***Session 22 – The Kingdom of God in the New Testament – The Gospel of Matthew Part II***

1. **THE KINGDOM IN MATTHEW 3 – JOHN THE BAPTIST**

A. 6Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD. 7And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” (Is 39:6–7)

1Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from Yahweh’s hand double for all her sins. (Isa. 40:1-2)

3A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of Yahweh; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5And the glory of Yahweh shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken. (Isa. 40:3-5)

Isaiah prophesied clearly to Hezekiah concerning the Babylonian exile that would happen some 300 years later. It would be a complete exile for Judah. *Nothing shall be left*. Even the kingly line would be taken and made eunuchs before the king of Babylon as well as other sons of Judah. But as soon as this prophecy came it was followed with what you would expect – a time in which the exile would end. It came with the promise and declaration of comfort. The LXX translates this word as *Parakaleite*. It also was addressed to “my people.” Yahweh would in some way continue to preserve a remnant, even in exile.

B. Verse 3 opens with a human voice and ends with the voice of Yahweh. Motyer makes the following observation:

A voice is used in an exclamatory way (cf. 13:4; 66:6) meaning, ‘Listen, someone is calling out’. The picture of the way for the LORD is not an exodus motif of the Lord’s people journeying home: they are not called to prepare that way, for it is ready for them (35:8; 42:16; 43:16–19; 48:17–21; 55:12). Rather, it combines the ancient picture of the Lord coming to his people’s aid (Dt. 33:2; Jdg. 5:4; Ps. 68:4<5>, 7<8>) with the practice of constructing processional ways for visiting dignitaries or for use by the gods as they were carried in procession. 6 The Lord’s road is to be straight (3d), level (4ab) and free of obstacle (4cd), i.e. he will arrive without fail, travel without difficulty and be undelayed by hindrances.[[1]](#footnote-1)

When the *way of Yahweh* has been made straight, His path to rescue His people in exile, then *the Glory of Yahweh* would be revealed! The mouth of Yahweh has spoken. In this section of Isaiah, we see exile, the promise of the remnant, a declaration of supernatural comfort, and a voice that would come and declare a message to make a path straight for the coming of Yahweh’s Glory. This is the backdrop to Matthew’s introduction to John the Baptist.

C. 1In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judah, 2Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’” (Matt. 3:1-3)

Onto the stage of human history stepped a new prophet, a Levite with a message that would resonate with hope and comfort, as well as a dire warning for those who would not listen. The moment had finally arrived. A message had to be preached for the way of Yahweh to be made straight so the Glory of Yahweh could be revealed to men, Yeshua the Messiah. And the way of *making the paths straight* was a two-fold message: repentance and the introduction of the Kingdom of Heaven to those who repent, which is the revelation of the Glory of Yahweh. John the Baptist would introduce the message, Jesus Himself would finish it.

D. John’s location should be of great interest. He begins in *the wilderness*. The place *outside* of the Land of Promise. It is meant to draw attention to the Exodus, the end of Exile.

John's location suggests that the biblical prophets' promise of a new exodus was about to take place in Jesus.126 So significant is the wilderness (3:1) to John's mission that all four Gospels justify it from Scripture (3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4); some even suspect that John himself used this text (Is 40:3) to explain his own sense of mission (Jn 1:23)[[2]](#footnote-2)

[T]he entire chapter demonstrates how John fulfills this prophecy, preparing the way of the Lord. That preparation involves calling Israel to repentance, a standard OT prophetic theme, which is symbolized by baptism, the hallmark of John’s ministry (3:1–12). It will culminate in John’s baptism of Jesus himself (3:13–17).[[3]](#footnote-3)

That John preached repentance and the Kingdom of Heaven and the culmination is the baptism of Jesus the King is the apex of John’s ministry. The message pointed to the fulfillment of that message. Jesus is the only answer to John’s message. When he made the path straight, the Glory of Yahweh was revealed!

E. John’s two-fold message is 1) repentance, 2) the kingdom of heaven/kingdom of God. The power of this message was to make a path for the King to enter and end the exile. So the Kingdom of God then, as we have seen, is Yahweh’s rule and reign, through His Messiah, over the realms of heaven and earth and the people in each realm, and the full overthrow and defeat of His enemies. The first step to that experience, according to John, is repentance.

