

Series: Messianic Fulfillment

THE YEAR OF THE BIBLE

Sermon #1: The King's Coronation

Matthew 3:1-17

Dr. Matt Cassidy --- August 23, 2020

Well, good morning, Grace. I'm so glad you could join us today, and I mean "us." We have about a hundred or more, maybe, people in the auditorium today because we're getting ready for a great day. We're going to regather on September 13 in just a couple of weeks. We're going to try to gather together as the church. I want you to know that we've been working on this for months.

Here's what we've done. We've completely renewed and upgraded our sound system so it would be more effective online. Also, we have new cameras and two additional cameras for that as well, so that we can ensure that what's being broadcast live on Sunday morning can be consistent and great quality.

Also, we've upgraded our internet feed for that purpose. And then recently we started asking people come to help us learn and train our volunteers to ensure that there would be physical safety here.

And this week we added a bipolar ionized air filtration system. Those are a lot of big words. It's got to be good. This is a commercial grade, hospital grade, air filtration system that enhances what we already do here in the worship center so that all the air is as clean as we can possibly make it.

So, the idea is on September 13 we're going to ask everybody to come. Here's what you're going to need to do. You're going to need to wear a mask. A mask will be required at that time. You will need to register online. You'll go to the website and then register to do that. And then there's no childcare. It will be family church. And if you have little kids that might be problematic, maybe—I don't even think we'll have a family room to take them to—so you might be reconsidering that.

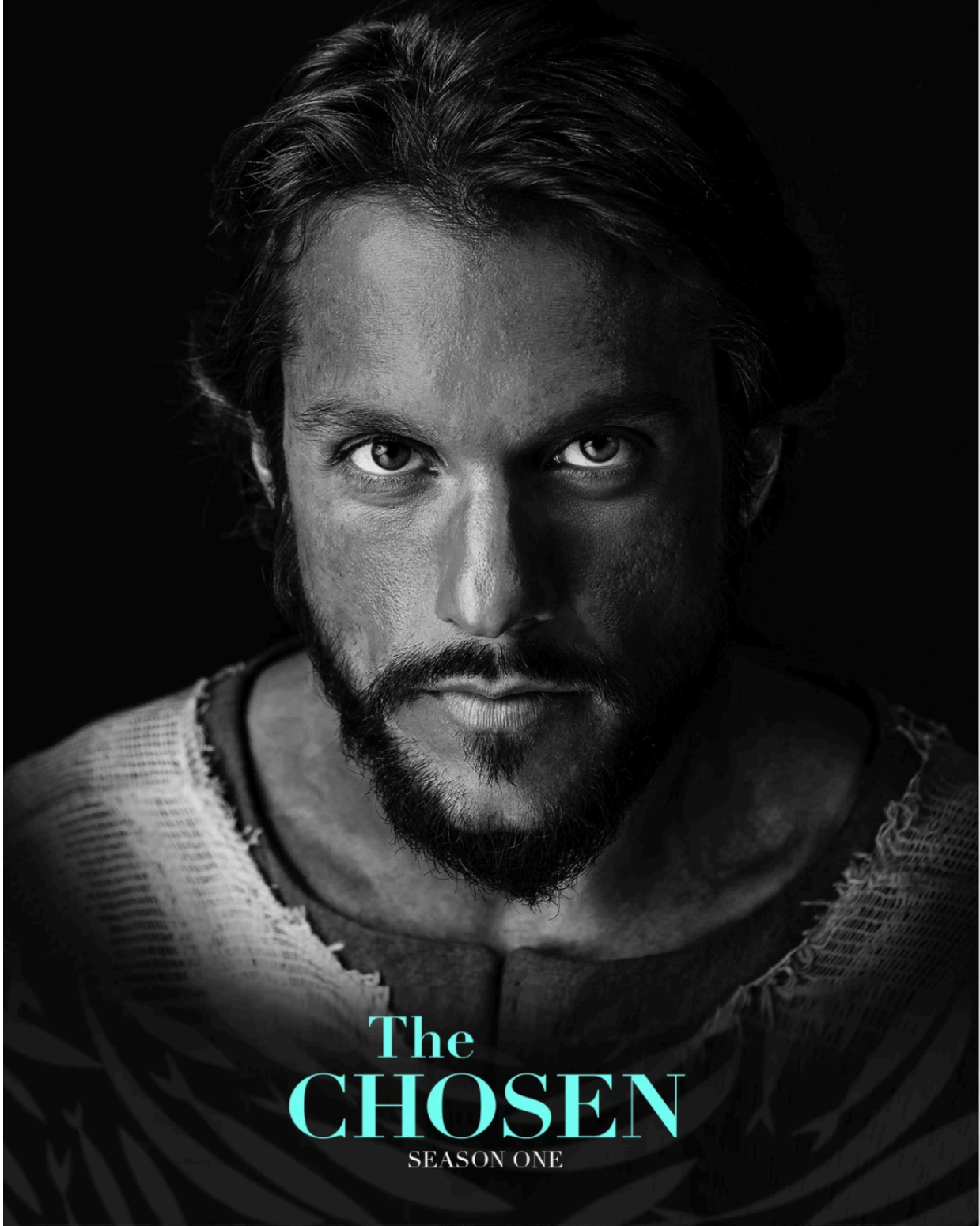
The next great announcement I want to tell you about is next week we're going to do Walk Thru the Bible, New Testament. We started this year with a walk through the Old

