

Kingdom of God in the Gospels I

(Feast of Tabernacles—Day 2)

Fred R. Coulter—October 4, 2009

Today we're going to investigate the Gospel message of the Kingdom. In other words *the Kingdom of God as described in the Gospels!* It's very unique from this point of view, let's see if we can put ourselves back into the mind-frame of the Jews during the days of Jesus.

We know that they were expecting the Messiah, because remember when the wise men—there may have been quite a few more than three—came to Herod, he called for the high priest and the scribes, and for them to tell him where the Messiah was to be born. So, they told him, and they knew it was about that time because remember: John the Baptist had been born. We'll cover part of that and we'll cover the birth of Jesus Christ.

However, when you read some of these Scriptures in Daniel and Isaiah, it's hard to put it together without the Gospels and without the knowledge we have of Jesus Christ.

Dan. 2—you know the whole thing about the head of gold, the chest of silver, brass, iron, iron and clay. As you read this, *this says nothing about the Messiah coming*—and the Messiah was Jesus Christ—*as a human being!* This looks like a direct intervention from God from heaven, which it will be in the final analysis.

I want you to do is put yourself in the frame of mind of the Jews back in the days of Jesus who had none of the Gospels, who had none of the New Testament; certainly not the blessing of the book of Revelation that we have today.

Daniel 2:40: “And the fourth kingdom shall be *as* strong as iron, forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and beats down all things, and as the iron that crushes all these, shall it break in pieces and crush. And whereas you saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay and part of iron, *the* kingdom shall be divided. But there shall be in it the strength of the iron, because you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. And *as* the toes of the feet *were* part of iron and part of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken... [weak]. ...And whereas you saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mix themselves with the seed of men. But they shall not cling to one another, even as iron does not combine with clay. And in the days of these kings, the God of heaven... [so this is coming from heaven] ...shall set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And the Kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these

kingdoms, **and it shall stand forever.** Because you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter. And the dream *is* certain, and its interpretation is sure” (vs 40-45).

Today we know that that happened pretty close to 26-2700-years ago, and it still hasn't happened. But the point is, as Peter said, ***this was spoken of by the mouth of all the prophets since the beginning of the world!*** We will see the same thing here, talking about the final Beast Power:

Daniel 7:25: “And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change the set times and the laws. And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and one-half time. But the judgment shall sit, and his dominion shall be taken away to be consumed and to be destroyed unto the end. And the Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the Kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High...” (vs 25-27)

If you're a Jew, who do you think it's going to be given to? *The Jews and the Israelites*, if you read this and know nothing about the New Testament.

“...Whose Kingdom *is* an everlasting Kingdom. And all kingdoms shall serve and obey Him” (v 27). *That's something!*

Daniel 7:13: “I saw visions in the night and, behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And dominion and glory was given to Him, and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (vs 13-14).

Now let's look at a couple of sections in the prophet Isaiah and let's see what it says. And if you were a Jew looking at some of these how are you going to reconcile this? Because the Kingdom of Heaven is coming from heaven, without a doubt. We covered a little of that yesterday, but let's look at it from a different point of view, because everything in Daniel shows it's coming from God, from heaven

down to the earth. Now we read here there's another element put in here, and how are they going to understand that? Now we have a human element added to it.

Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders..."

Here's a human baby. Then it talks about the government Is going to be on His shoulders shows that He's going to grow up. How can that be if the Kingdom of God is coming from heaven?

"...and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God... [This baby is referred to as **God**—how can that be?] ...The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and over His Kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this" (vs 6-7).

This sounds like it's coming from the earth, doesn't it? Daniel shows it's coming from heaven, but as an everlasting kingdom.

Isa. 53—this really messes everything up. The point that I'm making is that what Jesus teaches in the Gospels is the point that draws all of these together. Now here's a tough one to figure out if you don't understand.

Isaiah 53:1: "Who has believed our report?..."

Kind of hard coming from heaven, yet, there's going to be a baby. How are we going to work this out? *He's going to grow up and be a man and take over the kingdom of Israel!*

Verse 1: "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For He shall grow up... [this is talking about the baby in Isa. 9] ...before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; He has no form nor comeliness that we should look upon Him, nor beauty that we should desire Him. *He is* despised and rejected of men..." (vs 1-3).

How can that be when a Kingdom is going to come and destroy all the kingdoms that are on the earth and rule forever?

"...a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not" (v 3).

This really shows here that He's going to die! How can He come from heaven, set up a Kingdom and die? *They don't understand about the*

resurrection! If you don't have the Gospels and if you don't have the New Testament, these things are very difficult to understand.

Verse 4: "Surely He has borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.... [tie in Psa. 22, about all the suffering that Jesus would endure on the cross] ...But He *was* wounded for our transgressions; *He was* crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace *was* upon Him; and with His stripes we ourselves are healed" (vs 4-5). **How is that going to be?**

Verse 7: "He was oppressed..." ***How could that be if He's going to be the King of the Kingdom?***

"...and He was afflicted; yet, He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth" (v 7).

Now we're going to see, sure enough He's going to die. Well, if it's coming from heaven, and God is going to set it up and it will never die out, how's He going to die? This presented a great quandary for the Jews.

