

## Lesson One — His Forerunner

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This week we will study the part of Messiah's story that we are already familiar with — the birth of His forerunner. But in doing so we will pay particular attention to some detail that is often glossed over without a second thought. Let's begin.

### Day One — Reading the Familiar Story

Before we begin, why don't you ask the Lord to help you in your study today? Ask Him to open your eyes so that you might see things that heretofore you may have missed?

Today we will begin reading the account given to us in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, which is printed in the Appendix<sup>1</sup>. Spend good study time on this. The story may be so familiar to you that you may be tempted to skim over important facts. Pay attention to what you are reading! I have left wide margins for you to make careful observations of the text. Make any notes of interest in the margins. If you have enough time, it would be a good idea to read it through a couple of times.

Do the reading now.

We'll spend the next few days covering the various sections of what you have read today. As you go your way, and before you close, why don't you ask the Lord to help you meditate on what you have read today?

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<sup>1</sup> If you would like, you may want to tear these sheets out, cut off the fray, staple them together, and keep them in your book. Sometimes, loose sheets make it easier to handle. Just an idea.

## Day Two — Gabriel's Appearance to Zacharias

Begin your day of study in prayer.

Today we are going to go back to the reading from yesterday's work and catch a few of the specific details. In doing so, we will be rereading various sections of the large passage. Pull out those sheets now.

Go back and reread Luke 1:5-20. Write out the names of the three *main* characters in this portion of the story.

1)

2)

3)

List as many details as you can about Zacharias and Elizabeth.

Now we need to go back to pick up the details of what the angel told Zacharias. Please go back to vv. 13-20, and reread it.

What are the specific things that the angel prophesied concerning the son that Zacharias and Elizabeth would have? Make a list of the points. Especially note the prophecy in v. 17.

What was Zacharias' obvious and immediate concern about the message, which the angel gave? Write out what his question was.

What was the angel's answer addressing Zacharias' concern?

Within this dialogue, in v. 17 the angel quotes from Malachi 4:5-6. Read the following passage.

**Malachi 4**

**5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.”**

You may not have realized it, but these two verses are the *last two verses in all of the Old Testament!* Thereafter, God was silent for 400 years! For 400 years! Imagine! After God had called Abraham, and subsequently had spoken to the people through the prophets for the previous 1,600 years or so, He became silent.

And here in our reading of Luke chapter one, God *remembers* the very last thing He spoke to Israel. And God sent the angel, Gabriel, to speak to a man whose name was Zacharias (who was *chosen by the casting of lots* to go into the Temple that very day) to let His people know that *He remembered* what He had previously said, and was now getting ready to begin bringing Old Testament prophecies to pass.

**Oh, by the way! Do you know what Zacharias’ name means? The name “Zacharias” means “God Remembers.”**

(Pause for a moment, and ponder the greatness of God’s Word!)

Do you think it was coincidental that a man whose name means “God Remembers” was chosen by the casting of lots to go into the Temple the very day that God sent Gabriel with the first message in 400 years to His people, only to repeat what He had last said?

Now that should cause you to take a pause and breathe deeply, and realize what all is going on in these opening verses in the Book of Luke.

Neither is it coincidental that God would send His angel with this message to Zacharias and Elizabeth, a couple who, heretofore had been barren, and now — in their old age — they were to become the parents of a son who would be the prophet sent to prepare the way for the Messiah.

Does the description *old and advanced in age* remind you of another couple who was barren and beyond the years of childbearing, who also bore a son in their old age? Who would that be?

Exactly! Abraham and Sarah had a son in their old age after being barren. There are at least six instances wherein God mentions the fact that Abraham and Sarah *were advanced in age* prior to having the son of promise. God moves matters beyond the natural — removing man from the equation completely — and then supernaturally intervenes; something seen throughout Scripture. And it seems that God wants us to take notice of this fact.

**Genesis 17**

**17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”**

**Genesis 18**

**11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. 12 And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?” 13 And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’**

**Genesis 21**

**2 So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.**

**...5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.**

**...7 And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”**

**Genesis 24** (Abraham’s servant speaking to Abraham’s family when he was searching for a wife for Isaac)

**36 “Now Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master in her old age; and he has given him all that he has.**

Now reread Luke 1:6, 7.