Testament; we're into the New Testament now. We were planning on having a huge celebration next week ... naaah, well, whatever. So here's what we've chosen to do. We're going to break up the walk through the New Testament into two different sections. Next week I'll be teaching for about forty minutes through the first half or so of the New Testament. And then I think on October 18 we'll do part two. So, next week if you come here, be ready to do some aerobics. If you're at home, you'll want to dress especially comfortable ... like you're not already doing that. Anyway ... so, next week, Walk Thru the Bible. Go to the website this week sometime. We'll be having some of those handouts in PDF format so you can download some of those and use those as we go through that.

Also, we're doing all this because this year we've been going through the Bible. This year, 2020 ... there are a couple of things that have been great in the year 2020: Chevy Corvette came out with a new model, and we've been going through the Bible as a church. And if you wanted to catch up with us and you're just now joining right now, then you can start reading through the Bible starting in the Book of Matthew. Read two chapters a day, and you'll probably end at the same time as the rest of us that have been reading the Bible. We'll be in Matthew chapter 1, I think, the first day in October. So, we'll catch up eventually. And we'd love you to join us. Start reading the Book of Matthew with us. We'll look at Matthew chapter 3 today.

And then the other thing we're doing to help us understand the newer Testament is, if you like, watch the TV series called *The Chosen*. Listen, I watch Jesus movies kind of for a living. And I've got to tell you, I hate it. There are some really bad Jesus movies out there. But this one is good.

Get used to different.



The
CHOSEN
SEASON ONE

Let me tell you that there are a couple of things I love about this. One, sometimes the accents are a little thick and so we do it with subtitles—they capitalize the pronoun. Whenever they're talking about Jesus they use a capital "Y" for "You" and "H" for "Him." I love that. Even in their close captions they're respecting Him. And the other thing I love about it is it's filmed in Texas. So that's what God would do if He wanted to film a Jesus film. It's a biblical thing.

Let me start with a word of prayer and then we have a great teaching time in a marvelous passage. Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, we lift up this time to You. I'd ask that Your Spirit, the Spirit inside of us, would help us understand the fullness of what happened on this day; how all of creation stood still to gaze at this; and then, what that means to us and how that could change our lives. Lord, we come to You with humble hearts. I hope that You would enter and feel at home and guide and direct us in a rather difficult time that we're experiencing. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Again, I'm glad that you tuned in today, because today we're going to look at one of the top twenty events in all of human history. This picture, these paintings here, express what we're going to be looking at in Matthew chapter 3. If you want, you can turn in your Bibles there. It's the baptism of Jesus.



