

Lesson 5: John the Baptist and the “Wrath to Come”

Objective:

- 👉 In this lesson you will see that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy that “Elijah” was to come before the great and dreadful Day of the Lord.
- 👉 You know that John the Baptist announced Jesus’ coming as savior; but in this lesson, you will also see that he warned that Jesus would come as judge.

1. Please read and reread the book of Malachi (It is short and is an easy read). In this book God strongly expresses his displeasure with the Jews, especially with the religious leadership. God says:
 - a) A great and dreadful “**day of the Lord**” is coming (3:2 and 4:5).
 - b) He will come as a “**refiner’s fire**” to “**judge**” the wicked (3:2,5).
 - c) He will come in judgment on “**His temple**” (3:1). The temple of which He spoke was still in existence during Jesus’ earthly ministry, but it had been extensively renovated by Herod.
 - d) “**I will send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me**” (3:1).
 - e) “**I will send Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers...**” (4:5,6)
 - f) The righteous will be spared on the great and dreadful “**Day of the Lord**” (3:16-18).
2. Question: Was John the Baptist the predicted messenger Elijah?
 - a) When the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that he was to have a son, Gabriel said that he (John) would “**go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children...**” (Lk. 1:17). These same words were used in Malachi’s prophesy concerning Elijah (4:6).
 - b) Obviously John and Elijah (Elias) were different people, but John brought the same message as Elijah. He urged the people to repent and return to God (Matt. 3:2). But was he the fulfillment of the Malachi’s prophesy?
 - c) Jesus tells us that John was in fact the prophet who was to come. He says: “**This (John) is he of whom it is written, ‘behold I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before me’**” (Matt. 11:10,14).
 - d) In Matt.17:12 Jesus says: “**But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.**” Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

3. Since **Elijah** (John) **had already come** and since God said that He would first send his messenger (Elijah/John) and then “**suddenly come to His temple**” as a “**refiner’s fire**”, wouldn’t Jesus’ disciples expect that a **great and dreadful day of the Lord** was coming soon?
4. Question: Did John the Baptist say anything that might lead people to believe that a dreadful day of judgment was coming?
5. Answer: Yes he did! Please read Matt. 3:7-12. Speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, John said: “**Generation of vipers who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come**”? He said: “**Now the axe is at the root of the trees...**” He portrays Jesus as a judge who has a winnowing fan in his hand. He would soon separate the wheat and the chaff and then the chaff and the unfruitful trees will be burned.
6. Dear reader, there was a great and dreadful Day of the Lord in 70 AD. Jesus came to his temple in judgment, he came as a refiners fire, he laid the axe to the Old Covenant tree and that generation of vipers felt the wrath of God. At that time, he spared the righteous remnant as He had promised in Malachi 3. And as we noted in point two of lesson 3, Jesus’ disciples were living in **the last days** before the great and awesome **Day of the Lord!**