

Today is *Part 4* of the sermon series entitled *Ordinations & Baptism* and I'll tell you what – this is really exciting to me because every week before the Sabbath God is giving more and more understanding of things that are coming to pass, of things we're doing and of how everything is fitting together and just to pass along to you: things are happening in a much faster pace than they ever have and this is rather unique for me to experience. Some additional things are being given to clarify the picture of where God is leading us and why He's leading us in this direction. It is exciting brethren, it really is; where we are in time and what God is doing as we continue to go forward here and to me it's incredible how fast things keep coming along like this. We've been covering matters that apply directly to a work that God is now revealing that has to do with those things that are going to be a complete fulfillment of the work of the Elijah to come, prophetic things that God gave a long time ago: not just about one individual but about a Church. Because it's about the Church and what God is doing through us and why we're organizing in the way we are right now, why God has given us this time and what we're preparing for and it is an awesome thing, it truly is and all in the context of everything that God is revealing at this particular time and He saved it for this time to do it – which is again, an incredible thing to understand.

God has been revealing a new found freedom that is even now in the beginning process to begin to be restored to the world after nearly 6,000 years, which by itself is an awesome thing to understand – that affects men and women because it affects the minds of both and things that started way back from the very beginning are the very things that God is addressing now for the Church that we can begin to look at, focus upon, in our lives (each and every one of us in the Church) so that we can begin to make greater changes ourselves and to help prepare and teach those things that are going to take place in a new age. Because God is going to start out a new age with a focus on the family that wasn't able to be accomplished 6,000 years ago, but now it will be, not just because the 144,000 and Jesus Christ will be here, but as a part of that process, and *because* of Jesus Christ's return and the need for what God is going to do with this world during the Millennium. Yes, we are there, we are at a time now where God is going to begin to give *in* the family, in the human family those things that are necessary and make it a much clearer process of entering into God's Family; and man hasn't had that for 6,000 years. Only a few through time have had a *portion* of that – not all of it – even within the Church; and now we're being given a greater fulfillment of those things and that is an incredible thing to understand.

So again, with this truth about the beginning of the removal of a curse upon the human family God is also showing that women should be ordained in a ministerial service. All these things coming together all at one time. That's why I say this is happening very rapidly. What we're going through is an incredible process, what God is giving very quickly here and this series just accentuates that, brings it out even more so because we're talking about a lot of things here and it's all going to come together as we continue to go forward; an exciting process of what God is giving, of what He's preparing for.

So again, this is all fitting together as part of a work and commission that God is giving in a restoring that is beginning just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. And as part of that preparation we're learning that we are to prepare for massive baptisms that will occur before Jesus Christ does return and it's going to be incredibly exciting. I remember when we started talking about it – hasn't been that long ago, few years back here; but as He began to reveal that even though we will be going through horrifying

difficult things on this earth when things do begin to take place, that in the Church, we're going to have an excitement. Not because of what's taking place on the earth, but of that necessity of what takes place on the earth in order to humble mankind so that people *will* be drawn in a massive way to God, to the Church, preparing for a new age. And it's all part of a process and there is no other way to accomplish it because of the way human nature is and because of the way of man. And so it is an incredible thing. We're going to be focused on what comes afterward. We're going to be focused upon the things that are taking place in the transition of the short time remaining – whatever that time is when it all begins – of working with people as they come along, as minds begin to be opened up. People *you* know, people you've had conversations with, people you don't suspect, or expect will be called. Different ones you've had conversations with, perhaps in families, perhaps in a job, in a business or a neighbour – whatever! There are going to be people each one of us in the Church, as a whole, knows, that God is going to be dealing with and that is an incredible things to understand – let alone all the others that are going to be brought along...and even some from our past. Quite a few from our past. Some of you that have been around a longer period of time – those that *you* have known and have walked to God's house side by side and counsel blended sweet as the Psalm goes: the opportunity to have spent time in times past; and those who are going to be brought back. That's an exciting thing. I very much look forward to that. Different ones that I have known that are still yet to be awakened from sleep.

Let's go over to **Matthew 3** today. Again, all this is in the context of all this that we are now going to focus on what God began to reveal concerning the symbolism and purpose of baptism beginning with John. And this is exciting to me, it really is; of things that we have never addressed in the Church because there wasn't a need. We have gone through a process of baptizing. We have gone through a process of laying hands upon individuals. We have gone through a process of understanding of how people are begotten of God's spirit, but now God is blessing us to go a step farther in understanding and purpose for all these things and He's giving us an understanding of the *purpose* and the symbolism of things in baptism that we haven't fully understood and I find it awesomely exciting, I really do. So again, all of this beginning with John who was the first, and who fulfilled as the first, a 'type' of Elijah to come.

**Matthew 3** – we're going to begin focusing on things having to do with John baptising different ones and some of this that we're going to be reading in Matthew 3 is what we covered last Sabbath in Luke 3, so these different accounts that these witnesses gave, individuals gave, who wrote in the first 4 books of the Bible here. It says, **In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, You must repent: incredible thing that began to take place here, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.** He's saying, the time has come now, there is a purpose of something that's being done, the timeliness of something that's being done; that now is the time to begin focusing on the need to repent.

And it went on to say here then in **verse 3 - For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.**

Another translation says...**He is the voice shouting in the wilderness; Prepare the way for the Lord's coming. Clear the road, or clear the way, for Him.** And this was a 'type'. It wasn't the greater fulfillment because His first coming was about the Church, it was about the Passover, it was about the beginning process of salvation for mankind and it wasn't about Him coming at that time to establish God's Kingdom on the earth, to be the Messiah as so many believed at that point in time. In other

words, to fulfill the role of the Anointed One to rule the earth – and yet that’s what so many thought. That’s what they focused upon because of what was being said. They didn’t understand.

And so, again, that’s something that we’re going to be doing in a far greater way. This was a ‘type’, and a partial fulfillment, not a complete fulfillment. This was the beginning of something that God was doing and He began to do it through John the Baptist and there’s a lot revealed here. It’s incredible!

**Verse 4 - And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.** Very meagre in that respect in what God gave him to do and what he began to do in the wilderness; and to fulfill a specific role even for him in that case. It says, **Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea**, this doesn’t mean *every* person in Judea. It’s a term we’ve talked about in times past where it talks about in all the areas of Judea. Throughout the region there were people who were coming in; and large numbers of people as well, but it doesn’t mean every individual – it’s not a word that is used that way in any fashion or form. It doesn’t mean every person came out but it was large enough that it got the attention of the religious leaders...it was big what was taking place as God began to move people just prior to Christ’s ministry. *Just before* Christ’s ministry began here John the Baptist is out there preaching and preparing a way for Jesus Christ’s ministry and for greater things that Jesus Christ was going to do – pointing the way. And so it says, **they went out to Jerusalem, and all of Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.** So this was the beginning process. They began to confess, acknowledge their sins; they began to accept personal responsibility for their own sins in their own life and began to be pointing toward a coming Messiah: that the Messiah is coming. And so this message that was going out there, the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God is at hand, and the things we’ve been taught in times past - now is that time. They jumped to a conclusion and took it further in the sense of thinking what we’re thinking now: He’s coming now to establish God’s Kingdom on earth, that He’s coming to rule. At this time, they didn’t understand that wasn’t the complete fulfillment yet. It was just a partial, the beginning of something and that’s what’s so incredible about the past 2,000 years and what God has been doing in the Church.

**Verse 7 - But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said to them, O generation of vipers,** not politically correct. He was telling it like it was and saying things as they were and of course that didn’t endear them to him, but God had already inspired him to say those things. God *inspired* him to say what he said. God inspired him, gave him understanding. What he spoke and what he taught and what came out of him was, as with the word that’s used in the New Testament, especially of a prophet, inspired interpretation of those things that were given as far as the Old Testament scriptures because that’s all they had at this point in time and God specifically telling him certain things he was to do through that inspiration. **O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?** Because it’s about a message. He’s giving one about judgement here. He’s saying there’s One coming who’s going to baptise you, who’s going to immerse you, and he talks about fire as well as we talked about last Sabbath.

And so he said here because he’s talking about judgement, he’s talking about the need to be responsible yourselves for your own sins and a time of judgement and all those things coming together, but the timing of all those things was not being given yet as far as when everything would take place. If people knew... See, if those people that came out from all of Judea, Jerusalem and Jordan area there, as it talks about, knew that they were all going to live a full life and die and resurrections later on to take place – *much* farther up the road...Do you think they would be as moved and motivated to acknowledge their

sin and to come for baptism? Because they weren't being called into the Church. Some of those people were, quite a few of them as time went along here, but the vast majority of them were not being called into the Church.

Going on here, he went on to tell them; **verse 8 - Bring forth therefore fruit meet for repentance:** in other words as evidence of repentance, that you indeed are changing, that you indeed are receiving this message. And we still use that to this day; to bring forth fruit as evidence of repentance that you're starting the process. Before people are invited to Sabbath services there are certain basic things that people must do, because if they're not willing to do those things, they're not ready, they're not convicted, they're not bringing forth fruit proving, as evidence, that they are indeed addressing their sins and accepting the truth that they're listening to, or reading. And so there's a process we go through before anyone can be invited – of necessity.

**Verse 9 - And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say unto you,** because he was inspired to know exactly what their comeback would be, how the religious community felt, how they thought, what they believed and what they would fall back on. So he said, **don't think yourselves, We have Abraham as our father;** as though that's all you have to have, it's a matter of who you are as a people in the world, that you're... like some feel today, a special people, the special people of God...and because of that you look down upon other people in the world, other races, other families in the world in the earth; because that hasn't been well received in the world because of some of the attitude that some have had of that. Whenever haughtiness and pride enters in that's the kind of a response that you can expect. So he says, and **don't think to yourselves that we have Abraham as our father, for I say unto you that God is able to raise up stones to make children of Abraham.** So, again, we talked about that last Sabbath.

