



Matthew 2-3

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Tape #8002
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In chapter 2, we come to the birth of Jesus Christ. Chapter 1, we dealt with His ancestry, His lineage, and the circumstances preceding His birth; and now the birth.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem saying, "Where is he that is born king of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him." And when Herod the king had heard these things he was troubled and all of Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born [or the Messiah]. And they said unto him, "In Bethlehem of Judea for thus it is written by the prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a governor that shall rule my people Israel. (2:1-6)

The first thing that Matthew mentions at the birth of Christ is the coming then of these wise men called in the Greek the *magi*, inquiring where he is born who was to be the king of the Jews. Herod the great was paranoid. He was a small little fellow, 4 feet 11 inches high, but yet tremendously powerful. He was a genius, you cannot look at the structures that stand even today that were built by Herod without recognizing the genius of this man; the Herodian Fortress south of Bethlehem, the Masada down at the Dead Sea, the Alexandrian Fortress up the Jordan valley midway between Jericho and the sea of Galilee, the city of Caesarea over on the coast, as well as the remains of the Great Wall of Jerusalem that was built by Herod, that portion of the wall that still stands, the Temple Mount area, the huge stones (45 feet long, 8 feet thick, and 5 feet high)—all testify to the genius of this man.

Tremendous builder but tremendously threatened as far as his reign was concerned. He felt that his sons and his wife whom he loved, Miriam, were conspiring against him and so he killed some of his sons, he killed his wife, Miriam, and later regretted murdering his wife; and so he built a tower for her. But you can imagine what his feelings were when these men came from the east seeking the birthplace of the One who was born the King of the Jews.

It is interesting that when Jesus was crucified, this is the title that was placed above the cross in the three languages: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

And so, here were the *magi*, these wise men from the east inquiring from Herod, of all people, where he was who was born King of the Jews, for they declared, "*We have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him.*" (2:2)

The star of Bethlehem is something that the astronomers have tried to figure out just what it was. Some suggest that it was the conjunction of the planet Jupiter and Saturn that took place in 6 B.C. Others believe that it was a 'supernova', but neither of these explanations are satisfactory because we find that when they left Herod, the star stood over Bethlehem. Thus, it was supernatural and that's all that you can say about it; it was a supernatural guiding star that these men had followed and were led actually to Bethlehem.

So Herod and all of Jerusalem was troubled over these men. We hear of the three wise men. There is nowhere in the scripture that says three wise men. There could have been many more than three, and coming with all of the accompaniment of people with them, it probably did create quite a stir in Jerusalem. Usually they say three because of the three gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. We don't know how many men there were but it did create a real stir in Jerusalem.

And so they gathered together the religious leaders, the chief priests, scribes and demanded where the Messiah was to be born. And they declared that it was in Bethlehem of Judea and they quoted from the prophet Micah, "And thou Bethlehem in the land of Judah are not the least among the provinces of Israel, for out of thee shall come He who is to rule my people whose going forth has been from old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2) The eternal One who has always existed from old, from everlasting, will be born in Bethlehem

of Judea.

It is interesting that He is to be born in Bethlehem but as we follow through here in chapter two, He will come out of Egypt and will be known as a Nazarene or He will be from Nazareth. So interestingly enough, He is to be born in Bethlehem, come out of Egypt and yet be known as a Nazarene or from Nazareth. And those are prophecies that would seem to have a problem in one person fulfilling them. How could it be that he is born in Bethlehem, comes out of Egypt and yet is from Nazareth. It created a problem later as there was a question as to whether or not He might be the Messiah. A part of the argument in the rejecting of Him as the Messiah was the fact that He was known as Jesus of Nazareth, and they said, "Search the scriptures, nothing in the scriptures about the Messiah coming out of Galilee. He's got to be born in Bethlehem." But evidently, they didn't realize that He was indeed born in Bethlehem.

It is interesting also to me that although Herod was extremely interested in the birth of this child, the religious leaders didn't seem to have any concern. So cold, so callous, so far from God though they were the religious leaders of the nation that you think they would be the first to go to Bethlehem to find the child, that they, too, might worship Him. A sad indictment against the religious leaders in that day, not really concerned with the birth of the Messiah. It is true that about this time in history, many Jews were looking for the Messiah to come. There was an expectancy among many of the Jews because of the prophecy of Daniel that from the time of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah the Prince would be 69 seven-year periods or 483 years. And they were approaching that time and thus, there was an anticipation and, of course, they were looking for the deliverance of Israel from the bondage to the foreign governments, the foreign powers which at this particular time was Rome. And thus, there was a longing and a looking for the Messiah by the common people. Interestingly enough in the writing of the Asenes, more and more of the scrolls are being translated; and through the scrolls of the Asenes, we find that there was this expectancy and anticipation of the Messiah's appearing.

