CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Matthew Chapter 3 — John the Baptist and the Baptism of Jesus

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Matthew Chapter 2 ended with Jesus as a child in Nazareth.

Matthew Chapter 3 moves forward about thirty years.

Jesus is now a grown man.

But before Jesus begins His public ministry, God sends a messenger.

His name is John.

John appears in the wilderness.

He dresses like the prophet Elijah.

He eats simple food from the desert.

And he preaches one powerful message:

“Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near!”

For about four hundred years, Israel had not heard the voice of a prophet.

Now the silence is broken.

Crowds come from Jerusalem, from all of Judea, and from the whole region around the Jordan.

They confess their sins.

They are baptized.

But John does not flatter anyone.

When the religious leaders come, he warns them sharply.

Being a descendant of Abraham is not enough.

Religion without a changed life is not enough.

God is looking for fruit.

Then John points away from himself.

Someone greater is coming.

John baptizes with water.

The One coming after him will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Then that One arrives.

Jesus comes to the Jordan to be baptized.

John is shocked.

“I need to be baptized by You.”

But Jesus insists, so that all righteousness will be fulfilled.

As Jesus comes up out of the water, heaven opens.

The Spirit of God comes down like a dove.

The Father speaks from heaven.

“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 3 therefore stands at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

It shows us two great preparations:

The preparation of the people through repentance.

And:

The preparation of the King through His baptism and anointing.

The central truth of Matthew 3 is:

God prepares hearts through repentance and reveals Jesus as His beloved Son, anointed by the Spirit and approved by the Father to bring the kingdom of heaven.

I. JOHN THE BAPTIST APPEARS

Matthew 3:1 — Preaching in the Wilderness

“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea.”

Matthew introduces John simply.

“John the Baptist came.”

John was the son of Zechariah the priest and his wife Elizabeth.

He was born only a few months before Jesus.

But John did not serve in the temple like his father.

He preached in **the wilderness of Judea.**

This was a dry, rocky, empty region west of the Dead Sea.

In the Bible, the wilderness is often a place of testing, preparation, and new beginnings.

Israel was formed in the wilderness.

Elijah ran to the wilderness.

Now God's new work begins in the wilderness.

Cross References

Malachi 3:1

> “Look, I am sending My messenger, and he will prepare the road ahead of Me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to His temple.”

Luke 1:80

> The child grew up and became strong in spirit. He lived in the wilderness until the day he appeared publicly to the people of Israel.

1 Kings 19:4

> Elijah went a whole day's journey into the wilderness. He sat down under a bush and asked to die. “I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life.”

Spiritual Principle

God often prepares His servants in hidden places.

John spent years in the wilderness before he ever preached to the crowds.

Key Truth

God does not need the center of power to begin His work.

He can start in the wilderness.

II. THE MESSAGE OF REPENTANCE

Matthew 3:2 — “The Kingdom of Heaven Is Near”

“He said, ‘Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near!’”

John's message had two parts.

A command:

Repent.

A reason:

The kingdom of heaven is near.

To **repent** means to change your mind and turn around.

It is more than feeling sorry.

It means turning away from sin and turning toward God.

The **kingdom of heaven** is Matthew's usual phrase for the kingdom of God.

Many Jews of that time avoided saying God's name out of respect, so they often said “heaven” instead.

The kingdom of heaven is God's rule and reign.

John announced that God's King was about to appear.

Jesus Himself would later preach the same message.

Cross References

Mark 1:15

> “The time has come,” Jesus said. “The kingdom of God is near. Turn away from your sins and believe the good news!”

Daniel 2:44

> In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. It will crush all those other kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will last forever.

Ezekiel 18:30

> Turn back! Turn away from all your sins, so that your sin will not destroy you.

Spiritual Principle

Repentance is the doorway into the kingdom.

No one can welcome the King while holding onto rebellion against Him.

Application

True repentance includes:

- Seeing sin the way God sees it.
- Feeling real sorrow for sin.

- Confessing sin honestly.
- Turning away from sin.
- Turning toward God.
- Living a changed life.

III. THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

Matthew 3:3 — “Prepare the Way of the Lord”

“This is the one the prophet Isaiah spoke about: ‘A voice calling out in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.”’”

Matthew connects John to Isaiah 40:3.

In ancient times, when a king was going to visit a place, workers went ahead of him.

They filled in holes.

They removed rocks.

They straightened crooked roads.

