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## QUOTATIONS FROM THE BOOK OF MALACHI IN SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Malachi, the Minor Prophet, is known only for his book. He lived and worked in the Persian era which can be learnt from the text of the book itself (Malachi 1:8). Being associated with the Jewish community in Jerusalem, Malachi discusses the problems which the post-exilic Jewish community had to face. He is particularly concerned with the issues of worship and priesthood<sup>1</sup>. The book of Malachi, which is the final book of the canon of the Old Testament, is characteristic for its dialectical style. The book comprises a series of six disputes where the superscription (1:1) is followed with five similarly built disputes (1:2–3:21). Each oracle begins with the statement made by God or a prophet. Then the people ask for an explanation which is given to them. These disputes are full of rebukes on corrupt practices, but also they contain words of encouragement and love. The verses of Malachi 1:1–2:9 condemn Israelite priests of that era. The book ends with epilogue 4:1–4:6. The main idea expressed in all Malachi's prophesies is awaiting Eschatological era<sup>2</sup>.

The authors of the synoptic gospels include in their writings a lot of quotations from the book of Malachi. It concerns the following extracts: *Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me* (Malachi 3:1) and *Behold, I will*

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<sup>1</sup> See J.S. Synowiec, *Prorocy Izraela, ich pisma i nauka*, Kraków 1995, p. 320–322.

<sup>2</sup> See T. Brzegowy, *Potrójny ideał proroka Malachiasza*, „Homo Dei” 4 (1991), p. 15–17; A. Salas, *Prorocy. Zwiastuni Boga żywego*, Częstochowa 1999, p. 159, 160; *Międzynarodowy komentarz do Pisma Świętego*, ed. W. Chrostowki, Warszawa 2000, p. 1074; T. Brzegowy, *Poganie będą wielbić Imię*

*send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction* (Malachi 4:5-6).

**PREPARING THE WAY  
(MALACHI 3:1, MATTHEW 11:10, MARK 1:2, LUKE 7:27)**

The verse of Malachi 3:1 *Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me* can be found in the texts of all three synoptic gospels. Matthew and Luke refer to these words in the pericope about the testimony made by Jesus about John (Matthew 11:7-15, Luke 7:24-30). Mark, in turn, refers to the words in the introduction pericope to his gospel concerning the appearance of John the Baptist (Mark 1:1-8). Matthew and Luke quote the words as follows: *Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you* (Mark 1:2). Very similar words are found in Exodus 23:20 *Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared*.

The main theme of the book of Malachi is presenting threats and rebukes. Theologically speaking, the main prophesy is the prophesy of Messiah's predecessor (Malachi 3:1-23)<sup>3</sup>. The verse of Malachi 3:1 contains the fourth oracle titled *You have wearied the Lord with your words* (Malachi 2:17-3:5). This passage tackles the issue of unrewarded goodness. The people ask God to interfere having in mind his sense of justice (compare 2:17)<sup>4</sup>.

The extract of Malachi 2:17-3:22 is a prophesy of Yahweh's judgement. People expect the God's justice during their worldly life. Being successful means God's blessing thus people await God's intervention all the time. Malachi's contemporaries ask him: *Where is the God of justice?* (2:17). This is their reproach for not executing justice by God. The prophet rebukes such behaviour of people who doubt God's sense of justice<sup>5</sup>.

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*Pańskie: Księga Malachiasza*, in: *Wprowadzenie w myśl i wezwanie ksiąg biblijnych*, vol. 5: *Wielki Świat starotestamentowych proroków II*, ed. J. Frankowski, Warszawa 2001, p. 85-87; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza i ich zastosowanie w aktualnych polskich podręcznikach do katechizacji. Studium biblijno-katechetyczne*, Kielce 2006, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> See J.S. Synowiec, *Prorocy Izraela...*, p. 320-325; G. Witaszek, *Wykroczenia wspólnoty powygnaniowej w ocenie Księgi Malachiasza*, „Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny” 52,1 (1999), p. 7, 8.

<sup>4</sup> See *Międzynarodowy komentarz...*, p. 1074; A. Cody, *Księga Malachiasza*, in: *Katolicki komentarz biblijny*, ed. W. Chrostowski, Warszawa 2001, p. 887; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 190.