Herod was quite interested, not to worship Him but to destroy any threat to his reign. As I said, he killed his sons who he felt were conspiring against him and were going to try and take over his throne. The Roman authorities said it is safer to be Herod's pig than to be his sons. He was putting his sons to death but he wouldn't eat pork. So he demanded where the Messiah was to be born, and they went to the scriptures and came up with Micah and the prophecy of the birth of Christ there in Micah.

Then Herod when he had privately called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. (2:7)

"Just when did you see this star, when did it appear?" And inquired diligently.

And he sent them to Bethlehem and he said, "Go and search diligently for the young child and when you have found him, bring me word again that I may come and worship him also. So when they had heard the king, they departed and lo, the star, [This shows that it could not have been the conjunction of the planets.] which they saw in the east went before them 'til it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. (2:7-10)

Here is where the traditional Christmas programs and Christmas cards bring in a lot of confusion because we usually see the star above the manger and the wise men with their camels standing there with their gifts by the manger, bringing them to the little babe in the manger. The wise men probably did not arrive until Jesus was perhaps a year old or more. By this time they had moved out of the manger quite sometime ago, and were now in a house.

And so when they were come into the house, they saw the young child (2:11).

They didn't see the baby in the manger as your Christmas cards would indicate, but *they saw the young child in the house with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him, and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. (2:11)*

The gold representing the heavenly kingdom; the frankincense, the sweet fellowship with God, the incense that is offered as a symbol of the prayer of the saints; and the myrrh which was used in embalming and spoke of His subsequent death for our sins.

And then being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their

own country another way. (2:12)

So we see how God by the Holy Spirit is overseeing these events, He warns them not to go back to Herod, not to reveal the whereabouts of this young child, and they returned to their country another way.

And when they were departed, behold the angel of the Lord (2:13),

Again, the angel of the Lord directing the activities. I think it was probably Gabriel, I think the Lord put Gabriel in charge of this whole thing and that Gabriel was the one we know that came to Zachariah in Luke 2; he then came to Mary, announced to Mary that she was to be the mother of the Messiah, chapter one of Luke; and then here we find the angel warning Joseph in a dream saying,

“Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.” (2:13)

Herod said, “I want to come and worship him also”; but in reality his intent was that of the destruction, destroying of the young child.

When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying: “Out of Egypt have I called my son.” (2:14,15)

So the second prophecy, “Out of Egypt have I called my son.” This particular prophecy is in Hosea 11:1 and in its context, it is a reference to God bringing His son, the nation Israel, out of Egypt. But it is interpreted here by Matthew as also (as so many prophecies are) having a double fulfillment and a reference, yes, to God bringing the nation of Israel out of Egypt, but also God bringing His only begotten Son Jesus Christ “out of Egypt have I called my Son.”

Then Herod when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceedingly angry and he sent forth and slew all of the children that were in Bethlehem and all of the surrounding area from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. (2:16)

He diligently inquired what? What time they saw the star, that’s what he was inquiring of them. From what they told him, he figured that the child must be under two years old. That is why all of the children under two years old were slain in order to eradicate this imagined threat to his reign there in Israel. So this cruel retaliation by Herod and, as we said, he was an extremely cruel man, killing his sons and his wife and many others who he thought were a threat to his position. And with the death of these infants,

Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: “In Ramah there is a voice heard, lamentation and weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted because they are not.” (2:17,18)

Rachel, the wife of Jacob, died just outside of Bethlehem giving birth to the second son born to Rachel. The first was Joseph, the second was Benjamin and she died in childbirth, and as she was dying she named the son, Benoni, which means *son of my sorrow*. (see Genesis 35:18) But graciously after her death, Jacob changed the name to Benjamin, son of my right hand. But she was buried there and even today, on your way from Jerusalem as you’re entering into Bethlehem, you see the tomb of Rachel beside the road. And thus Rachel, the women of Bethlehem, “weeping for her children, would not be comforted because they are not.” (2:18) And so the prophecy of the weeping of the mothers of Bethlehem because of their children who were slain by this cruel edict of Herod.