Undoubtedly, Zacharias and Elizabeth knew the story of Abraham and Sarah. Undoubtedly, they would have put things together — even the fact that the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias with a message concerning their son being the forerunner of the One of Whom the whole of Scripture is about.

Do you have any comments on what you have learned in these two days of study?

**Oh, by the way! Do you know what Zacharias’ wife’s name, Elizabeth, means? It means “God of the Oath.”**

We’ll take a break for today, though we have covered only the beginning points of the story. What we have studied today should cause you to ask, “Well *exactly what* does ‘God remember?’” What ‘oath’ would He want to call attention to? Think about that as you go your way. Tomorrow we will examine it. See you then.

## Day Three — Gabriel’s Appearance to Mary

Yesterday we realized that it was no coincidence that Zacharias, a man — whose name means “God Remembers” — was chosen by the casting of lots to go into the Temple to burn incense on the particular day that God had sent His angel, Gabriel, with a message for His people, Israel. And the message He sent through His angel to His people had to do with the very last thing that God had spoken to Israel about 400 years prior. He had promised to send a prophet, a forerunner, before sending the Redeemer — a forerunner who would make ready the way of the Lord.

The text tells us that when Zacharias had completed his priestly duties, he went home. “And after these days, Elizabeth became pregnant.” Then, in the sixth month (of Elizabeth’s pregnancy), God sent the angel Gabriel to another person. This time, he was sent to a *young virgin*, whose name was Mary. Go back to the text in Luke chapter one and reread vv. 26-38.

In this passage, special attention needs to be given to the seven prophecies within the text that Gabriel specifically mentioned concerning Mary’s Baby spoken of in Luke chapter one.

**31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.”**

What are the seven prophecies concerning this conception?

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

Go back through this list and put a check mark by each prophecy that will be fulfilled **literally** (i.e., a fulfillment that would *literally* take place in time and space).

Now let’s look again at the interchange between Mary and Elizabeth. Reread Luke 1:39-55 now.

The text reveals that Mary and Elizabeth believed *all* that the angel had told Mary would be fulfilled literally. Check out Luke 1:45. What did Elizabeth say to Mary?

The phrase Gabriel used concerning Mary's Son — that He would “be called Son of the Most High” — was referring back to a promise God had given King David in II Samuel chapter seven. In fact, look at the phrase in Luke 1:32 and see the prophecy immediately following the announcement of this title. What prophecy does Gabriel give in connection with this title?

Let's look at the promise given to David by God through the prophet Nathan.

**II Samuel 7**

**12 “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me...**

How does the passage in II Samuel relate to what Gabriel told Mary about her Son? Give details.

Mary asked a question concerning these things in v. 34. What was the question?

What was Gabriel's answer (v. 35)?

When the angel departed, Mary made haste to visit Elizabeth. Read the simple detail given in v. 41 and compare it to v. 15. What comparison do you make here?

Now let's look at Mary's prayer of praise as spoken to Elizabeth in Luke chapter one. Reread vv. 46-55. This section of Scripture is absolutely filled with references to the prophets.

After you have reread this section, what is the last thing Mary praises God for in v. 54 and 55? Write it out verbatim.

In vv. 31-33, we see that the angel spoke to Mary about her son being the Son of God, and that God will give to Him “the throne of His father David.” Now, in vv. 54 and 55, Mary says, “In remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.”

Let’s look to see what God had spoken to Abraham, to which Mary would be referring.

#### **Genesis 17**

**1 Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. 2 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly.” 3 And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, 4 “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you.**

**7 “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”**

**....15 Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 And I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” 18 And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!” 19 But God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.**

What connection can you make between what the angel said to Mary, what the Prophet Nathan spoke to David, and what God had spoken to Abraham and his offspring? Write down what connections you can make.

Now go back again to the text in Luke chapter one. Zacharias was struck mute when he questioned the angel as to how it could be that he and his wife would have a son in their old age. As evidenced by the angel’s response to him, Zacharias displayed a lack of faith in God’s ability to perform such an action. That spoken of Zacharias and Elizabeth in Luke 1:6 — both walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord — would reveal that both knew the Old Testament Scriptures. In this respect, Zacharias would surely have known that God had previously performed such a feat with the birth of Abraham and Sarah’s son, Isaac. And due to Zacharias’ lack of faith in God’s ability to give them a son in their old age, he was struck mute from that time until eight days after the baby was born.

