

### Matthew 3

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea **2** and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” **3** This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.’”

**4** John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. **5** People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. **6** Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

**7** But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8** Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. **9** And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. **10** The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

**11** “I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. **12** His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

### The Baptism of Jesus

**13** Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. **14** But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

**15** Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.

**16** As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. **17** And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

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1. John's entire life served as a broadcast for the coming Messiah. His clothing, his diet, the location of his ministry, and his message all drew attention to Jesus. If those close to you were asked what message your life consistently broadcasts, what would they say? In what ways might you use your platform more effectively to broadcast the message of the gospel? Give specific examples.
2. Both the Pharisees and the Sadducees had a rich heritage in Israel. Both groups were comprised of highly esteemed religious leaders. However, neither group stood secure in their identity as belonging to God because they put their confidence in their heritage and their religious practices instead of in the Savior. Share ways in which we might mistakenly place our confidence in things that are feeble and not in the savior? What practical things can we do to ensure we find our identity in Christ and not in our performance or some other counterfeit savior?
3. John the baptist, in speaking of Jesus, says that He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. Here John is referring to the baptism of the Spirit. In other words, the moment when a believer receives the Holy Spirit as they trust in Jesus for salvation. Upon entrance into the life of the believer, the Holy Spirit then begins a refining process in the heart (hence the fire). Since you have come to Christ, in what ways have you seen the Holy Spirit refining you? In what ways has the Holy Spirit transformed your character?