And then he went on to say, as we read last Sabbath - **And now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree which does not bring forth good fruit is cut down and cast in the fire.** They understood what these things meant. They understood what was being said here. If you're not producing right fruit, if you're not living as you should, judgement comes, the tree is cut down and it's thrown in the fire – that is judgement. They understood the thing about judgement. They understood about fire and what was said in the Old Testament about gehenna, the Valley of Gehinnam, and something that was equated here then with judgement, of what would take place in time. They understood full well what he was saying.

He went on to say, **I indeed baptize you with water,** they were coming out to be baptized, to be immersed under water in the Jordan river, **unto repentance:** and so we have this baptism unto repentance that is referred to in Act's and other places and they talk about the baptism of John was one of baptism unto repentance. This is going to take on greater meaning as we go through this, which is incredible to understand what it signifies in a deeper way and with greater understanding. We understand what it means, but it takes on some greater meaning as we go through this sermon series. He says, **I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the holy spirit:** that means to be *immersed* into God's spirit, not just into water, but into the spirit of God! So a process of salvation is being revealed here even through John in the very beginning of this time, as far as what God is now showing because baptism was not a practice in the Old Testament. There are some, and I've heard speculation of things in times past where some have believed that, but God is clearly showing that no, that isn't the case. You can't go to Old Testament scriptures and read about baptisms. You can read

about purification, you can read about certain washings and so forth that the Levites did, you can read about certain things that they had as far as customs of washing, by the elbows on down their hands and this cleanliness of purification before you enter into prayers or enter into God's presence – that type of thing; and all these have significance, but this has far greater significance and meaning here of what God began to reveal through John the Baptist. This was the beginning of teaching about baptism, of the importance of being immersed, starts with water – starts with repentance because the purpose of being baptised under water *is...IS* a baptism of repentance. That's what you're picturing! You're burying the old self, that's your desire. You want to come up out of the water living a new way of life. It reflects and has great symbolism in the sense of wanting to put down, bury, be forgiven of your sins – a desire a person has of acknowledging, accepting, confessing as John the Baptist talked about here, sins; and then that symbolism of going under the water. And the desire is then from that point forward a conviction and a commitment to God to live a right life before God – to *change* the way you're living. That's what repentance means. That's why I love the word repent in the New Testament: means 'to think differently'. Literally in the Greek language the word repent in the Greek language means 'to think differently', not the same way you've done things in the past and the way you thought in the past, but to begin to acknowledge God's way of life – to think and be in a unity and agreement and oneness with God. We understand those things. So baptism is *always a baptism unto repentance* that began with John.

John says here that one is coming and **He shall baptize you with the holy spirit: and with fire:** he's talking to a group of people out here and he's saying that Christ is coming and He's bringing an immersion into the holy spirit and fire – judgement. Two different processes here. Those who don't change, those who don't go through the process, the outcome in time is one of judgement; the tree, the axe cut to the tree and it will be thrown in the fire. And in time if people do not respond and live as they should, do not accept what they should accept and so forth – he's going all the way with this through time through the plan of God into time. They didn't know the length of time here and John the Baptist didn't either, but the truth is the truth and in time everyone faces this. So it's either being baptized and receiving the holy spirit, repentance and change and growth in overcoming, or it's a rejection of God, a refusal to use God's spirit, a refusal of whatever it is in life and eventually one will end life – period.

**Verse 12 - Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor,** purify, cleanse, get rid of all that isn't going to be a part of what the purpose is of receiving the holy spirit. So it's about judgement again. But everyone, everything will be thoroughly purged, **and gather His wheat into the garner; and He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.** It's still about judgement and the importance of baptism. He addressed a religious group here where he knew their spirit, he knew their heart, he knew their attitude and called them as they were, a generation of vipers. It's very difficult for religious people to repent. I don't care what religion it is. The more religious they are in their deep convictions of what *they* believe is right, it's very difficult for some of them who are more zealous in their religion to be brought to repentance, it truly is. Whether it be in the world of Christianity; doesn't matter whether it be a matter of Islam; it doesn't matter whether it be of Buddhism; different things that people are to an extreme on the right – it's very difficult for them to be brought to repentance and that isn't going to change just because the world goes through what it does. Human nature is human nature and when it's all said and done not everyone's going to choose God's way of life.

Going on... Let's turn over to **Matthew 11** – So in all this, what is the primary message that John was giving? What God began to reveal to him, again, was the necessity to repent of sin and accept one's own personal responsibility. That's where it all begins. It was a strong message about judgement, being

blessed or punished for ones actions. That's what's in the message here in a nutshell. So a message began to go out concerning the need to confess sin, to acknowledge sin and repent, to seek to change – again, to think differently, to act differently. Because it's not a matter of just repenting. In the world so often people talk about repenting, but this has to do with the mind, this has to do with your actions that follow. So when you go under the water the mind and the attitude should be when you come up out of that water is that you have already determined in your mind, your conviction is, "I want to live differently. I don't want to remain the same. I want to change!" That's what this is all about. That's why it's so important to understand the following of the holy spirit; because without that, you can't change. You have to have that immersion as well; you have to be immersed into God's spirit, not just into water. That's just the beginning of a process.

So again, being immersed in water is a physical outward acknowledgement as we talked about, of a confession of sin and a desire to change. It's very simple. It's a physical thing, going under the water, but it's very symbolic and it carries with it a great deal of meaning for us just as much as when we partake of unleavened bread during the Days of Unleavened Bread or unleavened bread during the Passover. It shows our desire, our unity and oneness with God, the mind of God. We do something very physical but there's great importance in that in what it symbolizes and what we are in acknowledgement of and agreement with. And it is a desire all the time, all the days of our life, especially when we talk about partaking of unleavened bread throughout the Days of Unleavened Bread – to eat of the unleavened bread of life, of the very one pictured in Passover – Jesus Christ, the Word of God. And those things are very meaningful to us as much as baptism is. And this was the beginning of something; God began to reveal in a very powerful way through John.

**Matthew 11**; John carried an incredible message to Judah and this is what Christ said of him...notice **verse 7, And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What did you go into the wilderness to see? a reed shaken with the wind? So what did you go out to see? a man robed in effeminate clothing?** Now some translations talks about 'fine clothing' and 'soft clothing'. It's that political correctness again, but it had more to do with what the softness reflected in the words that are used there and it has to do with that which is effeminate in the sense of you think... well, notice what He says here, **Behold, they who wear effeminate clothing are in king's houses.** I think of some of the ways they looked in times past, in France and Great Britain and different ones of royalty of times past and all the fluffy things and that's what it's talking about. Some people take this as saying you shouldn't have fine clothing. That's not what it's talking about. People get some strange ideas sometimes because of different translations of what they read into God's word and the distinction here is not something about fine clothing. Jesus Christ wore fine clothing! But there are people and sometimes there have been people in God's Church as well who have felt that way. There are people who found fault with Mr. Armstrong and the quality and things he taught about God and the mind of God about quality and perfection and they didn't understand. And so again, it's not a matter of not having fine clothing or not having quality. That's why they cast lots for Christ's robe, because of the *quality* and how fine it was. It was worth something, something they wanted, something they desired with great desire and so they cast lots for it. I hope you know the story. If you don't you can go back and read it. But upon His death they wanted what He had.

And so again, this is what He's addressing here... **So what did you go out to see? Someone with effeminate clothing? Behold they who wear effeminate clothing are in kings houses. So what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.** Well then the question is... I made comment about John the Baptist and Mr. Armstrong not being prophets. I should have explained

more at that point in time, but again, you have to understand what is being used here in the form of a prophet. He was being given inspiration by God to speak of those things that were a matter of prophetic things that had already been written. He and Mr. Armstrong both; they fulfilled a 'type' in that respect, fulfilled roles of a prophet, but Mr. Armstrong was not a prophet and John not in that strictest sense either. It's used in the terms of what God gave to him. There's a difference in... and this is the definition that I want to make a clarification on; even in the first book, again, I used that definition of inspired interpretation; that God is involved, just like all of us when we speak, because of our understanding we're able to have inspired speaking which fulfills the same word. And that's the word that's being used here, still. And so even in our minds there is a distinction made between someone like John who wrote the book of Revelation, someone like Isaiah who was inspired to write that book, Ezekiel and so forth. There's a distinction in the jobs, or the offices, if you will, to fulfill a specific role. And I hope we understand that within the Church because again here it's a matter of the role that's been given to fulfill and that's a part of what is being given here and shown here – yes, a prophet in the sense of inspired interpretation, but not in the sense of, again, one like Isaiah or Ezekiel or even Elijah. Okay? It's different in what God gave. Not in the sense of prophesying things to come that weren't there as far as a record to be kept. It was a *message*, it was an inspired *message*. He was sent as a *messenger* in a very powerful way that gave things that were prophetic and yes, in that respect you can say a prophet. But I hope within the Church we are learning to use the word in the term of those things that are used in the Old Testament, those things that are used in the book of John and those things that God is doing now as a fulfillment of a role when He talks about prophets at the end of the age here and things that *will* be done through them in a different way.

