesus. We see you and how you love us so much.

We see the spirit at work. Help us to focus, help us to listen to your word and to respond to it. I pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

I wonder if you've ever thought of what heaven would be like. What would heaven look like? What could you eat and touch and taste?

Over the years, a lot of Christians have kind of speculated, they've kind of thought about what it would be like to be in heaven. I remember once reading, well actually just looking at Randy Alcorn's book Heaven.

[ 1 : 01 ] It's this thick and the Bible's like this thick. So that's a really big book about heaven. A more recent trend in Christian circles is this kind of thing called heaven tourism. This is where someone claims to have gone to heaven, seen it and been there and then come back and he's written a book all about it.

Don Piper released this book called 90 Minutes in Heaven. I wonder if you've read that or seen that in Man of Christian Centera. In 2010, Todd Burpo wrote another book.

He chronicled his son's experience. His son went to heaven, apparently. Heaven is for real, is what that book said. Although, personally, I'm not too sure how believable Jesus on a rainbow horse is. Yet these stories about heaven, they've been huge sellers, they've been best sellers in the bookstores. Why? Why is that?

I think it's because I think all of us, everyone, is wanting a touch of heaven. To peek behind the curtain. To see what life beyond our here and now is like.

[ 2 : 10 ] And look, even if you don't really believe heaven's a real place. The fact that we live our lives here on earth wanting a bigger house, a bigger car, a bigger holiday.

I think it means that deep down we really are trying to find heaven on earth. Heaven to escape the mundane hell that we think we live in.

Friends, what have I told you that there was an eyewitness account to heaven on earth that you could trust, you could read about, you could consider, and it was free of charge.

That's what Matthew chapter 3 is all about, I think. If you stay in your Bibles as we look closely at Matthew chapter 3. You see, it's interesting that all four eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus, the Gospels, they all speak of this moment of John the Baptist's ministry and the baptized King Jesus. Yet only Matthew, only Matthew starts and ends his chapter with the word the heavens. The heavens. It's mentioned three times, once in verse 2 and then in verses 16 and 17, right?

[ 3 : 21 ] The kingdom of the heavens, literally says, that's drawn near. Behold, the heavens were opened up. It's all about heaven. Matthew is interested too in heaven tourism, but of the best kind.

I think Matthew's focus on heavenly reality is timely for us. Because, friends, we chase for heaven, don't we? Yet our life on earth is far from it.

This is a year that has reminded us of it. We spend billions of dollars to keep New Zealand a COVID-free paradise. But who are we fooling? We live in a broken world, don't we?

With broken, messy lives. Our family relationships are far from heaven. And if we're honest with ourselves, the brokenness around us, some of it is because of the brokenness inside us.

There is darkness inside our own hearts. We are far from heaven, aren't we? And, friends, it's precisely people who know darkness, who know uncleanness in their hearts, that respond rightly in this chapter.

[ 4 : 31 ] In Matthew chapter 3, heaven comes down, right? In Matthew chapter 3, we see a God in love, a sinful people, and then, ultimately, an invitation to you and to me to enter God's family, to get a glimpse of heaven through Jesus, heaven's king.

Matthew chapter 3 has two scenes. Two scenes focused on two men, in particular.

And as these men talk, they show us two heavenly realities. And so, that's how I want to look at Matthew 3 this afternoon. We're going to look at it in two parts.

First, we're going to look at John the Baptist from verses 1 through to 12. And then, afterwards, from verses 13 to 17, we'll look at Jesus himself. And so, the first point I want to make today is that John the Baptist speaks fear to warn us of heaven's kingdom.

I'll say that again. John speaks fear to warn us of heaven's kingdom. When we get to this verse, it's been nearly 30 years since wise men from the east brought gifts to worship Jesus.

[ 5 : 49 ] Herod the Great now lies in the dust, and some of his children now rule different parts of Judea. And yet, the true king of the Jews has been living in tiny backwater Nazareth, out of sight, out of mind, until verse 1.

In those days, John the Baptist came preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

Friends, you know something or someone is important when they get a special announcement that they're coming beforehand, don't you? Just as behind every famous president is a talented speechwriter, Here comes John the Baptist to announce his cousin Jesus.

Once John leapt in his mother's womb at the sound of Jesus. Now he leaps into action. He breaks 400 years of silence, and he declares like a prophet, The king has come. Prepare the way of the Lord.

