

Prayer:

Slide # 1

Theme: *Christ the King*

Outline:

Chps. 1-2 The Advent of the King. (Proving His LEGAL right to the throne by His genealogy.)

Chp. 3 The Forerunner of the King and the King’s baptism.

Chp. 4 The Test of the King. (Proving His MORAL right to the throne by not yielding to temptation; and exhibiting His kingdom resume.)

Chps. 5-7 The Pronouncements of the King. (Proving His JUDICIAL right to the throne as seen in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching.)

Chps. 8-10 The Power of the King. (Proving His PROPHETICAL right to the throne by fulfilling prophecy.)

Chps. 11-12 *The Rejection of the King.*

Chp. 13 The Parables of the King.

Chps. 14-16 The Revelations of the King.

Chps. 17-20 The Instructions of the King.

Chps. 21-23 Formal Rejection of the King.

Chps. 24-25 The Predictions of the King.

Chps. 26-27 The Passion of the King.

Chp. 28 The Resurrection of the King.

Throughout the book Matthew has been developing evidence that shows that Jesus is the prophesied divine/human Messiah promised in the OT Scriptures. We have noted His legal right to the throne – the right genealogy (Matt. 1-2); His forerunner credentials – in that John the Baptist as His forerunner fulfilled prophecy perfectly (Matt. 3); His moral right to the throne in overcoming the most intense time of temptation at the hands of Satan (Matt. 4); His judicial right to the throne in the wisdom of His kingdom teaching (Matt. 5-7); and His authoritative right to the throne as seen His power of disease, demons, and nature (Matt. 8-9).

Jesus then empowered the 12 disciples (calling them apostles) to also do kingdom sign miracles as an enhancement of His ministry and sent them to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 10).

And that brings us to chapters 11-12. The time has now come for decision. The Messianic credentials of Jesus have been on display for the nation to see building to the climactic emphasis of His Lordship authority and now the issue is what would the response of the nation be? The main theme now put forward in Matt. 11-12 revolves around how the people should respond to Jesus.

That is the great issue in Matthew 11-12. And sadly we find the response was largely one of REJECTION as chronicled in these chapters. This rejection was led by the religious leaders and climaxed in the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit in chapter 12.

The rejection of Christ is seen in the rejection of His forerunner – John the Baptist. Jesus just got done saying “***He who receives you receives Me***” (Mt. 10:40). Well, they hadn’t received John the Baptist and they didn’t receive Jesus either (exceptions of course).

Matthew 11:1–15 (NKJV)

1 Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities.

After commissioning the 12 and endowing them with miraculous kingdom powers as His special apostolic representatives, Christ then began His own teaching and preaching tour in Galilee as seen here (cf. 4:23; 9:35; 11:1).

Christ’s teaching (Gk. *didasko*) meaning *to explain and give instruction* was probably about Scripture and how it applied to Himself, and His preaching (Gk. *kerusso*) evidently revolved around His message that “the kingdom is as hand” as seen in 10:7.

Matt. 11:2-19 finds its parallel in Luke 7:18-35. Matt. 4:12 has already mentioned John the Baptist’s imprisonment but background details are not mentioned until Matt. 14:3-12. Here in chapter 11 we have a glimpse of John’s struggles in prison during the course of Christ’s Galilean ministry.

2 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples

3 and said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”

It is thought that John the Baptist, now in the prison of Herod Antipas, had probably been there about a year or so.

John's "crime" was that he dared to speak out about the adulterous marriage of Herod to his brother's wife and so Herod had him put in prison (cf. Lk. 3:19-20). In prison, John had heard about the miraculous works of Jesus, but he had ONE major question. He sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus: "***Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?***"

This was not a question of carnal doubt, but rather one of puzzlement. Clearly the idea of "***the Coming One***" refers to the Messiah. All the way through the OT the prophets had prophesied of a coming Deliverer-King. But here seems to be John's struggle. He had preached that the Messiah would bring judgment and deliverance.