F. Repentance is typically presented in a way for people, sinner and saint alike, to stop sinning and do righteous works or deeds. And there is an element of truth to this. But it is the not the *end in and of itself*. Repentance is a *means* to an end. What is the end? The experience of the Rule and Reign of God in Christ Jesus.

G. The two words we have for repentance in the Bible is the Hebrew *t’shuva* and the Greek *metanoeo*. Both are compared to *preparing the way or path for Yahweh’s Glory to enter,* or the manifestation of the Kingdom of God. Repentance is the way we prepare to experience God’s Kingdom because it makes a straight path for the King to enter.

H. Hebrew *t’shuva (Heb. verb root shuv)*:

23Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should ***turn*** from his way and live? (Ezek. 18:23)

32 For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so ***turn***, and live.” (Ezek. 18:32)

Here the word *turn* is shuv. It means, “to turn around, repent, to bring back, refresh, refute…in a few instances שוב has the meaning “rest”… The basic meaning of שׁוב is defined by Holladay loc. cit. 53 as a word which is used of someone who has shifted direction in a particular way and then shifted back from it in the opposite way. As long as there is no contrary factor the assumption is that such persons or people will turn back and reach the original point from which they departed.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Following Ezekiel (another Levitical prophet), John the Baptist could have easily said, “Turn and live, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” He called for those who would hear to turn around with a call to bring back the times of refreshing. The direction into exile, or the direction that led to exile, was now being addressed and declared to now *turn around* and come back to Yahweh, because He is coming toward you! If you don’t shift back from disobedience, idolatry, and not allowing the land to rest, you will not experience rest.

The *turning* then is not just a *turning from* but also a simultaneous *turning to*. One cannot turn around without facing a new direction. Turning from sin, rebellion, disobedience, and idolatry is not stationary nor static. It must be a turning to Jesus the King, His righteousness, obedience, and worship of the Lord God Almighty!

21Restore us to yourself, O Yahweh, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old. (Lam. 5:21)

Here *restoration* is the root *shuv*. In other words, Jeremiah is praying, “turn us to Yourself, and we will be returned.” Or another way, “give us repentance, and will repent!”

I. Greek *metanoeo, metanoeite*. We have here two Greek words combined to show us the same reality of the Hebrew t’shuva. Meta most often is said to mean “to change” but it literally means beyond, or what lies ahead, or after. The other word nous is usually translated as mind but it is beyond just the way one thinks. It is the seat of the personality, the inner man.

Commonly translated as ‘mind’ or ‘intellect’, the Greek word nous is a key term in the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle and Plotinus. What gives nous its special significance there is not primarily its dictionary meaning – other nouns in Greek can also signify the mind – but the value attributed to its activity and to the metaphysical status of things that are ‘noetic’ (intelligible and incorporeal) as distinct from being perceptible and corporeal. In Plato’s later dialogues, and more systematically in Aristotle and Plotinus, nous is not only the highest activity of the human soul but also the divine and transcendent principle of cosmic order.[[5]](#footnote-5)

To have *metanoeite* then is to have a change within one’s moral center. W. E. Vine defines it as lit., “to perceive afterwards” (meta, “after,” implying “change,” noeo, “to perceive”; nous, “the mind, the seat of moral reflection”), in contrast to pronoeo, “to perceive beforehand,” hence signifies “to change one’s mind or purpose,” always, in the NT, involving a change for the better, an amendment, and always, except in Luke 17:3, 4, of “repentance” from sin.[[6]](#footnote-6)

*Metanoeite* then is directly associated with the transformation Paul writes of in Romans 12:1-2 and gives us a picture of what repentance is and what it does.

1I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Rom. 12:1-2)

Notice, before transformation occurs there is a presenting of the body as a sacrifice. This presentation of the full person is an act of *metanoeite*. One cannot do present themselves as a living sacrifice in spiritual worship and maintain an opposite direction. Thus, Paul says to not be conformed to this age, but experience transformation (metamorphoo) by the process of the renewed (anakainosis) mind (nous).