But when Herod was dead (2:19),

Now according to history, Herod died in the year 2 B.C. You say, “How can that be?” If we begin the dating of our calendars with the birth of Jesus, then how could it be that Herod died in the year 2 B.C., when Jesus was probably at least two years old? There were mistakes made. When they sought to make up the calendar, there is the Julian calendar and the Gregorian calendar, and there were mistakes made in the dating when they made those calendars. Now the calendars and the dates of the calendars are not inspired, or else they would not be incorrect. The Bible is inspired, it is correct. But Jesus was probably born in the year 4 B.C. according to our present calendar. Thus, could have been a little older at His crucifixion than what is generally accepted, about thirty-two years old, because evidence seems to point to the fact that He was crucified in April of 32 A.D. So he could have been older at the time of His crucifixion, probably born around 4 B.C.; but the mistake is in the calendar, not in the scriptures.

So when Herod was dead, behold the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying 'Arise, and take the young child, and his mother, and go into the land of Israel for they are dead which sought the young child's life.' (2:19,20)

Safe to go back, Joseph. Herod is dead.

And he arose and took the young child and his mother, and they came into the land of Israel, but when he heard that Archelaus, (2:21,22)

who was a son of Herod, and was even worse than Herod; in fact he really didn't last long. He was such a wicked ruler, the Roman government soon took the power away from him and they put then a Roman procurator over the land of which Pilate was then later the Roman governor at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus. So,

Archelaus was reigning in the stead of his father (2:22)

At the death of Herod, both Archelaus and Antipas, the sons of Herod, began to reign over the land. Herod reigned over the whole thing; Antipas was given the northern part, the Galilee and on up into Syria, where Archelaus ruled in the southern part. And Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the great, [and there are four Herods, and you need to get them separated in your mind; you might want to take notes on them], the one that ordered the death of the children in Bethlehem, the one who was ruling at the time of Christ, the one who built all of the magnificent structures around the holy land; his son, Herod Antipas, at his death was reigning, and his headquarters were in Tiberias on the sea of Galilee. He is the Herod that ordered the death of John the Baptist. He was attracted to the ministry of John the Baptist, but John was condemning him for marrying his brother's wife, Herodias; and she got angry with him for condemning him, and so when she had an opportunity, she had John the Baptist beheaded. So that was Herod Antipas.

He is the one that was drawn by curiosity to Jesus. Jesus referred to him as a sly fox. "Don't you know that Herod is seeking you?" He said, "Go tell that sly fox, I'll do my work today and tomorrow..." (see Luke 13:32) and he just... but then when Jesus was in Pilate's judgment; Pilate, not wanting to make judgment, knowing that he was innocent, sent him over to Herod because Herod happened to be in town because of the Passover. And Jesus appeared to Herod Antipas and he was curious hoping that Jesus would work some miracle, but Jesus would have nothing to do with him; and he said, "Send him back to Pilate." And so he was brought back to Pilate and Pilate then had to make the judgment.

So, the two Herods: father, son; Herod the great, his son Herod Antipas. Now Herod Antipas had a son, and he was Herod Agrippa I. And when you get into the book of Acts, he is the Herod that had James killed. "And Herod stretched forth his hand against the church, and he had James killed when he saw it pleased the Jews." He arrested Peter, had him put in jail, and intending to bring him forth the next day. And that was when the Lord delivered Peter out of the jail, as the church was praying. (see Acts 12:2-11)

This Herod Agrippa I is the one who, at a very young age, in his thirties, was there in Caesarea and there were the men of Tyre who had had some problems and they came down, the city council, and the mayor and all, to try to mend things up and Herod gave this great speech. He came out in this shiny silver kind of robe and it glistened in the sun there in the amphitheater of Caesarea and he gave this great speech and these guys, trying to play up to him, said, "It's the voice of a god and not a man," and it says that he gave not the Lord the glory and so "the angel smote him and he rotted [actually, his stomach rotted], and he died at a young age. (see Acts 12:22,23) That's Herod Agrippa I.

