

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **A Voice Crying in the Wilderness, Part 2**

Scripture: Luke 3:4-6

Code: 42-40

We have the privilege of coming at this time to the study of God's Word which, of course, is really a high point in our worship, as we hear from God who speaks to us in the Scripture. Open your Bible to Luke chapter 3. Now we're looking at the opening six verses of Luke chapter 3, but we're not going to get there for a while, so just open it and wait patiently.

We are looking at Luke 3 which introduces to us the ministry of the last prophet of the Old Testament age, John, who is not only the last prophet of the Old Testament age but is the forerunner, the herald, the prophet who announces the arrival of Messiah. His task was to point to Jesus Christ and identify Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, the Messiah, and Savior. He also had the responsibility not only to identify the Messiah, but to prepare the people for Messiah's arrival and kingdom.

Now this is part of the great foundation for the work of Jesus Christ Luke lays in the first chapter of this gospel. We now have come to, as you know, a monumental point in this gospel because as we come in to chapter 3 the ministry of John launches the ministry of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. John announces it's time to get ready, the Messiah has come. This is a great moment, the greatest of moments yet in all of human history.

As we approach this third chapter, let me establish some things in your thinking. Imagine a world where righteousness and goodness dominated. Imagine a world where there is no injustice. Imagine a world where everyone is treated fairly. Imagine a world where no court ever renders an unjust verdict, or an undeserved sentence. Imagine a world where what is true and what is good and what is right and what is noble marks society, commerce, education, and everything else. Imagine a world where there is pervasive total lasting peace, where there's the absolute absence of war and conflict. Imagine a world where joy abounds, where health is widespread, where people live for hundreds of years.

Imagine a world where a lion and a lamb lie down together. Imagine a world where children can play in snake pits because snakes are no longer poisonous. Imagine a world where a bear and a cow can walk together led by a child. Imagine a world where food is profuse. Imagine a world where well-being is common.

And imagine a world ruled by one perfect person who knows everything there is to know in the universe, natural and supernatural, observable and non-observable. Imagine a world ruled by one perfect omnipotent, omniscient God in human form who is mediating that rule through glorified perfected people who are His agents and they carry out His will and His purpose everywhere. Imagine a world where all sin, all iniquity and all transgression is dealt with instantly and firmly.

And if you can imagine such a world, you are not imagining an imaginary world. You are thinking about the earthly kingdom of Jesus Christ. Everything I just said is promised in the scriptures. In fact, all that I have said to you is taken from the Old Testament where God promised that some day Messiah would come and establish His Kingdom. His throne would be in Jerusalem. He would reign from the nation Israel over the entire world. This is how history ends. It began with amazing precision as God created the entire universe in six 24-hour days. God knew exactly what He was doing when He set the whole thing into motion. God also upholds and sustains and works out His perfect plan as history unfolds minute by minute. And the ending of the story has already been written with just the same amount of precision that the beginning had and the middle. History is not meandering at a random pace trying to find its way to some meaningful conclusion, nor are we left to figure out how to end it all or how to, better yet, perpetuate it all. The whole story has been prewritten and human history will end when Jesus Christ comes to Earth to establish His Kingdom over the entire world.

The character of that Kingdom is described again and again and again throughout the Old Testament, as well as certain New Testament passages. And it is a great grief, it is not small grief to me, but a great one, that there are so many people, even theologians, who do not understand this or are not willing to accept the clear teaching of Scripture on this. We are looking for the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of His earthly Kingdom, that is what Scripture promises.

And to show you just briefly, obviously we don't have time to cover all the passages, there are so many of them, but we can go back and look at a few to show you in a brief way sort of an overview of this promise from God. Back in 2 Samuel, for example, in chapter 7 God speaks and He speaks to David and He says to David the king through the prophet Nathan, verse 12, 2 Samuel 7, "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you who will come forth from you and I will establish His Kingdom. He shall build a house for My name and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom forever."

God promises to David that out of his loins would come the Messiah who would build a Kingdom way beyond David's kingdom, way beyond Solomon's kingdom, way beyond anybody's kingdom and it would be a kingdom that would be established forever. That is the great promise of Messiah's Kingdom, an eternal Kingdom.

In Psalm chapter 2 you remember this Psalm, it says that God, in verse 6, has installed His King on His holy mountain, meaning Mount Zion in Jerusalem. God has installed His King and He says to His King, "You are My Son," in verse 7. So God will install His Son as King. And He says in verse 8, "Ask of Me and I will surely give the nations as your inheritance, the very ends of the earth as your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall shatter them like earthenware." In other words, this is a sovereign rule of God's Son who is set on God's throne in Jerusalem. This is another indication of messianic promise, messianic fulfillment.

In Isaiah chapter 2 we find a reference as well to the coming Kingdom. Verse 2, "It will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains." The mountain on which the house of the Lord or the temple exists, of course, is in Jerusalem, and that will become the chief of all mountains, it will be raised above the hills, as metaphoric, all the nations will stream to it. It will literally become the center of the earth. "Many people will come and say...verse 3...'Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob that He may teach us concerning His way that we may walk in His paths, for the law, the law of God will go forth from Zion and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem and He will judge between the nations, will render decisions for many peoples.'" And there's a familiar statement after that, "They will hammer their swords into plow shares, their spears into pruning hooks, nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war."