John's work was to prepare the road for the King.

But the road John prepared was not made of dirt and stone.

It was the road into people's hearts.

Notice also who is coming.

Isaiah wrote:

“Prepare the way of the LORD.”

In Isaiah, the one coming is God Himself.

Matthew applies this to Jesus.

Jesus is the LORD who was coming.

Cross References

Isaiah 40:3

> A voice is calling out: “Prepare the way for the LORD in the wilderness. Make a straight road in the desert for our God.”

Malachi 3:1

> “Look, I am sending My messenger, and he will prepare the road ahead of Me. Then the Lord you are looking for will suddenly come to His temple.”

Luke 3:4

> This is what was written in the book of the prophet Isaiah: “A voice is calling out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way for the Lord. Make His paths straight.’”

Spiritual Principle

A repentant heart is a prepared road for Jesus.

Sin is the rock and the crooked path that must be removed.

Key Truth

John was only a voice.

Jesus is the Lord.

IV. JOHN'S CLOTHING AND FOOD

Matthew 3:4 — Camel's Hair and Wild Honey

“John wore clothes made of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.”

John's appearance was a message in itself.

His clothing was rough and simple.

It was the same kind of clothing worn by the prophet Elijah.

His food came from the wilderness.

Locusts were permitted as food under the Law of Moses.

Wild honey was found in rocks and trees.

John did not live for comfort.

He lived for his mission.

His appearance told the people:

A prophet like Elijah has come.

God had promised through Malachi that He would send Elijah before the great day of the LORD.

Jesus later said that John was the Elijah who was to come.

Cross References

2 Kings 1:8

> They answered, “He was a man who wore clothes made of hair, with a leather belt around his waist.” The king said, “That was Elijah from Tishbe.”

Leviticus 11:22

> You may eat these kinds of insects: every kind of locust, katydid, cricket, and grasshopper.

Malachi 4:5

> Look, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.

Spiritual Principle

A simple life can make a clear message.

John was not distracted by the comforts of this world.

Application

John's lifestyle challenges us to ask:

- Am I too attached to comfort?
- Does my life support my message?
- Am I living for my mission or for my possessions?
- Could people see that God matters most to me?

V. THE CROWDS GO OUT TO JOHN

Matthew 3:5 — Jerusalem, Judea, and the Jordan

“People from Jerusalem, all of Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan went out to him.”

John did not go to the cities.

The cities came to him.

People walked out into the wilderness to hear him.

It was a long and difficult trip.

But they were hungry for a word from God.

After centuries of silence, a prophet was speaking again.

Cross References

Mark 1:5

> People from the whole area of Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. They confessed their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River.

Isaiah 40:5

> Then the glory of the LORD will be shown, and all people will see it together.

Luke 3:3

> John traveled through the whole area around the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show they had turned from their sins and wanted to be forgiven.

Spiritual Principle

When God truly speaks, hungry hearts will come to listen.

People will travel far for the truth.

Key Truth

Revival does not depend on a comfortable location.

It depends on the presence and Word of God.

VI. CONFESSION AND BAPTISM

Matthew 3:6 — In the Jordan River

“They confessed their sins and were baptized by him in the Jordan River.”

The people did two things.

They confessed their sins.

They did not hide them or excuse them.

They were baptized.

Their baptism was an outward sign of an inward change.

The Jordan River was full of meaning for Israel.

It was the river Israel crossed to enter the Promised Land.

It was the river where Naaman was healed when he humbled himself.

Now people were coming back to the Jordan to begin again with God.

Cross References

Leviticus 16:21

> Aaron will put both of his hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wrongs and sins of the people of Israel.

2 Kings 5:14

> So Naaman went down and dipped himself in the Jordan River seven times, as the man of God had told him. His skin became healthy again, like the skin of a young child, and he was clean.

Psalms 32:5

> Then I admitted my sin to You and did not hide my guilt. I said, “I will confess my sins to the LORD,” and You forgave the guilt of my sin.

Spiritual Principle

Confession opens the door to cleansing.

God does not ask us to hide our sins.

He asks us to bring them to Him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

What we cover, God exposes; what we confess, God forgives.

VII. JOHN WARNS THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Matthew 3:7 — “You Brood of Snakes!”

“But when John saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to be baptized, he said, ‘You brood of snakes! Who warned you to escape the coming wrath?’”

Two powerful religious groups came to John.

The Pharisees were strict about keeping the law and the traditions of the elders.