The fourth Herod comes in the latter part of the book of Acts; when Paul is in Caesarea, has been held in protective custody by the Roman government, has been given a political runaround and has made an appeal to Caesar, being a Roman citizen. And so Festus, the governor, had to send him to Caesar, but Festus didn't have any real charges. And so when Herod Agrippa II came with his wife, Bernice, to Caesarea, he said, "Hey I got this fellow, Paul, real problem. The Jews are accusing of some kind of thing concerning the religion and all. And he appealed to Caesar, but I don't have anything to charge him and if I send him to Caesar without some legitimate charges, I'm in big trouble. Would you listen to his case, and help me frame the charges against him?" So Herod Agrippa said, "Sure" and so Paul came in and began to talk to Herod Agrippa and you remember the story as Paul was saying, "This wasn't done in a corner, Herod, do you believe?" And started pressing home the issue with Herod Agrippa and he said, "Almost thou persuadest me

to become a Christian.” (Acts 26:28) That’s the fourth Herod, Herod Agrippa II.

So next week, you’ll be tested on the four Herods, so get them down.

So Archelaus was reigning in the stead of his father. As I said, his reign was very short, but he was wicked, he was cruel.

And so rather than coming back to Bethlehem, they decided to go back to their hometown to live, back to Nazareth where they were living prior to the birth of Jesus.

And so they dwelt in a city called Nazareth that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. (2:23)

Now you will not find any Old Testament scripture that says He will be called a Nazarene. So you have to go back to the Hebrew language and the Hebrew *Netzer* which is branch-- there are many prophecies concerning the branch that shall come out of the root of Jesse and out of the stem of David, the righteous branch--and that’s the *Netzer*; and thus the word Nazarene coming from that.

Interesting that Jesus grew up in a city that had a bad reputation. Nazareth was one of those cities with just a bad reputation. Remember when Phillip came to Nathaniel and said, “We have found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.” He said, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) Just a bad reputation, but Jesus grew up in Nazareth and thus these prophecies; and we see several of them fulfilled in Matthew chapter two: Born in Bethlehem, Came out of Egypt, Great wailing and weeping because of the death of the children, and then Coming out of Nazareth [or moving to Nazareth] thus called a Nazarene.

Chapter 3

In those days, [that is the days that Jesus was here] John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. [down near Jericho by the Jordan river, near the area called Aeneas] And he was saying, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (3:1–2)

The kingdom of heaven is a reference to the rule of heaven over the earth. The kingdom of heaven will be here on the earth but it will be the rule of Jesus Christ. And when Jesus reigns and rules, you’ll be in the kingdom of heaven. Now, if He reigns and rules in your heart tonight, you are in the kingdom of heaven tonight. Jesus said, “The kingdom of heaven is among you”; it’s right here, it’s in the hearts and lives of all of those who had submitted to the reign of Jesus Christ.

So he came preaching, “Repent.” First word of God, breaking the silence of 400 years.

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he, [that was John the Baptist] who was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, [so the fulfillment again of prophecies all the way through. The prophet Isaiah which said.] The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. (3:2–3)

Whenever a king was coming to visit a territory, an area, there was just a lot of preparation prior to the coming of the king. There would be tremendous road building projects, making a highway, filling the valleys, cutting down the mounts, and thus making the roads straight, taking out the curves and thus he’s announcing, “The King is coming, get things ready,” “Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.” (3:3)

And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey. (3:4)

The locust is thought to be the carob bean from the Joshua tree; it’s also called Joshua bread, that long brown carob sticks and rather than the grasshoppers. It was probably the carob bean that he was eating, but he was an outdoors man, to be sure. The camel’s hair robe and coat and the leather girdle, just really ragged outdoors man. And eating, living off the land.

I love these kind of people, I’m attracted to them. I think of how dependent we have gotten on society. I’ve often wondered how long I could survive if I couldn’t go to the grocery store to buy a quart of milk and a loaf of bread. If we had to provide for our own food and you couldn’t go to the faucet and turn the water on, where would you go for water? How would you survive? That’s what makes me admire these people that can live off the land. Learning survival techniques.

I’ve always thought that I’d like to go down, they have survival schools down in Mexico where you learn to survive off the land and then the final test is they take you out into the jungles and dump you. And

you have to make a raft and now, think of that, cutting the branches and how do you tie them together and how are you surviving while you're doing all these, and then you have to float on out on the river and come back to civilization; you eat berries and roots and leaves and all this kind of stuff, and I've always been intrigued by that. Wanted to go that survival...I'm too old now, too spoiled, but I've always been intrigued by that.