Slide # 2

Matthew 3:10–12 (NKJV)

10 And **even now** the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and **thrown into the fire.**

11 I indeed baptize you with water unto 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 fan is in His hand,** and He will **thoroughly clean out His threshing floor,** and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will **burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**"

John saw clearly the blessing aspect of Christ's ministry in all the healings and so forth, but where was the judgment on the wicked that he had preached was coming? The way he envisioned it was that judgment would immediately come on the wicked and then Jesus the Messiah would bring in the kingdom in keeping with his message "***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.***" (Mt. 3:2) How could this prison experience be explained in light of this? John is saying, "***Did I miss something about You Jesus?***"

You see we often grapple with THE TIMING! John's message was right, but he didn't understand the timing. Looking back, we see clearly that Jesus came presenting His credentials as the Messiah as seen in His kingdom miracles. The kingdom was being offered on the condition of repentance. But this was not the time for judgment! First He must give Israel an opportunity to repent and receive Him. This is what His first coming was all about. Grace is extended first and then judgment if that grace is rejected. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:17).

Slide # 3**John 1:11–12 (NKJV)**

11 He came to His own, and **His own did not receive Him.**

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

John 3:17 (NKJV)

17 For **God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

John did not see the truth of TWO separate comings. He thought this was it. He was preaching repentance and those that repented he thought would immediately go into the kingdom. So, he didn't get it. It didn't add up to him. If Jesus was the COMING ONE Who brings judgment to sinners and deliverance and blessing to His people; if He is the One Who brings in the kingdom; then why was he now in prison facing death? He expected to go into the kingdom with the Christ - not to death row!

Slide # 4

The Messiah was a king, and He was to rule Israel on David's throne. That Messiah would come in like Judas Maccabee and drive out the foreign oppressors was assumed. – ***Ed Glasscock***

John is troubled not by what Jesus is doing (v. 2), but by what He is not doing. If Jesus is indeed the Messiah, where is the sweeping judgment that John predicted (3:7-12), and why is the forerunner allowed to languish in prison?

– ***Evangelical Commentary on the Bible***

There was a reason that in His sermon at Nazareth from Isa. 61 that Jesus stopped mid-sentence (cf. Lk. 4:16-21).

Slide # 5**Isaiah 61:1–2 (NKJV)**

1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, **[STOPPED]** And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, (see Luke 4:16-21)

This was “***the year of the Lord’s favor***” – a season of grace whereby an open invitation was being given to the nation to repent and receive Jesus as their Messiah. This was not the day of vengeance. That will come in due season at the Second Coming. But John did not understand this.

Again, this was an honest question seeking clarification, not rebel defiance. And God is patient with honest questions. He gives space for our weakness as seen in how Jesus goes on to defend John in the following verses.

4 Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see:

5 The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Slide # 6

Isaiah 26:19 (NKJV)

19 Your **dead shall live**; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead.

Isaiah 29:18 (NKJV)

18 In that day the **deaf** shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the **blind** shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness.

Slide # 7

Isaiah 35:5–6 (NKJV)

5 Then the eyes of the **blind** shall be opened, And the ears of the **deaf** shall be unstopped.

6 Then the **lame** shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the **dumb** sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.

Isaiah 61:1 (NKJV)

1 “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To **preach good tidings to the poor**; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

What Jesus was doing were prophesied kingdom sign miracles in perfect accord with kingdom realities which served to show that He was the Messiah Who brings in the kingdom. These were kingdom credentials of the Messiah!

6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.”

This serves as a mild rebuke of John. It serves as a reminder that all believers who recognize Jesus as the Christ are blessed (cf. Jn. 20:31). Now of course John knew this. It was John who claimed to be the voice in the wilderness preparing the way of the LORD (Jn. 1:23). It was John who said there stands one among you “whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose” (Jn. 1:27). It was John who announced Jesus to be “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29). It was John who testified that Jesus is “the Son of God” (Jn. 1:34). And it was John who said, “I am not the Christ, but, I have been sent before Him (Jn. 3:28).

John was not renouncing all this – just trying to make sense of his current situation in light of his understanding of what he thought the Messiah was going to immediately do.

Slide # 8

It is less what Jesus did and said that makes Him a stumbling block for many; it is rather that He does not conform to what we think He ought to have done and said.

– ***The New International Bible Commentary***

It is way too easy to assume a Jesus of our own making according to our own human thinking, when in fact God’s ways may be completely different. That is why we must not approach God with any preconceived ideas about Who He is or how He works. We must let Him tell us. This is the lesson that Jesus is teaching John at this point.

Slide # 9

Isaiah 55:8–9 (NKJV)

8 “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.

9 “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are **My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.**

Vance Havner called this “***The Forgotten Beatitude***” – “***Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.***” We must let God be God – let Jesus be Jesus. Don’t try to conform Him to our human thinking or our preconceived ideas.