And this is one of those events—there’s only a few—where both angels and demons alike popped and stood at attention to watch what was happening here. Some stood and marveled and some stood and trembled. This is an event like very few other events.

Jesus is on a mission like no other man because He is like no other man. Jesus was a man of destiny and His destiny was not cut short by death. As a matter of fact, His destiny was death. He came here to face death. He came here to destroy death. He didn’t have a tragic ending with His death—that’s why He came—to conquer it. He rose again just to brag, just to show off, just to prove that He had defeated death. And the story of His death and resurrection, for the most part, starts with this picture, with this painting, with this event: the baptism of Jesus Christ. It’s worth a thousand words, a picture; this picture, this painting, is worth four thousand words. It’s in all four gospels. All the biography accounts of the life of Jesus include this event because it is so very important.

It defines the triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It defines how we are to live and act according to the nature of God. And here’s the point of it: that Jesus is like no other man. He is different in kind, not in degree. He’s not a better man, He’s a different kind of man.

And God--when it comes to things that are valuable and important and have great weight, He is reckless, friends. He is generous with evidence to make His points known. This is a story where He wants us to know for sure who Jesus is, why He came, and how we can live according to that.

If you have your Bibles, turn to Matthew chapter 3. There is where the story takes place that I’m going to be looking at, anyway. And John’s baptism has two purposes. This serves as a great outline. The first is to prepare Israel for her Messiah. And the second is to prepare the Messiah for Israel—to prepare Israel for her Messiah and to prepare the Messiah for Israel. This is the story of a Jewish writer writing a Jewish audience about a Jewish king.

The Baptism Prepares Israel for the Messiah

Introducing the Introducer

And Matthew writes the story, and as you look at the story itself, it starts with—let me introduce the introducer, John the Baptist. Even when that story starts, his conception and birth is

a Jewish story. It starts like all other Jewish stories. God invades His creation and says, *I'm going to do something special. You need to listen. Watch and respond.*

John's conception story starts with an older woman past the childbearing age that has been barren her whole life. She has a prayer answered; she's given a gift, a son, John the Baptist. And those people knowing the story around John's mother were thinking, *God's here. We've got to watch this boy become a man. We need to listen to his words.*

And John serves as the last Old Testament prophet. And he preaches with fire and brimstone. And he's telling people, *We need to get ready.*

Matthew 3:1-3

**In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, ² "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."
³ This is He who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him.'"**

And here's why he preaches with fire and brimstone. Because they're out of time. He's coming—imminently, anytime soon. Here's his preaching style in verses 1 through 3. "In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.' This is he who was spoken of through the prophets. As Isaiah was saying, 'A voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make your paths straight for Him.'""

Matthew 3:5-6

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.

And the people responded. They came by the thousands to hear John preach that the coming of the Lord was near. Verses 5 and 6 say, "People came out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region in the Jordan area. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River."

John's saying, *Listen, all the promises that you've been hearing about, all the way back to Adam and to Abraham and to Moses and to David—they're coming true. The promised one is being delivered to us. Are you ready to meet God? You better prepare yourself.*

John's Message: Repent

John's message to us, to them, is repent. Repent! And repent doesn't mean just feeling sorry, having regret or remorse. In the Bible, repentance means changing your mind about something, the way you think about that. In the context of the Bible, particularly in the New Testament, it's talking about changing your mind about God, changing the way you think about God. And that change of mind must produce a change in conduct, because you've changed your whole values about something, particularly, the nature of God. If there's no change in conduct you have to go back and say, *Well, maybe I didn't completely change my mind.*

You have to study yourself. What motivates you to do something right or to do something wrong? Another way of saying "repent" is—we say, "You need to clean up. You need to come clean. You need to be honest. Would you just tell the truth, the whole truth?--not just what you do but why you do it." Think about what motivates you. Repent of that. That will change your mind about that nature of God.

And in this story here, John the Baptist is saying, "Repent. This is what you need to change your mind about—that Jesus is King." And the king rules.