Repentance then is another *key* by which we experience the Kingdom of God, and the power of the Age to Come.[[7]](#footnote-7)

J. John the Baptist then declares more than stop sinning. That is certainly contained within the core of his message. But what he is calling for is much more. He is crying out in the wilderness to a people in exile, that wandered into this place because of their idolatry and disobedience to Yahweh. He now steps forward and says “turn around” both inwardly and outwardly, because the King is coming. You’ll never see him going the direction you are facing.

K. The result of John’s preaching was Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. In other words, the message of repentance pared with the coming Kingdom of Heaven and its King provoked a response in the hearer that caused them to begin to move in the direction of *repentance* through the confession of their sins. The power of the age to come was breaking in.

This is in practice what James would later say

8Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:8)

Drawing near to God, cleansing the hands, and purifying the hearts is the core of repentance. This is movement toward God and the result is He will *draw near to you*. The Greek word for *draw near* is *engiei* (from *engizo*) meaning to come near or to bring near, to approach.

The word John uses for the kingdom of heaven is *near* is the same word, *engizo*. And this is the promise we see all in the Torah and the Prophets and the Writings:

29But from there [in exile; see prior verses] you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. 30 When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return [shuv; t’shuva] to the LORD your God and obey his voice. (Deut. 4:29-30)

The Septuagint (LXX) translates verse 30 as “And all these words will find you in the last days, and you will turn to the Lord your God, and you will hear his voice.”

Jeremiah reaffirms Moses’ prophecy in Jeremiah 29:

12Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. 14 I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile. (Jer. 29:12-14)

In exile, when Israel would turn toward Yahweh, He would turn toward them. “*You will seek me*” “*You will find me*” “*I will be found by you*”. This is all in context to individual and national repentance. Again, as James frames it, *draw near to God and He will draw near to you*.

L. John follows his message of repentance and the Kingdom of Heaven with another truth we have seen from Amos 5: *the Day of the LORD*, or the Day of His Wrath on His enemies. This is a theme we have seen and will continue to see all of the way to the Great White Throne Judgment.

When he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to question him concerning who he was and his baptism unto repentance, in the likeness of Elijah facing off with Jezebel, he confronted the religious leadership of the day exposing their motives and calling them to repent.

7But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8Bear fruit in keeping with repentance…11 “I baptize you with water for 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 and fire. 12His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” (Matt. 3:7-12)

M. John wastes no time reframing his message. To the repentant heart God will draw near and they will experience the Kingdom of Heaven. But to the unrepentant heart they will experience *the wrath to come*. And it is this question John asks them: “you offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee the wrath to come?”

John has no tolerance for what they were and who they were. They were children of the serpent, his spiritual offspring, and as such destined for God’s wrath. His question is rhetorical for no answer is given. The only target to which John is aiming is repentance and proof of that repentance: *good works*.

We see then another truth associated with John’s Kingdom message: repentance unto good works (bearing fruit that is consistent with turning toward God and His turning toward the repentant sinner). Whoever does not bear good fruit will be cut down and burned in the fire. Just like Elijah on Mount Carmel, this confrontation moves into a new phase of provocation: if you don’t repent, and show good works, you will be cut down and burned.

Two of those good fruits were *baptism* and *the confession of sins* and then turning from that sin after confession (Matt. 3:6).

N. Then John declares the message of *one coming after me* that is *mightier* than him, whose sandals he was not worthy to carry.

John came as *the voice* in the Wilderness. He was making a path straight for Yahweh to come to His people. That path was baptism, repentance, confession, and good works. And yet, that was only the *means* by which Yahweh would draw near to them, not an *end* in itself. To say another Person was coming who was *mightier than himself* was to point them toward Yahweh Himself.