Verse 8: "By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and with His generation who did consider that He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of My people He *was* stricken?" ***How can a man die for the sins of others?***

Verse 9: "And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; although He had done no violence, nor *was any* deceit in His mouth. Yet the LORD willed to crush Him..." (vs 9-10).

Why would God—Who sent the Messiah to save the Jews; to bring an everlasting Kingdom—put Him through all of this and that it was His will to 'crush Him'?

"...and He has put Him to grief: You shall make His life an offering for sin.... [How's that going to be? Here's a contradictory statement]: ...He shall see His seed; He shall prolong His days, and that the purpose of the LORD might prosper in His hand."

- How's He going to prolong His days if He dies?
- How's He going to bear the sins of people if He's a man?

That's quite a contradiction here!

That's why we need the Gospels! We're going to see why, and also we need to understand that the Gospels and Acts make up the fourth division of the Bible.

If you look at it this way: Here's the Old Testament, here's the New Testament; and the Gospels is that section of the Bible which directly reaches back into the Old Testament and begins to go forth into the New Testament. As we will see, every Gospel starts out going back. Just like Matt. 1 has *the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham—physical*, because all the prophecies have to be fulfilled. Those prophecies concerning that the Kingdom of God is sure enough coming from heaven; those prophecies showing that:

- yes, there's going to be a King Who will reign forever
- yes, He's going to be a human being
- yes, He's going to suffer death
- yes, He's going to be a sacrifice for the sins of the people
- yes, He's going to be resurrected from the dead

So you can see how important that the Gospels are. The Gospels contain what was called the *Good News* of the Kingdom of God, or as Matthew writes, *The Kingdom of Heaven*.

Luke 1:13—the angel Gabriel came and appeared to Zacharias “But the angel said to him...”

Zacharias was the father of John the Baptist, because we know in Mal. 3 there is a prophecy that says that God is going send His messenger before His face. When the Messiah comes, He's going to suddenly appear at the temple, ALL of the prophecies have to be fulfilled. So, here is a very detailed description on how God began to do it, through Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth and their son to be born John the Baptist. When Zacharias saw the angel he was scared to death.

Verse 13: “But the angel said to him, ‘Fear not, Zacharias, because your supplication has been heard; and your wife Elizabeth shall bear a son to you, and you shall call his name John. And he shall be a joy and exultation to you; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great before the Lord. And he shall never drink wine or strong drink in any form, but he shall be filled with *the* Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to *the* Lord their God.... [tie in Mal. 3.] ...And he shall go before Him in *the* spirit and power of Elijah... [they're reaching back to the prophet Elijah.] ...to turn *the* hearts of the fathers to *the* children, and *the*

disobedient to *the* wisdom of *the* righteous... [Elijah and Mal. 4] ...to make ready a people prepared for *the* Lord” (vs 13-17).

Well, Zacharias being old, probably well up into his 70s, likewise with his wife, didn't quite believe this.

Verse 18: “Then Zacharias said to the angel, ‘By what *means* shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife *is* advanced in years.’ And the angel answered *and* said to him, ‘I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you, and to announce this good news to you. But behold... [*listen*] ...you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day in which these things shall take place, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time” (vs 18-20).

If an angel comes and you know it's an angel of God, you better believe him regardless of the circumstances. Now we could also say of Zacharias: ‘Zacharias, have you not ever read about Abraham and Sarah? *Where God told Abraham and Sarah there's nothing impossible for the Lord!*

God did this to show the impossibility of this being done by human will alone. Some people have said, ‘Well, they read the prophecies in the Old Testament and then what they did they wrote the story of the Gospels so that they could show that the prophecies were fulfilled.’ There are so many that have been fulfilled there is no way that that could have been done.

Now let's see how the prophecies began to be fulfilled so there would be a child, a son. All of this is part of fulfilling the prophecies and the Gospel of good news of the Kingdom of God.

Verse 26: “And in the sixth month of *her* pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name *was* Joseph, of *the* lineage of David; and the name of the virgin *was* Mary. And after coming to her, the angel said, ‘Hail, you who are highly favored! The Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women.’ But when she saw *him*, she was *greatly* perplexed at his message, and was considering what kind of salutation this might be” (vs 26-29).

Just picture yourself a 19-year-old—probably 20-years-old—and an angel appears to you and tells you this; what are you going to think?

Verse 30: “Then the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, because you have found grace with God; and behold, you shall conceive in *your* womb and give birth to a son; and you shall call His

name Jesus” (vs 30-31).

Another impossible thing was done to show that this was of God. And it wasn't any man that announced it, the angel came from God. Gabriel says, '***I am Gabriel who stands in the presence of God.***' These are very momentous things that took place. So again, God did an impossible thing—impossible for men to figure out, but not for God.

Verse 31: “And behold, you shall conceive in *your* womb and give birth to a son; and you shall call His name Jesus

He shall be great, and shall be called *the* Son of *the* Highest; and *the* Lord God shall give Him the throne of David, His forefather... [Isa. 9—sit on the throne of David; a baby is born, a Son is given, this is it] ...and He shall reign over the house of Jacob into the ages, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end” (vs 31-33).

How can there be no end to the :Kingdom if He's going to die? That is if you don't believe in the resurrection.

Verse 34: “But Mary said to the angel, ‘How shall this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?’ And the angel answered *and* said to her, ‘*The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you; and for this reason, the Holy One being begotten in you shall be called the Son of God*’” (vs 34-35).

