

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

DECEMBER 26 - 30, 2022

HOPE LOVE

Peace Joy

practicing  
*Christmas*

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS 2022

SERMON SERIES

Nov 27 - Jan 1

# MONDAY

Read **John 1:6-8, 19-34; Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Malachi 4:5-6**

---

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! This week connects not only 2022 with 2023, but also the seasons of Advent with Epiphany. Who better to feature this week than John the Baptizer, the prophetic “bridge” between the Old and New Testaments? Some call John the “last Old Testament prophet”—he ministered on the other side of the cross, his key messages including the call to “*Repent!*” (Matthew 3:2).

The Old Testament’s last book, Malachi, prophesied regarding John’s ministry heralding the coming King. God promised, “*My messenger, who will prepare the way before Me*” (Malachi 3:1), serving in the spirit of “*Elijah the prophet*” (Malachi 4:5). Like Jesus, John tangled with Jewish officials who sought his credentials and identity. John humbly denied being the Christ, but also dismissed that he was literal Elijah returned to Israel. Elijah was one of two biblical figures who never died naturally (the other was Enoch, Genesis 5:24)—accordingly, many ancient Israelites anticipated Elijah’s return and some Jews do so even today.

“Like Elijah, [John] stood unwaveringly before unjust religious and political authorities. He was also bold to judge them according to God’s standards. ... John was the New Testament forerunner who pointed the way to the arrival of the Messiah, just as Elijah filled that role in the Old Testament.” (Biblical Christianity)

An earlier devo series referenced the “400+ silent years of the Bible.” These years, however, were anything but “silent”—God was readying things for the Messiah, John’s ministry among His final preparations. “Pre-silence,” Medo-Persia conquered Babylon in the 6th century B.C.—Cyrus allowed the Israelites’ return to Jerusalem and supported the temple’s reconstruction. Alexander the Great’s 4th century B.C. victories began spreading the Greek culture and language throughout the Mediterranean region. Rome’s 1st century B.C. conquests began establishing a relatively safe, efficient regional road network. These steps paved the way for the First Advent and enabled the subsequent spread of the Gospel.

John “*came as a witness, to bear witness about the Light (Jesus)*” (John 1:7)—this remains our glorious privilege and responsibility. How “will [you] prepare the way before [Him]” in 2023? This is no time for silence!

## **QUESTIONS**

Why is John called the “last Old Testament prophet” by some?  
In what ways did John’s ministry reflect the spirit of the prophet Elijah?  
How did God work during the Bible’s “400+ silent years” between Malachi and John’s ministry?

## **PRAYERS**

Father God, please stir hearts and draw many toward Jesus Christ during this season of His First Advent! Help us to lovingly witness, for Your glory, to those whom you are calling.

# TUESDAY

Read **John 3:22-30; Luke 7:18-23; Mark 6:17-28**

---

A former colleague, a department's second-in-command at my former employer, left the business abruptly. When asked why, he explained, "I can play several instruments, but not second fiddle." Fortunately, John "the Baptist" did not have this attitude. Rather, when a follower complained about Jesus' ministry drawing attention away from John's own, he reasoned, "*He (the Savior) must increase, but I must decrease*" (John 3:30).

In current US culture, boasting and posing are so common that encounters with true humility are surprising. John could have claimed falsely to be the Messiah—as others had in ancient Israel—or rightly named Jesus as his blood relative. When asked "*Are you the Prophet?*" ... he answered, '*No*'" (John 1:22). Moses had prophesied centuries earlier, "*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites*" (Deuteronomy 18:15)—many expected the literal return of Elijah or Jeremiah, others a "second Moses." John refuted such associations, humbly self-identifying as "*the friend of the Bridegroom*" (John 3:29).

At least two of the Apostles had been John's prior disciples—it's likely that John willingly let them go to follow Jesus. Today's Luke 7:18-23 passage describes an exchange that I believe is commonly misunderstood. Many interpret imprisoned John's sending followers to ask the

Lord, “Are you *the One who is to come ...?*” as an indication of John’s own doubts. I suspect he sent them selflessly, knowing that his death was immanent and that Jesus’ response would win these disciples to Him.

John’s ministry would appear deranged and tragic by contemporary, materialistic cultural norms. He lived simply and remotely, dressed coarsely and ate whatever the wilderness provided. His God-honoring, uncompromising ways alienated Israel’s elite and eventually prompted his execution by Herod (see today’s Mark 16:7-29 passage).