Matthew draws a connection between John's preaching and the prophecies of the prophet he's quoting, Isaiah chapter 40. And now in Isaiah chapter 40, this verse he quotes, It's written at a significant moment in that book, Where Isaiah shifts from words of judgment to God's people in sin, In the first half of the book, To words of comfort for God's people in exile.

[ 7 : 22 ] And I find it interesting that in this specific verse that he quotes here, Isaiah 40 verse 3, Isaiah uses God's covenant name, a special name, The Lord in capitals, Yahweh.

John the Baptist is basically saying that, when he quotes this, Prepare the way for God himself. He's basically saying, God is coming.

Like we long for level one to happen. Friends, these people longed for the day of the Lord to come. God's people were hanging out for the day when God himself would come. And in the very last pages of the Old Testament, The prophet Malachi says this, In Malachi chapter 4 verse 5, Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, Before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.

That's the last pages of the Old Testament. Those are the final words. The final prophet says. And then there's silence. And then John speaks again. Look, Matthew's point is this, That when John the Baptist speaks, Here is a wilderness preacher, None other than Elijah the prophet himself.

[ 8 : 46 ] I mean, he wears his clothes, doesn't he? He brings the same message, And his words have the same authority. And John the Baptist here says this, Verse 2, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.

It's a message that Jesus himself will repeat later on in his ministry, In chapter 4 verse 17. But what does it mean to repent? In the Bible, the word to repent broadly means to turn back to God.

It is what people needed to do to change direction, To orientate themselves, To change course back to God. Because when Matthew describes the Israelites from Jerusalem, Judea, And all around coming to the Jordan River in verse 5, That is what we see.

We see God's people confessing their sins, Turning back to God. Coming to show that by being baptized.

It was a mini revival, wasn't it? Now, different churches believe different things about baptism, And we won't go into that today. We are a Baptist church, of course.

[ 10 : 05 ] In John's day, though, To be baptized, Usually normally meant, If you were a Jewish person, That you would invite someone to take a bath in water.

And actually, they would do it themselves. There would usually be Gentile people, non-Jews, Who wanted to join the Jewish community. And so it was something that foreigners did to themselves, That they wanted to opt in to the Jewish community and faith.

That was what baptism usually, typically meant, During Jesus' time. During John's time. And yet, when John the Baptist performs baptism here, It's very different from Jewish baptism.

In three different ways. Firstly, you notice that this baptism was a one-off event. You did it once. Secondly, notice that the baptism was given by John.

You didn't give it to yourself. You couldn't baptize yourself. And thirdly, it happened here in the Jordan River. Look, the water of the Jordan is pretty yucky.

[ 11 : 13 ] It has no magic powers, as it were. And yet, the ritual of going to the Jordan, For God's people, had immense meaning. Throughout Israel's history, To enter the Jordan was to trust, Actively trust in God's faithfulness.

Think of Joshua entering Canaan, Having to cross the Jordan. Or Naaman the Syrian. Having to wash himself in the Jordan. To have faith that God would cleanse him. And so now, as these people repent, And they get baptized, Jesus, sorry, They're saying, God, I confess my sins. Friends, I'm turning back to you. Friends, let me ask you something. Do you ever feel unclean? Do you ever feel unclean?

I don't just mean after working out? I don't just mean after braving a supermarket dash, Where no one was socially distanced. And I don't mean after you hear that someone near your school or workplace got COVID.

Do you ever feel unclean inside? Have you ever had a fight with someone, for example, Where your words cut them so hard, And your insides felt rotten?

[ 12 : 29 ] I know I have. Or have you ever watched something, Or done something that made you feel dirty on the inside? What do you feel then?

You feel unclean, don't you? And friends, have you ever felt that? You're not alone. Every human culture recognises that, At some level, That we can be clean, And we can somehow be unclean on the inside.

Whether it is Chinese medicine, And talk about chi and balance. Whether it is ancient Buddhist rituals, Where you pour and sprinkle water on the Buddha statue.

Whether it is Hindus who bathe themselves in the Ganges River. Whether it is us with our Instagram filters, To smooth out our imperfections. We are on a quest, aren't we?

To stop being unclean. To sanitise our dirt. To cover up our imperfections. Deep down though.

