

(Luke) 10 - Intro to Chap3

by Ed Miller

Jesus, the Perfect Son of Man, identifies with imperfect sons of men, illustrating His relationship to God and His heart being set on His Father's business.

Duration: 51:27

Scripture: Luke 2:41 - 3:22, Luke 19:10

Topics: "Jesus Savior", "Gods Redemption"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reviews the previous lessons and emphasizes the key verse of Luke 19:10, which states that the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. The Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as the Savior for all mankind, not just the Jews. The speaker then focuses on chapter 2, discussing the greatness of Jesus' coming and how God reaches down to identify with humanity through John the Baptist. The sermon concludes by mentioning the upcoming focus on John the Baptist and how his role prepares the way for Jesus' identification with humanity.

Transcript

Let me just give a little bit by way of review. We've come pretty far. We're in Lesson 10 in our study.

If you've missed any of those lessons and desire them, just ask Lillian and she keeps the tapes and she'll be glad to get you those. Luke 19.10 is our key verse for the book and Luke 19.10 says, For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost. All monosyllables.

Every syllable, every word in that verse is a monosyllable. How simple it is. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.

The Gospel of Luke presents the Lord Jesus as the Son of all mankind. Not just Jews, everybody, all flesh, shall see the salvation of the Lord. In our discussion we've come to Chapter 2, sort of the end of Chapter 2, the coming of the Son of all mankind in order to be the Son of all mankind.

In Chapter 2 we were looking at the greatness of His coming and we divided it up into three sections. In other words, we looked at Chapter 2 three times. First we saw the greatness of His coming in the way He came.

And that is He came down, down, down, down, down in order to be the Son of all mankind. And then we saw the greatness of His coming illustrated by those to whom He came. You say, He came to everybody,

Gentiles and Jews.

Yes, but more especially He came to the humble, illustrated by the shepherds, and He came to the seekers, illustrated by Simeon and Anna. Who does He come to? Always the humble, always the seeker. And then last time we looked at His greatness in Chapter 2, illustrated by the results of His coming.

The results of His coming, illustrated by the angels and the shepherds, is supernatural joy. Illustrated by Simeon is contentment in life and peace. Illustrated by Mary is identification with Christ.

Illustrated by Anna is mission, overflow, outworking. We want to begin Chapter 3 this morning, but I want to finish up Chapter 2 first. There's a couple of dangling things that I'd like to mention.

When we left off, we were calling attention to Chapter 2, 41 to 52, this story about our Lord Jesus when He was 12 years old. Remember, He was lost in Jerusalem. Let me just read that record again and then make a couple of final comments, and then we'll move on.

Begin at 41, His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of Passover. And when He became 12, they went up there according to the custom of the field. And as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, and His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and they went a day's journey.

They began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. And it came about that after three days, they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.

And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. And when they saw Him, they were astonished. And His mother said to Him, Son, why have you treated us this way? Behold, your Father and I have been anxiously looking for you.

And He said to them, Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be about My Father's house? They did not understand this statement which He had made. And He went down with them and came to Nazareth. He continued in subjection to them.

And His mother treasured all these things in her heart. Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. This is a wonderful conclusion to chapter 2, because it's a great warning.

And we called attention to that last time. You see, chapter 2 tells us how wonderful it is to have Jesus come. That's how it begins.

He's great in His coming, great for those to whom He came, great in the results of His coming. And then the chapter ends with this, Don't lose Him. Don't leave Him behind.

And remember now, they lost Him at Passover. They lost Him in the religious ceremony. They lost Him in the time of worship.

They lost Him in the time of wonderful fellowship. I think the saddest verse in chapter 2 is Luke 2, 44. They supposed Him to be in the caravan.

What a terrible thing to suppose Him to be with you, when in reality He's not. See, they got so wrapped up in the fellowship and all of the ancillary things, they just left the Lord Jesus behind. Now, we spent quite a

bit of time last time discussing that.

And if you'd like that discussion, Lillian will get you that tape. Before we leave chapter 2, I want to make some final observations. Last week, I suggested this question.

