Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning, February 2, 2020

Let’s read Matthew!

***The King(dom) is Coming!***

Matthew 3

**What’s happening in the book?**  John baptizes sinners, then Jesus.

Jesus has been identified as the Messiah (Christ), heir to the throne of David. Now He publicly appears as the divinely approved Son of God, whose identity will be tested by Satan himself in ch. 4.

**What would we like to ask Matthew?**

How did John know to begin baptizing, and what did baptism mean?

What was the core of John’s message, and what does it imply?

John wore what? And ate what? Why is Matthew reporting this?

Who are the real children of Abraham, if not ethnic Jews?

Why is John so confrontational with the Pharisees and Sadducees?

What does it mean to be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire?

Why did Jesus need to be baptized, and why didn’t John know why?

What are the dove and the voice from heaven all about?

**What do we need to know about this story?**

❑ Consider Matthew’s check list for Jesus’ identity as God’s Son: In chapter one (1) He is virgin born, (2) conceived by the Holy Spirit, as (3) a “Savior” (Jesus) of “His people,” (4) from their sins. In chapter two He (5) appears at the right time (6) in the right places, and (7) is called from Egypt as God’s Son, all according to the prophets.

❑ In chapter three, Jesus comes to partake of a ritual designed for sinners. John is shocked. He knows who Jesus is, aware that Messiah will administer the ultimate baptism of blessing and judgment. Still, Jesus insists, and is baptized, even though He has no sins to confess!

❑ John appears out of nowhere, just as Elijah did when, in leather and camel hair, he confronted evil King Ahab (1 Kings 17:1; 2 Kings 1:8). Like Elijah, John spent time in the wilderness (thus his diet), but publicly called all Israel to repentance. The prophetic expectation was for Elijah to return as Messiah’s forerunner (Malachi 3:1--4:6) during a time of fiery judgment and righteous peace for God’s people. Later, Jesus will tell His disciples that John fulfilled this prophecy. Matthew 17:12, 13

❑ Unlike circumcision, which symbol it replaced, baptism was not a Jewish institution. So it was a perfect way to introduce the coming King and the nature of His mission to seek and to save sinners across all social and ethnic lines (Jer. 9:23-26). But how? Full immersion in the water pictures: 1. A break with sin in the confession /repentance of the sinner (cf. Lev. 26:40-45). 2. A washing away of sins (and so, their forgiveness). 3. A new life as a child of the (Abrahamic) Covenant. 4. Identity with Jesus in obedience to God’s commands. Each of these is pictured in Matthew, and given fuller explanation in later N T books.

**What’s the big idea (main point) of the story?**

Jesus is introduced to the world as a Messiah

who identifies with any and all sinners in order to save them,

in the power of the Spirit with full approval of the Father.

***So how do we apply these things practically today?***

Baptism: Have you chosen to be identified with Jesus? Matt. 28:19

Compassion: Jesus displays God’s love by identifying with sinners.

Life: Sinners become “children of Abraham” by grace, not ethnicity.