The word *mightier* is the Greek *ischyros* meaning:

pertaining to high status, probably on the basis of significant personal capacity—‘powerful, great.’[[8]](#footnote-8)

Its use in the LXX is

manly, vigorous; hero, champion; angel (24) : Dt 10:17; Jos 10:2; Jdg 6:12; 3 Kgdms 11:28; 1 Ch 5:24; 7:2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 40; 8:40; 9:13; 12:8; Pr 16:32; 24:65; Is 21:17; Jer 5:16; 9:23; 26:5, 6; 29:23; 31:14; 39:18[[9]](#footnote-9)

17 For the Lord your God, he is God of the gods, and the Lord of lords, the great and mighty (Gr. ischyros; Heb. *gibbor*) and fearful God, who does not marvel at a face, nor takes a gift, 18 doing justice to the sojourner and the orphan and the widow; and he loves the sojourner, to give him food and a cloak. (Deut. 10:17-18 LXX)

Judges 6:12 shows the Angel of the Lord calling Gideon “mighty one of power” (ischryos dynameon).

17 \*“O Lord who is, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and your high and elevated arm; ⌊nothing is by any means hidden from you⌋, 18\*who do mercy to thousands and repay the sins of the fathers to the bosoms of their children after them, great mighty God [*megas ischyros ho theos*], 19\*Lord of the great council, and mighty in works, the great Almighty God, and glorious Lord (your eyes are upon the ways of the sons of men, granting to each one according to his way); (Jeremiah 39:17-19 LXX)

18 You show steadfast love to thousands, but you repay the guilt of fathers to their children after them, O great and mighty God, whose name is the LORD of hosts, 19great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the children of man, rewarding each one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds. (Jer. 32:18-19)

To say the One coming after John is *mighty* is to call back to the use of *ischyros* in the LXX and see where it applies to Yahweh. John could have called Him the Mighty One of Power, the Great Mighty God, Lord of the great council. In any case, the use of ischryos or gibbor points to someone *bigger*, *stronger,* and more *powerful* than John himself – the King.

O. Matthew uses the word *fire* (Gr. pyr) three times in the last section of this passage concerning repentance, baptism, confession, and the Kingdom of Heaven. First, to the tree that does not bear fruit (that which comes after repentance), it will be cut down at some point and thrown into the fire. We’ll see Jesus use similar language in Luke 13:6-9 and introduce the truth of God’s grace in giving time to bring forth fruit after a season of cultivating the ground. There comes a time when the fruit of repentance (good works) is expected to become visible. Matthew compresses that time for John’s use in his sermon to the Jerusalem leadership. Repent! Do works of repentance! Otherwise, judgment is coming.

Next, we see John’s identification of the Messiah and His baptism and how it will differ from his own. John baptized with *water* for t’shuva (repentance and fruit of good works), but the Messiah will baptize with the Holy Spirit *and* fire. The use of fire here is of interest. Because it will also involve a type of baptism. Neither the fire nor the water are disconnected from the message of John, and later Jesus, concerning the Kingdom of Heaven and entrance into it. John is going to baptize Jesus and He is Himself going down into the water (a picture of His death) and coming up on the other side (a picture of His resurrection) with God’s Spirit coming upon Him (a picture of the power of the age to come and His restoration of all things).

Paul will pick this image up later in 1 Corinthians 10:

1For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. (1 Cor. 10:1-4)

What is this event? Passover, the crossing of the Red Sea. Who was with them in the cloud? Who was with them in the fire? The Angel (Malach – Messenger) of Yahweh.

21 Now *God was leading them* by day by a pillar of cloud to show them the way, but during the night by a pillar of fire. 22 And the pillar of cloud did not leave by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from right in front of all the people. (Ex. 13:21-22 LXX)

21And *Yahweh went before them* by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. 22The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. (Ex. 13:21-22 ESV)

In the Red Sea crossing itself

19Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, 20coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night. (Ex. 14:19-20)

The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible give a little more clarity on Exodus 14:19-20 in the Hebrew

19And the angel of [Go]d, who had been going in front of the [ca]mp of Is[rael, went around behind them;] and the pillar of [cloud] moved [from in front] of them, and stood [behi]nd [them. 20 And it came between the c]amp of Egyp[t and] the camp of Israe[l; ***and there was the cloud and the darkness, yet it gave light by night***. ***And the one did not approach the other*** all that night.] (DSSB Ex. 14:19-20)

John’s baptism then is a recounting of Passover into the Land of Promise with the expectation of another baptism by the Messiah Himself (i.e., *baptism into the sea, baptism into the cloud* and *the fire*). He is the manifestation of Yahweh in the cloud. He is the manifestation of Yahweh in the fire. He leads in the day by the cloud and by fire in the night. And that there would be no interaction between Israel and Egypt.