Why would the Holy Spirit give us this one event when Jesus was 12 years old? There's a period of time in His life, 30 years, which are called the obscure years. God doesn't tell us anything about the first 30 years, except He tells us this one incident. Last time, I suggested the spiritual reason.

And I think the spiritual reason is this. In chapter 2, this story of Jesus when He was 12 reveals two things about the Lord Jesus. Number one, that He was rightly related to God.

I must be about my father's business. And He was rightly related to men, illustrated by His subjection to His parents when He went back for all of those years. That's what we need to know about those 30 years.

He was rightly related to God. He was rightly related to men. He was perfect.

And then the second thing we needed to know was His heart was still set on His Father's business. Now, when He was a little baby, I pointed out from Hebrews 10 that He actually taught. And when He came into the world, He said, A body thou hast prepared for me, I come to do thy will, O God.

And now at 12 years old, He's still focused on that goal, and He's about His Father's business. And so that's the spiritual reason. Because all we need to know about those 30 years is that He's perfect, and He's come to do His Father's work.

Now, in addition to that, as we close, our sister Ginny suggested from the standpoint of her, 12 years old was an important age in the life of a Jewish boy. And that's true. At 12 years old, Jesus was the Jewish boy, became what was known as the Son of the Covenant, or the Son of the Law that continues to the present day in the famous Jewish Bar Mitzvah.

And this entering, leaving puberty and entering into adulthood and so on. At this age, 12 years old, He began to take on responsibility. Not full responsibility, but He began.

At this point, from this point on, every vow the 12-year-old gave was binding. He had to keep His word from this point on. Now He was expected to fast.

Pretty much, let me give you how they broke it up. When the Jewish child was three years old, for the first time, he could wear tasseled garments. That was the introduction into all of the ceremony.

And then when he was five years old, he was allowed to start memorizing Scripture. When he was ten years old, he was introduced to the Talmud, and especially, you know how we have commentaries on the Bible, well they also had a commentary called a Mishnah. And that was the interpretation of the law and then some comments on it.

And for the first time at age ten, he could begin to study the Mishnah. And then at age twelve, they got to wear the phylactery. A phylactery is just a little box.

And they would wear it on their forehead with Bible verses in it. And they'd wear one on their arm with Bible verses in it. And that was a big day for the twelve year old.

At age fourteen, they really got responsibility. Now they could marry. Now they could own property.

Now they could go to war, enter into military service, and so on. And then at age eighteen, they could study the Gomorrah. Say, what's the Gomorrah? Well the Talmud is the Bible.

The Mishnah is the interpretation of the Bible. The Gomorrah is the interpretation of the interpretation. So now they could study commentaries on the commentary.

And so that was pretty much a young child growing up in the Jewish culture. And so it's accurate to point out that from the standpoint of Jesus, twelve years old was an important age. My mother, I came to know the Lord before my mother did, but she had a straightforward approach to all the scriptures.

Like she'd struggle with Paul. Oh, he's a woman hater, you know. She had a hard time with Paul.

And she came to this chapter and I asked her one time, what did you get out of this twelve year old thing? And she said, what she got out of it is, a twelve year old should listen, ask questions, and submit to his parents. So that's what my mother got out of it. Before we leave Luke chapter two, let me point out a couple other things.

I was puzzled about verse 44 and 46. It says, they supposed him to be in the caravan, went a day's journey, and began looking for him among their relatives and acquaintances. And then when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem.

And it came about after three days, they found him in the temple. I used to think that they traveled a day and they missed him. Then they traveled another day back, and then they spent three days looking for him.

Now I'm pretty sure that's not how it was. I think the three days is the total. In other words, I think they were gone a day, came back a day, and then they found him on the third day.

You say, well that's not important. Well, it's really not important unless you're the parent looking for the lost child. If you're the parent looking for the lost child, that extra three days could be an eternity as you know.

One thing my wife and I always do is we study together. And she often gives tremendous insight and light. I just praise the Lord for Lillian and that we study together.

