

# *The Greatest Prophet*

## **Messenger of the Covenant**

(Transcript)

By Warren Zehrung – 11/8/2014

Both Mark and Luke begin their Gospel accounts with the storyline of **John the Baptist**. John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets – and a transitional figure into the New Testament. John is the turning point between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

**Mark 1:1** The **beginning of the gospel** of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; The Gospel of Jesus Christ **begins** with John the Baptist. We will see the importance of this concept as we go along.

**Mark 1:2** As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send **my messenger** before thy face, which shall **prepare** thy way before thee.

John was sent to prepare a people for the Lord – so that they would be receptive to the Gospel of Christ. It is God who refers to John the Baptist as **my messenger**. We need to realize what an extensive outpouring of people there was in response to John the Baptist's preaching.

**Mark 1:5** And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

The people poured out to hear John. Let's go back to just before the **birth** of John the Baptist. God has preserved so many minute details for us.

**Luke 1:5** There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

**Luke 1:6** And they were both **righteous** before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

**Luke 1:7** And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.

**Luke 1:8** And it came to pass, that while [Zacharias] executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course.

Zacharias' course in the Temple service lasted one week – twice a year.

**Luke 1:9** According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

The smoke of incense burning and smoke ascending was symbolic of all the people's **prayers** ascending to the Lord on high.

**Luke 1:10** And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

**Luke 1:11** And there appeared unto [Zacharias] an angel [Gabriel] of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

**Luke 1:12** And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

**Luke 1:13** But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name **John**. [Gabriel told Zacharias what his name would be.]

**Luke 1:14** And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

**Luke 1:15** For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

John was one of very few Biblical personalities to be filled with Holy Spirit from his mother's womb.

Both of John's parents were also given **God's Spirit** to be able to properly train up John "to make straight the way of the Lord." (Luke 1:41, 67)

**Luke 1:16** And many of the **children of Israel** shall he **turn to the Lord** their God.

Most people do not know what Elijah was exceptional for. Luke 1:16, that is exactly what **Elijah** did – **he turned many children of Israel to the Lord!** We will see that in a moment. Zacharias is being informed by the angel Gabriel as to the **purpose** his son John was going to be used of God.

Gabriel says:

**Luke 1:17** And [John] shall go before [Jesus] 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 **a people prepared** for the Lord.

We see here that the most important result of John the Baptist commission is that of **turning hearts** to God.

The verse, Luke 1:17 is a jam-packed verse of prophecy and commission for John the Baptist. Interestingly, Gabriel rewords the **second half** of the prophecy of Malachi when he quotes this verse. Of course, Gabriel would have a right understanding of the intent of God's prophecies. Malachi has it: **turn the heart** of the fathers to the children, and **the heart of the children** to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

The "disobedient to the wisdom of the just" [:17] means to turn the disobedient children of Israel back to — the Fathers — their believing ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Elijah etc...

These patriarchs spoken of throughout Malachi are the fathers – their **hearts** went out for Israel – and Israel's **hearts** were **turned** to the patriarchs by the works of John the Baptist.

There is **no speculation** here: John the Baptist is the one who went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah.

The Spirit and Power of Elijah was the Power of God's Holy Spirit to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children of Israel. **Turning hearts** – is a new covenant reality – **Pick up** on that phrase as we go through the Scriptures. Keep your marker here in Luke and turn to 1 Kings 18.

Since John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, to **turn the hearts of the fathers to the children...** We need to know what the Prophet Elijah **did** that God keeps harkening back to. You will remember the tremendous confrontation that Elijah had with the 850 prophets of Baal - 450 prophets of Baal, and another 400 prophets of the groves.

**1 Kings 18:21** And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

The children of Israel had forgotten their God. Then, Elijah utters a short prayer that their **hearts be turned** back to the True God.

**1 Kings 18:36** And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, [the Fathers] let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

**1 Kings 18:37** Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this **people** may know that you are the **LORD God**, and that thou hast **turned their heart back** again.