And so, when you repent and choose Jesus to be king, you say, *I will do whatever He says. I will obey.* That's what we do with a king. We obey our king. It doesn't matter what He says for me to do. *I understand completely. I will obey Him if I don't like it. I will obey Him if it costs me. I will obey Him if it makes me look foolish in front of people that I want to respect me, because I've changed my mind. He's my king. My ego is not my king. My safety is not my king. Jesus is my king.* That's what John is asking us to do—repent.

Why Repent? The Messiah Is Coming

And why? Because John says the Messiah is coming. Messiah is coming. He is the only safe place in a storm that's about to take place. "The day of the Lord ... the day of the Lord ... judgment is coming."

Matthew 3:11-12

“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with 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.”

Look what John says: “Look, I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to even carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 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 an unquenchable fire.”

Jesus is coming, he says. And He's bringing justice and He's bringing power.

Jesus Is Coming for Justice

Jesus is coming and He's bringing justice. John is saying here that Jesus is coming to judge the wicked and to reward the righteous. He says that He's got this winnowing fork, like a pitchfork, and He's going to find out who has value and who is just a husk. And the husk will be burned off.

Jesus fulfills this a little bit in His first coming. But certainly, in His final coming there is final justice. And John says, *You need to live your life like you're going to meet Him. There's a consequence for all of your choices.*

Later on he'll say—we won't look at that verse—but some people are saying, *Yeah, we're from the tree of Abraham.* And John says, *It doesn't matter what tree you're from. He doesn't care. He brought His chainsaw too. He's going to cut those things down to the root.* It doesn't matter if you go to church or not. I mean, it does matter, but it matters why. It doesn't matter who your family of origin is. What matters is: Did you repent? Is He your king?

John says, *Listen, He coming. He's got a pitchfork in one hand and He's got a chainsaw in another. And He's coming and He's bringing justice.*

Jesus Is Coming to Give Us Power

John says He's coming to bring power. He says, "He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit." Now in the older Testament the way the Holy Spirit worked is that people's souls weren't purified by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and so the Spirit would come upon a person for a purpose and then would leave that person. And they dreamt of the day that the Holy Spirit, one of the persons of the Trinity, would come and live and seal Himself in our souls. John says, *That's going to happen. The Holy Spirit is going to come upon you.*

Isaiah 44:3

And I will pour out my Spirit and my blessings on your children.

These are promises in the older Testament that this would happen. Look what it says in Isaiah. "And I will pour out my Spirit and my blessings on your children." There it is.

Ezekiel 36:27

I will put my Spirit in you so you will obey my laws and do whatever I command.

And Ezekiel says something similar—another prophet says, "I will put my Spirit in you so you will obey my laws and do whatever I command."

The Spirit of God, God Himself, living in our souls so that we could obey Him. The King is coming and He's going to judge and He's going to give us power.

Application: Repent

So, the application ought to be pretty obvious for us. Repent and be filled with His Spirit. Repent and be filled. That's the application John has for us. That's the first part of the outline, preparing Israel for the Messiah. You and I—that's us.

Is there anything more dangerous—can you imagine anything more dangerous than us, you and me, appearing individually before God and we say, *Oh, I did all these things and I went to mass and I did this confession thing and I served*, and He says, *I never knew you*. That's a story in the life of Jesus. He says, *Look, people are going to meet me for the first time. They think they're mine and they've been serving me, and I'm going to say, "I never met you."* I can't imagine anything more terrible, because after death comes judgment.

And so, John says to us, *Look, come clean*. There's no bluffing with God. There's only honesty. You can't hide your lying eyes. That's what the Eagles would tell us. You know what's right and you know what a righteous God expects.

Honestly, I don't there's a question about the right and wrong part of this. It's whether or not you actually think in your life that you can get away with it. And John is saying that the light will be too bright. Everything will be revealed.

And so, the appeal here is to come clean. Tell the truth—the whole truth. Maybe even do an inventory of what you do and why you do it. Why do you brag or lie or steal or cheat? Why do we do this? We confess those things, but why do we do them? Do we do it so we can get ahead, so we can look better in front of other people, maybe just for the lust of revenge? Those are descriptions of what repentance looks like.