**Verse 10 – For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I will send My messenger before Your face, who shall prepare Your way before You.** Again, it's prophetic, and it's fulfilling prophecy and this is what's being addressed here. **Verily I say unto you, Among them who are born of women,** I want to back up and mention about Mr. Armstrong again. Mr. Armstrong was fully an apostle. He was inspired with prophecy and in that respect just as much as John you could say he's a prophet but I don't want to use that term loosely and that's what is being given to the Church now. We don't use the terms loosely in that respect because then some would say, "Well, Mr. Armstrong said various things..." but he wasn't a *prophet* in the sense of Isaiah, Jeremiah or John – to give things that were going to come to pass. That's why I made a clear distinction in what *I'm* doing and what Mr. Armstrong did when it comes to a prophet. There is a *big difference* because you see the book '2008 – Gods Final Witness'... those events *will* come to pass, the timing of various things will come to pass in time and yet I think of the fast that's coming up in two weeks. It wasn't too long ago we had a fast in the Church that was 2 days. And the result of that fast had an impact on *timing* of events and God led us to that and I believe it was fully a part of God's plan all along, but as far as the Church is concerned, *we* are learning through this process of what God takes us through as well as some of the world. Some in the world who pays any attention right now at all is generally doing it for the purpose of finding fault with others waiting to see. There is also a large group of people out there just waiting to see because they're not sure. Maybe it will happen and maybe it won't. And so we get emails like that on occasion. There are those who are just waiting – see? And there are others who are given latitude to find fault, to mock, to make fun of. And God allows that for a purpose, just as we're going to read some examples in here of things that Christ said and things that happened during this period of time that has to do with the same message. God allows for those things for a purpose and for a reason in a very powerful way. But I hope all of you comprehend with all of your being that everything that is stated in the books is going to come to pass – because of the job of a prophet. See? And that's why things having to do with Ezekiel and Isaiah and things recorded, things that John wrote – they're absolute. And even some things to do with timing. And the

only thing that interferes with timing is that God can adjust His plan accordingly when there's a purpose behind it and I am dumbfounded to think about what God has led us to in order to understand God's mercy. One of the big things people on radio interviews wanted to know about, "Well, how can God do this?" or "How can a loving God even allow this to happen to mankind?" And they don't understand that people have to be brought to repentance. Just like here, it takes horrible things for man to have to experience to come to a point where he doesn't rely on himself anymore. What about you? What about *your* life? Do you realize that a lot of your life, things that have happened to you before you were brought into the Church, and things while you're in the Church are there to *bring you to your knees...* to help you to address a reality that *you cannot trust in yourself*; you cannot look to yourself for solutions and answers; that you are brought to a greater realization as a part of growth; you must always look to God. God must be first. God must be the focus *all* the time.

And so we go through difficult things in life that sometimes try us in those areas and refine us in those areas so that we do look to God, very powerfully so first and foremost, always! And we don't do that perfectly. That's why we still go through trials and hardships of life, to refine us in that area so that we can and will trust more and more and more on God – see?

Going on; **Who'd you go out to see? One inspired by God**, an inspired speaker. He had a message, that's why it went on to say here, **for this is he of whom it is written, Behold I will send My messenger before Your face who shall prepare Your way before You**. It wasn't very long, but it was as long as was needed. What we're going to do isn't going to be very long. It's going to be a very short work in that respect. And so was John the Baptist. He wasn't doing this for years and years and years on end. It didn't last a long, long time. It took a little while to begin and it began to get momentum because God was in it. God is the one who stirs people to repentance. Every one that was drawn, not all of them were brought into the Church. A few thousand were quickly on but as a whole here, when you're drawn - when you're called, again, God is involved in that just as much as He was with them. God did a lot of things in the Old Testament to inspire people, to bring them to a certain point, but not for the purpose of salvation yet. There are a lot of things written about in scripture and about different people's lives, or different groups of people and kingdoms even at times, but God wasn't bringing them to the point of being called into the Church, or being called to a point of being worked with like different ones throughout the Old Testament were. And the same thing was happening here. A lot of these people were being moved by God's spirit, being drawn by God, not to salvation, not to come to a point in time where they're going to be a part of the 144,000, but to have a good head start, to have a beginning of something working in their life because of an overall plan God had.

Just because they were coming to baptism here has nothing to do with them being brought into the Church or being a part of the 144,000 because there were far more baptized, just as there have been... You want to look back in Philadelphia? Look at all the people who were baptized, and in the ministry we have long known that a lot of them were never in the Church. People can get wet and have hands laid upon them and not be impregnated with God's spirit. That's between them and God. That's God's desire and God's choosing. A person can grow up in God's Church and give the right answers for baptism and have hands laid upon them. That doesn't mean that God has called them to be a part of 144,000. You understand what I'm saying? The difference? And we have experienced that. And that's gone through time. But look at the blessings people have by being a part of something, of receiving the understanding that they have to that point in time. Might add to that though too, God is drawing people now for the purpose of living into a new age, and that is unique; where everyone is going to have the opportunity of being a part of the Church if they so choose.



And so again here, a message going out in a very powerful way, preparing the way – a short work that was taking place here. **Verily I say unto you among them who are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist:** Why? Why does He say it this way? What about Himself? Was He including... No, He wasn't referring to Himself here, but He's talking about a job, He's talking about a responsibility. There's never been anyone that's been born who's had a greater responsibility, a greater *purpose* than John the Baptist. What about Moses? What about different ones? What about David? Is it... It's about what he was doing. It's about what he was saying. There had never been one that had been raised up to do something with a message like what was given to him. The Kingdom of God is now here at hand. Jesus Christ was bringing that and is bringing that greater message that was following and it was about the Messiah; it was about the Passover and because of that John the Baptist was great in what he fulfilled and what he was accomplishing.

**So among them who are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist:** see? It's not trying to make a comparison here with David and Moses and Jesus Christ Himself. That's not the point of this. He's making a point here about the importance of a job that John had, how great a responsibility that John had and it goes on to say here, **notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.** So what's He saying here? He's making it very clear: *All* who become a part of God's Family are greater than John the Baptist – they're *in* God's Family. A part of what John was pointing to was a beginning of a process of how to become a part of God's Family, of how to enter into it. It begins with baptism; it begins with acknowledging the Messiah; it begins with an understanding of certain things about the Kingdom of God, and judgement, the need for repentance, the need for change.

It was a beginning of that process and so it goes on to say, adding to this: **And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence,** it's a word that means in the Greek 'to be pressed upon' ...one... the point being is that one way or the other there are those who fight against it, there are those who try to force their own way into it (and I'll explain that as we go along here) and there are those who fight *for* it, to be a part of it. And so, God's Kingdom coming about, as far as man is concerned, there's a lot of violence associated with it, force... that's part of what the word means here too and it goes on to say **...suffers violence, and the violent,** or the word here akin to this one here means 'the forceful', **take it by force.** It just means 'to seize upon it, to seize it'. A unique thing that's being said by Christ about a message that began to come through John the Baptist about Jesus Christ, about the Kingdom of God. And He said, **And from the time of John the Baptist until...**it's still going on. **The Kingdom of God suffers violence,** that message, that truth and if you want to look at the very beginning of that, being pressed upon... there are those who loathe the message of the Kingdom of God and they fight against it. It's pressed upon. There are those out here who loathe and hate the truth and they press upon it, the Church through time, people have been pressed upon. Things have happened to you where force has been used against you in different forms, usually by the tongue obviously and things that are said against you because people don't like it. And so there is that hatred that is very common in people's lives. Churches out here, when you start talking about the Catholic church, or the Baptist church or the Lutheran church, or the Methodist church, or any other religion out here and you say, "They're all wrong!" The Kingdom of God get's pressed upon. There is that which is a matter of force in how the word is used here – not a great word in the English language, but it suffers violence; there's violence that takes place in the sense of how people respond. They're violent against it! They loathe...they *hate*... you know, there are things out here that people will put up with, but when they find out more about some of the beliefs you have – they get pretty nasty. In schools, teachers, employers on the job, a lot of you have experienced that violence in your lives, of how people respond

to you when you start obeying God and keeping the Sabbath. They don't jump up and down for joy that you're so convicted of your beliefs. There are things about jealousy that enter in, because they know they don't have the same kind of conviction. There are certain things that nag at their brain and their mind sometimes.

And then there are things where they're so filled with pride about what they're doing – they don't really care what anybody else believes in. If you don't agree with them, you know, and you give out a message that you're the only Church... "Oh, you're the *only* Church... and you're how large?" They like to mock things like that. Suffers violence because people don't understand. And then there are those through time concerning the word of God in the world of Traditional Christianity especially that try to force their way into the word of God. Everything that's out there; every religious idea in Traditional Christianity...look at it; what they've tried to force into God's word: Easter, so much so that one translation...because they're trying to force their way into it, so it suffers violence! The *message* and it's talking about a message because it's still going along with what God said about John the Baptist, and this *messenger* that was going to be sent with a *message* and that *message* – that's what's been attacked from the beginning from time. And the stronger that message becomes the more it's attacked; and it's a prophetic message! It's inspired by God of things that God has said throughout time through the prophets, through Moses, through David and on and on it goes – continuing on through time and now its gaining momentum – that message – because they'd never heard things like this. They, people, had never heard things like what John was saying, but they were being moved by God because they understood, because God was giving them a perception to understand to a point. That's why they came out and wanted to be baptized. They were being moved to believe. They were being oppressed. You know, when you're being oppressed as a people and you believe certain things about a Messiah; "Is this possibly the day of our deliverance? Is this *possibly* the time the Messiah's going to come and we're not going to have this harsh Roman government over us any longer? Is God finally going to come and institute His government on the earth, bring His government over and conquer to the point and not only of being relieved of the oppression, but to the point of actually ruling on the earth!" And that's what they thought. They were moved to believe *that*! See?

