

- Order of Service -

Call to Worship

Welcoming Prayer

Reading Matthew 3:1-12

- *46, Crown Him with many crowns*
 - Athanasian Creed
- *God, the uncreated one*
 - Athanasian Creed 2
- *28, O God our help in ages past!*
 - Athanasian Creed 3
- *Ancient of Days*
 - Athanasian Creed 4

Announcements and Prayer requests

Greeting

God sends His fore-runner of Christ, John the Baptist

Pt-2, Parallels and comparisons with Elijah & Jesus

Matthew 3:1-12

Sending prayer

You may notice we don't pass an offering plate

We invite you to participate in the ministry, and the offering box in the foyer is for your gifts and offerings for the Lord's work.

- 2 Corinthians 9:7-8, Galatians 6:6 -

Grace Bible Fellowship

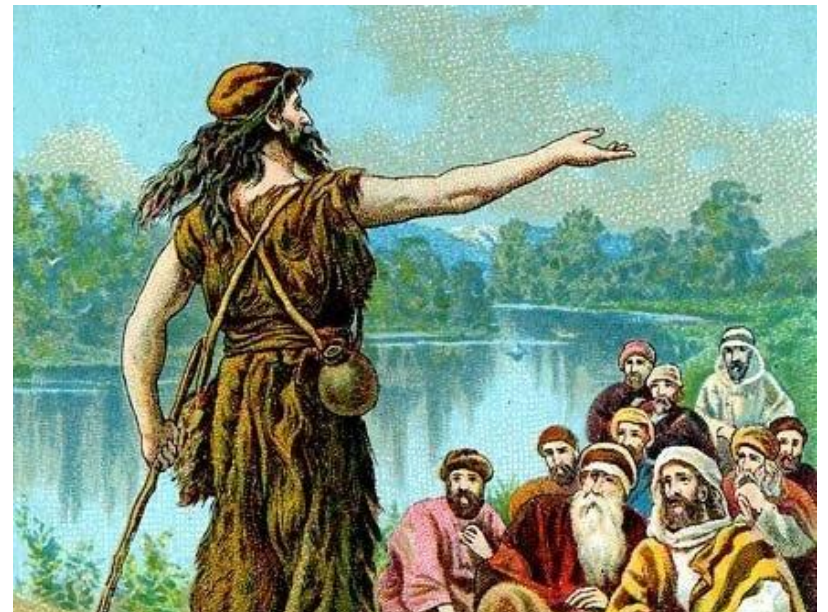
642 Ellen Lynn, Redwood Valley, CA 95470

(707) 485-7713 www.GraceBibleRedwoodValley.org



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love. truth. grace.

We are identified with Jesus Christ in his crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and heavenly seating.



- Teaching -

Eric Peterman

God sends His fore-runner of Christ, John the Baptist

Pt-2, Parallels and comparisons with Elijah & Jesus

Matthew 3:1-12

- January 7th, 2024 -

God sends His fore-runner of Christ, John the Baptist

Pt-2, Parallels and comparisons with Elijah & Jesus

Matthew 3:1-12

It was the practice in the time of Jesus, for forerunners to precede important individuals in order to prepare the way for their arrival. For example, when a king visited a town in his realm, his emissaries would go before him to announce and prepare for his visit. They would make sure that the town was in good condition to receive him. Sometimes his servants even had to do or arrange for minor roadwork to smooth the highway that the king would be taking as he approached his destination. John the Baptist not only prepared the way for Jesus, but he also announced Him as an important person and implied His royalty. But John did something more than prepare the way. John himself walked a parallel path in advance to Jesus in that he preceded Jesus' conception in his annunciation by the angel Gabriel, in his miraculous birth, in public appearance, in his pointed message to Israel about the kingdom of God, and in the cause and manner of his death.

*But the Bible, and Jesus himself, draws a strong parallel between John and the OT prophet Elijah (Luke 1:17, Matt 11:11-15). In a time of spiritual and moral decline and theological apostasy, Elijah called his people from indifference and playing both spiritual sides into a sharp crisis of faith: Choose God or Baal – you can't have both. And Elijah called down fire from heaven to make his point! John likewise called his people into a sharp crisis of faith, and into making a public declaration of it by baptism, and he promised that the one that followed him would call down a kind of fire from heaven. **Let us heed the spirit of the preaching of both John and of Jesus! Let us likewise respond instantly and thoroughly to the Word of God! Let us not be lukewarm to Jesus' call to belief and action, but snappy and refreshing!***

Let's start with last things first today. Let's start with John's parallel with the prophet Elijah. You'll recall that Elijah came on the scene when King Ahab and Queen Jezebel ran the Northern Kingdom (Israel). Prior to them, Solomon turned from God and His wisdom, to other gods, and his punishment was a split in his kingdom after his death. The Northern Kingdom turned to Baal worship due to its appeal and the fact that it's rival city, Jerusalem, was in the Southern Kingdom (Judah) "Hey, we have to have our own, competitive and better god!". Queen Jezebel had much to do with the rapid spread of Baal and the suppression of God's prophets in Israel. These events prompt Elijah's visit to king Ahab (who later comes back to the Lord) and informs him that a punishment will be

no dew or rain throughout the kingdom. Then in 1 Kings 18 Elijah, with God's direction, creates a crisis of faith between Baal and his 450 prophets, and God and his one prophet.

The crisis point is found at 1 Kings 18:36-40. It is here that a point of parallel comparison is drawn between the spirit at work in the prophets John and Elijah. **See Matthew 3:7-12**

Let's now see how God arranged John's life as a parallel to that of Jesus:

As Jesus' forerunner, John foreshadows in his person and work the person and work of Jesus.

Points of comparison:

1. Both John and Jesus annunciated by Gabriel.
2. Both miraculous births.
3. Both John and Jesus are the agents of God sent by God (11:10; 10:40).
4. Both belong to the time of fulfillment (3:3; 1:23).
5. Both have the same message to proclaim to Israel about the kingdom of God (3:2; 4:17).
6. Both enter into conflict with Israel: in the case of the crowds, an *initial favorable reception* ultimately gives way to *repudiation*; but in the case of the leaders, the *opposition is implacable from the outset* (3:7-10; 9:3).
7. Both John and Jesus are 'delivered up' to their enemies (4:12; 10:4).
8. And both are made to die violently and shamefully (14:3-12; 27:37).

Let us come to a firm realization: that God's nature and existence demand a decisive choice for us. This was true for John and Jesus, and their message demands the same. Either know and follow Him, or follow the many paths of Baal and of false religion (or no religion).

For the believer in Christ, we must heed and take to heart and life the faith delivered once and for all to us. Jesus will not suffer to be an appendage or add on to our lives. He does not desire a half-way alive, half-way dead spiritual existence... a limbo. He is worthy and He supplies eternal life. Let us decidedly walk in the integrity and joy of that life.