

**Matthew in Biblical Perspective:
A Biography of Jesus of Nazareth the Christ – “Seeing Jesus”
Preparing the Way**

Matthew 3:1-12

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

January 18, 2009 – Morning Sermon

There are about four passages that I want to look at in this study so that we can properly understand the text the Holy Spirit wrote through Matthew for us concerning the ministry of Christ through the ministry of John the Baptist. I would also like to invite you back tonight as we give God the praise on the Lord's Day evening. I thought I would tackle a non controversial subject which will be covered over four Sunday nights about what the Bible says about baptism. Just how much water do you need? I look forward to being with you in those Sunday evening times. Let's look at our text for this study. Matthew 3:1-12 says,

1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’” 4 Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. 10 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

The grass withers and the flower fades but the Word of our God abides forever. By His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

Here is a test. I need you to answer two questions for me. Question number one is who is the greatest man that ever lived? You are not a candidate. Write it down. The second question is what are the two things that you can do now that you won't be able to do in heaven? Write it down. We'll come back to these. Now look with me in the text where the Word of God we heard has now become the Word of God we've seen – the incarnation of Christ. On this text we have to fast forward. We have studied the incarnation of Jesus, the Virgin birth, the shepherds, the wise men and the flight to Egypt. In the last study on Matthew we looked at the flight of Jesus to Egypt and He comes back and now His childhood is in Nazareth. I saw something recently about this flight to Egypt in a children's Sunday school lesson where a little girl was told to draw a picture about the birth of Jesus, from any part of the birth of Jesus. When the little girl handed her little crayon drawing in the teacher looked at it and it was an airplane with four people in it. The Sunday school teacher said to the little girl, "What is this?" The little girl replied, "This is the flight to Egypt." The teacher said, "Who are the four people?" The little girl said, "Joseph, Mary, Jesus..." The teacher said, "I know those but who is the fourth one?" The little girl said, "They can't get there without Pontius the Pilot." So we have covered that.

Jesus comes back and His childhood is in Nazareth and we have basically one verse that tells us what happens over the next twenty something years found in Luke 2:52; "*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*" Now we pick up years later when Jesus is about 30 years old and John the Baptist is 30 years old. John the Baptist begins his ministry which points to Jesus' ministry and here the ministry of Jesus is summarized by the John the Baptist through his ministry. First, I want to take a look at the ministry of John the Baptist who is more precisely called John the Baptizer. As we look at John the Baptizer, the one who baptizes with water, how do you look at him? First of all he is from the tribe of Levi and how do I know that? I know that because his father is Zachariah who was a priest so that means he is of the Levitical tribe. John the Baptizer's mother was named Elizabeth who was a cousin of Mary who was from the tribe of Judah it is very likely that Elizabeth was also from the tribe of Judah. But John is now of course numbered with the Levites and that's why his ministry begins at about age 30, because that is when the Levites began their ministry according to what the Scripture says (1 Chronicles 23:3). John the Baptizer is now beginning his ministry ahead of Jesus, why? It is because John is 6 months older than Jesus. As John begins his ministry he comes out dressed a little odd with a leather belt, camel hair that he is wrapped up in and he eats real locust. Many poor people in what is called today the Palestinian people still eat locust. He eats not only locust but wild honey and he is doing his ministry out in the middle of the wilderness but everybody is coming to him.

One wonders why everybody is coming to John the Baptizer because he seems to be a one note preacher. He has got one sermon. He has got one line and that is "Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." That is the message of John

the Baptizer in his ministry. However that message is very important. It is extremely important to understand it. To understand it you have to understand John. Who is John? John is the first preacher of the Good News in the New Testament but he is the last Prophet from the Old Testament who is calling God's people to repentance. He is bringing a lawsuit like the other prophets. He says, "You have abandoned the Lord, and the covenant so repent. You need a change of mind, change of heart and change of life."

