

Explain Matthew 11:11-15.

Today's Gospel, Matthew 11:11-15, is perplexing. Would you please write a short explanation as to its meaning? Specifically, who is Elijah? John? I thought Jesus was the one who is to come?

In Luke 1:17, we hear that "he [John the Baptist] will go before him [Jesus] in the spirit and power of Elijah . . ." This precursor of the Messiah is foretold in the Old Testament, such as in Malachi 3:1: "Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me."

Later in Malachi (rendered either 3:23 or 4:5, depending on your Bible), the Lord's forerunner is associated with Elijah: "Lo, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the day of the Lord comes."

Jesus clearly identifies John as the fulfillment of these prophecies (see Matthew 17:9-13). Even John's unusual attire calls to mind Elijah.

The fact that this messenger has come reveals that the kingdom of God is now at hand, that the long-awaited Messiah is set to enter the stage.

The Church not only sees John the Baptist as the fulfillment of the prophecies about the "voice crying in the wilderness" to prepare the way for the Lord, but she sees Elijah as a type or prefigurement of John the Baptist, with Elisha as a type of Christ, as a pivotal transition takes place at the Jordan River. Read the remarkable story of Elijah and Elisha in 2 Kings 2, especially vv. 6-14).

John plays a key role in the line of prophecies leading up to the Messiah, but as great as he was, he is outshined by the least saint of the New Covenant.

For an engaging presentation on John the Baptist, see the opening chapter of Tim Gray's Bible study, [*Mission of the Messiah*](#). Also, other aspects of this passage were recently discussed at the [Catholic Hour](#) blog.