God will establish His King in Israel on Mount Zion where the house of the Lord is, the temple, there He will rule and there He will establish a peace that pervades permanently across the face of the earth. Were you to go further in Isaiah you would read again and again very similar promises to this about the coming Kingdom. In chapter 35 of Isaiah, "At that time the desert will blossom, it will rejoice with a shout of joy," and it goes on to describe some of the physiology. And it says, "They will all see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God." There is going to be a dramatic change in the planet, we'll say more about that in a moment, when the Lord establishes His Kingdom, the Kingdom of His Son, the Messiah.

In Jeremiah chapter 33, "Days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days at that time I will cause a righteous branch of David," that is an offshoot of David, the Messiah, "who is the line of David, out of the loins of David," that's why the genealogy of Luke, which we'll see later, and the genealogy of Matthew take the line of Jesus all the way back to King David. "Out of David's loins will come the Messiah, He will execute justice and righteousness on the earth. In those days Judah shall be saved, Jerusalem shall dwell in safety and this is the name by which she shall be called," that is Jerusalem, "the Lord is our righteousness...the Lord is our righteousness." It will be a time when all of Israel embraces the Lord as their righteousness and His Kingdom is established.

In Ezekiel, that great prophecy in a number of places, the same Kingdom is referred to. Particularly one I can show you, chapter 34, a brief look at verses 23 and 24, "I will set over them one Shepherd, My servant, David," that's the one out of David's loins, the Messiah, "He will be the one Shepherd and He will feed them, He will feed them Himself and be their Shepherd and I the Lord will be their God and My servant David will be prince among them. I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will make a covenant of peace with them." That's the New Covenant. God says in the day when I...when I save them by virtue of the New Covenant, which, as you remember, is the covenant of forgiveness, I will establish My King and He will reign and rule and shepherd My people and I the Lord will be their God. What we're talking about here is the salvation of Israel and the establishment of their promised Kingdom.

In Daniel, also the great prophecy of Daniel, chapter 2 verse 44, "In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom which will never be destroyed and that Kingdom will not be left for another people, it will crush and put an end to all kingdoms, but it will endure forever."

History ends with the establishment of an eternal Kingdom in which God rules through the Messiah who, in the next verse, is called "A stone cut out without hands." That's a reference to His virgin birth, and He crushes all other empires, according to verse 45, and establishes His eternal Kingdom by the same promise in other prophets, Hosea chapter 3, Joel chapter 3 and many other places.

Where is history going? History is moving toward this great climactic end, when the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised King, the Son of God comes to earth to establish His Kingdom and to bring back paradise that was lost in the Fall. History does not end in a confusion, it does not end in a puff of smoke. It does not end sort of wandering and meandering into oblivion. It does not end in a holocaust generated by man. It doesn't end any other way than the way God says it will end, and that is when the King Himself comes and establishes His glorious Kingdom on the earth and according to Revelation 20, it will last for a thousand years. And when it is over, the universe as we know it will disintegrate, it will be uncreated and God will instantaneously create in its place the new heaven and the new earth which will last forever. This is the flow of human history.

I happened to be reading yesterday quite extensively in the last edition I saw of Time Magazine which identified Albert Einstein as the man of the century for the immensity of his accomplishments and his unparalleled influence, his influence, of course, in terms of the theory of general relativity. His influence on the idea of relativity was basically to say that what you see is not the way things really are. Up to that point in time people basically defined things the way they saw them. Einstein proved that behind what you see is an atomic world, a world of subatomic particles that you do not see, that is the real world and that real world of subatomic particles with all kinds of names, do all kinds of strange things that are inexplicable. That's the reality. And it's random, he said. What you see is not the real world. The real world is not an absolute world that you can see and touch and feel. The real world is a relative world that you can't see, you can't touch, you can feel--you can't feel that functions

on a random level. And he basically identified randomness as the essential nature of the universe. And that set loose randomness not only in the scientific world in the understanding of randomness, but also in the moral and ethical and psychological and philosophical world. And out of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity rather than absolute came modern art, modern music, modern philosophy and all other relative things that attack absolutes in an immense impact.

I understood that part. The part about reading about his mathematical and scientific theories really left me reeling. I cannot...I can't understand that, I admit, and I read a lot of it, I read hours of it yesterday trying to get some kind of a grasp on it. But what did strike me when I got to the end of it was the fact that he died, here's the man of the century, he died never having discovered what he wanted to discover and nobody else has discovered it either and the article ended by saying, "We hope in the twenty-first century that we'll discover it." And it is that when you've gotten all the way down and you've gotten to the atom and you've gotten to the nucleus and you've gotten to the protons and you've gotten to the neutrons and you've gone inside the protons and inside the neutrons and inside the electrons and you're trying to find out what they're made out of, what they're made out of, the theory now, is a bunch of little weird squirrely strings that go in different directions that have something to do with the curvature of the universe, it has something to do with the time/space continuum that Einstein wrote about. When you get all the way down in there the problem is you can't find the force that holds it all together.