It's just like today, which is written in the book, and I believe it's in both talking about something that would continue on through time – that as we drew closer to the end that more and more things having to do with the end-time would become more of the current talk, the feelings about it being discussed. That's growing, it's not getting less. It continues to grow because God's doing it; God is stirring certain things up out here in the minds of human beings. Movies that come out... what's on the minds of people? What draws crowds? Things about the end, things about an apocalypse. They don't understand it, but their minds are there more and more. And that's what was happening back then – God was stirring up people to come out to John to be baptized. They were moved and motivated that this is important, "I need to begin to address my life and to make some changes and ask God to forgive me of my sins and to begin living a better life, a right life because we're being oppressed and we want to come out from under this oppression. We look forward to the Messiah coming!" Think how that's going to change even more so as a message continues to go out and people hear the message finally, because they're not hearing it very much out there yet. It's very small what we're doing and yet for us it's very big with what God is doing. But when things begin, when it's God's time, the hearing is going to be sharpened immensely so and people are going to begin responding. That's why we're doing what we're doing and preparing for baptisms because God is going to move thousands. And people mock and make fun of that... no, hundreds of thousands, and people mock and make fun of that...no, into the millions that are going to have the ability to be baptized before Jesus Christ returns. That's awesome and it's

going to take place, it's going to happen and we all get to be a part of it, one way or another, as a whole we're going to be involved in it. We're going to be a part of it and it's an incredible thing to understand.

And so again He says, **the Kingdom of God suffers violence**, those who hate it and loathe it from the get go; those who try to force their own way into it, even within the *environment* of the Church – we've had people come along who've tried to force *their* way into the message. I've mention different ones at times; Dr. Hoeh – notorious because he taught a lot of ministers who took the same message out there. There are different ones out there today in the Church that was scattered and people become uncomfortable with this being said. I don't care! You've got to face reality just as much as John the Baptist said you need to repent of your sins! How can you know what to repent of if you don't know what's taking place and acknowledge it and say, "Yes it is happening and yes that did happen." So there are people out there in United and Living and different groups out there that I feel sorry for, I hurt for, but so many of them have been duped by, deceived by that one man alone; by the false things he taught at Ambassador College. Mr. Armstrong wasn't there to supervise the teaching of the classes. He believed that evangelists were out there teaching, righteously so, rightly so of what had been given to him and what had been given to the Church. And yet they weren't. He was trying to get 14/15<sup>th</sup> Passover into the ministry, into the Church, into Ambassador College going way, way, way back and he's done immense damage to God's people. He has lived anti-Christ for a long time. And people say, "How can you say that about an evangelist?" Because he's not an evangelist and he hasn't been for a long, long time. He's been anti-Christ, against Christ, against the very proof of who Christ is: 14/15<sup>th</sup> Passover. And some people have wondered about... "Why do you get so worked up about 14/15<sup>th</sup> Passover?" Because it's as important and more important to the Church than 3 days and 3 nights to the world of Traditional Christianity. You know, if they can begin to address that one there, 3 days and 3 nights, and they try to squeeze a Friday sunset, what they call Good Friday into Sunday morning; and they try to squeeze three days in there it shows that they're pretty blind and ignorant of the truth and they don't like that. How much more in the Church when we should know the truth about Jesus Christ and everything He fulfilled within the day of the 14<sup>th</sup>. Incredible! Important to God, His Son, the Passover and it better be important to every one of us, not anything less, and not anything more.

We've had people that have tried to force things. So the Kingdom of God has suffered violence, and it fits everyone in the world and those whom God calls, you have to use, you have to be forceful. That's why I comment over and over again – you have to fight for this way of life! *You can't be a Laodicean! You can't be lukewarm and rest back on your laurels in your reclining chair! You've got to fight for this way of life! And if you don't...* are you going to be able to seize it, because that's what follows up... and it says...**and the forceful**, those who are willing to *fight for it!* That's what it means, seize upon it, and that's what we have to do when we're called. You can't just go through the motions of religion, you've got to fight against your nature, you've got to cry out to God to help you to change when you see your sins, when you see your human nature and just repent and know that as soon as you've repented, you're right with God. To have that confidence; not to have to beat yourself up, but a boldness in a plan that God has given to you.

I find these things immensely exciting and they should be exciting to you, but you've got to fight for it; because I know there are those of you out there listening, and those of you in the scattered church, you're not *fighting all the time!* You know, you let things pull you down in the world; you get sidetracked on your job, in your family. You let distractions come along. That's when you have to fight all the more! ...and cry out to God all the more! You really do; you've got to *fight for this way of life!* And if you don't, you don't receive it. And everybody being drawn now – I want to see them on the

other side of all this...and the 144,000 are already going to be there – I just don't know who you are, you know. But everyone else... I really want to see on the other side of all this – see? In the Millennium when everything's said and done, once Jesus Christ returns; and I believe that every one of you wants to be there as well, but it's not going to come just because you're sitting in Sabbath services today or listening to it on the telephone today, or listening on the webcast. It's because you're fighting for it! You're fulfilling what it says here about the Kingdom of God suffering violence. And those who are willing to fight have to seize upon it; you have to fight for it! And that's what we failed to do in Laodicea. That's the greatest lesson of Laodicea. We failed to fight for it and we fell asleep spiritually.

**Verse 13 - For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.** Everything... *everything* led up to this moment – that's what it's saying here. "Look at this," Jesus Christ is saying, "Look at this! *All the law and the prophets...*to this point in time, to John..." It was about this moment in time. It was about a messenger who was going to be sent to prepare the way with an incredible message. There's never been one *greater* in the sense of the message because now the message is beginning to be fulfilled! The beginning of a Messiah, the beginnings of salvation, the beginning of the truth, the beginning – baptism – the beginning of a process here of salvation that man can receive; the beginning of it. That's what the importance is of what Jesus Christ is saying here. He's making it very clear the importance of John the Baptist and the message. And that's why... I'll just tell you flat out; *we do not yet grasp the magnitude of what has been given to us NOW.* You will learn it as you go along here and you'll become more *inspired* as you go along here, but the magnitude of what God is doing right now here, at this point in time, is *FAR GREATER than the time of John the Baptist because the greater part is now here – the Kingdom of God IS NOW HERE!* It wasn't there 2,000 years ago. It was a beginning of the process whereby many more were going to be brought into the 144,000 because that's where the vast majority of the 144,000 have come from – through the Church! ...in the last 2,000 years. There aren't that many who are going to be resurrected who were in the first 4,000 years. You can pretty much go through the Bible and pick them out; they're written about. There aren't a whole lot of people lost in time there somewhere that aren't mentioned, but there are in the Church over 2,000 years because we don't know the people in Sardis and Thyatira and that longest era of the Church and Ephesus... we know some of those in the beginning but Smyrna – we don't know, Pergamus? We don't know them. They're not written in history, they're forgotten – Catholic church made sure of that because they're the ones that had control of a lot of literature and so forth. Still do, their little secret chambers and all the secret little dirty truths they don't really want out there. Amazing! ...that organization that's about to come to a screeching halt, a screeching end. What a beautiful thing.

**For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you will receive it, that big IF, this is Elijah, this is the beginning, this is the 'type', this is that message that's been preached through time, who was foretold to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.** It's a prophetic message – see? And that's what this whole story's been about.

Incredible story, it really is and there's a lot more to it here that's going to continue to come at us, we're going to grow in understanding as we go forward and understanding where we are now and what God is doing now and why this is such an important time of all human life, of all history. It's awesome; it truly is, beyond words. I don't have the words to describe it all, only to the point that God gives me Sabbath by Sabbath and that's where we're going to rest.

Let's go over to **John 1** – John pointed people to the next step which was one of being baptized, immersed into the holy spirit, so he talked about in his message what he was doing but he talked about

One who was coming who was going to immerse into the holy spirit and that's where they were in time, that's where he was in time. It was an incredible message 2,000 years ago, because throughout the 4,000 years before that no one ever heard such a message come together like this because it wasn't time. How much more now? ...when we talk about a time we live in, the end-time and what God is giving now. It's an incredible thing. That's why so many things are being fulfilled now – see? That's why so many things describe what's being fulfilled now that bother some people out there. Especially within the Church; we have to get by that and get on with it to realize this is an incredible time, an important time in all of history; what God's accomplishing.

He pointed people with that message to the next step of being immersed with the holy spirit that would come through the Messiah, through the Passover because that was the first part of the Messiah that had to be there – the Passover part; still a part of the role of the Messiah, but it's the Passover part and that's what they didn't grasp. So again, before this in the Old Testament there was no mention of baptism. It's not discussed. God began with John to reveal its purpose, it's symbolism, it's great meaning and here in **John 1** let's notice how this is condensed, this whole thing is condensed even more succinct, the purpose and so forth in things that John wrote and how he wrote here because this is really brought together well in some of the things he wrote. **Verse 19 - And this is the record of John**, now the story before this was about the word that was to be made flesh and it talks about Jesus Christ.

Now we're going to John, about the record of John, the witness of John. **And this is the record of John**, which is the witness of John; it's the same kind of word that's used in the New Testament. It means the same thing...witness/record, it's what he witnessed, it's what came through his life, it is recorded, it is a record as well. **And this is the record of John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are you? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.** Because that was very much on the minds of people. Again, Why? How? Because God gave it to be so. God has the power to communicate to the human mind; not to give the whole story, but to put certain things in people's minds, to stir up thoughts, ideas, wonder. And they were wondering about a Messiah. This was very much on the people's minds. Not because they hadn't gone through hard times before – they had. But God put it more and more in the mind of people.

They were asking him who he was, in other words, by what authority, by what right – who are you? What is this message you have? Why are all these people coming to you? Because all these people weren't coming to them like they were to John. They already had their established groups of meetings, met every Sabbath and were in the Synagogues and the like and yet they saw a whole lot of other people that they would like to have had to be a part of them. Just like today... people would like to have more people be a part of their church. It's just a natural desire that people have had through time.

