



Christmas and John the Baptist

Have you ever noticed how often we skip right over the story of John the Baptist? Now I don't think we should. The scriptures don't.

Consider this, before there was John the Baptist, there was John the baby. Before Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote of Jesus, John the Baptist kept a record first. And as in his life, John pointed people to Jesus, so did he in his birth.

Before Gabriel came to Mary he appeared first to an old man named Zacharias in the Temple.

Fear not, Zacharias," the angel said, "thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."

Gabriel went on and promised that this little boy would bring much joy to many people, but not just because he was a baby, but because he would "be great in the sight of the Lord.... Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God," Gabriel promised.

John would go before the Savior and "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Well as you can imagine, Zacharias struggled to believe what he was hearing and I don't blame him. Elizabeth was an old woman, well beyond child bearing. Nonetheless, Mary's miraculous conception was not the first one. Before Mary went into hiding with a child she couldn't explain, Elizabeth was there.

Now, later a beautiful young woman sent by an angel comes into the courtyard of Elizabeth's home, and calls out a greeting. In the womb, John leaps for joy, and he and his mother are filled with the Holy Ghost at the sound of Mary's voice.

It is sublime that at that moment, John bears witness of the Messiah before he even has a voice.



Glenn Rawson Stories

The two sons of prophecy and their sainted mothers spend the next three months together. As John prepared the way for Jesus, so Elizabeth prepared and consoled Mary.

Before the people heard the shepherd's witness of the Messiah they would be astonished at the new voice and testimony of Zacharias. His prophecies of the coming Messiah resonated through the hills and hearts of the hill country of Judea, filling the Jews with grand expectations. Then and later, all who ever knew John couldn't wait to meet Jesus.

On the night of the Savior's birth in Bethlehem, John was three months old in Hebron. Knowing what Elizabeth knew of Mary and the bond they shared, I wonder how far away she really was from her young cousin.

When Herod's soldiers came, you know they were looking for two famous babies—not one. While the angel sent Joseph and Mary into Egypt to save Jesus, Zacharias sent John and Elizabeth into the wilderness. Joseph and Jesus escaped, but the soldiers killed Zacharias. He would not give up his son.

As Jesus grew up with His Father, hewing wood, so John grew up in the wilderness eating locusts and wild honey, with no father. As Jesus waited and prepared to bring men to His Father, so John waited and prepared to bring men to Jesus.

As Luke's story of Christmas tells of a special babe whose birth pointed men to Jesus' birth—as John was born to prepare the way--may we be reminded today, that Christmas is a time when we too are born to prepare the way.

The Messiah is coming, again, soon. God grant that we be like John, that in all that we are, all that we say, all that we do, men want to meet Him.