John is not only a Prophet bringing a lawsuit against God's covenant people but he is also an evangelist. He says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." I want to show you how the Bible already foretold this, John the Baptist fulfills it and then John the Baptist has a very specific two part ministry. You must understand. First, let's look at how John was announced. Notice what it says in Matthew 3:3; *For this is he (John the Baptist) who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'"* This is a quote of prophesy that John fulfills from Isaiah 40:3. So it was prophesied of John the Baptist and his ministry of preparing the way of the Lord.

If you are keeping count, this is the seventh prophesy Matthew quotes from. Matthew is writing a biography about Jesus of Nazareth to prove to the Jewish people that Jesus is certified by the Holy Spirit, that Jesus fulfills the Scripture by the Word of God and the Spirit of God and it is affirmed that this Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. And through them to us this is the One Savior that God has sent His only Son. Matthew has already taken 6 prophetic statements in the first two chapters. Now as we are in chapter 3 Matthew adds the seventh prophetic statement from Isaiah 40. Jesus of Nazareth is coming to minister, how? He is coming by one (John) leading the way, making the valleys level, making the mountains level, preparing the way for the Lord to come and for people to come to the Lord. So John fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 40 to pave the way for Jesus.

Matthew obviously can't put everything in and he could have reached for two more texts. In fact, Jesus is fulfilling three more prophecies that aren't mentioned here. Remember? He is fulfilling the prophesy of the angel to Elizabeth and Zachariah where the angel says, "You will have a child who will lead the way for the Messiah to come (Luke 1:17)." So the angelic prophesy given to Zachariah is being fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist. But even before that there were two more prophecies in the Old Testament besides the one in Isaiah and they were both found in the book from that great Italian prophet Malachi. Here in Malachi the ministry of John the Baptist is prophesied. Picking up on Isaiah 40, Malachi 3:1 says, "*Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple (the body of Jesus); and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.*" The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. The Word is about to come to His Temple – the

incarnation but before He comes He is going to send one who will prepare the way, making the announcement, "The King is coming, the King is coming and He will lead the way." That one is John the Baptist. One more prophesy is in Malachi 4 where he tells us who is going to come. Malachi 4:5 says, "*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.*" Harry you said John the Baptist came, here it says, Elijah. Did Elijah come?" Yes he did. How do I know? Jesus said so.

Let's look at Matthew 11. In Matthew 11 we are being told that the Lord is going to come and when He comes He will be preceded by that one who will go before Him. Now before we look in Matthew 10 let's look in Matthew 17 first. Matthew 17:9-13 says,

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead." 10 And the disciples asked him, "Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" 11 He answered, "Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. 12 But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands." 13 Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Now look at Matthew 11:7-15; 7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "*What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? John the Baptist was the last prophet. He goes on to say, Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. John was also an evangelist. He continues,*

10 This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you." 11 Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

So who is John the Baptist? He is the one who is called to prepare the way for the Lord's coming and he is the prophet who brings the call of repentance. He is not only that one but he fulfills the prophesy of Elijah. John is the one in the spirit of Elijah, even in such appropriate attire out in the wilderness he is proclaiming "Repent!" and he is proclaiming the Good News of "the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."

One may be thinking, “Harry why do you think that phrase “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” is Good News?” It is because the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. How could John say the Kingdom of heaven is at hand? It was because coming right behind him was the King. Wherever the King is there is the Kingdom. Who is this King? It is Jesus, the Savior of sinners. Repent and come to the Savior who is near to you. So here are two things you need to know about the ministry of John the Baptist in fulfillment as Elijah. The first thing is to prepare for the coming of the Lord. The second thing is to bring people to Christ the King.

When they are all out there coming to Him there are some religious people who come out according to what was read in the text from Matthew 3. There are some Pharisees and Sadducees who come out to see John in the wilderness. They didn't come out to repent they came out to be seen with the crowd. So what does John the Baptist do? He zeros in on them. I don't whether John could ever lead a seeker centered friendly worship service or not because when those people come in he says, “You brood of vipers!” That is not very inviting. He says in Matthew 3:7, “*You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*” In other words he is saying, “Why did you come here? You didn't come here to repent. You came here to be seen. That's what you always do. Do you want me to tell you where you are? All we have to do is look at your fruit. If there is a root there will be fruit. But the fruit that you have is the fruit that leads to judgment, not the fruit that proclaims a saved man or woman. Therefore the Ax is about to cut it and then cast into *the* fire, eternal condemnation.” John the Baptist ministry is not only inviting to Christ for salvation through repentance with a life to come and a new life now but it is also a warning that there is a judgment to come. He then uses that as a jumping off point to make a summation statement about the One who is coming after him, Jesus. As he speaks to them and speaks of *the* fire that those who don't know Christ will spend under eternal judgment and condemnation, he then makes a summation of the life and ministry of Jesus. Matthew 3:11, 12 says,