And Einstein's conclusion was it was random but he couldn't identify what the force was. He got into quantum physics and in quantum physics, quantum is an interesting word, you've heard of quantum leap, quantum physics says that something at this point goes out of existence and this happens all the time in all atoms, something goes out of existence at this point, comes into existence at this point simultaneously and never traverses the space in between. How can that happen? How can something go out of existence here, come into existence here simultaneously and never traverse the space in between? Einstein died never being able to discover the force that holds it all together. And so, the article closes by saying, "We're hoping in the twenty-first century, or in the next millennium, somebody will discover it." And I wanted immediately to stand up and say..."I'm your guy." I can go where Einstein has never been, and that's to Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God..." and I can go to Hebrews 1 where it says, "He upholds all things by the word of His power." And you can muck around in your petri dish until you're blue in the face and...(clapping)...and you are not going to find God in there. That's the supernatural element. And I was greatly comforted. I may be ignorant of all the little squiggly things but I know what they don't know.

Listen, this is not a random universe in any sense. Nothing in it is random. It is upheld by the word of His power. They will never be able to discover what it is that is the force that holds it all together because the force that holds it all together is Almighty invisible God, not subject to any scientific experiment. And God who holds everything together by the word of His power has a plan for history and history is unfolding exactly the way God has designed it to unfold, and He couldn't have been

more clear, He repeatedly again and again and again and again says that in the end paradise will be regained. This world is not going to go up in a puff of amillennial smoke. When you get to the very end of this thing, it is going to unfold step by step exactly the way the prophet said it would unfold and that incorporates a final Kingdom in which Messiah reigns on the earth over the earth.

Now I could spend a lot of time, I could spend weeks talking about the Kingdom, we'll intersect with this as we go through the gospels. And let me just give you sort of a quick overview of what this Kingdom is like. First of all, you can look at it politically or socially, let's take it first at that perspective and we'll take three perspectives.

You can look at the promised Kingdom politically or socially. And when you study the Old Testament, the prophets, the Psalms, the writings, you can find the Kingdom in all of those places, as I just showed you from Psalms and Samuel as well as the prophets, you look for the political characteristics of this Kingdom, three things jump out at you. One, it is Christ's universal rule. There aren't any other kings, there aren't any other national entities. There isn't going to be a League of Nations. There isn't going to be any kind of...any kind of United Nations. There isn't going to be any kind of conglomerated Europe. There isn't going to be any amalgam of leaders. There aren't going to be any kings. There aren't going to be any potentates. There aren't going to be any rulers in the world because Christ will universally rule the world and literally cover the entire globe with His rule. All other kings will be made subject to Him, that is the testimony of Psalm 2, the testimony of Daniel 2, the testimony of Daniel 7, the testimony of Revelation 19:16 which says Christ will come as King of kings and Lord of lords. It will be universal rule. There will be a dictatorship over the entire face of the earth and all the people of the earth and that dictator will be the perfect one, the God who became man in the form of Jesus Christ, risen, exalted, glorified and returned to establish His Kingdom.

Secondly, it is not only a universal Kingdom, it is an absolute Kingdom. It is an absolute Kingdom. It will be, I like this, it will be a Kingdom without a senate. It will be a Kingdom without a congress. It will be a Kingdom without any representatives. It will be a Kingdom...it will not be a democracy, it will not be a democracy, I say that again, it will not be a republic, there won't be discussions, there won't be committees. Everything will be perfect disseminated from an absolutely perfect monarch who knows everything there is to know, observable and non-observable. And He will pass down His rule through glorified and perfected saints who come back to reign with Him, as well as through the nation Israel to the world. It will be absolute in its nature. Psalm 72, Isaiah 11, many, many passages talk about the absolute nature. He will break literally all other rulers, as Psalm 2 indicates. He will use His rod of iron to wash all other entities that would in any way compete for that absolute rule.

Thirdly, it will be a righteous rule. Universal rule, absolute rule, and righteous rule, He is a King of righteousness. Israel will say, "The Lord is our righteousness," and He will rule with righteousness because He is righteous. Everything He does...all that means is everything He does will be absolutely right, absolutely right. He will make every decision absolutely right. In Isaiah 11:4,

"Righteousness will be the belt about His loins." Every thing He does will be wrapped in righteousness.

Secondly, you can look at the Kingdom not only politically and socially, but you can look at the Kingdom physically and even I guess you could say geologically to some degree. But you can look at it physically and perhaps geologically, topographically and from the standpoint of human life and what do you find? You find several characteristics. Number one, the curse is lifted...the curse is lifted. And I mentioned that...lion lies down with the lamb...because animals are no longer enemies of one another. The animal kingdom is dramatically altered, it goes back to being the way it was in Eden. A bear and a cow munching grass together in a field, being led by a child. Snakes no longer poisonous. Isaiah 11, Isaiah 30, Isaiah 35, first part of the chapter in the latter, down in verse 7 or so, the lifting of the curse.

