

**A SPECULATIVE REFLECTION
ON THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
JOHN THE BAPTIST
AND
JESUS**

**MARK SMITH
NGUNNAWAL
2001**

DEDICATED
TO
WILLIAM HUGHES DELVES

A TRUE FRIEND
AND
FELLOW BACKPACKER

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

Intent of Enquiry

Perceptual Analysis

The Gospels Are Incomplete and Pro-Roman

Illegitimacy of Jewish (Herodian) Priesthood

The New Covenant Theology and the New Israel

John the Baptist Was the Original Messiah

Glossary and Terms

CHAPTER 1 – AN EXPOSURE OF THE WEAKNESSES IN THE CONVENTIONAL EXPLANATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS

I

Six Unanswered Questions

The Conventional Status Accorded to John the Baptist

Baptism for the Remission of Sins

Jesus Baptised by John

Six Unanswered Questions

II

A Critical Examination of the Six Questions

1. Did Jesus Need to Have His Sins Remitted?
2. Why Did Jesus Get Baptised by John (and not vice-versa)?
3. Why didn't John Become a Follower of Jesus?
4. Why Does Luke Report of John the Baptist that:
“all men mused in their hearts whether he were Christ or not.” (Luke 3:15)
5. Why Did Luke Record that John the Baptist was so Uncertain of the Mission and Message of Jesus that He Sent Two of His Disciples to Inquire:

“Art thou he that should come? Or should we look for another?” (Luke 7:19)

6. **Why Did Luke Insert the Words:**
And Blessed is he, whosoever is not offended by me” (Luke 7:23)

SUMMARY

CHAPTER 2 – SCRIPTURAL FORENSICS

Written “in” and Omitted “from”

Roman Bias

Tragic Irony

Comparing Earlier and Later Teachings

Biblical Criticism

Holistic Approaches to Biblical Investigation

The Christian Theory of History

Jewish and Christian Concepts of Time and the Use of Midrash

A Midrashic Interpretation of the Death of John the Baptist

Time, Eternity and Hyparxis

The Christian Concept of Time

CHAPTER 3 – THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY

Barbara Thiering’s Outline of Herod’s Promotion of a New Covenant

Herod’s New Israel

Old Testament Covenants

Covenants Sealed With Blood

The Transition from Book of the Covenants to The Books of the Old Testament

The Hope of a New Covenant

Christianity and the New Covenant

“The New Covenant in My Blood”

The Telescoping of the Passover and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

The Last Supper as Re-enactment of the Passover and Yom Kippur

CHAPTER 4 – THE NEW COVENANT AND THE PRINCIPLES OF REPETITION AND SUPERCESSION

The Pattern of Repetition and Supercession

Messiahs

David
Solomon
Zerubbabel

Priesthoods

Key Ancestral Personages

Parallelisms

Adam
Abraham
Melchizedec (Melchizadok)
Israel (Jacob)
Joseph
Moses
Joshua
Ahitophopel
Elijah

Redemptive History

The Book of Enoch and the Pre-existent Messiah
Geographical Repetition

CHAPTER 5 – MIRACULOUS BIRTHS AND MIDRASH

Introduction

I ***Three Infancy Narratives***

The Two Infancy Narratives of Jesus

Common Elements of the Jesus Infancies

Differences Between the Infancy Stories of Jesus in Matthew and Luke

The Infancy Narrative of John the Baptist

Luke's Account of the Birth of John the Baptist

The Parallelism of the Birth Stories of Jesus and John the Baptist

Gabriel's Announcements to Mary and Zechariah

The Publicised Birth of Each Child

The Circumcision

Public Presentation

Pattern of Development of Each Child

II ***Miraculous Births and Midrash***

Introduction

Moses

Samuel

Samson

Daniel

CHAPTER 6 –SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CONVENTIONAL THEORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS

Introduction

I
Shortcomings of the Gospels

Nine Unresolved Gospel Issues

Gospel Writers Overstatement of the Superiority of Jesus over John the Baptist

Least is Greater
Winedrinking
Miracles
Joan Taylor's Comments

II
Further Disquiet from Information Gleaned From Extra-Gospel Sources

Introduction

Pharisees

Sadducees

Zealots

Essenes

Nazarites

Zadokites

The Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest

The Three Genealogies Theory of Robert Graves

III
Defensive Writing Style of Gospel Compilers

CHAPTER 7 – A SPECULATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PROCESSES OF ROLE RE-ASSIGNMENT OF JOHN AND JESUS

I
Spiritual Geology

The Cultural Strata

The Historical Strata

The Theological Strata

Unreliability of Gospel Information

Criteria for the Selection of Reliable Texts

The Nain Miracle Analysed
An Important Criteria

The New Covenant Theology As a Restoration Theology

The Prophecy of Jeremiah
The New Covenant Theology Not Formulated by Jesus or John the Baptist
Aspects of The New Covenant Theology