11 “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

The symbol of John the Baptist's ministry was water baptism. Jesus calls John the greatest man that was ever born of women and John says he is not worthy to untie his sandals. *The* fire is being further defined here. This the unquenchable fire of Gehenna, hell.

So we have seen the ministry of John the Baptizer now what about Jesus the Messiah? The ministry of Jesus the Messiah is also a baptizer. He is Jesus the baptizer and He will baptize everyone. Everyone reading this will be baptized by

Jesus either with the saving work of the Holy Spirit or with fire, the eternal torment of judgment in hell. Jesus doesn't baptize with water. He baptizes us with the Holy Spirit or with fire. The other day I was looking at a television program where a preacher was quoting from this text and he said, "Praise the Lord, I'm going to pray that you get the baptism with fire." Folks, I don't pray that for you. That is misuse of this text. This text is not talking about the fire of passion. It's the fire of judgment and I know this every Saturday night before I step up here. I have the one message that tells you of the saving work of Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You have it in your Bible and many of you know it and believe it. I also stand before people who have rejected who stand under baptism of judgment.

Let me make something very clear. With all due respect to my brothers who teach it, I don't question their motives, but there is no such thing of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Bible doesn't teach that. The phrase is not found in the Bible. The Holy Spirit does not baptize anybody. Jesus is the baptizer and He baptizes with one of two elements; the Holy Spirit or fire. The fire is defined for you in the text. Those baptized with the Holy Spirit are the wheat that he will gather into his barn for eternal life and glory. Those baptized with the fire are the chaff that are gathered and cast into the lake of fire. He defines fire for you. John starts with "the fire" warning the Pharisees and then he says Jesus is coming and he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with the fire. He defines the fire as the judgment of eternity, the unquenchable fire but he also makes clear that you are baptized with the Holy Spirit if you are a believer.

The baptizer, Jesus, baptizes with the Holy Spirit and it's not a possible second blessing after your salvation. It is the work of Christ that accomplishes your salvation. If you haven't been baptized with the Holy Spirit then you haven't been saved and the Bible is clear about this. Now after my salvation are there fillings of the Holy Spirit? Are there special experiences? Are there anointings where He prepares me for sharing the gospel? When He prepares me for standing? When He prepares me for adversity? When He prepares me for preaching? When He prepares me for preaching in the spirit of God? He prepares you to share Christ with others. Yes there are many fillings and anointings and workings of the Holy Spirit after our conversion but there is only one baptism with the Holy Spirit by Jesus the baptizer.

The early writers understood that. Let me show you how the early writers understood this. The reason we know they understood it is because if you had been in Jerusalem when Jesus went to the cross, died for our sins and everyone was proclaiming you can be saved, you were Jewish and you came to Christ, and you say, "Praise the Lord Jesus died so we could be saved" but do you know who you really question? You would say, "What about them dogs?" This would mean Gentiles. Can they be saved and how do we know that they can be saved? The Gospel goes from Jerusalem down to Judea and Samaria and word gets back to Jerusalem that people are coming to Christ but they are Gentiles! Can

they do that? So the Lord through a vision and through an invitation picks Peter up from Joppa and sends him down there to investigate what's going on. And Peter comes back and gives a report. Acts 11:1-18 says,

1 Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, 3 "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." 4 But Peter began and explained it to them in order: 5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. 6 Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. 7 And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' 8 But I said, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' 9 But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' 10 This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. 11 And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. 12 And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. 13 And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; 14 he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.' 15 As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' 17 If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" 18 When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