**1 Kings 18:38** Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

**1 Kings 18:39** And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; **the LORD, he is the God.**

**1 Kings 18:40** And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; [and do away with them...]

So what did Elijah do of note? **He turned their heart back again to the LORD God.**

The New Covenant relationship which enables us to receive the Holy Spirit is what turns hearts to God. It was John the Baptist who bridged a physical, **hard hearted** Old Testament people to, a New Testament people with **converted hearts** and minds capable of having a direct relationship with God.

**Romans 5:10** For if, when we were enemies, we were **reconciled to God** by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Can you imagine that John the Baptist grew up knowing that this was his special commission from God in the spirit and power of Elijah...

**Malachi 4:5** Behold, I will send you **Elijah the prophet** before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

This is the **only** Scripture in the entire Old Testament that refers to an **Elijah to come**.

**Malachi 4:6** And he shall turn the heart **of the fathers to the children**, and [turn] **the heart of the children** [of Israel] to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse. [complete destruction]

It is for the elect's sake – those with hearts of flesh – the converted brethren led by God's Holy Spirit – that the earth will not be smitten with utter destruction.

Repentance and Faith are the **process** we have to go through to receive the Holy Spirit, -- and that is what **turns our hearts**.

Turning the hearts – that was John the Baptist's motivation throughout his lifetime by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

This Biblical concept of **turning the hearts** is dramatically more **significant** in the Plan of God than just a church Y.O.U. - youth program to get kids and families closer together.

Jesus is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and turn their hearts to the message of the Patriarchs. (2 Peter 3:9)

It's about **turning all hearts** back to God. John the Baptist's ministry was the turning point in the whole Plan of God. God said of His people:

**Deuteronomy 5:29** O that there were **such an heart in them**, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!

The problem was that the Old Testament peoples and the outside world today have a hard hearts like flint rock - carnal hearts in them. Without conversion they are unable to obey and submit to God.

**Ezekiel 36:25** Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Man has an evil, deceitful, **wicked heart** that's hostile against God, that cannot turn to God.

**Romans 2:5** But after thy **hardness and impenitent heart** treasures up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;

**Romans 8:7** Because the carnal mind is **enmity against God**: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

How can these hearts and attitudes be turned to God?

**Ezekiel 36:26** A **new heart** also will I give you, and a **new Spirit** will I put within you: and I will take away the **stony heart** out of your flesh, and I will give you an **heart of flesh**.

This is a wonderful and **essential change** in mankind that is necessary to bring forth a converted people. We see the arrival of the new heart in a great way in the New Testament on the Day of Pentecost:

**Ezekiel 36:27** And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

For the first time – because of a **fleshly heart** – God’s Holy Spirit – men would be able to be obedient and submissive to God. John the Baptist paved the way for Jesus to make God’s **Holy Spirit** and **new hearts** available. There was only six months difference in the ages of Jesus and John.

**Luke 1:26** And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

**Luke 1:27** To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

**Luke 1:39** And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah;

**Luke 1:40** And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

**Luke 1:41** And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit:

**Luke 1:42** And [Elisabeth] spoke out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

**Luke 1:43** And whence is this to me, that the **mother of my Lord** should come to me?

The lives of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ were prophesied about.

**Luke 1:70** As [the Lord God of Israel] spoke by the mouth of his **holy prophets**, which have been since the world began:

**Luke 1:71** That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;

And John the Baptist was destined to be the **greatest prophet of God** of them all:

**Luke 1:76** And thou, child, shalt be called the **prophet of the Highest**: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;

Zechariah has a great understanding of the **obligation** that was being placed on his son, John the Baptist.

**Luke 1:77** To give knowledge of **salvation** [Jesus is Savior] unto **his people** [God's People] by the **remission** [forgiveness] **of their sins**,

We see John's job description laid out for him. John did not forgive their sins – but he ushered in Jesus Christ who would bring about forgiveness of sins. There was no baptism to repentance before John – John initiated it. This Scripture may sound like John would forgive sins – would remit sin – but in fact, John was laying the groundwork whereby Jesus would come and forgive sin.

**Luke 1:80** And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

So John grows up and he is out in the wilderness.

**Matthew 3:4** And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leather belt about his loins; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

That is all that most people know about John the Baptist; that he was in the wilderness baptizing, eating locusts and wild honey... Brethren, there was a great deal more to John's life and ministry than that.

