

Session 02 Forerunner Ministry: Friends of the Bridegroom (Jn. 3:29)

I. REVIEW: THE FORERUNNER MINISTRY

- A. One of IHOP's primary callings is to minister with a "forerunner spirit". We need to renew this spiritual identity and focus in our ministry foundation.
- B. Isaiah prophesied of forerunners who would prepare the way for the Lord in the End-Times or at the time of Jesus' Second Coming when all flesh (all nations) shall see Jesus' glory together.
³ ***The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God...5 The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh (all nations) shall see it together (at Jesus' Second Coming). (Isa. 40:3-5)***
- C. John the Baptist was a down payment of this prophecy by being only a partial fulfillment of it.
²³ ***I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness...as the prophet Isaiah said. (Jn. 1:23)***
- D. Forerunners prepare the way for the Lord by preparing people to ***respond rightly to Jesus*** in the End-Times by making known His plans. God raises up forerunners as a "mercy ministry" to the multitudes before the intensity of the Lord's End-Time activities begin in both positive (revival) and negative (judgment) ways. These activities express God's love and wisdom.
- E. As intense events begin to happen, many tend to lose their perspective and objectivity in seeing God's love and wisdom. Those who see what God is doing as biblical and as expressing His love and wisdom are able to set their heart to be resolved to participate with the Lord in His purposes instead of resisting or neglecting them in fear, confusion and offense.
- F. The highway God travels on is the voluntary agreement of His people as they partner with Him. Forerunners make sense of what is to happen (revival, judgment, etc.) before the Spirit releases it in a worldwide way. They are messengers who proclaim "now" what the Spirit is "soon" to emphasize in a universal way. They are one short step ahead of what the Spirit is soon to openly release. Forerunners bring new understanding or paradigms of God and His End-Time activities.
⁵ ***If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? If in the land of peace...they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan? (Jer. 12:5)***
- G. The forerunner ministry does not make sense to the multitudes until the intense activities begin. The wisdom of Noah's ark was not apparent until it began to rain.
- H. Forerunners are "messengers" who function with a specific message in different spheres of life. For example, they are preachers, evangelists, artists (singers, musicians, actors, etc.), writers (internet), media, marketplace or intercessors as well as those who disciple people one-on-one in the church, marketplace, campus, or home (moms are some of the most important forerunners).

II. SEVEN THEOLOGICAL PREMISES OF THE FORERUNNER MINISTRY

- A. Premise #1: There will be ***“unique dynamics”*** in the generation the Lord returns. The greatest number of people will be living at the time of the greatest manifestation of power (God’s/Satan’s) and will require a unique focus and understanding. In this generation, history transitions to the Millennial Kingdom. This is the unprecedented new thing that Isaiah prophesied.
- 18 Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? (Isa. 43:18-19)***
- B. Premise #2: The Holy Spirit will emphasize the ***revelation of the Father*** in the End-Times.
- C. Premise #3: The Holy Spirit will emphasize ***3 facets of the beauty of Jesus*** as a passionate Bridegroom (with tenderness and deep desire for His people), as a powerful King who confronts darkness and wins the lost and as a righteous Judge who upholds God’s standards (holiness).
- D. Premise #4: Forerunners participate in ***3 unprecedented activities of the Spirit: restoring the First Commandment, gathering the Harvest*** and releasing God’s judgments (Rev. 6; 8-9; 16).
- E. Premise #5: God is ***preparing forerunner ministries ahead of time*** in the wilderness that they may prepare others for the Day of the Lord activities. It takes a clear sense of mandate and identity as a forerunner to stay faithful long term to grow in understanding (Dan. 11:33-35).
- F. Premise #6: Forerunners must ***live a fasted lifestyle*** in the grace of God as seen in Mt. 6:1-18.
- G. Premise #7: Forerunners are ***best trained in context to the End-Time prayer movement***. They understand the role of the prayer movement in End-Time prophecy and therefore, build houses of prayer. (Rev. 22:17; 5:8; 8:4; Lk. 18:7-8; Isa. 24:14-16; 26:8-9; 30:18-19; 42:10-13; 62:6-7).

III. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S LIFE: THE MODEL FOR THE FORERUNNER MINISTRY

- A. John the Baptist is the clearest model in Scripture of the End-Time forerunner that was prophesied in Isa. 40:3-5. The Holy Spirit gave him as a down payment of the forerunner ministry for our benefit. We gain invaluable direction and inspiration from his ministry.
- B. Jesus described John as having a burning heart and a shining lamp of ministry that clearly and boldly made known God’s ways and brought light that expelled misunderstanding about Jesus.
- 35 He was the burning (heart) and shining lamp (ministry) and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. (Jn 5:35)***

1 For Jerusalem's sake I (the Lord) will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burns. (Isa. 62:1)

- C. Jesus described John as the greatest man in history. No one ever obeyed God more consistently nor prepared for ministry more diligently than John the Baptist.
¹¹ ***Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John... (Mt. 11:11)***
- D. In the end the people of Israel said he was demonized and dangerous to God's purpose. Jesus assured us that John's lifestyle and message will be openly vindicated at the Judgment Seat.
¹⁸ ***For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon." 19...But wisdom is justified (vindicated) by her children (long term fruit). (Mt. 11:18-19)***
- E. Undoubtedly, John knew from his youth he was a forerunner to be prepared in the wilderness as declared in the Scripture. He prepared for about 20 years for only 2 years of public ministry.
²² ***Who are you...? What do you say about yourself? 23 He said: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said." (Jn. 1:22-23)***
1. ***I am the voice*** – John prepared the people to respond to God in the unique dynamics related to Jesus' first coming. The forerunner's voice speaks of the things that are yet to come with clarity, power and boldness.
 2. ***One crying in the wilderness*** – John understood his identity in ministry as "a voice" that was to be prepared in the wilderness of fasting and prayer. A forerunner voice is always prepared and released in context to the wilderness.
 3. ***Make straight the way of the LORD*** – we are to make clear without any compromise what God is saying and doing. God is establishing a 'prophetic information highway'.
- F. God is raising up forerunners who will be a voice and not merely an echo.
- G. There are 4 distinct applications of being in the wilderness in Scripture.
² ***The people...found grace in the wilderness-- Israel, when I went to give him rest. (Jer. 31:2)***
¹⁴ ***I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. 15...She shall sing there...16 It shall be, in that day...that you will call Me "My Husband"... (Hos. 2:14-16)***
1. ***Posture of heart*** – the fasted lifestyle that seeks to encounter God in the wilderness. John lived a "*wilderness lifestyle*" (reading the Word with prayer and fasting).
 2. ***Spiritual condition*** – dryness before the breakthrough of the Holy Spirit. Nations, cities, churches and ministries speak of experiencing the "*wilderness years*" before revival.
 3. ***Difficult circumstances*** – an unusual season of pain before the release of God's promises
 4. ***Geographic location*** – John lived in an actual wilderness, the desert of Judea.

IV. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S VIEW: HIS LIFE, MINISTRY AND PARADIGM OF JESUS

²⁹ *He who has the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the friend of the Bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice...this joy of mine is fulfilled. (Jn. 3:29)*

A. John described what Jesus felt emotionally in saying "He who has the Bride is the Bridegroom". To understand John, they had to know who He lived before.

⁷ *The marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)*

1. *He that has the Bride* – Jesus has a bride in His heart because God promised Him a prepared Bride at the end of natural history.

2. *He is the Bridegroom* – He has tender love and burns with desire for His people.

B. John described his ministry and lifestyle as a friend the Bridegroom who stands and hears Him.

1. *The friend of the Bridegroom* – the best man in a wedding does not seek to draw the bride's attention and affections to himself but to prepare her to receive the embrace of the Bridegroom. Paul spoke of ministries who preached or showcased 'themselves' (2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2:19-21). Friends of the Bridegroom prepare people to receive Jesus' embrace as the Bridegroom God empowering them to walk out the first commandment.

2. *Who stands* – diligent attentiveness to stand in God's presence in prayer and the Word
¹⁸ *For who has stood in the counsel of the LORD, and has perceived and heard His word? Who has marked His word and heard it? (Jer. 23:18)*

² *The seven angels who stand before God...to them were given 7 trumpets. (Rev. 8:2)*

3. *Who hears him* – to respond with obedience regardless of the price

C. John described the joyful emotional impact that hearing the Bridegroom's voice had on him.

1. *Because of the Bridegroom's voice* – growing in revelation of Jesus as a Bridegroom

2. *Rejoices greatly...this joy of mine is fulfilled* – empowered with joy by receiving the revelation of the Bridegroom even in the difficulty of a desert lifestyle