I have a friend, in fact, many of you know him, who has moved on down to Blythe, ole Wally Hobson, this fellow I just admire, he's a man's man. He just knows how to live off the land and you go down there with him and he catches the turtles in the Colorado river, the snapping turtles, and then he cooks them up and he smokes the fish, just great time with him when I'm down there. Got a freezer full of dove and all of these, he's a great outdoors man.

And so this fellow was attractive in a weird sort of way. I mean, you draw attention when you wear a camel's coat and a leather girdle, and you're out there eating wild honey and locusts, you do attract attention.

And so there went out to him from Jerusalem, and all of Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, (3:5)

A lot of people were going out to hear this fellow. He was calling out to the people to repent and drew a crowd. And when he saw,

And were baptized by him in the Jordan, as they confessed their sins. (3:6)

It was a baptism of repentance, he was calling people to repentance, to change. Now the river Jordan, interestingly enough, in typology is a type of death. And thus the baptism in the river Jordan was sort of the death to that old life; it's a repentance and now a change, going to live a new life, going to bury the old life and going to live a new life. Now that is somewhat similar to the baptism in Christianity, only our baptism is identifying in the death of Jesus Christ and the new life that we have in the Spirit through Jesus Christ. But John's baptism was the baptism of repentance. I'm going to change, I'm going to let that old life die, going to live a new life.

And he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, (3:7)

Now these are the people that Jesus had real problems with when He began His ministry. The Pharisees were a religious sect, they were people who had returned to the Mosaic law, from them we get the Talmud. Their idea was the interpreting of the law and the keeping of the law circumspectly. And they made up all of the rules and regulations surrounding the law. These were the men that Jesus said "strained at a gnat but swallowed a camel." These were the men who were constantly trying to convert people into their society; they were the religionists of the day.

The Sadducees were the materialists of the day. They wore religious garb but they didn't believe in angels, they didn't believe in spirits, they didn't believe in resurrection from the dead, they were purely materialists. But they too were attracted to John the Baptist and John saw some of them with their robes and their phylacteries and all in the crowd, and,

he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruit therefore that demonstrates repentance: (3:7,8)

John was preaching repentance, the baptism was one of repentance. And here came these self-righteous men, religious men, and John takes after them, calls them a generation of vipers. Show some fruits of repentance, your lives aren't changed at all. Show forth fruit of repentance.

And don't think to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father: (3:9)

Their boast was we're descendants of Abraham and they were trusting in that for salvation. They were looking for generational type of salvation. Because I'm related to Abraham, I'm saved. That's as foolish as thinking that because you're a citizen of the United States, you're saved. Don't say we have Abraham as our father,

for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. Now the time is when the ax is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit will be cut down, and cast into the fire. (3:9,10)

You generation of vipers. Show some fruit of repentance because the ax is going to be laid to the root of the trees. And if a tree doesn't bring forth good fruit; the good fruit would be the fruits of repentance, the

signs that there has been a true change, a real repentance; and if it isn't there, the tree is to be cut down and cast into the fire.

Now I indeed [he said] baptize you with water unto repentance: but the One that is coming after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: and he's going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: (3:11)

Two baptisms: John's baptism, the element is water, the issue is repentance; there's another One coming after me, He's mightier than I am, I'm not even worthy to bear His shoes, and He's going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. So John the baptizer, the issue is repentance from sin, the element is water. Jesus is going to come, He is going to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Now he talks about the fire and let me point out that it is not the fire that is oftentimes referred to in the Pentecostal churches as this wild emotionalism, "Brother, we've got the fire!" And they are usually making reference to a lot of the emotional outbursts and vigorous physical type of activities. This fire, John defines for us, for he said,

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, (3:12)

When they would harvest their wheat, they would put it on the threshing floor. And they would then walk all over it to break the husks away from the wheat kernel. And so they would lay it out on the floor, walk all over it and breaking these husks off of the wheat kernel. And ideally, the threshing floor was on the top of a hill, a flat rock that they've flattened out on the top of the hill, and then when the wind would blow, they would take the wheat and the chaff, the husks, throw it into the air and the wind would blow the husks away, the wheat would fall back down on the threshing floor. And that's what the psalmist was talking about in the first Psalm where he said, "The wicked are not so but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away."

