

# John the Baptist

## The Humanity of Jesus

Three weeks ago Jeff spoke about the humanity of Jesus. I would like to add a couple of insights on that before we move on to John the Baptist.

In the New Testament we only get one glimpse of Jesus between His birth and starting His ministry at age 30 and that is at the age of 12 asking questions of the Rabbis in the temple. I recently discovered that an aspect of Jesus childhood seems to be described prophetically in the Psalm 69. The context of this Psalm is David seeking the Lord's help when he is being pursued by King Saul. However, I think there is another layer of meaning in these verses that apply to Jesus because they don't seem to fit David's life. Let's take a look and see what you think.

Vs 8. I have become a stranger to my brothers, And an alien to my *mother's* children.

Mary had other children after Jesus who were His half brothers and half sisters. Notice that it says He became "**an alien to my mother's children**" and doesn't say to His father's children because God was His father, not Joseph.

Vs 12. Those who sit in the gate speak against me, And I am the song of the drunkards.

Those who sit in the gate refers to the towns officials; the town council members and judges etc. So the most powerful people in the town spoke against Him. Then we read that the town drunks also sang songs about Him we see that everyone from rich to poor; the revered to the despised all looked down on Him because He was believed to have been conceived out of wedlock.

One of the many exchanges made at the cross is that Jesus was despised and rejected so we can be accepted as children of God.

## Our Kinsman

One of the many aspects of what Jesus did for us on the cross is that He was our Kinsman Redeemer like Boaz was for Naomi in the book of Ruth. To be eligible to be our Kinsman-Redeemer and to open the Title Deed scroll in Revelation 5 Jesus had to be a kinsman of Adam, He had to be a man.

Secondly He had to be willing and able to assume all the obligations. The nearest kinsman in the book of Ruth was not willing to assume the obligation of taking on Ruth the Moabitess as a bride. Jesus had to be willing to take on all the obligations attached to taking us as His bride. He had to take on the obligation for our sin in order to redeem us, to buy us back from our slavery to sin. We know that the wages of sin is death so death as a perfect sinless human is the price Jesus had to pay for us.

Thirdly, Jesus had to be able to pay the price to redeem us. If Jesus had sinned like the rest of us His death would only pay for His own sin. By living a sinless life He was able to be the perfect sacrifice and meet the requirements of the law.

John the Baptist declared Jesus to be:

...The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! - John 1:29 NKJV

## THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

His miraculous conception was announced by an angel to Zacharias while he was tending the altar of Incense in the Holy Place.

According to Jewish tradition recorded in the Talmud, the mantle of Elijah was placed in a small chamber in the altar of incense. There is a legend that Zacharias removed the garment and kept it for the ministry of his son. The angel told Zacharias that his son John would go before the Messiah in the "spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17).

Believed to be born on Passover 2BC

John's father was a priest and his mother was from the tribe of Aaron so John was eligible to be a priest too. Priests ministered from age 30 to age 50 and it seems that God's call came to John at age 30 in 29AD.

If you are having problems with the maths getting 30 years from 2BC to 29AD just remember there is no year 0.

Like any good historian, Luke gives us a real, historical background for the events he is writing about. This is not a fairy tale beginning with "once upon a time." Luke 3 verses 1 and 2 give us the names of **seven** people who were in positions of authority at the time John began his ministry. From this information we know it was 29AD. The historical reality of these rulers is undisputable. Archaeologists have discovered specific, undeniable evidence that each of these people lived and ruled in these places and at these times.

There are two people who are named as High Priest which is odd since the Law specified there was to be one High Priest. The reason there were two is that the Romans appointed Caiaphas but the Jews considered his father-in-law Annas to be the legitimate High Priest.

In 1990, scholars discovered the tomb of Caiaphas. On the ossuary, the burial box for his bones, is an inscription with his name. The bones in the box are the only confirmed human remaining from any specific individual mentioned in the Bible.

### Fulfilment of prophecy.

Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "**Who are you?**"

He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "**I am not the Christ.**"

And they asked him, "**What then? Are you Elijah?**"

He said, "**I am not.**"

"**Are you the Prophet?**"

And he answered, "**No.**"

Then they said to him, "**Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?**"

He said: "**I am 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the LORD,' ' as the prophet Isaiah said.'**" - John 1:19-23 NKJV

John's message is that a King is coming and preparations need to be made. When ancient kings travelled they sent out workmen on the planned route to clear the road and make it as smooth as they could. John was getting people to prepare their hearts to receive Jesus.

In Luke's account he records a comment straight after this by John that "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." This I think refers to the same thing Paul is talking about in Romans 8:21.

*The creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. - Rom 8:21 NKJV*

All flesh is not just the Jews, it is not even just mankind, it is all animals too. It is not only mankind that is under a curse of death and decay from the fall by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, all creation is under the curse and Jesus will remove the curse when He comes again.

