

# Emmanuel Matthew 3

by John Nelson Darby

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*Jesus' life is a perfect representation of God's relationship with man, demonstrating God's holiness and love.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 1:20

**Topics:** "The Humanity of Christ", "Grace and Holiness"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound relationship between God and man as revealed in the life of Jesus Christ, who embodies both divine holiness and perfect humanity. He illustrates how Jesus, though tempted in every way like us, remained sinless and serves as our ultimate example and friend in the journey of faith. Darby encourages believers to study Jesus' life and character to understand their own spiritual journey and the grace available to them. He highlights the importance of recognizing our need for God and the transformative power of His love, which is fully manifested in Christ. Ultimately, Darby reassures that through Jesus, heaven is opened to us, and we are invited to share in His glory.

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## Transcript

The word of God presents to us this very precious fact, that we do not only find there certain truths and doctrines, but also every relation between God and man fully developed on earth, and each day we can clearly see all these things in the Person of Jesus. It is a great mercy of God to have brought Him so near to us, as so to make known to us those relationships in the circumstances in which we are ourselves found. At bottom the life of Jesus was like ours. He was in all things tempted in like manner as ourselves. It was indeed God manifested in flesh; but it was also life, and the expression of a life; perfectly acceptable to God.

In order to make progress in spiritual life we must study the Lord Jesus; whether in the grace of His Person or in the circumstances of His life; or, lastly, in the glorious position He has near the Father, and which we shall by-and-by share with Him.

We see in Christ, from the beginning, the accomplishment of the life of faith, which was tested in Him, and of which He manifested all the perfection.

Jesus is to us a tender and mighty friend; and, while travelling through the wilderness, we know that at the end of the way will be found the glory in which He now is. That is what is said in Hebrews 12:1-3: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before

us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" - rather "the leader and completer of faith." As captain, He has gone before us; as shepherd, "he putteth forth his own sheep," and also "goeth before them." He "despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

Divine life is seen in that Man who walked in the midst of all difficulties and temptations, who surmounted all, and who, alone amongst all, was not touched by the evil one.

Now He has entered the glory at the right hand of God; and we shall share with Him that glory when He shall appear, since we shall be made like unto Him.

53 We shall see a little how the Spirit of God presents Jesus to us, at the beginning of His life, when He enters that painful race of faith.

An important thing to remark is, that the light manifests all that is in man.

It is true that God saw what was in the heart of Abel and of Cain, before anything of it was manifested; just as He saw a remnant in the midst of the Jews, in whom grace was working; but things were never brought to light under the law. God was, as it were, hidden behind a veil, and He allowed many things because of the hardness of their hearts, as Jesus told His disciples; for the full light was not yet manifested. But in Christ the light shone in the world.

In the Christian, who possesses the life of Christ, that which is true in Christ is true in him, as it is said in 1 John 2:8: "Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

It is always well to bear in mind that, in the former dispensation, God hid Himself, but that He sent certain messengers who were to reveal what was entrusted to them, but without making God known. The law did not manifest Him fully. It is true it says, Thou shalt love; but not, I love thee; it does not reveal a God of love. It does not shew us what God is, save that He is a just God and executes vengeance. It tells us nothing at all of what God is for man, nor of what He is in Himself. The law did indeed make known to men what they ought to be toward God, but it was silent as to what God is for them.

A man is always under law, as long as he is occupied with what God demands from him, instead of understanding what God is for him; for this would produce much more excellent effects. God, being thus hidden, required obedience in order to grant life. It was no question of being able to place oneself in the presence of God. The high priest alone presented himself once every year into the holiest of all; for the way into it was not yet made manifest, and there were many things that God bore with, without approving them. There were ceremonies and ordinances, which were intended to remind man of his dependence, and to bring him into relationship with God, according to certain things which acted upon the flesh and adapted to the flesh, because man was in it, and God placed Himself in a relationship with him. The holiness of God who was hidden was not seen, but there were ceremonies which maintained the relationships between that God who remained hidden and man.

54 But when God manifests Himself, it can no longer be so; for God is holy, and He is love. He is perfect in holiness, and man must necessarily enter into relationship with what God is. God can forgive sinners - can wash them; but He cannot bear with anything that does not answer to His holiness. If there is grace, there is also holiness, but God cannot, because of His holiness, bear with man, a sinner, just as he is; for God is

"of purer eyes than to behold evil."