John the Baptist and His Place in the New Theological Framework

The New Israel Movement and the Appointment of Jesus

II

The Period Between the Crucifixion and the Destruction of Jerusalem

Two Factions of The New Israel Movement

Paul as Broker Between the Two Factions

Three Basics of the United Mission

The Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD

III

The Transformation of the New Israel Movement into the Church of Christ

A Great Persecution of the Church

Editing of Early Gospel Fragments

The Dual Messiahs

The Emergence of the superiority of Jesus

The Epistle to the Hebrews and its New Covenant Theology

From Messiah to Christ

History to Geschichtlich

NOTES

APPENDIX

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FOREWORD

In recent years there has been a spate of books which have promulgated speculative theories about the life of Jesus. Most of these books have sought to incorporate details found in the Dead Sea Scrolls about “The Teacher of Righteousness” and the “Wicked Priest”. Dupont-Sommer wrote

“The Galilean Master ... appears in many respects as an astonishing reincarnation of [the Teacher of Righteousness in the scrolls]”

(Hershel Shanks)²

One of the most speculative of the scroll theorists was John Marco Allegro. He is said to have committed scholarly suicide by publishing a book – “The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross”. He argued that Jesus never had an historical existence but was a literary creation which grew in the minds of rabid Jews writing under the influence of hallucinogenic mushrooms.³

Allegro’s theory was adopted by B. Lewis in his eclectic conspiratorial work – “The Thirteenth Stone”. Lewis’ book asserted that there was not one mythical portrait of Jesus but two! The Star/Teacher of Righteousness was the Jesus of Luke’s gospel while the Sceptre/King was the Jesus described in Matthew’s gospel. He identified many Old Testament characters as representative types of “Star” or “Sceptre” saviours. Adam, Noah, Moses, Samson and David were “Star” types while Joshua represented the “Sceptre” archetype. King Solomon and the Apostle Paul were respectively “The Wicked Priest” and “Liar” of the scrolls. Lewis identified John the Baptist as another Jonathon, the beloved friend of King David.⁴

The work of Barbara Thiering⁵ is extensively based on her adoption of a thoroughgoing pesharim where ordinary meanings of words are given a secret or hidden value. Thiering believes that the “Teacher of Righteousness” was John the Baptist and the rival teacher, the “Wicked Priest” (or “Man of a Lie”) was Jesus.

The present work is not based on these rather idiosyncratic theories. They have been mentioned because they demonstrate the extremes that are possible when one seeks to assimilate sources from outside the bible. This work seeks rather to explore the gaps which are in the gospels themselves. It examines differences of emphases, editorial re-slanting and tantalising asides found within the gospels. It speculates on textual embellishments of gospel accounts of the same events and attempts to make sense of glaring omissions. It seeks to treat the gospels holistically and to speculate on the strange discrepancy between the gospels and the preoccupations of the contemporaneous Epistle to the Hebrews.

This speculative account is an attempt to make sense out of what the gospels state by proposing an enlarged religious context not overtly stated within the New Testament. It begins its argument by proposing that Christianity grew from a New Israel movement that pre-dated the birth of John the Baptist and his successor, Jesus. The New Israel movement had two major streams viz the Herodian and the Zadokitic streams. The Herodian stream was revisionist while the Zadokites were purists. Paul (Saul) was a key person in the Herodian movement while John the Baptist was his counterpart in the Zadokite movement. At the death of the John the Baptist the governing council of the Zadokites appointed Jesus as his replacement. This new appointment had unexpected consequences in that Jesus moved the Zadokites much closer towards the Herodians than was expected. The crucifixion of Jesus was arranged from within the Zadokite movement by an act of betrayal. After the death of Jesus, Paul sought to unite the two streams by ‘brokering a deal’.

The New Israel movement achieved a unified status by an agreement on certain aspects of its New Covenant Theology. These aspects are dealt with in Chapter 7. Among other things, the agreement

sought to be inclusive and accord a meaningful status to both John the Baptist and Jesus. In one sense, the Herodians triumphed over the Zadokites.

One day it may be proven that the accounts of John the Baptist and Jesus given in the New Testament derive from editorialists who were once declared enemies of the movement these two represented. If this should be so, it would be one of the most tragic ironies of history.

INTRODUCTION

Intent of Enquiry

The intent of this enquiry is to examine the relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus. The enquiry has revealed that the conventional characterisation of John as a precursor and herald to Jesus is probably a third attempt to define his mission. It is also one which ‘papers-over’ a number of unanswered questions.

The unanswered questions arise from information supplied by the gospel writers themselves (or by their later editors).