**Luke 3:2** Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the **word of God came** unto **John** the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

John the Baptist did not just get up one morning and decide to institute a decree that everyone must be baptized. He did not just invent the formal procedure of baptism as a ritual or a ceremony. **The word of God came** unto **John** and told him what to do. There was the intervention of heavenly forces coming into play so that righteousness might be made available to mankind. We know that Jesus submitted Himself to John's baptism so that all righteousness might be fulfilled. (Matthew 3:15)

We are told that **the word of God** came to John the Baptist ... We do know that John was **told** to baptize!

**John 1:33** John said, "**He that sent me to baptize** with water, the same **said unto me**, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is He which baptizes with Holy Spirit."

John knew exactly how Jesus' baptism would supersede his "water only" baptism. God the Father was directly responsible for John beginning to perform baptisms – because Jesus was in the flesh – and did not instruct John. Again we see that God the Father inspired John's ministry:

**John 1:6** There was a man **sent from God**, whose name was John.

John the Baptist's ministry was only the forerunner of the salvational work that only Jesus could complete. John's baptism was insufficient because he did not baptize with Holy Spirit. John did not remain in the wilderness during his ministry – he traveled around the country as Jesus would do. John was somewhat of an

itinerant prophet – traveling, preaching and baptizing from place to place. And he preached something new – something the people had never heard before...

**Matthew 3:1** In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

**Matthew 3:2** And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

**Matthew 3:3** For **this is he** that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

**Luke 3:3** And [John the Baptist] came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the **baptism of repentance for the remission of sins**;

**Luke 3:4** As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." [a direct quote from Isaiah 40]

**Isaiah 40:3** The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

There is absolutely **no speculation** there – Isaiah 40:3 points directly to John the Baptist.

I want you to notice here brethren – how that it is that the mission of John the Baptist will lead to the "**Restoration of all things.**" Jesus said that John the Baptist would "restore all things." We need to understand how that was fulfilled in John the Baptist.

Continuing in Luke 3:5, this is not about the topography of hills and valleys – this is millennial in scope – and about how all things will be **restored** because of the work begun by John the Baptist.

**Luke 3:5** "**Every** valley shall be filled, and **every** mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; [we do not yet see these millennial transformations of society, culture, government and religion fulfilled.]

**Luke 3:6** "And **all flesh** shall see the salvation of God." [End of Isaiah's quote.]

All flesh has not yet see the salvation of God. We do not yet see these millennial factors restored – their fulfillment is yet future – to take place after the life's work of John the Baptist. Let me interject a thought here – John was **expecting** these things to immediately happen. I'll expound on that in just a moment. John knew that his own personal mission would meld into that of Jesus Christ. John said:

**John 3:30** He [Jesus] must increase, but I must decrease.

John was even teaching that the Kingdom of God was coming soon - all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

**Luke 3:15** And as the people were in **expectation**, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Messiah, or not;

**Luke 3:16** John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with **fire**:

**Luke 3:17** Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will **burn with fire** unquenchable.

**Luke 3:18** And many other things in his exhortation - he **preached the Gospel** ['euangelizo' - announced glad tidings] unto the people.

**Luke 3:19** But Herod the tetrarch, being reprov'd by [John the Baptist] for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done,

**Luke 3:20** Added yet this above all, that he shut up **John in prison**.

John's public ministry was actually very short. His preaching and baptizing seems to have lasted only about a year and a half. It was cut short by King Herod. John taught fasting to draw near to God - But Jesus disciples were with Immanuel [God with us]/Jesus and did not fast.

**Luke 5:33** And they said unto him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?

When we are in the presence of God in the Kingdom of God - we will no longer fast.

**Luke 7:18** And the disciples of John the Baptist showed him of all these things. [the miracles Jesus was performing]

**Luke 7:19** And John the Baptist calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?

All the prophecies about the Messiah and the Day of the Lord were not being fulfilled - and John - knowing that his days were numbered - began to have doubts about Jesus being the end-time Messiah.

