

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

76- Jesus Demonstrates His Absolute
Authority- Part 14

Jesus Has the Authority to Save Sinners- Part 2

Church November 19, 2023

Matthew 9:9-13

9 As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

10 Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples.

11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?"

12 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.

13 But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Now we are continuing our verse-by-verse "Journey" through the Gospel of Matthew and this morning, I want to pick up where I left off before Rhonda and I made our trip to Texas. We must remember that Matthew is a Jew, who is trying to reach his fellow-Jews with the "Good News" that Jesus saves Sinners. So, he wrote this Gospel Record in a Way that would reach the Jewish people.

So, Matthew wrote this Book in a "Story" format. Because the ancient Jews would sit down with his Family; or with his Children; or with his Students; or his Followers and he would say, "*Let me tell you a Story*". And then he would relate the Truth about Enoch and Noah and Abraham that his Father had taught him. And that is how the Old Testament came to be- especially the Book of **Genesis**. It was *first* related from Father to Son for several Centuries before Moses became the first man to write down the Truth of God's Word.

But the New Testament was not like that. The 27 Books of the New Testament were written down relatively early after Jesus had risen from the Dead; and while the people who saw Him; and who talked with Him; and who interacted with Jesus- were still alive. And that helped to allow people to believe in what the New Testament Books said- because there were still eyewitnesses alive who could verify the Truthfulness of the things that the four Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) said about the Christ.

So, the Gospel of Matthew is divided into Sections that would appeal to a 1st Century Jew. So, we have an Introduction and an Ending. And in between those two Sections- there are five larger Sections of Teaching from Jesus- that Matthew put in such a Way that they resembled the five Books of Moses.

And we have already finished the first Section of Teaching by Jesus that we now call, the “Sermon on the Mount” where Jesus- in His Authority as God- told everyone what the “*Righteousness that surpassed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*” looked like.

So, throughout all five of these Sections on Teaching- Matthew is comparing Jesus with Moses. Because whoever the Messiah will be- He will NEVER contradict anything that God gave to Moses.

Now, from Chapter 8 all the Way to our Passage this morning- Matthew is showing us that Jesus had the very SAME Authority as God the Father had. So, we see Jesus having Authority over disease and over the elements of Nature and over demons. And so, by giving his Readers all this Information about the Absolute Authority of Jesus- Matthew is proving that Jesus is God Almighty in human Flesh. That He is “*Immanuel*”- God with us.”

But now here in Chapter 9- Matthew is showing his Jewish Readers (and us)- that Jesus has the Authority to forgive Sin and to save Sinners from the Wrath of God. Because whoever the Messiah is- He MUST be able to rescue Sinners from God’s Wrath. And Matthew is telling them (and us) that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

But just *how much* Sin can Jesus forgive? Can Jesus only forgive *some* Sins or can Jesus forgive ALL Sin? Can Jesus forgive the horrific Sins of the worst people in town or does Jesus only forgive the more “acceptable Sins” that “nice people” commit? And Matthew answers that Question by saying,

He forgave me- and I was the very *worst* of Sinners!

... because Matthew tells his Readers why he thought that way when he wrote,

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

... so, Matthew is publicly confessing his Sin of being a Tax Collector.

Now I spent a great deal of Time in the last Sermon telling you just how Evil Tax Collectors were. They were so bad that, according to Alfred Edersheim's books- Tax Collectors were NOT allowed to enter the Temple! They were so bad; so Evil; so terrible- that the Jewish leaders would NOT allow a Tax Collector to even worship God!

Tax Collectors had purchased a Tax License from Rome and were in the Business of extracting exorbitant taxes from the Jewish people to help finance the many Wars that Rome was waging around the known world. So, these men were looked down on as being worse than the Roman soldiers who were brutally ruling over the people.

And Matthew rote this portion of His Gospel Record so he could convey three Points. In other words, Matthew had three things in mind and that is why he wrote this inspired Passage of five verses:

1. His own personal Testimony (verse 9)
2. The Fact that Jesus ONLY saves "*Sinners*" (the entire Passage)
3. God saves Sinners by "*Calling*" them to Salvation (the entire Passage)

... so, let's examine all three of these.

