

Episode #712 Matthew 3 Part 4: The Greater Baptizer

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 identifying people by means of a water ritual with a submissive company in Israel. Many came to him to be baptized, but when the proud and arrogant religious leaders came, he rejected them.

III. The Baptism of John.

- A. Verse 9. John reads their thoughts. They imagined they could not be vipers because of their connection with Abraham. They must be in on the promises because of this connection. But John tells them no. Descent from Abraham will not save them. In Romans 9:6, Paul makes this clear. They used power to cast people out of the nation, but imagined they could not be thrown out themselves!
- B. Verse 10. The mattock, not the axe, is the tool for removing a stump. People throw stumps into the fire when they clear the land. This is an illustration of the truth.
- C. Verse 11. Baptism does not mean a water ritual, but one accompanied this baptism. God was calling out an army of submissive people. John was the recruiting sergeant who swore them in. The One coming is so much greater he is not worthy of serving Him in such an insignificant way! He lists three baptisms.
 1. Baptism (identification) with a submissive company by means of a water ritual.
 2. Baptism (identification) in spirit holy would mean their acts were acts of the Spirit, their words were words of the Spirit, etc.
 3. Baptism (identification) with fire was with that great symbol of judgment (not punishment). Isaiah 42:4. Psalm 76:8. Psalm 67:4. Matthew 19:28. This would identify people as rulers, as the twelve will be identified. Isaiah 4:5.
- D. Verse 12. A winnowing fan was like a pitchfork with wooden prongs. They would spread grain on the threshingfloor and drive the oxen over it with a drag to break it up. Then on a windy day they would toss it in the air with a winnowing shovel. The wind would carry away the chaff and the good grain would fall back to the floor. Unquenchable fire = Greek *asbestos*. This does not last for all eternity, but only until it has burned up all the fuel it has. See Ezekiel 20:45-48.

V. Conclusion: John called on the people of Israel to submit to God, and to demonstrate it by going through a water ceremony. He rejected the religious leaders who showed no propensity to submit. Christ would have two more baptisms (identifications): with spirit and fire. He would purge His floor of all proud and unsubmitive ones, like the Pharisees and Sadducees. Do we submit to God in our lives by believing in the Savior He sent? Or do we too cling to our own traditions and works and refuse to submit to the plan of salvation God provides?

Matthew 3: ⁹ and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as *our* father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ¹⁰ And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit ^[a] and fire. ¹² His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Romans 9: ⁶ But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel, ⁷ nor *are they* all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” ⁸ That is, those who *are* the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

Isaiah 42: ⁴ He will not fail nor be discouraged,
Till He has established justice in the earth;
And the coastlands shall wait for His law.”

Psalms 76: ⁸ You caused judgment to be heard from heaven;
The earth feared and was still,

Psalms 67: ⁴ Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy!
For You shall judge the people righteously,
And govern the nations on earth. *Selah*

Matthew 19: ²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Isaiah 4: ⁵ then the LORD will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and above her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. For over all the glory there *will be* a ^[a]covering.

Ezekiel 20: ⁴⁵ Furthermore the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁴⁶ “Son of man, set your face toward the south; ^[a] preach against the south and prophesy against the forest land, the ^[b] South, ⁴⁷ and say to the forest of the South, ‘Hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I will kindle a fire in you, and it shall devour every green tree and every dry tree in you; the blazing flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be scorched by it. ⁴⁸ All flesh shall see that I, the LORD, have kindled it; it shall not be quenched.”””