An amazing thing! But this is all a part of the fulfilling the prophecies of the Kingdom of God. You have to have this connection between the Old and New Testament, and that is given through the fourth division of the Bible: the Gospels and Acts.

Verse 36: “Now behold, Elizabeth your kinswoman... [probably her aunt, because remember, Elizabeth was old and Mary was a maiden] ...has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is *the* sixth month for her who *was* called barren. For **with God nothing shall be impossible**” (vs 36-37). *After that what could Mary say?*

Verse 38: “And Mary said, ‘Behold the handmaid of *the* Lord; may it be *done* to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed from her.”

Mary got up, she went over to see her aunt, and notice what happened. Let's understand something that's very important. *All of this part of the book of Luke had to have come directly from Mary!* When Luke was getting all of his sources, as he said there in the beginning part of Luke 1 and also Acts 1, when he was putting this all together...

If Mary was 20-years-old when Jesus was

conceived in her womb—so let's say 21 when He was born—she was about 51 when His ministry began. You add another 20-years to that, so she must have been 70, maybe even into her 80s, if Luke came to Jerusalem and personally interviewed her for this. But these things were written down way before then. Here's what happened. This was an amazing thing:

Verse 41: “Now it came to pass *that* when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the babe... [whatever is in the womb is a baby; a child] ...leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with *the Holy Spirit.*”

Again, showing that ***this is from God!*** Not connived by two women to try and figure something out. Not by men who are trying to set up the Kingdom of God themselves. God had to intervene directly in the lives of these people and begin—through His angels—to work out and fulfill all these prophecies.

Verse 42: “And she cried out with a loud voice and said, ‘Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb. But why is this *happening* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?’” (vs 42-43).

She didn't know this in her mind that she understood that Mary was carrying Jesus already, probably just a few weeks conceived. This was from the Holy Spirit to show that God was doing what He promised in His Word, and that this One was going to become the Lord, the Son of God, the Son of man.

Verse 44: “For behold, as soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the babe in my womb leaped in exultation. And blessed *is* she who has believed, for there shall be a fulfillment of the things spoken to her from *the* Lord.’ Then Mary said...” (vs 44-46).

Only Mary could have given this information; which means that since it was an astounding thing to them, I wonder how quickly after these events took place that they wrote them down. We also know in another place where it says, ‘*And Mary kept these things in her heart.*’

“...‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has exulted in God my Savior; for He has looked upon the humble estate of His handmaid; for behold, from this time forward all generations shall count me blessed, because the Mighty One has done great things to me, and Holy *is* His name... [she understood what God had done] ...and His mercy *is* toward those who fear Him, from generation to generation. He has worked strength with His arm; He has scattered *the* haughty in *the* imagination of their hearts. He has put down rulers from thrones,

and has exalted *the* lowly” (vs 46-52).

This is a prophecy of the advance work of Christ and the coming of the Kingdom of God. That didn't happen right there just because Mary was pregnant and Elizabeth was six months pregnant. *No!* This is a prophecy.

“...He has filled *the* hungry with good things, and *the* rich He has sent away empty” (vs 52-53).

All of these are prophecies. If you go down to the marginal reference of the Bible, you will see that verse back to references in the Old Testament. You have to have the Gospels coming right after the end of the Old Testament, so all of these things can be tied together. Out of the Old Testament prophecies all of these things are put together in a form, in a pattern, and a way that's going to fulfill the Word of God. Remember, the prophecies and the Old Testament is put together 'line upon line; here a little, there a little; precept upon precept. So now the Gospels begin to pull these precepts out and to line them up in a row, in a way that could not be done without the Gospels and later the New Testament.

Verse 54: “He has helped His servant Israel, in remembering *His* mercy, exactly as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever” (vs 54-55).

So, that goes right back to Abraham. But I want you to understand exactly what this is talking about here, and how the Gospels are indispensable in laying the groundwork for the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. All of these things have to be done, and have to be fulfilled, and there has to be the connection from the Old Testament to the New Testament, and that's why the Gospels are fourth or middle division of the Bible.

John the Baptist was born, and remember his father couldn't say anything; so when John the Baptist was born they wanted to name him on the day that he was going to be circumcised, and they wanted to call him Zacharias. His mother said no, he's going to be John. And they said, 'John! There's no one in the family called John!' So they said, 'Well, let's ask Zacharias.' So, they handed him a writing tablet and he wrote 'his name shall be John.' As soon as he wrote it his mouth was opened. Now, I suppose he had a lot to think about the nine months that Elizabeth was pregnant with John the Baptist, then he was finally born.

Notice what happened, v 67: “And Zacharias his father was filled with *the* Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, 'Blessed be *the* Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited and has worked redemption for His people” (vs 67-68).

Hasn't save a single soul yet—a prophecy. The Holy Spirit had to give this information to tie it all together.

Verse 69: “And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; exactly as He spoke by *the* mouth of His holy prophets since the world began” (vs 69-70). *Isn't that what Peter said later (Acts 3)?*

Verse 71: “Salvation from our enemies and from *the* hand of all those who hate us.”

