

General Comments on Matthew 3-4

Luke 3-4 covers the same material as does Matthew 3-4, with some significant differences. I would assume the lesson manual chose Matthew's account over Luke's because of the more verbose accounting of Jesus' baptism in Matt. 3:13-17, ct. Luke 3:21-22. Luke's account is more verbose in it's accounting of John's ministry, cf. Luke 3:5-6, 10-15, 18.

The Inspired Version (IV) makes a number of substantial emendations to the KJV.

KJV

1 In those days came
John the Baptist,
preaching in the
wilderness of Judaea,
2 And saying,
Repent ye:
for the kingdom of heaven
is at hand.
3 For this is he that was spoken
of by the prophet Esaias,
saying,
The voice of one
crying in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.
4 And the same John
had his raiment of camel's hair,
and a leathern girdle
about his loins;
and his meat was locusts
and wild honey.
5 Then went out to him
Jerusalem,
and all Judaea,
and all the region
round about Jordan,
6 And were baptized
of him in Jordan,
confessing their sins.
7 But when he saw
many of the Pharisees
and Sadducees come to his baptism,
he said unto them,
O generation of vipers,
who hath warned you to flee
from the wrath to come?

IV

27 And in those days came
John the Baptist,
preaching in the
wilderness of Judea,
28 And saying,
Repent ye;
for the kingdom of heaven
is at hand.
29 For I am he who was spoken
of by the prophet Esaias,
saying,
The voice of one
crying in the wilderness,
Prepare ye the way of the Lord
and make his paths straight.
30 And the same John
had his raiment of camels' hair,
and a leathern girdle
about his loins;
and his food was locusts
and wild honey.
31 Then went out to him
Jerusalem,
and all Judea,
and all the region
round about Jordan,
32 And many were baptized
of him in Jordan,
confessing their sins.
33 But when he saw
many of the Pharisees
and Sadducees come to his baptism,
he said unto them,
O, generation of vipers!
who hath warned you to flee
from the wrath to come?
34 Why is it that ye receive not

8 Bring forth therefore fruits
meet for repentance:

9 And think not to say
within yourselves,
We have Abraham to our father:

for I say unto you,
that God is able of these stones
to raise up children unto Abraham.

10 And now also
the axe is laid
unto the root of the trees:
therefore every tree
which bringeth not forth
good fruit is hewn down,
and cast into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you
with water,
unto repentance:
but he

that cometh after me
is mightier than I,
whose shoes
I am not worthy to bear:

he shall baptize you
with the Holy Ghost,
and with fire:

12 Whose fan is in his hand,
and he will thoroughly
purge his floor,
and gather his wheat

the preaching of him whom
God hath sent?

If ye receive not this
in your hearts,
ye receive not me;
and if ye receive not me,
ye receive not him of whom
I am sent to bear record;
and for your sins
ye have no cloak.

35 Repent,
therefore,
and bring forth fruits
meet for repentance;
36 And think not to say
within yourselves,
We are the children of Abraham,
and we only have power to bring seed
unto our father Abraham;

for I say unto you
that God is able of these stones
to raise up children into Abraham.

37 And now, also,
the axe is laid
unto the root of the trees;
therefore every tree
which bringeth not forth
good fruit, shall be hewn down,
and cast into the fire.

38 I indeed baptize you
with water,
upon your repentance;
and when he
of whom I bear record cometh,

who is mightier than I,
whose shoes
I am not worthy to bear,
(or whose place
I am not able to fill,)
as I said,

I indeed baptize you
before he cometh,
that when he cometh
he may baptize you
with the Holy Ghost
and fire.

39 And it is he of whom
I shall bear record,
whose fan shall be in his hand,
and he will thoroughly
purge his floor,
and gather his wheat

into the garner;
but he will burn up the chaff
with unquenchable fire.

13 Then cometh Jesus
from Galilee to Jordan
unto John,
to be baptized of him.
14 But John forbad him,
saying,
I have need
to be baptized of thee,
and comest thou to me?
15 And Jesus answering
said unto him,
Suffer it to be so now:
for thus it becometh us
to fulfil all righteousness.
Then he suffered him.

