FULFILLED PRPHECIES ABOUT JESUS: A MESSENGER WHO PREPARES HIS WAY

Mark 1;2b&3 "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" - "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

Review

Last week we talked about Daniel 9:24-26 which says the Anointed One (the Messiah, the Christ) would come around 30AD and be put to death before 70AD when the Romans conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple.

This week we will talk about John the Baptist preparing the way.

My Messenger

Malachi 3:1a "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me."

This promise also includes what we will be talking about next week, the idea that it will somehow be God Himself who comes. What we are looking at this week is that the Old Testament specifically prophesied that there would be someone who would "prepare the way." Jesus Himself said this specifically referred to John the Baptist.

Luke 7:27&28 "This is the one about whom it is written: 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

Description of the Messenger's Ministry

Isaiah 40:3-5 A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

As in Malachi 3:1 the messenger is to prepare the way. Isaiah adds that the messenger will do it in the wilderness, in the desert.

Matthew 3:1&2 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

Luke 3:2 during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

Mark 1:4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

The Greek preposition *"eis"* translated "for" in Mark 1:2 is translated "at" (the preaching) in Matthew 12:41"The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here."

Luke 3:7-9 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

The imagery of Isaiah 40:3&4 "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain" is the imagery of preparing sixth century BC and first century AD roads for the arrival of someone who was very important, who would probably come in a chariot.

Did John See Himself as the One Preparing the Way

John 1:19-21 Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah." They asked him, "Then who are you/ Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No."

John 1:22&23 Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

John 1:24-27 Now the Pharisees who had been sent questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie."

John 3:27-29 To this John replied, "A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.' The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less."

Was John successful in Preparing the Way?

John 10:40-42 Then Jesus went back across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing in the early days. There he stayed, and many people came to him. They said, "Though John never performed a sign, all that John said about this man was true." And in that place many believed in Jesus.

Acts 18:24&25 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Luke 7:29&30) (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

Matthew 21:23 Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you this authority?"

Matthew 21:24-25a Jesus replied, "I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John's baptism - where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?"

Matthew 25b-27They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin' - we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We don't know." Then he said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

John Introduces Jesus

John 1:29-31 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel"

John 1:32-34 Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is God's Chosen One."

Things to Remember

The Old Testament clearly predicted a messenger who would prepare the way for the Messiah and that he would do his preaching in the wilderness.

John effectively prepared the way for Jesus by telling people to repent, to change their minds, about their relationship with God. He told them that being Jewish and keeping rules was not enough to get them into heaven.

Those who believed John's message and were baptized by him accepted Jesus, those who rejected John rejected Jesus.

We have many today who believe they are Christians because they were born in a Christian country and are good people. Until they accept John's message, that everyone needs to change their mind and admit they have sins that need to be forgiven, they are very unlikely to accept that Jesus is the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world by paying for it when He died on the cross.