But, many of them expected that to come immediately. Little did they know that the whole process of salvation was now going to be a different thing than they ever, ever imagined. It had to start this way:

- you have to fulfill the prophecies
- you have to then bring the teaching
- you then have to do what Jesus did

Verse 72: “To fulfill *the promise of* mercy made to our fathers, and to remember His Holy covenant, *the* oath that He swore to Abraham our father; to grant us *that*, being saved from *the* hand of our enemies, we might serve Him without fear, *walking* in Holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our lives” (vs 72-75).

Now then, another prophecy. He didn't know what he was going to be other than what he was told by the angel, 'He's not to drink any wine or any strong drink at all. He's going to be a Nazarite from birth.' Just imagine what John the Baptist looked like when he was 30-years-old and began preaching down by the Jordan. I bet he was a fearsome thing to look at, *indeed!*

Verse 76: ““And you, little child, shall be called *the* prophet of *the* Highest; for you shall go before *the* face of *the* Lord, to prepare His ways.”

That he did! But how long was John the Baptist's ministry? *Probably no more than seven or eight months long.* Yet, that's important! That's part of the fulcrum or the transition from the Old to the New Testament.

Verse 77: “To give *the* knowledge of salvation to His people by *the* remission of their sins, through *the* deep inner compassions of our God; in which *the* dayspring from on high has visited us, to shine upon those who are sitting in darkness and in *the* shadow of death, to direct our feet into *the* way of peace” (vs 77-79).

What a prophecy! Yet, his life was cut off and Jesus said of him, remember, 'that of the prophets of God *there was none greater than John*

the Baptist! And yet, he did no miracles.

- What happened to him?
- How did he die? *Terrible, ignominious way!*

You can read of that!

He had his head cut off because he promised some young woman that enticed his lusts—so he died. This is quite something! You stop and think about the things that happened concerning the birth of Christ. These are many, many things that are not found in Matthew, Mark and John. That's why Luke wrote it the way that he did. I don't know how much of Matthew he had, but a lot of it was written, as we know, by about 35_{A.D.} I don't know when Mark was written, but we have the history of it. It was in the 40s & 50_{S.A.D.} Then John was written in several occasions and then he added the first chapter of the Gospel of John to show that yes, the real fulfillment of this was that 'in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' *Fantastic thing!*

Brethren, I want you to understand what a blessing it is that we have all the Word of God, where we can now sit down and we can read these things, and we can study these things, and we can put them together; and we can know for sure that these things happened this way. But this was a fantastic and important thing to do. The way that it was done ***had to be done directly from God*** the Father to make these things known and give these prophecies ***so that it would be understood that this is from God!*** So when Jesus began to preach, He was the coming King of the Kingdom of God.

Let's look at the birth of Jesus. You know they were living in Nazareth, but because of the registration and population census and the taxing of people, everyone had to go to the town he was born in. So, Joseph had to take Mary, who was very ready to give birth, travel all the way from Nazareth and come to Bethlehem. Now it was as the Feast of Trumpets was beginning and of course, a lot of the Jews would come to Jerusalem to get ready for the Feast of Tabernacles by coming there before and keep the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement and then the Feast of Tabernacles, so there was no place for them at the inn.

Luke 2:6: "And it came to pass *that* during the *time* they were there, the days were fulfilled for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her son... [it doesn't say *their* son] ...the firstborn, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (vs 6-7).

We know that this happened toward

evening. He may have been born just right as the Feast of Trumpets began.

Verse 8: "Now *there* were shepherds in the same country, who were dwelling in the fields... [this shows that it couldn't have been in the winter time] ...and keeping watch over their flock by night; and suddenly an angel of *the* Lord stood by them, and *the* glory of *the* Lord shined round about them; and they were seized *with* great fear" (vs 8-9).

If you're just out there watching the sheep and all of a sudden this happens, and here's all this light and here are these angels—the glory of the Lord—who are we? *We're just shepherd men!*

Verse 10: "But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I am announcing to you glad tidings *of* great joy...'"

- he did not announce it to the kings
- he did not announce it to the high priest
- he did not announce it to the scribes and Pharisees
- ***he announced it to shepherds***

Why? Because Jesus was to be the Shepherd of the sheep!

"...which shall be to all people... [and he went to two, maybe three, shepherd men out in the field] ...for today, in *the* city of David, a Savior was born to you, Who is Christ *the* Lord. Now this *is* the sign for you: you shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (vs 19-12).

After that message then, WOW! This is what really happened; this was something!

Verse 13: "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of *the* heavenly host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in *the* highest, and peace on earth among men *of* goodwill'" (vs 13-14).

I bet by time they got done hearing that and seeing that the hair on the back of their necks was standing up and their spines were tingling and they were excited all over. *Yes! Yes!*

Verse 15: "And it came to pass, as the angels were departing from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now as far as Bethlehem... [so they knew that was the city of the King] ...and let us see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' And they made haste... [they *ran*] ...and came and found both Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in the manger. Now after seeing *Him*, they made known everywhere the proclamation that they had been told concerning this little Child" (vs 15-17).

Amazing events that took place! All of this

to tie together the Old Testament with the New. The Kingdom of God preached by all the prophets since the beginning of the world, and now the beginning of the fulfilling of the events so this could start to take place and to happen. However, it came about differently than they expected, and we will have to see why.

(go to the next track)

Now let's continue on with the Gospels as the fourth, or center, division of the Bible, which connects the Old Testament to the New Testament and brings together many of the prophecies that seem to be completely contradictory in the Old Testament.

Let's begin here with John the Baptist and his meeting with Jesus; because Jesus—even though they may have been cousins—didn't grow up and know John the Baptist. Because Jesus grew up in Galilee, in Nazareth and John the Baptist stayed in the wilderness of Judea until the day of His appearing.

So, when they met, John didn't know who He was until he saw the Holy Spirit descending out of heaven upon him. But notice how he began to prepare the people for Christ. Notice what he said; very similar to what Jesus said. But we need to view it how God views it.

Matthew 3:1: "Now in those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'" (vs 1-2).

It still hasn't come even to this day, yet, has it? But the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand for them. As we come down through history, everyone of us are confronted with that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand for us. That's what he's saying here. Now, John told them who he was. God gave them this much information.

Verse 3: "For this is he who was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet... [this is Luke writing] ...saying, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of *the* Lord, make straight His paths.'" Now John himself wore a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then went out to him *those from* Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the country around the Jordan..." (vs 2-5).

He became a very well-known figure. Remember, all of them remembered when he was born, what a tremendous thing this was that these old people had a baby—and it was the talk of everyone! Now all of sudden, thirty years later, he appears, and this is how he is. People wanted to go

out and see him.

Verse 6: "And were being baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But after seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism..." (vs 6-7).

They wanted to check this guy out, that's why they came. They came to find out, 'who are you?' John the Baptist was the son of a priest, and he didn't say, 'Oh, lookie, the religious leaders are coming down here and they're all going to be converted.' **No way!**

Notice how he received them: "...he said to them, 'You brood of vipers, who has forewarned you to flee from the coming wrath?'" (v 7).

How dare he speak to us that way! Doesn't he know who we are? How important we are?

He called them 'snakes in the grass'!

Verse 8: "Therefore, produce fruits worthy of repentance... [you have to show that you're repenting to God] ...and do not think to say within yourselves, 'We have Abraham *for our* father'..." (vs 8-9).

Don't rely on who you are physically. That's going to be a keynote that follows through all the rest of the Gospels. It's not *who* you are, it is ***how you repent!***

"...for I tell you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. But already the axe is striking at the roots of the trees; therefore, every tree that is not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into *the* fire" (vs 9-10).

Nice welcome from John the Baptist. You try that on some very important people today. You walk up to them and say, 'You lying snakes in the grass. Who do you think you are?' That's about what it was. Now then, he understood who he was; and notice what he said:

Verse 11: "'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but the one Who *is* coming after me is mightier than I, of Whom I am not fit to carry His sandals; He shall baptize you with *the* Holy Spirit, and with fire"—***a reference to the Lake of Fire!*** That goes clear to the end of all human time *when the incorrigible wicked are burned up in the Lake of Fire!* Then he brings it down to his day, again:

Verse 12: "Whose winnowing shovel *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather His wheat into the granary; but the chaff He will burn up with **unquenchable fire.**" ***That shows the fire is the Lake of Fire!***

Now here's where Jesus and John meet; they

didn't meet before this:

Verse 13: "Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and You come to me?' Then Jesus answered and said to him, 'You must permit *it* at this time; for in this manner it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he permitted Him *to be baptized*.... [that's when he knew who He really was] ...And after He was baptized, Jesus came up immediately out of the water..." (vs 13-16).

It's not like these silly little pictures that you see of John the Baptist standing there sanctimoniously pouring a little water over the Jesus' head. He went down into the water; complete immersion into water.

"...and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him.... [that was the sign to John as to Who Jesus really was] ...And lo, a voice from heaven said, 'This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I have *great* delight'" (vs 16-17).

After that happened, they sent an official committee from Jerusalem—the Pharisees and Sadducees—and they wanted to know: *Who are you?* They didn't believe him the first time. Like people are today when you tell them something that they don't want to believe, they don't believe it.

John 1:19 "And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' Then he *freely* admitted, and did not deny, but declared, 'I am not the Christ'" (vs 19-20).

What does this also tell you? *This tells you they were also expecting the Christ!* He was preaching the Kingdom of Heaven, so they were expecting the Kingdom; and they were expecting to inherit the kingdom and for Jesus to join them and they would be in charge. But not so, because the Kingdom of Heaven Jesus then declared what is necessary to attain to the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven.

Verse 21: "And they asked him..." *This shows you how much they knew!* They knew, and a lot of them knew better.

"... 'Then who *are you?* Are you Elijah?'..." (v 21). *Why did they ask that?*

Remember, John the Baptist's father said that John the Baptist would come 'in the power and spirit of Elijah.' Jesus said he was Elijah. But here's another very important thing to understand: John the Baptist didn't know that he was Elijah. He

understood who he was, but didn't understand that he was Elijah.

"...And he said, 'I am not.' *Then they asked,* 'Are you the Prophet?'..." (v 21).

This also shows what they knew and understood concerning the Scriptures. Because this is a direct reference back to Deut. 18 about the Prophet that God would raise up to them Who would speak the words of God to them, and He would be like Moses—that is a Lawgiver, a Prophet, a Teacher. But God also showed that you had better listen to that Prophet because God is going to hold you responsible for everything that you hear.

"...And he answered, 'No.' Therefore, they said to him, 'Who are you? What do you say about yourself so that we may give an answer to those who sent us?'" (vs 21-22).

In other words, they came down to find out what was going on, who John the Baptist was, and to bring an official report back to the high priest and the priest back in Jerusalem—and probably to the Sanhedrin. So, here's the answer that he gave, right out of Isa. 40:

Verse 23: "He said, 'I *am* a voice crying in the wilderness... [Where was he? *Down at the Jordan!* Where was that? *In the wilderness!*] ..."Make straight the way of *the* Lord," as Isaiah the prophet said.' Now those who had been sent belonged to *the sect* of the Pharisees, and they asked him, saying to him, 'Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?'" (vs 23-25).

Remember, he was the son of a priest; and part of this implies that as the son of a priest—and you're not the Christ and you're not Elijah and you are not the prophet—what are you doing baptizing here instead you should be a priest up at the temple.

Verse 26: "John answered them, saying, 'I baptize with water, but there is one *Who* stands among you Whom you do not know. He it is Who comes after me, *but* Who has precedence over me; of Whom I am not worthy to loose the thong of His sandal'" (vs 26-27).

Then after John saw the Holy Spirit come on Him, then we find here in the Gospel of John that he said that 'Jesus was the Lamb of God.' So that's when he knew that He was the Lamb of God.

Let's see what took place in Matt. 4, because this is important to understand. It has bearing on the Day of Pentecost, and it also has a bearing on fulfilling the prophecies. Jesus came in the flesh as a human being, having ordinary human nature like we

do, but filled with the Holy Spirit of God. When He was growing up He was taught every day by the Father Who woke Him up morning-by-morning. And also when He went (Luke 2) when He was 12-years-old, those at the temple who were the learned teachers were amazed at His understanding and His answers. They couldn't figure Him out.

Since Jesus was a man, and God was His Father, and the whole Kingdom of God now is going to start being revealed, and the One Who is going to be King has got to also be God. This is why He has a confrontation and temptation with Satan the devil; because:

- we know Satan the devil has '*deceived the whole world*'
- we know that Satan the devil is the '*god of this world*'
- we know that he inspires as '*prince of the power of the air*'

appealing to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and all of that

- we know that there is *a division between the Kingdom of God*, which is in righteousness *and the kingdom of Satan*, which is in evil

John said, 'Don't love the world nor the things in the world. For all that is in the world: the lust of the eyes, the pretentious pride of life' *and all of those things are of the world and are not of God!*

As a man, Jesus had to overcome Satan the devil in the weakest possible condition as a man that He could be in. He could meet him as God and overcome him, no problem. If He changed Himself as an angel He could meet him as an angel and overcome him. But, as a man, this was a greater challenge. *So, the temptation of Jesus came about so that He could qualify to continue going with His ministry; so that He could qualify as King, having conquered Satan the devil by overcoming his temptations against Him.*

Matthew 4:1: "Then Jesus was led up into the wilderness by the Spirit in order to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted *for* forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was famished... [and very weak, as we will see when we get to end of the temptation] ...And when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread'" (vs 1-3).

Just think how you would feel. Let's just give you a week's fast—not 40 days—just a week's fast. You walk into a house, but your fast was going to be for ten days. At the end of the week you walk into a house where someone is baking bread; and you smell the aroma of this wonderful bread, and

your flesh and your stomach are crying out for food. Oh how easy to say, 'Well, I've gone seven days, Lord, isn't that good enough?' No, Jesus didn't do that; because here is the answer: *It's not what you do physically*, and we're going to see this is going to be carried through all the teachings of the Gospels.

Verse 4: "But He answered *and* said, 'It is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God."'” *That's how man is to live!*

- What was the story of the Old Testament?
- What was the summation of nearly everything in the Old Testament?
- *They didn't obey the voice of God!*

So, as a man, He had to show that He was going to obey God in all circumstances in spite of the odds against Him; in spite of the temptation that came against Him. This is an example for us to follow. Too many of us are willingly giving into things when we ought not! Jesus had to do this.

Verse 5: "Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him upon the edge of the temple... [from the highest point in the temple to the lowest part of the Valley of Kidron is 650-feet] ...And said to Him, '*If* You are the Son of God...'” (vs 5-6).

If You are? Notice Jesus never answered and said 'why of course, I'm the Son of God. Don't you know that?' *No, He never did!*

"...cast Yourself down; for it is written..." (v 6). *Satan loves to quote Scripture!* Please understand that not only does Satan love to quote Scripture, but his ministers who appear as ministers of righteousness have their well-worn little trails in the Bible to pick out the verses that they want, and they quote Scripture and then misapply it—just like the devil was doing here.

"...He shall give His angels charge concerning You, and they shall bear You up in *their* hands, lest You strike Your foot against a stone" (v 6).

Now, just suppose He jumped down there and landed on His feet, unharmed, but He had obeyed Satan the devil? Don't you think that Satan would have all the priests, all the Levites and all the important people come down there and surround Jesus and say, 'What a marvelous thing He did; we accept You as the Messiah.' Because they were looking for a *physical* messiah.

Notice what Jesus said. *You don't respond to temptations that are given to you as a convenient thing to do!* That's what Adam and Eve didn't do. They failed. In order to be the 'second Adam' from

heaven, Jesus could not fail.