<sup>5</sup> See M. Peter, *Księga Malachiasza. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz*, in: *Księgi proroków mniejszych*, vol. 2, ed. S. Lach, Poznań 1968, p. 486; G. Witaszek, *Wykroczenia wspólnoty powygnaniowej...*, p. 13; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 191.

God replies with sending his messenger called „malak”. His name is not given in the book and his duty is to prepare the way for God’s coming. The role of „malak” is similar to the one of the prophet from Isaiah 40:3 who is sent to prepare the new way for God’s intervention. The Lord’s coming is a challenge *But who can endure the way of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?* (Malachi 3:2). The lord is like a „refiner’s fire” and „fullers’ soap” (Malachi 3:2b). In spite of all the drama connected with the coming of the Lord, his aim is not to destroy but to purify<sup>6</sup>.

The audience receives the answer in the form of the prophesy of Yahweh’s judgement day. The aim of the judgement is to bring justice. The Lord will be preceded with the messenger. *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* (Malachi 3:1). This judgement day will be the time of terror. Yahweh will eradicate the evil of the Israelites and he will inflict punishment on the guilty ones. It will be a dreadful time for all sinners<sup>7</sup>. *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, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord* (Malachi 3:3). Malachi in the verses of 3:2-5 warns the audience that it is reckless to call for God’s justice. The Israelites tend to forget about their own sins and see them only in others<sup>8</sup>.

The verses of Malachi 3:1-5 give a detailed description of the day of Yahweh. The primary reason for God’s intervention on that day is the lack of trust in God’s justice (compare Malachi 13-15). The oracle of Malachi 3:1-5 begins with the prophesy of the coming of Yahweh’s messenger. The first verse of the oracle rejects the accusation that God being the protector of morality and fair judge is indifferent to the violation of his rules. God’s intervention will surely come but it will be done unexpectedly. God’s coming will be preceded by the appearance of his messenger. He will go before God – the judge in eschatological times. The day of Yahweh will influence all people both good and bad<sup>9</sup>.

Considering spiritual deficiency of a human soul, Malachi prophesies a prompt ushering in of a new era which will remedy all deficiencies. The day of the Lord is approaching and then each human being will be judged according to their deeds.

<sup>6</sup> See *Międzynarodowy komentarz...*, p. 1074; A. Cody, *Księga Malachiasza*, p. 887; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 191.

<sup>7</sup> See G. Witaszek, *Wykroczenia wspólnoty powygnaniowej...*, p. 13, 14.

<sup>8</sup> See M. Peter, *Księga Malachiasza...*, p. 489–491; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 191.

<sup>9</sup> See J. Homerski, *Dzień Pański u Proroka Malachiasza*, „Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne” 1 (1987), p. 14–16; Synowiec, *Prorocy Izraela...*, p. 321; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 191–193.

The judge will speak up for every wronged person and every man of integrity will receive his award (Malachi 3:20). Before the day of judgement comes, God will send his messenger to the earth who will prepare the way for him. In the appendix to the book of Malachi it is stated that the messenger will be Elijah: *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes* (Malachi 4:5). Yet the name of Elijah is just a symbol of the future predecessor of the Messiah. When we take the New Testament into consideration here, the predecessor is John the Baptist who is to come *in the spirit and power of Elijah* (Luke 1:17)<sup>10</sup>.

The writers of the synoptic gospels use the quotation linking Malachi 3:1 and Exodus 23:20 in their works: *Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you* (Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27). Matthew and Luke put these words in the pericope of the testimony Jesus gives about John the Baptist (compare Matthew 11:7-15, Luke 7:24-30). The beginning of the pericope comprises the set of rhetorical questions like *What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet* (Matthew 11:7-9; Luke 7:24-26). These questions prepare us for the remarkable testimony that Jesus gives about John the Baptist that John is the greatest man of all men. *I tell you, among those born of women, none is greater than John* (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28). Jesus praises John lavishly for his strength of character and austere lifestyle. Jesus criticizes such vices as dubiousness and avoidance of inconvenience<sup>11</sup>.

John is the predecessor of the Saviour for whom he must prepare the way. This time the authors quote Malachi 3:1<sup>12</sup>. In the Old Testament the angel preceded God

<sup>10</sup> See T. Brzegowy, *Potrójny ideał...*, p. 24–26; A.T. Desmond, *Król Sługa. Biblijny portret Mesjasza*, Kraków 2000, p. 178; T. Brzegowy, *Poganie będą wielbić...*, p. 83; J. Glinka, *Pierwsi chrześcijanie. Źródła i początki kościoła*, Kraków 2004, p. 173, 174; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 192.