1. Matthew Gives his own Personal Testimony of Salvation

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

Now remember that God the Holy Spirit chose Matthew to write down this true and accurate Record of the Birth; Life; Ministry; Death; Resurrection; and Ascension of Jesus, the Christ.

But before he was saved- Matthew was a wicked Sinner. And as far as he was concerned- Matthew was a much *worse* Sinner than most- because he had purchased a Tax License from the Roman Authorities and had engaged in imposing *confiscatory* Taxes on his own people- the Jews. And Matthew had been responsible for forcing many Jews into Poverty; causing their Businesses to be

ruined; financially hurting Widows and Orphans; and of prospering at the expense of the “People of God”.

So, here at the beginning of Chapter 9- Matthew wanted his fellow-Jews to know (as well as anyone else who would read this Account)- that he was both *acknowledging* that he was a great “Sinner” and *testifying* that he had *repented* of (turned from) his Sins. And Matthew is careful to tell us that he did all of this because Jesus had “called” him to forsake Sin; and be “saved”; or “rescued”; or “delivered”; or “healed” from God’s Wrath against his many Sins.

And Matthew did that- not only by immediately *following* (obeying) Jesus; but also by utterly *abandoning* his thriving Tax Business. And by abandoning his Business- Matthew was testifying loudly that he considered his Business to be “sinful” and something he could no longer be a part of-now that he was saved.

Now last Time- I told you that, even though Church Leaders don’t discuss this much anymore- but *part* of the “*Act of Repentance*”- the initial *turning away from* and the *forsaking* of Sin- includes not only genuine, godly “*Sorrow*” for the Sins a person has committed; but in the Bible, there was also a public “*Confession*” of those Sins. In John Mark’s Gospel we read:

And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. (Mark 1:5)

... and there was also usually both a public and private “*Condemnation*” of the Sins that the people had been forgiven of. **2Corinthians 7:11** says,

For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

Now please turn with me to **Luke 3:1&2:**

**1 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,
2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.**

Here, Dr. Luke lists seven different Romans, who had high

Positions of Authority, at the Time when the “Word of God came” to John the Baptist:

1. **Tiberius Caesar** (in the 15th year of his Reign)
2. **Pontus Pilate** (as Governor of the Roman Province of *Judea*¹)
3. **Herod** (the Tetrarch² [Overseer] of the Roman Province of *Galilee*³)
4. **Philip** (the Tetrarch of the Roman Provinces of *Ituraea* and *Trachonitis*⁴)
5. **Lysanias** (the Tetrarch of the Roman Province of *Abilene*⁵)
6. **Annas** (the Jewish High Priest)
7. **Caiaphas** (the Jewish High Priest)⁶

And the Reason the good Doctor gave us this List was to remove ALL Doubt about the *veracity* of the Gospel Records. It is very easy for anyone to check when these men held their various Offices. And that would then *verify* the objective Truthfulness of the New Testament.

It is important for us to know that since the original Publication Date of the King James Version of the Bible (1611) there have been over 1 million archeological Findings throughout the modern Nation of Israel. And, to date- there has NOT been one Discovery that has contradicted a single Person; Place; or Event that the New Testament posits. 100% of the ancient Discoveries have *verified* that what the New Testament says- actually happened.⁷ Now look at **Luke 3:3-6:**

3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;

4 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.

5 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;

6 AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.'"

¹ The Roman Province of “**Judea**” was located from the middle to the mid-southern portion of 1st Century Palestine and included Jerusalem

² While the Roman “**Office of the Tetrarchy**” was not officially established until 293AD under the Emperor Diocletian, various Roman Authorities were informally called, “**Tetrarchs**” as early as during the earthly Ministry of John the Baptist

³ The Roman Province of “**Galilee**” was in the northern portion of 1st Century Palestine in the area around the Sea of Galilee (Lake of Tiberius)

⁴ The Roman Provinces of “**Ituraea**” and “**Trachonitis**” were located in the far northeastern portion of 1st Century Palestine

⁵ The Roman Province of “**Abilene**” was located about 15 miles northwest of Damascus and was also called, “**Abila**” or “**Abilene of Lysanias**”

⁶ Annas had been the High Priest from 7AD to 15AD but was still influential after he was replaced. Caiaphas was Annas’ son-in-law and was High Priest from 18AD to 36AD.