The whole of life on a physical level is going to change. Joel chapter 2 verses 21 to 27 says there will be abundant provision for everyone. There will be a flourishing of growth. Things will begin to grow like they did once in the Garden of Eden. The desert, first of all, is going...the desert, on the backside of Jerusalem, the whole of Jerusalem, as I'll mention in a moment, is going to split. God is going to send a river flowing into that desert and it's going turn it into the Garden of Eden again, the world is going to change dramatically. And that may not only happen in Jerusalem, but other places in the world as God renovates the earth and it begins to produce in ways that were perhaps will approximate the way it was even before the Fall in Eden. There will be abundant provision everywhere on the face of the earth.

And thirdly, there will be health. People will live hundreds and hundreds of years. The prophet said, "If somebody dies at a hundred years, they die as a baby." Isaiah 29:18, Isaiah 33:24, again Isaiah 35, Isaiah 65, Isaiah chapter 30, I think it's around verse 19 and 20 talks about a high birth rate, even people will be...will flourish. They will be healthy and they will live long lives. And imagine if you live for hundreds of years how many babies you can have. And if you die at a hundred you die like a baby. So it will be again like a pre-flood condition, it will be like it was when the curse of sin hadn't so dramatically affected life. We'll live long lives and it will be productive. That's why you can have a few people going into the Kingdom, just a few believers will survive and go into the Kingdom, but they'll populate in a thousand years, they'll populate in an incredibly explosive and exponential way. Health will abound everywhere.

And as I mentioned, Israel will be altered. The topography of Israel will be dramatically altered. Jerusalem will be exalted. So there's going to be some really dramatic physical changes in the world, as well as some political changes that will be dramatic.

Thirdly, spiritually, you can look at the world of the Kingdom of Messiah politically, you can look at it physically, but most importantly you can look at it spiritually. What's going to happen spiritually?

Well let's go to Zechariah chapter 12, next to the last prophet of the Old Testament. Zechariah, because Zechariah...a lot of...you could go a lot of places to answer the question, but Zechariah kind of pulls it all together in a wonderful way. And what Zechariah tells us, it just give us a picture of the way it's going to come together at the end and the Kingdom.

Let's start in chapter 12 and we'll kind of go through this quickly here. This is the word of the Lord concerning Israel, it comes to the prophet, Zechariah. Verse 1, "Thus declares the Lord, He stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him." See, again you go back to this point, folks, if God isn't the God of creation, then He's not the God of history. I'm trying to get people to understand this. You can't come to me and convince me that if we're here as a result of random evolution, if it's random evolution that has made the world the way it is, then how am I supposed to believe that history is under the absolute sovereign control of God. If God can't control the physical part of life, then how am I to assume He can control the spiritual part? If there's anything random in this universe, then everything is random. The fact of the matter is, you will find as God here is given the responsibility and the authorship of the end of human history, He is identified as the creator of human life. It is the Creator who is the sustainer. It is the Creator...it is the one who designed and made the universe who is designing and making its course of history. So it is God who stretches out the heavens. It is God who lays the foundation of the earth and on the earth creates man. It is that God who is going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around. And when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah. Judah and Jerusalem are simply describing Israel back in its land, what's going to happen in the end, He says, God's going to gather all the nations of the world against Jerusalem.

That's where human history is going, folks. The focal point of human history isn't going to be Europe, it's not going to be the United States, the focal point of world history is going to be the Middle East, namely it's going to be the land of Israel, namely it's going to be the southern part of the land of Israel, it's going to be the city of Jerusalem. That's where history is going. And at the very end, all the nations of the world, according to the prophets of the Bible, and according to the book of Revelation, are all going to gather to the land of Israel and they're going to come against Israel to try to destroy the Jewish people.

That is...that is not some kind of human political ploy. That is a satanic ploy because Satan ever and always wants to thwart the purposes of God, right? He tried to destroy the people of Israel by intermarriage after they came back from the captivity. He tried to destroy the Messianic line and it got down to just one person in the times of Athaliah. He tried to destroy the Messiah when He was born, when he had all of the babies around Bethlehem slaughtered under two years of age. He tried to destroy the messianic purposes of Jesus by taking up into a high mountain and tempting Him and then He would have yielded Himself to Satan and He would have violated the purposes and the plan of God. He would have been disobedient and He would have been disqualified. He tries every way



he can. He tried genocide against the Jews with Joseph Stalin. He tried genocide against the Jews with Adolph Hitler. And eventually at the end of the world there will be another massive attempt at genocide to wipe out the people of Israel so that God can't finish His plan, save the people of Israel and give them the promised messianic Kingdom.

And you have this here. God allowed that to happen. He allows that siege against Jerusalem to be the culmination of the man's day, the culmination of human history because that becomes then the purging point that leads to Israel's final salvation. He's going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the people.

What does that mean? It's graphic language. Jerusalem looks so inviting, they come to attack and to plunder and the nations are sort of seen as drinking with the plundering kind of passion. But as they drink they become drunk and as they become drunk then they become easy prey for God to destroy, all the nations coming, as it were, getting drunk, as it were on the blood of the Jews. As we'll see later, they're going to destroy two thirds of those people and apparently those two thirds are rebels that God uses the Gentile nations to purge out.

