

Preparing & Beginning (Matthew 3-4)

Focus Bible Study

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ELIJAH	JOHN THE BAPTIST
Description • Fiery; shocks & challenges; striking character (judgment, law, severity) • Unique • Single-minded commitment • Calling: to confront, not comfort (Kings & Israelites) • Irresistible authority; extraordinary stature • Lived in isolation in Judean wilderness; ate strange food • Appearance: ◦ Hairy cloak/mantle) with a leather belt (or girdle) tied around his waist Strengths & Accomplishments • Most famous & dramatic of all prophets • Used by God to: ◦ Predicted start & end of 3-yr drought ◦ Raise dead child to mother ◦ Bring fire from heaven in Baal contest • Appeared w/ Moses & Jesus in transfiguration Low Point • Fleeing from Jezebel; afraid for his life; alone & dejected after • "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." ⁵ And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. Key Verses "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." (1 Kings 18)	Description • Unique, striking character • Wild-looking w/ no official power, position in Jewish political system • Proclaimed the coming of the Savior • Proclaimed repentance • Nazarite—set apart for God's service from birth • Appearance: ◦ outer garment made of rough camel's hair with a leather belt tied around his waist • Ate locusts & wild honey • The last of the prophets Strengths & Accomplishments • Spoke truth to power w/ almost irresistible authority • People sought him out in wilderness • Pointed beyond himself to Jesus • Jesus said there is no person greater in the Kingdom Low Point • Imprisoned, near execution • Asked Jesus: "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" Key Verses This is he of whom it is written, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you." (Matt 11:10)

Elijah	John the Baptist
1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2	Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 1, 3; John 1
Prophet during time of spiritual apostasy in Israel	Prophet during time of spiritual decline and religious corruption
Confronted King Ahab	Confronted Herod Antipas
Confronted Jezebel	Confronted Herodias
Challenged the king's sin: "You have abandoned the commandments of the LORD" (1 Kings 18:18)	Challenged Herod's sin: "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife" (Mark 6:18)
Called Israel to repent	Called Israel to repent
Demanded a decision: "How long will you go limping between two different opinions?"	Demanded preparation for a decision: "Prepare the way of the Lord"
Ministered in the wilderness	Ministered in the wilderness
Wore distinctive prophetic clothing; described as a hairy man with a leather belt	Wore camel's hair and a leather belt
Depended upon God for food in the wilderness	Ate locusts and wild honey
God demonstrated His power through Elijah with fire from heaven	John performed no recorded miracles
Was feared and opposed by the ruling authorities	Was feared and opposed by Herod
Experienced a period of fear, exhaustion, and isolation after Mount Carmel	Experienced isolation in prison and questioned about Jesus
Had a successor: Elisha	Had a greater successor: Jesus
Elijah's ministry prepared Israel for renewed faithfulness to God	John's ministry prepared Israel for the arrival of the Messiah
Taken from earth dramatically in a whirlwind	Died by execution under Herod
Appeared with Moses at Jesus' Transfiguration	Was identified by Jesus as the "Elijah" who was to come

“The Elijah ↔ JTB Connection”
No surprise to Jesus

Isaiah 40:3

A voice cries:

**“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

300 Years

Malachi 4:5

“Behold, I will send you **Elijah the prophet before
the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.**

400 Years

Luke 1: 15-17

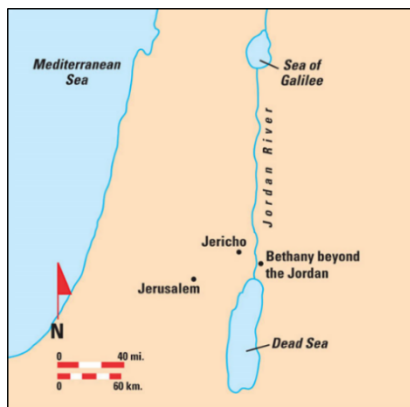
¹⁵ for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, ¹⁷ and he will go before him in the spirit and power of **Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.”**

30 Years

Matt 17:12-13

¹² But I tell you that **Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.” ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of **John the Baptist**.**

This is the prophetic signal that the promised Messiah (and Kingdom of God) is here!



Why does Jesus' baptism "fulfill all righteousness"?

But, there is a reason for saying this now—at his baptism:

1. He's declaring, right now, He will live a sinless life; righteousness in every possible area
 - Performing the entire will of God
 - Seeking baptism in order to be obedient to the will of God.
 - Beginning His public ministry with a physical rite that will say to the whole world:
"I want to do the will of God more than anything else"

Principle:

The sinlessness of Christ does not just serve as a nice example for us.

- It's fundamental and necessary for our salvation.
- If Christ had not been the "lamb without blemish", He could not have secured anyone's salvation (He would have needed a savior Himself)
- All of our sins that Jesus bore on the cross required a perfect sacrifice

Remember, our salvation requires **2 aspects of redemption from Jesus:**

DIED	LIVED
Jesus had to be our substitute & receive the due punishment for our sins.	Jesus had to fulfill the law of God perfectly to secure the merit necessary for us to receive the blessings of the covenant
The perfect for the imperfect The sinless for the sinful	The life of perfect obedience required for our salvation

RC Sproul
Essential Truths of the Christian Faith

"I consider this incident Jesus' first miracle: the miracle of his humility. The first thing that Jesus does for the human race is *go down with it* into the deep waters of repentance and baptism. Jesus' whole life will be like this. It is well known that Jesus *ends* his ministry on a cross between thieves; it deserves to be as well known that Jesus *begins* his ministry in a river among sinners. From his baptism to his execution Jesus stays low, at our level, identifying with us at every point, becoming as completely one with us in our humanity as...he is believed to be completely one with God in eternity. Jesus' "at-one-ment" with the human race, visible already here at baptism, is as impressive and important for human salvation as Jesus' "at-one-ment" with the heavenly Father."

Frederick Dales Brunner
Matthew, A Commentary

Chapter 4

Then Jesus was **led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.**

But why the test? Why did Jesus have to go through this?

Principle:

One of Jesus' roles:

- To serve as the new Adam (aka: "2nd Adam").
- He would do for us, what the 1st Adam failed to achieve
- By the 2nd Adam's obedience (Jesus'), His followers are redeemed

Both Adams were subjected to a probationary test: would achieve obedience & righteousness?

- For Christ to redeem us as the 2nd Adam, God had to be put Jesus to the test.

Just reviewing the 1st of the 3 temptations:

² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread."

⁴ But he answered, "It is written,

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."

Principle:

Jesus would not feed His soul on the things of the world. We cannot either [comfort, food, predictable future]. Like Jesus, we need a new appetite for God alone.

V18 Jesus officially chooses 4 of His 12 disciples: 2 sets of brothers:

1. Andrew and Peter **Immediately they left their nets and followed him.**
2. James and John **Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.**

Principle:

Christ called you to Himself because He wanted to (God doesn't do anything He doesn't want to).

You have security in His choice of you (loved and safe forever).

You have significance (you are important to God; no one can take it away).