⁷ I highly recommend “*The Evidence that Demands a Verdict*” and “*The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*” by Josh McDowell.

Here, Dr. Luke is *infallibly* linking John the Baptist's Ministry with the Fulfillment of three verses in the "Burden of Isaiah":

Isaiah 40:3 (verse 4)

Isaiah 40:4 (verse 5)

Isaiah 40:5 (verse 6)

... and with John's Ministry- a New Covenant "Sacrament" was born: "*Water Baptism by Immersion*".

The Old Covenant "*ceremonial Washing*" in water that *symbolized* a "*spiritual Cleansing*" was now COMMANDED of ALL Believers- who would be saved under the infinitely *superior* New Covenant.

So, as John was baptizing Believers- the Jewish religious Leaders became curious as to what he was doing (since there is NO Old Testament Command to baptize anyone in water). And in *response* to those Leaders gathering near to where John was baptizing repentant Jews- Matthew recorded what John said to them in **Matthew 3:7-12:**

7 ... "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;

9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

12 His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Now it is commonly taught that the "**Wrath**" that John was referring to in verse 7- is the Wrath of God that is coming on all the world at some point in *our* Future- when Jesus comes back. But John was NOT talking about Jesus coming back. John the Baptist NEVER preached about Jesus' 2nd Coming. God was using John here to bring in a New Covenant Sacrament (Ordinance) of water Baptism. And the Jewish Leaders are standing there watching him- and listening to what he was preaching to the people. So, what was John preaching?

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)

So, John was NOT preaching about the Wrath of God that is coming on all the world during the Time when Jesus comes back to this earth. He was preaching about the Reality that the Kingdom of Heaven- that the Old Testament Prophets had foretold- was AT HAND! And whoever will enter THIS Kingdom- will do so because they repent; and turn from Sin; and believe in Jesus- NOT that they will return and keep the Law of Moses! So, in **John 1:29b-34** when John the Baptist said,

29... "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

30 "This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'

31 I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.

33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

34 I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

It is important for us to realize that once John made the Statement:

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

... animal Sacrifices were ended!

And that is WHY neither John, nor his disciples; nor Jesus nor His disciples ever sacrificed the first animal during their entire Ministry!

Now we have already read about the ever-growing Hostility that existed between Jesus and the Jewish religious Leaders. Those Leaders didn't simply disagree with Jesus- they hated Him. And so, very early on in His earthly Ministry- they were trying to trap Jesus into saying something or doing something they could use to discredit Him.

And when Jesus proved to be perfectly Sinless- instead of falling on their faces and crying out to God for Forgiveness (because they had NEVER known ANYONE who was sinless)- these religious Hypocrites planned to have Jesus murdered! And they were so deceived; so consumed in their hard and dark hearts

with Envy Jealousy and Hatred- they honestly believed that murdering Jesus would be pleasing to God!

But seldom do we speak of the ever-growing Hostility between these Jewish leaders and John the Baptist. They hated him as well. And they hated John for a number of Reasons:

- He was baptizing in water- which none of the religious Leaders did
- He was calling on people to repent- including the Leaders.
- He was preaching that the “Kingdom of Heaven” was now “at hand!”

So, when John was arrested by the Roman Authorities- because he defended biblical Marriage and condemned the secular Ruler for his Fornication- that Condemnation applied to the Jewish religious rulers as well. Because, as we have already seen- in the 1st Century- the religious Leadership of the Jews was filled with ungodly Divorce and Re-Marriage!

This caused the Jewish religious Leaders to put a distance between John and themselves. So, while John languished in Prison- awaiting his Execution- Jesus NEVER even visited him! And that was probably because it was NOT Time for Jesus to be taken captive.

But why didn't the Jewish religious Leaders visit John? What was their Excuse? The Old Testament *commands* them to visit the people who have been imprisoned unjustly. And they knew John's Message of Holiness was *absolutely* in line with the Old Testament. So, why didn't they visit John?