Even if we can’t make sense of things – we must remain firmly camped on the truth of Who Jesus is knowing that He is Lord over all and that He has a sovereign plan that He is working out – even if we can’t understand it. This is our calling as believers, whether it be Job, John the Baptist, or you.

The idea of being “***offended***” (Gk. skandalizo) is the idea of stumbling or being caught in sin. Just because Jesus isn’t doing things the way we think He should be, we should NOT fall into the sin of challenging or sinfully doubting God. The way of the blessed is not to be offended when things don’t make sense. Don’t blame Jesus! Don’t be sinfully offended. Walk by faith. Never doubt in the dark what you have known to be true in the light.

Slide # 10



Interestingly, Jesus didn’t really give John more insight. He just reminded him of what he already knew – which is that Jesus is the Messiah fulfilling prophecy. John ended up going to his death without having all his specific questions answered or understanding how his prison experience fit in with “the kingdom being at hand.” Job had a similar experience. Job likewise never got all the answers he was demanding.

Sometimes God says, “You have all the evidence you need. Just hold onto your faith consistent with the Scriptural truth.” That is the blessed position before God.

7 As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?”

Jesus privately sent a “mild rebuke” to John the Baptist exhorting him to not be offended because of Him. John in effect needed to be strengthened in his faith. Jesus told Peter before his fall, “when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” (Lk. 22:32). We all need to be strengthened. James says, “we all stumble in many things” (Ja. 3:2). And to strengthen John the Baptist at this point Jesus sent him right back to the Scriptures showing him how He as the Christ is fulfilling them.

Yet, at the same time, Jesus publicly defended John as a stable man of conviction by asking a series of rhetorical questions in relation to him.

First Jesus asks them (referring to John) if they went out to the wilderness to see “***a reed shaken in the wind***” – metaphorically speaking. A reed shaken in the wind is a picture of compromise – bending any which way the winds of human opinion are blowing. It pictures a person who lacks strong conviction. It portrays a double-minded person vacillating on everything (cf. Ja. 1:8). John was not a fickle person tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine or with every emotion or every whim (cf. Eph. 4:14).

Slide # 11



A reed was a tall, slender-leaved plant that would bend and bow in the wind. It is a picture of being unstable or fickle. That was NOT John. John was confused and puzzled but he was not a man given to compromise. He was a man who would not bend, and he would not bow to compromise. That had not changed. There is a difference between being confused and having character issues. John was confused – not compromised.

8 But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

John was not a softy like the politically elite who never had a real job in their life. John had lived an austere lifestyle. He was a “man’s man” if there ever was one. The word translated “soft” here is the same word translated “homosexual” in 1 Cor. 6:9. It connotes softness or effeminacy. John was not a femmie kind a guy. He was tough and rugged.

Matt. 3:4 says John was clothed with “**camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist**”. John was no spoiled softy. Rather he was a rugged prophet in the line of Elijah of OT fame.

His question arose not from personal weakness or failure but from misunderstanding about the nature of the Messiah. – **D.A. Carson**

John was neither one who bowed to popular opinion nor one who sought an easy life. – **The New Bible Commentary**

9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet.

Jesus here answers His own question. Yes, John was a prophet, but he was more than a mere prophet. John not only prophesied, he was himself the fulfillment of the forerunner prophecies in the OT Scriptures. That made him special over all other prophets.

10 For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’

Jesus here quotes Scripture to show who John the Baptist was as seen in the prophecy of Malachi 3:1.

Slide # 12

Malachi 3:1 (NKJV)

1 “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, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the LORD of hosts.

John was not merely a prophet but rather Christ’s messenger or forerunner who went before Him to prepare the way by calling the people to repentance.

Mark in his gospel in Mark 1:2-3 combined the prophecy from Mal. 3:1 with that of Isa. 40:3.

Slide # 13

Isaiah 40:3 (NKJV)

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.

Slide # 14

Other men had prophesied the Coming of Christ, but John was the one chosen to announce His actual arrival. It has been well said, “John *opened the way* for Christ and then he got *out of the way* for Christ.” – **William MacDonald**

11 “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Jesus is here talking about the privileged position that John had as the forerunner to Christ. In this life there was no higher privilege. And yet all those who go into the kingdom will find themselves in an even greater position than that which John enjoyed during his earthly ministry.