It says, "In that day...verse 3...I'll make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples." You know, you lift up something that's too heavy, it can't be carried and it can injure you, and that's exactly the picture here. These nations are going to try to lift Jerusalem and they're going to find themselves severely injured in the effort. And all the nations of the earth, at the end of verse 3, are going to be gathered against it, describing as they come to drink...that's one metaphor, as they come to lift and destroy Jerusalem...in that day, verse 4, I'll strike every horse with bewilderment, the rider with madness. I'll watch over the house of Judah when I strike every horse of the people with blindness." I'm going to protect the people of Israel, My covenant people because My plan is still in place and I'm going to destroy those who come against them.

"In that day...He says in verse 6...I'm going to make the clans of Judah like a fire pot among pieces of wood, a flaming torch among sheaves." In other words, they're just going to ignite this thing in a great conflagration. "They'll consume on the right hand, they'll consume on the left all the surrounding peoples." In other words, God is going to step into that situation and He's just going to wipe out those armies. The book of Revelation calls this the battle of...what?...of Armageddon. This is the battle that's going to go from the Plain of Megiddo all the way south to Jerusalem. It's going to cover that entire area and the blood is going to be splattered up to the horses' bridles over a length of hundreds of miles as God destroys the enemies of His people.

Verse 7, "The Lord will save the tents of Judah first and then He will bring glory to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as well." Verse 8, "In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The Lord's going to protect them. And even the one who is feeble among them in that day will be as strong as David," and we all know how strong David was, he knocked off the biggest man who ever

lived, Goliath. "And the house of David is going to be strong like God, strong like the angel of the Lord before them. It will come about in that day that I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."

That's what's going to happen and here's how history ends. Eventually it focuses more and more and more on Israel. Israel feels the pressure of the world coming against it, so Israel decides they need help. As that scene unfolds toward the end of human history, they make a pact with a great world leader who is to be their protector, Daniel 9 talks about this. They sign a covenant with a great world leader. Well, that world leader turns out to be the Antichrist and it isn't long into that pact that the Antichrist turns against them and it is the Antichrist who leads the coalition of world forces against Jerusalem. Why? Because he wants to wipe out Jerusalem. He wants to wipe out any vestiges of the worship of the true and living God in order that he alone may be God. And so he has captured the minds of the world. He is the ultimate Hitler of all Hitlers. He has convinced the entire world to come in an act of genocide against Israel to wipe out the rival to his own deity and his own sovereignty. So he brings all these nations together and it's at that point that the Lord comes at the battle of Armageddon when they're coming against the people of God, against Israel, against the nation Israel that Jesus Christ appears. God protects His people, Christ comes and destroys the nations. You can read the whole thing in Revelation chapter 19.

But look at verse 10, here is where we want to go. You have in verses 1 to 9 God's protection of Israel in the end of human history. Then in verse 10, "And I will pour out on the house of David, on the inhabitants of Jerusalem," again these are titles for the people of Israel, the Jewish people, "I'll pour out on them the Spirit of grace and of supplication." What's going to happen is, I'm going to pour out grace on them and I'm going to convict them and out of that conviction they're going to turn to Me and they're going to supplicate, they're going to pray, and they're going to look on Me whom they have pierced. And that can only describe one thing, who was pierced? Jesus was pierced in both feet, both hands and in His side by a spear. They're going to look on Me, God, who was pierced. There's a good indication of the deity of Jesus. And they're going to mourn for Him. There the Father separates Himself from the Son, He includes Himself as one with the Son in the pronoun "Me" and then separates Himself in the pronoun "Him." They're going to mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son, weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

You know what happens? God protects Israel from the onslaught of Antichrist's armies at this great conflagration at the end of human history. In the middle of that protection comes conviction and they begin to examine their situation and they look back in history and realize they executed their Messiah. God is going to literally convict them and they're going to mourn and they're going to weep and repentance over what they have done.

Verse 11, there's going to be great mourning and he goes on to talk about that. Every family is going to mourn, verse 12. And he goes on to list various sort of representative families. In verse 14, all the

families that remain, every single family by itself and all their wives by themselves...you've got all the nation Israel mourning. What are they mourning over? They're mourning that they killed their deliverer, they killed their Messiah and that's why things have gotten so bad. That's why it's so terrible. When the Messiah came the first time they should have accepted Him. When He came the first time they should have embraced Him and they would have had their Kingdom and all this history never would have taken place. Now look at it, they've got through holocaust after holocaust and here's the holocaust of holocausts, as the entire world is coming against them.

And so there comes protection at the end and then there comes conviction. And then chapter 13, there comes salvation, "In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David, for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for impurity." That is the greatest, that is God saying, "In that day I'm going to save Israel, I'm going to bring them to salvation, I'm going to bring them through repentance to forgiveness of sins. And then they can have their Kingdom."