If you need help on inventory, Celebrate Recovery is a tremendous ministry for that. You can just go there and say, *You know, I don't think I have any addictions to chemical stuff, but I've got addictions to stuff, and I need to learn how to repent*. Celebrate Recovery can help you do that. We'd love you to join us. Look online for how you can be part of that.

Whether you join or not, John's saying you've got to repent. You've got to come clean. Tell the truth, the whole truth.

Repent: Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

The second application John has for us is to be filled—be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is available to us. How do we get that? Glad you asked.

Luke 11:13

“If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”

Look what Jesus says in one of His sermons. “If you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those” – what?—“who ask Him?”

How do you receive the Holy Spirit? You ask Him. You just ask. The Holy Spirit gives you the power to obey. It gives you the power to want to be who you ought to be, but you don't necessarily want to be. You know? I ultimately want to be this, I just ... aaaa! The Holy Spirit does that. You ask that Father. You say, *Lord, fill me with the Spirit. Lord, I surrender my life. I want to live Your way, not my way. I want to do whatever You want to do, but I'm a coward. I need the courage. I don't have the willpower. Give me that willpower.* How do you receive the Spirit? You ask for it.

Jesus came, died, and rose again to bring His presence into our everyday lives, into our very souls. The baptism of Jesus is showing us that. So repent and be filled. Prepare your heart for the Messiah.

The Baptism Prepares the Messiah for Israel

The Messiah's Arrival

The second part, the second reason, the second thing we're to take away from this story of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist is that it's preparing the Messiah for Israel. It's the Messiah's arrival.

John never knew when Messiah would come. He didn't know the exact day. And so, every day he would wake up and go down to the Jordan River and he'd have these revivals. He'd preach repentance. He'd tell people to make sure their ways were right. He didn't know if it would be next week, next month, maybe next year. And then ... and then ...

I love what **Phillip Keller** says about this, Phillip Keller's description of what happened on that day. **“When the day came for Jesus to gently close the door to His carpenter shop for the last time, He knew exactly where He would go. And with firm footsteps and quiet determination He set off directly to see John. Following the winding roads from the hill country of Nazareth, He headed down into the burning heat of the Jordan Valley where John was baptizing in the running river.”**

Jesus works His way through that crowd of thousands, takes off His sandals, goes into that murky water and stares at His cousin John. *Hey, John. It's time. It's time.*

John's Reluctance

Matthew 3:14

But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”

I love this because John doesn't know what to do. Look at verse 14. It says, “But John tried to deter Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and you come to me to be baptized?’”

I love this. And I'm sure the crowds of thousands are looking at John and for the first time they see him stutter. Here's a man who's perplexed now. He's a little bit frightened. John, John the Baptist, never fought within his weight class. He was way outweighed. He went toe to toe with the religious leaders and just called them out for what was true. And then he stared down Herod the terrible himself. And this man that was known for his sharp tongue and his clever wit can't find the words. He can't find the words because he's in the presence of Jesus. And he says, *I can't baptize You. You baptize me.*

Matthew 3:15

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

And Jesus responds, “ ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this in fulfillment of all righteousness.’ And so John consented.”

Why was Jesus baptized? This is a baptism of repentance. Jesus doesn't need to repent. Jesus is a righteous man. He's a righteous Jew. Jesus is literally an Old Testament law giver. And as this man, He will submit to those laws that He gave. Jesus is leading by example. He says to people, "Follow me." And He says, "Follow me, I'm going to take you where you need to go." Jesus needs this baptism like He needed a rest after six days of creation. Sabbath was built and enjoyed by God so that we would enjoy that Sabbath.

The Baptism Itself

The baptism itself: Jesus is baptized and He comes up, and that's when it all happens. That's when angels and demons pop to attention. Some marvel, some tremble.

Matthew 3:16

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 resting on Him.

This is what happened, verse 16: "As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water. At that moment heaven opened up and they saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and then resting upon Him." The dove is the Holy Spirit. It comes and rests upon Jesus.

Matthew 3:17

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."

