

Matthew:

3:1 In those days John the Baptist came proclaiming [as a herald] in the desert of Judah.

“In those days:” We left Jesus Christ in chapter two as a young boy, now he is about 30 or 31 years old. It is now circa 29 A.D. during the reign of Tiberius Caesar, 14-37 AD (Luke 3:1, 2, “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. . . the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias in the desert.”). John is toward the end of his ministry and soon will be murdered.

John was descended from Aaron, the original high priest of Israel. So, John could have functioned as a true priest in the temple. His father was a priest from the family of Abijah (Luke 1:5; 1 Chronicles 24:10). His wife was also descended from Aaron (Luke 1:5).

A king always had his heralds. These heralds would precede a king and announce his coming in order that proper preparations were made and that homage would be rendered to a king as he came through. Jesus Christ has two advents, one is historical (1st Advent) the other is prophetic (2nd Advent). He came the first time to provide salvation; he will come the second time in order to establish his personal reign on the earth, to consummate the angelic conflict and human history. On both occasions prior to his coming, he is announced by heralds.

Since the ministry of Jesus Christ is both related to the angelic conflict and human history, he has both angelic and human heralds. In the first advent of Christ his angelic herald made his proclamation before the shepherds. (This was most likely Gabriel since he also delivered messages to both Zacharias and to Mary as found in Luke 1:19, 26.) The human herald is John the Baptist (Luke 1:17) and we studied him in the first part of Matthew chapter 3. In the Second Advent, His angelic herald is the Mighty Angel of Revelation 10. The two human heralds (Moses and Elijah) are called the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3-12).

Revelation 10:1-3: verse 1: Then I saw [Revelation 10:1-11:14] another [elect] angel, the powerful one, [the King of Arms - the highest ranking angel in the college of heralds; Revelation 5:2] coming down from heaven, and he was wearing a cloud [representing the glory, power and wisdom of our Lord Jesus Christ], and a rainbow over his head [a sign of the integrity of God in the perpetuation of human history], and his face was like the sun [provision of log grace and the warmth of divine blessing], and his feet were like a columns of fire [the wall of fire - the divine protection for the growing believer in personal or historical disaster].

This angelic herald is going to claim planet earth for the Lord before the 2nd Advent of the Lord. Since he is the Lord’s herald, these namely the cloud, the face like the sun, the rainbow and the feet like pillars of fire manifest the greatness of the Lord (form the escutcheon of this angel as the Lord’s herald).

10:2: And he had a small opened book [the title-deed of the earth from which he made his proclamation] in his hand. Then he placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land [claiming planet earth for the Lord Jesus Christ].

The angel put his right foot (the more important foot) on the sea indicating the importance of controlling the sea. One cannot control land-mass unless he controls the sea.

10:3: Then he [the King of Arms] shouted with a loud voice [made his proclamation that Jesus Christ is the legitimate ruler of the world], just as a lion roars [can be heard at a great distance] and when he had shouted [made his announcement], the seven thunders [pursuivant-messengers, a rank of angels below the Officer of Arms] relayed the proclamation with their voices.

When a lion roars it has a note of confidence so as with this angel. The Seven Thunders who accompany the King of Arms rebroadcast the proclamation throughout the world. So, the entire universe knows of the coming of Christ made by the proclamation of the King of Arms.

Revelation 11:3-12:

11:3: And I will give to My two witnesses [human heralds - Moses & Elijah] power [from the Holy Spirit: his filling], and they will prophesy [evangelize and teach Bible Doctrine] for one thousand two hundred and sixty days [last 3 1/2 years of Tribulation], wearing sackcloth (a mesh, a coarse texture of cloth made from goat's hair and finely woven: not something sloppy; Moses and Elijah will be well dressed and groomed).

We must identify these two witnesses. Matthew 17:2-3, "And He was transfigured [appeared before them in his glorified resurrection body as it would be at the 2nd Advent] before them, and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as snow. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him." Malachi 4:5, "Behold I am going to send to you Elijah, the prophet before [in the middle of the Tribulation] the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord [the last 3.5 years of the Tribulation]. Luke 1:17, "It is he [John the Baptizer] who will go as a herald before him [Christ] in the spirit [the filling of the Spirit] and in the power of Elijah . . ." Thus, Elijah will also in the Tribulation have the power of the Holy Spirit. John 1:19-21, "This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent him the priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" verse 20: And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ [Messiah]." Verse 21: They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah [then are you his herald since they all understood that Elijah would function as a herald at the 2nd Advent]? And he said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet [The Lord Jesus Christ: Deuteronomy 18:15, 18]?" And he answered, "No."