<sup>11</sup> See H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium, erster Teil: Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1-9,50*, Leipzig 1970, p. 414–416; F. Gryglewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz*, Poznań–Warszawa 1974, p. 169; F. Rienecker, *Das Evangelium des Lukas*, Wuppertal 1974, p. 197–198; J. Radermakers, *Lettura pastorale del vangelo di Matteo*, Bologna 1997, p. 199, 200; K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego Testamentu*, vol. 1, Poznań–Kraków 1999, p. 70; H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza. Tłumaczenie, wstęp i komentarz*, Lublin 2005, p. 201–203; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 192; C.L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, in: *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G.K. Beale, D.A. Carson, Grand Rapids, Michigan 2007, p. 38–40.

<sup>12</sup> See A. Sand, *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Brescia 1977, p. 238–240; S. Fausti, *Una comunità legge il Vangelo di Matteo*, vol. 1 (cc. 1–13), Bologna 1999, p. 203; A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza, rozdziały 1–13, Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz*, Częstochowa 2005, p. 466.

(compare Genesis 24:7, 32:2). With this quote Jesus affirms his equality with God. In Malachi 3:1 the prophet announces the messenger preceding God. All three authors of the synoptic gospels clearly point to Messiah-Jesus as the messenger and they identify the coming of the Messiah with the coming of God<sup>13</sup>.

At the end of the pericope (Matthew 11:7-15) Matthew quotes the words of Jesus: *he who has ears to hear, let him hear* (Matthew 11:15). Jesus utters these words so that Jews could see prophesied the mission of Elijah in the Old Testament through the acts of John. If one wants to discern the true self of John the Baptist one must be able to hear and have an open mind to hear anything<sup>14</sup>.

In the pericope by Mark (1:1-8) the quote from Malachi 3:1 is followed by one from the book of Isaiah *A voice cries: „In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God”* (Isaiah 40:3). Mark's version is „The voice of one crying in the wilderness: *Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths* (Mark 1:3). This sentence appears in all the synoptic gospels, but Matthew and Luke put it in the pericope about the teaching of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3, Luke 3:4). However, Luke extends his quotation of the book of Isaiah *Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God* (Luke 3:5-6). Luke quotes the words from the book of Isaiah 40:3-5. All three synoptic gospel writers state the origin of the quote as the one from the book of Isaiah (compare Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:2, Luke 3:4), but only Mark precedes this quote with another quote from the book of Malachi 3:1, *Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way* (Mark 1:2)<sup>15</sup>.

This part of the book of Isaiah, which the above mentioned quotation comes from, begins with the calling for comfort: *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God* (Isaiah 40:1). In the language of the Bible the word comfort „*niham*”, which is derived from God, means the participation of a comforter in the misery of man and it goes together with the intervention of God himself. The intervention of Yahweh

<sup>13</sup> See J. Homerski, *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz*, Poznań–Warszawa 1979, p. 198; K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego...*, p. 70; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 192, 193.

<sup>14</sup> See J. Schniewind, *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*, Brescia 1977, p. 253–255; R. Fabris, *Matteo*, Roma 1982, p. 257, 258; O. Da Spinetoli, *Matteo. Il vangelo della Chiesa*, Assisi 1983, p. 332–334; S. Grasso, *Il Vangelo di Matteo*, Roma 1995, p. 289–291; K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego...*, p. 71; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 193.

<sup>15</sup> See H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, p. 155–157; F. Gryglewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 117, 118; H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Marka. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz*, Poznań–Warszawa 1977, p. 78–80; R. E. Watts, *Mark*, in: *Commentary on the New Testament...*, p. 113–115.

is about his redeeming actions. Salvation stems from the mercy of forgiveness<sup>16</sup>. *Speak tenderly of Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins* (Isaiah 40:2)<sup>17</sup>.

