

The First Coming of King Jesus Part 9: The Forerunner of the King

December 4, 2022

Matthew 3:1-6

From the Greek: “prodromos” meaning precursor, forerunner, messenger & herald.

The Application: Reminder that Christmas has a perilous danger that goes along with Jesus’s birth: virgin birth, preaching, miracles, trial, death and sacrifice, resurrection, and rule. These aspects of Christmas point us to eternity and judgement, division and loss.

4 Aspects of the 1st Forerunner of Jesus:

- 1) **Approach:** Matt. 3:1 and Luke 1: 5-25, John came preaching (announcing the coming of the Lord) in the wilderness of Judea and would turn the hearts of Israel to the Lord. Zacharias, John’s father, spoke of John in Luke 1:67-79. In v76, John is called a prophet of the Most High. John preceded Jesus in announcement, birth, preaching, and death.
- 2) **Announcement:** Matt. 3:2: What was the message? “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Same message Jesus proclaimed in Matt. 4:17. Repent means to turn. Is it a turning from sin to righteousness as in Joel 2:12 (with fasting, weeping, and mourning), v13 (tear your heart). Is. 55:7 (the wicked forsake his way, thoughts). The kingdom is physical. Jesus is coming again, neither John nor Jesus gave an alternate kingdom. It can’t be spiritual only because Jesus is not preaching to all the world at this time. The disciples anticipated a future kingdom, Matt. 20:20-28 and Acts 1:6.

4 Variables of the kingdom of heaven being at hand:

- a) **Packaged deal variable:** it was close because Jesus was there ministering on earth.
 - b) **Divine-timing variable:** it was close from our time vantage, Dan.9:24-27 (remaining week of years), Rev.12 (short time), 1 Thess.4 (rapture), 1 Pet. 4:7 (end of all things at hand), 2 Pet. 3:8 (1 day=1000 yrs.), Phil. 4:5 (at hand), Rev. 22:12 (coming quickly).
 - c) **Grammatical variable:** “is at hand” means “drawn near” not happening now.
 - d) **Temporary offer variable:** the message of Christ would be clear. But, it is modified in Matt. 12 after He is rejected. In Matt. 13:3, Jesus began speaking in parables. If you were a believer, you would understand. Matt. 28:19-20, Jesus would be with believers until the end of the age, so it is not complete yet.
- 3) **Approval:** of John in Matt. 3:3 referred to in Isaiah 40:3, Mal. 4:6. V4, dressed in camel’s hair eating locusts and honey with a leather belt. Jesus affirmed John as the one these prophecies referred to, Matt. 11:14. He looked nothing like the Pharisees (Mk. 12:38-40). Elijah was similarly dressed: 2 Kings 1:8. John was commissioned to announce Jesus in the wilderness. Matt. 3:3 reads: “In the wilderness; Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His path straight.”
 - 4) **Assignment:** Matt. 3:5-6, John is baptizing in the Jordan River those who desire to confess their sins. John was making Jews start as Gentiles and be cleansed and warned that Messiah is coming and citizenship in the kingdom depends on repentance of sins.

Aspects of the 2nd Forerunner:

Between Isaiah 39 and 40 Babylon would gain strength, put Israel under tribute and destroy Jerusalem. Isaiah speaks of comfort for Israel 100 years before Babylon comes. The Persians would allow the Jews to return and rebuild (Ezra/Nehemiah). Chapters 1-39 of Isaiah are full of the pain of captivity and judgement. Chapters 40-66 speak of peace and restoration of Israel. Layer 1: Is. 40:6-8, the word of the Lord stands forever. God will bring them home. Layer 2: Is. 40:4, every obstacle removed because Israel has repented.

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Layer 3: 2nd Forerunner is the people of Jerusalem in the last days. Jerusalem the highest place on earth, Is.2:2 & Micah 4:1. From Zion (the City of God), Is. 40:9: "Behold your God" is spoken to the cities of Judah at the end of the Tribulation that Messiah is come.

Further Discussion and Application

If we believe in Jesus' virgin birth, it reveals that Jesus is God. As God, Jesus should be worshipped. As God, we accept His commandments and teachings. Spend a moment to reflect on the commands of Christ. Read Romans 12 & Gal. 5:16-26. What should be the focus of our lives in worship and service to the Lord and His church?

Read Acts 17:31, 2 Cor. 5:10, Acts 10:42, John 5:22, 27, 12:47-48. These passages speak about Jesus the judge. As judge of all, Jesus will judge according to the righteousness of God. What are the implications of that judgement? How pure and holy do we need to be to enter heaven? Can we see that the virgin birth is one piece of our faith, and the return and rule of Jesus is also sure and to come? How do we focus our lives to please the Lord?

How is repentance a blessing from the Lord for our sanctification and Christlikeness? Why was the message of repentance by John the Baptist important for righteousness vs. how the pharisees promoted righteousness within Israel?

How does a heart changed by the Lord act, live, think, and hope? What is a believer looking forward to?

Jesus entered into the Holy of Holies to offer Himself as the sacrifice to take away sins (Heb. 6:19-20) and has prepared a place for believers (Jn. 14:1-4) when He comes to take us there. Consider what the Lord has finished and completed? What is your part in the work of Christ? What is left to do?

Jesus came as a baby and was crucified with sinners. How will His perfection, beauty, glory, and majesty be demonstrated and revealed on the day of His coming? Why must we get the full story of Jesus as God, Ruler, and Judge correct?