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Isaiah prophesied: “*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of Jehovah; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of Jehovah has spoken’*” (Isaiah 40:3-5). John applied the fulfillment of this prophecy to himself. When asked “*Who are you? ... What do you say about yourself?*” (John 1:22), “*He said: ‘I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’*” as the prophet Isaiah said” (23).

It is written in Malachi: “*Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And Jehovah, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,*” says Jehovah of hosts” (Malachi 3:1). Jesus fixed this prophecy on John. “*He began to speak to the multitudes concerning John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed those who are gorgeously appareled and live in luxury are in kings’ courts. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’ For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he’*” (Luke 7:24-28). Not only did Jesus confirm that Malachi was foretelling the coming of John, but in describing him, the Lord described John the Baptist as “*more than a prophet*” and, in fact, the greatest of all the prophets ever born.

Again, Malachi foretold: “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Jehovah. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse*” (Malachi 4:5-6). Before John was even conceived, his father was told by an angel of the Lord, “*Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of*

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the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him 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” (Luke 1:13-17). The angelic vision not only confirmed that a second prophecy in Malachi was about Zacharias’s unborn son, but also that he would be “*great in the sight of the Lord*”

John, the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth, was the object of Isaiah’s prophetic writing more than 680 years before he walked the earth. Moreover, he was the object of two of Malachi’s prophecies 430 years before his birth. Furthermore, he was the object of an angelic prophecy before his mother conceived him. The angel called him great in God’s sight and Jesus of Nazareth referred to him as the greatest of all prophets. Clearly, John the Baptist is an enormously important figure in God’s kingdom.

However, those ancient prophecies about him say that John was a messenger, not whom the message is about. Those prophetic words identify his role as that of preparing for the coming of someone greater.

John preached, “*There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit*” (Mark 1:7-8). He considered himself unworthy to even touch the shoes of the One whose way he was preparing the people for.

“*John answered and said, ‘A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease’*” (John 3:27-30). John likened himself to a best man in a wedding, putting the emphasis on Christ as the groom. He said that, whereas he, John, must decrease, Jesus was increasing.

In Reagan’s joke about Gorbachev’s chauffeur, the point is that it would be hard to comprehend who in the USSR would have been so important as to be driven by the General Secretary. And, in Scripture, the point about John is that the man whom two prophets and an angel foretold of was merely the unworthy messenger on behalf of the

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"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

"THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER"

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Men's & Ladies' Studies @ 6:20 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard
Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.
Members Expected.

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Lord of all lords and King of all kings.

"John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, "After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me." I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.' And John bore witness, saying, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God'" (John 1:29-34).

Jesus is unlike any who ever came before Him or any who would ever follow. He declared, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me"* (John 14:6). Everyone else written into the inspired narrative serves one purpose and that is to point out how truly awesome Christ, and Christ alone, really is.

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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GORBACHEV'S CHAUFFEUR

Bryan Matthew Dockens

President Reagan loved to tell jokes, especially about his counterpart in the Soviet Union, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev: "Recently they issued an order that anyone caught speeding must get a ticket. And you know that most of the driving there is done by the Politburo, the bureaucracy. They're the ones with cars and drivers and so forth. One morning, Gorbachev himself came out of his country home, knew he was late getting to the Kremlin, and told his driver to get in the back seat and he'd drive. And down the road he went. Passed two motorcycle policemen. One of them took out after him. In a few minutes, he's back with his buddy, and the buddy said, 'Did you give him a ticket?' He said, 'No.' 'Well,' he said, 'Why not? We were told that everyone caught speeding was to get a ticket.' He says, 'No, no, no; this one was too important.' 'Well,' he said, 'Who was it?' He says, 'I don't know. I couldn't recognize him, but his driver was Gorbachev!'"

The humor, of course, is in the idea that a Soviet policeman would try to guess who might outrank the highest-ranking member of the Communist Party in Soviet Russia. There is something similar, although no amusement is intended, with John the Baptist.

Jesus Christ is of such serious spiritual substance that even His messenger, the one who prepared others for His coming, was foretold of in multiple Old Testament prophecies.

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