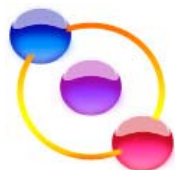




Mission of Jesus

Part Two



Jesus and John the Baptist

The Mission of Jesus, part two, will focus upon the relationship of Jesus with John the Baptist.



Probably no other figure in the Bible, other than Jesus, commands more universal respect than John the Baptist, the greatest Prophet.

John was the only prophet that was commissioned to testify directly to the Son of God and to make a people prepared to receive him.

To this day, Christians, especially Christian ministers pattern their own ministries after that of John the Baptist.




Although certainly the testimony of John about Christ at the river Jordan was most remarkable and dramatic, in fact, God had been doing many mighty works in the House of Zechariah long before that fateful day.



After having given his startling announcement to Mary about the birth of her son, Gabriel also visited Zechariah to prepare him to understand the important role his son would play in the dispensation of Christ.

Gabriel's words were stunning. He revealed that the orthodoxy of the day would have to change. . .no easy task.

Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.



Malachi's Words

And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Gabriel's Words

Gabriel recites a direct passage from the very prophecy in Malachi that served as the basis of the Hebrew expectation of the return of Elijah.

This was so that Zechariah could know that his son would be the fulfillment of that prophecy. The bigger problem, as we shall see, is that an earthly coming of Elijah was not the expectation. Their doctrines were proclaiming a cataclysmic coming of Elijah.

Elijah coming in the personage of John was a huge curveball.

Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.

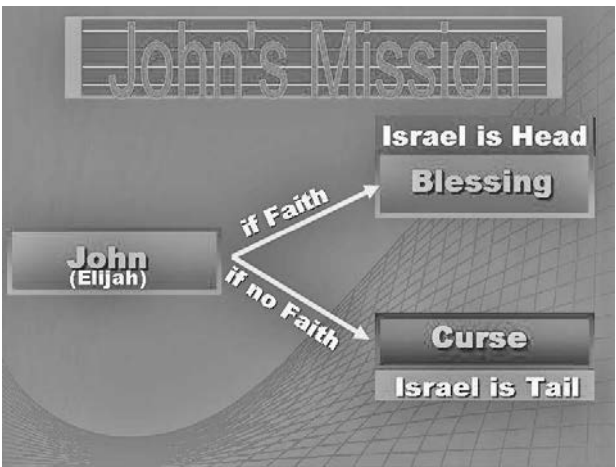
Malachi's Words

And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Gabriel's Words

Also significant was Gabriel's explanation of the scope of John's mission. He was "to make a people prepared for the Lord."

More important, as we learn from Malachi's warning, that unless that foundation of prepared people is accomplished, God will come and "strike the land with a curse."



As we mentioned in part one, the contingency of blessing or curse was still in effect even until the last words of the very last prophet.

Blessing or Curse, Jesus very destiny would reside in the hands of John and the fulfillment of his mission.



We can see that despite the extensive preparations in the House of Joseph and the House of Zechariah. . . just a few months later Jesus is born into a most threatening circumstance with what appears to be very little support.

It suggests that the intense spiritual preparations in these two families, did not take root. We will see evidence throughout the course of the relationship of Jesus and John the Baptist.



In fact, 30 years go by. We see that John feels called to a mission. He is anticipating the arrival of the messiah. He feels that he is somehow “preparing his way.” . . .finally John attracts the attention of concerned leaders.

John is Elijah!



John 1:19-23

Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" 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.'"

We see in John 1:18-23 a very curious exchange.

John's denial that he is the Elijah is a serious departure from what we know to be true. Why would John say such a thing? If he doesn't know he is the Elijah. . . is it possible that Zachariah lost the vision of what he had received? Or could it be that John himself was having doubt?

What is of no doubt. . . this has created a serious problem for Jesus ministry, as we shall see.

Luke 1:17



And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

It was vitally important for John to make sure that everyone in Israel knew that he was the Elijah. For the Jews, the appearance of Elijah was the singular touchstone that declared that the messiah would be soon be near. No Elijah means No Messiah.