Let us meditate upon the example of Jesus, the Light upon earth, entirely separated from sinners, which constituted the perfect beauty of His life. On one hand, we see that He is alone, perfectly alone; He is the most isolated man that one can imagine. The disciples themselves know not how to sympathise with Him. The woman of Samaria, to whom He addressed such touching words about the water "springing up into everlasting life," can understand nothing else but "the well is deep." She says, "From whence then hast thou that living water?" If Jesus says, "Look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest"; if He speaks of "a meat to eat" that His disciples "know not of," it is ever the same He meets with no real sympathy in the midst of men. We feel that this was painful to Him, because He had a man's heart, and would have desired to find some one who could understand Him; but He found nothing anywhere. On the contrary, as to Him, we see that He has a perfect sympathy toward all. Jesus was the most accessible man, most within the reach of the simple, of the ignorant, and even of the most degraded of sinners. He manifested in His life something that had not its equal. No, there never was all that holiness and love, which is above all our thoughts.

There is so much selfishness in the heart of man that the love of God is to him an enigma still more incomprehensible than His holiness. No one understood Jesus, because He manifested God. I do not as yet speak of His work, but of what He was, when He was manifested in the midst of the world. He had to shew that all the ceremonies cannot make God known; for the thing is impossible. Jesus alone manifested God as He is, and man also as he is.

55 No religion as such can change man. Man puts on religion as a clothing; but his religion leads him farther away from God.

The first thing God does is to lay us bare in His presence; He takes away everything. He is occupied with us, and not with our religion. Then is all quite removed, and we stand before Him, such as we are. Well! that is what took place when Jesus was here below; and therefore He was unwelcome and found Himself in conflict with every one.

It is impossible we could like to find ourselves in the presence of God, just as we are. A man accustomed to dirt does not know he is dirty, because his whole way of living is fashioned to it; but if he finds himself in certain circumstances, which give him light as to himself, he will feel disgusted to see what his whole life has been. Such is the heart of man; but when the light of God shines in his conscience and in his soul, he sees himself such as he really is in the sight of God, although there be doubtless some defect in the perception of it. This is very humbling; one does not like it, for it is too painful. Once more I say, before God it is not a question of our religion but of ourselves.

Such is the necessary effect of the presence of God in the world. The light shews us in God all condescension, all goodness, all grace: and in man a selfishness which betrays itself before God. One sees that man cannot be saved through himself. A certain man says, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father." Is it not as good as saying, There is something else that holds the first place when Christ calls me? It is not my will to serve God entirely. "I have bought five yoke of oxen," says another; and a third, "I have married a wife." What does this mean? That the heart is fixed on quite another thing; that it prefers its oxen to the feast that God has prepared. Thus all is made manifest, and the heart is laid bare.

All disappears before the testimony of God. Man's self-righteousness and his pride lead him to hide from himself his own state, in order to take advantage of a religion which descends from his ancestors. But

John the Baptist said (Matt. 3:7-9), when he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance; 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." It is God who works as He pleases, and in His own power, to create children unto Himself. All your pretensions, as Jews, descendants of Abraham, God takes no account of. He works in that supreme power, in which He is able, even of stones, to raise up children unto Abraham; and that is the reason why He takes no account of your righteousness: He must first have sinners.

56 There is yet another thing to observe here. John says (Matt. 3:11, 12), "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Jesus is going to establish His kingdom, and that will soon come to pass. It is a kingdom in which that which is not according to His heart will be burnt with fire. Such was the testimony of John. "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached." God had given the law to that people which He had gathered and ranged round Himself; He had sent prophets who, as witnesses for the moment, called upon the Jews to walk according to the law. John the Baptist came to announce to them quite another thing: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. God is about to establish a new order of things: are you in a state to enter it? Have you energy to penetrate there? Judgment is there also. He has His fan in His hand. Have you any fruit? If not, "the axe is laid unto the root of the trees." "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father." Thus it was that John taught; such is the place he takes. As to Jerusalem, it is about to be set aside, and John preaches the testimony of repentance and of the kingdom about to be established; he presents himself in order to draw out every thought towards Jesus. After having announced the testimony of repentance, the Lord Jesus presents Himself to our hearts and souls. Let us rest - rest our thoughts upon Him, who shews Himself to us personally.