The prophecy the religious leaders were looking to be fulfilled is from Malachi:

*"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible 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 smite the land with a curse."*

— Malachi 4:5–6

We know from our vantage point in history that Jesus first coming did not include the judgement known as "*the great and terrible day of the Lord*". I believe that this prophecy will be completely fulfilled by Elijah being one of the two witnesses described in Revelation, and Moses being the other. It was Moses and Elijah who were seen at the Transfiguration. These two represent the law and the prophets and they do the same miraculous signs in Revelation as they did in their previous ministries.

### **The message of John the Baptist.**

John preached a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. The idea behind remission is not only forgiveness, but liberty.

The Jews were familiar with baptism which is a ceremonial immersion into water. This was a common ritual for Gentiles who wanted to become Jews so it is strange that Jews submitted to John's baptism. For a Jew to submit to baptism was to say, "I'm as bad as a heathen Gentile." This was a true mark of humble repentance.

This is different than our baptism into Christ (Romans 6:3-4) where our immersion in water identifies us with Jesus' death and coming out of the water identifies us with His resurrection. This baptism of repentance John presented identified a person with their need to get right with God and be cleansed.

### **John's message to the multitudes.**

Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "**Brood of vipers!** Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Luke 3:7

John the Baptist was clearly not into preaching politically correct, seeker friendly sermons. Calling them a brood of vipers or family of snakes was intended to associate them with Satan the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

John was a pretty weird guy. Any man who preached like this, lived in the desert, wore funny clothes and lived on grasshoppers and wild honey was just plain weird. I imagine him having long 'wild' hair and grasshopper legs stuck in his beard. Jesus

didn't have a "slick" marketing man with a thousand dollar suit and a flash haircut preparing the way for Him. God does things differently to how we expect, He often uses weird people.

Therefore **bear fruits worthy of repentance**, and do not begin to say to yourselves, **'We have Abraham as our father.'** For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees." Luke 3:8-9

This comment about 'We have Abraham as our father' is John telling them that being born a Jew was not enough to receive eternal life. The same is true for us. Just because we may have been brought up in a Christian home does not mean we automatically receive eternal life. It is only by realising that we have fallen short of God's perfect standards and understanding that there is nothing we can do to earn a right to eternal life that we see our need for Jesus. If we are willing to submit to Jesus being in charge of our lives and accept that He has paid the price on our behalf we can receive the free gift of eternal life with Him. If any of you have not already given your life to Jesus then do it today right after this service. Come and see me or one of the prayer team who are available over here after the service.

John tells the people that they need to show the fruit of repentance. They need to demonstrate by a change in the way they live that they really have changed. The fruit we are expected to show in our lives is love for one another as described in Galatians 5 and 1 Corinthians 13.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. - Gal 5:22-23 NKJV

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. - 1Cor 13:4-8 NKJV

### **John points forward to a greater One and a greater baptism.**

Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not, John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Luke 3:15-16 NKJV

John wasn't trying to boost his own popularity; he pointed people to Jesus.

The comment about the "sandal strap I am not worthy to loose" comes from a teaching of the rabbis of Jesus' day. They taught that a rabbi can require just about anything of his disciples in a fag-master and fag or master and servant kind of relationship. One of the things which were considered "too low" for a Rabbi to expect from his disciples was the untying of the Rabbi's sandal strap. John says he is unworthy to do even this for Jesus.

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,  
"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!  
"This is He of whom I said,  
'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'

- John 1:29-30 NKJV

John was six months older than Jesus so what does he mean by saying “for He was before me”? This quote is from the Gospel of John which begins by declaring Jesus to be eternal with God before the creation of the world. Again in this verse we see John pointing people to Jesus.

Peter Cotton is going to talk about Jesus Baptism by John in a couple of weeks and Jeff is going to talk about Jesus temptation next week. I will finish with one more thing that happened after Jesus was baptised and returned from His temptation in the wilderness.

### **The testimony of the first disciples.**

John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"  
The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.

John 1:35-37

John's purpose was not about gathering disciples for himself. He was happy to have his disciples leave and follow Jesus. Having people follow Jesus fulfilled John's ministry so he was not threatened by this.

Then Jesus turned, and seeing them following, said to them, "What do you seek?"  
They said to Him, "Rabbi" ... "where are You staying?"  
He said to them, "Come and see."  
They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).

John 1 38-39

Jesus invited John and Andrew to be a part of His life. Jesus didn't live hidden away from the world. Jesus taught and discipled others by allowing them to live with Him and to work alongside Him.

Now it was about the tenth hour: This comment by the apostle John indicates to me that meeting Jesus was such a memorable occasion that 60 years later he even remembered the time of day that he met Jesus!

Do you remember when you first met Jesus? If you are not sure that you have ever come to know Jesus come and meet with the prayer team or myself and we will introduce you.