The deeper problem was in what manner Elijah would return. The people had been taught for centuries that Elijah would return in a chariot of fire. . . a very cataclysmic arrival. . . highly perceivable and unquestionable.

This doctrine was devised by the great scholars who found that the prophet Elijah had been taken up “in a chariot of fire” when he departed this world.

Thus. . . the elevator goes up. . . the elevator comes down. . . he goes up in a chariot of fire, he comes down the same way.

You can see the problem that Zechariah would have. . . its hard to compete against those Hollywood special effects. Elijah born on earth ain't gonna cut it.



Jesus Affirms John is Elijah



Matthew 47:10-11: *Elijah has already come, and the disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the Law say that Elijah must come first?" Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things." Disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist.*



"I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that Jesus was coming toward me and I said, 'Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."



"I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water, was that he might be revealed to Israel." Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."



"I myself did not know him?!"

Here we can see the dire consequences wrought upon Jesus ministry as a result of this unclarity.

The disciples are witnessing to the nation about Jesus as the messiah. . .but the people are not responding. . .they have an objection. . .an objection that the disciples do not understand nor how to solve it. They take it to Jesus. "Why do the pharisee's and the teacher's of the Law say that Elijah must come"? You can almost sense the frustration in there voices. . .they have been unable to close any sales. . .Jesus explains and affirms unequivocally that John is the Elijah to come.

The day of John's meeting of Jesus is, of course, very significant. His testimony is strong. . .clear and bold. However, there is a curious element expressed. . .further evidence that this initial effort to bind the House of Joseph and the House of Zechariah had failed.

"I myself did not know him."

John is saying. . .had it not been for the revelation that God gave him. . .he would not have know Jesus or that he was the messiah.

What's wrong with this picture?

What's wrong is that it flies in the face of all the preparation that God had invested. Gabriel announces to Mary about her son. . .Joseph has a dream and in the dream an angel reveals the truth of Jesus. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit and proclaims "hail Mary full of grace. . .how am I so favored that the Mother of my Lord should cast her favor upon me"? Zechariah knew "that God had raised up a horn of salvation in the House of his servant David". . .Everyone knew. Everyone knew John's mission, that Jesus was the messiah. . .Elizabeth and Mary were cousins. . . "I myself did not know him?" HELLO?

Young Jesus in the Temple



It is clear that there was a massive breakdown in the family level with the mission of Jesus. . .including a breakdown in Jesus' own home. . .amongst his own family. . .

Consider the circumstance of young Jesus at the temple. He had astounded the scholars, professors, the doctors. . .with his brilliance. . .yet, Joseph and Mary only thought to bring him back to Nazareth. . .for what?. . .to work in Joseph shop. . .

A carpenter? I thought everyone had been informed. Jesus was at least the King of Israel. . .!



We do get attached to our traditions. . . the manger, no room at the Inn. . . "the little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay". . .and the image of Jesus as a lowly carpenter.

But these images are literally screaming at us. . .that something has gone horribly wrong.

Jesus is a Carpenter?



Mark 6:3-4

"Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor."

Here's the truth. . .Mark 8:3-4

So the reality is that Jesus could have had a full scholarship to a Temple education, comparable to a Harvard education today. . .had there been a little vision on the part of Joseph and Mary. . .but no. . .Joseph needed Jesus to sweep up in the shop. . .nice. . .big vision there, Joseph. . .



Jesus is a carpenter. . .AFTER ALL THIS?



Written 12:227-28

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana As Jesus was saying these things, saw woman in the crowd call to out, Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you. they wanted wine, the He replied, Blessed is father and I rise, who hear the word of God and obey it for, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

The scene at the wedding of Cana’s daughter displays the utter lack of attention toward Jesus from his own Mother.”Oh Jesus they have no wine. .”

Well, what about Jesus’ wedding. . .they have no wine . .no wine and no bride. . and no wedding. . .

“Women what dost thou have to do with me”? Jesus asked.

Let me answer that, Jesus. . .NOTHING. . .NOT ONE LITTLE BIT!



Mark 3:37-38

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd standing outside, they sent some to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you. Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

Here’s the truth. . .”when Jesus family heard of the things he was doing they said, ‘come let us take charge of him, for he is OUT OF HIS MIND.’”

