

The Gospel of Matthew

“John: Messiah’s Forerunner”
(Matthew 3:1-12)

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Malachi 4:5-6

“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.
And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse.”

The last prophetic word from God for over 400 years!

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Matthew 3:1-12

“Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, ‘Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’...”

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John the Baptist

1. John’s Identification

➤ *He is Messiah’s immediate forerunner*

- He is the “voice” of Isaiah 40:3 – He announces and prepares the way for God’s coming
- He is “Elijah” who comes before the day of the Lord (c.f. Matthew 11:14; 17:12-13)

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John the Baptist

2. John’s Baptism

➤ *distinctive use of symbolic water immersion*

- His was a baptism of Jewish people signifying repentance from sin in preparation for God’s kingdom
- *Implication* – being Jewish did not in itself guarantee that one was a member of the true people of God and safe from God’s judgment
- John’s baptism was a forerunner of Christian baptism

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John the Baptist

3. John’s Message

A. Repent from sin

- A call to radical transformation (conversion) – turn from sin and return to a true allegiance to and love for God
- True repentance will bring forth “fruit” – actions and desires that display a love for God and a love for your neighbor

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John the Baptist

3. John's Message

B. God's kingdom is at hand

- "kingdom of heaven" refers to the manifest exercise of God's saving reign on earth among men
- The coming of God's reign demands repentance or it brings God's judgment

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John the Baptist

3. John's Message

C. Messiah is coming (is here)

- Jesus has an inestimable worth in comparison to John the Baptist (and us!)
- Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire – refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which is the essence of Messiah's saving activity

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John the Baptist

John's message to us...

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"

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