John didn’t mind “playing second fiddle.” In fact, he didn’t care about his own prestige at all, embodying that “*the first will be last*” (Matthew 20:16). He sought God’s will and glory, concerned only that others would repent and accept Jesus Christ, thereby knowing forgiveness, peace, regeneration and eternal life. John is an excellent example to follow in the year ahead!

## **QUESTIONS**

What are some ways in which John willingly “decreased so that Jesus might increase”? How was John being humble when describing himself as “*the friend of the Bridegroom*”?

## **PRAYERS**

Almighty Creator, gift us with hearts that are humble, hearts that are eager to serve others for Your kingdom purposes. Help us decrease so that You might increase!

# WEDNESDAY

Read **John 1:14-17, 29; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Exodus 29:10-21**

---

Ancient monarchs sent heralds proclaiming to citizens that their sovereign ruler (“lord”) was coming. John fulfilled this role for the Messiah, announcing “*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29). What a strange way to introduce “*the King of kings and Lord of Lords*” (Revelation 19:16): “*the Lamb of God!*”

Kings generally obsess over establishing and sustaining their reigns, vanquishing enemies, winning subjects’ hearts (and/or fearful obedience), and securing their legacies. Jesus is like no other king nor any other person, either before His First Advent or since—the One who came selflessly to die in our place, ushering in and embodying the “*kingdom ... not of this world*” (John 18:36).

Animals were sacrificed in Judaism—a bloody process—to cover sins per the Mosaic covenant. As our redeeming, sacrificed Substitute, “Jesus had to die: to fulfill all the types, promises, and prophecies of the Old Testament; ... to finish all the sacrifices and ceremonies of the priesthood; ... to completely identify with humanity; ... to complete His perfect obedience; ... to satisfy the justice of God; ... to defeat the power of Satan, sin, and death; ... [and] to demonstrate the love of God (and the lengths He’s gone to in order save us).” (David Guzik)

But why such a torturous, grisly method? “Crucifixion was ... so gruesome that it was reserved for ... the worst criminals or enemies of [Rome, typically executed] along public highways ... Jesus died a shameful death to depict the [consequences of] our sins ... [likely] stark naked [in front of His mother and others] ... Jesus [died] a death that was excruciatingly painful ... to depict the horrible [destruction] that sin causes ... [and] the horror, the ugly and disgusting shame ... and the suffering caused by sin. All sin. Every sin. Even ‘tiny’ sins.” (Church of the Great God)

We, fallen people in a fallen world, have become increasingly desensitized to sin and its loathsomeness—particularly to a holy, loving God. Sin’s devastation—pictured also in the goriness of Jewish animal sacrifices—was in full view on Calvary’s cross. There our glorious, sinless King was “*made ... sin ... so that in Him we might become the [children] of God*” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

## QUESTIONS

What was the role of heralds in ancient kingdoms? Why did Jesus have to die? Why did the Father subject Jesus to such a painful, gruesome means of death?

## PRAYERS

Righteous Savior, our Redeemer, we thank You for the unfathomable sacrifice You made! Forgive us for taking this for granted and help us to walk in grateful, responsive joy.

# THURSDAY

Read **Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-14; Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:18-23**

---

Recently I've been watching the video series, "The Chosen," which presents the Gospel principally through the eyes of those on the scene during Jesus' First Advent ministry. Among the things "The Chosen" does excellently is reinforce the parallels between John 1 and Genesis' creation account.

*"And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Genesis 1:3).* Light represents God's revelation of Himself, His aim to share His love, goodness, wisdom, etc., with humankind, even "[creating us] in His own image" (Genesis 1:27). The most loving, generous thing that God could do is share Himself, the opportunity for knowledge of and fellowship with Him. The ultimate realization of this generosity came when *"the Word became flesh and dwelt among us"* (John 1:14).

Unbelievers wrestle with reasonable concerns like, "What about the person living in a remote area, one never hearing about Jesus? How could God judge them?" Romans 1 addresses this, reminding us that God reveals Himself to all through creation. Those rejecting such revelation do so rebelliously, hardening themselves to further *"light"* from God.

