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The four gospels take a different approach as to how and where each starts out. Luke starts out by showing the conditions that existed by naming those in charge in the local Roman government as well as those in charge of the Jewish state in Israel, when Jesus started His ministry. Luke then begins by showing prophecy fulfilled by John the Baptist, pointing to Jesus.

In Luke 1: 4As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

5Every 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;

6And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Mark begins by not with the birth of Christ, but with when Jesus begins His ministry similar to Luke's observation that John the Baptist would play a critical role in Christ early ministry.

Mark 1: 1The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

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

3The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

John begins with before the creation of the world and universe. John shows Jesus, existence as the Word and being with God always as His Son. John then jumps to John the Baptist and the role he would play in the preparation of Jesus's ministry to Israel and the gentile world.

John 1: 1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2The same was in the beginning with God. 3All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

***The Witness of John
(Malachi 3:1-5)***

6There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

9That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. 10He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Matthew began with the genealogy of Jesus going all the way back to Abraham through David to the Birth of Jesus. In the 3rd

chapter of Matthew, he gets to John the Baptist and the role he plays in Jesus ministry in more detail than the other gospels.

So, all four gospels have varied beginnings but all point to this event of John the Baptist. Once the foundation is established as to who Jesus the Word really is, then Jesus's ministry to mankind can begin. Prophecy is the unknown revealed to us. Prophecy to God is simply what He has already seen happen and He simply states the facts as they occurred. Our role in this is Faith. Faith simply in what God says will happen because in His position in Heaven, it already has happened.

From God's perspective we have already lived our lives, our destiny is sealed. From our position we are in the process of living our lives, not knowing exactly what our individual futures look like, but living them out day to day, minute by minute. God already knows, we will find out how we react to every second with hindsight. God sees our lives as foresight. Are we going to be obedient, filled with Faith in our Creator God and Savior Jesus Christ? Or will we abandon the only hope we have for a very short life on this earth followed by judgement?

Let's see what John the Baptist chose.

Matthew 3

The Mission of John the Baptist

(Isaiah 40:1-5; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 3:1-20; John 1:19-28)

1In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, **2**And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

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

Isaiah 40: 1Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.

3The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:

5And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

4And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

Elijah wore similar clothing, so this description of John and his clothes harken back to Elijah. God also foretold after Elijah's

ascension that he would return before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

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

Matthew 11: 11Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. 13For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. 15He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

There are possibly two fulfillments of this prophecy. The first is the image of Elijah in the form of John the Baptist. The second is perhaps one of the two witnesses that God sends to Jerusalem during the Tribulation. Is Elijah one of those two witnesses? A discussion for another time.

5Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, 6And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

We are not given a number here, but the implication is that it was a large group of people that came to John to confess and be baptized.

Remember all these people were still under the law. They had every opportunity to confess their sins by following the law, but John was bringing a new message. One of a more personal relationship but still under the Law and Prophets.

The heart of man when he hears the Truth, some cannot resist it. They fall to their knees and repent. John was causing many to do that through the power of the Holy Spirit and then baptizing them.

7But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

The Pharisees and Sadducees were indeed the ruling elite of this time. John through the power of the Holy Spirit not only spoke boldly to them but called into question their sincerity. Were they there to repent or were they there out of concern for their own power.

8Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

John was preaching repentance from sin. The true meaning is that a person confesses their sin and repentance meaning turns away from the sin in our life. A true turning away from sin to Jesus will always bring about fruit or evidence that something truly has changed in our life. The idea is that if there is no repentance then there is no evidence of a changed life. It is the difference of just feeling sorry for our sins and really committing to stop sinning.

Jesus put it into a metaphor that explains how it has to work. There is no other way. If this metaphor of bearing fruit is not carried out by each of us then we are liars and the truth is not in us.

John 15:5 I am the vine and you are the branches. The one who remains in Me, and I in him, will bear much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing.

John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Sin in our lives requires a constant rooting it out. Don't think well I'm special, I'm different. We are all miserable sinners that deserved death and punishment. But for God and the Mercy, He has shown us through his Son Jesus Christ.

This conversation that John the Baptist is having with the religious elite continues.

9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

The Jewish nation has lived on their lineage to Abraham and to Issac the son of promise. It was the foundation of the Law and the Prophets that Israel was God's chosen people. Their declaration of lineage would no longer hold water as their sins were dripping into the Holy of Holies and God would have it no more. Israel is

still God's chosen people in respect to Abraham and God's promise to Him. But now today this day, they must accept Jesus as Lord and Savior to be saved as must we all. As God stated through Paul:

Colossians 3:

1If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ***2***Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ***3***For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. ***4***When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

5Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: ***6***For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: ***7***In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. ***8***But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. ***9***Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; ***10***And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: ***11***Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

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

This prophecy is not just for these religious elites, I think. It is likely for all religious elites and individuals from all who claim Christianity from this point on.

The axe is the Judgement of God. It goes beyond religious entities and comes to bare on the individual that claims Christ. Anyone can make the claim, but according to God few are that will see His Glory.

Matthew 7: 13Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

***A Tree and its Fruit
(Matthew 12:33-37; Luke 6:43-45)***

15Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

21Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23And then will I profess unto

them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

John now introduces not only the coming Messiah but the power of God in the Holy Spirit and the blanket of Salvation that is to come that will cover all who truly repent and confess their sins to God asking Christ into their heart.

11I 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 Ghost, and *with* fire: **12**Whose fan *is* in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

This “burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire” goes hand in glove with the “**axe is laid unto the root of the trees**”. Both speak of the destruction of those who reject the Messiah Jesus Christ.

The Baptism of Jesus

(Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:29-34)

13Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

There are many monikers given to Jesus, all fulfill prophecies about the coming Messiah. Jesus is called as one of these names, “the Light”, as in “A light unto this world”.

This light was prophesied by Isaiah.

Isaiah 9: 1Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

2The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

Israel had been in darkness due to following after many other nations and eventually being defeated by Assyria. Isaiah was given a message of Hope that was to come to Israel, via Galilee, and that was the coming of the Messiah.

Remember John the Baptist is the cousin of Jesus. We first heard of him when Mary the mother of Jesus went to visit her cousin

Luke 1: 39And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; 40And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. 41And 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 Ghost: 42And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. 43And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

We are not told that John was told about what happened, but it is likely the events were shared with Him. The Holy Spirit confirmed in John the person whom he knew only as his cousin. That person was the Messiah and John could not bear the thought of baptizing the Creator God, but it must take place.

14But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? **15**And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be* so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. **16**And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: **17**And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

One of the most amazing pictures in the Bible of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Father in His adoration of His Son and the reuniting in a physical depiction of the Holy Spirit with the Son of God. The God head, the Trinity in full display.

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