Deep down. Have you ever felt like you need a bath on the inside?

[ 13 : 42 ] And, If so, Then I think John the Baptist would say it to you, The King is coming. The King is coming. And He knows how you feel on the inside.

So, you can take that first step. You can own up to your uncleanness. That's what it truly means. To repent. Repent. But other than the crowds, We notice in our passage, Matthew tells us, Another group of people, Come down, To the Jordan River.

Right? Look at verse 7, With me. It says here, But when He saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where He was baptising, He said to them, You brood of vipers, Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

It's the first time that Matthew, The gospel writer, Mentions the Pharisees and the Sadducees explicitly. These were the religious leaders of the day.

The Jewish top dogs. And in Matthew's gospel, They eventually become the ones who are most hostile to Jesus, To the point of planning His execution on the cross.

[ 14 : 52 ] Seems like they've heard of this mini revival at the Jordan River, And they've come to check it out. And when John sees them, He gives his verdict straight away.

He calls them offspring of snakes. He calls them unfruitful trees. Right? Verse 8. The image John burns into our minds here is this, A tree that is hacked away at its root, Because it doesn't bear any fruit.

So you might as well get rid of it. Why does John do this? Why is he so angry at them? Because you see, Verse 9 tells us, You see, The Pharisees and the Sadducees, These religious leaders, Were saying among themselves, We have Abraham as our father.

You see, Instead of repenting there, They're trusting in their heritage. In other words, We hang out in the right circles. We're part of His covenant people. So surely we've got His blessing.

The Pharisees and Sadducees, They presumed on their status. Yet they failed to live out who they were. And in response, John needs to twist the knife as he talks.

[16:04] Out of these stones, He says in verse 9, God can raise up children for Abraham. God doesn't need you. God doesn't need you. You need Him. That's what He's saying.

And have a look at that command again in verse 8. Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. Notice what He's not saying. He's not saying repent by producing fruit.

He's saying produce fruit in keeping with repentance. That's the other way around. When you truly repent, When you truly turn back to God, You will naturally want to do good things.

You will naturally want to bear fruit That is worthy of your turning back to God, Your repentance.

See, that's how repentance truly works. Not by presuming, But by turning.

And yet God is so kind. He shows us. God, and John, Even invites the Pharisees and Sadducees To be baptized too. Right? Look at verse 11. Okay?

[17:05] I baptize you even, With water for repentance. Friends, Even religious, Even self-assured people Are allowed to turn back to God. They are still welcome to.

Because maybe you're listening in And you don't actually feel unclean at all. You feel pretty good.

You grew up in church. You've been to Sunday school all your life.

You don't steal, lie, or murder. You even got wet in front of your family. And yet deep down inside, If, If you're trusting in all that stuff To be right with God, Trusting in all your good works, Deep down, You're not actually rooted to God.

Because you've been relying on your good works To feel secure And not relying on God himself.

And if that's you, When heaven's king returns, John warns, You're going to be in trouble.

You're going to be in trouble. Because you need more than a family connection to church. You need more than Sunday appearances. If that is all there is to your walk with God, My friend, One day, You and I will be found out.

[18:20] Found wanting. Because John warns these people. John warns us. The one mightier Than John is coming. Jesus. And Jesus will pull no conscience.

One day he comes to sort the fruitful from the unfruitful. He comes to see the repentant And put them aside from the proud.

Verse 2 says, doesn't it? He will gather his wheat into the barn. Right? The fruitful part. But the chaff, the unfruitful part, He will burn with unquenchable fire.

Friends, these are hard words, aren't they? But it's a warning from heaven's king. So can I encourage you? If this is you, If you have been relying on your own good works To save you this life, While you can, Turn back to God.

Confess your uncleanness to Him. Own up to your pretend holiness. You can repent too. Tell God you're weak and needy.

[19:29] And join a crowd of people, This church, Who are weak and needy. That's what church is, isn't it? Not just a building, But a crowd of people Who know that they are failures.

We are messy people. Unclean. Unfruitful. But willing to repent. To turn back to God. Wanting to bear fruit for Him. And that will make all the difference.

We've seen John speak fear so far in this passage To warn us of heaven's kingdom. And in the rest of the chapter, I think we see how Jesus the baptized Draws near To invite us into heaven's love.