The Sadducees were wealthy priests who controlled the temple and did not believe in the resurrection.

These two groups usually disagreed with each other.

But both came to John.

John did not welcome them warmly.

He called them:

“You brood of snakes!”

Snakes look harmless on the surface but carry poison.

John saw that many of them were coming for show, not because they had truly repented.

He warned them of **the coming wrath** — God's judgment against sin.

Cross References

Isaiah 59:5

> They hatch the eggs of poisonous snakes and spin spider webs. Whoever eats their eggs will die.

Luke 3:7

> John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You family of snakes! Who warned you to run away from God's anger that is coming?”

Zephaniah 1:15

> That day will be a day of anger, a day of trouble and pain, a day of ruin and destruction, a day of darkness and gloom.

Spiritual Warning

Religious activity can hide an unchanged heart.

Being baptized without repenting is only getting wet.

Spiritual Principle

God's judgment is real, and only true repentance prepares us to face it.

VIII. PRODUCE GOOD FRUIT

Matthew 3:8 — Proof of Repentance

“Prove your repentance by producing good fruit.”

John told them what real repentance looks like.

It produces fruit.

A tree is known by what grows on it.

A changed heart is known by a changed life.

In Luke's Gospel, John gave practical examples:

Share with those in need.

Do not cheat people.

Do not take what is not yours.

Be content.

Repentance is not just a moment.

It is a new direction that shows up in daily life.

Cross References

Isaiah 5:2

> He dug up the ground, cleared away the stones, and planted the best vines. He expected the vineyard to produce good grapes, but it produced only bad grapes.

Luke 3:8

> Produce fruit that shows you have truly turned from your sins. And don't start saying to yourselves, “Abraham is our father.”

Jeremiah 17:10

> I, the LORD, look deep into the heart and test the mind. I reward each person for what he has done and for the results of his actions.

Spiritual Principle

Real repentance always shows.

It cannot stay hidden.

Application

The fruit of repentance can be seen in:

- Honesty where there was lying.
- Generosity where there was greed.
- Kindness where there was cruelty.
- Purity where there was immorality.
- Humility where there was pride.
- Forgiveness where there was bitterness.

IX. ABRAHAM IS NOT ENOUGH

Matthew 3:9 — Children from Stones

“Don’t think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you, God can raise up children for Abraham from these very stones.”

Many Jews believed that being a descendant of Abraham guaranteed them a place in God's kingdom.

John destroyed that idea.

Family line does not save.

National identity does not save.

God can make children of Abraham out of rocks if He wants to.

What matters is not who your ancestors were.

What matters is whether you have the faith and obedience of Abraham.

Cross References

John 8:39

> “Abraham is our father,” they answered. Jesus said, “If you were really Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did.”

Isaiah 51:1

> Listen to Me, you who want to do what is right and who look to the LORD. Look at the rock you were cut from, and the quarry you were dug from.

Luke 3:8

> Produce fruit that shows you have truly turned from your sins. And don't start saying to yourselves, “Abraham is our father.” I tell you, God can make children for Abraham from these stones.

Spiritual Warning

No one is saved by their family's faith.

Godly parents are a blessing, but every person must come to God personally.

Key Truth

God has no grandchildren.

He only has children.

X. THE AXE AT THE ROOT

Matthew 3:10 — Judgment Is Near

“Even now the axe is ready to chop at the root of the trees. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

John used a strong picture.

The axe is not swinging at the branches.

It is set at **the root.**

This is not a warning of light trimming.

It is a warning of complete removal.

And it is **even now** — judgment is close.

A tree that does not produce good fruit is useless.

It is cut down and burned.

Cross References

Luke 3:9

> The axe is already lying at the roots of the trees. Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Psalms 1:3

> He is like a tree planted by streams of water. It produces fruit at the right time, and its leaves never dry up. Whatever he does goes well.

Ezekiel 15:4

> It is thrown into the fire for fuel. The fire burns both ends, and the middle is blackened. Is it good for anything?

Spiritual Principle

God expects a fruitful life from those who belong to Him.

The person who is planted by God's Word bears fruit.

Spiritual Warning

Time to repent is not unlimited.

The axe is already at the root.

XI. THE ONE WHO IS GREATER

Matthew 3:11 — The Holy Spirit and Fire

“I baptize you with water to show repentance, but the One coming after me is greater than I am. I am not even worthy to carry His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

John now points away from himself.