The object of God is not only to cause sin to be felt, although that must take place, but to make Jesus known and to place the soul in the enjoyment of God Himself - to act in grace towards it in order that it may forget itself and be filled with the thought of Jesus. This is the way God does it. He presents the Lord "as a root out of a dry ground." There is in Him no beauty for man, as there was in the temple; nay, nothing of that which attracts the flesh and might tempt it - nothing of all that. It is on the contrary, a root that none "should desire." To the eyes of flesh there is absolutely nothing to render Him lovely. Who is it then? It is a poor man who goes preaching! He "hath not where to lay his head." He is a man condemned by every clerical authority, by all the wise men and all the Pharisees. The Sadducees condemn Him, the priests condemn Him. Thus was Jesus received. In Him is "no beauty that we should desire him." It was needful He should present Himself thus, that it might be shewn if the heart could discern God, and because He would not supply food to fleshly feeling. He must put the heart to the test, to prove whether God is enough for the heart, and whether the moral beauty that is in God - His love, His holiness, His word that penetrates within the heart; whether, in a word, all that is infinitely precious in the divine nature - can be discerned by man.

57 When He comes as the light, He never adapts Himself to that which He is going to destroy in the heart: man would do it, and he would call this religion; but it would only be to hide God, or to deny Him. Thus the Lord Jesus presents Himself without anything which could attract man, and that is what we find here. Of course every testimony of grace and goodness, necessary to our poor heart, is there; but nothing to meet its desires. The testimony given by Jesus was perfect and placed before the heart the grace it needed, to

be rendered capable of tasting the grace of God itself.

Jesus has shewn Himself to our faith in all the grace of His divine Person; but He took His place among men as being nothing, save as the object of faith.

The angel appears to Joseph in a dream and says to him: "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins," Matt. 1:20, 21.

It was as Oshea that God caused Joshua to be called, which means Saviour, for God had charged him to bring Israel into the land of Canaan. It is God Himself, it is Jehovah, who comes as Saviour. It is the first thing that is presented to us: "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." What a great and precious truth - "God with us!" Then God, so to speak, begins over again with man.

58 As soon as Jesus appears, Satan seeks to destroy Him. It is astonishing to see how forgetful man is. The magi who came from the East had owned Jesus as King of the Jews born in Bethlehem; they had borne a testimony to Emmanuel, to the Son of David. The shepherds, after having worshipped, had spread abroad what the angels had told them; and in spite of that, Jesus, although approved of God, was disowned and rejected by men.

God begins over again the whole history of Israel in the Person of Jesus. He must call His Son out of Egypt, where He had sent Him, because men wanted to slay Him the moment He had come into this world. Israel was really lost, and God must begin over again all their history in the Person of Jesus. Herod seeks the young child to destroy Him. Thus we find that opposition shews itself against Jesus, even from His cradle.

Satan has carnal motives enough to persuade souls to do away with God. His great work is to supply us with motives powerful enough to lead us to do without God, and to shut Him out of our hearts. Here we find the way he begins. He stirs up Herod against Jesus. Then Joseph takes the young child and departs into Egypt. After that he returns into the land of Israel and dwells in Nazareth, for it was written, "He shall be called a Nazarene." This is in fact where Jesus begins in the midst of the world. And who is it who dwells there in Nazareth? It is Jehovah, the Saviour; it is "Emmanuel." And what is that city? It is so bad a place, that to be found there is enough to make men say, Ah! I will have none of it. Nathanael said to Philip, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

It is God whom I first see in the Person of Jesus; but God in the circumstances which the flesh repels, because it is wicked. To know God the flesh must be entirely mortified, and grace in our hearts must lead us to value the love of God in spite of the flesh. This is the history of Christian life.

Outwardly Jesus was only a poor Nazarene; but perfection was in His ways and in His heart, and it manifested itself in the midst of every difficulty, of all contempt, and all that was false. Faith alone could discern the ways of Jesus through want and every misery. The broken heart saw this perfection of goodness manifesting itself in the midst of every care. It is necessary our hearts should see also, in that despised man, God Himself, who reveals Himself to our souls and takes His place in our midst.

