

Sermon Follow-up | March 16, 2025

Exile: “Up from the water”...” – The New Exodus

Focus Passage: Matthew 3:1-17

Other passages Referenced: Joshua 1–3; Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 2:15; 17:5

Sermon Recap

The **Big Idea** from the sermon was: “Jesus immersed himself in the waters to rescue us through the waters.”

The Gospel of Matthew tells multiple stories and weaves them together with several layers of meaning—the story of Israel, our story, and the story of Jesus. Matthew 3 begins with John the Baptist baptizing people in the Jordan River. The last time the Bible records God’s people gathered at the Jordan was in Joshua 1–3, describing the people of Israel’s crossing the river into the Promised Land some 1,400 years earlier. That event was the triumphant end of their exodus journey. In that event, God parted the river much as He had parted the Red Sea, allowing His people to walk into the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Matthew is telling Israel’s story.

Matthew 3:3 quotes the Prophet Isaiah, referring to John the Baptist as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophesy 600 years earlier about a messenger preceding the Messiah who would be a voice crying in the wilderness. The one John the Baptist announced was named Jesus. We want to note that “Jesus” is the Greek translation of the name “Joshua.” With Jesus now at the edge of the Jordan River, where many of God’s people were gathered, Matthew is telling Jesus’ story as part of Israel’s story.

This time, Jesus does not part the waters or lead the people across the river. Instead, Jesus immerses himself in the river. Why was Jesus baptized? Again, there are multiple layers. The first is that Jesus identified with us in death. Throughout Scripture, the sea and rivers signify chaos and death—the creation story of the Spirit of God hovering over the chaos of *the deep*, the flood that killed all flesh except Noah and his family, Jonah in the depths of the big fish, and Jesus in the boat being battered by a storm his disciples feared would kill them. By immersing Himself in the river among sinners who were also being baptized, Jesus symbolically entered into our sin and death. Matthew is telling our story as those who see a Promised Land in the future that we cannot get to on our own.

John the Baptist expected that Jesus might baptize him, but Jesus turned the tables and told John to baptize Him. In His baptism, Jesus identified Himself with us in the chaos of our sin and death. Jesus also substituted Himself in our place. He took on our exile and punishment and gave us His home. Jesus immersed Himself in the waters to deliver us through the waters of chaos and death.

In His baptism, Jesus also humbled Himself below us. It was typical in that time for a disciple of a rabbi to imitate his rabbi and obey his instructions. However, it was prohibited to ask a disciple to carry the sandals of his rabbi, because that was a lowly task reserved for a slave. When John the Baptist said, “I am not worthy to carry the sandals” of the coming Messiah, he was saying, “I’m not worthy to be His slave.” Yet, Jesus humbled Himself even lower and insisted that John baptize him.

It is noteworthy that the first thing Matthew records after Jesus’ birth in 2:1 is about wise men, from the east searching for Jesus to give Him gifts. These men from the east came from Babylon! As soon as Jesus was born, we see a shift. The banishment of original sin took humanity east of Eden and the exile took God’s people east to Babylon. When Jesus was born, we see people from the east coming to Jesus.

After Jesus was baptized: the heavens are torn open, the Holy Spirit descends, and a voice from heaven speaks for the benefit of onlookers saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased (v. 17). There is only one other time in Matthew’s Gospel when a voice from heaven speaks, and it repeats: ““This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” and it adds, “Listen to him.” “Listen” = “Obey”.

Matthew 2–5 tells the story of a new exodus in Christ—Out of Egypt (2:15), through the waters (3:16), into the wilderness (4:1), and onto the mountain (5:1). Followers of Jesus need to learn the story so they can also live the

story. Follow Jesus out of Egypt and out of Babylon. Keep walking with him as he leads you through the waters of chaos and death. Trust him as he guides you through the wilderness places of life. Go with him onto the mountain to receive, listen to and live according to God's Word—Live the story! Live the new exodus story!

Allow the Word to Speak — READ Matthew 3:1–17

1. What from the passage or sermon was most impactful to you?
2. Were you left with any questions or confusion about the passage or sermon?
3. What did John the Baptist say Jesus would do when He comes? (Matt 3:11–12) Do you see Jesus fulfill those things in His earthly ministry? READ Revelation 19:11–16.
4. How do you see all three members of the Trinity participating in Matthew 3:16–17)

Put the Word into Practice

1. What role did the Jordan River play in the first Exodus event described in Joshua 3? What role do you see the Jordan River play in the new exodus with Jesus in Matthew 3?
2. How did Jesus identify with us in His baptism and how do we identify with Jesus in our baptism? (See Rom 6:1–11)
3. Although we are probably more accustomed to hearing that Jesus substituted Himself on the cross for us, what is the significance of Jesus substituting Himself in baptism for us at the very beginning of His public ministry?
4. As you experience the chaos and death of exile, what are some specific ways the challenge to live the story of the new exodus applies to your current situation? How can you rely on the Holy Spirit and Jesus as the New Exodus to move forward?

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Sermon Slides | March 16, 2025

1. Matthew's Multiple Stories
 - Matt. 3:6=Jos. 3:1
 - Matt. 3:3=Isa. 40:3
 - Joshua (Hb.)=Jesus (Gk.)
2. The New Exodus—Matt. 2-5
 - Out of Egypt—2:15
 - Through the waters—3:16
 - Into the wilderness—4:1
 - Onto the mountain—5:1
3. "Jesus is baptized not because he shares our need but in order to share it."—Dale Brunner
4. "I consider this incident Jesus' first miracle: the miracle of his humility. The first thing Jesus does for the human race is *go down with it* into the deep waters of repentance and baptism. Jesus' whole life will be like this. It is well known that Jesus *ends* his ministry on a cross between thieves; it deserves to be as well known that he *begins* his ministry in a river among sinners. From his baptism to his execution Jesus stays low..."—Dale Brunner
5. He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."— Matthew 17:5
6. Why does Jesus get baptized?—Matt. 3:1-17
 - Jesus identifies himself with us
 - Jesus substitutes himself for us
 - Jesus humbles himself below us
 - Jesus immersed himself in the waters to rescue us through the waters
 - Application: Live the story