There's more, because the voice of God the Father becomes involved. "And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.'" Seldom does the Father speak audibly in the Bible. It has to be a magnificent event, and that is this event. It is of extreme, supreme importance. We have in these descriptions and the pictures of this event the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Purpose of the Baptism

The purpose of this unusual and magnificent event—what is that? I’ve heard people say, *Oh, this is when the Father sends to His Son that’s longing for approval a pat on the head. “There you go. Now go out there.”*

Whoa! That might be true if there weren’t the Bible to tell us otherwise. That’s encouraging, I guess. But that’s not what’s happening here. This is a regal installment. This is a king being crowned. This is Jesus being realized as the sovereign King, the servant Savior. This event is a demarcation that what was true in His private life now begins to be true in His public life. This is—let me read—this is a divine annunciation by the Father. It is witnessed by the Spirit and validated by the Holy Spirit. It is witnessed by John the Baptist, the last Old Testament prophet, representing two thousand years of prophets saying, *Yes, this happened on this day. This is the one. This is the promised one. This is Messiah.*

This event is a coronation event. A king receives His crown in front of all creation. That’s what this event is, a king getting what all of creation already knew—the spirit world, anyway. He gets that authority.

Application: Certainty of Who Jesus Is

The application has to do with the doctrine of Jesus Christ. What do we believe to be true about Jesus the Christ? We often put Him in the category—and we try to flatter—people outside the church or even liberals in the church try to flatter Jesus. *He’s the greatest teacher of all time.* Yeah, okay, that’s true. But that’s not what this passage is showing us. He’s not to be compared to other good teachers such as Socrates or Buddha or Confucius or whoever. He’s a different kind of person, not a different degree of person.

If you had a comparative religion class and you dedicate an entire building to comparative religions, that would be awesome. You could study those, but when you talk about Jesus, you’re going to have to go down the street in that cathedral. Because He’s a different kind of man, not a different degree.

He stands apart, and this event says so.

The practical application of this is for you and me. It is the certainty. This passage gives us the certainty of who Jesus is. There’s no ambiguity here. This is like a summary of all of

creation saying, *Yeah, yeah, yeah*. For the billion people that have followed Jesus the Christ, you should know for sure He was the one. The last Old Testament prophet: *That's Him*. The Holy Spirit: *Jesus, pick Jesus*. The Father: *This is my Son, with whom I am well pleased*.

Later Jesus will say “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.” And do you know why He said that? Because He could. Because He is the way.

So, here's the point. When you have faith in Jesus, the faith needs to be strong. It needs to be sure. It needs to be certain. There should be security in our lives. Okay, here's the emotion: rest—just rest. You didn't choose recklessly or poorly or hopefully, not even emotionally. *Oh, I hope it's Him. He's so nice*. Who cares? It's true.

Faith Is Like Gambling

Faith is gambling, okay? Faith is betting. Faith is like placing something of value down, whether it's a token or money or I'm going to be my farm on this. Religious faith is *I'm betting my soul on this*. But listen, in what's called epistemology—well, I didn't mean to say that. In the way we know things—how do we know something for sure? We all live by faith. We're all living by faith and faith is gambling. We're all gambling all the time.

So like right now, we're all gambling in the context of—this happens regularly now. You have faith in your doctor. You go to that doctor, him or her, and he or she tells you to do something. And you believe them. And we put them in white robes kind of like, *Yeah, I put faith in them*.

Go take this pill.

And so you go and say, *I'm going to do that because I have faith in that person*. You're gambling your health and maybe even your life.

Then you go to the pharmacy. *Oh look, they have white robes too. Oh, good*. There's a costume for a reason. And you think, *This is the pill the doctor said to take*. You're gambling. You're gambling your health, you're gambling your very life.

And right now, people are kind of scared because medicine isn't showing itself to be all that consistent sometimes. I trust my doctor in *Should I wear a mask or not wear a mask?* We have these conflicting views, and that's why people are a little rattled. They put maybe too much faith, too much gamble in medicine. There's an appropriate amount—yes, absolutely. But that just showed what was always true: we don't know that much sometimes.