Now if they did not have a site that they had a good breeze, then they had these fans and when they had knocked the husks off of the kernel, they would fan it and it would blow the husks away with the fan. So, "whose fan is in His hand and He's going to thoroughly cleanse or purge His floor," [the threshing floor, and He will]...

gather his wheat into the garner; [into the silo or the barn] but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (3:12)

This is talking about that purifying process of our lives through the Holy Spirit. And the fire is that which consumes the chaff in order that we might be cleansed or purified, refined, so to speak, where the impurities of our lives are removed. And that is the purpose of the Holy Spirit, the removal of the impurities in your life in order that you might be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. Burning out from your life anger, strife, those areas of the flesh, purging it that He might just leave that which is pure and wholesome, just the wholesome grain, the wholesome wheat. And thus the fire of God may make me shout, but I'm shouting, "Ooo, ouch, oh!", as He is burning out the chaff. It's not one where you run around raising your hands and shouting praises to God. It's one that just really hurts when that fire begins to cleanse and burn the chaff, refine the life, getting rid of the dross. Burns the chaff with the unquenchable fire.

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan...(3:13)

Now this was John's ministry, summed up for us by Matthew. Tough, straight, and he is foretelling One that is coming. Coming after me, He's mightier than I am, I baptize with water, He's going to baptize with the Holy Spirit. John the baptizer in one case, Jesus the baptizer in the other. Jesus is the One who baptizes you in the Holy Spirit. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan..." (3:13) Jesus was up in the area of Nazareth, Galilee, He came on down to Jordan where John was baptizing,

...to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and you are coming to me? (3:13,14)

Now this is interesting because John did not yet know that He was the Messiah. John did not know that He was the Messiah until after He was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. John said that, "I did not know until the Spirit descended upon Him because He who sent me to baptize said, 'The same One upon Whom the Spirit descends and abides, He is the One'." This had not happened yet. And yet John's

acquaintance with Jesus, probably sometime early in childhood, knew the character of Jesus; and thus, when Jesus asked to be baptized, John said, "Really, I need to be baptized by You."

John's parents, you remember in the gospel of Luke, were old when he was born. His birth was really miraculous because when the angel told Zachariah that his wife, Elizabeth, was going to have a son, he said, "How can this be, she's old and stricken with years?" [that is, she's bent over by her age]. So they probably died when John was young and thus he, more or less, was sort of on his own, went on out into the wilderness, became a man of the outdoors, and yet was familiar with Jesus because there was a relationship between his mother and Mary. He actually was of the priestly family, his father was a priest and thus because it went from father to son, he was a priestly family but turned down the formal religion to just commune with God out there in the wilderness area of the Jordan river.

And Jesus answering said unto him, Allow it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. And so he allowed Him. (3:15)

Now, Jesus is declaring that in doing this, He is fulfilling all righteousness. He was righteous, and yet, He is setting an example and Peter tells us that "Christ has left us an example that we should follow in His steps." (1 Peter 2:21) And thus, water baptism is an important step for the child of God in the fulfilling of all righteousness in the obedience to the commands of the scripture.

And then when Jesus was baptized, as He came up out of the water, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (3:16,17)

Notice the three persons of the Godhead: Jesus coming up out of the water, the Spirit of God descending and lighting upon Him, and the voice of God speaking from heaven, declaring, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Well pleased because He was obeying and fulfilling all righteousness. Once more, God spoke from heaven and that was at the transfiguration, again declaring, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." Hear the declaration, I am well pleased.

God Himself breaking the silence, speaking from heaven, bearing witness of Jesus Christ, "my beloved Son." Jesus said the Holy Spirit bears witness of Him, the Father bore witness of Him, and then He declares concerning you, that "you are My witnesses." And thus we are to bear witness of Jesus Christ to the world, joining the witness of the Father and that of the Holy Spirit, truly this is the Son of God.

Father, we thank You for the Word of God, the scriptures that were fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ, in the circumstances of His early childhood, in the circumstances of His life and ministry, in the circumstances of His death and resurrection. Lord, we thank You how that the scriptures have laid out in advance all of these aspects of the life of Jesus Christ. And You spoke of them before they happened so that when they did happen, we might believe.

Lord, we do believe that Jesus Christ is Your only begotten Son, that He was sent into this world to save us from our sins. And we believe that through Him and faith in Him, we have received the gift of eternal life and the hope of heaven, the kingdom of heaven. Lord, we pray that as we continue our study through the gospel of Matthew that we might see Jesus in a new light, that we might see Him as the Lord of glory, and that we might indeed surrender our lives to His lordship over us. In Jesus' Name, we pray, Amen.