

John: the Forerunner of Christ

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. An itinerant preacher and chosen prophet spoken of in Christianity, Islam, Bahai, and Mandaeism, John the Baptist is found in the Jewish Antiquities by Flavius Josephus (book 18, chapter 5, 2)

"Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment of what he did against John, that was called the Baptist: for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to come to baptism; for that the washing [with water] would be acceptable to him, if they made use of it, not in order to the putting away [or the remission] of some sins [only], but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness. Now when [many] others came in crowds about him, for they were very greatly moved [or pleased] by hearing his words, Herod, who feared lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion, (for they seemed ready to do any thing he should advise,) thought it best, by putting him to death, to prevent any mischief he might cause, and not bring himself into difficulties, by sparing a man who might make him repent of it when it would be too late. Accordingly he was sent a prisoner, out of Herod's suspicious temper, to Macherus, the castle I before mentioned, and was there put to death. Now the Jews had an opinion that the destruction of this army was sent as a punishment upon Herod, and a mark of God's displeasure to him.

- B. All four Gospel accounts record John the Baptist's ministry. In the Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew, and Luke), Jesus's baptism is depicted, while it is implied in the Gospel of John.

1. Mark 1:1-8

2. Matt. 3:1-6

3. Luke includes an account of John's infancy, introducing him as the son of Zacharias, an old man, and his wife Elizabeth, who was barren. The birth of John was foretold by the angel Gabriel to Zacharias. Since he is described as a priest of the course of Abijah and his wife, Elizabeth, as one of the daughters of Aaron, this would make John a descendant of Aaron on both his father's and mother's side.

a. Luke is the only writer who speaks of John as a relative of Jesus, teaching charity, baptizing tax-collectors, and advising soldiers.

b. Acts speaks of disciples of John becoming followers of Jesus
Acts 18:24 - 19:6

4. John reports Jesus' disciples were baptizing - John 3:22-30, 5:31-35

- C. Christianity is a rational religion, and the faith is based on evidence.

1. Jesus does not expect us to believe He is the Son of God on His testimony alone, but provides us with evidences - John 5:31-47

a. John the Baptist, the works of Jesus, the Father, the Scriptures

2. Testimony and evidence by the Law of Moses - Deut. 19:15; John 8:17

I. THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

- A. John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus
 - 1. Isa. 42:16, 40:3-5; Matt. 3:3; Mal. 4:5-6; Matt. 11:11-14
- B. John the Baptist was recognized by all as a prophet of God.
 - 1. Matt. 21:25-26; John 1:15-28
- C. John's testimony concerning Jesus.
 - 1. He was before John, an affirmation of Deity - John 1:15; Luke 1:67-80
 - 2. Grace and truth came through Jesus - John 1:17
 - 3. Jesus the Lamb of God taking away the sins of the world - John 1:29
 - 4. Jesus the Son of God - John 1:29-34

Conclusion:

- A. John the Baptist came to identify and announce the Messiah. In his own words, "I myself did not know him; but for this I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel" (John 1:31).
- B. Regardless of all of the importance the scriptures place on John the Baptist, and of being related to Jesus, and he himself being an inspired prophet of the change in covenant, John knew his place before the Christ - Matt. 3:13-15