So when are you baptize with the Spirit? According to this text is at conversion. When they believed the Holy Spirit was poured out upon and they were sealed into the covenant of grace by His presence. Peter is quoting here what we had just read in Matthew. When they were baptized with the Holy Spirit that settled the argument for them because they couldn't be saved without the Holy Spirit and when the Holy Spirit was poured out among them that means they had been saved, even the Gentiles. So not only does John's statement that he baptizes with the Holy Spirit guide Peter, but Peter says that you can't be a believer without the Holy Spirit. He has to bring you, He has to call you, He has to give you a new heart, He has to give you a new life, He has to give you eyes to see and ears to hear so then as you come and believe He is poured out upon you and as Jesus baptizes as you with the Holy Spirit you are sealed into that relationship with Him. Now He dwells in you by the Holy Spirit. He keeps you. He

empowers you. He leads you. He tells you, "Don't grieve the Holy Spirit or quench Him (Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19)."

On the other side, if you don't have the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is not a second blessing because you have to have Him to come to Christ and if you don't have Him then that means you have not come to Christ. Not only does Peter pick up on this, but Paul does also in Romans 8. Here Paul talks about the Christian life, he calls it the life lived in the Spirit and if you are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:8-9 says, *8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You (Christians), however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.* So if the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon you then you are in the Spirit because the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon you. You have been baptized with the Holy Spirit. He goes on to say in the latter half of verse 9, *Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.* Without the Spirit you cannot know Him, you can't follow Him. Yes, multiple works of the Spirit in our life after we are converted but one baptism by Christ with the Spirit in all of His people.

In terms of where we are in this text, what are some things we can take away? I want to give you one take away with three suggestions and please consider them a little bit more than a suggestion. Consider them a way to live this out. John the Baptist is unique. He is the last prophet of the Old Testament and he's the first preacher, the first evangelist of the New Testament. His message; "Repent. The Kingdom is at hand." He is preparing the way and he is announcing the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Come to Him. John is not only unique is also a portrait for you and me. In fact, Jesus says as great as he is, you will be even greater if with his humility you engage in what he does. What did he do? He prepared the way and he brought people to Christ. One may be thinking, "So how can I prepare the way, He already came 2000 years ago?" He is also coming again. When will He come again? He will come again when all of His people are called to Himself, Matthew 24, then will come the end. Do you know how I can prepare the way for Jesus on His second coming? I can do this by sharing Him with others, by bringing others to Him. And I can be like John the Baptist and make the way level. I can straighten out the way for people to come to Him. I can help them see that religion is not the answer, Jesus is. I can help them see that rituals are not the answer, Jesus is. I can help them see that good intentions are not the answer but Jesus is. I can help them see that no matter where they are in their sin that Jesus can forgive them. I don't care where they are in their life they can come to Him. He has come for them. The Lord is near. Now, repent and put your trust in Him - those glorious two sides of the same coin, faith and repentance. Turn from my sin and myself to surrender and trust in Jesus by faith. I can be a John the Baptist minister. I can follow the same pattern. Prepare the way for the next coming of the Lord and bring people to Him until He comes.

Here are my three pastoral exhortations. The first one is this, follow Jesus and that way you will follow John the Baptist in being a preparer, a proclaimer and an

evangelist. Why? God had one Son. He sent Him. When God sent His Son, He sent an Evangelist. Jesus said, "The Father sent Me." What did the Father send Him to do? The Father sent Him to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Notice how it says to seek so if we want to be like Jesus we don't just want to pick the low hanging fruit, we want to climb some trees to find some fruit. We want to shake some trees to seek and save the lost. When God sent His Son, He sent the Evangel, the Evangelist, the Good News and the One who proclaims the Good News. Let's follow Jesus by being evangelists. My prayer is that every single one of us would say to the Lord, "Lord, there are two things I can do by Your grace; prepare the way and proclaim the Good News – to seek and save the lost. I want to do those two things. I want to be engaged to prepare the way for You to come again, just like John the Baptist and I want to be able to tell everybody, not of the one who is coming the first time, but the One who is coming again." You can be ready because of what He did the first time where He paid for all your sins on the cross. He is ready to forgive you. Come to Him just as I am.