He says three things about Jesus.

He is greater.

John was a great prophet.

But Jesus is far greater.

John was not worthy to carry His sandals.

Carrying someone's sandals was the job of the lowest servant.

John said he was not even worthy of that.

He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

John could only use water on the outside.

Jesus would change people from the inside by the Holy Spirit.

The **fire** speaks of two things:

The purifying work of the Spirit in believers.

And the judgment that falls on those who refuse to repent.

Cross References

Joel 2:28

> After this, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions.

Mark 1:8

> I baptize you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 4:4

> The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion. He will clean the bloodstains out of Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of burning.

Spiritual Principle

True servants of God point people to Jesus, not to themselves.

John's greatness was his humility.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The more clearly we see Jesus, the smaller we see ourselves.

XII. THE WHEAT AND THE CHAFF

Matthew 3:12 — The Final Separation

“He is ready to separate the wheat from the chaff. He will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn up with fire that cannot be put out.”

John uses a picture from the harvest.

After grain was cut, farmers tossed it into the air with a winnowing fork.

The heavy wheat fell back to the ground.

The light chaff blew away in the wind.

The wheat was saved.

The chaff was burned.

John says Jesus will do the same with people.

He will separate the righteous from the wicked.

The righteous will be gathered safely into His barn.

The wicked will face a fire that cannot be put out.

Cross References

Psalms 1:4

> The wicked are not like that. They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

Malachi 4:1

> “The day is coming that will burn like a furnace,” says the LORD who commands armies.
> “All the proud and all who do evil will be like straw. That day will set them on fire.”

Isaiah 41:15

> Look, I will make you like a new threshing board with many sharp teeth. You will crush the mountains and make the hills like chaff.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is both Savior and Judge.

Those who receive Him are gathered in.

Those who reject Him face judgment.

Key Truth

Everyone will one day be either wheat or chaff.

There is no third category.

XIII. JESUS COMES TO THE JORDAN

Matthew 3:13 — From Galilee to Be Baptized

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.”

After all of John's preaching about the coming One, the coming One arrives.

Jesus traveled from Galilee in the north down to the Jordan.

He came for one purpose:

To be baptized by John.

This is the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

He was about thirty years old.

For years He had lived quietly in Nazareth.

Now the time had come.

Cross References

Mark 1:9

> At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized Him in the Jordan River.

Luke 3:21

> When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And while He was praying, heaven opened.

John 1:29

> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

Spiritual Principle

God's timing is perfect.

Jesus waited thirty years before beginning His ministry.

Key Truth

The One who came to take away sin stood in line with sinners.

XIV. JOHN TRIES TO STOP JESUS

Matthew 3:14 — “I Need to Be Baptized by You”

“But John tried to stop Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and yet You come to me?’”

John was shocked.

He had been baptizing sinners who confessed their sins.

But Jesus had no sins to confess.

John knew he was the one who needed what Jesus could give.

John's reaction shows deep humility.

In the presence of Jesus, John saw his own need.

Cross References

John 1:27

> He is the One who comes after me. I am not worthy even to untie the strap of His sandal.

Luke 3:16

> John answered all of them, “I baptize you with water, but One who is more powerful than I am is coming. I am not worthy to untie the straps of His sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

Isaiah 6:5

> Then I said, “How terrible for me! I am ruined, because I am a man whose lips are not clean, and I live among people whose lips are not clean. And I have seen the King, the LORD who commands armies!”

Spiritual Principle

Being near Jesus shows us our need.

Like Isaiah before him, John saw his own unworthiness in the presence of the Lord.

XV. TO FULFILL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

Matthew 3:15 — Jesus Insists

“Jesus replied, ‘Let it be this way for now. It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ So John agreed.”

These are the first words Jesus speaks in the Gospel of Matthew.

And they are words about obedience.

Jesus did not need to repent.

So why was He baptized?

To fulfill all righteousness.

Jesus came to do everything God required.

He obeyed perfectly where we have failed.

By being baptized, Jesus also:

Identified with sinners — He stood where we stand.

Approved John's ministry — He showed that John's work was from God.

Set an example — He showed the way of obedience for His followers.

Pointed to the cross — He would one day take the place of sinners completely.

Cross References

Psalms 40:8

> I love to do what You want, my God. Your teachings are in my heart.

Isaiah 53:11

> After His suffering, He will see the light of life and be satisfied. My righteous Servant will make many people right with God, and He will carry their sins.