Go down from there to verse 9. Well, we ought to look at verse 8, "It will come about in all the land, declares the Lord, that two parts in it will be cut off and perish, but the third will be left." Of all the Jews alive when this happens, of all the Jews alive when this happens, two thirds are going to perish, two thirds are rebellious, two thirds are unbelieving, two thirds resist the work of God and they will be destroyed by the gathering powers of Antichrist. But one third will be left. "And I'll bring the third part...verse 9...through the fire and I'll refine them as fire is refined and I'll test them as gold is tested and they will call on My name and I will answer them and I will say, 'These are My people.' And they will say, 'The Lord is my God.'" There's the salvation of Israel.

It's absolutely unequivocal. This is as clear as clear can be. This is referring to Jewish people. They're repeatedly called Judah, Jerusalem, Israel, sons of David. They're even identified as those associated with Nathan and Levi and the Shimeites back in the end of chapter 12. These are Jewish people in the end protected by God.

First comes protection, then comes conviction, then comes salvation and then you come in to chapter 14 and you get further insights. "A day is coming for the Lord which the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half the city exiled, the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city." So this again describes the purging out of peoples. "But the Lord...verse 3...will go forth and fight against those nations as when He fights in a day of battle." After they've done what He wants them to do in purging out the rebels, then the Lord comes to fight.

And how does He do it? Verse 4, great one, one of the great verses in the Old Testament, "In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives." He's going to come right out of heaven in glory, Revelation 19 describes Him as having a blood-splattered garment, coming out riding on a white horse, that's metaphoric for power and strength. And behind Him are all the saints in their white

robes and they all come pouring out of heaven as He comes down to earth. His feet land on the Mount of Olives and when He hits the Mount of Olives the Mount of Olives is going to split. It's going to split in the middle from east to west by a very large valley. The half of the mountain will move toward the north, and half toward the south. Literally, from the Mediterranean Sea toward the desert behind Jerusalem the whole valley splits, the whole mountain, I should say, into a massive valley. And all the people of Israel are protected by fleeing down in this valley. And the Lord will come, in the end of verse 5, "My God will come and all the holy ones with Him."

And when that happens, He says in verse 6, there will be no light. The luminaries will dwindle. That's exactly what the book of Revelation says. The sun goes out, the moon doesn't give its light. The stars of heaven fall. The whole universe goes black and you can't see anything but the blazing glory of the Son of God coming to judge. It's a unique day...verse 7...which is known to the Lord, it's not day and it's not night, that's because all the heavenly bodies are put out, "It will come about that at evening time there will be light, it will come about that in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea, the other half toward the western sea, it will be summer as well as...it will be in summer as well as winter." Verse 9, I love this, "And the Lord will be King over all the earth."

In that day the Lord will be the only one and His name the only one. Listen, there won't be any other king, there won't be any other monarch...are you ready for this? There won't be any other religion...none. And the land will change, verse 10 says. And the rough, rough mountainous land will be changed into a plain. Jerusalem will rise. In verse 11 it says, "And the people will live in it, there will be no more curse. Jerusalem will dwell in safety." That's how human history ends, folks.

Now let's go back to Luke. Now you needed to know that, didn't you? Here comes John and what's his message, folks? "Messiah's coming, repent, make sure your sins are forgiven so you're ready when Messiah comes so we can receive His Kingdom." That's John's message. They had been waiting so long for this. They had been oppressed by the Babylonians, they had been oppressed by the Medo-Persians. They had been oppressed even by the nations around them after they came back from their captivity. They had been oppressed by the Greeks. They were currently being oppressed by the Romans. Their land was desecrated by Gentile occupation. They desperately wanted the Messiah to come. They had waited for centuries for the Messiah to come. Jeremiah the prophet said, Jeremiah 23:5, "Behold the days are coming, I will raise up for David a righteous branch...that's the Messiah...He will reign as King and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely and this is His name by which He will be called, the Lord our righteousness. Behold the days are coming. And when that day comes nobody is going to say anymore, 'Oh the Lord is the one who delivered us from Egypt,' they're going to say, 'The Lord is the one who brought us from all the nations of the earth back to the land for the Kingdom.'"

They waited for that. Believe me, they longed for the time when the righteous branch out of David, the Messiah, the Son of God would come and establish His Kingdom. In Jeremiah 30 the Lord says, "Your wound is incurable, your injury is serious, there's no one to plead your cause, there's no healing for your sore, there's no recovery for you. All your lovers have forgotten you. They don't seek you. I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the punishment of a cruel one because your iniquity is great and your sins are numerous." God says you're in deep trouble. You're wounded, you're pained, you're in disease. "But...verse 17...I will restore you to health, I will heal you of your wound." God says...I have a plan to save you. "I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob. I will have compassion on his dwelling places. The city shall be rebuilt. The palace, I'll stand on its rightful place," and so forth. "I will punish oppressors." Then in verse 22, "You will be My people and I'll be your God."

Micah chapter 4 said the same thing. Isaiah 61, Isaiah 62, so many times the promise, the promise of the Kingdom, the Kingdom. And summing it up, there will be a Kingdom for Israel. The Messiah will reign on the throne in Jerusalem and He'll reign over the entire world. Truth will dominate the earth. Righteousness will flourish everywhere. Peace will pervade. Joy will abound and Holy Spirit power will flow everywhere.