A mysterious „voice cries” (Isaiah 40:3) is the echo of God's voice. One of Yahweh's spokespersons who belongs to his council gives others the order to prepare the way for Yahweh in the desert. As we find out from the context of this verse, God is planning to lead his people along this way to their national land of Palestine. A very similar thing happened when God led his people in the time of Moses (see Isaiah 40:1-5). He will free his people and bring together the dispersed Israelites into Jerusalem. It will be a march of triumph and it is shown as such by Deutero-Isaiah who heard it at the heavenly court. He was present at the court as a prophet and his prophecy is full of hyperbolic pictures. The prophecy expressed a great joy of approaching freedom. The author believes that Yahweh will redeem and bring salvation to his people<sup>18</sup>. The writers of the synoptic gospels refer the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3 to the person of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4). Mark places this commentary at the very beginning of his gospel just before the information on the speech made by John the Baptist about the need to convert (Mark 1:4) while Matthew and Luke place the commentary after this information (Matthew 3:1, Luke 3:1-3)<sup>19</sup>.

Gospel writers introduce the description of the public activity of Jesus by the speech of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-12, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 3:1-6). This is the way to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3<sup>20</sup>. While we take into consideration the clothes of John the Baptist described by Matthew 3:4 and Mark 1:6 we can safely assume it is the person of Elijah (see 2 Kings 1:8). John is wearing the clothes of camel fur and he is tied with a leather belt and this belt could mean that he perceives himself as Elijah. According to 2 Kings 1:8 Elijah was recognized thanks to his beard and a leather belt. However, we cannot be convinced that John perceives himself to be Elijah only because of wearing the leather belt<sup>21</sup>. The Jewish com-

<sup>16</sup> See L. Stachowiak, *Księga Izajasza II–III. Wstęp...*, p. 60, 61; Z. Małcki, *Struktura literacka prologu Księgi Deuteroizajasza (Iz 40,1-11)*, „Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny” 49,4 (1996), p. 15–17.

<sup>17</sup> See D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 142.

<sup>18</sup> See L. Stachowiak, *Księga Izajasza II–III. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz – ekskurs*, Poznań 1996, p. 58, 59; J.S. Synowiec, *Prorocy Izraela...*, p. 267, 268; *Komentarz historyczno-kulturowy do Nowego Testamentu*, eds. C.S. Keener, K. Bardski, W. Chrostowski, (Warszawa, 2000), p. 13; C. Stuhlmüller, *Deutero-Izajasz (Iz 40–55) i Trito-Izajasz (Iz 56–66)*, in: *Katolicki...*, p. 649.

<sup>19</sup> See H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Marka. Wstęp...*, p. 79, 80; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 142.

<sup>20</sup> See J. Schmid, *L'Evangelo secondo Matteo*, Brescia 1976, p. 7, 8; A. Sand, *Il Vangelo...*, p. 65, 66; J. Schniewind, *Il Vangelo secondo...*, p. 43–45; S. Fausti, *Una comunità...*, p. 37.

<sup>21</sup> See J. Gnilk, *Jeżus z Nazaretu*, Kraków 1997, p. 103; *Ibid*, *Pierwsi chrześcijanie. Źródła i początki Kościoła*, p. 172, 173.

munity believed that the Messiah would be preceded by Elijah (see Malachi 3:23, Sir 48:10, Matthew 17:10, Mark 9:11). What's more, Jesus calls John Elijah (Matthew 11:14; 17:12, Mark 9:13, Luke 1:17). The synoptic writers in their gospels refer to a traditional typology of Elijah – John the Baptist meaning John to become a new Elijah in the gospels<sup>22</sup>.

The preaching of John the Baptist is quite specific in presenting the details both about the place, the desert, and the way of God's coming. He very strongly emphasizes the need to convert as the kingdom of heaven is approaching. While he is preaching and calling for atonement he refers to the Old Testament prophets and their activities yet the justification for his preaching is totally different. The prophets of the Old Testament threatened people with God's wrath and they vividly displayed future punishment and John justifies his preaching with the forthcoming kingdom of Heaven. Such an event involves every man and encourages him to change his lifestyle decisively<sup>23</sup>.

John calls for penance to be done in the desert, which in the Old Testament is described as the place of purification and change. The voice of John is clearly heard and his strict figure is also visible. This very activity of John is mentioned in reference to the word of Deutero-Isaiah by all three synoptic gospel writers. Israelites were in exile in Babylonian servitude and the prophet comforted them with the vision of home-coming saying: *In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God* (Isaiah 40:3). Gospel writers perceive the act of freedom from Babylonian servitude as the prophecy of freeing from sin. Jesus Christ is the one to free people from this slavery of sin and John the Baptist precedes him preparing the way for his coming. John gives an example of an austere lifestyle while he asks others to convert and do penance for their sins<sup>24</sup>.