It would seem then the baptism John is referencing is this: the Holy Spirit is a picture of the *cloud by day*, and He is also *the fire by night*, so the believer might *travel* by day and by night and remain separated from the power of this age. We will learn later that Holy Spirit is the power and down payment, the first installment, of the reality of the Age to Come.

Finally, there will be an eschatological gathering of His wheat and a cutting down and burning of the chaff with *unquenchable fire*.

Matthew being a *Second Temple Period* (2TP) scroll is within the same period of work as another 2TP *Wisdom of Sirach* (LXX) which notes:

9Gathering of the lawless is like gathered flax, and their end is a flame of fire (*pyr*). 10The way of sinners is leveled with stones, and at its end is the pit of Hades. (Sir. 21:9-10)

Another 2TP source for the *hell* of the NT is none other than 1 Enoch. We see the following:

11And to Michael he said, “Go, Michael, bind Shemihazah and the others with him, who have mated with the daughters of men, so that they were defiled by them in their uncleanness. 12And when their sons perish and they see the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them for seventy generations in the valleys of the earth, until the day of their judgment and consummation, until the everlasting judgment is consummated. 13Then they will be led away to ***the fiery abyss***, and ***to the torture***, and ***to the prison*** where they will be confined forever. (1 Enoch 10:11-13)[[10]](#footnote-10)

1And I looked and turned to another part of the earth, and I saw there ***a deep valley with burning fire***. {2/ And they brought the kings and the mighty and threw them into that deep valley.}[40] 3/ And there my eyes saw them making their instruments, iron chains of immeasurable weight. 4 And I asked the angel of peace who went with me, “For whom are these chains being prepared?” 5 And he said to me, “These are being prepared for the host of Azazel, that they might take them and throw them into the abyss of complete judgment, and with jagged rocks they will cover their jaws, as the Lord of Spirits commanded. 6And Michael and Raphael and Gabriel and Phanuel will take hold of them on that great day, and throw them on that day ***into the burning furnace***, that the Lord of Spirits may take vengeance on them, ***for their unrighteousness in becoming servants of Satan***, and leading astray those who dwell on the earth.” (1 Enoch 54:1-6)[[11]](#footnote-11)

Dr. Heiser makes the follow observation on this passage:

Nevertheless, it is clear that, for certain Second Temple Jewish writers, Azazel was a Satan figure (cf. 1 Enoch 9:6). Perhaps most compelling is the destiny of Azazel—flames. It would seem that 1 Enoch 54:3–7 is part of the backdrop for the New Testament teaching that hellfire was “for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41), an idea not presented with any clarity in the Old Testament.[[12]](#footnote-12)

5And I saw that valley in which there was a great disturbance and troubling of the waters. 6/ And when all this happened, from that ***fiery molten metal*** and the troubling of (the waters) in that place, ***the smell of sulfur*** was generated, and it mixed with those waters; and the valley of those angels who had led (humans) astray ***burned beneath that ground***. 7/ And through the valleys of that (area) ***rivers of fire*** issue, where ***those angels will be judged*** who led astray those who dwell on the earth. (1 Enoch 67:5-7)[[13]](#footnote-13)

P. John then finishes this *fire* sermon with the great eschatological destiny of Satan and his children at the end of the present evil age. This *unquenchable fire* is hell.

12His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” (Matt. 3:12)

Note Mark 9 and his use of the *unquenchable fire* language:

43 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to ***hell***, to ***the unquenchable fire***. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be ***thrown into hell***. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be ***thrown*** ***into hell***, 48 ‘where their worm does not die and ***the fire is not quenched***.’ (Mark 9:43-48)

Mark makes it clear that the unquenchable fire is in fact hell and as such the eschatological judgment at the end of the Millennial Reign. We then have another truth shown in Matthew: the realization of the enemies of God, the unrepentant who oppose God, His Messiah, and His Kingdom are destined for ***hell, the unquenchable fire*.** Not popular, but true nonetheless.