**Luke 7:20** When the men were come unto [Jesus], they said, John the Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?

**Luke 7:22** Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the **blind** see, the **lame** walk, the **lepers** are cleansed, the **deaf** hear, the **dead** are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.



What Jesus listed was a number of miracles that the prophet Isaiah had said would be done by Messiah. Most of these miracles come from Isaiah 35 and Isaiah 61. Those are the things that only the Messiah could perform.

**Luke 7:23** And blessed is he [John the Baptist], whosoever shall not be offended in me.

Most people **expected** a Messiah who would expel the Gentile oppressors from the land and establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace. They did not expect, and did not understand, that Jesus would not do those things at that time – but would die at their hands. It actually took the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost before the disciple were able to understand and put together the two-fold nature of Jesus Christ's ministry.

John the Baptist did not understand that Jesus coming as Messiah would be in **two phases** – His public ministry – and then as King of Kings in the Day of the Lord, and to establish the Kingdom of God over all the earth. That is why Jesus said to John the Baptists' disciples, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me. In other words, do not **doubt** because of Jesus' **two fold** coming. John the Baptist was expecting the Day of the Lord's **wrath** to precede His coming as Messiah. Notice what John preached:

**Matthew 3:7** But when [John] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his **baptism** [First occurrence of 'baptism' in the Bible], he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the **wrath to come?**

John the Baptist did not understand that the **Day of the Lord's wrath** would not fully come until the **second coming** of Jesus, as the rest of Scripture affirms. That is why John doubted that Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecies about the Messiah.

Let's look briefly at this concept of Jesus' **two-fold coming** that John the Baptist did not know or understand.

**Luke 4:14** And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.

**Luke 4:15** And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.

**Luke 4:16** And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

**Luke 4:17** And there was delivered unto [Jesus] the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

**Luke 4:18 + Isaiah 61:1** The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to **preach** the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to

**heal** the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the **blind**, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

**Luke 4:19 + Isaiah 61:2** To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. [Jesus Stopped at this point]

**Luke 4:20** And [Jesus] closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

**Luke 4:21** And he began to say unto them, This day **this** [part of the] **scripture** is fulfilled in your ears.

Jesus stopped mid-sentence and **short** of the verse that refers to His **second coming** and the Day of the Lord and the millennial period. (Isaiah 61:4)

**Isaiah 61:2** To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. [period! Jesus stopped right there], and the **day of vengeance** of our God;

Jesus stopped short of completing the verse. Jesus left out the part of the **Day of the Lord's vengeance** – because that is reserved for Christ's second coming. John the Baptist did not know that the Day of the Lord's **wrath** would **not** fully come until the **second coming** of Jesus.

John had been teaching about the **wrath** to come:

**Matthew 3:11** I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and **with fire**:

John understood correctly that the **wrath of God** would come with the rule of the Messiah – but he inaccurately anticipated it with Jesus' first coming.

**Malachi 4:1** For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall **burn them up**, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave **them neither root nor branch**.

John the Baptist had been teaching that even **now**...

**Matthew 3:10** And **now** also the **axe is laid unto the root** of the trees: therefore every tree which brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast **into the fire**.

John the Baptist was thinking that all these things would occur with the coming of the Messiah – and He was **not** seeing those things happen. John knew that in the **time order** of things he, himself, would precede the Messiah because of Malachi 4:5. Again:

**Malachi 4:5** Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet **before** the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

The verse does not say **immediately** before – or **just** before – like so many make the mistake of assuming even today. And so, Jesus sent word back to John of

evidence that He was indeed the Messiah to come. Then Jesus begins to speak about John the Baptist:

**Luke 7:26** But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much **more** than a prophet.

Speaking about John the Baptist, Jesus quotes Malachi 3:1:

**Luke 7:27** This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send **my messenger** before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

The name "**Malachi**" means **God's messenger**! So brethren, when you are studying, you can confidently put in your notes that Malachi 3:1 is a direct **reference** to John the Baptist – because **Jesus said so!** Again, there is absolutely **no speculation** there. Jesus said, "This is **he**." In fact, now we can see that Malachi 4:5-6, Malachi 3:1, and Isaiah 40:3 all refer to the same "**voice crying in the wilderness**" – John the Baptist.