**And they asked him, Who then? Are you Elijah? And he said, I am not. Are you that Prophet? And he answered, No.** So again, he fulfilled a 'type' of the Elijah to come but he wasn't that Elijah. **Then they said...** Because that's why they were asking him these questions; because they were referring to prophecy, prophetic events. **Who are you? that we may give an answer to them who sent us. What do you say of yourself?**

And so in **verse 23** it goes on to say. **He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness**, He was given to understand that he was fulfilling that role and he said... and they understood the scriptures. They understood where this was coming from. He wasn't giving them something... They knew what the scriptures said. **I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make straight the way of the Lord, so**

he was letting them know, “This is what I’m doing, this is what I am fulfilling.” ...**prepare the way for the Lord**, for His coming in other words, **as said the prophet Isaiah**. So just in case they didn’t know he told them right where it was, but they knew – those that they took a message back to definitely knew what this was and what it was referring to. It says, **And they who were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why do you baptize?** See, what is this baptizing?! What is this immersing in water and why are you doing this if you’re not the Christ? ...if you’re not the Messiah? Because he was introducing something new, something above and beyond what had ever been given to Judah, to the Jews. It wasn’t in the scriptures in the Old Testament.

**...if you are not the Christ**, if you’re not the Messiah...**nor Elijah, neither that prophet? And John answered them, saying, I baptize with water:** he stayed to the message because this was all that was being given at that time. The whole story wasn’t being given to John. The whole story wasn’t being given to them about what was taking place. But people were stirred up enough to hear this and to be moved by it and to want to change. ...**I baptize with water: but there stands one among you, whom you do not know; He it is, who’s coming after me who has been before me**, in other words, again, not because He lived before. It’s amazing what we believed in the past, but it’s so easy because you have a preconceived idea to read something into scriptures and this is a good example of that. ...**who was before me**. Why? Because He comes first! He was determined first. He was *predetermined* first and this is exactly what John is referring to. *He came before John. He came before John’s purpose. John’s purpose was to announce Him.* He’s making it, for those of us who understand, for those of us who grasp, for those who know the truth, it’s written here so it’s very simple for us. He was before and we understand He was; He is the cornerstone, the foundation of everything that’s built upon it. The whole universe, nothing was made, nor the angelic realm, nothing in the *spirit* world was created and made until first was known the Messiah. God had a plan for a Family from the very beginning of time. God makes it clear in Hebrews the reason the angelic realm was created – to minister unto the Family of God, to those who are going to be called, to those who are going to be brought into His Family in time. That’s why the angelic realm was created – to be part of a spirit family in that respect, but not of the God Family. And so incredible things here that happened through time; and John saying, “He was before me.” He was purposed before him and then John was purposed later. You realize that John the Baptist was purposed before human beings were ever put on this earth? You realize that John the Baptist, that different ones through time – that Moses, that different ones were purposed through time...that these... *God didn’t just allow history to happen. God didn’t just allow this book to happen.* It didn’t happen by what the world teaches with evolution. ‘It just kinda evolved.’ That’s what the world would have you believe about the word of God. The word of God, this Bible didn’t kind of just evolve over the past 6,000 years and God just kind of dealing with things as they happened; like even we kind of thought in the Church in the beginning. I give this example sometimes: in Ambassador College one time, sitting in a class, and this evangelist was teaching a particular class there at this time and talking about some of these things and the whole class was responding and talking about Adam and Eve. And it was like, because of sin now, it’s like God hitting Himself in the forehead and asking, “What am I going to do now? They’ve sinned! What are we going to do now?” ...and so God did certain things... and that’s how it was perceived. You think, “No it wasn’t!” God knew *exactly* what human beings would do. “They were made physical,” He said, “for a purpose.” Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life – the greatest thing that every human being must address is that biggie – the pride of life. We’re *all* filled with it because that is where Satan did what he did. God wanted mankind to understand you cannot have that kind of a mind, you cannot be lifted up with pride, pride will not be allowed to exist in the God Family and so before you are ever able to address, before anyone can become a part of the God Family they must experience what it’s like to be a pride filled human being! That’s an awesome thing.

There's no other way to become a part of the God Family without a part of God's creation... because, see it happened to the angelic realm. They were made spirit in composition and that didn't prevent sin, but in God's Family those who are filled with Him will have a unique mindset: one that is totally at one with God that will *never* have pride. And there's a process we go through spiritually before we enter into God's Family where we address pride and we repent of it day in and day out. And every time you repent you're growing in character because of God's spirit in your mind, where you're acknowledging pride, you're acknowledging God, you're acknowledging that God is right and that we're wrong, that pride is wrong. It's an awesome thing how God delivers us and makes us what we are and it doesn't happen by God just putting it in your mind. He can't create character in your mind, it's something that comes by choice; free moral agency. Again, powerful messages that God gave through Mr. Armstrong that weren't even understood in times previous to that but was given toward the end-time.

**John answered and said, I baptize with water:** a beginning of a process, **but there stands one among you**, again, he's talking about the coming of Jesus Christ and Him being the foundation stone as we said here, the word made flesh and that's what he said – there was one before me, **whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.** So everything that has happened in God's plan, everything that has come after that John the Baptist was determined before man was ever created; the Elijah to come was predetermined before man was ever created... the 144,000 as well – not just the 144,000 and the number, but *every being, every person* in the 144,000. That job and responsibility that's going to come now in the Millennium; a part of God's Family and how it's going to govern – every part of that organization, every part of that Body, every part of that... the functioning of *every member* in that was predetermined before God ever created the angelic realm. Could we appreciate and understand those things more deeply, to think about things like that? If you can grasp the universe in the slightest form – that everything out there is by design and uniqueness that God has put there, meticulously so – not colliding into each other, but it's beautiful, it's awesome the magnitude of it! How much greater that which God is doing in His own Family and preparing and determining things *long* before they ever came into being to fulfill certain roles... Everybody that's ever been called in the last 6,000 years and worked with by God, moulded and fashioned. God has done the moulding and fashioning of that person's character, of their mind from the get go. That's an incredible thing to understand because there's a place for every person to fit and *all of you*, the 144,000 is just the beginning – the rest of the structure of the Family is still out there. And far beyond the importance of the universe *you* exist, and your life exists and God is moulding and fashioning you – those of you being drawn now *fit into a place* in the Family. *You fit into a part* of something that God is creating. *God* is creating it. He is the master potter and you know where you're going to be the most fulfilled in life? By yielding yourself to that process. But you know what you do as a human being? You resist it. You fight against it and a part of our conversion and a part of that process is learning to fight against self and to *yield* our self to that process. And the more you yield yourself to it, you are going to be the most fulfilled exactly where God places you, just as much as different galaxies out here – they are where they are by design. And if we yield ourselves to the process, we're going to be where we are by design all fitting together as a part... and there's not going to be jealousy and envy between anyone, there's not going to be any competition and we're all going to function together beautifully and it goes beyond human understanding, but if you continue to yield yourself to the process... That's what God is doing. So, do you look at your life that way? What happens to you day in and day out is a part of a process of being moulded and fashioned by your God? Because that's exactly what's going on in your life and your fighting and your battling and you're trying to seize upon that Family, the Kingdom of God as you continue to fight and do the things that God shows you. And yet in all this process God is moulding and fashioning you and different experiences you go through, things that happen to you that are different from someone else...all a part of fashioning and

moulding. Because see, sometimes we don't want to be where we are – we want to be someone else, or somewhere else. Don't do that. You just yield yourself to the process and God will see it through. It's an awesome thing.

**Verse 28 – These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming to him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.** Didn't give more in the message, but saying that He is the Lamb of God, certain things that are taught about Passover, the lamb. There are certain things that aren't fully missed but not fully understood either; the Lamb of God – hmmm, things that latch onto the mind of things that they were wondering about and this thing about baptism and coming out there and here is this One that he's been talking about. The Kingdom of God is at hand, there's One coming, talking about looking to a Messiah, and now he says, **Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.** What does all this mean? How is this possible? Well, that's to be revealed later on – see, but this is a beginning.

**This is He of whom I said**, and they were *moved* by the message. They didn't see it all but what they were given they were moved by it, as much as when something is given to you when you're first being drawn and you begin to see something and you're moved by it and what it does in your mind – that's what was taking place here on a smaller scale, but so important to them because of what they were living through at that time. Going on... **This is He of whom I said, after me comes a Man which is preferred before me:** in other words, 'became, or fulfilled, or was done, made'; that's what the Greek word means, 'came to pass' before me. Same kind of terminology here of things he's pointing to, **for He was before me. And I knew Him not:** in other words, understanding the purpose and the things that were there until God began to work with John to show certain things to John; but even there John didn't fully understand what God was doing in and through him. That's why even later on, you know what he did? He was about to lose his head and he said, "are you the one or should I continue to search for another?" When you're going through hardship and trial, your head's about to get lopped off, you know, you're in prison... you begin to wonder.

That's why I think about Paul and people in the Church, things we go through in our lives sometimes – like... everything's going bad for me, everything's going wrong, I must not be pleasing God someplace, somewhere, and am I in the right place, am I doing the right thing – maybe this isn't... maybe... and people have left God's Church because of those kinds of thoughts that come into the mind. And yet there's not an individual that had more right to say something like that than Paul, but Paul never said that. Beaten! Would you think when you're stoned and you're drug out of the city, left as dead, you might begin to think, "What am I doing wrong here? Am I not pleasing God?" Shipwrecked! I'm glad we don't have jet crashes or anything like that, so far anyways, it doesn't say what kind of shape we're going to be in at the end of this. But you know, I think about that oftentimes when travelling. I think we have *nothing* to complain about and you think what God has given to us in this age and so forth, but you think about someone who had an opportunity to begin to think and say, "Am I doing the right thing God?" You never see Paul saying that. On the contrary; he says, 'O wretched man that I am! Who's going to deliver me from the body of this death?' 25 years after serving God in that capacity and he says, 'I thank God through Jesus Christ.' He knew the way. Amazing!

