



Old Testament Reading: Malachi 3:1-3, 4:5-6 – New Testament Reading: Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

Behold the King **“The King Proclaimed”** **Matthew 3:1-6**

The 39 books of the Old Testament can be summed up in two “bookend” verses.

- Genesis 1:1 – God created the perfect habitation for man and initiated a personal relationship with him.
- Malachi 4:6 – man still lives in the painful separation from God’s love.
- Over 4000 years of human history; over 70 generations of people, who witnessed the greatest miracles of God and experienced the severest chastisement from God, yet none of this changed their heart toward God. Why?

- “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it?” Jeremiah 17:9

What one generation allows in moderation, the next generation excuses in excess, and the third generation adopts as a new, but lower standard.

Malachi 4:5-6 was the last word from God for 400 years. There were no prophets, no angelic messengers, and no acts of chastisement or miraculous blessings from God.

- During those 400 silent years, God prepared the world stage for the first coming of Jesus as the Messiah, the Savior, to redeem God’s people from their sins.
- *“In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman; born under the law, that He might redeem those under the law.”* – Galatians 4:4
- During the last 2000 years, God has prepared the world stage for the second coming of Jesus as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.
- *“Immediately after the tribulation...then shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds with power and great glory.”* – Matthew 24:29-30

Matthew’s goal in writing his gospel is to prove Jesus was and is the King who will one day rule the world.

- Chapter 1 – Jesus was proven to be the King by virtue of His miraculous birth.
- Chapter 2 – Jesus was proven to be the King by virtue of the behavior of the Magi who worshipped Him and King Herod who feared Him.
- Chapter 3 – Jesus was proven to be the King by virtue of the way John the Baptist announced His arrival – Jesus was given the same “herald” that was due a king.
- John was the official “herald,” inaugurating the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ, and exhorting the people to prepare their hearts for the coming of the King.

1. His Spiritual Legacy – Matthew 3:1-4 – “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea.”

- The name “John” means “Jehovah is Gracious.”
- The title “Baptizer” was because of what he did; John baptized those who desired to repent of their sins and prepare their hearts for the coming of the King.
- John’s father was Zacharias, a priest who served in the Temple at Jerusalem, and his mother was Elizabeth, an elderly woman who was unable to conceive.
- Six months before he told Mary she was to give birth to Jesus, the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that Elizabeth was to bear a son, that they were to call him John, and that he would be one of God’s greatest men.
- Because Zacharias doubted Gabriel, God struck him dumb until Elizabeth gave birth to their son.
- At the moment of John’s birth, Zacharias and Elizabeth recognized him as a gift from God, and they dedicated him back to God for His use and His glory.
- At the age of 14, John took the Nazarite Vow to abstain from intoxicating drinks, to allow his hair to grow, and to refrain from touching the dead. (Samson and Samuel)

- At the age of 16, John adopted the lifestyle of Elijah, wearing a cloak of camel's hair held up by a leather belt, and living off the land.
- After his father and mother died, John determined to live in the desert, saturate himself with the study of the Holy Scriptures, in order to develop a "Kingdom Mindset"!
- John became convinced he was living in the day when the Kingdom of God would become a reality.
- John knew God had conceived him, birthed him, trained him, and equipped him for a special service, and he knew the time had come for him to call the people to repent of their sins and to prepare their heart for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

2. His Singular Ministry – Matthew 3:1-5 – Verse 2: “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

- Bethabara, which means “house of the ford,” is where John began to preach and Jesus came to be baptized.
- Historians believe over a million people made the 30-mile journey into this wilderness area to hear this wild-looking man preach a very simple, two-point sermon:
 - Repent – the King is coming!
- Repentance is the act of turning away from our sins and turning toward the Savior.
- Repentance is not something WE must do to be saved.
- Repentance is the work of God in our lives as the evidence we have been saved.
- What drew thousands of people into the desert to hear John the Baptist preach was their desire to be forgiven of their sins and to be prepared for the coming of the King.

3. His Sacred Memory – Matthew 11:11 – “Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.”

- John the Baptist was a unique child, born of a miraculous conception, filled with the Holy Spirit before he left his mother's womb, and dedicated to God by his parents.
- He desired to live in the desert to avoid the sin in the city and to be immersed in the study of the Scriptures.
- What made John the Baptist great was his willingness to risk his own life to proclaim a message from God that was totally different from what was being preached in that day; to call people to repent of their sins and prepare their heart for the coming of the King.
- Those who received John's message were the first people to follow Christ when He launched His earthly ministry and among the first to be called “Christians” at Antioch.
- In that regard, every Christian owes John the Baptist a debt of gratitude.