The religious Hypocrites didn't like John's Message of Purity anymore than the Romans did. So, they kept their distance; they DIDN'T visit him; they NEVER encouraged him; and they allowed the secular Ruler to murder him- even though they *knew* that John was a man of God!

The Scribes and Pharisees saw John the Baptist to be as much a Threat against their Existence as Jesus was. Because John was preaching that God was bringing a decisive END to the Old Covenant; and was ushering in the glorious New Covenant- in, by, and through Jesus- the Lamb of God who takes away the Sins of the world!

Now all throughout their long History- every time God brought Judgment to the Jewish people- it had to do with them wandering away from the Law of Moses. And so, God would bring them under His “corrective Judgment”- NOT to utterly destroy them- but to bring them to Repentance.

And, many times, God would use a pagan Nation to humble His people. And after awhile- the Jews would come to their Senses- usually as they suffered while in their Captivity. And then they would cry out to God for Forgiveness. And God would raise up a “Deliverer” to rescue them from the pagan Gentiles who

were dominating them and bring them back to their Land- with a renewed sense of Zeal to obey the Law of Moses! And the Old Testament Narratives repeat this Scenario- over and over and over again.

But during all of those Times- “Repentance” for the Jew consisted of a “turning *away*” from Sin; and a “turning *back*” to the Law of God that He had given to Moses!

But this Time- now that Jesus has entered into His Ministry- things are radically different! Now please remember that as the 1st Century came about- the Jews had been under the cruel Domination of pagan Gentiles for over 3 Centuries! And for over 400 years- God has been strangely and eerily silent! For 4 Centuries there has been NO Miracle; NO Sign; No Wonder; No Gift; No Deliverer; NO Prophecy; No Prophet; No Seer; No Angel; and NO Move of God!

And NOW- suddenly- John the Baptist comes on the Scene- baptizing humbled and repentant Jews and preaching,

Repent! The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand!

But this Time- Repentance for the Jew will NOT look like all the other Times. There WILL be a “turning *away*” from *individual* as well as *corporate* Sins, Yes! But there will NOT be a turning *back* to the Law of Moses. Not this Time! Why? Because this Time- the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand! This Time- God is going to do a “New Thing” in the earth that He has NEVER done before. Now God is bringing the First or the Old Covenant with all of its Ordinances and Sacrifices and the Levitical Priesthood and an earthly Temple- to a decisive END! And once that Covenant is abolished- it will NEVER rise again!

And in its place- God is now establishing an infinitely BETTER Covenant; that is based on infinitely BETTER Promises; brought about through an infinitely BETTER Sacrifice; that is offered by an infinitely BETTER High Priest!

And so, in **Matthew 3:12** when John the Baptist looked at the Scribes and Pharisees and said,

His [God’s] winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

... he was NOT talking about the Wrath of God that is coming on all the world at the End of Time- he was talking about the Wrath of God that is coming on unbelieving Israel- who, for the most part will categorically *reject* Jesus and the New Covenant in its entirety!

So, even though we may certainly *apply* what John says here to ourselves and those we baptize- John was specifically speaking to the Jewish Leaders who became increasingly MORE hostile toward John as well as Jesus and the Apostles as time went on.

So, in verse 12- John was speaking to those Jewish Leaders figuratively or metaphorically. And so, the “**Threshing Floor**” is the Place where those who have been “called” to Salvation will be forgiven and made Righteous by what Jesus alone does for them. The “**Winnowing Fork**” is the Word and Spirit that God uses to purify all those He calls. The “**Wheat**” are the genuine Believers in Jesus; and the “**Barn**” is Heaven. The “**Chaff**” are the Jews who refuse to believe in Jesus; and the “**Unquenchable Fire**” is the eternal Damnation of Hell.

But we MUST understand that the “**Wheat**” mentioned here- are those who know and who confess that they are wicked Sinners. “**Wheat**” in this case does NOT mean those who, like the Pharisees, hold themselves out to be “Good people”. Those who refuse to confess their Sins are the “Chaff”.