When it came time to circumcise the boy and to name him, Zacharias’ tongue was loosed, and he could speak (1:57-66). Immediately Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to praise God and to prophesy over his son. He said in vv. 68-79:

**“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for He has visited us  
and accomplished redemption for His people,  
and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant —  
As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old —  
Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, and  
FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;  
to show mercy toward our fathers,  
and to remember His holy covenant, the oath  
which He swore to Abraham our father,  
to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,  
might serve Him without fear,  
in holiness and righteousness  
before Him all our days.**

**“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
for you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS;  
to give to His people the knowledge of salvation  
by the forgiveness of their sins,  
because of the tender mercy of our God,  
with which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us  
TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH,  
To guide our feet into the way of peace.”**

Before we continue, would you mind reading through Zacharias’ prayer of prophecy and praise a few times? I would like you to be familiar with it, as we look at some Old Testament passages, to which Zacharias undoubtedly was referring? Please do that rereading now.

Let’s look back at what God “spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old.” Find the word “remember,” and draw a circle around it. Then draw a line under exactly what it is that God remembers. Now write out verbatim what God remembered.

There is more to this, which we will continue to see as we study. That is enough for the day. Mediate on these things. See you tomorrow.

## Day Four — Zacharias’ Prayer and Prophecy

Let’s begin today by going back to Zacharias’ prayer of praise and reread what he said.

With that in mind, let’s peruse some Old Testament passages which have to do with this oath, which Zacharias mentions concerning God’s holy covenant with His people. But before we get to the oath per se, we must understand *why there was a need for such an oath*. We must understand something at the very beginning of Scripture, which, if these beginning things are overlooked, then succeeding *facts may*

*altogether not make much sense.* So let's go back to the opening chapter of God's Word and see what God says about creating man in the first place.

### Genesis 1

**26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."**

According to what God said, what was His *very purpose* for creating man?

And what was man to rule over?

Man was to rule over the domain over which Satan was originally created to rule. A study in this area of God's revelation to man reveals that Satan is the "god of this world [Lit., 'age']" (II Cor. 4:4), "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2); and he has been so since his creation, when he was created as the *anointed cherub who covers the earth* (Ezek. 28:14). But Satan fell at a point in time in eternity past, and God created man to rule in his stead.

It's easy to see that God's purpose has not yet been fulfilled. It's also easy to see that, if God plans something, His plan will not be thwarted. So why was His plan not immediately fulfilled? Write out what you think.

God's plan was not immediately fulfilled due to Satan's intervention, resulting in Adam's sin in the Garden; but to show that God's plan will ultimately be fulfilled, He gave a promise of redemption (for the man) to the very one who had brought about his fall — Satan. In speaking to Satan concerning man's redemption, immediately after the fall of the man, God said:

### Genesis 3

**15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."**

Without spending too much time on all of this (which certainly should be done at some point), suffice it to say that even Adam's fall resulted in not only his own disqualification to fulfill his created purpose, it also resulted in the entire human race being disqualified to fulfill man's created purpose. But again, God's plan will not ultimately be thwarted.

God began to bring about His plan of redemption. He promised that there would come a Seed of the woman, Who would ultimately put down the enemy, and, having that victory, God would then place man back in a position wherein he could fulfill his created purpose. And throughout the pages of Scripture, we can clearly see that plan, not only as it progressively unfolds but as it is also ultimately fulfilled.

Now go back and reread the prayer of praise spoken by Zacharias, eight days after his son had been born. See if the prayer of praise makes more sense to you now. Notice that it really does have its basis in what has happened since the beginning of mankind. Do that reading now (p. 16).

Today we are perusing some passages that progressively deal with God's unfolding plan. As you read through these next passages, underline the portions of these passages which seem to be that which Zacharias was referring to concerning the oath made by God.

The first several passages deal with the things God spoke to Abraham.