59 Then Jesus comes to John to be baptised. John forbad Him, because he owned the dignity of His Person. "I have need to be baptised of thee; and comest thou to me?" Jesus then "said unto him, Suffer it

to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Whom do I find here? It is the Lord Jesus and His Person owned; but, in spite of that, His will is to take His place with the least of the saints. "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Who are they, these we? It is John and Himself. Where does He place Himself? He places Himself there, in connection with the first movement of His Spirit in the heart. I place Myself with those who repent, said Jesus. There are some who come to be baptised; I also, I come to be baptised. As soon as there is a movement of repentance in the heart of the sinner - a response to the testimony rendered by the word - Jesus takes His place there with that heart. It is not only that He manifests as an object that which, by faith, becomes the crucifying of the flesh, but He goes with the heart also, and the poor heart sees all that; and what a consolation for us! The one in whom the fulness of the Father was manifested is there, and it is the Son Himself. If a soul is broken down - well! Jesus is with it. If it is in fear, because already "the axe is laid unto the root of the trees," He is there to encourage it and to shew unto it His grace. He takes His place with His people, and thus we see the perfect goodness of God. It was He Himself who produced this movement of repentance in that heart, and He takes His place with that soul; Jesus is there. If He is to us the most high God, the One who manifests all this light, He is there also as man, meeting the least of our feelings. He is with us, believers, in all our misery and in all our circumstances.

The consequence of the baptism of Jesus is that the heavens are opened unto Him. It is not only the God incarnate, but heaven is opened over Him; He has the full approbation of God, and thereby we see all the extent of that grace presented to sinners. Never was heaven opened before. God had sent messengers, but never had there been on earth a man upon whom heaven opened.

60 When Jesus has accomplished the work of atonement, He places us in the same position as Himself. "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God." Heaven is open. There is no longer any veil on our heart.

As man, Jesus was perfectly righteous, and although He placed Himself in the position of those poor sinners who drew nigh to God, He was none the less acceptable to God; and indeed never was Jesus so acceptable to God, as when He bare our sins on the tree. It was at the moment of His death that He perfectly glorified God in all that He was as man, and that He also at the same time bore testimony to the perfect and infinite love of God towards sinners.

Heaven is opened on Jesus - well! it is also entirely opened on us. No sin can be tolerated before God; all that is not of Christ, on whom heaven could be opened, God beholds, and He cannot tolerate sin. But there is no longer a veil as to us: we look on His glory in Jesus with unveiled face; and the glory of God shines on man as he is in Jesus, just as it shone on Jesus Himself. All that is not Christ is condemned. All that is reprobate is manifested by Himself.

There is another consequence of the acceptance of Jesus; it is the Spirit of God, who descended upon Him like a dove, and the voice from heaven, which made itself heard, "saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Such is the position Jesus takes. He manifests His grace in testimony to man when he is in his sins. He adapts Himself to the circumstances of the sinner in his lowest state; He identifies Himself with him in the first step he takes under grace, but at the same time we see as to Himself that there is a voice "saying, This is my beloved Son." This is the perfect Man in the presence of God - the friend of poor sinners, and the expression of all that God loves to see in man in the midst of the world.

But further (Matt. 4), if we are the children of God, His beloved children, as we believe, loved as Jesus is loved (as He said Himself: "That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them"), we are through grace in the same position as Himself in the sight of God. But it is needful that this perfectly beloved Person should be tested, and we, not merely to know if we are children of God, nor as sinners; as such, we have already been tested, and we know we are lost. It is needful that grace should work; and when it is a question of grace, it is always the perfect grace of God toward sinners. All that is good must be on God's side, for in man there is nothing. The light manifests that in God there is nothing but that which is good, and in us no good thing. This love of God, in us, produces a new life. We are in the position of children of God, like Jesus; but then, the Spirit of God being in us, we must be put to the test. There are many things which hinder us from enjoying the love of God. There is selfishness, self-love, levity: therefore we must be put to the test, as Jesus Himself was. Paul says, "We glory in tribulations also . . . and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts."

61 Thus we are conscious of being children of God, being looked upon by Him as Jesus Himself. Then all is begun; but all is not finished. As to acceptance indeed all is finished. The child that God may have just given me is truly my child, though its education be not gone through; but it is as much my child, though just born, as when he will be twenty.