And she made an interesting comment about verse 50 and 51. It says, they did not understand the statement which he had made. And he came down with them, came to Nazareth, he continued in subjection to them, and his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Lillian called together those two ideas. They did not understand, and she treasured it in her heart. And her comment was that we don't need to understand in order to treasure it in our heart.

And what didn't they understand? And the answer is, they didn't understand the mystery when he said, I must be about my father's business. They didn't understand the mystery. And the thing that makes that so important is that in verse 48, Mary felt like she had been mistreated by her son.

She felt like one of two things, I think. He either should have informed me, number one, or he should have got my permission, number two. And I think a parent would think that would be true of a 12-year-old.

You better inform me or get my permission. But of course, God was illustrating that Jesus had a relationship to Mary. Jesus had a relationship to his Father God.

And his relationship to God was higher than his relationship to Mary. And because of his relationship to God, he set his heart to bypass his mother's wishes to do his father's will. And she felt like because of her relationship to him, that she had some rights.

You should tell me what's going on. You should explain this to me. You should get my permission.

The reality is, sometime when we feel like he needs our permission to do something, or he better inform us as to what's going on, he's about his father's business. And we feel like he's mistreated us. Don't you love me anymore, Lord? What's going on? Why did you treat me this way? Even when you don't understand how God has treated you, you can treasure it in your heart as a mystery and know that he's doing his father's business.

And so his father's will is far above our wishes. And it's wonderfully illustrated here at the end of Luke 2. One more thing before we leave Luke 2, and that is the terminal points in Luke 2. When you study any portion of Scripture, you'll want to see the terminal points. And by that I mean how does it begin, how does it end.

And usually God has tied his word together in such a way that by seeing how it begins and how it ends, it carries some great truth. Notice how the chapter begins in verse 1 and in verse 4 and 5, it came about in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that a census be taken of the inhabited earth. And in verse 4, Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was with child.

On the low level of earth, why did Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem? And the answer is because the government told them to. They submitted to the government. There was a taxation, and they went in order to fulfill the requirement of the law.

But as you know, there was another reason 600 years before a prophecy was given in the book of Micah, chapter 5 and verse 2, "But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah from you. One shall go forth from me, who is to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from the ages of eternity." And so 600 years before the prophecy of Bethlehem.

I don't know if Mary and Joseph knew that prophecy. I don't know if Joseph said, we've got to get to Bethlehem. You know, Micah said that Christ is going to be born in Bethlehem.

I have an idea. They didn't have a clue about that. They just submitted to the government, and God watched over his word in order to perform.

And so it begins with Mary and Joseph submitting to the government. How does it end? See, the chapter ends with Jesus submitting to his parents for all of those years, from 12 years old all the way to 30. Verse 51, "He went down with them and came to Nazareth, continued in subjection to them, and his mother treasured all these things in her heart." Now the great issue of the life of Christ, as you know, is in verse 49.

"Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business, my Father's will?' Jesus had to do his Father's will. Later he's going to call it his meat, his food. That's his life.

"I've got to do my Father's will." Now you see, at the beginning of the chapter there's a prophetic word. At the end of the chapter there's the will of God, my Father's business. How am I going to be sure in my life that the word of God is fulfilled? How am I going to be sure in my life that the Father's business is going to be fulfilled? Now call attention to this because there was absolutely no danger that God's word would fail.

Absolutely no danger that God's will would be done. As I said, I'm not even sure they knew there was a prophecy. Call attention to this because for years in my Christian life I got paranoid about the will of God.

Oh, I've got to find God's will. I've got to know what God wants me to do. I don't want to marry the wrong person.

I don't want to take the wrong job. I don't want to live in the wrong house. I don't want to live in the wrong city.

I don't want to get involved in the wrong ministry. How will I find God's will? Mary, don't forget now Mary's the picture of the church. And every time, she's the first picture of the church in the New Testament.

Every time you see Mary you better put yourself in there because you see yourself. Mary had Christ in her when she went to Bethlehem. And when you have Christ in you, you don't have to worry about missing the word of God.