16 And Jesus,
when he was baptized,
went up straightway
out of the water:
and, lo,
the heavens were opened unto him,
and he saw the Spirit of God
descending like a dove,
and lighting upon him:
17 And lo
a voice from heaven,
saying,
This is my beloved Son,
in whom I am well pleased.

into the garner;
but in the fullness of his own time
will burn up the chaff
with unquenchable fire.
40 Thus came John,
preaching and baptizing
in the river of Jordan;
bearing record,
that he who was coming after him
had power to baptize
with the Holy Ghost and fire.
41 And then cometh Jesus
from Galilee to Jordan,
unto John,
to be baptized of him;
42 But John refused him,
saying,
I have need
to be baptized of thee,
and why comest thou to me?
43 And Jesus, answering,
said unto him,
Suffer me to be baptized of thee,
for thus it becometh us
to fulfill all righteousness.
Then he suffered him.
44 And John went down into the water
and baptized him.
45 And Jesus
when he was baptized,
went up straightway
out of the water;
and John saw,
and lo,
the heavens were opened unto him,
and he saw the Spirit of God
descending like a dove
and lighting upon Jesus.
46 And lo,
he heard a voice from heaven,
saying,
This is my beloved Son,
in whom I am well pleased.
Hear ye him.

Comments on Matthew 3

1 IN those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, 2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the

wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, 6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: 9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to [our] father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. 10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and [with] fire: 12 whose fan [is] in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

v1-12 John Baptist's ministry is distilled and presented. John preaches in the wilderness and tells the people to repent because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand (v. 1-2). He identifies himself as the forerunner of the Messiah per Malachi 3:1 (v. 3). He is something of an Elijah-esque wild-man (v. 4). Many people of Judah in the regions around Jerusalem go out to see him, and get baptized as they confess their sins (v. 5-6). He becomes popular enough to draw away the devotees of the Pharisees and Sadducees, but when they come out he rebukes them harshly (v. 7-10). He then warns the people that his ministry is only preparatory, in that he baptizes with water but one will shortly be along to baptize them with the Spirit, to purge them of all uncleanness (v. 11-12).

Luke's account is more verbose than Matthew's, cp. Luke 3:5-15. It includes a parlay between John and the people around him. They ask him what they should do and he tells them. And some of them think that he may be the Messiah.

v1 "preaching in the wilderness", John continues to avoid the towns and villages, presumably maintaining his ascetic Nazarite lifestyle. It also follows suit with the predictions concerning his calling to "clear a path in the wilderness" per v. 3. Also cp. Luke 1:80.

v3 The IV emends the verse to John identifying himself rather

than Matthew identifying him as the forerunner of the Messiah.

v4 John is presented as being like Elijah in both his calling and countenance, cp. 2 Ki. 1:6.

"his meat was locusts", with regard to the locusts, various commentators point out the Aramaic term which would have been used here for "locusts" was close to the Aramaic term for "carob", so the translator from Aramaic to Greek may have mistranslated. Eating locusts is permitted in Lev. 11:22, and Arabs at that time were known to eat them. The carob versus locusts issue is driven more by Western sensibilities on what is and is not palatable than anything else.

The term "meat" is an archaic English term meaning "food" in general, unlike the contemporary English which refers to the flesh of animals. The Greek term is "trophe" and most literally translates to "nourishment".

Regardless of whether he ate locusts or not, the passage intends to convey the idea that John Baptist lived away from town, was a wild man, and relied on Providence to live.

v5 John becomes quite popular, which is not all that surprising. When Herod took over rule of Jerusalem he had the local Rabbis deposed and the Sanhedrin executed. They were subsequently replaced by Rabbis imported from Persia who apparently were descendants of those remaining after the Babylonian Exile. Thus, these religious leaders were servile to Herod because they owed their positions of power to him. Hence their persistent deference to and reliance upon him, his children, and the Romans.

The locals in Jerusalem did not hold these imported Pharisees in high esteem, as is evidenced by the lack of respect shown them through the Gospels. So, when someone else comes along who is preaching truthfully and railing against the obviously corrupted current system, the people resort to him.

This also explains why John Baptist is so hard on those which were formerly devoted to the imported Pharisees (v. 7), but who recently turn to him. These are people who tend to follow trends.

v6 John's baptizing is not a novelty. Jews have a practice of ritual washing called "tevilah" which is performed in a "mikvah", which would be equivalent to baptism performed in a fount. Jews still practice this custom today, generally on Yom

Kippur and for converts to Judaism. To them it is a ritual ablution, or washing.

v7 These people are not Pharisees and Sadducees in the sense of being the religious leaders, scribes, priests, and so on. These are people who were adherents to these two sects (note Luke 3:7 simply identifies them as "the multitude"). When John sees these people coming out, he sternly calls them to repentance. Their intentions are hypocritical, apparently based upon John's fame, thus resulting in his rebuke. The IV then inserts a verse to explain why they are hypocrites: they are not accepting his testimony concerning the Messiah, so they aren't really accepting him.

