Mission of Jesus
Part Two
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.
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.

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.

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.

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.
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 unequivacally 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 flys 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?
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.

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?
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!

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!

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.
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 desparately 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?
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.

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. . it’s the coming of ELIJAH!

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.”
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.

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

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.

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

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?

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

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.