When I have Christ in me, I don't have to worry about missing the word of God. Just live up to the light you have. Submit whatever comes and you know to be right.

Just do that and you're going to end up in the will of God. The Father's will was going to be done. You say, well Jesus delayed the Father's will all those years.

No he didn't. He just submitted to his parents. That's the right thing to do.

And God's will was done. If I live up to my present life and you live up to your present life, you are not going to miss the will of God. Don't, now this might sound like a heretic talking, but don't run after the will of God.

Run after the God whose will it is. If you go after the Lord, you can't miss his will. Remember that wonderful promise in Proverbs? In all your ways acknowledge him.

Can you finish it? He shall direct your path. Exactly right. He shall direct your path.

You can't miss God's will. Sometimes people call up and say, you know, can you help me? How can I find God's will? I'll tell you how to find God's will. You run after Jesus for 80 years and then you look over your shoulder and you'll see all the guidance you ever want to see.

All the guidance you ever want to see. And if it doesn't work, then try something else. But at least give it 80 years.

And just go after the Lord himself and you're going to find his will. That's what you see in chapter 1. They weren't trying to get to Bethlehem. They were just obeying the government and God took care of his word.

Jesus wasn't worried about fulfilling the Father's will. He just submitted to his parents and the Father's will was done. And so we can rest in the Lord.

Now so much for chapter 2. I'm going to ask you to turn, please, to chapter 3 of Luke. I don't know why I'm puzzled. I'm in John.

All right, Luke chapter 3. Luke chapter 1 we titled Certainty Through Faith. Luke chapter 2, The Greatness of His Coming. And just so, Luke chapter 3 tells us how the perfect son of man now begins to identify with the imperfect sons of men.

And in this chapter we begin to see what Luke will develop throughout the whole chapter, I mean the whole book, and that is he's now becoming one of us. He's become a man and now he's going to identify with us. There are three stories in chapter 3. The first one covers the first 20 verses and that is the forerunner of our Lord Jesus.

He prepares the son of man to identify with the sons of man. And then in chapter 3, 21 and 22, we have this wonderful story of the baptism of our Lord Jesus. I think you're going to get a blessing when we look at that together.

And then at the end, chapter 23 to 38, we have the genealogy of the son of man. This traces the genealogy all the way from Messiah back to Adam, not Abraham, back to Adam because he's the son of all mankind. And this genealogy, by the way, traces it through Mary.

Matthew traces it through Joseph. When we get to that I'll show you why God has given us those two. This morning I'd like to introduce those first 20 verses, the forerunner, John the baptizer, prepares for the coming of the son of all mankind.

Follow along please as we read the first two verses. In the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Aeternia and Treconitis, and Licinius was tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. When you read that you say, now all this is is history.

All this is is historical fact. Now remember in Luke 1.3 he promised he was going to do that. He said he investigated everything thoroughly and was going to ground us in all of the facts.

But God is not just giving us dry historical facts so that we can answer the question, who was Caesar, who was governor, who were the three tetrarchs, who were the two high priests. God is not giving us dry facts. Those first two verses prepare us for the spiritual message of this wonderful chap.

We sometimes read these things la la la, but even in a cursory study if you know anything about history you know the names of those men register some pretty wicked people. They were not nice people at all. And Luke was writing to show us how terrible things had become at that time when our Lord Jesus began his ministry.

Now the situation in Luke 3 is a far cry from God's original plan. God's original plan was that Israel would be like it was in the days of David and the days of Solomon. That there would be kings and priests that were holy and godly.

But now Jerusalem, the city of peace, it was not a city of peace. They were under the heel of the Roman government. They were subservient to Rome and paying taxes to Rome.

And in fact they were slaves. Not like the Egyptian slavery where they were whipped every day, but they were still in bondage to this oppressive power. Tiberius Caesar, he was the stepson of Augustus Caesar.

Here's one historian's view. He was ambitious, cruel, licentious, infamous, inhuman, and lived a life of lustful excesses. Welcome to this nice emperor of Rome.