Q. This section then of Matthew’s record of John, his message of the Kingdom of Heaven, his baptism, repentance, good works, and the confrontation of the religious powers of the day is marked with the ultimate good news declared by the Voice crying out in the Wilderness! Messiah is coming! He will lead you out of Egypt (the domain of darkness) into His Kingdom by way of death and resurrection that He Himself will participate in *first* and will be proof for everyone who follows Him. Those who reject him, will ultimately be judged in the eternal unquenchable fire of hell.

**II. THE BAPTISM AND ANOINTING OF JESUS AS PROPHET, PRIEST, & KING**

A. 13Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. (Matt. 3:13-17)

Recall Paul saying to the Philippians of the value Jesus placed on *humility* and *meekness* in becoming a *human* (man) (Phil. 2:5-11). That He did not think of His place in equality with God the Father shows us the way in which He approached John and baptism.

John at first tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized by him by saying, “I need to be baptized by You!” That was of course true. John did need to be baptized by Jesus. Recall his sermon, “the Coming One will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.”

However, Jesus was thinking farther than the immediate. His thoughts were on completing His purpose: to complete the righteousness of God, or to fulfill *all righteousness.* Keener comments,

Jesus probably here expresses his obedience to God's plan revealed in the Scriptures. Matthew's readers familiar with the Scriptures would already understand that Jesus sometimes "fulfilled" the prophetic Scriptures by identifying with Israel's history and completing Israel's mission (2:15, 18). This baptism hence represents Jesus' ultimate identification with Israel at the climactic stage in her history: confessing her sins to prepare for the kingdom (3:2, 6). Jesus' baptism, like his impending death (cf. Mk 10:38-39 with Mk 14:23-24, 36), would be vicarious, embraced on behalf of others with whom the Father had called him to identify.[[14]](#footnote-14)

B. This event is also another reenactment of the children of Israel entering the Land of Promise at the Jordan with Joshua and the subsequent circumcision. Here the greater Joshua (Yehoshua) would enter and lead those that would come after Him into victory over all of His enemies. (See Josh. 3:14-4:10) The Levites carried the Ark into the Jordan which allowed the children of Israel to cross over.

*“Look! The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is about to cross over ahead of you into the Jordan. (Josh. 3:11)”*

The Priests carrying the ark of the covenant of Yahweh stood firmly on the dry land in the middle of the Jordan until all Israel crossed over. After that crossing Joshua called 12 men from the people, one from each tribe, and had them take stones from where the Levites stood. These would be reminders that the waters of the Jordan were cut off from before the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh.

C. Matthew uses the Exodus/Baptism/Wilderness and applies that narrative to Jesus’ baptism.

Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus as reliving Israel’s experiences yet obeying continues with Jesus’ baptism. On their way out of Egypt, Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:1-31), and on their way into the Promised Land, Israel passed through the waters of the Jordan (Joshua 3:1-17). In a similar fashion, Jesus enters into the waters of the Jordan to be baptized; as a result the heavens open, the Spirit descends on him, and a voice from heaven identifies Jesus as the Beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased (Matthew 3:13-17). God has called his son out of Egypt (2:15), and now he is announcing his identity as the servant of Yahweh and the anointed son of David (cf. Isaiah 42:1; Psalm 2:1-12) who will bring Israel’s exile to an end. Matthew’s description of the event also evokes language from Isaiah 63:11-15 and 64:1, which describe the first exodus in anticipation of a new exodus that would lead his people out of exile. The descriptions of waters parting, the presence of the Spirit, and placing people in a new land described in these two Isaianic texts themselves may echo the creation account of Genesis 1, which would link this new exodus to a new creation as well.

After Israel passed through the waters of the Red Sea, the Spirit of God led Israel, the son of God, into the wilderness. In a similar fashion, after passing through the waters of baptism in the Jordan, the Spirit leads Jesus, the Son of God, into the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). But unlike Adam, who failed in the garden, and Israel, who failed in the wilderness when tempted by Satan, Jesus obeys. Whereas Israel’s hunger and thirst in the wilderness led them to grumble against the Lord and distrust him, Jesus’ hunger and thirst led him to obey. In response to Satan’s temptations, Jesus quotes three passages of Scripture from Deuteronomy 6–8. These chapters recount Israel’s wilderness wanderings, highlighting their failures. By contrast, Jesus resists the temptations of Satan, showing that he is not only the obedient son of God but also the promised seed of Adam and Eve who would crush the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15). The new exodus that would lead to restoration from exile is under way![[15]](#footnote-15)

D. Mark’s Gospel says concerning the baptism of Jesus:

9In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw ***the heavens being torn open*** and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:9-11 ESV)

The highlighted phrase “*the heavens being torn open*” is the Greek *schizo* and is used in the LXX of Exodus 14:21-22 when the *water was split* and the children of Israel entered into the midst of the sea on the dry ground.