The IV insertion has the statement "for your sins ye have no cloak". Assuming this addition is equivalent to the statement in John 15:22, what John is saying is they have no pretense or false front with which to hide their sins with as he has told them plainly concerning the Messiah and they ignore him.

v8 The other people are apparently confessing their sins honestly in v. 6, but for this group of hypocrites John makes it perfectly clear change is required. Their confession and his baptism is not sufficient.

v9 The IV on this verse adds on to the meaning of the KJV:

And think not to say within yourselves, We are the children of Abraham, and we only have power to bring seed unto our father Abraham; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children into Abraham.

The IV on Luke 3:8, the parallel version of the present verse, states:

Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, Abraham is our father; we have kept the commandments of God, and none can inherit the promises but the children of Abraham; for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

The KJV presents them as claiming salvation via Abrahamic lineage. The IV on the Matthew and Luke accounts goes on to broaden John's accusation to include complacency and self-righteousness. The people are claiming special privileges by birthright and saying they do not have the power to save anyone but themselves, which they are doing because they are keeping the commandments.

John retorts that if all God wanted was children for Abraham He could make them from scratch as he did Adam and Eve. This de-emphasizes their privilege via birthright claims, says that their claim to not be able to save anyone else besides the lineage of Abraham are nonsense, and accuses them of self-righteousness.

"We have Abraham to our father", the underlying subject is the claim associated with being children of the Promise. This idea has its source in the numerous OT Prophet statements that Israel will be redeemed and is the Lord's favored people. Especially see Isa. 51:1-3 where this connection is explicitly made with respect to the redemption of Zion.

However, the Lord is perfectly willing to destroy the wicked from among Israel and reconstitute it as He deems necessary, based upon the various covenant curses, cf. Lev. 26. For example, the entire Golden Calf episode where the Lord wants to destroy almost all of Israel, but Moses intercedes and only the most wicked are destroyed, cf. Exod. 32.

Thus, the people are myopically focusing on the doctrines that suit themselves.

Such appeals to Abrahamic lineage are used both correctly and incorrectly throughout the NT, cf. Luke 16:24, John 8:33-39, Acts 7:2, Romans 4, Gal. 3:29.

"stones...children", the Aramaic which would have been used here contains a probable word play of "benayya", children, and "abnayya", stones. Which would explain why John chose to put children in an obscure parallel to stones.

v11 The IV on this verse fleshes out the KJV a bit, and inserts a parenthesis which explains what John means when he says "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear", i.e., "I am not able to fill his place".

v12 John is still addressing the hypocrites from v. 7-10, and he warns them that when the Messiah comes he will separate the

wheat from the chaff and burn the chaff. The imagery of burning and consuming for purification is common to the OT, cp. Isa. 5:24-25, Mal. 3:1-3. The metaphor of harvest and winnowing is also common, cp. Isa. 28:23-29.

The IV inserts a verse between v. 12-13 which summarizes v. 1-12. It also serves as a segue from v. 1-12 to v. 13-17, as v. 1-12 have him testifying concerning the Messiah, and v. 13-17 has the Messiah. In the KJV it is not clear who is present for v. 13-17. The IV makes it clear the two sections are separate and the only one who witnesses the events in v. 13-17 is John Baptist. The IV follows the versions presented in John 1 and D&C 93 where John is a solo witness. The IV on Luke 3:21 also emends the verse to read such that the baptism of the people is separate from the baptism of Jesus.

13 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. 14 But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? 15 And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer [it to be so] now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17 And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

v13-17 Jesus comes out to John to be baptized by him (v. 13). When John recognizes him he refuses saying he needs to be baptized by him instead (v. 14), obviously referring to the baptism of the Spirit previously mentioned (v. 11). Jesus states it is necessary because by so doing they will fulfil all righteousness. The IV inserts a verse stating they went down into the water together, obviously implying baptism by immersion. Then afterwards Jesus comes straight out of the water and sees the heavens open and the Spirit descend and rest upon Jesus (v. 16). John then hears the voice of God the Father announcing Jesus is His Well-beloved, and he tells John to hear him (v. 17).

v15 The subject of this verse is discussed at length in 2 Ne. 31:4-7.

v16-17 The IV emends these verses to make it clear John was the one witnessing the various events. The KJV suggests Jesus is

the one witnessing the events, and we are left to infer John's witnessing.

According to D&C 93:16-17, this is the point at which Jesus is committed the full set of keys with regard to being God the Son in the flesh. Prior to this we would have to assume Jesus did not have the full set of keys and therefore was not God the Son when strictly speaking regarding authority issues.

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