

Tuesday 14th December 2021

Malachi 4: 5 *“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.”*

Matthew 17: 11-13 *“Jesus replied, ‘To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognise him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.”*

Modern day, so-called prophets come and go but John the Baptist’s part in the Christian story has stuck.

There were many Old Testament prophets who are divided into groups. The former prophets are described in the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. The latter prophets appear in books from Isaiah to Malachi but to make things more complicated these latter prophets are further subdivided into major and minor. Isaiah was a major prophet. Malachi was the last of the minor prophets but he predicted the coming of John the Baptist.

In Jesus’s day the elders of the Jewish church believed that the arrival of the Messiah would be heralded by the coming of a prophet of Elijah’s standing. Matthew reveals how the disciples came to understand that that ‘herald’, John the Baptist had not been recognised as such.

As we look forward to the celebration of the birth of Jesus with its joys of presents and family gatherings let us not forget the role of John the Baptist in pointing out the way to living a Godly life with its promise of redemption for the repentant and the promise of everlasting life.