In Isaiah 40:3 the Comforter announces the end of the Babylonian servitude. With this quote put in the canonical gospels we can understand better the redeeming intervention of God. The end to the servitude was the sign of the salvation of all mankind which was done through Christ. This interpretation of Isaiah 40:3 is given by the authors of the gospels. They change the words of the prophet „the way for Yahweh” into „the way of the Lord” and „the paths for our God” into „His

<sup>22</sup> See H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Marka. Wstęp...*, p. 74–76; J. Radermakers, *Lettura pastorale...*, p. 127; P.R. Gryziec, *Według świętego Mateusza. Stary Testament ukryty w Nowym*, Kraków 1998, p. 51, 52; A.T. Desmond, p. 178; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 143.

<sup>23</sup> See K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego...*, p. 19, 20; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 143.

<sup>24</sup> See O. Da Spinetoli, *Matteo...*, p. 91, 92; L. Infante, *Il Battista chiama al ritorno*, „Parola Spirito e Vita” 22 (1990), p. 128, 129; R. Fabris, *Matteo*, p. 77–79; K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego...*, p. 20; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 143.

paths". The subject of the gospels is not God-Yahweh but Christ and all mention of Yahweh is in reference to Jesus<sup>25</sup>.

### IN THE SPIRIT OF ELIJAH (MALACHI 3:23 – LUKE 1:17)

Malachi ends his book with the words "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction" (Mal 4:5-6). Malachi in 4:4-6 defines the forerunner of the Lord's day who was prophesied in 3:1<sup>26</sup>.

Luke is the only synoptic gospel writer that refers to Malachi 4:5-6 and he puts it in the pericope on the prophecy of John's birth (Luke 1:5-25) and he is also the only writer to describe in detail the life of John the Baptist. He even gives details on John's birth announcement. The sole event of the Annunciation takes place in the temple of Jerusalem and the account is of a historic type. The account is preceded with a very ceremonial prologue similar to those found in the Old Testament. The chronological data is preceded with the description of the characters involved (Luke 1:5-9). Luke introduces Zechariah, the father of John, who is performing the most important role in his life during the ceremony in the temple during the Annunciation. Zechariah was burning incense (Luke 1:8n)<sup>27</sup>.

During burning incense Zachariah quite unexpectedly receives the announcement of his son's birth. Luke tells that "And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of Incense" (Luke 1:11). Biblically speaking, the right side is the symbol of salvation and redemption (see Matthew 25:33n). The appearance of the angel on the right signals the great importance of God's Annunciation. Both in the New and Old Testaments God's will is usually expressed by angels, either in a dream or in person. The sight of an angel usually causes fear which religious psychology calls *misterium tremendum*. Zechariah also reacts with fear: *And Zechariah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him* (Luke 1:12)<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> See J. Schmid, *L'Evangelo...*, p. 79, 80; J. Homerski, *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza. Wstęp...*, p. 103; L. Infante, *Il Battista chiama...*, p. 131–133; D. Adamczyk, *Starotestamentalne cytaty w Ewangelii według świętego Mateusza...*, p. 144.

<sup>26</sup> See T. Brzegowy, *Poganie będą wielbić...*, p. 87.

<sup>27</sup> See F. Gryglewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 83, 84; E. Szymanek, *Wykład pisma świętego Nowego Testamentu*, Poznań 1990, p. 60, 61; P.R. Gryziec, *Według świętego Łukasza. Abyś się mógł przekonać o całkowitej pewności nauk*, Kraków 1999, p. 31; K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego...*, p. 264, 265; *Międzynarodowy komentarz...*, p. 1243, 1244; H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według świętego Łukasza...*, p. 43; D.W. Pao, E.J. Schnabel, *Luke*, in: *Commentary on the New Testament...*, p. 257.

<sup>28</sup> See H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, p. 31, 32; F. Gryglewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 84; F. Rienecker, *Das Evangelium...*, p. 13; E. Szymanek, *Wykład pisma świętego...*, p. 60, 61; K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego...*, p. 264, 265; H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 46; D.W. Pao, E.J. Schnabel, *Luke*, p. 257.