Slide # 15

Luke 10:23–24 (NKJV)

23 Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, “**Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see;**

24 for I tell you that **many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen** it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it.”

MANY prophets desired to see the Messiah and did not. But John did. John had the high honor and esteemed privilege to intimately go before the Messiah and prepare the way for Him and then to announce Him to the nation. Others had vaguely prophesied about the coming Christ, but John saw more clearly and more intimately than them all. All the other prophets vaguely looked forward to this day -but John had the privilege to personally usher it in.

And yet in the kingdom all God’s children will have an even greater access to Jesus than John ever knew. All the saints in the kingdom will see on a greater level than John ever did. Thus, even the least of the saints in the kingdom will be in a greater position than John was in his earthly ministry (cf. Jn. 3:29).

This was not intended to discredit John, for Jesus had been exalting him, but rather to signify how blessed and honored one is to be in the kingdom. – **Ed Glasscock**

Note the kingdom was yet future as John is regarded as NOT yet being in the kingdom at this point. This is important because some want to claim the kingdom is just a spiritual reality, when in fact biblically it is physical reality in which Christ will physically reign in Jerusalem on David's throne.

12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

This is a difficult verse because it can legitimately be understood in two different ways, and both are theologically true. And so good commentators have differing views here and this is not a place for strong dogmatism.

The issue is how to understand the phrase “**suffers violence**”. In the Greek the verb “**suffers**” (Gk. *biazomai*) can legitimately be taken as either being in the middle or the passive voice and how you take it determines how you interpret what is being said. Middle is reflexive in the sense that something does it to itself with the idea then being “**the kingdom violently forces its own way**”. In contrast passive is the idea of the action being forced upon it from the outside with the sense being ‘**the kingdom is being treated violently**’.

Slide # 16

"So then in Matt. 11:12 the form can be either middle or passive and either makes sense, though a different sense." (Robertson's *Word Pictures in the NT*).

Slide # 17

Middle Voice Nuance

“The truth of the kingdom presses ahead relentlessly [forcefully advancing] and only the relentless [determinedly committed] press their way into it.”

An argument for this view is the cross reference in Luke 16:16 where the same verb translated as “**suffers**” in Mt. 11:12 is translated as “**pressing**” in Luke 16:16. In Luke it clearly shows the conversion commitment of believers in spite of opposition.

Slide # 18**Luke 16:16 (NKJV)**

16 “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is **pressing** into it.

However, “**suffers**” in Matthew 11:12 can just as legitimately be taken in the passive sense and if taken that way here is the sense.

Slide # 19***Passive Voice Nuance***

“The truth of the kingdom suffers violence [from rebel religious leaders] who are seeking to seize it.”

A most compelling argument for this view is the cross reference of Matthew 23:13.

Slide # 20**Matthew 23:13 (NKJV)**

13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! **For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.**”

This verse parallels Matthew 11:12-13 where the religious leaders were bringing violence to the kingdom program. Since they resisted the King they were hindering the kingdom’s coming and the ability of the people to enter it. The rejection of Jesus by Israel’s leaders “effectually shut the door to the Kingdom offering by God through His Son upon earth.” – **Michael Vlach** in *He Will Reign Forever*, p. 373

In light of the surrounding context emphasizing persecution and what John was going through this passive interpretation probably makes the most sense. But again, it can legitimately be understood either way.

However, note a couple of things.

In matters of interpretation CONTEXT is KING! We noted in Chapter 10 there are two great emphases. There is the matter of delegated power to the apostles to do kingdom sign miracles; but then there is also a strong emphasis on persecution that would accompany the ministry.

Slide # 21**Matthew 10 Context – Persecution...**

10:16 – “sheep in the midst of wolves”

10:22 – “you will be hated by all for My name’s sake.”

10:28 – “do not fear those who kill the body...”

10:34 – “I did not come to bring peace but a sword.”

10:36 – “a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.”

This whole context of predicted persecution leads into the experience and question of John the Baptist in chapter 11. So, the context is one of emphasizing expected persecution. In addition to this the context right after dealing with John’s imprisonment goes on to address “this generations” rejection of both John and Jesus as seen in 11:16-19.

So, right in the MIDDLE of this whole extended subject of persecution and rejection is Matthew 11:12 which in keeping with the greater context would seem also to relate to the violent opposition of people in response to the kingdom message. Jesus is saying this hostile rejection is to be expected.