The second Title of today's sermon comes from this verse:

**Malachi 3:1** Behold, I will send **my messenger**, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the **messenger of the covenant**, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

John the Baptist is God's messenger of God's covenant. And what is God's Covenant?

**Jeremiah 31:33** But this shall be the **covenant** that I will make with the **house of Israel**; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and **write it in their hearts**; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

We must ask ourselves, "Is there **such a heart** in me?"

**Hebrews 8:10** For this is the **covenant** that I will make with the **house of Israel** after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and **write them in their hearts**: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

**Hebrews 10:16** This is the **covenant** that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws **into their hearts**, and in their minds will I write them;

John the Baptist was sent by God to **change hearts**. We do not see or hear about that very much in God's Church. John was the **messenger of the covenant** – and the covenant is to be **written in our hearts**.

The Title of the sermon, The Greatest Prophet, comes from this verse:

**Luke 7:28** For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a **greater** prophet than **John** the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

There is none greater than John the Baptist – he is the greatest prophet. Only those resurrect to eternal life in the Kingdom of God will surpass John the Baptist in significance in establishing God’s Plan on earth. Certainly, the Children of God shall be glorified! Then:

**1 Corinthians 2:9** But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

**Luke 9:7** Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him [Jesus]: and he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that **John the Baptist** was risen from the dead;

**Luke 9:8** And of some, that **Elijah** had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.

Because of Malachi 4:5 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:” – there was a general **expectation** among the populous that **Elijah** was indeed **coming**.

**Luke 9:9** And Herod said, John have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see [Jesus].

Herod was dangerous – so the best thing was to get out of town.

**Luke 9:10** And the apostles, when they were returned, told [Jesus] all that they had done. And He took them, and went aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city called Bethsaida.

**Luke 9:18** And it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am?

**Luke 9:19** They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elijah; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.

**Luke 9:20** He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The **Messiah of God**.

Jesus told them to keep it to themselves – because it was not yet time to reveal to all. John was not weak – and he was not living a life of luxury with soft clothing like King Herod who was keeping him in prison.

Jesus began a series of questions to **assert** that John the Baptist was indeed **founded** in the truth, and not wavering like the reeds in a marsh with the wind.

**Matthew 11:7** And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes **concerning** John [the Baptist], What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

Jesus was saying that John was stable – not tossed and turned by every **wind of doctrine**. Ephesians 4:14 “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.”

John was not manipulated or influenced by public opinion. John was not tossed to and fro by what was politically expedient. Jesus pointed out that John was not living in the lap of luxury like Herod – but the harsh life of a prophet:

**Matthew 11:8** But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

**Matthew 11:9** But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and **more than a prophet**.

**Matthew 11:10** For this is he, of **whom it is written**, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall **prepare thy way before thee**.

The Title again is from here:

**Matthew 11:11** Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a **greater** than John the Baptist: not withstanding he that is least **in the kingdom of heaven** is **greater than he**.

**Matthew 11:12** And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

**Matthew 11:13** For all the prophets and the law **prophesied** until John.

John the Baptist is the **pivot point** between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Then, Jesus reveals to His disciples the true **Elijah fulfillment** that everyone has been wondering about. Speaking of John the Baptist, Jesus says:

**Matthew 11:14** And if ye will receive it, this is **Elijah**, which was for to come.

**“Which was for to come”** – John has fulfilled this prophecy, Jesus says! John was the Elijah to come.

**Matthew 11:15** He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Jesus has shown that Malachi 3:1 and Malachi 4:5-6 refer to John the Baptist. John the Baptist is the sole fulfillment of this prophecy. Jesus is saying, “This is the meaning of Malachi’s prophecy on Elijah!” The New Testament explanation right here makes it very clear for us that John the Baptist **has fulfilled** this prophecy. Jesus clearly says, “If ye will **receive it**, this is **Elijah**, which was for to come. We now know without equivocation or ambiguous arguments that Malachi 4:5-6 refers to the unique role that John the Baptist played.

