

Things to do during the week/at Life group

1. Think of the areas in your life in which you need to repent.
2. Spend time in prayer, waiting on God, bringing your sins before the Lord in repentance
3. Read Matthew 4 in preparation for next Sunday's teaching

Questions for discussion

1. Does 'revival' excite you?
2. We had to see that Jesus in the midst was Himself revival, that God had no more to give than Him, and that when He was in the centre, then brokenness, openness, testimony and fellowship followed as natural effects of the great First Cause. The secret lay in none of the five points considered by themselves, but only in Christ Himself. How do you understand this quotation?
3. When did you become a Christian? When did you first become excited about knowing Jesus Christ?
4. Why is Matthew so concerned to tell us about John the Baptist and emphasise to his readers that John the Baptist is an 'Elijah figure'?
5. Why would the Pharisees and religious leaders have been so angry at the things that John was saying about them?
6. John promised that the Messiah would baptise with the Holy Spirit. What does this mean for you? Have you known the baptism of the Holy Spirit in your life?
7. John also promised that the Messiah would baptise with fire—purification., which is a painful process. Have you known baptism of fire (purification) in your life?
8. John and Jesus' demands upon all followers is 'repent'. Why is repentance so important as the key to unlocking the Kingdom of God for us?
9. What does the 'voice from heaven' in Jesus' baptism teach us about who Christ really is and about his coming ministry?
10. Do you feel that there are areas of your life that you need to repent of, or repent from? What would be the spiritual impact if you did repent and change your ways and turn away from your sin? (maybe a quiet reflection, rather than a 'sharing' question—but feel free to share if appropriate)



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Sermon Notes

Matt 3—Baptism of Jesus

Matthew, one of the 12 apostles, was the author of the Gospel. Matthew was a Tax Collector who left his work to follow Jesus (Matthew 9:9-13). In Mark and Luke he is known by his other name of Levi.

Date and Place of Writing –

The Jewish nature of Matthew's Gospel suggests that it was written in Palestine, although some think it was written in Syrian Antioch. In the Early Church it was commonly held that Matthew wrote his Gospel first, which is why it comes first in the New Testament, but this is largely not held to be the case and that he copied much of Mark's Gospel. Therefore, if he copied Mark who was writing (we believe) in the early 50s, then Matthew had to be writing his Gospel in the late 50s or early 60s AD.

Recipients of the Gospel –

Matthew's Gospel was written in Greek, so therefore he was writing to a Greek speaking audience. They were also Jews. Matthew's Gospel, more than any other, has a keen focus on tracing Jesus' ancestry to Abraham, he has more quotations from the Old Testament than any other New Testament author and he fails to provide any explanation of Jewish customs. He emphasises Jesus as the 'Son of David', he speaks of the 'Son of Man', rather than 'Son of God', 'Kingdom of Heaven' rather than 'Kingdom of God' which would have been offensive to a Jewish audience who would never utter God's name. However, Matthew is the only Gospel to include the Magi at Jesus' birth, an indication that he is concerned that the Gospel is given to the Gentiles, and that Jesus is for all people.

Purpose –

Matthew's main purpose is to prove to Jewish readers that Jesus is their Messiah. He does this primarily by showing that Jesus' life and ministry is a fulfilment of the Old Testament scriptures and prophecies.

Revival

In 'My Calvary Road', Roy Hession outlines 5 areas of the Christian life in which we need to grow in order to experience Revival:

Prayer with hunger - revival begins with a great dissatisfaction in the spiritual life, with a longing for more of God

Brokenness at the Cross - being willing to be humble at the foot of the cross in real repentance and conviction of sin

Fullness - hearts filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit. But the Lord will not fill cups (hearts) to overflowing that are full of sin or dirt; we need to confess our sin before we receive fullness

Openness - openness to one another in the Christian life, 'walking in the light' with each other, sharing our lives and sharing our burdens

Oneness - Lack of oneness, lack of unity is sin. We need real unity in the church.

'We had to see that Jesus in the midst was Himself revival, that God had no more to give than Him, and that when He was in the centre, then brokenness, openness, testimony and fellowship followed as natural effects of the great First Cause. The secret lay in none of the five points considered by themselves, but only in Christ Himself.' Pgs 151-152

Matthew's Gospel

The Jewish belief was, and still is, that Elijah will return before the Messiah to prepare the way for the anointed one of God. You will remember that Elijah had not died, but had been taken up into Heaven, so Jews are expectantly waiting for Elijah to return from Heaven to point people to the Messiah.

Malachi 4:5

John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist - this is the very description of Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8

The Message of John - The Threat

John's message contained both a threat and a promise.

'You brood of vipers, who told you to flee the coming wrath?'

The Pharisees coming for baptism are like animals, snakes, scurrying from a fire that is burning across a field looking for safety

V9 - You cannot say that because Abraham is your father, then you are saved. God can raise up his own children even from the stones.

The Message of John - The Promise

The one who was to come would baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

All through history the Jews were looking for the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

Ezekiel 37:14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the Lord have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord.

Ezekiel 39:29 I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."

Isaiah 44:3

Joel 2:28

But the Messiah would also bring a baptism of fire - fire purifies gold or precious metals, the flame burns away the impurities and tempers the metal. This is about purity of heart.

John's Message - The Demand

John's basic demand was 'repent' - Matt 3:2. Jesus also said 'Repent and believe' Mk 1:15

The King and the herald both call people to repentance.

Isaiah 1:16 - Action must always follow repentance - change your ways!

Jesus and His Baptism

John was startled when Jesus came to him to be baptised.

He believed that he needed baptism from Jesus, not the other way round.

The Voice of God at Jesus' Baptism

This is my Beloved Son - Psalm 2:7

Every Jew accepted this Psalm as a description of the Messiah, the mighty King of God to come.

'with whom I am well pleased' - Is 42:1.

Repentance is the key to opening up life in the Kingdom of God