Matt. 11:12 says the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence “from the days of John the Baptist” (the beginning of his ministry) – which at the time Jesus was speaking would have been for about 18 months. It was John who burst on the scene and started preaching “**repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**” (Mt. 3:2). Then Jesus followed suit with the same message, also saying, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**” (Mt. 4:17). This message was met with violent opposition by the religious leaders and those rejecting it.

In addition to the contextual argument the most natural rendering of the language in this setting translated as “*violence*” (*Gk. biazetai*) followed up with language of “*take it by force*” (*Gk. harpazousin*) would seem to indicate this is the action of those hostile to the kingdom message.

Taking this as a violent response on the part of the unbeliever, which I tend to do for the reasons stated, the idea is that kingdom truth has been under attack since the time John began to preach it as seen in opposition to John the Baptist and then to the Christ He pointed to.

The pattern is clear. Persecution is to be expected. Yes, the kingdom was being offered. Yes, there were “kingdom signs” being exhibited. But the kingdom was not here yet! And until it comes those rejecting the message of Christ will respond violently to it. This is to be expected!

13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

The law and the prophets represent the whole of the Old Testament. The whole message of the OT was really preparatory and looked forward to the coming of Christ. But John was the last of these OT prophets and as such he had the privilege to actually “**bring the message home**” so to speak in that no more was the message one of anticipation, but now one of announcement that the KING is here; hence the need for repentance so that they might go into the kingdom.

Slide # 22

When John stepped out on the stage of history, his unique role was not just prophecy; it was announcing the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning Christ’s First Advent. – **William MacDonald**

This establishes the primary function of the OT in Matthew’s Gospel: it points to Jesus and the kingdom. – **D.A. Carson**

By the way as a side note what was the collective experience of the OT prophets up until John. Did they have a “cushy” life? Were they well accepted and appreciated?

Slide # 23

Acts 7:52 (NKJV)

52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,

This is pre-kingdom experience. Why should John think he was any different? He proclaimed the “kingdom as being at hand” but they were not there yet. What was missing? Well, it was the reality of REPENTANCE. Until Israel is repentant the expectation is to be largely that of rejection and persecution that goes with it. This will be the experience of God’s people generally until the kingdom comes. In this there is consistency!

14 And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come.

Jesus was not saying that John the Baptist was literally “Elijah”. John had plainly said he was NOT Elijah in John 1:21. However, John did come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Slide # 24**Luke 1:17 (NKJV)**

17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

John the Baptist had an Elijah like ministry in calling the people to repentance. If the people of Israel had responded they would have gone into the kingdom. But you say, how can that be – because then Christ would not have gone to the cross. Well, God knew they wouldn’t receive Him and the cross was part of the plan all along.

So how can the offer of the kingdom pre-cross be legit if God knew they were going to reject Jesus as the Messiah all along.

If Israel had accepted Christ at His first coming, would He have established the kingdom immediately, and would John the Baptist have been Elijah? The answer is yes. You say, “How can that be?” I have an answer for you: I don’t know. I only know what Jesus said, and He can do things which I cannot explain. In fact, He does a lot of things which I can’t explain; I simply accept them.

– J. Vernon McGee

Clearly there are TWO “Elijah” figures in relationship to prophetic history. After the martyrdom of John the Baptist, Jesus again renewed the promise that Elijah must come first and restore all things. John did not do this, but Elijah will.

Slide # 25**Matthew 17:11–13 (NKJV)**

11 Jesus answered and said to them, “Indeed, **Elijah is coming first and will restore all things.**

12 But I say to you that **Elijah has come already**, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.”

13 Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist.

Prophetically, it is Elijah who comes before the Messiah to call Israel to repentance and ultimately, he will be successful. As Jesus said he, “**will restore all things**”. John the Baptist came in the role of Elijah but was not successful – in that sense. He experienced persecution and death.

As you put it all together – the Messiah MUST have an “Elijah” forerunner before He comes. That was true at His first coming in which John the Baptist in an Elijah-like role called the people to repentance because the kingdom was being offered on that condition. However, the people under their religious leadership at that time rejected Jesus Christ and called for Him to be crucified.

Prior to the Second Coming of Christ, Elijah will come as the forerunner to Christ and he will succeed in calling the nation of Israel to repentance.