Verse 7: “Jesus said to him, ‘Again, it is written, “You shall not tempt *the* Lord your God.”’ After that, the devil took Him to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory” (vs 7-8)—**and Luke adds: ‘in a moment of time’!**

All that power; all that wealth; all that money; all those people—You can rule over them. Didn’t You come to be King of the world, Jesus? I’m going to let you have it now.

Notice the qualification to receive it, v 9: “And said to Him, ‘All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me.’”

That means *in the same way as You do as God*; because he, as Satan the devil, wanted to be God—**always!** But because of that lust and vanity and pride what happened to him? *He became evil and sinned and fell! So, Jesus had to overcome him!*

Verse 10: “Then Jesus said to him, ‘Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “You shall worship the Lord your God...”’”

That’s not referring to Satan to worship the Lord God, because he worships himself; he’ll never worship God. This is a quote to men of which Jesus took on the form of a man to become the Son of man, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

“...and Him alone shall you serve” (v 10). *That’s something!*

That temptation was necessary so that Jesus would show that He could overcome Satan the devil and the demons, every temptation, that it was possible for a human being, with the Spirit of God, to do so. It was necessary for Him to do so, so that He could displace Satan the devil as the God and King of this world. That’s quite a thing that was done there.

Verse 11: “Then the devil left Him... [‘for a season’ (Luke)] ...and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.”

That’s how weak He was. Resisted every temptation! That was necessary so that all righteousness could be fulfilled and **this then would be the standard on which the teachings of Jesus would be based!** So, He goes out and He begins calling those to be His disciples; because Jesus wasn’t going to set up the Kingdom. There’s a greater plan of God until the Kingdom can be set up. It’s going to involve the whole world. So, He starts out with his disciples. But notice how He

approached them.

After He came back into the area of Galilee, v 14: “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying, ‘*The* land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalim, *by the way of the sea*, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people who were sitting in darkness have seen a great light... [that was referring to Christ. He said what? ‘I am the Light of the world’] ...and to those who were sitting in *the* realm and shadow of death, light has sprung up” (vs 14-16).

- hope
- light
- change
- salvation
- forgiveness
- redemption

Here’s what Jesus preached, v 17: “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.’”

Mark 1:14: “Now after the imprisonment of John, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time has been fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is near at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel’” (vs 14-15)—**because the Gospel tells you about the Kingdom of God!**

- how you’re going to get into it
- who is going to get into it
- the requirement and the qualifications to get into it

It’s going to be far different from what they had supposed. That God was either going to send God from heaven down to the earth and set it up—which it eventually will be—or that it would be a physical man born of a woman to set himself up as king over the Jews and over the people of Israel.

Now it’s greater than that. This is going to entail eternal life. He starts by calling His disciples. Then He began preaching in Galilee and His fame went out everywhere, all around the great multitudes followed Him (last part of Matt. 4).

Then Jesus began to teach His disciples. Let’s notice the change in the emphasis of teaching that begins in the New Testament, though these were prophesied in the Old Testament. What do you have to do to be saved? How do you have to conduct your life? And Jesus is going to show it’s different from just going to synagogue; but you still have to keep the Sabbath. It’s different from just going to the Feast in Jerusalem; but you still have to keep the

Feast. But now it's going to depend on:

- a change of heart
- a change of mind
- a change of spirit
- a change in the way that you obey God

This had to be shown in order for the Kingdom of God to be established. Not like of old! King would come of the line of David and he would sit on the throne, whether he was good or whether he was evil. Not like the children of Israel who were the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who then belonged to the kingdom of Israel. As long as they lived by the laws of the kingdom, in the letter of the Law, they would be fine.

Now let's see what Jesus began teaching. Again, I want you to further your study by going through the center column reference and look at every single one of these verses that came from the Old Testament. What's going to happen is that though it comes from the Old Testament, *now there's a new emphasis and teaching on it!* Now it's not going to be just perfunctory letter of the Law-keeping. It's got to do with:

- attitude
- mind
- heart
- thoughts

A completely new and different way of approaching God and doing what you need to do to receive eternal life!

Matthew 5:1: "But seeing the multitudes, He went up into the mountain; and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth *and* taught them, saying, 'Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven'" (vs 1-3).

It's not going to be the prideful. It's not going to be those who are high and mighty. It's not going to be those who think they're important. But your 'poor in spirit'; that means *you're not self exalted; you're looking to God!*

Verse 4: "Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (vs 4-5).

Think about that! ***Inherit the earth!*** Not just be part of a physical kingdom on earth in one location, but to 'inherit the earth.' Now a whole change in attitude toward God, the Word of God and the way of living:

Verse 6: "Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

He doesn't tell them how in any of these cases; that comes later; because the teachings have to be built one upon another, and it has to lay the foundation for the rest of what Jesus is going to teach. Before you can begin to understand what it is about the Kingdom of God, and how you're going to get into the Kingdom of God, you first of all have to have these attitudes here, which are called *the beatitudes*. Notice how you're to approach God's way. You '...hunger and thirst after righteousness...' That's why in the New Testament we find we are to:

- pray every day
- study every day
- learn of the way of God

Why? ***Because we are in training for eternal life!*** To come from the flesh to be changed into immortal spirit beings, we've got a lot of learning to do. In order for that to happen, there's got to be a lot of changing going on in our hearts and in our minds. We will see later that that has to be based on the love of God, the love of neighbor and the love of the brethren. Yes, even loving your enemies! Total different approach. In the Old Testament you loved everyone who lived in Israel, and you hated your enemies, even though God told them to be kind to the prisoners that they took.