First we saw John speak fear To warn us of heaven's kingdom. Now, verse 13 to 17, We see Jesus the baptized Draw near To invite us Into heaven's love.

I wonder what show for you Is must see TV at the moment? Must see TV. For us in our family, Actually, It's the 1pm COVID update.

[20:39] Right? Unmissable. Right? Ashley Bloomfield at the podium. Or Jacinda, The journalist asking aggressive questions. That's popcorn stuff. You can't miss it.

Our favourite part, actually, As our family, Is watching the sign language interpreter In the corner. And he or she does a great job Translating into sign language What the person at the podium is saying.

Now, I want you to imagine, Imagine, for example, Ashley Bloomfield comes onto the stage. And then the sign language interpreter Starts to interpret and gesture.

But then the director general Suddenly says, Hang on, hang on. Come up. You come and give the update right here. I'll sign for you. That'd be quite unexpected, wouldn't it?

An unexpected role reversal. And yet, that's what we see here In verse 13. We see Jesus enter the stage. But then we see that He wants to be baptised By John.

[ 21 : 43 ] Look at verse 14 with me. Sorry, verse 13. Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan To be baptised by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, I need to be baptised by you.

And do you come to me? Surely the main act Should baptise the support act. Right? Shouldn't the king baptise the servant? And yet Jesus' reply, In fact, His first words are Here in the Gospel of Matthew, Is this.

Let it be so now. Verse 15. It is proper for us to do this To fulfil all righteousness. I guess we could see it coming.

Right? Matthew's Gospel so far Has been all about fulfilment. No surprise that Jesus' first sentence Talks about Him fulfilling All righteousness. But what exactly does that mean?

And in fact, Why exactly does Jesus Need to be baptised? Right? Is He sinful? And like the rest of us, And needs to kind of confess? No. Does He need forgiveness of sins?

[ 22 : 47 ] And to turn back? No, I don't think so. I think what we see here Is Jesus publicly identifying With John's message.

You see, I think what's going on here is this. By submitting Himself to John's baptism, Jesus is endorsing John's call For people to repent. In other words, At His baptism, Jesus joins Himself With all the people Who have turned back to God.

Does that make sense? At His baptism, Jesus is joining Himself, Identifying with those Who have turned to God. It's kind of like this. In sport, When your club Signs a world-class player, Right? It's got nothing to do with us. But we feel great. What a moment When a Bodum Barrett Signed for the Blues. Finally, Here's our chance.

Or when Stephen Adams Joined the Thunder. We were so proud, Weren't we, As Kiwis? And you know what it's like. There's the press conference, All glitzy, Where this amazing athlete Comes in, Shakes the manager's hand, And then puts on the jersey.

[ 24 : 00 ] And what a moment. We get so excited When we see that, Don't we? And we go, I've got a jersey too. I've got a jersey. And now, He's like me. I'm like him.

There's hope for our team. He's with us now. Friends, When Jesus gets baptised, It's as if he's signed on For our team. Team humanity.

Jesus is saying, I'm with you. I'm your champion. Each win I will have Is for you. Every righteous act I will do for you.

Remember once upon a time In God's, Israel's history. Once upon a time, Moses was meant to be Israel's champion.

Yet he failed. And never entered The promised land. Time and time again, God's people, From God's people Came up. People who should have been champions. Saul, David, Solomon.

[ 24 : 59 ] And they all fell. And now Matthew tells us That the King Has come. Heaven's King Has finally come. And when he's baptised, This is as if he's run Onto the pitch And he's ready to be Our MVP This season.

And as you and I Keep reading Through Matthew's gospel, This is what happens. Jesus starts winning For us. He starts shooting Point after point. Scores try after try For us.

Right? In the very next chapter We will see Jesus beat Satan In the wilderness. And he kisses his badge And says, I did it for you. Matthew 8, Jesus is going to Heal the sick, Beat illnesses.

He calms a storm. He beats nature. And he says, This is, I'm doing this for my fans. For my people. He feeds the hungry. He casts out demons.

What a try. Matthew 28 Is the culmination, Isn't it? At the very end, Even at the darkest Point in history, He hangs on the cross. How? Why?

[ 26 : 03 ] To beat sin. To defeat death. And three days later, When he rises from again, He beats death itself. He says, I did it for you.