Again, we don’t have to speculate about John the Baptist coming in the role of Elijah. Jesus Christ tells us that a couple of times; We saw where Jesus said that John the Baptist was Elijah to come; we saw that the angel Gabriel said it to John’s father Zacharias; Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in their Gospel accounts tell that John the Baptist was Elijah; And John the beloved apostle shows that John the Baptist fulfilled the Isaiah 40:3 prophecy:

**John 1:23** [John the Baptist] said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah.

**Matthew 17:10** And his disciples asked [Jesus], saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come?

**Matthew 17:11** And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elijah truly shall first come, and **restore all things**.

The concept of all things restored, including the face of the earth, being renewed is shown by the Prophets of old – but it is Jesus who articulates that John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elijah is the one who finally sets in motion the fulfillment of the **restoration all things**. Truly, Elijah shall first come and **restore all things**.

I've heard evangelists in God's Church say, "John the Baptist did **not restore** anything. What doctrines did he restore?" Brethren, we need to understand what the scriptures say! We need to believe what Jesus said about John the Baptist. '**Restore all things**' is way more than just doctrinal understanding alone. Jesus said:

**Matthew 17:12** But I say unto you, That Elijah **has come** already, and they **did not recognize him**, but have done unto him whatsoever they wanted. [Herod beheaded John]

**Matthew 17:13** Then the disciples **understood** that He spoke unto them of John the Baptist.

But what is this "restoration of all things" referring to? Elijah truly shall first come, and **restore all things**. To most, it certainly does **not** look like John the Baptist "Restored all things" in his short life. That's right! – but John the Baptist **set the events in motion** whereby all things would be **restored** – so Jesus gives the **credit of restoration** to John the Baptist. John the Baptist paved the way for Jesus Christ – made straight His Path.

**Acts 3:18** But those things, which God before had shown by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.

**Acts 3:19** Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

**Acts 3:20** And He **shall send Jesus Christ**, which before was preached unto you:

Here is the answer to "**Restore all things**."

**Acts 3:21** Whom the heaven must receive until the times of **restitution of all things**, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his **holy prophets** since the world began.

John's work makes the **Restoration all things** possible through Jesus Christ! John the Baptist initiated the **restoration** of all things and it will be Jesus Christ who is the ultimate restorer of all things.

John the Baptist was the prophet God used to **initiate** the very ritual of baptism. Baptism did not exist prior to John the Baptist. Baptism was not in the Mosaic Law, and not commanded for Israel. Oh yes, there were various and sundry **washings, purifications,** and Temple **cleansings** – but **NO** baptism for the remission of sins.

John the Baptist, the voice of one crying in the wilderness who prepared the way of the Lord, made His paths straight – made the **restoration of all things** possible. John the Baptist initiated the restoration—and it is Jesus Christ who will complete the process of restoring all things.

God sent John to initiate the ritual of water baptism – a baptism unto remission of sins. John knew exactly how Jesus' baptism of Holy Spirit would supersede his "water only" baptism. The ultimate cleansing from sin is only available through Christ's blood, and John's baptism was the foreshadowing of that **comprehensive remission** of sin.

John the Baptist ushered in the New Covenant relationship which enables us to receive God's Holy Spirit—which is turning our hearts to God. It was John who transitioned a **hard hearted** Old Testament people to, a New Testament people with **converted hearts** and minds.

The beloved apostle John wrote late and added some insights into how perfectly John the Baptist understood the Plan of God—even the substitutionary role of Jesus Christ's sacrifice in dying for our sins. John the Baptist has great understanding and testifies as a witness:

**John 1:29** The next day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the **Lamb of God**, which takes away the sin of the world.

**John 1:34** And I saw, and **bare record** that this is the Son of God.

**John 1:36** And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, **Behold the Lamb of God!**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ begins with **John the Baptist**—the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—God's messenger of the Covenant. We have seen a glimpse of John who restored all things; who was a voice crying in the wilderness; who prepared and made straight the way of the Lord—so that the hearts of the people could be turned to God.

Among those that are born of women there is none **greater** prophet than **John** the Baptist. (Luke 7:28)

End: The Greatest Prophet  
Messenger of the Covenant