The angel comforts a scared man and brings him a message that his request has been heard and that his wife will bear a child. The angel orders him to name the child John (Luke 1:13). Defining the name of the child before its actual birth by God's messenger underlines the importance of this even<sup>29</sup>. The angel adds that *many will rejoice at his birth* (Luke 1:14). This prophecy shows John's greatness and importance as God himself gives him the name. It makes him God's man who will be full of divine mercy and he will be a man of moral principles. The angel leaves also a mysterious prophecy *for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb* (Luke 1:15). The restraint form „wine or any strong drink” makes him similar to great characters of the Old Testament like Samson (Judges 13:4.7.14), Samuel (1 Sm 1:11n) or other priests performing cult duties in the temple of Jerusalem (Lev 10:9; Ezek 44:21)<sup>30</sup>.

The mysterious prophecy will become clear when John the Baptist will be announcing the coming of one ”Greater than himself.” Defining John as the man that „will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb” refers to John's sainthood which began in his early childhood. He is the person to play a major role in the act of redemption. He is filled with the Holy Spirit and thus a prophet, but unlike others who were inspired by the Holy Spirit just before their preaching, John received the powers of the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb<sup>31</sup>.

John will prepare people for the coming of the Lord and John's activity is announced by the angel *And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the father to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared* (Luke 1:16-17). Here the angel refers to the words of Malachi 4:5. John's activity is characterized as eschatological renewal meaning that John will be the next Elijah and he will be supported with the power and ardour of Elijah. John will introduce love and social peace into families and he will guide the hearts of those opposed towards God. He will make them just again. Thanks to his zeal, he will remind of Elijah's preaching and his activity will make the people of Israel the perfect people of God (Lev 26:12)<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> See H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> See *ibid*, p. 47; H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, p. 33; F. Gryglewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 84; F. Rienecker, *Das Evangelium...*, p. 14; E. Szymanek, *Wykład pisma świętego...*, p. 61; K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego...*, p. 265; D.W. Pao, E.J. Schnabel, *Luke*, p. 257.

<sup>31</sup> See F. Gryglewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 85; E. Szymanek, *Wykład pisma świętego...*, p. 61; P.R. Gryziec, *Według św. Łukasza...*, p. 30; K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego...*, p. 265; H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 47.

<sup>32</sup> See F. Gryglewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 85; E. Szymanek, *Wykład pisma świętego...*, p. 61; K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego...*, p. 266; D.W. Pao, E.J. Schnabel, *Luke*, p. 258.

Luke seems to point out that Elijah's type of activity will be repeated through the actions of John yet he does not identify John the Baptist with Elijah, he only updates the tradition. Unification with God is possible only by settling the family and social matters before. To prove this point Luke quotes Malachi 4:5 but he adjust it to his purposes<sup>33</sup>.

The prophecy of John's birth and greatness serves the purpose of describing God as mighty. It is God who does the act of creation in the old womb of Elizabeth and he can also cause the conception of God's son in a virgin womb of Mary. Thus the greatness of John emphasizes the greatness of Jesus. The more eminent predecessor, the greater the one who follows. Gabriel is God's messenger (Luke 1:19), who according to apocalyptic tradition is the executor of God's will, being it mercy or wrath, conveying the message to Mary<sup>34</sup>.

It is also Gabriel who informs Zechariah that he will be speechless until the day of John's birth (Luke 1:20). Zechariah is punished for his doubt in the power of God. When Zechariah went out of the temple to speak to the people he couldn't utter a word and then all understood that he had a vision in the temple (Luke 1:21). Time passed and noticing she was pregnant Elizabeth understood the prophecy and knew it would fulfill (Luke 1:24-25)<sup>35</sup>.

The birth of John the Baptist is preceded with a set of important events which make him a man of great importance. Luke describes him as *the prophet of the Most High* (Luke 1:76) whose job is to prepare *the way of the Lord* (Luke 3:4). Luke contrasts the pericope on John's birth prophecy with the text on Jesus' conception and his birth (Luke 1:26-38). Luke parallels the story of John (1:57-80) with the story of Jesus (2:1-20) to contrast the one who will come<sup>36</sup>.

The similarities are in the field of being a human being while the difference is about transcendence. Their relationship is one of a servant and lord (Luke 1:43). Jesus is stronger *than him* (3:16). The contrast between the two is visible from the very beginning of conception *Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard* (1:13) and *Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God* (1:30). The first case is the initiative of a man and the second is the instance

<sup>33</sup> See F. Gryglewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 85; H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 49; D.W. Pao, E.J. Schnabel, *Luke*, p. 258.

<sup>34</sup> See H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, p. 37; F. Rienecker, *Das Evangelium...*, p. 15; E. Szymanek, *Wykład pisma świętego...*, p. 61; H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 50.

<sup>35</sup> See H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium*, p. 37; F. Gryglewicz, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 85; F. Rienecker, *Das Evangelium...*, p. 15; K. Romaniuk, A. Jankowski, L. Stachowiak, *Komentarz praktyczny do Nowego...*, p. 266; H. Langkammer, *Ewangelia według św. Łukasza...*, p. 51.

<sup>36</sup> See S. Mędała, *Czas Jezusa: Ewangelia według św. Łukasza*, in: *Wprowadzenie w myśl i wezwanie ksiąg biblijnych*, vol. 8: *Ewangelie synoptyczne*, ed. J. Frankowski, Warszawa 2006, p. 282.

of God's will. Zechariah is punished for the lack of faith in God (1:20) and Mary is praised for her faith (1:45). Thus the greatness of John is relative (1:15) because the power of the Holy Spirit comes from outside. Jesus, on the other hand, fulfills salvation. The angel speaks about Jesus: *He will be great and he will be called the Son of the Most High* (1:32). His greatness is because of his Father and his mission that lies ahead *and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end* (1:33). However, John's mission is quite temporary and Jesus will be ruling forever. The one whose mission is to prepare people for the coming of the Lord takes an example from Elijah<sup>37</sup>.

## QUOTATIONS FROM THE BOOK OF MALACHI IN SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

### Summary

The extract of Malachi 3:1 about preparing the way for the Lord is put into the pericope on John the Baptist being a predecessor of the Saviour (Matthew 11:7-15, Mark 1:1-8, Luke 7:24-30). This prophecy is fulfilled with the person of John the Baptist as he is somebody more important than just God's herald. With the prophecy of Elijah's return (Malachi 4:5) he is the one who directly announces the coming of the Lord. Luke is the only writer of the three synoptic gospels that refers to the words of Malachi 4:5-6 and he puts them in his pericope on the announcement of John's birth (Luke 1:5-25). Luke's gospel underlines the contrast between John the Baptist and Jesus emphasizing Jesus' transcendency. The Gospel reinterpretation identifies the coming of the Messiah with the coming of God which makes them equal.

Matthew notes that Jesus speaks of John the *Baptist and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come* (Matthew 11:14). John is the messenger of the kind usually angels are and none of the other prophets had such an honour. His duty is to preach and prepare the people for the Messiah. Jesus praises John while John is imprisoned and that makes him the first human being to die for Christ.

## CYTATY Z KSIĘGI MALACHIASZA W EWANGELIACH SYNOPTYCZNYCH

### Streszczenie

W Ewangeliach synoptycznych cytowane są słowa z Księgi Malachiasza. Tekst o przygotowaniu drogi dla Pana z Ml 3,1 zawarty jest w perykopie dotyczącej Jana Chrzciciela, jako poprzednika Zbawiciela (Mt 11,7-15; Mk 1,1-8; Łk 7,24-30). Słowa o proroku poprzedzającym nadejście dnia Pańskiego z Ml 3,23 n. cytuje tylko Łukasz w ramach perykopy dotyczącej zapowiedzi narodzenia Jana (Łk 1,5-25). W reinterpretacji ewangelicznej tekstów z Księgi proroka Malachiasza na osobie Jana Chrzciciela spełniła się przepowiednia o przygotowaniu drogi dla Pana z Ml 3,1 oraz o powrocie Eliasza z Ml 3,23 n. Posłannictwem Jana Chrzciciela było głoszenie przyjścia Mesjasza i bezpośrednie przygotowanie ludzi do tego wydarzenia.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 283; *Międzynarodowy komentarz...*, p. 1243.

**Keywords:** John the Baptist, prepare the people for Messiah, Synoptic Gospels, the day of the court, the predecessor of the Savior

**Słowa kluczowe:** dzień sądu, Ewangelie synoptyczne, Jan Chrzciciel, poprzednik Zbawiciela, przygotowanie przyjścia Mesjasza