God wants us to have a reasonable faith. He wants us to have a reasonable gamble. He wants us to use our minds.

People gamble with their money—everyone gambles. If you invested, if you go to Vegas—that’s gambling. Some of it’s reasonable gambling if you’re good at it. But also, just investing.

I’m going to invest in this stock.

Why?

I think the logo’s really pretty and it looks good on me sometimes.

Oh, okay.

That’s unreasonable gambling. That’s unreasonable faith.

Here’s what I’m trying to show you. Here’s a metaphor. Here’s a picture. Some of you are going to be really mad at me for this. Write Ray Anderson and he’ll respond to your e-mails.

Roulette

If God had a casino—now you’re already mad—if God had a casino and He had a roulette table, this is what it would look like.



Roulette—I've seen this on TV. Let me try to explain it to you for those of you who don't know. Roulette is a game of chance. They're going to put a marble in a spinning wheel and spin it around, and you place your bet on a table on numbers one through thirty-six. And the numbers alternate between red and black, red and black, red and black. And you pick a number or a set of numbers. You can bet on black or you can just bet on red. And the odds reflect your return on those bets. One through thirty-six, okay?

And then there's this one other number. Is it a number? It's zero. And zero is green. And the odds of getting green zero are really low. Don't bet on zero. It's actually, in the gambling community, so I'm told, unlucky to bet on zero, on green. Don't do that.

And so, what happens is that people ask you to put your money down. This is what you're betting. And then they say, "All bets down. Hands off the table." And they put the marble in the roulette spinner and they let the marble go and it bounces around and wherever it lands, people get a return on their investment, on their choice. That's how life works.

In the context of world view, people hedge their bets. I'm going to bet on something like black—half of the odds are good. I'm going to bet on science. We can know things for sure. We're finding out maybe not so much. But it's still not a bad bet.

I'm going to bet religiously, philosophically, on all gods are the same. Well, okay, you can do that. Bet on red. Maybe. I don't know. Let's see. Roll the dice. All bets down, hands off the table.

At Yahweh's roulette table it's a little bit different. At Yahweh's roulette table we're all standing around and we're not betting money; we're not betting the farm; we're not betting things of consequence that are temporal. We're betting our souls, our eternal souls. Life here and life everlasting.

And so, before we put our souls down on that roulette felt, some guy walks up to us and he's kind of shabby. It looks like he could use a little upgrade in clothing. It looks like he hasn't changed clothes in a while. He's the maintenance guy. The maintenance guy comes up to you and says, *Hey, I'm John Baptiste and I've been working here for a long time. And I've got to let you know something. I know something from upstairs. The table's rigged. It's going to land on zero. Bet on green. I know this. I come from two thousand years of maintenance guys. We've been working this casino for a long, long time. And I know—I heard them talking upstairs—they've magnetized the zero. They've got a metal ball bearing. It's going to come and it's going to land on zero. Bet on zero.*

And you're thinking, *You know what? Maybe I should listen to this guy. But boy, his breath is bad.*

Then all of a sudden, the place starts to rumble. And the roof opens up. And there's this terrible storm breaking loose up in the sky. But then, out of nowhere the clouds part. And the blue sky is breaking through and the sun you can't see, and out of that sun comes this dove. And he flies down and he sits on the table and he lands on green and he just starts pecking on the green, the zero. It's like the dove is telling you, *Bet on zero. Bet on zero.*

And you're thinking, *Maybe I should bet on zero. I don't know. I've got this John guy, I've got this dove out of nowhere ...*

And then someone clears their throat and says, *This is the management. Management is speaking. I want everyone's attention. If you're gambling right now, if you're at the roulette table, hi, it's me. I own the place. I built the place. And I rigged the table. This is what I'm going to do. We're going to spin that ball, but it's going to land on green. It's going to be zero. Here's the thing—I love zero. Zero I'm well pleased with. My favorite color is green.*

Bet your soul. All bets down, hands off the table. Click, click, click. Green. Zero. Who put their soul there?