This man was proud and he wanted his name to live in history. And so he visited a city and he said, from now on this city will no longer be called by its name. And that's why you read in your map and you'll find the city of Tiberius.

They've got a new name. And he went down to the Sea of Galilee and he said, this is no longer the Sea of Galilee. And that's why in your Bible it's called the Sea of Tiberius.

Because he just changed the name. He was just a proud, arrogant, wicked ruler. You don't have to say much about 3-1 because you know who Pontius Pilate was.

And he of course is the one who sentenced our Lord Jesus to the death on the cross. The Tetrarchs that are mentioned here, there's only three mentioned. In order to have a Tetrarchy you need four because that's just a ruler of one-fourth of a piece of land.

We know about Herod. This is the grandson of Herod the Great. If you want to know who Herod the Great is, just put in the word monster at the end.

Herod the Great Monster. He's the one that had those babies killed. He's the one that took a sword and opened his mother's womb so he could see the womb that brought him into the world.

Killed all his brothers. Just a wicked, wicked man. And his grandson is almost like him.

This descendant of Esau. We know about him from chapter 3 that he took his brother Philip's wife, 3-19-20. He was an adulterer.

He was a wicked, wicked man. We know from Matthew 14 it was this Herod that finally took the head of John the Baptizer. Had him decapitated.

What had the Jews, God's promised people, what had become of all of the promises? Now you've got this wicked Tiberius Caesar. You've got the governor Herod and Pilate, or rather Pilate is the governor and Herod this tetrarch over central Palestine. And then look at verse 2. It says, The high priests, plural, and it wasn't even religious.

It was just a political thing. And you know these were the greatest promoters in the death of our Lord Jesus. And God is just illustrating how terrible things had become with a ruler like this Caesar, with a man like Herod in there, with a man like Pilate, and these wicked political priests, these high priests.

And the people, as far as the religious, look at verse 8-9. Here's what John said. He said, Therefore bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance.

Do not begin to say, We have Abraham for our father. I say to you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Everything was external.

These Jews were so proud in these Pharisees that they just gloated in the fact that they had a lineage. We're saved. Abraham's our father.

And John said, Don't you say that. God could go out and take a stone and make that into a child of Abraham. Just because you can trace yourself to Abraham, he said, You better not glory in that.

You know how through the years we have all these jokes about Peter at the gate of heaven. We have all kinds of jokes. I guess it's because Jesus at one time gave him the keys of the kingdom.

So somehow he got the porter of the doors of heaven. Well, the Pharisees had something like that on the other side. They said Abraham, father Abraham, was in charge of the doors of hell.

And what was he doing there? And the Pharisees said he was there to make sure no circumcised person ever got into hell. And that was their area. As long as you were circumcised, as long as you were a Jew, as long as you could trace your genealogy.

And that's when John comes along and he said, God has laid the axe right to the root of the tree. And it's time to repent and turn from all this kind of thing. All of this to say that in days like this, when you have a Caesar like that, and a governor like that, and Tetrarch like this, and in the temple these wicked, wicked priests, and in the religious life of the people, just ceremony and externals and all of this.

In those days, again, don't read verse 2, la la la, the word of the Lord came to John in the wilderness. That's the only place God could find somebody. Everything was dead and everything was cold and everything was wicked.

And God found a listening ear out there in the desert. How often he bypasses the ecclesiastical world and the political world and goes out into the desert where he can find a listening ear. Now, we don't know how long John lived in the desert.

You know his parents, Elizabeth and Zacharias, were very old when they had him. And some say, well, they died young and he just went out into the wilderness. Some believe he'd been out there for ten years.

You say, well, where did they get that, ten years? Well, you know, Zacharias was a priest. And in the Old Testament it said when the son of a priest was twenty years old, he would begin then to become the apprentice. And so at twenty, they say, John went out into the wilderness and had been out there for these ten years.

I don't think anybody knows for sure. But Luke stresses the heart of God once again now. He's going to identify with the sons of men.

