

"John-the-Baptist" (a personal tribute)

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Honestly, I've thought a *lot* about John-the-Baptist. Then again, I've thought a lot about *most* people, in the Bible, but *John-the-Baptist* holds a special place in my heart. Keep reading and I hope you understand why. (please click and read verses+ in blue)

The *birth* of John-the-Baptist was probably the biggest *spiritual* thing to happen amongst the Jews in almost 400-years. Seriously, after the Jews completed the second Temple and started their '*rituals*' again, it was *not the same*. Granted, God *meant* for the second Temple to be built (because there was exactly 70-years between the destruction and completion), but they were just *going through the motions* and *God was not pleased*.

Malachi 1:10

"Oh, that one of you would **shut the temple doors**, so that you would **not light useless fires** on my altar! **I am not pleased with you,**" says the LORD Almighty, "and I will accept no offering from your hands."

About 400 years later, the Gospel of Luke tells us that the Jews were still doing the *same rituals* when the priest, Zechariah, was chosen, by lot, to go in and light the *incense*, (Luke 1: 8-9+) or as God called it (above): "*useless fires*".

However, on this occasion, "an angel of the Lord appeared to him" and told Zechariah that he would have a son and to name him "John". It was similar to the announcement that Abraham got (in his old age), so Zechariah should have taken the angel at his word. Nevertheless, he *doubted* because he was old and his wife, Elizabeth, was barren. Therefore, he was not able to speak, for about 9 months, until the day John was '*named*', and Zechariah wrote down "*John*". The fact that he got his voice back, at that instant, astonished people and John became famous before he could even take a step.

Side Note:

Contrast the reaction of **Mary**, a *common girl*, when she was told by the same angel, Gabriel, that *she would have a child*.

After clarifying the fact that she was a *virgin*, she had *no doubts*.

Luke 1:38

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. **"May it be to me as you have said."**

Then the angel left her.

see whole passage
(Luke 1: 24-38)

Luke 1:65-66

65 The neighbors were all **filled with awe**, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were **talking about all these things**. 66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, **"What then is this child going to be?"** For the Lord's hand was with him.

Flash ahead about 30 years, and John-the-Baptist is appearing from the *desert region*, wearing clothes made of camel's hair, eating locust and wild honey, preaching about repentance. (Mark 1:4-6) People *flocked* to him, from Judea, *perhaps* because some remembered *who* he was and *how* he was born. Yet, John did not want the focus to be on him but clearly said that he was just waiting on someone else, *much more important*.

Yet, John-the-Baptist *was important* because he fulfilled a prophecy, which *had to be fulfilled*, before Jesus could be revealed as the Messiah. In fact, the Gospel of Mark, which Peter no doubt had a lot of influence in, *starts out* with John-the-Baptist fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, and explaining exactly what John's message was.

Mark 1: 2-3; 7-8

"It is written in Isaiah the prophet: "I will send my messenger **ahead of you**, who will **prepare your way**"- (3) "a voice of one **calling in the desert**, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

7 And **this was his message:** "After me will come one **more powerful than I**, the thongs of whose sandals **I am not worthy** to stoop down and untie. **I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."**

Of course, all this did not go unnoticed by the *religious community* of Pharisees and Sadducees. However, they didn't accept him like the *common folk did*. Instead, they sent representatives to question and ask 'who he thought he was'. (I'm sure the elders *remembered* who he was but they didn't want to accept him because he was *different, now*.)

Upon seeing the messengers, John-the-Baptist wasn't *cordial and kind*, nor was he *impressed* that they were "*children of Abraham*" because he knew *exactly* what they were.

Matthew 3: 7-9

"But when he saw many of the **Pharisees and Sadducees** coming to where he was baptizing, **he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.**

9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham."

Was John-the-Baptist *wrong* to be so *mean* to the poor messengers? Apparently *not* because Jesus called them a "brood of vipers", *also*, on two separate occasions. (below)

Example #1

Matthew 12:34 [*Important note:* Prior to this encounter, Jesus had *purposely* kept a low-profile, **to fulfill prophecy!** (*Matthew 12: 16-21*)] It's true.