The second thing is I want you to look at lost people perhaps differently. Don't look at lost people with anger. Be like John the Baptist who was humble. How can we be angry at lost people? I know we can be angry at sin and the only reason I'm not doing what the lost are doing and worse is because God's grace has saved me and forgiven me and He is at working changing me. I want you to look at lost people differently and no longer with anger. I want you to see where they are. They are in the sea of sin and despair. They are floundering. They are going down. Their marriages and families are going down. They are going down to the abyss of discouragement and despair. We are not a flotilla of yachts cruising to heaven. We are a fleet of fishing boats to fish for men and rescue the perishing. God, help me not to look with anger but pity even as someone looked upon me and brought me to Christ. God, please don't let me look with arrogance. We're not show boats of self righteousness. We're life boats to rescue the perishing. They may be enemies of God but I see them as prisoners of sin, Satan and darkness and I want the Light to shine. I want the chains to fall off and I want them to come to Christ. Somebody did that for you, right? Somebody had pity on you. They didn't dismiss you in arrogance or anger but they talked to you. I am sure there was more than one somebody who talked to you. Can you wait to get to heaven? I can't wait to get to heaven. I know when we get to heaven we will say, "Praise Jesus He saved me." But there are some people I want to talk to. I can't wait to see my grand daddy and grand mother who got up at 5am every morning to pray for me. They would take me to church. Teach me the songs. I want to see my daddy and momma. I want to see my children's Bible school teacher, Miss Allison. I want to go see all those people and I want to thank them. I also want to ask myself this "Is anybody going to come up and thank me?" Thank you for speaking to me. Thank you for praying for me. Thank you for bringing me to hear the Gospel preached. Thank you for bringing me to that small group. Thank you for taking the time to talk to me when I was in the sea of despair and the prisoner of Satan and sin. Will anybody look for us to thank us?

I'm going to go thank a man named Jimmy who was a 40 year old man who lost his 39 year old wife and had 4 little girls. If there was any man who could go over and die in a pile on the day he buried his wife in self pity and everybody would understand it, it would be him. But he didn't. Standing in a kitchen, returning from a gravesite, on the day he buried his 39 year old childhood sweetheart he looked at me and said, "Harry, I think there's something I need to tell you today. There's something you need to hear." That day I heard. I walked into a hallway and gave my life to Jesus. I can't wait to thank Jimmy again. There is something I need to tell you. There is something I want to tell you. So my friends, I am asking you to look at lost people differently. They are headed to the unquenchable fire without Christ the Savior.

The third and final thing is this, I want to ask you to seize an opportunity. I have a desire. I only build on the desire that has been our founding pastor's and this church's for years. We have sought many ways to do this. We want to seek another way. We want to put into the tool box of disciple making in your life another tool on how you can share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We want to share with you how you and I can prepare the way and bring others to Christ. I want you to seize the opportunity for this tool. We have designed so that just in three sessions we can be taught to share our faith and we're calling it the Bridge to Life. The Bridge to Life is Jesus. How can I get from sin and death to life and eternity and a new life? How can I who am going down in this sea be changed and rise to the heights of Christ? How can that happen? There's a bridge and that bridge is Jesus.

We will start next Sunday morning, then Sunday night and Monday night. I ask that you prioritize it. It will take three Wednesday nights at other times also. We will have another level which is Evangelism Explosion (EE). There will be another level where I will teach apologetics along with some other people on how can I answer the tough questions, not to win an argument but to win people. We answer questions like "is the Bible reliable," "why is there suffering," "what about hell," "is Jesus really the only way." We will do all of those things but one simple tool in your tool box so that you can conversationally share with people the testimony of God's grace, the Gospel, out of your life to their life. Seize that opportunity.