And when everything is as black as black can be, God reaches down and he goes into the wilderness and he finds this listening ear in John the baptizer. Now, what I'd like to do for the next couple of weeks, minus our Thanksgiving break, is focus in on this wonderful instrument of God, this John the baptizer. Recall, please, in chapter one, when we were in chapter one, I said we're going to, there's one thing about John I wanted to mention, and we picked it up when we came to chapter three.

Well, here we are, and so I want to pick that up. I want to use this illustration of John and Elijah. God puts that together and calls John Elijah.

I want to illustrate from that a great Bible principle. And the principle can be expressed in these words, the law of multiple fulfillment. And what I mean by the law of multiple fulfillment is this, that the same word that God gives can be fulfilled over and over and over and over again.

And that's how he does it. So that when he came at Pentecost, he said, this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel in those days, in the last days, old men shall drink dreams and have visions and so on. He said, this is that.

It's fulfilled. And you read a little while later, it's still coming. Was it fulfilled or not? You read Matthew 24, and Jesus says, it's going to come to pass that not one stone will be left on another.

You say, well, that's 70 A.D. when Titus the Roman Emperor went in and destroyed Jerusalem. Was that 70 A.D.? Yes, it was. Is it still coming? Yes, it is.

It was fulfilled. It's still being fulfilled. Someday there will be a person on the earth called Antichrist.

John says, there's already the spirit of Antichrist. And he's already here. And it keeps coming and coming.

Someone says, Mussolini was Antichrist, and Hitler was Antichrist, and Stalin was Antichrist. Well, that's the truth. They were.

They're just keeping the seat warm. There's going to be another one someday. And so there's this law of multiple fulfillment.

In the last days, there's going to be earthquakes and wars and rumors of war. That's always been true. But it's becoming more true.

And as you get to the end, this thing begins to grow and grow until the final manifestation. Now, having said that, I'm going to ask you to look at chapter 1 again. And let me show you this from the standpoint of Elijah and John.

Gabriel, the angel, is speaking in verse 15 about John. He'll be great in the sight of the Lord. He'll drink no wine or liquor.

He'll be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb. He'll turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. 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, to disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so to make a people ready and prepared for the Lord.

Gabriel said John would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the children back to the father. Do you know how the Old Testament ends? Malachi chapter 4, verses 5 and 6. It's the end of the Old Testament. And a promise was given.

And it said, Behold, I'm going to send you Elijah the prophet. Before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord, he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children. In other words, the Old Testament ends with a promise that first Elijah would come and then Messiah would come.

You see, the Jews not only had a messianic expectancy, they not only expected Messiah, they expected Elijah. They were looking for Elijah to come because God said Elijah was going to come. Now we're told outright that John, in his ministry, in John chapter 10, verse 41, that John the baptizer worked no miracle.

He never worked a miracle. But because of the way he dressed and the wonderful diet that he had and the things that he ate and the way people flocked to him, the question had to be asked. And so they came to him in John 1, 21.

And they had a delegation come from the church. And they went to him, John 1, 21, Are you Elijah? They asked him point blank, Are you Elijah? You know his answer? He said, I am not. I am not Elijah.

Now that becomes interesting because in Matthew 11, after John had been arrested and thrown into prison, Jesus started talking about John. Listen to Matthew 11, 9. He said, Who do you go out to see, a prophet? I say more than a prophet. Truly I say, 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. Now listen to Matthew 11, 14. If you care to accept it, he himself is Elijah.

They asked John, Are you Elijah? He said, No, I am John. I am not Elijah. Jesus said, Yes, he is.

That was the prophecy that was given. And so Jesus said, John was Elijah. Now the Gabriel said he is going to come in the spirit and in the power of Elijah.

Now he is thrown in this dungeon known as the black tower, that fortress down by the Dead Sea, Macharis it is called. John was alive when Jesus said, This is Elijah. Well he certainly dressed like him.