**Verse 31 - And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore I have come baptizing with water.** So that He could be shown to Israel, so that it could be testified, so that it could be given, so that it could begin, a process begin to be given here that he bear record of what took place. And so much of what he did here was bearing record, was a witness of something that took place in a



beginning process concerning the process of baptizing. He said **that's why I have come baptizing with water**. It's a beginning. He didn't say beginning but that's what it was because never before had anything been preached like this. Never before had the Messiah come and now was the time of the Messiah coming but now He's coming as the Lamb of God. He said, **behold the Lamb of God...**

**And John bear record**, 'gave witness', that's what it means. **And John bear record, saying, I saw the spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode/rested and stayed upon Him**. What an incredible thing! Now, very physical in one respect, but very incredible to witness something that God manifested to show the importance of the occasion as He had different times in history and even in the future here after this point in time of things that God did. Awesome and incredible things! And so John bear witness of this and there's a reason why all this has to be recorded and the witness had to be given here.

**Verse 33 - And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water**, God Almighty sent him to baptize with water; **the same said unto me, Upon Whom you see the spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He who baptizes with the holy spirit**. You know there are things that John already knew and understood about Jesus Christ, but he had to bear witness of these things. **And I saw, and bear record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples;** we'll come back to this in a moment here, verse 35. I want to turn over to Luke now.

**Luke 1:76** – about fulfilling a role of the Elijah to come in the form of a prophet, not a prophet like Elijah, not a prophet like those of the Old Testament, not a prophet like John, but the fulfilling of a role, again, in how the word is used; **And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Highest: for he shall go before the face of the Eternal to prepare His ways;** again, a 'type'. This was a 'type' of something to be accomplished, something to be fulfilled at this time... **To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of sins**, this is a beginning. You need to be baptized, you need to repent of your sins and that was the message that was going out and that was showing the beginning of salvation, but the rest of the story wasn't there, the importance of the holy spirit which we're going to come to in this sermon series that's going to take on greater meaning as we go forward. But again, **to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins**, in other words the need for forgiveness of sin, the need for receiving the holy spirit because that was a part of his message: that there's One coming after me who's going to immerse you in the holy spirit. So again, a part of a prophetic message that was recorded in the Old Testament and a part that began to be given through a messenger, through John, and again, talking about the importance of being immersed in the spirit not just in water.

Going back to **John 1:35 - Again the next day**, it says, **after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus**. So, notice here as a part of the story, some actually were following John the Baptist first and then they began to follow Jesus Christ. There was a relationship there and certain things that they were ready for when Christ talked to them and spoke to them. It says, **Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said unto them, What do you seek? And they said unto Him, Rabbi, teacher, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master, in this case here) Master where are You living? And He said unto them, Come and see. And they came and saw where He was living, and abode/stayed with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. And one of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother**. It shows here a relationship with John the Baptist and then they began to follow Jesus Christ here. It said, **that followed Him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother**, and he said, **he first found his own brother Simon, and said unto him,**

**we have found the Messiah**, so again here this relationship that they had, the different ones that were following John the Baptist, they already had part of this message, things that they had already discussed and that they were sharing, and now; can you imagine at this point in time because they were with John at this moment when Jesus Christ came along and when John said, **behold the Lamb of God**, and so they started following Him... and Andrew, like a brother would who was sharing in many of these things because of what they believed, like any of us would do, ran speedily, quickly and carried a message here, **We have found the Messiah!** This message that is out here, we have seen Him! And so this is what they were doing.

And so it says here, they ran and he got his brother, as it says here, Simon Peter and he says, **first found his own brother Simon, and said unto him, We have found the Messiah! ...Which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus saw him, he said, you are Simon the son of Jona:** so there was no conversation here, Jesus Christ told him who he was to reinforce the truth of who He was and because the fact that Simon was being drawn and called to be a part here of the 12 disciples that Jesus Christ was going to work with. And **He says, you are Simon the son of Jona: you shall be called Cephas**, in other words, Peter, **which is by interpretation, A stone**. So again, Simon Peter and the expression here that is used through time. Incredible story of some of the disciples, how they began to be worked with and their first learning of Jesus Christ and the like and sometimes it's exciting to see more of the story of these things.

The story of John's commission and work is very unique as it began to fulfill a prophetic 'type' of the Elijah to come and so in that respect fulfilling a prophetic role, yes indeed, just as Mr. Armstrong fulfilled a prophetic role. God gave to him certain prophetic things about ... he was an apostle but He gave him things about Europe, even things about Mussolini at that time and Germany and when he came to understand a moment in time of something in prophecy that had to be given at a very specific moment in time when he understood that... **Revelation 17:10 - And there are seven kings: five are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come;** so again, one moment in time when this could be fulfilled – speaking of the seven revivals of the Holy Roman Empire and at this particular time Mr. Armstrong came to understand what it was talking about. That the 'one is' was talking about what was happening with Germany and Italy and WWII, and talked about 'one is yet to come'. So God gave to him understanding about various things like this but his job was not that of a prophet, it was one of an apostle, a messenger of God. And all are messengers of God who are apostles and prophets. John was unique indeed because of his message and what he had to give and did fulfill the role of... that was prophetic.

**Luke 16** – It's important to understand that Judah had not received any kind of a message from anyone concerning God, that God had sent to them, for 430 years because Malachi was the last one and that was 430 years before John; that this message came along; and incredible just to know the span of time there and so the excitement that was given to them... there was a period of time of the Maccabees, but God wasn't involved in those things at that time and doing anything of any significance at that time. It was from the time of Malachi all the way up to John. So 430 years afterward and finally a message began to come along that God inspired to be given because it's time for Jesus Christ to come. And this entire story is a part of what's referred to here in Luke 16, if you will, about preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah and the era of the Church, candidly, because that's what was following, the era of the Church which was divided into seven specific eras.

**Luke 16:13** – it says, **No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one**, in other words value one less, **and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot**

**serve God and mammon.** ...or avarice and wealth, whatever that is for you. It doesn't have to just be a matter of that which is physical in the sense; it can be anything that has to do with what you consider to be of value in life and why you might make certain choices. It could be something as simple as a mate, as simple as your child, as simple as your parent, as simple as a friend, as simple as a job – see... whatever it is that we consider to be so... that God is saying in other words – God is first. You serve God first and foremost in life. **And the Pharisees also,** going on it says, **who were covetous,** that's the way they were, covetous, describes how they acted, how they functioned, **heard all these things: and they derided Him.** ...sneered at Him because He's saying here, because He knows exactly what will push their buttons, what will rile them up, what will stir them up because He gets to the heart and core of who they are, that they won't acknowledge and admit. So He went on to say here, **And He said unto them, You are they who justify yourselves before men;** what a sick thing. I really hate that whenever this happens, especially in the environment of the Church. We of all people need to learn very quickly on when God gives us anything in life we should never justify ourselves. There is no justification for doing something wrong. There's never a justification for whatever it is that we do that isn't right before God and yet so often in time and in our human nature we will seek to justify, in other words, put ourselves in a good light and the reality is there are times in life where we just have... that's why with husbands and wives, or on the job, it doesn't work in the same way in what I'm talking about regarding relationships as far as people in the Church. There are some who work for others in the Church but as a whole that doesn't happen. But as far as relationships within the Church is concerned, the right thing to do when you've done something wrong is to acknowledge it, even to your child – that doesn't matter what age they are; if they're two, or three, or five, or eight, or twelve, or whatever the age is. When a parent has done something wrong you need to acknowledge your error, your wrong – see? Too often that isn't the case. **You are they who justify yourselves before men;** so He said, this is how you are, **but God knows your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.** So He's knocking their chops pretty good here.

**Verse 16 - The law and the prophets were until John:** that expression again, and **since that time the Kingdom of God is preached, and every man presses into it.** That same word that was 'suffered violence' – exact same word being used here again. You have to understand what it's talking about and it's talking about all mankind and this particular case, concerning the Pharisees, how did they respond to the Kingdom of God being preached? Well, they fought against it, to the point of wanting to see Christ put to death – that's how much they fought against it and that's how it's first received as far as human nature is concerned and those who consider themselves to be religious.

Turn over to **Matthew 3.** We'll read another area here because before John the Baptist it's recorded that everything up to that point in time is of the law and the prophets. John begins talking about the Kingdom of God, the focus of God's work having to do with the coming of Jesus Christ as the Passover and the Church, the seven eras as I mentioned earlier being established. As we're continuing in the story here, Jesus Christ actually came to John then as John was preaching these things and baptising people and He told John to baptize Him. Why did Jesus Christ have to do that? Why did Jesus Christ who had never committed any sin, because isn't that what it's about? It's about a desire to repent of sin, to live right and so why was it necessary that Jesus Christ would have to come to John to be baptized? ...and it's really quite simple but let's follow the story here because Jesus Christ had no sin, He had nothing to repent of.