E. Concerning the declaration of Jesus being God’s Beloved Son, Dr. Heiser writes:

When God refers to Jesus as his “beloved” he is affirming the kingship of Jesus— his legitimate status as the heir to David’s throne.

The key term is “beloved.” Scholars have noticed that the term was used of Solomon, the original heir to David’s throne.

It’s difficult to discern that in English translation, though, since the Hebrew term gets translated as a proper name: Jedidiah. Solomon is referred to as “Jedidiah” in 2 Samuel 12: 24– 25:

24 David consoled Bathsheba his wife, and he went to her and slept with her. She bore a son, and he called him Solomon, and Yahweh loved him. 25 He sent word by the hand of Nathan the prophet, so he called him Jedidiah because of Yahweh.

Notice the wording. “Jedidiah” is a name or term that Nathan told David the Lord wanted assigned to Solomon. The name in Hebrew is yediydyahu and is related to dawid/ dawiyd, the proper name “David,” which also means “beloved.” 16 Used of Solomon, the term amounts to a title that marked Solomon as the legitimate heir to the Davidic covenantal throne. The same message is telegraphed with respect to Jesus. God’s own voice announces, This is the king, the legitimate heir to David’s throne.[[16]](#footnote-16)

F. This was also the great anointing as Prophet, Priest, and King.

Deuteronomy 18:15 declared that Yahweh would raise up for Israel a *prophet* like Moses from among his brothers, and they were commanded to listen to him. It was in comparison to the same Sinai event where the children of Israel cried out to not each hear Yahweh’s voice. He would raise up (Gr. *anasteso* – the root of the NT *resurrection* – *anastaseos | anistemi*) a *prophet* and put His words in His mouth and he would speak all of the commandments. (See Psalm 2:7-8 and Psalm 82:8 – Gr. arise/stand up is *anasta (anistemi*))

19… And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people…27And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:13-35)

The Disciple Cleopas declared Jesus to be a *prophet* who both declared Yahweh’s words and commandments, and who demonstrated those words in mighty deeds. Jesus then disclosed to them that He was in fact *that Prophet* Moses spoke of in Deuteronomy 18:15. Because He had been *raised up* both naturally from the line of Abraham and David, and from the dead in the power of the resurrection to live forever in the power of an indestructible life (Heb. 7:16)

Matthew will use the *Prophet like Moses motif* to show how Jesus is the greater Moses throughout his Gospel narrative. He would succeed in bringing those who would follow Him into the New Eden, into the Great Jubilee and Sabbath Rest.

G. He was also anointed to be the Great High King Priest after the order of Melchizedek. This was in fulfillment of Psalm 110. This anointing that began in the Jordan would be the *already­* part of an *already-but-not-yet­­* fulfillment that would culminate in the Ascension to Yahweh’s right hand to sit in the completed work and to begin the exercise of ruling and reigning as both King and Priest according to Psalm 110. He began to forgive men’s sins *before* He was crucified, raised, and ascended.

2And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven.” 3 And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” 4 But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, “Why do you think evil in your hearts? 5 For which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? 6But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he then said to the paralytic—“Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” (Matt. 9:2-6)

The *proof* of Jesus Judean Priesthood (*after the Order of Melchizedek – in other words, a Priesthood that was older than both Levi and Melchizedek*) and His power to forgive sins is in his power to heal. If anyone needed any more proof He showed the paralytic was in fact both healed and forgiven. Thus, Jesus’ priesthood was functioning before He ascended. The power of the age to come had begun to be experienced in this age as He began to set men free from the domain of darkness, physically, inwardly (soul), and spiritually!

