



The Gospel According To MATTHEW
Chapter 3
“The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand!”

> THREE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM:

> Key #1 - The Messengers of the Kingdom! (v1-4)

- **JOHN THE BAPTIST** - Forerunner of Jesus; a moral reformer and preacher of messianic hope. According to Luke 1:36, Elizabeth and Mary, the mothers of John and Jesus, were either blood relatives or close kinswomen. Luke adds that both John and Jesus were announced, set apart, and named by the angel Gabriel even before their birth.

In the popular belief of the time, it was believed that Elijah would return from heaven to prepare the way for the Messiah (Mal 4:5-6). John reminded the people of Elijah because of his dress and behavior (Matt 11:14; Mark 9:12-13). What they encountered from this ***“voice...crying in the wilderness”*** (Mark 1:3) **was a call to moral renewal, baptism, and a messianic hope.** (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

- **The life of John the Baptist can be summed up with, “He must increase, but I must decrease.”** (Jn 3:30) John the Baptist is the last of the Old Testament prophets for God last spoke to Israel four centuries before through Malachi. This is commonly called the 400 years of silence.

> Key #2 - The Message of the Kingdom! (v2-3, 5-12)

(v2-3) **“REPENT!”** – means to turn around, to change direction, to change the mind and will. It does not denote just any change, but always a change from the wrong to the right, away from sin and to righteousness.

The message of “repentance” was also proclaimed by Jesus in the beginning of His ministry, ***“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”*** (Mark 1:15); also the twelve disciples ***“And they went out and preached that men should repent.”*** (Mark 6:12)

On the Day of Pentecost Peter said, ***“Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins”*** (Acts 2:38; cf. Acts 3:19; 20:21; 26:18). Everyone must REPENT if they want to enter the “Kingdom of Heaven!”

The Bible teaches in Romans 3:23 - ***all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; Romans 3:10 - There is none righteous, no, not one.***

- What does the Bible say about our sinful lifestyles: 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8.
- Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7:22-23 - ***Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'***
- In Matthew 7:17-20 - ***Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree***

that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

- **Observe David's prayer of repentance in Psalm 51:1-13.**

(v7) Who are these PHARISEES (legalist) & SADDUCEES (liberals)? PHARISEES (*separated ones*) – were a religious and political party in Palestine in New Testament times.

Pharisees observed the Law carefully as far as appearances went, but their hearts were far from God. Their motives were wrong because they wanted the praise of men (Matt 6:2,5,16; 23:5-7). They also had evil desires that were hidden by their pious show (Matt 23:25-28). That is why Pharisees are often called hypocrites: their hearts did not match their outward appearance. The Pharisees thought they could match God's standards by keeping all the outward rules. **Luke 18:9 says they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous."**

- **SADDUCEES** were members of a Jewish faction that opposed Jesus during His ministry. Known for their denial of the bodily resurrection, the Sadducees came from the leading families of the nation-the priests, merchants, and aristocrats.

The high priests and the most powerful members of the priesthood were mainly Sadducees (Acts 5:17). They enjoyed privileged positions in society and managed to get along well under Roman rule. Any movement that might upset order and authority was bound to appear dangerous in their eyes.

Only a few references are made to the Sadducees in the New Testament. They opposed the early church (Acts 4:1-3; 5:17-18), much more so than even the Pharisees (Acts 5:34-39; 15:5; 23:6-9). Since the chief priests usually came from among the Sadducees, it is clear that they played a major role in the arrest of Jesus and the preliminary hearing against Him (Mark 14:60-64), and that they urged Pilate to crucify Him (Mark 15:1,3,10-11).

Jesus warned His disciples about the "leaven"-the "doctrine" or teaching-of the Sadducees (Matt 16:1-12). John the Baptist was suspicious of their supposed "repentance" (Matt 3:7-12).

> Key #3 - The Messiah is the Kingdom of God! (v13-17)

(v13-14) John the Baptist knew that Jesus was the Holy Son of God! John the Baptist proclaimed in **John 1:29-31** - *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."*

(v15) Why did Jesus desire to be baptized since He had no sin to confess? C.I. Scofield gives an astute analogy- "It may be suggested **(1)** Jesus was now to enter into His mediatorial office as Prophet, Priest, and King and, as the Aaronic high priest publicly entered his office in a special ceremony (Ex. 29:4-7), so our Lord's baptism signifies His entering His ministry; **(2)** our Lord's baptism was the means for His introduction as Messiah to His people (Jn. 1:31-34); **(3)** by thus taking His Place with sinners, He was illustrating the doctrine of identification (cp. Isa. 53:12 - *Because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors*; also 2 Cor. 5:21); and **(4)** He was prophetically looking forward to His own death and resurrection, which alone could "fulfill all righteousness." (**Matt 20:22** -*But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"* (This is in reference to His death.)).

(v16-17) In this passage we not only experience the baptism of Christ, but we also see a clear picture of the “Trinity.” By the Trinity of God we mean His tri-personal existence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three distinct persons in one God.

(1) The Father is recognized as God (1 Pet. 1:2) and is all the fullness of the Godhead *invisible* (Jn. 1:18).

(2) The Son is recognized as God (Heb. 1:8) and is all the fullness of the Godhead manifested in the *flesh* (Jn.1:14).

(3) The Holy Spirit is recognized as God (Acts5:3,4) and is all the fullness of the Godhead *acting upon man*, convicting him of sin (Jn. 16:7-11) and guiding the believer into all truth (Jn. 16:12-15).

(4) The doctrine of the Trinity is not explicit in the Old Testament, but is rather implied, “*Then God said, Let Us make man . . .*” (Gen. 1:26); in Deut 6:4 - “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!*” “*One*” in Hebrew is *'echaad*, which means a *compound unity*.

(5) The doctrine of the Trinity is revealed in the New Testament. In verses 16 and 17, we have Christ being baptized in water, the Father speaking from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descending as a dove. We are to baptize in the “name (not names) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19).

(6) Even *creation* implies the doctrine of the Trinity. In creation, we have space, matter, and time in one creation. In **space**, we have length, width and height in one space. In **matter**, we have energy, motion, and phenomenon in substance. In **time**, we have past, present, and future in one time. In **man**, we have body, soul, and spirit in one man (1 Thess 5:23).

(7) In the Holy Trinity, we have Father, Son and Holy Spirit in one God.

Let’s conclude our lesson on God’s endearing personal note, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” The word “beloved” connotes a deep, rich, and profound relationship. It is used here of the Father’s great love for His Son, but it is also used elsewhere of His love for believers (Rom 1:7 - *To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints*).

As believers, we too are a delight to the Father, because we are now in the Son. Because the Father finds no imperfection in His Son, He now by His grace finds no imperfection in those who trust in Him:

Romans 3:26 - *he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.*

Romans 5:17 - *For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

Galatians 3:27 - *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

Ephesians 1:3-6 - *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.*