<u>The Ministry of John the Baptist :–</u> Matthew chapter 3, verses 1 – 17; Mark chapter 1, verses 1 – 11; Luke chapter 1, verses 5 – 25; 39 – 45 and 57 – 80; Luke chapter 3, verses 1 – 22; John chapter 1, verses 19 – 37; John chapter 3, verses 25 – 30 and Matthew chapter 11, verses 1 - 15:-
The fact that John the Baptist is prominent in all four Gospels is an indication of his importance in the record of the incarnation and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. In one Bible Study it is only possible to look at some key moments in these readings.

Luke chapter 1 records the miraculous conception and birth of John. Note that at six months the *"babe in (my) womb leapt for joy"*. John, in his divine role as 'The Forerunner' recognised the coming Saviour before either of them were born. For Christian believers this should give a guide to our attitude to abortion. The question "*What then will this child be?"* is answered in the message of the rest of the Gospel. *"He was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel"*. (Luke chapter 1, verse 80).

Luke chapter 3, verse 2:- *"the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness"*. The phraseology of this simple statement designated John as a prophet. (compare - Jonah chapter 1, verse 1; Micah chapter 1, verse 1, etc.)

Mark chapter 1, verses 1 - 11:- After more than 450 years of silence the appearance of John the Baptist, clothed in the garments of a traditional prophet would have caused great excitement. Is this the promised 'Messiah"? His message was a call to repentance in preparation for the coming of the expected Messiah. John recognised his role in the plan of redemption. The coming One was to be mightier and to baptise with the Holy Spirit. See also **Matthew chapter 3, verses 11 – 12**.

John chapter 1, verses 19 – 28:- Notice that John was in fact 'Elijah' and 'the prophet' - see Matthew chapter 11, verses 1 – 15 for the testimony of the Lord Jesus. John, in quoting the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 40, verse 3, was claiming to be the 'forerunner', preparing the way for the Messiah.
John chapter 1 verses 29 – 37:- This was the turning point in the ministry of John. He pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ as *"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"*. At least two of John's disciples left him to follow the Lord Jesus (verse 37).From that time on he knew that *"He must increase, but I must decrease"* (John chapter 3, verse 30). Having pointed to Jesus as the Messiah the important part of his ministry was complete.

Matthew chapter 11, verses 1 – 15:- John was imprisoned by Herod and later put to death (Matthew chapter 14, verses 1 - 12), When in prison he heard of the teaching of Jesus he questioned if Jesus really was *"the one who is to come"*. Even John the Baptist had his doubts!
In quoting the book of the prophet Malachi (chapter 3, verse 1) the Lord Jesus was not only emphasising the importance of John but also pointing to Himself as 'the Coming One'. We close with the affirmation in the words of the Lord Himself -
"among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist".

1. Jesus, the name high over all
in hell or earth or sky;
angels and men before it fall
and devils fear and fly,
and devils fear and fly.

2. O that the world might taste and see
the riches of his grace!
The arms of love that welcome me
would all mankind embrace,
would all mankind embrace

3. His righteousness alone I show,
his saving truth proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below,
to cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'
to cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'

4. Happy if with my final breath
I may but gasp his name,
preach him to all, and cry in death,
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'

Verses from a hymn by Charles Wesley 1707-88

Terry Brighton 13 / 2 / 2025