**Matthew 3:13** – continuing from where we left off earlier, catching up on part of the story here. **Verse 13 - Then Jesus,** again, it says, **came from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John**  
**Ordinations & Baptism – Pt. 4**

would not do it, he refused at first, he wouldn't allow it to be done, **saying, I have need to be baptized of You, and why do You come to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, you are to permit,** or 'to allow' as the word means here, you're to allow this now, you're to permit this now: **for its proper,** meaning in the Greek, 'it's right', 'it's proper, 'it's necessary' if you will, it's necessary for a purpose, **for us to fulfill all righteousness.** In other words the example; that's what it was all about. It was about the example of a process that all must follow so the example of that which was being set here, that everyone has to follow *this* process as a part of salvation; and so that's why He was doing it, a matter of fulfilling all righteousness – that all must be baptized under water, even though for Him we understand it wasn't necessary and we learn from that too, because He had no sin. So he asked the question why, because in everything Jesus Christ set the example for the Church – that's what it talks about in scripture: we're to follow *that example* in everything we do in life from beginning to end.

And then it says that he allowed it, he permitted Him to be baptized, **And Jesus, when He was baptized,** and it was also to fulfill then that which was given to be shown here because certain things had to be fulfilled as a part of a function here of something he was to record and witness. **And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, behold the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him:** so more of the story. It's not always recorded in every account; a little bit here, and a little bit there and it's all put together. **And behold a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.** Powerful, awesome thing that was taking place, and this just the beginning of a process of salvation.

**Matthew 4** it goes on to say – it says, **Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.** And goes on to talk about the **forty days and forty nights,** so we know the story. As soon as He was baptized, as soon as John recorded and witnessed this thing of the holy spirit then resting upon Him, like a dove as it says, setting there, and fulfilling a role that John had been given already to testify unto and the necessity then to be baptized for all this to be a part of the occurrence of something that God was going to fulfill as an example. All the things involved here of a process that leads to salvation and just like with Passover, you know, Jesus Christ kept the Passover with the disciples to teach them about that and Paul later on said that's the example we're going to use in the Church. It wasn't any more about killing of a lamb and so forth, there was a process here of something that was to be taught and learned from the example of those things that Jesus Christ set. He started out by washing their feet and setting that example, again, over and over again here, of necessity to fulfill righteousness, a process here for everyone within the Church.

**Mark 1:8** – **I indeed have baptized you with water: but He shall baptize you with the holy spirit.** In other words to be immersed in the holy spirit. **And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straightway, it says, coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the spirit like a dove descending upon Him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, again, You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And immediately the spirit drove Him into the wilderness.** It shows it was God's spirit then that moved Him into the wilderness because this is the time that Satan met Him and the 40 days of fasting was to take place. And it goes on now and adds more here; and it says, **And He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him. Now after that John was put in prison,** so there was a period of time that followed, not right away, because Christ started His ministry and then later on John was put in prison. This is not immediate here so we have to put more of the story together in a moment but it says, **later on, after this, John was put in prison, Jesus**

came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, there's a time factor here; that didn't happen immediately as you'll see in some of the story later on, so it's jumping ahead just a tad here.

**Verse 15 - And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand: repent and believe the gospel.** What took place was an incredible thing because it continues on with a story of something John was doing for a time. Jesus Christ was tempted first, He went up into Galilee, as it talks about, but there's a little bit that happened in between here that we're going to get to in a moment that's not mentioned here in Mark's account. But it does jump ahead to a point in time that when He did go to Galilee, then it talks about a period of time that John was put into prison and Jesus Christ was preaching the same thing. It says - **the time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand: repent**, but now a little bit more... **believe the good news**, believe the gospel. A little bit more as it goes along here just keeps being added. The ministry of Christ began to come along and God began to add more to the story.

Toward the end of John the Baptist's ministry and the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ baptism continued through the time of Jesus Christ's ministry. Baptisms continued in the ministry of Jesus Christ while John was put in prison. It came to a point in time where John was put in prison but immediately when Jesus Christ began to preach, after He'd been tempted in the wilderness – His disciples baptized people – a baptism of repentance and as a whole we don't think much about something like this; we haven't in times past as a whole focused much upon this, haven't really addressed it in that respect but there is something that should be quite apparent when you consider this. Holy spirit hadn't yet been given – they weren't receiving and were not being immersed yet in the holy spirit. It was still the same kind of baptism that John the Baptist was doing – a baptism unto repentance. **John 2:1** - this is John's account of the beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ and it says here...**on the third day there was a wedding of Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding and when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, They have no wine.** Now, I've often wondered why this miracle... nothing was done without importance. Was it just for the sake of a wine? Was it just for the sake of a miracle? There's more to the story...it's really quite incredible. So again here, when they ran out of wine **the mother of Jesus came to Him and said, They have no wine. And Jesus said unto her, Woman, what does your concern have to do with me?** They've run out of wine. Well...? **My hour has not yet come.** There are certain things here that aren't to take place; there are certain things that aren't to happen yet.

**And His mother said unto the servants, whatever He says to you, do it.** Incredible here what took place; not a whole lot is given here, this is kind of an overview of something that transpired. There's really a lot contained here because of what happened and what followed. You have to understand that God inspires it all. Everything that Jesus Christ ever did – God inspired it all. God was in it all – powerfully so; in ways we can't even begin to comprehend...the Son of God, the mind of God, the oneness with God, things that are hard for us because of how we're converted and how we're called and how the process begins in us once (only after we're baptised) and Christ, He experienced things throughout His life. Last Sabbath I discussed when He was 12 and when He was left at the Feast and He's talking to the lawyers, the ones who should know the scriptures inside and out and dumbfounding them with His comments and His questions back and forth. Incredible.

Notice here, **Verse 6 - Now there were set there six water pots of stone, according – notice this, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece.** It's interesting here what was used. Here is a story of something that's interjected in the beginning of

Christ's ministry, the beginning of His ministry, and one of the first great things to take place here, after He'd been tempted in the wilderness. He's invited to a wedding, His mother makes a comment to Him and He picks certain vessels where a miracle's going to be performed. It's these vessels that had been used in times past for washings, purification, the water that would normally be in these vessels – and that's why it makes the comment here, **containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece**. And water is used for purification of the Jews...and **Jesus said unto them, Fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, Draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast.** The one who's in charge, the one who's doing these things. And it says, **And they took it and when the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and he did not know where it came from:** he didn't know what had happened, **(but the servants, it says here, who had drawn the water, they knew;)** **the master of the feast called the bridegroom, And he said to him, Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine; and when the guest have gone drinking well for a while/been drinking well for a while, then the inferior is brought out:** that was kind of the custom back then, let them have a little good wine for a while, then after a while just bring out the stuff that didn't cost as much, that isn't as good and let them keep drinking if they want to. He says in this case here, **you have kept the good wine until now**. An exclamation here, this is exciting, this was good, this was a unique situation. It says, **This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.**

And there's really more to the story in that respect of something that was going to come through Jesus Christ, some things that are symbolic here, of what was going to come from Christ in a greater story of purification because the Jews were being shown something here. There's a greater need than just going through a ritual and going through a washing. There is a need for you to be *completely*, your whole life; your whole body needs to be immersed in water. One time in your life and a conviction and a commitment before God – powerful message went with it because people can get into a routine and do something over and over again and after a while that's all it is, a routine. That doesn't mean anything before you come before God. And a greater message is going out here – you need to be totally immersed; you need to be totally cleansed before you come into God's presence. There's more to the story! And so, incredible here. So it talks about **this beginning of stories that Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory; and His disciples believe in Him.**

**After this He went**, and more of the disciples, not only talking about the 12 when it mentions disciples. **And after this He went down to Capurnum, and He and His mother and His brothers, His disciples and they did stay there many days. Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand and Jesus went up to Jerusalem**, showing a time of season, mentions specifically here about the Jews. There are certain rituals and things they went through – they didn't do everything right, but it was a process they went through and Jesus Christ then went there and observed those days. **And He found in the temples**, it says, **those who sold oxen and sheep and doves and the moneychangers doing business**. In the temple of all things, and so Jesus Christ is showing a side of something that many people don't talk about or don't focus upon because some of this has to do with things even later that Jesus Christ is going to fulfill – the zeal for the Temple of God, the Church. See, it's about spiritual, not the physical, and something was being done as a 'type', as a fulfillment of something to show a power and a might that God has given in and through Jesus Christ of something that's going to be accomplished toward the end when He returns. The next time He comes He doesn't come as a lamb. The next time He comes is as a lion and He comes with power and when it talks about what He does – He takes charge of the earth in a very powerful way and it's about the Church and the establishment of God's Church over all the earth now.

One government, one Church – it's an awesome thing! Things that sometimes have a measure of a picture of fulfillment of that which teaches and leads to a future time and this is a part of that.

**And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves and moneychangers doing business and when He had made a whip of cords** – this wasn't a mild thing He went through in doing. He was with power and force, like a Lion, not as a lamb; it was very strong what He did – a man, a very strong man who went through there and drove them out, you know? Think that was a mild thing when He made a whip? Why do you think He made that? Just to try to threaten people? *"You better get out of here!!"* He was using it. He wasn't afraid to use it, **and He drove them out of the temple**, it says, **with force. He drove them out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen and poured out the changers money and overturned the tables.** It doesn't talk about them standing there and fighting him and trying to keep the change and the money and everything else. They got out, they saw someone who was stirred up, very powerfully so.

**Verse 16 – and He said to those who sold doves; Take these things away, do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise! Then His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for Your House has eaten Me up.** There's a lot of zeal that's getting ready to be exerted on this earth very soon now, very powerfully so, a far greater fulfillment of that prophecy. See, they saw a little bit each time. When certain things were recorded about Christ in the beginning of certain things; they were just at the beginning. Things about John – it was just the beginning, it was a small portion and it was to grow through time to greater fulfillment.