Unbelieving Jews who have rejected Christ have always looked for the 2nd Advent; never the 1st Advent. Matthew 11:9-10 and Malachi 3:1. If the Jews had accepted Christ as their savior and Messiah, there would have been no need for John the Baptizer (Matthew 11:14) since there would have been only one advent and Elijah would have been the herald along with Moses. Matthew 17:1-3; 17:10-13.

11:4: These are the two olive trees [Moses and Elijah analogous to Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel in Zechariah 4:3, 11], and the two lampstands [Moses and Elijah giving light from their teaching of Bible Doctrine regarding the Tribulation Temple] who are standing [as heralds and meet the crisis] before the Lord of the earth [Jesus Christ as ruler of the world at the 2nd Advent].

After the Babylonian captivity, Joshua the High Priest was the spiritual leader, and Zerubbabel was the political leader. These are analogous to Elijah and Moses who are the human heralds of the 2nd Advent and who will be the great teachers during the last three and half years of the Tribulation.

11:5: Furthermore, if anyone [demonized population of the Tribulation: unbelievers and believers in reversionism] desires to harm them [Moses and Elijah], fire shoots out [pictorial present] of their

mouths and destroys [chew-up, masticate and completely digest and came to mean to destroy] their enemies; also if anyone would desire to harm them in this manner, he must be killed.

These two teachers never abuse their weapon, but kill only in self-defense. If they would not kill, they would have been killed and would have failed in their mission. Whether this fire comes literally out of their mouths or not is inconsequential. They do have effective weapons for defense. They need weapons since the police system in Jerusalem will not protect them. No one will offer them protection; they are on their own. Those who have integrity have a right to possess weapons, and so God gave them a weapon to kill.

11:6: These [Moses and Elijah] have the power to shut up the sky [economic disaster to bring people back to reality] so that [a semifinal purpose clause] rain may not fall [related to Elijah's ministry] during the days of their prophetic ministry [teaching of God's word]; furthermore, they have power over the waters to turn them into blood [related to Moses's ministry], in fact, to strike the land with every plague [a reference to the plagues that Moses had performed in the past] as often as they desire.

Economic disaster tends to bring people back to reality in an objective way. Hopelessness and helplessness tend to open up the volition of an individual. Moses and Elijah will function in this ministry as they had in the past. Neither man had ever abused this authority and power.

11:7: Now when they [Moses and Elijah] had finished their testimony [ministry], the beast-monster [Abaddon of Revelation 9:11: an evil and powerful fallen angel] who comes up from the abyss will make war [fight] against them and will both overpower and kill them [the permissive will of God].

Abaddon is Satan's number two fallen angel who is the head of Satan's terrorist activities. Moses and Elijah came from the court room of heaven to testify regarding God's plan for the people of the Tribulation. Neither had completed their ministries on the earth. For Moses it was self-righteousness which removed him (must we bring water from this rock); for Elijah it was the arrogance of self-pity (I only I am left and they seek my life to take it away). Their messages in the latter half of the Tribulation are probably broadcast throughout the world through some media-technology.

11:8: And their corpses will be exhibited in the street of the great city [Jerusalem is called great because of David, Bible doctrine and the cross] [of a sort] which is called figuratively [emblematic resemblance to] Sodom [moral and social degeneration] and Egypt [demonization and religion without reality; culture without truth; power without principle], even where their [Moses' and Elijah's] Lord was crucified.

Moral, social and spiritual degeneration is always associated with religion. All religions are authored by the degenerate Satan, and so can only produce degeneration.

The literal should not be allegorized and the figurative can be understood and determined from context which when pertinent must be related to other parts of Scripture. In this verse, Jerusalem is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt because Jerusalem at that time had the characteristics of Sodom and Egypt.

By displaying their corpses they were saying in effect we have won: self-deception. However, these future murders will not cancel the messages of Moses and Elijah.

Worldwide news coverage of the event: a worldwide gloating because of the antagonism of the 4th estate (the news media). No sympathy or outrage is reported by the press. While this is going on, Moses and Elijah are celebrating in heaven.

11:9: And they from the masses [Jews in Jerusalem] and tribes [Jews throughout the Middle East and the world], and many foreign languages [broadcast in all the languages of the world] and gentile nations [possibly via satellite] will view their corpses for three and one half days, furthermore they [the political authority] will not permit their corpses to be placed in a tomb.

11:10: And the inhabitant of the earth [believers and unbelievers] will gloat over them [their dead bodies]; they will both celebrate and exchange gifts [to commemorate their deaths], because these two prophets had tormented the inhabitants of the earth [when unbelievers and believers do not respond to the truth, they react and are tormented in their souls].