Hebrews 10:7

> Then I said, “Here I am. It is written about Me in the book. I have come to do what You want, God.”

Spiritual Principle

Jesus' perfect obedience is credited to those who trust Him.

He fulfilled all righteousness so that we could be made right with God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus was baptized, not because He was a sinner, but because He came to stand in the place of sinners.

XVI. THE HEAVENS OPENED

Matthew 3:16 — The Spirit Descends Like a Dove

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, He came up out of the water. Suddenly, the heavens opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and resting on Him.”

Three remarkable things happen.

The heavens opened.

Heaven was not closed to Jesus.

The barrier between God and humanity was about to be broken.

The Spirit of God descended.

Jesus was anointed by the Spirit for His ministry.

The word **Christ** means **Anointed One.**

Here the Messiah is publicly anointed.

Like a dove.

The dove is a picture of peace, gentleness, and new beginnings.

After the flood, a dove brought Noah an olive leaf, a sign that God's judgment had passed and new life had begun.

Now the Spirit comes like a dove on the One who would bring true peace with God.

Cross References

Isaiah 11:2

> The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him — the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of guidance and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and of respect for the LORD.

Genesis 8:11

> When the dove came back to Noah in the evening, it had a fresh olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew that the water had gone down from the earth.

Ezekiel 1:1

> I was living with the captives by the Kebar River when the heavens opened, and I saw visions from God.

Spiritual Principle

God's work must be done in the power of God's Spirit.

Even Jesus began His ministry anointed by the Holy Spirit.

Key Truth

The Spirit rested on Jesus just as Isaiah had promised.

XVII. THE FATHER SPEAKS

Matthew 3:17 — “This Is My Beloved Son”

“And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

God the Father spoke from heaven.

His words combine three Old Testament passages.

“My Son” — from Psalm 2, a psalm about the royal King.

“In whom I am well pleased” — from Isaiah 42, about the Servant of the LORD.

“Beloved Son” — echoing Genesis 22, where Abraham was told to offer his only, beloved son.

In one sentence, the Father declares that Jesus is:

The King.

The Servant.

The beloved Son who will be offered as a sacrifice.

Notice also when the Father said this.

Before Jesus preached a sermon.

Before He performed a miracle.

Before He went to the cross.

The Father's love and approval came first.

Cross References

Psalms 2:7

> I will announce what the LORD has decided. He said to Me, “You are My Son. Today I have become Your Father.”

Isaiah 42:1

> Here is My Servant, the One I support. He is My Chosen One, and I am very pleased with Him. I have put My Spirit on Him, and He will bring justice to the nations.

Genesis 22:2

> God said, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, the son you love, and go to the land of Moriah. Offer him there as a burnt offering.”

Spiritual Principle

The Father's love for the Son is the foundation of the gospel.

Through faith in Jesus, believers are brought into that same love.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Jesus did not work to earn the Father's love; He worked from the Father's love.

XVIII. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM MATTHEW 3

1. Repentance Prepares the Heart

John's message was simple and clear:

Turn away from sin because God's kingdom is near.

Principle:

No one can receive the King while holding onto rebellion.

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2. True Repentance Produces Fruit

It is not about heritage or religion.

It is about a changed life that shows obedience to God.

Principle:

A changed heart will always lead to a changed life.

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3. Jesus Is Greater Than John

John baptized with water.

Jesus brings the Holy Spirit and refining fire.

Principle:

The greatest servants of God always point beyond themselves to Christ.

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4. Jesus Fulfilled All Righteousness

Though sinless, He was baptized to identify with humanity and set the example of obedience.

Principle:

Jesus obeyed perfectly so that we could be made right with God.

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5. The Trinity Revealed

At Jesus' baptism, the Son is present, the Spirit descends, and the Father speaks.

This shows God's unity in three persons.

Principle:

The one true God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, working together in our salvation.

XIX. WHO WAS JOHN THE BAPTIST?

John is one of the most important people in the New Testament.

A Miracle Child

He was born to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age, as an angel had promised.

A Relative of Jesus

His mother Elizabeth was a relative of Mary.

A Prophet

He was the first prophet to speak to Israel in about four hundred years.

The Promised Messenger

He fulfilled Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1.

The Elijah Who Was to Come

Jesus said John was the Elijah promised in Malachi 4:5.

A Humble Servant

He said of Jesus, “He must become greater; I must become less.”

