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P.O. Box 182218, Chattanooga, TN 37422-7218  
1-888-734-7707/ [www.preceptsforlife.com](http://www.preceptsforlife.com)

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**SERIES: Matthew (The King, His Kingdom And Me)**

**TITLE: Program 5 – The Kingdom Of Heaven At Hand!**

**FRIDAY**

**OPEN**

Come with me, my friend, to the Jordan River. To the actual place where John the Baptist was crying out, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2)** Come with me to the Jordan River where John baptized Jesus to fulfill all righteousness. Come with me to the Jordan River where very few ever get to come, because it’s a military zone. Come and have this rare privilege of hearing again the message of John the Baptist.

**PART ONE**

Matthew chapter 3 verse 1 said that, **“Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” (Matthew 3:1-2)** I’m standing in a very strategic spot. I’ve come to Israel for over 20 years and never before have I been at this place in the Jordan. This is the place where John the Baptist literally was baptizing. This is the place where Jesus was baptized. This was

the crossroads from Jordan as they would come over from Ammon which was once called ancient Philadelphia. Not the Philadelphia in the seven letters to the churches in Revelation, but a Philadelphia, Roman city that was built there over in Ammon. And there from here you can go straight up to Jerusalem and it's approximately, let's say, between 20 and 30 miles, depending on the way the ancient road went. So they would come down from Jerusalem. They would come from the region of Judea. They would come from across the Jordan and the wilderness of the Jordan. This is the Jordan River right behind me. And they were coming to hear this one. This one that was in the wilderness, this one that was preaching, **"Repent...."** (Matthew 3:2) **"Repent"** in the Greek language is in the present tense and so it's a continuous action. "[Keep on repenting] **for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**" (Matthew 3:2) And then to support that he quotes from Isaiah chapter 40 and it says, **"For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!' Now....,"** it says, **"...John...had [on] a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins."** (Matthew 3:3-6) Why was he calling them to repent? Well we have to remember at this stage in Israel's history, they had begun to turn away from God again. Oh they were active in the temple and they were keeping the letter of the law and yet we're going to hear in Matthew chapter 5 that they have heard what was said, but they didn't understand that their repentance was to be a matter of the heart. It was not just an external performance, rather it was a change of mind and an acknowledgement of who God was and the fact that they were to bow the knee to Him. And that they were to make their way straight, why? Because the Lord was coming, the Lord was coming. And so [He was going to make the crooked places straight.]

(Paraphrase, Isaiah 40:4) Now Isaiah the prophet had spoken about this. As a matter of fact if we go to Luke chapter 3 we find that God wants you to understand exactly when this was happening. He lays down the the historicity of the moment and in Luke chapter 3 in verse 1 it says, **“Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, in the...priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. And he came into all the district around the Jordan....”**

**(Luke 3:1-3)** This is the district around the Jordan. This is where the main highway from Jerusalem came down to cross the Jordan to go over into Ammon. And so this was a traffic spot. This is where people that would be traveling and they would hear about this one that was in the wilderness that was down by the Jordan River that was crying, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”** **(Matthew 3:2)** It says, **“...He came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”** **(Luke 3:3)** When I mark “repentance” in my Bible, what I do is I start off with an arrow and I send it in the opposite direction because “repentance,” “metanoeo” means “to have a change of mind”. It’s according to what we think that we do. [As a man thinks in his heart, so he is.”] (PARAPHRASE, Proverbs 23:7, KJV) Where does sin begin? It begins in the heart and then it’s manifest in the actions. And so God is crying through John the Baptist, **“Repent...!”** **(Matthew 3:2)** It says, **“As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every ravine will be filled...every mountain and hill will be brought low: the crooked will become straight, and the rough road smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of [the Lord]. (Luke 3:4-6)** You can imagine the excitement. You can imagine the interest, why?