#### **Genesis 12**

**1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; 2 And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great And so you shall be a blessing; 3 And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."**

#### **Genesis 17**

**4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you.**

**...7 "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."**

#### **Genesis 22**

**16 and [God] said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."**

Thus far, list the details concerning the oath given to Abraham:

Now let's look at further revelation given to King David:

#### **II Samuel 7**

**12 "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me..."**

What did God promise David?

And to show that David understood the promise, read what David later wrote<sup>2</sup>:

**Psalms 132**

**11 The LORD has sworn to David, A truth from which He will not turn back; “Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne. 12 If your sons will keep My covenant, And My testimony which I will teach them, Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever.” 13 For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. 14 This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it. 15 I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy with bread. 16 Her priests also I will clothe with salvation; And her godly ones will sing aloud for joy. 17 There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth; I have prepared a lamp for Mine anointed. 18 His enemies I will clothe with shame; But upon himself his crown shall shine.”**

Now let’s look at a few of the very many places wherein the prophets wrote of the promises God made about the coming Messiah — the One Who would bring God’s plans and purposes concerning man and the earth to pass.

**Isaiah 9**

**2 The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.**

**Isaiah 40**

**3 A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley...**

**Isaiah 42**

**7 To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon, And those who dwell in darkness from the prison.**

**Jeremiah 23**

**5 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. 6 In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The LORD our righteousness.’**

**Jeremiah 30**

**10 ‘And fear not, O Jacob My servant,’ declares the LORD, ‘And do not be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, And your offspring from the land of their captivity. And Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, And no one shall make him afraid.**

**Malachi 3**

**1 “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts.**

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<sup>2</sup> This is only one of *very many* Psalms wherein David wrote of the promise given to him.

#### Malachi 4

1 “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. 2 But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. 3 And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the LORD of hosts. 4 “Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. 5 Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.”

We can also find references to these things in the New Testament. Here are a few of the places which refer back to the oath God gave as well as the prophecy concerning the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth.

#### Acts 2 (Peter to the Council)

29 “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 And so, because he was a prophet, and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS UPON HIS THRONE...

#### Acts 26 (Paul to King Agrippa)

17b ...the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, 18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’

#### Hebrews 6

13 For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, “I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU, AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU.” 15 And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. 16 For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. 17 In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, 18 in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Compare this sampling of passages to what Zacharias said in his praise at the circumcision of his son.

This all should cause us pause to ponder how great God’s Word is! See you tomorrow.

## Day Five — John the Baptist

This week we have studied the events leading up to and including the birth of John the Baptist. We have learned that he was born to parents who were in their old age, and who had heretofore been barren. John's father's name means "God Remembers," and his mother's name means "God of the Oath." We have also seen that his conception and birth was foretold by the angel Gabriel, and fulfilled several Old Testament prophecies.

Today we are going to view the life, message, and death of John the Baptist. We will be doing a good amount of Bible reading today. Please do not read these passages in the rote way that (sorry to say) so many of us have been taught to read Scripture. Read it as if you are reading a personal letter written to you, by God, for so you are. Read these passages with expression and passion. Understand that these Words are not just old, dusty Words written nearly 2,000 years ago, but that these Words are alive, and the very personification of Truth!

### John's message and ministry:

#### **Matthew 3**

**1 Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 3 For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"**

In a word, what was the message John brought?

According to this passage, why did John tell the people to repent?

#### **Mark 1**

**1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY; 3 THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.'"**

**4 John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 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. 6 And John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. 7 And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals. 8 I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."**

**9 And it came about in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; 11 and a voice came out of the heavens: "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased."**

What had Isaiah the Prophet prophesied, which Mark quotes here in vv. 2 and 3?

Whose voice came out of heaven? What did the Voice say?

What was the message John brought?

According to this passage, what was John privy to witness and hear?

### **Luke 3**

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

### **John 3**

**23** And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and they were coming and were being baptized. **24** For John had not yet been thrown into prison. **25** There arose therefore a discussion on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. **26** And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have borne witness, behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him."

