

- The forerunner of Christ is prophesied in Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1. John comes to herald the coming and arrival of the King, the Messiah. John is the final OT prophet after 400 years of quiet to Israel.
- At Sinai, in Ex. 24:7, Israel accepted the Mosaic Covenant. Gal. 4:4-5, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those under the Law.
- John was sent to prepare the people of Israel for the Lord's coming and to turn their hearts to the Lord, Luke 1:13-17.
- Matt. 3:1-2, John's message was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." People came to John to be baptized, confessing their sins (V6). John's message was preparing the hearts of Jews to receive Christ's message.
- Acts 26:22-23, the Prophets and Moses prophesized that Jesus would come and proclaim light to the Jewish people and Gentiles.

The Genuine Believer in Christ sees John the Baptist as God's Prophet to Proclaim Christ:

1. **The Genuine Believer in Christ is Unshakable in Faith:** Matt. 11:7-9, Jesus questions them about who they expected to see in the wilderness? (1) A reed shaken by the wind? No, John wasn't swayed by public opinion or those of reputation. (2) A man in soft clothes? Someone wearing effeminate and colorful clothes? No, John came wearing camel's hair and a leather belt. (3) John is a prophet and more than a prophet. John's coming was prophesied in Scripture, and he also proclaimed Jesus as the Lamb of God. A believer stays faithful to God even through suffering and pain because God keeps him, 1 Pet. 1:3-7.
2. **The Genuine Believer in Christ is an Undeniable Witness:** V10-11, Why has not anyone been greater than John? The prophets announced Jesus would come, 1 Pet. 1:10-11. Moses in Deut. 18:18. David in Psalm 24:7. Isaiah in Is. 53. Jereimiah in Jer. 33:15. Ezekiel in Ez. 43:7. Daniel in Dan. 9:25-26. Hosea in Hos. 3:5. Joel in Joel 3:1-2. In John 1:29, John declared that Jesus was the Lamb of God and knew he must decrease and Christ must increase.
 - a. **What about verse 11b?** "Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."
(1) We have the revelation of the New Covenant and NT Scriptures. (2) Those who have been born again can testify of Christ because of the work done within them. 1 Thess. 1:9-10, the Thessalonians turned from idols and turned to Christ. They saw the light of Christ.
3. **The Genuine Believer in Christ is Undeterred in Persecution:** V12, the phrase, "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force," what does that mean? Does it mean that the advance of the kingdom of God is difficult? Does it mean that the assigned representatives are under attack and the followers need to be aware? Is it evil men that want to take it and use it for their wicked purposes? It can be explained as the representatives of Christ and those who follow Him are under attack by wicked men who want to use the work of Christ for themselves and their wicked purposes.
 - a. In Matt. 2, Herod sought to kill all the male children. In Matt. 3, wicked leaders wanted to use the baptism of John to persuade others of their authority and holiness. In Matt. 4, Satan tempts Jesus to worship him. In Matt. 5, Jesus warns believers that they will be insulted and persecuted. In Matt. 6, believers are told not to worry about their life, but to trust that God will give them what they need. In Matt. 7, Jesus tells believers to beware of false prophets. In Matt. 8, Jesus heals demon-possessed men, but the people wanted Him to leave their region. In Matt. 9, Jesus eats with sinners and is insulted by the Jewish leaders. In Matt. 10, Jesus sends the 12 out letting them know how to respond when those they preach to reject His message of the kingdom of heaven. In Matt. 21:33-46, Jesus tells how the Jews have killed the prophets and will kill the Son as well.
 - b. Genuine believers hold fast to their faith in Christ in persecution, 2 Tim. 2:12. If we died with Him, we will also live with Him. We have been given His Spirit and adopted as His children, Rom. 8:15-17, "if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

4. **The Genuine Believer in Christ has an Unwavering Trust:** V14-15, John is Elijah that has come to proclaim Christ. John said in John 1:21, that he wasn't Elijah, but Jesus says John was. Who is right? Elijah will come again during the Tribulation as a witness of Christ's return in Revelation 11. John came as Elijah to proclaim the coming of Christ in that day.
 - a. We must believe what John preached, because he was prophesied to come and point us to Jesus.
 - b. If we reject the teaching of John, we reject the truth of Scripture, V10 (Mal. 3:1, Is. 40:3).

Further Discussion and Application

We must believe in Jesus, the One foretold in the Scriptures. Why must we accept and believe all of Scripture? Why would rejecting the prophesies of the OT prevent someone from being able to rightly divide the Word of truth? How should we receive the teachings of the OT and NT? What were the apostles teaching and preaching about Christ in the book of Acts?

How do we know that we are in Christ? How does our faith remain even in the face of trial or tribulation? In John 10:28-30, Jesus says that no one can snatch us out of the hand of the Father and Jesus Himself. Why is our salvation safe and secure?

How do we provide witness of the work and person of Christ in our lives? How can we witness each day to those in our lives? What can we testify concerning Christ and His power to save and transform our lives?

Persecution comes to those who follow Christ. What are the blessings of persecution? According to 1 Peter 1:3-7, what do trials prove in us and to us? In verse 3-5, there are great blessings to those who have been born again. What are those blessings? In verse 8 and 9, what is the source of this great joy in our lives? What do we hope and yearn for as believers?

In everything, our source of strength and comfort is God's word and His abiding Spirit within us. What are the blessings found in Romans 8 for the believer? Why is the outcome of our lives so secure? What power have we been given that keeps and established us?