

The One Who Comes Next

Matthew 3:6-12

Main Truth: Christ cleanses us in His refining fire

Matthew 3:1 John the Baptist first words to the people of Israel was 'repent'. He was sent by God to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. In response to John's message the people were being baptized by him in the Jordan river. He was not forgiving them of their sins, but was a vessel that God used and he baptized them.

Matthew 3:6 The location where John was baptizing people was the Jordan River. This is the same river that Moses could not cross (Numbers 20:10-12) and Joshua crossed over with the Israelites when they entered the promised land (Joshua 3). The Jordan River represents a passing-through-the-waters which symbolized man's relationship with God - out of the wilderness and into a relationship with Him.

God's plan was not built on good works as was the tradition of the legalistic Jewish leaders. His plan is one that is built on a repentant heart. In order to cross over into an authentic relationship with Yahweh, they needed to acknowledge their sin against Him and repent of it.

Baptism did not save them. They did not find forgiveness because they were immersed in water. When they repented of their sin and believed in God's kingdom, the coming Messiah being at hand, they moved into a relationship with God. John's baptism offered an outward expression of their confessed sin which demonstrated their repentance.

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

An awareness of sin is the foundational step towards God.

As Christian baptisms took form in the early church as seen especially in the book of Acts, baptism is seen as a public testimony of repentance and a commitment to follow Jesus as both Lord and Savior.

Ephesians 2:8-9 Our sins are not forgiven, and we are not saved by baptism, since God's Word clearly states that we are only saved by faith in Jesus Christ and His blood. Baptism is an outward expression of an inward decision, a proclamation that Jesus is our Lord and Savior.

Matthew 3:7-12 The Pharisees and Sadducees represented the religious leadership of Judaism and just how far they were from God. They are first mentioned in the book of Matthew and they will play an important role throughout the story of Christ. They had the appearance of holiness yet were living in a spiritual wilderness.

John does not hold back and calls them "a brood of vipers."

The religious leaders were anxious for the Messiah to arrive but their hearts were not prepared and they were not repentant.

Their religious activities were not able to save them. John warns them to “flee from the coming wrath.” He is quick to point out that being a descendant of Abraham was not enough to save them and give them a free pass into the family of God. They must have a repentant heart.

Romans 9:6-8 it is not the children that are of physical descent of Abraham, but the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring.

Galatians 3:27-29 To be in God’s family, we are welcomed in by Christ and Christ alone.

John 15:6 God’s judgment was coming and the religious leaders needed to take warning. If you are a tree that does not grow fruit that is of Christ, you would be tossed into the burn pile.

Matthew 3:11 John was baptizing with water as a step of repentance, but he knew someone else was coming who would baptize with something more permanent. Jesus is the baptizer of our spirits and baptizes us in a cleansing way, burning away what is not of Him.

Romans 6:3-4 Only Jesus can make us right with God and only He can refine us to be clean spiritually. To be baptized by John was a spiritual revival, but to be baptized by Jesus was to be spiritually reformed.

John warns them to prepare for the Messiah’s coming because He is coming with judgement.

Zechariah 13:9 “This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is our God’”

The fire found in Zechariah is to refine the willing metal to become pure gold and pure silver in His name.

John points to Jesus as the baptizer of our spirits, bringing us from an eternal wasteland into an eternal paradise.

The Jewish religious leaders that John identifies as a ‘brood of vipers’ do not see that they need to be cleansed.

John’s message is the same for us today. He is pointing us to the one who comes next in Matthew’s gospel, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

“they will say, ‘The LORD is our God.’ ”

Do I see how I need to be cleansed myself?

I need to repent of sin and not only step into the river to be baptized as a symbol, but I need to step into the furnace of Christ and be baptized clean.

Main Truth: Christ cleanses us in His refining fire

Application: Be baptized in the Spirit of God

Small Group Discussion Questions

The One Who Comes Next Matthew 3:6-12

1. Do you or someone in your family have a nickname? How did the nickname come about?

Matt 3:5-6

2. How did the people respond to John's message, and what specific actions did they take regarding their sins? How important has the role of repentance been in your life?
3. What was the purpose of John's water baptism? Is there any evidence that John's baptism saved anyone?

Matthew 3:7

4. What kinds of religious leaders came to listen to John? What is the significance of the two Jewish groups mentioned? Have your group look up the description for each group.
5. What harsh name did John call the religious leaders and why was he so aggressive toward them? Didn't he want them to repent as well? What can your group remember about how Jesus referred to these same religious leaders?

Matthew 3:8-10

6. What was John's specific message to the local religious leaders? Discuss the demand to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance."

Matthew 3:9 and Romans 9:6-8

7. What is John saying in verse 9, what is his point? In today's world most people don't claim being a relative of Abraham will save them. Discuss the "Abrahams" people think will save them in today's world. Think in terms of "religious reasons". Are there any Abrahams in your life?

Matthew 3:11

8. How did John describe the type of baptism Jesus would bring? Discuss the significance of "the Holy Spirit" and "with fire."
9. How did John compare himself to the one who would come after him? What can you say about John's humility?
10. John says he is not worthy to carry Christ's sandals. How does this differ from Jesus telling us to "take up your cross and follow me?" **Matt 16:24**

Matthew 3:12

11. With what images did John describe Jesus and His judgment? Discuss the significance of each of the following: "winnowing fork," "threshing floor," "wheat," and "chaff".

Personal Study Guide

The Refiner's Fire?

The refiner will only stop the refining process once the metal residue reflects his image, like a mirror. In the same way, God wants to spiritually purify us with the result that our hearts and actions reflect the character of Jesus Christ to others. As you study the following verses, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what your reflection is like in the refiner's fire. Ask Him to help you identify the dross that needs to be removed so that you will reflect Jesus.

Psalms 12:6

1 Chronicles 28:14-18

Job 28:1-2

1 Peter 1:7

Revelation 3:18

Psalms 66:10-12

Isaiah 48:9-11

Jeremiah 9:7-9

Zechariah 13:8-9

Jeremiah 6:27-30

Daniel 11:35

Daniel 12:10

Malachi 3:2-4

1 Peter 1:7

Proverbs 17:3