"[Everyone is designed with] a built-in knowledge of God. ... There are not atheists because of intellectual problems—they are atheists



because of moral problems. ... All [people] have some light (John 1:9) ... no matter who they are. ... Light refused increases darkness. ... [The one refusing God's light] begins to regress ... [forfeiting] even the light [they have already, their] foolish heart ... darkened. ... Creation and conscience tell a [person] there is a God. [But if they] admit that, [they realize they're] going to have to change (and be accountable accordingly) ... While all [may not have] have enough light to save them, all [unbelievers] have [rejected] enough light to damn them. Had they lived up to the light they had, they would have received more light ... [The hardened unbeliever] can't find God for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman." (Adrian Rodgers)

Be grateful that God has sent light which you have received, enabling more of His Self-revelation. Be an active light-bearer, sharing Jesus with those stumbling about in darkness. What better "late Christmas gift" than this?

## **QUESTIONS**

How is light portrayed biblically regarding the works of God?  
What does Pastor Adrian Rodgers' quote, "Light refused increases darkness," have to do with salvation?

## **PRAYERS**

Father of Lights, thank You for the Light of the World! Help us to be faithful light-bearers, bringing others to the foot of the cross. Deepen our burden for the lost and stir us to respond faithfully.

# FRIDAY

Read **John 8:12; Matthew 5:6, 28:18-20**

---

Intense people like me sometimes hear, “You need to lighten up!” That’s good advice, but in ways unintended by critics. The “lightening” each of us needs is to receive more of God’s Self-revelation, His “light”—through Bible study and related reflection, surrendered prayer, fellowship, and observing His work all around us. Our resultant responsibility and opportunity: reflect what we’ve received in a declining world desperately needing the Savior.

John the Baptizer shared what he had received. He wasn’t the source of “the Light,” but a light-bearer. *“Sent from God ... he came as a witness, to bear witness about the Light, that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but came to bear witness about the Light”* (John 1:7-9). John faithfully fulfilled his mission in introducing and proclaiming “the Light of the world” (John 8:12).

Some complain, “Why doesn’t God just reveal Himself clearly?” But He has via creation and its fine-tuning, enabling human life; the Bible; changed lives; and Jesus Christ—“the only God, who is at the Father’s side [and] has made [God] known” (John 1:18). Sadly, however, it remains true that “[although] the world was made through Him, [most still do] not know Him” (John 1:10).

Compared to those living in the 1st century, we are greatly advantaged in having God’s full biblical revelation, including the Gospels—even beyond our ancient Christian predecessors, we are “*without excuse*” (Romans 1:20) regarding knowing and following Christ. Yet daily we encounter people all around—family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, new acquaintances—who still “[do] not know Him.”

What, then, are we to do? Jesus commissioned us: “Go ... and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them ... all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20). As you plan for 2023, make Jesus’ “Great Commission” a priority. Establish a stepped-up daily practice of prayer, Bible study, and quiet, reflective time with God. And as you draw closer to the Lord, ask Him for a greater heart for the lost, for increased boldness and clearer opportunities in witnessing, and for the availability and faithfulness to respond to the Spirit’s prompts. Let God use you like never before in the year ahead!

## QUESTIONS

What are some of the ways in which God reveals Himself? How are we even more “*without excuse*” (Romans 1:20) when compared to our predecessors regarding knowing and following Christ? How will you be a light-bearer in 2023?

## PRAYERS

O, LORD our Peace, thank You for the Prince of Peace, the only Way to salvation! Deepen our hunger for Your Word, for knowing You ever deeply so that we might be peacemakers in a strife-filled world.

## Sources

- Biblical Christianity's quote is from <https://biblical-christianity.com/is-john-the-baptist-the-elijah#:~:text=John%20the%20Baptist%20ministered%20in%20the%20spirit%20and,and%20ate%20what%20he%20could%20from%20the%20land.>
- David Guzik's quotes can be found at <https://calvarychapel.com/posts/7-reasons-jesus-had-to-die>.
- The Church of the Great God's quote is from <https://www.cgg.org/index.cfm/library/article/id/360/jesus-die-crucifixion.htm>.
- Adrian Rodgers' quotes are from his radio teaching ministry, "Love Worth Finding," excerpted from the audio sermon available at <https://www.lwf.org/sermons/audio/no-other-way-to-heaven-except-through-jesus-1965#:~:text=The%20Refusal%20Factor%3A%20light%20refused%20increases%20darkness.%20Adrian,and%20we%20continue%20to%20refuse%20God%2C%20we%20regress.>



Glenkirk Church | 1700 Palopinto Ave, Glendora, CA 91741 | 626.914.4833

GlenkirkChurch.org |  @GlenkirkChurch |  Facebook: GlenkirkChurch