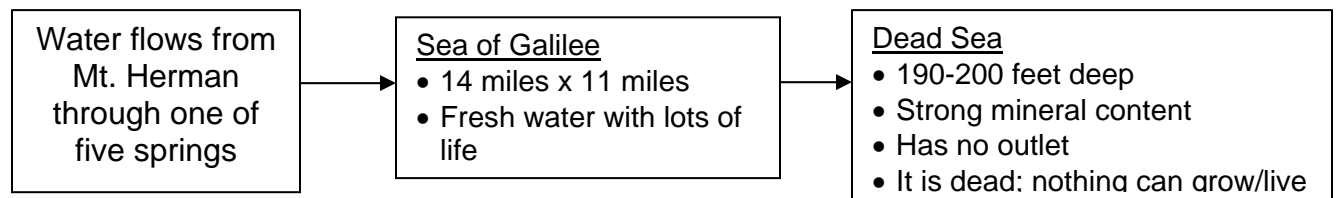


**Matthew – The King And His Kingdom**  
**The Great Adventure**  
**Notes For Session 4 – Chapter 3 John: The Forerunner to the King**

Chapter 3 begins Jesus' public ministry.

1. The importance of John preaching in the “wilderness” of Judea, specifically, on the Jordan River just ¼ mile NW of the Dead Sea. Matt 1:1-3
  - a) God brings John to the lowest point on earth (1200 to 1300 feet below sea level)
  - b) The Hebrews who escaped Egypt during the Exodus crossed into the Promised Land, 40 years after leaving Egypt into Jericho, at the same exact spot.
  - c) It was Joshua who led Israel across the Jordan river by Jericho, and many believe that Jesus is the Joshua of the New Testament
  - d) Location! Location! Location!

**Flow of the Jordan**



Tale of two seas:

- The Sea of Galilee – receives and gives back
- The Dead Sea – just receives; doesn't give back

Which are you– the Sea of Galilee or the Dead Sea?

**Foundation from the Old Testament** concerning the Exile and waiting for the **Consolation of Israel**: See Chapter 2 DVD Notes items A & B for details.

- In Matthew 3:3 John the Baptist is quoting from:
  - Isaiah 40:3: A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!
  - He is announcing the Consolation has begun. New Exodus has begun.
2. In Jesus' time, the Jews were waiting for the consolation of Israel and the coming of Elijah.
    - a) Many believed that John the Baptist belonged to the Essenes sect (a specific Jewish sect) who believed in the resurrection and that the end times had come. They mainly lived in the area around the Qumran where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.
    - b) Sadducees (a different Jewish sect) did not believe in angels or the resurrection
  3. Significance of John baptizing people
    - a) It was symbolic of an Exodus and John was enacting what the children of the Exodus did when they crossed over the Jordan River; i.e., they had a new beginning after entering the water
    - b) “Metanoia” means change of heart followed by a change of action

4. Kingdom of Heaven vs. Kingdom of God
  - a) "Kingdom" is mentioned fifty times in Matthew's Gospel
  - b) The reference to Kingdom of Heaven is used as an evasive synonym for Kingdom of God. The Jewish people believed that it was forbidden to speak God's name. This is the Jewish way of saying Kingdom of God.
  
5. John's Clothing: More words describing what he wore instead of what he said.
  - a) John wore camel's hair and a leather belt.
  - b) What he is wearing points to his vocation as a prophet
  - c) Identifies the role he is playing in the drama (i.e., Elijah)
  
6. Similarities of John the Baptist and Elijah
  - a) Similar clothing worn
  - b) It was prophesized that Elijah would come before the Messiah and restore the sons of Israel (Mal 4:5-6 (a/k/a Mal 3:23-24)). John comes before the Messiah.
  - c) Elijah went up in a chariot of fire at the same place where John was baptizing (2 Kings 2:4-11)
    - 2:4 Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here, please, Elisha, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho." "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live," Elisha replied, "I will not leave you." 2:5 They went on to Jericho, where the guild prophets approached Elisha and asked him, "Do you know that the LORD will take your master from over you today?" "Yes, I know it," he replied. "Keep still." 2:6 Elijah said to Elisha, "Please stay here; the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan." "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live," Elisha replied, "I will not leave you." And so the two went on together.
    - 2:7 Fifty of the guild prophets followed, and when the two stopped at the Jordan, stood facing them at a distance. 2:8 Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up and struck the water, which divided, and both crossed over on dry ground. 2:9 When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask for whatever I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha answered, "May I receive a double portion of your spirit."
    - 2:10 "You have asked something that is not easy," he replied. "Still, if you see me taken up from you, your wish will be granted; otherwise not."
    - 2:11 As they walked on conversing, a flaming chariot and flaming horses came between them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.
  - d) John said "I must decrease" (John 3:30) so that Jesus can increase.
  - e) Elisha who followed Elijah asked for a double share of what Elisha was given by God. Elijah (John) decreased so that Elisha (Jesus) can increase.
  
7. Similarities of Jesus and Elisha
  - a) Elisha transfers vessels of oil (2 Kings 4:1-7), in Cana Jesus transfers water into wine.
  - b) Elisha raises a dead child to life (2 Kings 4:32-34), Jesus raise a dead child to life
  - c) Elisha multiplies loaves to feed a multitude (2 Kings 4:38-44), Jesus multiply loaves of bread to feed multitudes.

- d) Elisha cures Naaman of leprosy (2 Kings 5); Jesus cures the lepers
- Church see cleansing of Naaman and crossing of Jordan as prefigurements of the Sacrament of Baptism.
  - Baptism is prefigured in the crossing of the Jordan River by which the People of God received the gift of the land promised to Abraham's descendants, an image of eternal life. The promise of this blessed inheritance is fulfilled in the New Covenant. CCC 1222

8. Naaman's Cleansing in the Jordan:

- 2 Kings 5:11 But Naaman went away angry, saying, "I thought that he would surely come out and stand there to invoke the LORD his God, and would move his hand over the spot, and thus cure the leprosy. 5:12 Are not the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be cleansed?" With this, he turned about in anger and left. 5:13 But his servants came up and reasoned with him. "My father," they said, "if the prophet had told you to do something extraordinary, would you not have done it? All the more now, since he said to you, 'Wash and be clean,' should you do as he said."
- 5:14 So Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times at the word of the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.
- God does marvelous things through simple ways. Through the Sacraments Jesus comes to us in water, a confessional, bread and wine transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ, in marriage.

9. Matthew 3:13-17: Jesus is becoming Israel and is fulfilling everything including our need for repentance. He goes to the lowest point on earth and submits himself to repentance.

- Jesus is becoming Israel completely. Completely identifying with Israel.
- Not only is He coming to earth as a baby, but also He goes to the lowest point on earth and submits himself to a Baptism of Repentance.

10. The descending of the Holy Spirit and language that is used in Matthew 3:16-17 after Jesus' baptism is the same language used for the anointing of a Jewish king (i.e., Saul in 1 Samuel 10:6 and David in Samuel 16:13)

CONCLUSION: Convergence of many themes:

- 1) The wilderness invokes the memory of Joshua and the Jewish people crossing over the Jordan into the promised land as well as the memory of Elijah and Elisha;
- 2) Hosea and Isaiah both prophesize that "God would allure and speak tenderly to you in the wilderness".
- 3) The anointing of Jesus as King and his complete identification with Israel as he fulfills all righteousness by submitting himself to a baptism of repentance.