Conclusion

The game's rigged. I mean, what this says about God, I love. Because if nothing, it's clear communications. All the different angles all saying the same thing. But here's what I love about it. God does not want us to be reckless with our faith. He doesn't want us to gamble without knowing how it ends. Look at this picture, friends. Look at these paintings. How is it that we can know God? It is clear. The way of God is clear. Look at what it says about the nature of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It says the Father in His generosity sends His Son, for God so loved the world He gave His Son. It says the Spirit is empowering the Son. It is the crown on His head. Jesus is coming to serve all of mankind in obedience the Father. All of that is happening right there. It's teaching us about the Godhead and His love for us and the way He wants us to learn to live with certain and clear faith.

And then look at John the Baptist. That's a picture of our life. Because this is the high point in John's life. It doesn't get any better than this. But here's what's important about John's life. After this event John says, "He must increase and I must decrease." That's you and me. When we meet Jesus, there's something inside of our souls that's supposed to say, *Oh, I get it. I'm supposed to become more like Christ in all of life. He must increase in my soul and my ego must decrease.* What a beautiful picture. It's a picture of the true fullness of life.

So, Grace, repent and be filled. The Messiah, the one who has received testimony from the Father, the Spirit, and all the Old Testament prophets—He's the one. Jesus says He was. He was. From this Jesus will go and take the place of the second Adam that He was. And where Adam failed in a garden, Jesus will succeed in the barren wasteland in a desert. And He will show the last variable, Satan. He will show Satan that He is the one.

Let's close in a word of prayer with these revelations in mind.

Lord Jesus, it's very easy for us to know this story, Lord, and just think, "Oh yeah, baptized by John. I remember that." And now we understand maybe a little bit more that You loved us so much that You didn't just send Your own Son that we might have Him deliver us from our sins. But also, You sent Him in a way and declared so that we could live faithfully and

certainly and securely, that we put our faith, our soul, on Him. And so, God, give us the courage to live courageously. Give us the insight to live thoughtfully. Give us the soul of the Spirit to live sacrificially. You gave us Your Son so that the Spirit would inhabit us and never leave us. We celebrate that in a new way today. We're grateful for that.

Lord, I'd ask that if there are men and women in the sound of my voice that need to take an inventory and repent, tell the truth, the whole truth, that they would do that before You and maybe another person or two; that they might receive the fullness of what You have for their life.

God, we are grateful that we can look back on this event and maybe receive some of the fulfillment of why it took place; that we would live confidently, courageously, certainly about who You are and what You've done. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Good story. Boy! Matthew chapter 3. Read it again.

I know this week has been an exceptionally difficult week for so many people. I don't know where to start. I mean, there are a lot of moms that got almost punished this week making this transition to what might be school. And think of the schoolteachers—I bet it was no picnic for them either. And all the way up the chain—the school administration. And people trying to get work done while school is taking place. I just want to acknowledge it's been a very difficult, exceptionally difficult, week for a lot of people. And some of you are afraid of tomorrow. Or you're just weary.

And I want to open up, in some respects, today's lesson. Repent, maybe, about ways you've been adapting or maladapting to the stress. And then be filled. Ask God's Spirit to come and do what maybe you couldn't do otherwise.

And this last application: could you call someone? Maybe the church. But call someone that you could talk with. I met with someone this week and I realized in the middle of the conversation that I just enjoyed being with this man so much, that I thought—and I said it out loud to him—“I'm going to make for a new spiritual discipline meeting with people. It's been real easy not to meet with people and it's hurting my soul.” And then just like a lot of spiritual disciplines—I don't want to read my Bible. And then I read my Bible and I think, *I love reading my Bible!* I don't want to pray, and I pray: *I love praying!* I don't want to meet with people, and I meet with people: *I love meeting with people!* I'm going to do that. I'm going to encourage you

to do the same thing. Make it a spiritual discipline to meet with someone two or three times a week. It will be good for your soul.

Until then, we'll see you next week. We'll do the Walk Thru the Bible, New Testament, part one.