All of this was waiting for the Jewish people and the world when Messiah came. John comes and when did John come? Look at Luke 3, it was in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene. It was in the days of those Gentile rulers. And it was also in the days of the priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas that the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness where he had been since he was a boy. And John, having been called by God to begin his ministry of announcing Jesus who would come six months after him, came into all the district around the Jordan, preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Why? Because if you're going to come to the Messiah, if you're going to embrace the Messiah, have the Messiah embrace you, if you're going to receive the Kingdom you're going to have to have forgiveness of sin. And if you want forgiveness of sin you have to repent. And so, John fulfilled, verse 4 says, what was written in the book of the word of Isaiah the prophet. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." That was John's job.

Now as we've been looking at Luke 3 we've been looking at these six verses now for I don't know how many weeks. We've seen the historical background, or the historical setting of the beginning of John's ministry and the ministry of Christ. We've seen the geographical background and setting. We've seen the theological background and setting. Now in verses 4 to 6 we're looking at the

prophetic. This fits in a certain place in history, geography and theology and it fits in a certain place in prophecy. And what you have in verses 4, 5 and 6 is quoted from Isaiah 40, and we went into that in some detail last week and won't go through all of that. But Isaiah 40 is the prophecy that is quoted here. And the prophet Isaiah in chapter 40 began by saying, "Comfort My people, O comfort My people, tell My people..."

If you ever talk to Israel, give them comfort, will you? Tell them...tell them their sins have been paid for. Tell them their warfare is over. Tell them there is forgiveness from God. Tell them it's all available. Tell them that. If you ever speak to Jews, tell them that...tell them that.

Why? Because the Lord is coming...the Lord is coming. Salvation can't come from man. If we're ever to be delivered from sin, if there's ever to be comfort for anybody, any sinner, the Lord has to bring it, so you tell them, the Lord is coming, Isaiah said, the Lord is coming. But tell them this before He comes, there will be a voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." Before the Lord comes they'll come a prophet pointing to Him and that's John. John's the fulfillment of Isaiah 40.

And what did John say? He came along and preached forgiveness of sin, according to verse 3. He said there's forgiveness, there's forgiveness, your sins can be forgiven, your sins have been paid for, your warfare is over. I'm telling you there is forgiveness. But if you want that forgiveness it calls for repentance, it calls for repentance that's deep. It calls for a serious repentance that involves a baptism.

What was that about? Well the only immersion, the only baptism that they had apart from ceremonial washings, the only baptism was the baptism of a Gentile who wanted to become a part of Israel. If you wanted to become a proselyte to Judaism, you had to go through immersion which symbolized that you were an unclean person outside the covenant and you had to be washed to even be accepted into Israel. And John is saying...what you need to do as Jews, as sons of Abraham, what you need to do is recognize that you're not better than a Gentile who is outside the covenant, you need to be baptized and confess the depth of your sin and alienation from God. And if your repentance is that kind of repentance, then God will forgive your sin. So he preached the forgiveness of sin based upon repentance and a repentance that recognized that even though you were a Jew, you were outside the covenant and you had no relationship to the God of Israel whatsoever.

And to make that even more graphic, the Holy Spirit led Luke to record that John fulfills this passage that says this, verse 4, "Make His paths straight, every ravine shall be filled up, every mountain and hill shall be brought low, the crooked shall become straight and the rough roads smooth and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

You say, "What's that all about?" Well look back at verse 4, it was written in the words of Isaiah in Isaiah 40, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness," we know that's John, he's telling people make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight, make His path ready. And Isaiah and here, of course, in John's case and Luke, they're using an analogy. If a king is going to come to a town or a village, he would send a herald or a forerunner ahead a few months and say you've got to get ready, the king is coming, you've got to make the road ready so he can come with ease and dignity to your city. That's what John did. He said the King is coming, the King is coming, Messiah's coming, you've got to get ready and ready means you need to have your sins forgiven and that calls for repentance and a deep repentance that even acknowledges you're outside the covenant, you're no better than a Gentile. So you need to repent.

Now he gives a further definition of repentance in this analogy that I think is really penetrating. Let me show you what he's saying. Jesus was coming as Messiah. If Israel accepted Him as a nation they would have had their Kingdom. Matthew 11 says if that was the case, if they had believed in Messiah, received Him as Savior, they would have received the Kingdom and John would have been the fulfillment of Malachi 4, 5 and 6 which said that before the Lord establishes His Kingdom, one will come in the spirit and power of Elijah. Well, John did come in the spirit and power of Elijah. If Israel had believed, He would have been the fulfillment of that prophecy, the Kingdom would have been established.

Sadly, that's not what happened. They rejected the Messiah. John got his head chopped off. Jesus was executed. They didn't receive the Kingdom. The kingdom was not cancelled, however, the Kingdom was postponed because the gifts and callings of God are without...what?...repentance. God doesn't change His mind. God knew how it would go all along. But John is saying to them...Look, if you want to be ready to receive the King as a nation, it starts with individual repentance...it starts with individual repentance. And repentance is described in the analogy. Look back at this analogy.