[(*starting at verse 22*) – Jesus was healing a "demon possessed man" who was deaf & mute that the **Pharisees brought**. Yet the **Pharisees were still not impressed** and mumbled against Jesus.

34 "You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."

Needless to say, **Jesus was no longer low-profile**, (after He confronted the Pharisees, *directly*). Yet, by that time, **He was on His way to victory.**]

Example #2

Matthew 23: 29-37 [(starting at verse #1) **Jesus was preaching** to the crowds and disciples, **warning them against the Pharisees** and Teachers of the Law.]

29 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you **hypocrites!** You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous.

30 And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.'

31 So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.

32 Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!

33 "You **snakes! You brood of vipers!** How will you escape being condemned to hell? 34 Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. 35 And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.

37 "**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem**, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often **I have longed** to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but **you were not willing**.

I don't think anyone would deny that John-the-Baptist was *humble and called by God*. Yet, he was *abrasive* to the religious community and they didn't accept him. In fact, the same is true for Jesus. Yet, that doesn't mean they were wrong for being abrasive; it means *the religious were wrong* for not humbling themselves and accepting God's *real message*. In fact, the Jews have been notorious for rejecting God's messengers and trying to kill them, as noted in the *Parable of the Tenants*. (*Matthew 21:33-44*)

In the end, John's message was *proven correct* when Jesus was revealed and started performing countless miracles and healings. Yet, John's *truthfulness* about the king and queen got him thrown into prison. However, it took trickery from a woman (no offence) to have John killed because the King was *afraid of him*, as well he *should have been*.

Part 2:

**So why did John-the-Baptist react so harshly to the messengers?
Could things have been *different* if he was polite and welcomed them?**

I don't think so. However, this calls for a *little speculation*, on my part, to fill in the missing 30 years that are not covered in the Bible. (It's okay; this is *not* Revelation.)

Since John's parents were both rather old when he was born, I figure they both died and John was orphaned at an early age. Given his miraculous birth, perhaps he went to *live* with the priests, in the Temple, like Samuel did. I figure they tried to make him a priest, *like them*, but he rejected their *system of hierarchy* and *meaningless rules*. I tend to think that John-the-Baptist was *very familiar* with the inner workings of the Temple and that's why he chose to go into the desert. He wanted to find God, *for real*, and *escape the corruption of the Temple*. In my opinion, that's why he was surprised to see the messengers and reacted the way he did.

In reality, it wouldn't have been any different, no matter how John acted towards the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus explained that the religious community will *never be satisfied*, no matter how a messenger of God acts, or whether the message is good or bad.

Matthew 11:16-19

16 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: 17 "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn."

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'
19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."
'But wisdom is proved right by her actions.'

Like I said, the *actions* of John-the-Baptist were *proven right* and he went down in history as a *great prophet*, even though *he never claimed to be*. (below)

Actually, given his miraculous birth and popularity, he could have claimed *anything*. Yet, he only claimed to fulfill *one prophecy* from Isaiah.

John 1: 20-23

20 He [John-the-Baptist] did not fail to confess, but confessed freely,
"I am not the Christ."

21 They asked him, "Then who are you? **Are you Elijah?**" He said, **"I am not."**
"Are you the Prophet?" He answered, **"No."**

22 Finally they said, **"Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"**

23 **John replied** in the words of **Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"**

I imagine the *next* real messenger, from God, will be treated the same way as Jesus and John-the-Baptist, especially by the religious elite. In fact, there's a particular '*servant*', during end times, who is *chosen* to provide food for the other servants. It's obviously during *end times* because the '*servant*' is encouraged to continue *until the Master comes*.

Matthew 24:45-46

45 "Who then is the faithful and wise **servant**, whom the master has **put in charge** of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time?
46 It will be good for that *servant* whose *master* finds him doing so **when he returns**."

It's just a *hunch* but I bet the religious elite won't accept that servant either. However, that *doesn't* mean he'll be wrong, just *different*.

Yet, there's always *hope* that the religious elite could '*humble themselves*' and accept something '*new*'. Otherwise, they will '*be humbled*'. **Those are Jesus' words, not mine.**

Luke 14:11 [Jesus said,]

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."