**Verse 18 – So the Jews answered and said to Him, What sign do you show us since you do these things?** In other words, You're doing these thing here, You're running the people out of here so...what are You going to show that You have that authority, You have that right? **And Jesus said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.** See, so sometimes things are said to give people opportunity. God gives that. He allows and gives those who want ample room to mock, to make fun of, to distort, to twist things because they're not being worked with, because they're not the ones being called and it shows a part of a process here that man must learn from and even those who engage in those things, in time, they will come to learn from those and so does everyone else through time. So we learn, we can see; we understand what man is like and that's a part of the story here as well.

**John 2:20 – then the Jews said, It's taken forty-six years to build this temple and You'll raise it up in three days?** That's a big hee-haw out of that. They didn't grasp, they didn't comprehend, you know? And things haven't changed to this day. God allows things to be done, things to be said and gives people that opportunity. It tries people. It reveals people. It reveals where the heart is and what people think.

**Verse 21 – But He was speaking of the temple of His body, therefore when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said to them...** see, they didn't know He was going to die as the Passover lamb. They didn't get it. They didn't comprehend. They had to learn from that after the occasion, after it happened – then God gave them the understanding of what things Jesus Christ had said before. Much of my learning through the Church and through things that God has given has been through a similar process of things we've gone through and then God has shown what took place, what happened, what was fulfilled. We learn from that so often. That's how God teaches and moulds and fashions us oftentimes. It says, **His disciples remembered that He had said unto them and they believed the scripture and the word which Jesus had said. Now when He was in Jerusalem at the**

**Passover, during the Feast, many believed in His name,** believed who He was, who it was said He was, what was being said and the things He was saying as well, not just Him but the message as well.

**John 3** because the story goes on here of things that were taking place and there were things that Jesus Christ just didn't give them the satisfaction of. There are things that had to be accomplished yet in the ministry of Christ. John is summarizing everything here and we come to a story now about some things that God is revealing, that Jesus Christ is revealing and it comes through the story of Nicodemus. It starts out with this story flow of something that took place as soon as He'd gone in the wilderness for a while, came back to the wedding, and then a ministry began and **chapter 3** here - **There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: and he came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God:** he acknowledged this – that those leaders said, "We know that you're a man, a teacher who has come from God," **for no man can do these miracles that You do, except God be with him.** So it's an incredible thing here to understand that there was this understanding that some had but they still refused. There are indications here that Nicodemus changed as time went along here toward the end, but the rest of them as a whole, they didn't because they wanted to hold onto their power and their religious righteousness. It's a crazy thing, the human mind, it truly is.

And so Jesus started to teach something new now. Incredible here; of part of the process here again following up with the story of John the Baptist, because all this is relating or giving information here about a process that was to take place and He begins to introduce him to this subject about being born, begotten, being born again. **Verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.** Now, we have used this loosely in the Church as well, we haven't acknowledged the full process here of what's taking place. In one respect we have and in another we haven't. He's talking about the ability to see something; it's seeing something spiritually. You cannot see the Kingdom of God. He's not talking about the complete fulfillment of it later on, but He's talking here even about the beginning part because He's talking to Nicodemus and telling him, "You cannot understand! You cannot understand what I'm telling you Nicodemus!" See? Because He introduces him to this concept about the holy spirit and He's telling Nicodemus, "You can't see this, you can't understand this, because this has to take place in a person's life." No one can *see spiritually*, the Kingdom of God, except he be born again. **Nicodemus said unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? He took this fully physically as people do when they hear things like this and he says, can he enter into the second time,** and he's a teacher, a notable individual in that respect as far as education, as far as being one of the Pharisees and he said, **can a person enter into a second time in his mother's womb, and be born?** "I mean, this is insane in thinking! How can a person be born twice?" **And Jesus said unto him, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.** It's a process of life physically and it's a process of life spiritually. That which is physical comes from human beings who are born from, if you will, out of water in life, and there is that which is born in life from conception that will be born of spirit. The process begins for us at begettal. We start a form of life in begettal. We begin to *see* the Kingdom of God, we begin to understand things on a *spiritual plane* when God gives us His spirit and His spirit dwells within us. We begin to see things that we otherwise could not see. That's why *you* can talk to people who are not a part of the Church, who are not baptized and had the laying on of hands – and they *can't* see what you see, but the things of the Kingdom of God – that's why you're able to speak with inspired interpretation, that word for prophecy, prophet and so forth in the New Testament. Over and over again, we're able to do that amongst ourselves because we understand the truth; we have that knowledge within us. And so the process begins at begettal. You receive the impregnation. And so Jesus Christ is following up the story of baptisms here and leading into something



else that must take place and this is the process He's explaining here and it starts with the story of Nicodemus and He's saying a person must be born of water and of the spirit. And we, a part of our process spiritually is to go down under water, to come back up to walk in newness of life and the next phase of that is having *hands laid upon you* so that you can receive the impregnation then of God's spirit. And so it's a matter of a confession, an acknowledgement and a *baptism* of repentance – what you go through when you're put down under the watery grave. You're repenting, you're desiring to be forgiven of your sin, you bury your sins and at that moment in time then, because of the symbolism of everything that God has given to us and a covenant you enter into – God forgives you of sin. Then and only then can you be impregnated with the holy spirit because it's through Jesus Christ you're forgiven of your sin – through your Passover, otherwise God would not dwell in you. You can't be *begotten* unless there's a means to be forgiven of sin and that's the awesomeness then of the picture of repentance and baptism and the forgiveness of sin through – as John said – the One who takes away the sins of the world, the sins of mankind. It's through Christ and so a greater teaching about this baptism into repentance and what it signifies, and what it pictures, and what it means for the Church.

And so He's telling Nicodemus something here: He says, **except a man be born of water and of spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.** This is what leads in time into us literally entering into it. We enter into it in part, we are the Kingdom of God in embryo as Mr. Armstrong said; it's a beginning of the process, but we're not yet *born* into it, we're only begotten at this point in time. And it goes on to say, **that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.** We use this a little bit improperly to make fun of people who talked about being 'born again' in the world. We understand that teaching is wrong and their concept is wrong and what their interpretation is of being born again. We understand that, but the literal reality is you are *begotten of God's spirit* and that leads you to finally being *born into* the Family of God when you are given a spirit body, when you're literally born into it at the resurrection, whenever that comes. Some are just going to be changed quickly, but it's a process of being born. So you're not in that Kingdom until you're of spirit, or composed of spirit. **That which is born of the spirit is spirit; that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.** We are begotten of the spirit, we're... the word 'born' is fine. We're begotten of the spirit, we're not yet spirit, but we have spirit in our life, in our mind; that's where the process begins and He's making a distinction here then that **which is of the flesh is flesh** as far as human life is concerned, **and that which is of the spirit is spirit** – spiritual in every way. We're not yet of the spirit family yet, we're not yet composed of spirit. That will follow when you're finally fully born into God's Kingdom.

**Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again.** And He goes on to clarify it then. Don't marvel that you have to be born again. **The wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but you can't tell where it comes from and where it goes: so is every one who is born of the Spirit.** You can't see it! It's there, it's in you, it's in your life – that's what gives you the ability to see the Kingdom of God, to see the truth, to know the truth. And this is the process then of what Nicodemus is being told.

**Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? And Jesus answered and said unto him, Are you a master of Israel, and you don't know these things?** Mocked a little bit where they stood and what they believed. **Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak that we know, and testify that we have seen; and you don't receive our witness. If I had told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you heavenly?** In other words, we use the term 'spiritual things'. How can you understand? Basically He's letting Nicodemus know – you don't have the spirit, you haven't been begotten... **no man has ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the**

**Son of man which is in heaven.** Again, showing His origin. He came from heaven, fully so, not because He pre-existed, but because God the Father is in heaven, from heaven and fully what came into the life of Christ. He is the Father and fully that full portion of life was given in Jesus Christ – the source is from heaven, but a separate being now.

**Verse 14 - And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness**, beautiful picture...what an incredible thing. Over 700 years later after this thing was lifted up in the wilderness, this pole with a snake around it, the Israelites were still using it as a form of something to be looked upon to be worshiped as a matter of healing, as a symbol of healing and a king had to have it destroyed – ground up and thrown in the water. But that symbol is still with us to this day. It's the symbolism here...**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:** Just as much as those who were bitten by snakes had to come and look upon that pole when they were leaving Egypt, in order to be healed of the snake bites only at that period of time only, it says, the same symbolism here is true, that the **Son of man has to be lifted up;** that we look to Him. He's our saviour. Now, people have taken this in the Protestant world too far, you know, they use it as a symbol on a cross and a person, supposedly Christ on the cross and that they have to have this as an image of worship and so forth. That's not what God wants at all in any fashion or form.

**That whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** And then, it goes on to talk about **God loving the world, that He gave His only begotten Son**, and showing that He had to die; that the Son of God had to die, that He had to die for the sins of all the world, all mankind.

**Verse 22 - After these things Jesus and His disciples went into the land of Judaea; and there He stayed with them, and baptized.** Amazing! The beginning of the ministry of Jesus Christ and they continued to baptize; the disciples baptized for Christ – He didn't do any baptizing. But there was no laying on of hands, there was no receiving of the holy spirit – that hadn't happened yet. It was a baptism unto repentance. Incredible!

**And John**, speaking of the Baptist, **also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized. For John was not yet come into prison.** It wasn't until Christ went up to Galilee – that was the timing then for John to be put into prison. But at this time, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ's disciples were baptizing at the same time! A baptism unto repentance and we have to understand why and what was taking place here. And it goes on to say, **for John was not yet cast into prison.** It says, **Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and of the Jews about purifying.** It's exciting because next Sabbath we get into the reasons why some of this is being discussed here and why it continued on with a baptism... that Jesus Christ's disciples continued to do throughout Christ's ministry. It didn't stop. Just because John went into prison, they continued the process of baptizing people. It's an awesome story and we'll pick that up next Sabbath.

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