A Faithful Martyr

He was later put to death by Herod Antipas for speaking the truth.

Key Truth

Jesus said that among those born of women, no one was greater than John the Baptist.

XX. THE TRINITY AT THE JORDAN

Matthew 3 is one of the clearest places in Scripture where all three persons of God are seen at the same time.

God the Son

Jesus stands in the water, being baptized.

God the Holy Spirit

The Spirit comes down like a dove and rests on Him.

God the Father

The Father speaks from heaven.

The word **Trinity** does not appear in the Bible.

But the truth it describes does.

There is one God.

And this one God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Each person is fully God.

Yet there are not three Gods, but one.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Our salvation is the work of the whole Trinity — planned by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Spirit.

XXI. WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

Repentance is the first word of John's preaching.

It was also the first word of Jesus' preaching.

It is important that we understand it.

Repentance Is a Change of Mind

We begin to see sin, ourselves, and God the way God does.

Repentance Is a Change of Heart

We feel genuine sorrow for our sin, not only for its consequences.

Repentance Is a Change of Direction

We turn away from sin and turn toward God.

Repentance Is a Change of Life

We produce fruit that shows the change is real.

What Repentance Is Not

- It is not simply feeling bad.
- It is not just being afraid of punishment.
- It is not trying to earn forgiveness.
- It is not a one-time ritual without a changed life.

Key Truth

Repentance is not earning God's grace; it is turning to receive it.

XXII. WHAT MATTHEW 3 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Matthew 3 presents Jesus as:

The Lord

John prepared the way of the LORD, and Jesus came.

The Greater One

John was not worthy to carry His sandals.

The Baptizer with the Spirit

He gives the Holy Spirit to His people.

The Judge

He will separate the wheat from the chaff.

The Righteous One

He fulfilled all righteousness.

The Anointed Messiah

The Spirit came down and rested on Him.

The Beloved Son

The Father is well pleased with Him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The One who stood in the water with sinners is the One the Father declared His beloved Son.

XXIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did John preach in the wilderness instead of in Jerusalem?

The wilderness was a place of preparation and new beginnings in Israel's history.

Isaiah had said the voice would call out in the wilderness.

It also meant people had to leave their normal lives behind to come and hear God's Word.

Question 2

What does it mean to repent?

To repent means to change your mind and turn around.

It is turning away from sin and turning toward God.

True repentance shows itself in a changed life.

Question 3

What is the kingdom of heaven?

The kingdom of heaven is God's rule and reign.

Matthew uses the word **heaven** because many Jews avoided saying God's name out of respect.

John announced that God's King had arrived and that His kingdom was near.

Question 4

Why did John dress like Elijah?

John's clothing matched the description of Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8.

God had promised in Malachi 4:5 to send Elijah before the day of the LORD.

Jesus later said that John was that promised Elijah.

Question 5

Why did John speak so harshly to the Pharisees and Sadducees?

Many of them were coming for show, not with true repentance.

They trusted in their religious position and their family line.

John warned them that God's judgment was coming and that only real repentance would prepare them.

Question 6

What does it mean to “produce good fruit”?

It means living in a way that proves repentance is real.

This includes honesty, generosity, kindness, purity, and obedience to God.

Question 7

Why was being a descendant of Abraham not enough?

Salvation does not come through family line or national identity.

Each person must turn to God personally.

God can make children of Abraham from stones, so physical descent gives no special advantage before Him.

Question 8

What is the difference between John's baptism and the baptism Jesus gives?

John baptized with water as a sign of repentance.

Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit, changing people from the inside.

The fire speaks of purifying believers and judging those who refuse to repent.

Question 9

Why did Jesus need to be baptized if He had no sin?

Jesus was baptized:

- To fulfill all righteousness.
- To identify with sinners.
- To approve John's ministry.
- To set an example of obedience.
- To begin His public ministry.
- To point ahead to His death in the place of sinners.

Question 10

What is the meaning of the Spirit descending like a dove?

It shows that Jesus was anointed by the Spirit for His ministry, as Isaiah 11:2 promised.

The dove is a picture of peace and new beginnings, reminding us of Noah's dove after the flood.

Question 11

What do the Father's words in verse 17 teach us?

The Father declared that Jesus is His beloved Son and that He is well pleased with Him.

The words echo Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 42:1, and Genesis 22:2.

They show that Jesus is the King, the Servant, and the beloved Son who would be offered as a sacrifice.