So who shows up, leading the family pack, to do the dasterdly deed? MOTHER MARY.

“Who are my mother, brothers and sisters”? Jesus asked.

Let me answer that, Jesus. . .at this point, NO ONE IN YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY!



“The Holy Family”

Jesus brother did not believe him and tried to entice him to go to Jerusalem because they knew that the Jews were plotting to have him killed there. . .Jesus brothers were no different than the brothers of Joseph who threw him down a well and left him for dead.

After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus’ brothers said to him, “You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.” For even his own brothers did not believe in him. John 1:1-5

So John’s confusion is not difficult to understand. It does seem that John is grappling with his role. . .with Jesus as the messiah.

Here is evidence that, on some level, John was aware that he was the Elijah. Either that or John and Elijah shopped at the same store in the mall. . .The Prophet’s Gap.

John is Elijah



Matthew 3:4 (about John)

John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.

2 Kings 1:8 (about Elijah)

They replied, “He was a man with a garment of hair and with a leather belt around his waist.” The king said, “That was Elijah the Tishbite.”

What was John's Real Influence?

- On His Own Disciples



Matthew 9:14
Then, John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" "Lamb of God!" When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

What was John's Real Influence?

- Upon the Nation

Matthew 16:13-14
When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Caesarea Philippi

What was John's Real Influence?

- Upon the Nation

Mark 6:14-15
Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago."

Judea

What was John's Real Influence?

- Upon the King



Mark 6:19-20
So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

Let's take a step back from doctrines and legends about John the Baptist and, instead, let's evaluate his work based on the one known parameter of what constitutes success: a people prepared for the Lord. This was the mission of John, to make a people prepared for the Lord. Yet, later, we see that Jesus is desperately gathering his own disciples, training them and then sending them out two by two. . .because "the harvest is great, but the laborers are few."

We have seen evidence of John having bouts of unclarity about his role. . . perhaps we should examine his actual results. First, what was his influence upon his own disciples? How many followed Jesus as a result of John's testimony? Maybe two, at the most. . .Andrew and an unnamed disciple. Matthew 9:14 illustrates, in fact, John's disciples still identified closer with the ways of the Pharisee's than the ways of Jesus. How could that be after the fact of John's testimony?

John's influence across the nation was no better. In Caesarea Philippi, in the north, Jesus conducted a survey. "Who do the people say that I am? The response is instructive. . .they heard of Elijah, they heard of John the Baptist. . .but no one had heard Jesus was the messiah. . ."the lamb who takes away the sins of the world."

A similar poll is taken in Judea. . .with a similar result: If John had really been speaking out constantly in support of Jesus, how could it be possible for the people to confuse Jesus as a resurrected John the Baptist?

No influence in Caesaria Philippi, no influence in Judea, not even much influence upon his own disciples. . . a people prepared for the Lord? I don't think so. . .

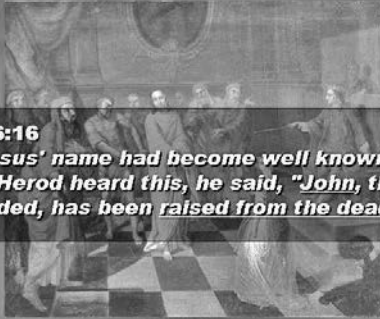
Here is a shining moment of opportunity for John to testify to the one person that could have the greatest of impact, both positively or negatively, upon the ministry of Jesus.

John had the interest and attention of King Herod. . "Herod feared John and protected him. . he LIKED to listen to John"

Well, John. . what is the GREATEST thing that you can tell Herod while you have his ear?

What was John's Real Influence?

• Upon the King



Mark 6:16

For Jesus' name had become well known. But, when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"

That greatest of all messages was never delivered apparently because later, when Jesus emerges, we see that Herod has no idea, whatsoever, who Jesus is. . . in fact. . . he even considers that Jesus is the resurrection of "the man that I beheaded."

Later, Herod would condemn Jesus to death. Way to go, John.

Testimony? TESTI-PHONY!!!