The Bible says that Elijah was a hairy man and he wore these camel hair coats and they both came from the wilderness of Gilead and both lived self denial. It was a sect back then. It would be the modern recluses.

They are called the Essenes. Have you heard of the Essenes? This little group of separatists and they believe in this separation and this moral purity and ceremony and so on. Many believe John was an Essenes.

I personally don't believe he was for this reason. The Essenes wore white robes in order to illustrate purity because John lived an austere life and was separated and ate locusts and wild honey. He looked a lot like the Essenes, but I don't think he was actually an Essenes.

I think he was influenced by them. He was a Nazarite after the order of Samson. But the point is this, that he said he is not Elijah.

Jesus when he was alive, he is in prison, Jesus said, This is Elijah. Then you know the story, he gets beheaded. There is a transfiguration and you know all of the record when Jesus was on the mountain, transfiguration.

And afterward a discussion came up about the second coming and when you are going to come back Lord and what is it going to be like and tell us about the second coming. Now don't forget John is dead. Here is what Jesus said, Matthew 17 verse 11.

Talk about the second coming. He said Elijah must come first. What? I thought you said John was Elijah.

Yes. Did he fulfill it? Sure he did. Is it still to be fulfilled? Yes it is.

Because there is the law of multiple fulfillment. It was fulfilled once partially, but it is going to be fulfilled again. And somehow there is going to be somebody, I don't think a reincarnation, but some people think he is literally going to come back.

You know in the book of Revelation there are these two witnesses that come on earth and the Bible says it is appointed to men once to die and two men never die. Enoch never died. Elijah never died.

And since it is appointed to die, they have to come back and die. And so they say these are the two witnesses. Whether that is true or not, I don't know if it is true.

I only bring this up to say that there is this law of multiple fulfillment. So how does that apply to my life? It applies in this way. Everything God says about the future is designed to teach you to know the Lord now.

I hope you don't get involved in studying prophecy to know prophecy. What is going to happen down the road and what is going to happen in the future and what about the ten confederations of states and what about antichrist and tribulation and all that kind of thing. Everything about the future has a present foretaste.

It is fulfilled now and it will be fulfilled then. Say I can't wait to go to heaven. That is true.

But I am telling you I have got a heaven to go to heaven in. I am not waiting for heaven to go to heaven. I have got heaven now.

Say I can't wait until the millennium when Jesus reigns and Christ reigns and Satan is bound and the knowledge of God covers the earth like the waters cover the sea and universal peace and righteousness reigns. I can't wait for that day either. But I have already got it.

He is already reigning. Satan is already bound in my life. The knowledge of God already fills the landscape of my heart.

There is already peace and righteousness. I am not going to wait for that. Every future truth, when you study the future, ask the Lord to teach you what does that mean for your heart right now.

He wants you to have a present foretaste of future glory. And everything that shall be is. You know that verse, Jesus, He is the same yesterday, today, forever.

One thing that means is everything He ever was, He is. Here is the other thing it means. Everything He ever will be, He is right now.

And I don't have to wait for Him to be that He is already that in my heart. One other verse in that connection, I love it. Romans 8.30, Romans 8.30 says those He calls, He also justifies.

Those He justifies, He also glorifies. You know what it means to be glorified? We are not glorified yet. We are justified and we are being sanctified.

Someday we will be glorified when we get our new body. Well, you can wait for some day. I am already glorified.

It is as good as done. It is prophetic past tense. And God wants us to enter into all of these things.

All of that to introduce John, John the baptizer, Elijah. He didn't know it, but he was. And yet it is continually being fulfilled.

Now let me make one other comment about John and that will prepare us for our next lesson. When we introduced John in chapter 1, I called attention to the fact that his contribution to the history of redemption was that he was the forerunner of our Lord Jesus. He is the forerunner of Christ and because he is the forerunner, he becomes the model of every Christian and every Christian ministry.

In other words, the only legitimate ministry that can ever exist is a forerunning ministry. Nobody has a ministry. Only Jesus has a ministry.