Because there had not been a prophet for 400 years, God had been silent. There was no word from God until Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, had an angel appear to him when he was taking care of the evening sacrifice in the temple. And then he was told that he was going to have a son and that his son would be the forerunner of Messiah. The long awaited days of Messiah had finally come. It had been about 4,000 years since the first promise of Messiah and now He was here. And here was the forerunner saying, **“...Make ready the way of the Lord....” (Matthew 3:3)** You know God could be speaking to you today, Beloved, and He could be saying to you, “Listen, you need to repent. You need forgiveness of sins. You need to change your mind about who God is. You need to get your crooked life straightened out and there’s only one way that you can do it.” And that’s through seeing the salvation of the Lord, the salvation of the Lord comes in not a religion but in a relationship, a relationship with the Son of God. Well let’s go on. It says, **“...John himself had a garment of camel’s hair, and a leather belt around his waist...his food was locusts and wild honey.” (Matthew 3:4)** He was a man of the wilderness. He was a man who was living out here and waiting for that perfect, perfect timing. It had been about 30 years, about 30 years since Jesus Christ had been born. He’s going to have a three and a half year ministry. Now John the Baptist is proclaiming His coming. And it says in verse 7, **“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and [the] Saducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore [bring forth] fruit in keeping with repentance.’ (Matthew 3:7-8)** Remember “repentance” is a key word. If you didn’t get your study guide you need to go online to [preceptsforlife.com](http://preceptsforlife.com) and there you can download your free study guide and when you do you’ll see how to mark “baptism,” you’ll see how to mark “wrath,” you’ll see how to mark “repentance” because these are key words throughout the gospel of Matthew. Jesus is the one who came to save us from the wrath to come but if He’s going to save us

from the wrath to come then we've got to repent. We've got to repent because the King has come and [the kingdom of heaven is at hand.] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 3:2) He says, **"Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham [as] our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham." (Matthew 3:8-10)** Now one of the things you know about the land of Israel if you've ever been here, there are plenty of stones. There are plenty of rocks and what he is saying is, "Look, you can't just say I have this religion, I have this faith. I've been born a Jew because there's more to being born a Jew. It is necessary for you to be righteous and if you're not righteous you can't enter the kingdom of heaven." So he says to these Sadducees and Pharisees, these people that have a religion but have no relationship with God, these people that are keeping the law externally and yet are breaking it internally. These men that say, "Thou shall not commit adultery", and yet are committing adultery with the women that come to the temple in their hearts. God knows the hearts of men. And John knows the hearts of these people and so the message is "Listen, listen, [you brood of vipers.]" (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 3:7) ["You've got to bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance."] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 3:8) What is the fruit of repentance? The fruit of repentance is righteousness and what is righteousness? Righteousness is living according to what God says is right, not according to the culture, not according to your belief system but according to the Word of God. And then he makes this statement. **"The axe is already laid at the root of the tree...." (Matthew 3:10a)** It's all ready to swing. It is all ready to bring it down. It's **"...Laid at the root of the trees; therefore....,"** he says, **"...every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Matthew 3:10)** When you mark "wrath," you can mark "fire" the same way because the fire is the wrath of God. And what he's saying here is so important for you and I to know and to be cognizant about because I will

tell you what, we think God is just a God of love and we can do anything we want and get away with it but that is not true. He is a righteous God. He's a holy God and His righteousness and His holiness demand judgment against sin. That's hard isn't it? We'll talk about it more when I come back.

## **PART TWO**

Welcome back, my friend. Welcome back to the Jordan River where Jesus was baptized, where John was crying out with this message, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2)** I know, Precious One, that it is a God-ordained meeting for you and for me today so that you can hear the message of God. He wants to prepare the way of salvation. He wants you to understand that you and I, too, are to bear fruit unto righteousness and so as John the Baptist was proclaiming, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 3:2)** the scribes and the Pharisees came down to be baptized by John. And yet he knew their hearts and he said, **“...‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath [which is] to come?’” (Matthew 3:7)** Don't you know that [the axe is already at the root of the tree]. (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 3:10a) and **“...Every tree...that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance....” (Matthew 3:10b-11)** It's the Jordan River that is behind me. This is the water that he was using to baptize them for repentance. It wasn't some sacred vial of water. Rather this was an action. An action that showed that they wanted to be cleansed, that they wanted to be right with God, that they were willing to conform to what God said. And he says, **“As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I ... I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Matthew 3:11)** And here, Beloved, you're going to see what he means about being baptized with the Spirit and baptized with fire as he describes to us this baptism by fire. I want you to see