How do you make ready the way of the Lord? How do you make His paths straight so He has access? How do you do that? Well, you take the low places, the ravines, you bring them up. You take the high places, you bring them down. You take the crooked places, you just straighten them out. You take the rough places, you smooth them over.

What's he talking about? Well let's just make it simple. The wilderness here is your heart. The wilderness is the heart. The voice is crying in the wilderness...Get the pathway through the wilderness ready. The wilderness is really the heart. It's the sinful heart, the sinful mind through which a path must be made. And that path is the path of repentance. And this is a magnificent analogy of what repentance is like. Here's where it starts. Every ravine shall be filled up. What's that? Low places, analogous to the low, base, dark, hidden things of the heart.

See, repentance involves an honest dealing with the depths of wickedness in your heart and mine. You've got to go down deep into the ugly muck of your sinful life and bring it up. And then he says, "Every mountain and hill shall be brought low." You know, the Jews were not only good at hiding the filth down low, but they were really good at elevating themselves in self-righteous ways, weren't they? You've got to...you've got to knock down the proud, haughty, self-righteous attitudes.

And then you've got to take the crooked places and straighten them out. That's the word skolios, from which we get scoliosis, which is a curvature, the devious, the deceitful, the lying, the perverse.

So you've got to dig deep into the filth of the hidden things. You've got to go high and pull down your pride and self-righteousness. Then you've got to deal with all the perverse, devious, deceptions of the heart. And then he says, "And the rough roads smooth."

What's that? Anything that's laying out there on the road of repentance. Could be self-love, could be love of money, could be love of the world, could be lust of the flesh, could be indifference, could be apathy, could be unbelief, any of that.

You want to get...you want to get...you want to get the path ready through the wilderness of your heart? Then repent and that means deal with the deep, base, hidden, secret, dark, low things. That means deal with the pride of your life, bring it all down to where it needs to be. Deal with the deception, the perversity, the wickedness, the devious elements and everything else, all the junk laying out there in your life that needs to be wiped clean. See, John is calling for a full repentance. And he says to them...If you do that, look at verse 6, if you will do that, all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

You know what? That's just another way to say the Kingdom will come. The whole world is going to see the salvation and if you do that then the nation will be saved and the nation will be exalted and the Kingdom will come and salvation will cover the earth, if you do that.

There's a simple message here really. Messiah's arrived and He offers you a Kingdom. If you want to be in that Kingdom you need your sins forgiven. If you want your sins forgiven you must repent. You have to prepare a pathway through your heart, a path of true repentance and the Lord will come to that heart and He'll reveal Himself and He'll save that sinner and that nation.

By the way, in verse 6 John quotes from the Greek translation of Isaiah 40, rather than the Hebrew. And he does that so as to include the interpretive rendering of the Septuagint, the Greek translation, which used the word "salvation." In the original Hebrew and in your own Bibles you won't see the word "salvation" in the passage in Isaiah. But that's what it means and the translators of the Septuagint interpreted it, added the word "salvation" because that's essentially what is indicated there. All it says in Isaiah 40 is, "You'll see the glory of the Lord." But the glory of the Lord is



revealed in Messiah by the salvation of God that He brings. And it was a...it was a right understanding of that passage and that's why the Holy Spirit inspired the writer Luke to include that here.

So what is John saying? You want salvation, you want salvation personally, you want salvation nationally, you want salvation of God to purvey the whole world, you want the Kingdom, you want all flesh to see the salvation of God, then repent of your sin and embrace the Lamb of God who comes to take away the sin of the world, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. If anyone wants to see the salvation of God, if you want to see the salvation of God, if you want to see God's power to forgive sins, then you have to prepare a path in your heart, a path of repentance of sin, the low sins, the high sins, the crooked sins, the clutter of sins and embrace Christ and His work for you with an attitude of repentance. When you do that, you'll be forgiven and when Israel does that, they'll be forgiven. Sadly, they refused and so the Kingdom was not cancelled, the Kingdom was postponed and in the future, Romans 11, "All Israel will be saved." The day will come, a great war will come and out of that will come the salvation of Israel, as Zechariah showed us, and then the Kingdom of Christ.

But they had their opportunity now in this very hour. John offered it to them as he preached the message of repentance. And so do I offer it to you as one who stands, I guess, in the tradition of John. I say to you, there is salvation for you, there is the complete forgiveness of sin, but you need to make a pathway through the wilderness of your heart, a pathway of true repentance and embrace Jesus Christ as Savior. That is the constant message we give to the Jew and to the Gentile. Join me in prayer.

Father, I ask that You would work the work of repentance. We know that is something You can do and alone You can do it. You have to turn the heart, just as you will some day in Israel when You give them a spirit of grace and supplication, You literally cause them to mourn. We pray, O God, that You would produce mourning in the hearts of people here, that You would cause them to look at their sin and grieve and prepare a path of repentance that You might come to their hearts. We thank You that until history finally culminates in the salvation of Israel, all the way along by Your grace You're saving Jew and Gentile and any individual who repents and receives the salvation offered in Jesus Christ. May we ever and always offer sinners the message of comfort and forgiveness and salvation through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ alone. In His name we pray. Amen.

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