The gospel, establishment truth and Bible doctrine taught by Moses and Elijah tormented the souls of these unbelievers who had rejected the truth. When a person (believer or unbeliever) reacts to truth he is tormented in his soul, and no one likes to be tormented in his soul. Furthermore, people who are negative toward truth don't want to think about death. However, the messages of Moses and Elijah forced them to do so.

Now they no longer fear God for his two messengers are dead in the street. So, their negative volition toward truth will be intensified. The latter state is worse than the former state.

11:11: And after three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered into them [in their interim bodies]; then they [Moses and Elijah] stood on their feet; and great fear fell on those who were viewing them. [by their physical presence being in Jerusalem or by some form of media]

Life comes from God. Man does not create life through copulation.

11:12: And they [Moses and Elijah] heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And so they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies observed them [in their interim bodies].

John could have had a ministry in Jerusalem working with the Levitical priesthood. However, if one is going to have a successful ministry before the Lord, he must separate from religion (a system of works) and established denominations (always contain some false teaching). All great teaching is accomplished by individuals who do not compromise the word of God, and the only way that can be done is to remain independent. John was under the authority of the Lord, not some legalistic organization. Thus, he was given the privilege of being the Lord's herald.

3:2. "Change your thinking [regarding Christ] for the kingdom of heaven is near." [The future king was already on the earth]

This phrase 'the kingdom of heaven' occurs 32 times in the book of Matthew (Matthew emphasizes the kingship of Christ). John used this phrase since Christ the future king was on the earth. The kingdom refers to the kingdom of believers and the way of entering into the kingdom is through Christ the king.

3:3. For this is what was communicated through the prophet, Isaiah saying, "The voice of one proclaiming loudly in the desert. Prepare [Acts 19:4: the aorist tense a one time-decision: a command to

believe in Christ] the way of the Lord [an idiomatic expression for salvation]. Keep on making upright [Rebound followed by the development of experiential righteousness] his paths!” (Isaiah 40:3)

These are a couple of sentences from his messages to let us know the categorical content of John’s teaching [the gospel and the spiritual life].

3:4. Now John himself kept on having a garment of camel’s hair [very uncomfortable] and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.

The imperfect tense characterizes his entire life out in the desert. There was nothing in this man’s dress, diet or personality that demanded a hearing from the people. John was operating under the law of supreme sacrifice, a city boy who is now living in the primitive desert.

3:5. Then [after John went where God wanted him to be] Jerusalem kept on going out to him [face to face] and all Judea and all the districts around the Jordan.

Many people came to listen to him because they were not getting the truth in the temples (where the priests taught) or synagogues (where the scribes and Pharisees taught).

3:6. and they were being baptized [identified with the kingdom] by him [under his authority] in the Jordan River [where Israel crossed when they entered the land], and they kept on confessing their sins [post-salvation confession of sins].

John had both a gospel ministry (“prepare the way of the Lord”), and a ministry of teaching the spiritual life (“keep on making upright his paths”). After their salvation John taught about their identification with the Millennial and Eternal Kingdom via water baptism and about the mechanics of confessing their sins. These are both post-salvation functions.

John lived in the ritual age of Israel and so it should not be surprising that he used ritual to teach (Matthew 3:1-10; John 1:25-33). There had to be a ceremony never used before to identify a person, the new believer of the 1st Advent with the kingdom of God since the King was present. The kingdom could have immediately followed the cross. However, since the majority of the Jews of Israel had rejected Christ and his work on the cross, the Millennial Kingdom had to be postponed.

Since John was the herald of Christ in his 1st Advent, it was his responsibility to assist in manifesting Christ to Israel, “I did not recognize Him [at first], but so that He might be manifest to Israel, I [John only] came baptizing by water.” (John 1:31) This responsibility was delegated to him alone by God the Father for John 1:33 states, “. . . but he [God the Father] who sent me [not anyone else] to baptize by water. . .” (In order to identify ritually the new converts of the 1st Advent of Christ with the Messiah and his kingdom). (John 1:33).

To help us understand the meaning of his baptism, John picked the exact location where the Jews crossed the Jordan upon entering the land. After crossing the Jordan, “Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing, and they are there to this day.” (Joshua 4:9) This represents identification with Christ’s death and burial. Then Joshua commanded twelve men to take large stones from where the priests were standing and carry them to Gilgal (meaning circle, a picture of eternal life). “So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe; and

Joshua said to them, 'Cross again to the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. (Joshua 4:4, 5) "Thus, the sons of Israel did as Joshua commanded and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan just as the Lord spoke to Joshua according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel, and carried them over with them to the lodging place [Gilgal] and put them down there."(Joshua 4:8, 19, 20) Thus, when John would immerse the new converts, they would be identified with His substitutionary death on the cross; coming out from the water foretells their receiving their resurrection bodies at the 2nd Advent (as believers living and dying in the 1st Advent, in the age of Israel) followed by their participation in the Millennial and eternal kingdom.