Slide # 26

Malachi 4:5–6 (NKJV)

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

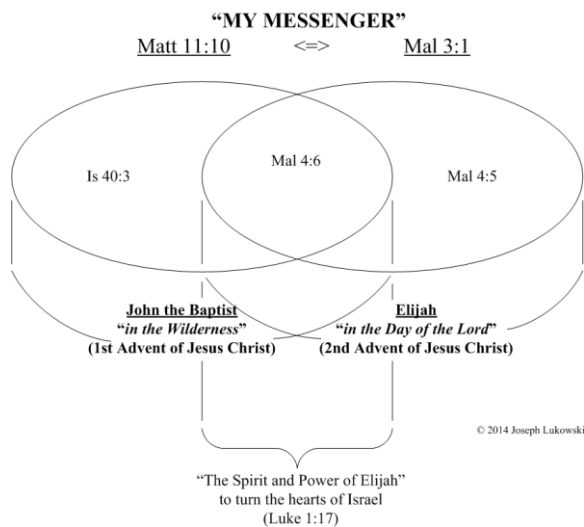
6 And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

Before the GREAT TRIBULATION – which is the second half of the Tribulation Elijah will appear on the scene and in repentance he will turn the hearts of the children of Israel (cf. Acts 3:21). For this reason many of us believe Elijah will be one of the two special witnesses in the first half of the Tribulation Period as seen in Revelation 11.

To this day the Jews when celebrating the Passover meal set a plate for Elijah – waiting for him to come. At some point in the meal – they will have a child go and check the door to see if Elijah has come.

But you see they don’t understand the Messiah ultimately has TWO comings and in relation to each coming He has an “Elijah” forerunner who calls the people to repentance.

When Israel is finally repentant the Messiah will come and set up the kingdom. So, yes indeed we are still waiting for Elijah to come and successfully call Israel to repentance. First comes Elijah the forerunner and then comes the Messiah and His kingdom.

Slide # 27

There is scarcely a passage in Scripture which shows more clearly that the kingdom was being offered to Israel at this time. Its coming was contingent upon one thing: Israel’s receiving it by genuine repentance. ...[John] fulfilled Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1, but not Malachi 4:5-6 because the latter passage is dependent upon the [repentant] response of the people. – **Stanley Toussaint**

15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

In context the point is that John the Baptist with an Elijah-like ministry was indeed the prophesied forerunner going before the Messiah showing that indeed Jesus is the prophesied Messiah.

The formula: “**He who has ears to hear, let him hear**” is used 15 times by the Lord – seven times in the gospels in relation to His earthly ministry (cf. Lk. 8:8; Mt. 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mk. 4:23; 7:16; Lk. 14:35); and eight times in the book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 2-3; 13:9). Only Jesus used this language denoting His voice of authority. It denotes a solemn warning that one better pay close attention to the message being given because it is all important.

This phrase “**He who has ears to hear, let him hear**” puts the emphasis on being responsible to respond. It thus emphasizes human responsibility and the need to personally appropriate what is being said.

Here is the bottom line: If John the Baptist did indeed fulfill the Elijah-type prophecies concerning the forerunner Elijah, then Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah!

What are the odds that anyone could ever just as a matter of happenstance have a forerunner go before them in the spirit and power of Elijah? What are the odds that it could happen just at the right time with a national audience like John the Baptist had? What are the odds that it just happens to align with prophecy given 700 and 400 years in advance as seen in Isaiah and Malachi respectively? What are the odds that following this forerunner a man with an unparalleled signs and wonders ministry would come on the scene? What are the odds that this could all just be orchestrated by man? The odds are ZERO!

Scholars estimate that Christ fulfilled at least 109 specific OT prophecies at His first coming. Statisticians claim that the odds of one person fulfilling just 8 of these prophecies is one in 10 to the 17th power. That is a 10 with 17 zeros after it (i.e., 100,000,000,000,000,000).

The equivalent of this would be to fill the state of Texas with 2 feet of silver dollars. Mark one of them with an X and then thoroughly mix. The odds of having a blindfolded man pick out the X-marked silver dollar is one in 10 to the 17th power. Yet Jesus fulfilled not merely 8 specific prophecies, but over a hundred of them!

Only God could orchestrate the many faceted prophetic details that found fulfillment in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the reality of John the Baptist to the letter fulfilling the forerunner prophecies as found in Isa. 40:3 and Mal. 3:1 is one of the major evidences showing emphatically that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear!