

Ancient Anticipation Part 3: The Official Frontrunner of Jesus

December 10, 2023

Isaiah 40:3-5, Mark 1:1-8

>>Daniel is reading Jeremiah 25 in Daniel 9:1-3. He understands that the 70 years of Israel's captivity is nearing the end which started with Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, in 605 BC. Daniel reading in 9:1-2 is likely about 4 years before the end of 70 years. Babylon attacked Israel in 605BC, 597BC, and 587BC, finally destroying Jerusalem in 586BC. Israel was brought under tribute after the invasion of 605BC, but Jehoiakim rebelled 3 years after agreeing to pay tribute (2 Kgs. 24:1). The Medes and Persians conquer Babylon as written in Daniel 5:13-31.

>>Isaiah preached a message that Israel would reject in Is. 6:8-10. How long should Isaiah proclaim the message? Until the cities are laid waste, houses are without a man, and the country desolate, Is. 6:11-13. Isaiah's message beginning in Ch. 40 is much more comforting to Israel.

>>The 70 years of captivity is according to God's command to keep the Sabbath Year as outlined in Lev. 25:1-4. Lev. 26:31-35 outlines that the land will have Sabbath Year rest if the children of Israel don't obey God's command to observe it. 2 Chron. 36:21 outlines the cause for captivity.

>>Is. 40:3-5, Isaiah's prophecy about a prepared road, smooth way, and a highway for the Lord to come. In Ezra 1:1-4, Cyrus sends Jews back home to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem. After multiple attempts to reestablish a Jewish nation, a time of silence from God's prophets for 400 years commences, but the Gospel of Mark (1:1-8) brings the heralding of God's Messiah by John the Baptist (JTB) and preaching the coming of the Kingdom of God and the coming of Christ.

5 Major Elements of the Forerunner's Ministry: Mark 1:1-8

1. **Forerunner's Presentation:** Luke 1:11-17, Zacharias told that Elizabeth, his wife, would have a son, to be named John (Luke 1:13). He would not drink strong wine (Lu. 1:15), come in the power of Elijah (Lu. 1:17, Is. 40:3-4, Mal. 3:1, 4:4-6). JTB would live in the wilderness and live off the land. JTB would herald the coming of Christ. The prophecy in Is. 40:3 and Mk. 1:3, is properly stated: "The voice of one crying, in the wilderness make ready the way of the Lord." God met with Israel in the wilderness to introduce Himself at Sinai. God comes to them **again** in the wilderness as JTB's ministry starts to proclaim the coming of Christ.
2. **Forerunner's Proclamation:** Mk. 1:4, came baptizing and preaching a baptism of repentance for forgiveness of sins, see also: Matt. 3:2, Luke 3:3. This call was to change your mind and loyalty from sin to the Law of God (to turn/repent: Joel 2:12. Is. 55:7, Ez. 33:11). JTB was speaking to Jews still under the Law. They were repenting of sins for failing to keep the Law.
 - a. Three Reasons Why JTB was baptizing: 1) Call to Salvation: preparation for Messiah. 2) Church Reason: V8, these will be baptized on Pentecost by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). 3) Kingdom Reason: Matt. 3:2, national salvation of Israel, the Kingdom is coming.
3. **Forerunner's Purpose:** Israel committed to obeying God's commands at Sinai, Ex. 24:7. Christ came at the fullness of time, born of a woman, born under the Law to redeem those under the Law, Gal. 4:4-5. After 400 years of silence from God, JTB's singular purpose was to turn the hearts of many in Israel to the Lord, Luke 1:16-17. The prophets were killed because they proclaimed judgement. JTB was killed as well, Matt. 23:32-37. JTB was to bear witness of the Messiah of Israel, Jn. 1:7.
4. **Forerunner's Place:** Mk. 1:6-7, JTB was in the wilderness. There was no greater prophet than JTB, Matt. 11:11. God's prophets were in two groups: Elijah and all the rest. Elijah described in 2 Kings 1:8, a hairy man wearing a leather belt.

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Elijah proclaimed judgement upon Israel. The rest proclaimed repentance as well, but their second message was of a coming Kingdom. JTB's message summarized the message of Elijah and all the rest of the prophets.

5. Forerunner's Privilege: The Pharisees (followed traditions of men) and Sadducees (denied the resurrection & supernatural) came to JTB's baptism, representing the self-righteous. JTB publicly refuses them baptism (Luke 3:7-9) because of their false repentance. But when Jesus comes JTB requires no repentance from Jesus, being sinless and God, nor does he feel worthy to even loosen His sandal strap, (Luke 3:16-22, Mk. 1:9-11, Matt. 3:13-17). Jesus was baptized to: 1) Identify with the Jewish people, 2) Inaugurate His ministry, and 3) It was the moment Jesus was empowered by the Holy Spirit for ministry.

>>John bore witness of the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus (John 1:32). The Holy Spirit descending upon Christ was a visual manifestation of the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit similar to creation (Gen. 1:2). Jesus saw the heavens opened and God empowering Him to defeat Satan, Mk. 1:10. God the Father blessed the Son. The Holy Spirit empowered Him, as a man, to defeat Satan and fulfill His ministry. We see this confirmed by the Holy Spirit driving Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted, Matt. 4:1-11, Mk. 1:12-13.

Further Discussion and Application

We see God's sovereign plan in action in the work of JTB. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John 3:8. The works of Satan are willful sins of men and those who practice unrighteousness. How does the word of God and the knowledge of His word destroy the power of sin in our lives? Contrasting our response to God's grace with the Pharisees and Sadducees, why does our repentance demonstrate a changed life and heart?

Consider the prophets of God and how they spoke of the coming King. What did God demonstrate by sending the Son in the likeness of man and as a baby? How did God demonstrate His power and control over darkness, evil, and Satan? We are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, Eph. 4:17-24. What are the works of that new man? What is the desire of the new man?

Looking at Genesis through Revelation – what do the prophets and Scriptures testify about Christ? Make a list of things spoken about Christ.