3:7. but when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, "You brood of vipers [poisonous snakes], who warned you to flee from the wrath to come [Baptism of Fire: identification with the fire of Torments and then the Lake of Fire]?"

Unbelievers came to listen to John for two reasons. Many came to hear the gospel clearly presented. Others came, namely the religious unbelieving Pharisees and Sadducees because they were impressed with the large crowds that John was drawing and possibly thought that there was some magic or power related to his baptizing. Thus, they wanted to participate in his baptism and to use it in some evil way.

When a viper bites an individual, he injects his killing toxins. By analogy, these religious unbelievers, the Pharisees and Sadducees inject their toxic lies into the Jewish unbelievers which blinds the unbeliever so that he does not seek the truth.

If Jesus Christ had not been rejected by the Jewish people, then the age of Israel would have continued until its completion (the Tribulation completes the age of Israel). (However, they did reject Jesus Christ as Savior and Messiah and so the client nation was destroyed, and the Church age was intercalated that is inserted before the age of Israel was complete.) After the completion of the age of Israel at the end of the Tribulation, comes the wrath of God namely the Baptism of Fire when the Lord removes both Jewish and gentile believers from the earth and identifies them with fire forever. After which the Millennial reign begins.

3:8. "Therefore, produce fruit [believe in the Lord Jesus Christ] in keeping with a change of mind [Before anyone believes in Christ, he changes his mind about Him. Once having become believers, they would have been qualified to participate in Baptism],

Water baptism doesn't save. If it did, John would have baptized these religious unbelievers immediately. The water baptism of John was only a ritual that he used to fulfill his responsibility as Christ's herald. After John's death, it was never used again.

3:9. Now, stop presuming by saying in yourselves [by thinking], We have Abraham as our father [and so we are genetically God's children]. [However, no one becomes a child of God through genetics only.] For I say to you that God is able to raise-up children to Abraham from these stones [pointing to stones along the bank of the Jordan].

Using Abraham's and Sarah's genetic code, God could have raised-up descendants with biological life since biological life requires only chemicals and these chemicals could have been obtained from the rocks. However, biological life without the two births (physical and spiritual) is meaningless (One has to

be born again (twice)). The first birth takes place at physical birth when God creates and imputes soul-life to biological life resulting in human life and the second birth occurs at faith in Christ at which time God the Father imputes eternal life to the newly created human spirit (created by the Holy Spirit) at salvation.

3:10. Already the axe is laid at the root of the trees [the apostate religious types in the land will be destroyed when the 5th cycle of discipline (Leviticus 26:27-33) is administered in August of 70 AD]. Therefore, every tree which [individual who] does not produce good fruit [salvation] is cut down and thrown into fire [a reference to the Baptism of Fire: unbelievers identified with eternal fire].

3:11. On the one hand I baptize [believers] by means of water because of a change of thinking [about Christ], but the one coming after me is mightier than I whose sandals I am not worthy to lace [loosen, remove]. He himself will baptize by means of the Holy Spirit [a reference to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Church Age] and by means of fire [a reference to the Baptism of Fire at the 2nd Advent].

At salvation, in the Church age God the Holy Spirit identifies (baptizes) every believer with Christ who is seated at the right hand of the Father. This sets apart the believer from the rest of humanity (positional sanctification). Being set apart he is called a saint (a set apart one: 1 Corinthians 1:2). In union with Christ, he takes on many of the characteristics of Christ; clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27). Taking on these positional characteristics makes the believer a new spiritual species, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ and he is, [he is] a new spiritual species" (2 Corinthians 5:17a).

The Characteristics of the Baptism of the Spirit:

1. It is not a personal experience. So, it is not an emotional activity such as human feelings or ecstasy. Also, it is not related to speaking in tongues (foreign languages for the purpose of communicating the gospel). In the early church certain believers were given this gift which functioned from 30 to 70 AD.

2. It is not progressive. Therefore, it cannot be improved in either time or eternity. Our union with Christ at salvation is perfect and complete.

3. It is not related to sin. In Christ the believer cannot sin since his volition does not function in that state. 1 John 5:18 must be interpreted in the light of 1 John 5:20 which is talking about the believer in Him (positional union in Christ), the interpretive phrase. Also in this same book, John has already made it quite clear that experientially believers do sin (1 John 1:8, 10).