But we prepare the way for Jesus. In Luke 1, 76, we read this, and you child, Zacharias is talking about his son, you child will be called the prophet of the most high. You will go before the Lord to prepare his way, to give his people the knowledge of salvation.

John couldn't do what Jesus would do. That is why he said in Luke 3, 16, I baptize with water. There is one coming after me.

He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. The best we can do is water. The best we can ever do is prepare the way before the Lord.

So we are just forerunners, whether we preach or teach or counsel or just live. We are just preparing the way for Jesus. I hope you get a blessing out of these Bible studies.

But I tell you, I would throw the towel in if I didn't believe that Jesus was going to follow after and do the real work in your heart. I can't give you anything for your heart. I can baptize, so to speak, in water.

But only the Lord can do the job. And so all we ever do is prepare the way for the Lord to follow. And that is all that real ministry is.

Now next time I am going to try to develop for you the principles. There are six wonderful principles on what is a forerunner. And we will be looking at those in detail.

But notice in verse 4 and 5, as it is written in the book of Isaiah, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord, make his path straight. Every ravine shall be filled up. Every mountain and hill shall be brought low.

The crooked shall become straight. The rough road smooth. Now I know that is a graphic metaphor that is given there.

Every ravine filled. It is sort of like ironing the terrain, you know. The mountains are made flat and the hills, the valleys come up and the crooked get straight and the rough are smooth.

But do you realize this? Every time you have ministered to someone and you have removed one of their little mountains that is in the way, you have prepared the way for Jesus to come. Every time someone has been discouraged and you have brought them up out of the valley, you have prepared the way for the Lord Jesus to do his work. Every time you took a stand on righteousness and you made the crooked straight, you have prepared the way for Jesus to do his work.

Every time you have helped somebody over a rough spot, you have prepared the Lord to do his work. In John chapter 3, and I will close with this. In John chapter 3, you see this forerunner really focused on the Lord.

John had a lot of disciples and they were just flocking around John. But as Jesus came into view, more of John's disciples were dropping off and collecting around Jesus. And some of the disciples got upset and they came to John.

And they said, did you know that Jesus is getting more disciples than you are? And they were jealous. And so John gave this little parable about marriage. He said, you know the difference between the groom and the best man? He said, the difference between the groom and the best man is this.

The groom has the bride and the best man rejoices when the bride and groom come together. And then John said, I am not the groom. I have no right to the bride.

I don't want the bride. I don't want a following. I don't want anybody to come to me.

My joy is when the bride and groom get together. And John said, I am the friend of the groom. I am the best man.

And the best news you could ever bring is that I'm losing disciples to Jesus. That I'm seeing the bride and groom come together. And that's where you get that great verse.

John 3.30. He must increase. Finished. I must decrease.

That's a forerunner. That's a forerunner. A forerunner is somebody who realizes I can't do anything except prepare the way for the Lord to do the real work.

And he must increase. I must decrease. I'm just a friend of Jesus.

And my joy is seeing the bride and groom come together. If I see you embrace the Lord, that's the fullness of my joy. That's what it's all about.

And that's what a forerunner ministry is. Now we're going to look in detail at John's life and because he's going to prepare the way for this son of man to identify with the sons of man. But we'll pick that up next time.

Comments or questions? Gabriel said he'll come in the spirit and power of Elijah. So I think he's just the Elijah type. He had the spirit of Elijah.

But I don't think it's a reincarnation of Elijah. Well, thank you. Thank you.

And I think it's wonderful how the Lord has given you that scripture and Elijah and all these things. This is wonderful. Well, let's bow before the Lord.

Father, thank you for everyone here. We know, Lord, that you're the one that baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Water just touches the surface, but fire purifies right down to the soul.

So do your work in each heart. Lord, this Thanksgiving, we pray as never before. We might know what it means to pour out our hearts in thanks to you.

Give everyone here a wonderful Thanksgiving. Bring us back together in your will to meditate on your word and to be focused on the Lord. Thank you that you're doing it.

You're going to continue to do it. Encourage us in Christ. We ask in Jesus name.

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