I did it for my people. What a saviour. What a champion. You see, At his baptism, The Son of God says, I am identifying With humanity.

He's joining with us And our uncleanness. He's not unclean, But he joins in our team. And Jesus will go on To fulfil every righteousness As the pioneer, The author, The perfecter of our faith.

And just to underscore How amazing Jesus will be, Matthew records this, Verse 16, As soon as Jesus was baptised, He went up out of the water.

And at that moment, Heaven was opened. And he saw the Spirit of God Descending like a dove And lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, This is my son, Whom I love.

[ 27 : 06 ] With him, I am well pleased. This, This is a touch of heaven. A peek behind the curtain.

Because here, The God, Who is sovereign over kings And babies, Over royal bloodlines, Finally speaks. And he says this, This is my beloved son, With whom I am well pleased. Forget heaven tourism. Friends, This is what heaven will be like. He will be a proud father, Thrilled with his son, And the joy of the Holy Spirit.

This is God in the three persons, What we call the blessed trinity. Father, spirit, son, And loving community. This is heaven's love.

Come down to earth To rescue us. And friends, As Jesus goes on To heal the sick, Feed the hungry, To rebuke the wind, To raise the dead to life, Every loving act and word Spills out of a man Who is intimately connected To the inner life Of the Godhead.

[ 28 : 15 ] Friends, The trinity Is not a puzzle to be solved, But a family To belong to. I'll say that again. The trinity is not a puzzle To be solved.

It's actually a family For us to belong to. And in Jesus, God invites you To join this family. So, PCBC English, What does Matthew 3 show us?

It shows us this. God, Who was perfectly Complete in himself, Extends his love Down to earth Through his son, Jesus.

It's Father's Day today Here in New Zealand, Right? And perhaps for you, It's a bittersweet day. It's a mixed feelings. Some of you know What it's like To miss your dad. Some of you know What it's like To be disappointed With your dad.

[ 29 : 14 ] I know some of you Know what it's like Not to be able To live up To your dad's Expectations Of you. And yet here In Matthew 3 Is a proud father Who says, This is my beloved son With whom I'm well pleased.

Friends, Isn't that The verdict you long To hear From a father? Isn't that what you Would love to hear From our dads? And this is exactly What we get to.

How? Through Jesus. Through Jesus. Because the good news, My friends, Is this God Complete in himself He entered Your failure So that you can Enter his family.

That's the gospel. God enters Your failure So you can Enter his family. Because King Jesus Put on Our team jersey Friends, If you join him By faith, You will enter His family.

You will get His spirit. And in him You can be Truly clean And truly fruitful. So let me Encourage you If you've never Done that before In your life To take that Step of faith.

[ 30 : 29 ] To turn To the Father's arms Which are Open wide For you. To trust Jesus As your True champion. To let God's spirit Give you A new Heart.

And so As I close In prayer In a few Moments I'm going to Pray a Simple prayer. Is that Alright? And if you Would like to Take that Step for the First time If you've Never Fully Committed your Life to Jesus And you Want to Take that Step You want To enter This Love Then I Would welcome You As I pray I'll pray it Slowly You can Pray the Words after Me.

You can Do it From the Comfort of Your couch. You don't Even have to Raise your Hand. Even if you Do I Won't see It. But you're Welcome to Pray these Words after Me. And join a Family that Is nothing to Be proud of Except Jesus Our champion.

A family Whose spirit Fills us Empowers us To keep Repenting From our Sins. To keep Following Jesus. To keep Living Clean and Fruitful Lives.

Because one Day we Want to Hear a Proud Dad in Heaven say Well done Child. Enter into My glory. So I'm Going to Pray now. And if you Want to Join me You'd be Most Welcome to.

[ 31 : 49 ] Shall we Pray together? Jesus Thank you For loving Me.

Thank you For coming Into my World. I'm Hurting And I'm Broken Within.

I want to Own up To my Uncleaness. Jesus I confess My sin To you And I'm Sorry Lord.

Thank you For being My champion. Thank you For living For me. Thank you For dying For me.

Thank you For rising Again For me.

Jesus I'm yours. Please Be mine. Fill me With your Spirit. Show me The Father's Love.

[ 32 : 58 ] And help Me to keep Trusting you And to Bear fruit For you. Jesus In your Powerful name I pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.