

## Episode #711 Matthew 3 Part 3: The Baptism of John

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. In previous studies we were considering the ministry of John the Baptizer (John the Identifier). He was calling on people to have the aftermind (submit) because the government of God was impending. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of Yahweh per Isaiah 40:3. He dressed in the garments of the common people (not the priests), and ate a diet the common people would eat. Throngs from Judea were going out to him.

III. The Baptism of John.

A. Matthew 3:6. What did he do when he baptized?

1. The argument for immersion: *bapto* means “to dip.”
2. The argument against immersion: water was scarce in Israel. The place where people baptize in the Jordan today is the one place it is deep enough for immersion, but we have no record John baptized there. The places John baptized, you could not immerse.
3. The argument for sprinkling: Water rituals of sprinkling were common in the Old Testament. Leviticus 14:51, Numbers 8:7, Numbers 19:13, 19:18-21, many blood rituals. Mark 7:4: immersion would wreck a couch.
4. The argument against sprinkling: Since the word *bapto* means “to dip,” it makes more sense that a ritual of immersion would be spoken of by this word than a ritual of pouring or sprinkling.
5. The argument for pouring: ancient Christian art showing baptism shows it by pouring.
6. We would note that there is not a word in Scripture telling us just how John performed his water ritual. All attempts to copy it today are a guess.

B. The important point is he identified them by means of a water ceremony. By this they were put under a new responsibility and accountability to God. This Jewish priest brought Israelites into a metanoia company. Their pledge to be submissive is like a person being sworn into the army. Woe to them if they do not obey their superiors after this!

C. They confess their sins, but this does not mean water baptism washes away sins. There is a baptism that produces forgiveness of sins: baptism (identification) with Jesus Christ. In this case, they were baptizing to show submission. Confessing their sins shows they are submissive by admitting ways they have not submitted in the past. Consider Zacchaeus in Luke 19:8.

D. Verse 7. The Pharisees were a sect or party that laid the strictest emphasis on keeping the law. They placed a hedge of tradition around the law that was supposed to help you not break it. The Sadducees rejected the traditions of the rabbis, but also angels and spirits, and, supposedly, the entire Bible except the first five books. Why did they come to his baptism? Probably to try to get control of this popular movement. People favored and catered to them, and they probably thought John would do the same. John called them vipers. Brood = generation, but this does not mean everyone of a certain age living at that time. They were generated by the wicked teaching of their predecessors. He pictures them like snakes fleeing from a burning house.

E. Verse 8. They had never submitted to anything from the Word of God.

IV. Conclusion: John called on the people of Israel to submit to God, and to demonstrate it by going through a water ceremony. This caused them to enter a company of submissive, and put them under great responsibility to submit in the future. He rejected the religious leaders who showed no propensity to submit.