**27** John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing, unless it has been given him from heaven. **28** You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' **29** He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. And so this joy of mine has been made full. **30** He must increase, but I must decrease. **31** He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. **32** What He has seen and heard, of that He bears witness; and no man receives His witness. **33** He who has received His witness has set his seal to this, that God is true. **34** For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure. **35** The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. **36** He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Summarize what John said of Jesus:

Jesus' witness of John:

**Matthew 11**

**1** And it came about that when Jesus had finished giving instructions to His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. **2** Now when John in prison heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples, **3** and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?" **4** And Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: **5** the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. **6** And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me."

**7** And as these were going away, Jesus began to speak to the multitudes about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? **8** But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces. **9** But why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. **10** This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.' **11** Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. **12** And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. **13** For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. **14** And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come. **15** He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

Summarize what Jesus said of John:

John's death:

**Matthew 14**

**3** For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. **4** For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." **5** And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they regarded him as a prophet. **6** But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. **7** Thereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. **8** And having been prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." **9** And although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests. **10** And he sent and had John beheaded in the prison. **11** And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl; and she brought it to her mother. **12** And his disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.

After these things, Jesus appeared to three of His disciples, Peter, James and John, in His kingdom glory. This event was later to be used by the Holy Spirit in both Peter's and John's writings, but for our purposes today, I want you to see what Jesus said to them after the event on the Mount of Transfiguration concerning John the Baptist. (This will further be discussed in the video lecture.<sup>3</sup>)

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<sup>3</sup> The video lecture will be an important element in this study this week. If you cannot attend your class, or

**Matthew 17**

**9 And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." 10 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"**

**11 And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things; 12 but I say to you, that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.**

Essentially, what did the disciples ask Jesus after the experience of the transfiguration on the mount?

What did they understand Jesus to be saying (v. 13)?

Now before you get carried away with that thought, let's consider the inference here. There are some who believe this inference indicates that Jesus was saying that John the Baptist was, in fact, Elijah. But can that be so? If that is so, then we would have to consider reincarnation as a possibility, which of course, it is not possible. So let's go back to what the angel said to Zacharias.

**Luke 1**

**16 And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."**

What does the text say?

Does that imply that John *will be* Elijah?

We do know that the angel did quote from the prophet Malachi. As we have seen, this is where the quote comes from:

**Malachi 4**

**5 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6 And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."**

Elijah was an Old Testament prophet ministering mostly during the reign of the wicked King Ahab. He was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot, without experiencing death. Elisha witnessed the event. If you would like to read about it, read I Kings 17-19 and II Kings 1, 2.

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if you are not in a class where they have the lecture video, you may want to consider having a CD or DVD sent to you. You can make a request via email at [kseeker1@aol.com](mailto:kseeker1@aol.com).

According to this passage, when is God going to send Elijah back to the earth?

What will God do through the future ministry of the Prophet Elijah?

Let's reread a portion from Matthew chapter eleven.

**Matthew 11** (Jesus is speaking)

**"... 12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force. 13 For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah, who was to come. 15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear..."**

But God knew that, though John was sent to prepare the way for the Messiah, the nation as a whole *did not "care to accept" Elijah*. As a whole, the nation did not repent from their sinfulness, and in fact, rather than repenting and accepting their Messiah and His message, they crucified Him and rejected His message. And so God did smite the land with a curse about 37 years after the crucifixion.

In 70 AD, the land was ransacked, the Temple was destroyed, the Jews were scattered. For nearly 2,000 years the land remained cursed, so to speak. Only in recent years has the land come back into the world's focus, and that is for the purpose of allowing end-time prophecies to come to pass. Elijah, one who did not see death, will yet be sent back to this earth. And he will be sent back to earth, not through being born a second time, but rather through God simply sending him back, with the message of repentance, and preparation for the *second coming* of the Messiah.

And so, it was not Elijah whom God sent prior to Christ's first coming. It was the son born to a man whose name means "God Remembers" and a woman whose name means "God of the Oath." John appeared "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Lk. 1:17). Note what John said of himself:

**John 1**

**19 And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" 20 And he confessed, and did not deny, and he confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 They said then to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?" 23 He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."**

And if you remember, Elijah has come back to the earth once already at the transfiguration of Christ on the mount, when both Moses and Elijah appeared to the Lord and were talking with Him about the crucifixion. But yet once again, God will indeed send this prophet back — the one who had taken up in a fiery chariot without seeing death!

Think on these things. See you in class.

## Notes