

Preparing the Way before the Lord: Beyond Human Expectations

SJSM Sermon | 13-14 Dec 2025 (Advent 3)

Malachi 3:1-5; Matthew 11:2-11

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What happened to John the Baptist?

Miraculously conceived, leapt in his mother's womb at Mary's greeting (Luke 1:5-24,39-44)

Lived radically, preached repentance to prepare for the coming of the Messiah (Matt 3:1-4; John 1:6-7)

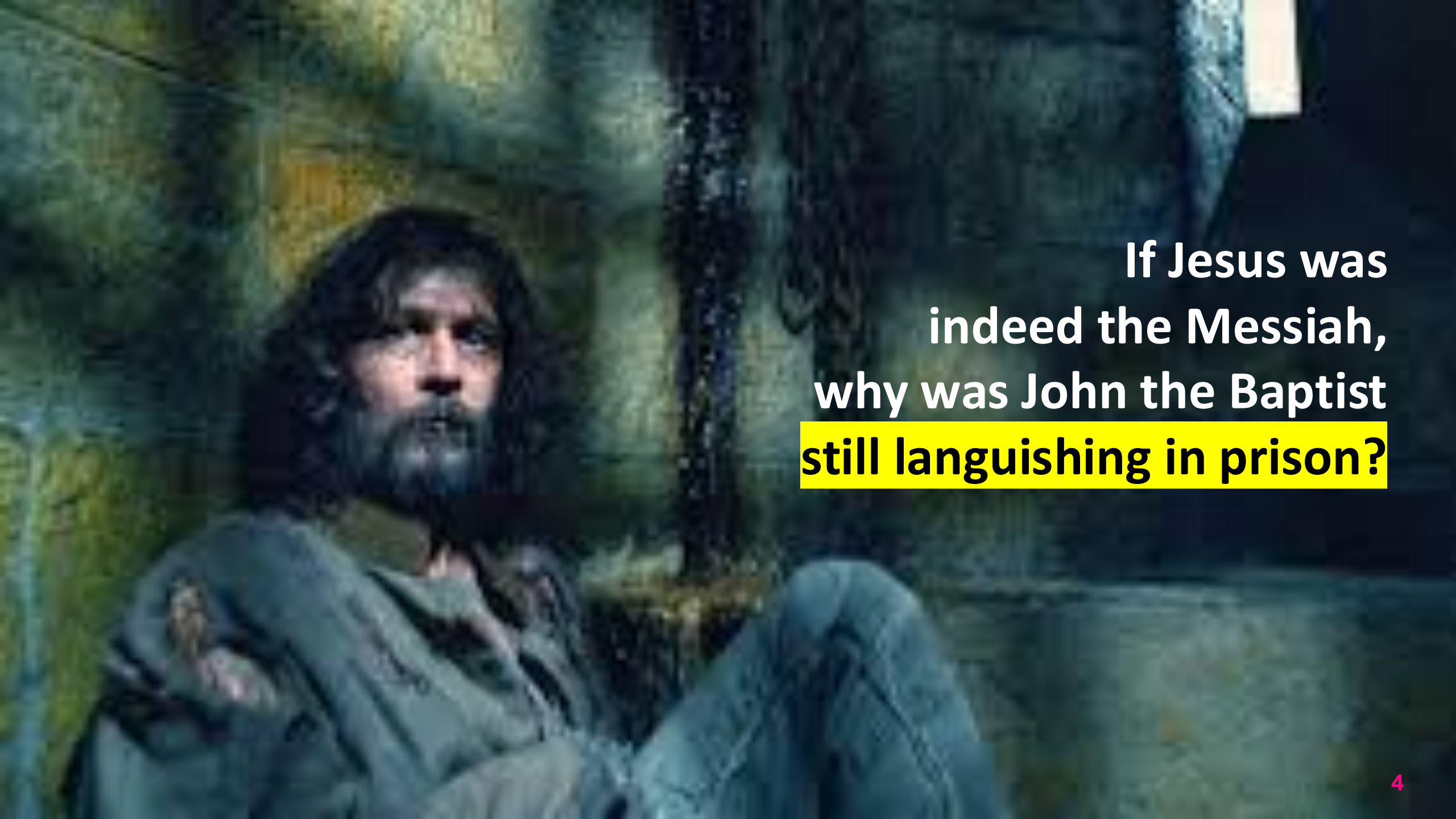
Recognized and pointed out Jesus as the Messiah: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." (John 1:29, 36)

Imprisoned by King Herod for criticizing his adultery (Mk 6:17-18)

What happened to John the Baptist?



From prison, John's query to Jesus:
**"Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for
another?" (Matt 11:2-3)**

A man with long dark hair and a beard, wearing a simple brown robe, is seated in a dark, stone-walled prison cell. He is bound by heavy metal chains around his wrists and waist. The cell is dimly lit, with a small opening in the wall behind him. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

**If Jesus was
indeed the Messiah,
why was John the Baptist
still languishing in prison?**

Key misunderstanding:

**What kind of Messiah was
John the Baptist expecting?**

**Similarly, what kind of Christ
are you expecting?**

Mal. 3:1 “Behold, I send my messenger,
and he will prepare the way before me.

And the Lord whom you seek will

suddenly come

to his temple; and the messenger of the
covenant in whom you delight,

behold, he is coming,

says the LORD of hosts.

“Suddenly”

**means that Christ’s coming
will be beyond human
expectations – His first as
well as His second coming.**

1. His Coming: Unexpected Hour

- “But concerning that **day and hour no one knows**, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.” (Matt 24:36)
- “Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an **hour you do not expect**.” (Matt 24:44)
- “Watch therefore, for **you know neither the day nor the hour**.” (Matt 25:13)

2. His Coming: Unexpected Manner

- **Demonstrated the OT signs of the Messiah:** Blind see, lame walk, lepers cleansed, deaf hear, dead raised and good news preached to the poor. (Matt 11:5) But the Scriptures did not promise instant vindication.
- **Refused to be made king:** “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, **Jesus withdrew** again to the mountain by himself. (John 6:13-15)
- **“My kingdom is not of this world.** If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” (John 18:36)

3. His Coming: Unexpected Outcomes

- First, **REFINING and PURIFYING**: Eternal Life for the faithful made righteous by Christ.
- For he is like a **refiner's fire** and like **fullers' soap**. He will sit as a **refiner and purifier** of silver, and he will **purify** the sons of Levi and **refine** them like gold and silver... (Mal 3:2-3)
- ...**be transformed** by the renewal of your mind... (Rom 12:2)
- “If anyone would come after me, let him **deny himself and take up his cross and follow me**. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matt 16:24)

3. His Coming: Unexpected Outcomes

- Then **JUDGEMENT**: For the rebellious in attitude and unrepentant of habitual sinful conduct:
- “I will draw near to you for judgment...against (1) the **sorcerer**... (2) the **adulterers**... (3) those who **swear falsely**... (4) those who **oppress** the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless... (5) those who **thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me.**” (Mal 3:5)
- “**Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’** will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (Matt 7:21)

What about John the Baptist?

Affirmed by Christ as **more than a prophet, the greatest mortal**, as he faithfully announced the Kingdom of Heaven without seeing its fulfillment.

What about us, who have inherited the Kingdom? Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. May we hold fast in our faith and hope, to **walk, watch, wait and work with Him till He returns.**