Here's a promise: "...for they shall be filled.... [So this is the attitude that we need.] ...Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall find mercy" (vs 6-7)—*not judgment and stoning, but merciful!*

- you have sinned, *you want mercy*
- you have done wrong, *you want forgiveness*
- you have done foolish things, *you want understanding*

But God says you have to change; because remember, He started out right here: 'Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand.' So therefore, ***this tells you now the requirements for the Kingdom of God!***

The Gospels is the place where this begins; though it goes all the way back to the Old Testament. That's why we have in the Bible here a section, a commentary written, *The Unity of Scripture*—between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Jesus is beginning to bring this out. Jesus now tells us *what we are to do*. He tells us *how we are to think*. It's two things"

1. in the Old Covenant you were told what to do and very little about how to think

2. in the New Testament we are told *what to do and how to think and how to do it—and the spiritual aspects* of all of it combined

That's why the Gospels are so important; because it lays the foundation, and Christ was the Foundation for everything else in the New Testament then which goes back and brings the unity of Scripture between the Old and New together.

Verse 8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

What do you find in the Old Testament? *Jesus, Who was the Lord God of the Old Testament, told Moses: 'You can't see My face and live.'* But we know in Rev. 22 it says we will see God 'face-to-face.' Entirely different!

The Old Testament, as we know on the Day of Atonement, no one saw God. The priests could only go into the Holy of Holies once a year. Now in the New Testament it teaches us we can come into the Holy of Holies of God every day, every time we pray. Tremendous thing! ***That's why there has to be the teachings in the Gospel!***

This is going to be a little different than living in a society where everyone believes the same thing.

Verse 10 "Blessed *are* those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

It's going to be persecution; it's going to be difficult; it's not going to be easy. Why do you think that Jesus had to have the temptation first? *To show all of us that it's not going to be easy; it's going to be difficult!* That's why Peter wrote, 'If the righteous are saved with great difficulty, where will the sinner and ungodly be?' He talks about persecution here. Not only persecution, other things are going to happen to you.

Verse 11: "Blessed are you when they shall reproach you, and shall persecute you, and shall falsely say every wicked thing against you, for My sake."

- the world hates Jesus
- the world hates the name of Jesus

We're going to have bear some of that reproach. Quite a bit different than being accepted because you're the son of so-and-so, and you live in this house, and you live in this neighborhood, and your father did that, and your mother has done that. You're part of a nation. Now, you're part of another nation that is to come, the Kingdom of God.

People are going to persecute you, say false things about you, wicked things against you 'for My sake.' But remember, what I want you to understand with every one of these things: you can take every one of these that we're reading here—the beatitudes—and what do we find in the Gospels? ***Jesus lived by every one of these things and went through every one of these things, and not only was He persecuted, spoken wickedly against, falsely accused, but was killed by them!*** So, Jesus, in teaching these things, is showing that He Himself also had to live by these things. That's amazing when you understand it. But here's the attitude we need to take:

- don't be glum
- don't be depressed
- don't be down and out
- don't worry about it

Verse 12: "Rejoice and be filled with joy, for great *is* your reward in heaven... [which is coming with Christ] ...for in this same manner they persecuted the prophets who *were* before you."

That's exactly what happened to Jeremiah. Look at how they treated him. Look at how they treated Isaiah and all the other prophets, because the prophets came along and said, '***Repent! Turn to God! Get rid of your wickedness!***' Now Jesus is saying the same thing, but now repentance is for a greater purpose:

- eternal life
- inheriting the world
- living forever
- ruling with Christ

But is here is how we start, and Jesus taught us the way that we need to be. Now, as far as the world is concerned, as God looks at it:

Verse 13: "'You are the salt of the earth... [then He gives a little responsibility to us] ...but if the salt has become tasteless, with what shall it be salted?....'"

- What is the earth worth?
- What are the people on the earth worth?

without the very few who truly believe in God!

"...For it no longer has any strength, but *is* to be thrown out and to be trampled upon by men. You are the light of the world...." (vs 13-14).

Jesus is the Light of the World, but we also are to be the light of the world:

- in what we preach
- in what we teach

- how our lives are
- how we conduct our lives
- how we stand for God
- how we stand for the Truth

“...A city that is set on a mountain cannot be hid. Neither do they light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket, but on the lamp-stand; and it shines for all who *are* in the house. In the same way also, you are to let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father Who *is* in heaven” (vs 14-16).

So here are the basic things that Jesus began to teach concerning how to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven!

We’ll continue tomorrow with this same theme about ***the Kingdom of God in the Gospels!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Daniel 2:40-45
- 2) Daniel 7:25-27, 13-14
- 3) Isaiah 9:6-7
- 4) Isaiah 53:1-10
- 5) Luke 1:13-20, 26-38, 41-55, 67-79
- 6) Luke 2:6-17
- 7) Matthew 3:1-17
- 8) John 1:19-27
- 9) Matthew 4:1-11, 14-17+
- 10) Mark 1:14-15
- 11) Matthew 5:1-8, 10-16

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Psalm 22
- Matthew 1
- Malachi 3; 4
- Acts 1, 3
- Deuteronomy 18
- Isaiah 40
- Revelation 22

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