and I want you to understand that there's one of two baptisms. A baptism is an identification with, it is a uniting with. He's either going to unite you with the Holy Spirit or he's going to unite you with fire and it depends on what your decision is, what you decide to do in respect to the one who is coming after John, who is mightier than John and John says, **"...I am not [even worthy] to remove His sandals...."** (Matthew 3:11b) He says this about the one that is coming. **"His winnowing fork is in His hand[s], and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor...."** (Matthew 3:12) And what he means is he's outside and there's a threshing floor and he has the wheat there. And he takes that winnowing fork and he comes along parallel to the ground with that over the wheat, winnowing the wheat, winnowing the wheat, breaking it down, separating the chaff from the wheat and it says, **"...And He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn...."** (Matthew 3:12) Now I want you to remember that. He gathers his wheat into the barn **"...But He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."** (Matthew 3:12) Well he said **"... [One's] coming after me...."** (Matthew 3:11) Now the crowds have come at this crossroads and they had come to see this man. They had come all the way from Jerusalem. They had walked approximately between 20 and 30 miles to get here and then one came beside the Jordan River. **"Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan...."** (Matthew 3:13) He had come from the north down to the south. He had come down along the road that goes along the Jordan River and it says, **"...coming to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and You come to me? But Jesus answering said to him....'"** (Matthew 3:13-15) Now listen to His answer. It's very important because you're going to find a key word here that you're going to see throughout this gospel. **"...Jesus...said to him, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.'" (Matthew 3:15)** The Righteous One had come. The Righteous One had come. The One born without sin.

The one born the Son of Man. The one born the Son of God and what does He want to do? He wants, **“...to fulfill all righteousness....” (3:15)** and in fulfilling all righteousness you see a humbling of Himself. He is the Son of God. He is God incarnate and yet He is saying to John, I want you to baptize me. What is He showing to all around? He is showing to all around that His will is to do the will of the Father. It is showing that there is a mind that is connected with God and so He says, **“...I have need to be baptized by You...,”** John the Baptist says to Him, **“...and...You come to me? But Jesus answering said to Him, ‘Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then He [John] permitted Him. After being baptized....” (Matthew 3:14-16)** See if you can catch it in your mind’s eye. Watch Jesus going down into the water and after being baptized. Jesus came up immediately from the water and behold the heavens were opened and it says, **“...And he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting [up]on Him, and behold, a voice [from] the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, [with] whom I am well-pleased.’” (Matthew 3:16-17)** Luke tells us that for the first 30 years of Jesus’ life, [he grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.] (PARAPHRASE, Luke 2:52) Now He’s about to begin His public ministry but not before He’s tempted by the devil. And yet God’s confidence is in His Son and this is what He’s saying, **“...This is My beloved Son....” (Matthew 3:17b)** And it’s like He takes His holy finger and [in the form of a dove, He sends the Spirit of God who descends on Jesus and lights on Jesus and says, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 3:16b-17) I want us to understand, Beloved, that although that this was an event that happened over 2,000 years ago it still speaks to us and it reminds us if thy, **“...kingdom of heaven was at hand.” (Matthew 3:2)** then it is far closer now and what you and I need to do as part of the body of Jesus Christ is make sure that we are living righteously, make sure that we are fulfilling all righteousness, make sure that we don’t



**MATTHEW (THE KING, HIS KINGDOM AND ME)**  
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have just a religion like the scribes and the Pharisees but we have a relationship with God and that relationship shows in the way that we live. But I want you to see that what happened, what was recorded in this book, what happened in time and place is written for you. It's written for me. God has preserved this book. ["Not one jot or one tittle of the law will ever be changed. All things will be fulfilled."] (PARAPHRASE, Matthew 5:18, KJV) He is coming and when He comes the wheat are going into the barn and the chaff are going into the fire. How do you know that you are truly a child of God? You know because your life has been changed, because you've become a new creature in Christ Jesus, because you're fulfilling all righteousness. It doesn't mean you never sin but it means that when you sin you ask forgiveness and you get up and you go forward. So this is God's precept for life for you today and that is repent of anything that is not from God and make His way smooth. He is coming.