"We know that anyone who has been born [reference to regeneration] from God does not sin [in union with Christ], but He [Jesus] who has been born from God [the Holy Spirit provided the 23 chromosomes to fertilize the egg], guards him [the believer], and the evil one [Satan] does not touch him" (1 John 5:18).

"And we know that the Son of God has come and he has given to us [spiritual] understanding [spiritual I.Q.] in order that we might know the true one [the Lord] and we are in him [positional sanctification] who is true, in his son Jesus Christ. This one is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

4. It is not related to any human merit, ability, or works. There is nothing you can do to merit the Baptism of the Spirit.

5. It is obtained at the moment of salvation through faith alone in Christ alone. It is not a post-salvation experience. So, it is not the "second blessing," so called by the emotional types. Union with Christ is a completed ministry by the Holy Spirit. Hence, it cannot be reversed by any human failure.

6. It is eternal and unchangeable in nature. It cannot be canceled or changed by God, angels, or man. It is a part of your eternal security. No renunciation; no sin, human good, or evil; no moral or immoral degeneracy can cancel this ministry of the Holy Spirit.

7. It is known and understood only through perception of the mystery doctrine of the Church Age. Therefore, it cannot be applied in a state of ignorance. It is invisible, not learned through empiricism; it is perceived through cognition of Bible doctrine only.

8. Characteristics obtained by identification with Christ (baptized into Christ):

- a. Righteousness: 2 Corinthians 5:21
- b. Heirship: 1 Peter 1:4
- c. Priesthood: 1 Pet 2:9
- d. Destiny: Ephesians 1:5
- e. Election (chosen): Ephesians 1:4
- f. Eternal life: 1 John 5:11-13
- g. Royalty: 1 Peter 2:9
- h. Sonship: Gal 3:26

3:12. "His winnowing-shovel is in his hand, and he will thoroughly clean [separating the unbelievers from the believers] his threshing floor [analogous to the earth], and he will gather his wheat [believers] into his granary [the Millennium], but he will burn up the chaff [the unbelievers] with unquenchable fire."

3:13. Then [while John was talking about the coming of Christ] Jesus arrived [made his public appearance] from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John to be baptized by him.

Before Jesus Christ began his public ministry, he would have to declare ritually that he would fulfill the Father's plan. This ritual would be accomplished through water. Jesus by going into the water was making a public declaration that he would go to the cross in order to fulfill the Father's plan during His 1st Advent. Coming out of the water represented his resurrection, ascension and session.

3:14. But John tried to prevent him saying, "I have need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

John understood that Jesus was coming to participate in the baptism that he had been performing for his converts, but this was not the case. (The baptism of Jesus Christ would be unique.) If Jesus had come to participate in John's baptism, it would not have made any sense.

3:15. But Jesus replied to him, "Permit it now for in this way it is fitting for us [John is supporting the humanity of Christ by being the herald] to fulfill all righteousness [at the cross]." Then he permitted him [since he now understood that the baptism of Jesus would be unique].

Jesus went into the water of the Jordan, the place of death; he came out from the water representing his resurrection, ascension and session.

3:16. After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water and behold the heavens were opened unto him, and he [the deity of Jesus Christ] saw the Spirit of God [the Holy Spirit] descending as a dove and lighting on himself,

The only visible member of the Trinity at any time is the Lord Jesus Christ. So, it was the deity of Christ who saw the Spirit as a dove.

A dove will not light on dead bodies (analogous to unrighteousness) nor upon water (as illustrated by the dove of Noah). It will only light on something clean (analogous to righteous). Thus, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus like a dove means that Jesus was perfectly righteous and qualified to begin his ministry.

3:17. and behold a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased."

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus had to make a formal declaration that he would execute the Father's plan. The ritual of going into the water was Christ identifying with and agreeing to fulfill the Father's plan namely live a perfect life under the greatest possible pressure, go to the cross with maximum integrity and humility and be judged for the sins of the world. His coming out of the water represented his resurrection, ascension and session where he would be glorified at the right hand of the Father.

Immediately after his baptism, Jesus Christ, being spiritual mature a reference to his humanity, received evidence testing administered by Satan. Evidence testing is Satan's cross-examination of every witness presented by God in the historical trial of all fallen angels. In human history, man's thoughts, motives, decisions, and actions are entered as evidence, exhibits, precedents, and arguments in Satan's appeal trial. Every believer who attains maturity is an argument or witness for the Prosecution (the Lord) against Satan. The greatest witness against Satan was the humanity of Christ who received both the evidence testing related to the plan of God (Matthew 4:1-10) followed three years later by the cross, a suffering which defeated Satan strategically.