Let me just tell you how dumb I am. I think God likes dumb prayers and I have one. I am asking God that all 4200 members in two years to be trained at least with this basic tool of how to share their faith in their classroom, on their team, in their fraternity, among their friends, in their neighborhood, where they work, that they'll be able to plant, water, cultivate and reap decisions for people to come to Jesus Christ. God, would You let all 4200 get there? We're not going to give it to just 4 or 5 but that every single one of us will be there and that every single one of us will have the opportunity to do that and be equipped to do it. So that we don't run, we're not afraid, we're not embarrassed, nor are we obnoxious and in

the name of graciousness we're not silent. In the name of boldness we're not going to be obnoxious but win souls to Christ. It is very exciting to see this in your life. Not only do I have some people to thank but it is very exciting.

So what are the two things you can do now that you won't do in heaven? You can send now and you won't do that in heaven. Praise the Lord that there will be no more accountability groups, no more fleeing temptation. What else can't you do in heaven? You won't be able to evangelize. So why don't we take one of those and do less? Guess which one? Sin. I won't be sinless but how about to sin less. How about evangelism? Let's do more. We won't get to do it in heaven. Let's do more even now. It's so exciting and so much fun to see it.

I remember early on when I was a student pastor at a church that met in a living room and we started with 17 people. My first pulpit was a television. That's right, my first sermon I was on television. Some of you don't know what televisions looked like back then but they were big and out of the back were all these tubes that ruined every suit I ever owned. I had two tailors back then – poly and ester – and they would pick every single one of my suits. I had this Godly lady in that core group whose name was Ruth, very appropriately, and she said, "My son is coming on Mother's Day and preacher he hates Christianity. He hates Christians and he hates preachers. He is a scholarship athlete at UTC but he loves me and he said he would come here on Mother's Day since that is what I told him I wanted for my Mother's Day gift." The lady was an evangelist. In he comes roaring in on one of the biggest Harley Davidson's I had ever seen, dressed in his leathers. He pulled it over to the side and kicked the stand down. He walked into that living room and I am standing behind this television. He goes over and picks up one of these dining room chairs, turns it around backwards, sits down, puts his arms up on the back of it and just glares at me. It wasn't exactly a receptive audience that morning. I just said, "God, let me preach the Gospel." The glare never left all the way through the benediction. He had to go out by coming by me and he wouldn't even shake my hand but just looked at me and walked on out. I heard the Harley rev up and screech and he was gone.

Cindy and I were eating dinner and I was getting ready for my Sabbath nap afterwards. I told Cindy what had happened and about the view from where I was at the pulpit and what was taking place. While we were eating I hear this guttural noise of a Harley. I looked out the door and there he is flying around the corner on that bike. He almost lays out the bike and kicks the stand down. He jumps off the Harley and comes running up to the door. He is absolutely red in the face and he beats on the door. I looked at Cindy and said, "I'm going to the door and I may not be back." I opened the door and the redness was no longer anger but it was tears. He said, "Preacher I'm tired and I want that Jesus." God saved him that day. He brought him from death into life and the power wasn't in the preacher. The power wasn't in that little service we had in that living room. The power was the Gospel of Jesus Christ that brought him from death unto life. I just had the

privilege along with his mother and I'm sure some others of planting, watering, cultivating and reaping the fruit. That is what lays before us.

What would happen if 4200 of us were doing that day after day after day? When I asked the question of what's the thing you won't do in heaven, I can't just ask that question without asking this one; will you be there in heaven? You're first step is not to take Jesus to somebody but to come to Jesus. He says, "Come. Trust Me. Turn. Repent. Come to Me. I'm here. I'm at hand. I'll save you." Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together. Thank You for the privilege to simply say, "Jesus, I come to You. I turn and I put my trust in You. Thank You that I might know You, love You and serve You." Father, thank You that we might rise up as Jesus has said, "I send you as the Father has sent Me." We might prepare the way for You to come back by bringing others to You. O God, our God make these next couple of weeks and these next couple of years so effective in giving us the instrument, the tools to tell others, "The wages of sin are death but I have Good News. The free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." God do that work in us and through us and we'll give You the praise. We are Yours, You are ours. Father, be glorified. In Jesus' name, Amen.

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).