John 3:22-30
 Rabbi, that side of the well, he is to. To this, John is, I've given him, testify, that ahead of him, bridegroom, bridegroom, joy, when he is mine, and greater; I must become less."



on the other, ified about, is going to him." is, I've given him, testify, that ahead of him, bridegroom, bridegroom, joy, when he is mine, and greater; I must become less."

This is not testimony. . . its TESTIPHONY-BALONEY!

John is confused and divided in his mind about Jesus. . . He wants to stem the tide of people who look to him to validate for them whether Jesus is the messiah or not.

The "one who has the bride is the bridegroom". . . John is saying. . . its the flow of the people to the figure that is the validation. . . not me. If the people go to Jesus. . . then he must be the one. . . "the bridegroom has the bride". . . well, I don't think so, John. . . in that case. . . Jesus is not the messiah because the people didn't go with Jesus. . . and by the way, in case you forgot. . . its not the flow of people to the figure that validates the Christ. . . its the coming of ELIJAH!

John's Words from Prison



Matthew 11:4-6

Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind, receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

The divided state of John's mind toward Jesus is clearly revealed from prison.

Notice that Jesus says. . . "go and tell John AGAIN"

Of those born of women none rose greater than John. . . YET HE WHO IS LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS GREATER THAN HE!

If the least in heaven is greater than John. . . is John in heaven? Why?


Jesus defines what constitutes being called "the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. . . "Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven."



Matthew 5:19: 1

Any one who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

What About the Blood?




Hebrews 9:22
In fact, the law requires that nearly everything? be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

The Purpose of the Messiah

Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. . .but notice that Hebrews 9:22 doesn't declare an absolute requirement for blood. . .and "almost" "nearly everything". . .there were other ways of atonement, even in the Old Testament, that didn't require the shedding of blood.

What About the Blood?



But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." Luke 5:24

The Purpose of the Messiah

In fact, we see that Jesus HAD the authority to forgive sins upon the earth

Atonement without Blood

Micah 6:6-8:
~~With what shall I come before the LORD and bow before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my burnt offering for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, and to heed is better than the fat of rams, what is good, And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.~~

The Purpose of the Messiah

We see, in fact, the actual tradition of atonement is that God prefers "faith rather than sacrifice and obedience rather than the fat of rams."

Faith is primary. . .blood atonement is secondary. . .and less preferred.

Atonement without Blood




Proverbs 16:6:
Through love and faithfulness, sin is atoned.

The Purpose of the Messiah

Proverbs 16:6 says that through "love and faithfulness, sin is atoned."

Thus if all of Israel would have heeded Jesus word. . "to repent and hear the good news." . .and then gathered together with him as a hen gathers her brood. . .He then, could have extended his authority to "forgive sin on earth." . .their sin, through love and faithfulness toward Jesus, would have been atoned.

Atonement without Blood



Luke 5:20
When Jesus saw their faith he said, 'friend, your sins are forgiven.'

The Purpose of the Messiah

In fact, we see that Jesus displayed this authority. . . whenever a condition of faith or love was offered.

Atonement without Blood



Leviticus 16:10:
But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat.

The Purpose of the Messiah

The way of the scapegoat. . . was the way that Jesus went in the first two years of his ministry. . . the sins of the people were heaped upon the scapegoat and then the scapegoat was released into the desert. . . it was not offered by shedding its blood.

How do we know this was Jesus path?

Atonement without Blood



Matthew 4:1-11
Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

The Purpose of the Messiah

He was released into the wilderness with the sins of humanity. It then proceeded to do a 40 day fast. For who's sins was Jesus fasting? His own? . . . I don't think so.

He was walking the course of the scapegoat. He was interceding for us and battle satan, being tempted "in every way just as we are" and yet he did not fall into sin.

When he came out of the wilderness. . . he began to preach:
REPENT, FOR THE KINGDOM IS AT HAND

Let This Cup Pass. . .



The Purpose of the Messiah

We can now know the true content of Jesus sorrow: as a filial son. . . Jesus greatest aspiration was to take away the "heart filled with sorrow" on the day His Father lost his own lineage, the very purpose for which He had created.