H. Finally, the anointing as King happened in the same way. The Levitical Prophet, John the Baptist immersed Yeshua into the Jordan and the Father God anointed Him for ruling and reining as the last Davidic King who would build the eternal *house for Yahweh’s name*, and the Father would establish the throne of His kingdom forever. (2 Sam 7)

I. Heaven split apart and God’s Spirit descended upon Jesus after He came up out of the waters. The scene is reminiscent of the Ark that Noah build coming out of the flood and sending out the dove to bring back evidence of the new creation. Here the image of the dove can be seen similarly. The *Ark* of God, comes up out of the waters of baptism and now the dove again brings proof of the new creation as He anoints Yeshua and declares the relationship of the Father with the Son.

J. This is again recalling Israel as Yahweh’s Son in the Exodus (Exodus 4:22 where Israel is called Yahweh’s *firstborn son*). Here the Servant Israel is called *my beloved Son* in whom the Father delights and has pleasure.

K. 8 I have set Yahweh before me always. Because he is at my right hand I will not be shaken. 9Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices. Yes, my body will dwell in safety, 10 for you will not abandon my soul to Sheol; you will not give your faithful one to see the grave. 11You will make known to me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forever. (Ps. 16:8-11 LEB)

Luke writes in Acts 2:25-28

25 For David says with reference to him, ‘I saw the Lord before me ⌊continually⌋, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken. 26 For this reason my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced greatly, furthermore also my flesh will live in hope, 27 because you will not abandon my soul in Hades, nor will you permit your Holy One to experience decay. 28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with gladness with your presence.’ (Acts 2:25-28 LEB)

The beloved Son, Yeshua, is the source of the Father’s pleasure and delight. King David said of this *Pleasure*, “I have set *Yahweh* before me, for He (Yahweh) is at my right hand….yet we see him move in a prophetic Psalm. “You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; you will not give your Faithful One to see the grave. You will make known to me (the Faithful One) the path of life.” Who is David talking about? Himself? Or someone else?

David died; his tomb was proof of that; and his body that had been in the tomb for a thousand years had no doubt seen the decay of the grave; but Jesus rose from the dead because God did not let him see corruption (Acts 13:35–37). For the apostles the solution was made clear for all time when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, demonstrating how the promises would be fulfilled in spite of death. The language of Psalm 16 was excessive for the author’s understanding but became literally true for Jesus Christ. In fact, Peter declares that David said these things about Christ (Acts 2:25–28). In other words, the New Testament writers bring this passage forward, knowing what the Spirit of God had intended when David wrote them. The apostles make it clear that these words could only apply to David in the general sense of a future resurrection, for his body had been in the grave for a thousand years; but they apply it to the Lord in the precise and fullest sense, for by the resurrection he did not see the effects of being in the grave that were true of every human being. Because Jesus’ resurrection from the dead was the first fruit all who sleep in death (1 Cor. 15:20), it guaranteed that David, and all of the saints, would be raised from the dead. Therefore, God has not abandoned David—or any saints to the grave—but will yet raise him triumphantly.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Verse 8 says Jesus is at the Yahweh’s Right Hand. Verse 11 says *at your right hand are pleasures forevermore*. Clearly, when the Father says, “This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” He is declaring the invitation to behold the Father’s Pleasure – His Beloved Son.

L. Matthew then ends Chapter 3 with an emphatic statement about *who Jesus is* and one of the experiences of Him. The fount of eternal pleasure. The writer of Hebrews writes

8But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. 9You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” (Heb. 1:8-9)

King Jesus, anointed that Day in the Jordan, is God Incarnate. He is the Father’s Delight. And the Father has called Him God. And has given Him the throne of His earthly father David and his kingdom. He is the Father’s Delight. He is the happiest of all, being anointed with the oil of gladness.

M. That *oil of Gladness, as Holy Spirit descended and anointed Him,* led him to declare in Luke 4, Isaiah 61. He was anointed to bring *good news*, or, the Gospel of the Kingdom. (See Isa. 61:1-3) The end of Exile, Jubilee, the power of the age to come, salvation, eternal life. This is the beginning of His First Earth Ministry.

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