Question 12

What should Matthew 3 change about the way Christians live today?

Matthew 3 should cause believers to live:

- Quick to confess sin.
- Committed to true repentance.
- Producing good fruit.
- Not trusting in family or religion to save them.
- Humble like John.
- Pointing others to Jesus.
- Obedient like Jesus.
- Secure in the Father's love through Christ.

XXIV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Matthew 3 asks several important questions.

Have I Truly Repented?

Have I turned away from sin, or have I only felt sorry about it?

Is There Fruit in My Life?

Can others see that my life has been changed?

Am I Trusting in Something Other Than Christ?

Am I depending on my family, church, or good works to make me right with God?

Am I Hiding Any Sin?

The people came to John confessing their sins.

Is there something I need to confess to God?

Does My Life Point to Jesus or to Me?

John said he was not even worthy to carry Jesus' sandals.

Am I Living in the Power of the Holy Spirit?

Jesus began His ministry anointed by the Spirit.

Do I Obey Even When I Don't Fully Understand?

John did not fully understand why Jesus should be baptized, but he obeyed.

Do I Live Secure in the Father's Love?

Through faith in Christ, I am loved by the Father.

XXV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Way to the King Runs Through Repentance”

John stood in the wilderness and called out.

He did not tell the people to improve themselves a little.

He did not tell them to add more religion.

He told them to repent.

Then Jesus came.

And the first thing Matthew shows us about Jesus' ministry is that He stood in the water with repentant sinners.

The King came to the very place where people were turning from their sins.

This creates a powerful principle.

Jesus meets us at the place of repentance.

He does not wait for us at the top of a mountain of good works.

He comes down to the river where sinners confess.

Principle:

We do not clean ourselves up to come to Jesus; we come to Jesus to be made clean.

XXVI. FINAL APPLICATION

Matthew Chapter 3 opens with a voice in the wilderness.

For centuries, there had been no prophet.

Now there was a man in rough clothes calling the nation to repent.

Crowds came.

Sins were confessed.

People went down into the Jordan.

Religious leaders were warned.

The axe was at the root.

The winnowing fork was in the hand of the coming Judge.

Then Jesus came.

He did not arrive with an army.

He did not arrive in a royal chariot.

He came quietly from Galilee and stepped into the water.

And heaven opened.

The Spirit came down.

The Father spoke.

Matthew 3 therefore reminds us:

God prepares the way for Jesus.

And Jesus comes to those who are ready to turn to Him.

Before the miracles came repentance.

Before the ministry came baptism.

Before the work came the Father's words of love.

The story of Jesus' public ministry begins with:

A voice crying in the wilderness.

A people confessing their sins.

A Savior standing with sinners.

And a Father declaring His love.

The same call still stands:

Repent.

Produce good fruit.

Point others to Jesus.

Walk in the power of the Spirit.

Rest in the Father's love.

And until He returns:

Keep repenting.

Keep bearing fruit.

Keep pointing to Jesus.

Keep obeying.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for sending John to prepare the way for Jesus.

Thank You that You do not leave us in our sin but call us to repent.

Show us our sin the way You see it.

Give us honest hearts that confess our sins instead of hiding them.

Help us turn away from every sin and turn fully toward You.

Let our lives produce good fruit that shows our repentance is real.

Keep us from trusting in our family, our church, or our good works.

Teach us to trust in Jesus Christ alone.

Give us the humility of John the Baptist.

Help us point others to Jesus and not to ourselves.

Thank You that Jesus fulfilled all righteousness for us.

Thank You that He stood in the place of sinners.

Thank You that through Him we can be made right with You.

Fill us with Your Holy Spirit.

Purify our hearts with Your holy fire.

Keep us faithful so that we will be gathered like wheat into Your barn.

Thank You for revealing Yourself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thank You that the Father loves the Son and is well pleased with Him.

Help us live secure in Your love through Jesus Christ.

Give us courage to speak the truth like John.

Give us obedience like Jesus.

And use us to prepare the way for others to come to You.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” — Matthew 3:17

Central Truth

God calls people to true repentance and reveals Jesus as His beloved Son, anointed by the Holy Spirit and approved by the Father, to fulfill all righteousness and bring the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 3 in One Sentence

John the Baptist prepares the way for the King by calling people to repent and bear good fruit, and then Jesus is baptized, the Spirit descends on Him, and the Father declares Him His beloved Son.