So, the *only* people who *can* be saved- are those whom the Spirit of God is sovereignly drawing to Jesus. And those who are being drawn to Jesus for Salvation- might well be the very *worst* people on earth! And this was completely different from the “salvation” that the Scribes and Pharisees preached.

You see, because true Salvation is a sovereign Work of God- it doesn't matter how Bad a person has been! Because Jesus came to call Sinners to Salvation- then ONLY Sinners can be saved! And part of the Way God humbles His chosen people- is by revealing to them just how Horrible and how Evil they have been! And so, those who can confess their Sins- EASILY- are those God is dealing with.

The Pharisees didn't think they were sinful. They thought that their religious Activities made them Righteous. So, they looked down their noses at the “Sinners”. But Jesus looked TO them! And so, the ONLY people who can be saved- are those who know they are wicked Sinners! And that is why Matthew was quick to Confess that he had been an evil Tax Collector!

Now, back in the 1st Century, this Statement by John the Baptist would mean absolutely NOTHING unless it was directed *specifically* to the Jewish religious Leaders. Gentiles, who lived then, would have not understood what John was talking about. And this is further *incontrovertible* Proof of the *titanic* Transformation from the Old to the New Covenants- that was going on during this Time. So, when John the Baptist told the Jewish religious Leaders,

... do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children

to Abraham.

... he was telling them that their physical, genealogical Relationship with “Father Abraham” was NO LONGER GOING TO HELP THEM under the New Covenant! And when John said,

"The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

... he was prophesying about the complete END of the hierarchical Jewish Priesthood- which was represented in many of the Teachings back in the 1st Century as strong and vibrant “Trees” (Oaks). And this was based on what the Prophet had foretold in **Isaiah 61:3:**

To grant those who mourn in Zion, Giving them a garland instead of ashes, The oil of gladness instead of mourning, The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

The Jewish religious Leaders had *incorrectly* taken this Prophecy of Isaiah to mean that THEY were the “*Oaks (Trees) of Righteousness*” that the Prophet saw. And so, in many rabbinical Writings dating back to the 1st Century- the Scribes and Pharisees referred to themselves as majestic Trees that represented the very “Righteousness of God Himself” to the people.

Now it is important that we understand that by saying that the “axe of God” had already been laid to the Root of the Ministry of the Pharisees- John was NOT *agreeing* with those religious Hypocrites that they actually did represent the Righteousness of God. But ONLY that they categorized *themselves* as being those “spiritual Oaks”.

So, by telling them that God had *already* cut them off by the Roots- John was telling those religious Frauds that their Time of deceiving people about God and Salvation and Holiness and Divine Truth was coming to a decisive End. And by telling them,

... therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

... John was NOT *specifically* referring to the people he was baptizing or that we baptize today- even though it CAN and SHOULD apply to them.

No, John was specifically addressing the Scribes and Pharisees and telling them that the Fruit they were ALREADY bearing- was REAL BAD FRUIT; UNGODLY FRUIT; and EVIL FRUIT; and they were- AT THAT VERY MOMENT- standing under the Damnation of God!

In other words, John was telling these religious men that they were DONE! Their Ministry was DONE! Their Ability to lead the people was DONE! And their spiritual Position and their Ministry as well as their Teaching would NOT carry over into the infinitely superior New Covenant!

Now this is amazing! And what makes it even *more* frightening is that John the Baptist said all of this to these men- even though they could list their spiritual Pedigree:

- They were *directly* and *physically* descendant from Abraham
- They had been circumcised
- They knew the Law of Moses (many had memorized it)
- They were striving to earn Righteousness through fastidious Obedience to the Law of Moses
- They were promoting a Salvation that came by way of Obedience to the Law of Moses

But John was telling them right here that unless they *personally* and *individually* bore this Good, Godly, and Measurable Fruit- (which would *prove* they had experienced the Miracle of the New Birth) not only were they NOT qualified to lead the people- they weren't even saved! And that means these men who spent their entire Lives in the Ministry were NO different than the pagan Gentiles. And so, they would end up in the very SAME Hell as the pagan Gentiles!