Jesus, owned of God, takes His place according to our weakness, and He is "led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." What Satan always seeks is to make us forget our position as children. In ourselves we are slaves of the devil; but we have been set free by God. Satan wanted man to abandon his first estate which he had in Eden; and he succeeded. There were "angels which kept not their first estate," neither did Adam keep his. Whatever the position in which man was placed, he always failed. Nadab, Abihu, Solomon, were not able to keep the estate in which they had been placed. Satan always seeks to make us fall. Hence, although God brings into blessing, He brings us also into trial; yet we know that "He who hath begun the good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." If Jesus leads His sheep out, "he goeth before them." Satan rises up to make us fall if he can; but man must in this world undergo the temptations of the devil. Well, Christ also underwent them, and in that position He acted as we ought to do ourselves. He does not at first say to Satan, "Get thee hence"; but He places Himself in the same position as ourselves, and He fasts forty days and forty nights. But He is there with Him who said to Him, "This is my beloved Son." He was conscious of being the Son of God; yet, as man, Satan begins to tempt Him. Do something, he says, inconsistent with your position, something that is not obedience, to please yourself, to satisfy your own will. "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." But Jesus answers him, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

62 If Jesus had obeyed Satan as the first Adam did, He would have fallen; but He could not. Grace places Him in all the difficulties in which we may be found ourselves. What is precious for us (it matters little in what circumstances) is that in Jesus we find not only life but also the maintenance of that life.

I have life, because God gave it to me; but in a practical sense, if I do not eat I cannot live; John 6. There is not in our souls one single spiritual quality but what comes from God. And, besides, see how Jesus acts practically. There is not a single word in the book of God which cannot feed our souls; and therefore it is important for us to know how to handle that word by the power of the Holy Ghost, in order to be enabled to keep Satan at a distance.

"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Satan quotes to Him a promise, but Christ will not abandon the position of obedience, and He answers him, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." We have here a principle of the utmost importance. We have indeed the whole word of God, as a means to gain the victory over Satan; but it is in the most simple obedience that we find strength. If Christ has not a word from God, He does nothing. He came to do the will of His Father; and if that which He is asked to do is not according to that will, He does not act.

The true affection of Martha and Mary leads them to beg of Jesus to come, saying to Him, "He whom thou lovest is sick." This appeal was very touching; but the Lord does not respond to it immediately: He had received nothing from God, and He does not go. He does not listen to His natural affections. He had indeed healed others that were sick; but if He had healed Lazarus, Martha and Mary would have learnt nothing more. Jesus then suffers Lazarus to die, and allows their heart to feel all the bitterness of death, that they may learn that the resurrection and the life are there.

63 Such is the obedience which is the principle of the life, and not the rule only; and, as a Christian, I ought to do nothing but what God wants me to do.

But besides I find here another important principle, which is, that I should have in God such perfect confidence that I never need to make a trial of it. It is tempting God not to have the certainty that He loves us. I ought so to reckon on His love and faithfulness as not to need even to think of it.

Again, Satan says to Jesus, "Cast thyself down." Ah! I need not do it, thought Jesus; I know full well that God will keep Me. The Jews said, "Is Jehovah amongst us, or not?" Well, in that they tempted Jehovah. We ought to have such assurance in God as to be able to think of nothing else but His will.

As soon as the devil said to Jesus "and worship me," then it is plainly Satan, and the Lord answers, "Get thee hence . . . Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

The two great principles in which Jesus walked are obedience to the word without having any will, and perfect confidence in God. We also can reckon upon God, because we are sure to have Him for us.

I would also call your attention to the way in which Jesus placed Himself in our position. We see Him taking His place with sinners who needed repentance, but in the act which was the beginning of the divine life in them, associating Himself with them in that baptism where their heart responded to the testimony of God about their sins. They were truly the excellent of the earth, those poor publicans and sinners.

Jesus is found in the position of the obedient Son, and thus fulfilling all righteousness. Heaven opens. Is the temptation there? Jesus is found there also. He is everywhere in order to sympathise with sinners. When He presents Himself in this world, it is God Himself who comes, and He shews in Him all that He would put in us. It is a God who has placed Himself in such a position that flesh finds nothing there. One must absolutely learn that it is the heart which must value God in His love, in His holiness, and in the midst of a world entirely lying in the wicked one.

How blessed to have Jesus! He puts Himself in our place; and we have to do with a God who has manifested Himself in the midst of the world, and who would have us for Himself, but without sin. Having put away our sins, He draws us to Himself, but without sin, to bring us to enjoy what He is, in spite of every

obstacle, and of all that is in the flesh. He would have us to enjoy perfectly that God whom, by His grace, we have known as He is.

64 May God grant unto us to value the perfect beauty of that Jesus who came to us! We know Him. Ah! how happy are we to be enabled to say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed to him!"

May God shew us all the perfection of Jesus, and that even in temptations; for we shall find the beauty of One who will not forsake us up to the time He will have placed us in the same glory with Him!

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