And by saying all of this- John was *infallibly* Teaching that Jewish Genealogy; Jewish Ethnicity; and Jewish Nationality; as well as physical Circumcision meant NOTHING as far as Salvation was concerned. The axe of the New Covenant has ALREADY been laid to the ROOT of the Tree! And because that's true- unless a Jew (or anyone else) bears the Fruit of being born again- they CANNOT lay claim to be a "*Child of God*" or a "*Son of Abraham*"; or that they are a part of the "*Chosen People of God*".

Those terms and that Reality- from the Time of John's Ministry until now- belongs SOLELY to those who are part of the Church that Jesus is building; and over which He alone is "Head"! And the MARK that is the unmistakable Proof that a person is part of the "Chosen People of God" under the New Covenant- is NOT the physical Circumcision of their Flesh- but the *invisible*

“Circumcision of Heart” that is verified *outwardly* and *visibly* by the ongoing Good and Godly Fruit that is “in keeping with Repentance”.

Now I realize that this is somewhat Controversial. But the ONLY reason that is true- is because of real BAD Teaching and real Faulty exegesis and exposition of the Scriptures that has given people a false and unbiblical Understanding of the Relationship between the Jew and God under the New Covenant.

However, I do NOT seek to be Controversial at all. I seek to merely to understand (rightly and fully); and to believe; and to teach; and to love; and to hope in what the Bible actually says- and NOT what has been force-fed to us by well-meaning but wayward Teachers.

Now please hear me. I am NOT being “*Antisemitic*”. I didn’t say these things- John the Baptist did. The inspired; infallible; and inerrant Word of the living God teaches *exactly* what I am saying to you this morning. But I wish NO Harm to come to the Jews. But like the Apostle Paul- I seek for their Salvation. And I seek for their Salvation- precisely because I know they are NOT already saved! And so, unless they repent and believe the biblical Gospel- Jews will go to the SAME Hell as everyone else who is Lost.

The New Testament is crystal clear about this. NOBODY is “made Righteous” by obeying the Law of Moses. NOBODY! EVERYBODY who is Righteous- *became* Righteous BY FAITH Alone- in Jesus and in His finished Work- because Jesus obeyed the Law of Moses- *perfectly*!

And the ONLY people who actually love God- are those who are truly saved. Lost people do NOT love God. And they DO NOT love God- because they CANNOT. And they CANNOT love God- because they don’t want to.

But ALL saved people have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth and have the third Person of the Trinity dwelling continually inside of them. And God the Holy Spirit loves Jesus- perfectly! So, by Definition- the ONLY people who are the “People of God” and the ONLY people who love God- are those who have been born again. And that is true whether they are natural Jews or natural Gentiles- because

THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE!

Those who are natural Jews may very well be “*spiritual Gentiles*”. And those who are natural Gentiles may very well be “*spiritual Jews*”. And the “*sons of Abraham*” are ONLY those who “*do the Works of Abraham*”. And in **John 8-** Jesus said the “*Works of Abraham*” are:

- They *rejoice* in Jesus
- They *believe* in Jesus

Jesus said that EVERYTHING in the Old Testament was about Him. And so, if a person reads and understands the Old Testament *correctly*- they WILL come to Jesus as “Lord”; and “Master”; and “Savior”. And those who do NOT come to Jesus like that- have NOT understood the Old Testament correctly and are deceived.

We MUST also believe that NOBODY loves God unless they are saved. And the *Best Way*; the *Fullest Way*; and, under the New Covenant, the *ONLY Way* to love God- is to love Jesus; and to worship Jesus as God!

And the Fact that most people don’t teach this today and don’t believe it- does NOT change the Fact that this is what the Bible says. I didn’t write the Bible- but I believe in what it says. So, if you disagree with me- then love me enough to come to me- with your Bible open- and engage me about this Subject.

Now the people were standing there that Day and listening as John the Baptist was *excoriating* those religious Leaders they had looked up to- their entire Lives. And so, they began to be very concerned about what God might expect from them. And Dr. Luke was faithful to tell us about it in **Luke 3:10-14**:

10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?"

11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise."

12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what you have been ordered to."

14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."

Now over the Centuries since this has been in the Bible- various Groups have taught that saved people MUST ALWAYS be poor people. That there is something Noble and Humbling and Godly about Poverty. There isn’t. Some of the most arrogant and self-righteous people on earth are those who are financially Poor. And a quick examination of the people in **1 Timothy 6**, who were warned by the Apostle Paul to NOT love Money- were the people who didn’t have any- but who lusted for it.

So, our Ability to be Humble and Kind and Godly is NOT determined by how *little* we have in our Bank Account. The Ability and Desire to be Humble and Godly is predicated on whether or not we have personally experienced the Miracle of the New Birth and have been given a new Nature.

Others have taught that ALL saved people MUST give away ALL of our earthly Goods in order to go to Heaven. That isn't what the Bible teaches and it's NOT what John the Baptist was teaching here.

But John the Baptist DID teach what he taught. And so, those who have been saved- MUST bear Good and Godly Fruit BEFORE they are baptized. And that Fact seems to rule out "quick Baptisms". It seems that we need to give people, who have recently experienced the Miracle of the New Birth and have been justified and have been adopted into the Family of God, an Opportunity to bear some real Good and Godly Fruit that is "in Keeping with Repentance" or that is "in Accord with Repentance" or Fruit that "proves that the individual has truly repented"- BEFORE we baptize them.

During the early Days of the Christian Church- it was common for the Leaders to wait about "40 Days" from the Time a person said they were born again and their Baptism. And that "40 days" was a Time of Repentance; Grieving over Sins; Fasting; and of bearing godly Fruit that would PROVE that their Conversion was Genuine.

It was also a Time when the "new Convert" would be taught the "*Fundamentals of Christianity*"; memorize a Creed (usually the Apostles' Creed); and be able to answer Questions about what the Creed taught.

But it was also a Time when, for example, if a man had been a Thief- he could go to the people he had stolen from and *repay* them- either by giving them back what he stole or by working for them to earn money to repay them. The Effort a person would expend to try to "make amends" was judged by the Elders to either be appropriate or to be lacking Veracity. And a Decision was made by the Church Leaders as to whether that person had proved that he was truly "Penitent".

So, when that person was ready to be Baptized- it was truly a real big deal. And the people of the Community- including the Sheriff and Mayor would come out to see what God had done with that person- who had been a notable Sinner.

And that public Baptism was termed as the "*First Public Profession of Faith*"- where the Individual would openly confess before those present: what he believed; what Sins God had delivered him from; how terribly Sorry he was over his Sins; and what his Intentions for the Future were. He would also recite the Creed and testify that it represented what he ascribed to. And, like what is done in some Marriages, Time would be given to anyone present- who had an Objection to that person being Baptized.

Beloved, I believe the early Church had it right. And I give my Approval that we should *emulate* this Standard in our Church for all future Baptisms. I am sorely afraid that we rush too quickly into Baptisms- partially because of the Sin of

“spiritual Competition” of trying to keep up with other Groups to see how many people we can Baptize in a year.

Over the Centuries, the “*Public Profession of Faith*” that Baptism represented after 40 days of Repentance; Teaching; and Bearing Good and Godly Fruit was changed to things like “*Altar Calls*”; and “*Walking down an Aisle*”; “*Shaking the Preacher’s Hand*”; “*Raising a Hand*”; “*Signing a Card*”; or “*Praying a Prayer*” while the choir sings 350 verses of “*Just as I Am*”.

But what Matthew infallibly wrote here about his own Conversion should be the Standard that we go by concerning true and genuine Salvation:

- Jesus ONLY saves Sinners
- Sinners are saved by God “*calling*” them to Salvation
- It doesn’t matter how sinful you have been
- People may rebel and delay and wander off- even for long periods of time- but there is a set Time in God’s Economy when God’s Call to Salvation is “*Effectual*” and “*Irresistible*” and the people He calls- respond *IMMEDIATELY!*
- Those who respond to the Divine Call to Salvation repent “in Deed” as well as “in Word”. They bear Good and Godly Fruit “in Keeping with Repentance”
- Those who are saved- follow Jesus wherever He goes

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.