“The New Testament is a remarkable collection of documents. Not only does it include redactions that seek to convince us of a particular understanding of history, but the men who wrote the Gospels faithfully included sayings and stories that could themselves invalidate their interpretation of history. So great was their determination to reproduce traditional material that they included pieces that do not tally with their overall purposes or that contradict other statements they endorsed”.⁷

Perhaps the most telling of these unanswered questions is the one posed by Michael Grant:

“How could Jesus have been baptised for the forgiveness of his own sins, when according to the Christology which developed after his death, he was divine and therefore sinless.”

(M. Grant “Jesus”)⁸

There are also many other questions which cry out for answers. These are dealt with in Chapters 1 and 7.

Perceptual Analysis

The “answers” provided in this monograph are derived from a methodology which relies on imaginative perception rather than textual dexterity. These “answers” are indications rather than conclusions and in order to derive them one has to get beyond the texts and perceive the intentionality of the compiler. They seek to establish a history behind the written history.

There are not a great number of reliable historical facts or signposts to anchor gospel events in a time-space continuum. However, John’s baptism of Jesus is almost universally accepted as one of the surest of those facts. Not so sure are the gospel infancy accounts of John and Jesus. The gospel reports of the death of John and Jesus also leave much room for doubt.

The Gospels Are Incomplete and Pro-Roman

The gospels are not biographies although they provide biographical information. They are not continuous narratives but loosely arranged fragments. They do not provide a great deal of social or political commentary and the existence of rabid zealots and dedicated essenic communities is overlooked. The gospel compilers go to extraordinary lengths to appease their Roman oppressors and to paint the Jews as their true enemies. John the Baptist's role is given no credible context. He is not a town Jew and his voice is that of a loner "crying in the wilderness". He is also not a Christian. His assigned role is a very unconvincing and fabricated one.

Illegitimacy of Jewish (Herodian) Priesthood

If the social and political context of gospel events is not well outlined it is also true that the spiritual landscape of mainstream Judaism receives only light brushstrokes. We are not explicitly informed about the most compelling and central issue lying behind all the gospel events. This central issue concerns the legitimacy of the Temple Priesthood. If it were not for the Epistle to the Hebrews the reader of the New Testament would not realise how much this was an issue for the emerging church. Sources from outside the New Testament not only describe the Roman oppression of Palestine but also the Jewish antagonism towards the Priesthood appointees of Rome.

The New Covenant Theology and the New Israel

It is not possible to determine very accurately the degree of influence that mainstream Jewry had over the essentially Jewish sect of John the Baptist. It seems reasonable to assume that much of the New Covenant Theology developed by the Herodian priesthood was adopted into the New Israel movement.

At any rate New Covenant theology was highly articulated at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in AD 70. When the Matthean and Lucan gospels were compiled in the AD 80s they interpreted the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus in accordance with a new theology with its emphasis on midrash. The later Gospel of St John is essentially an ahistorical work and its differences with the earlier gospels demonstrates the processes of change and re-interpretation of events that were at work in the emerging church.

John the Baptist Was the Original Messiah

This enquiry advances the proposition that John was originally a warrior messiah and Jesus was his successor. John's baptising activity was probably more a form of ritual cleansing from the defilement of mainstream Judaism than it was a form of admission into the ranks of the zealots. Later on the Christian community re-defined John's baptism as a prelude for baptism by the water AND the spirit. In fact John's whole status was subject to re-definition. He began as a warrior-Messiah, then re-assigned as the High Priest of the Levitical Priesthood and finally assigned the role of a new Elijah. Similarly Jesus' role changed from Disciple of John the Baptist to that of Priestly Messiah (after the Order of Melchizedek) and finally to Christ as King and Priest.

Glossary and Terms

Finally a word needs to be said about the terms ‘messiah’ and ‘covenant’. I have used the word ‘messiah’ rather than ‘christ’ because I believe it somewhat demystifies the titles attributed to John the Baptist and Jesus. The term ‘messiah’ derives from the Hebrew word ‘mashîach’ or ‘anointed one’ and was used about royalty or priests.

The term ‘covenant’ denotes a binding contract with penalties for non-fulfilment. It is a term which is used synonymously with ‘testament’ and is an English translation of the Greek word ‘diatheke’. The word ‘testament’ derives from its Latin equivalent.

I have used the King James Version for bible citations but I have taken the liberty of substituting the word ‘covenant’ for ‘testament’ in the few New Testament verses that use ‘testament’ instead of ‘covenant’, e.g. “This is the new testament of my blood...” etc is rendered “this is the new covenant in my blood...” etc. This substitution reserves the word ‘testament’ to the library division of the bible into an “Old” and “New Testament”.

CHAPTER 1

AN EXPOSURE OF THE WEAKNESSES IN THE CONVENTIONAL EXPLANATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS

CHAPTER 1

AN EXPOSURE OF THE WEAKNESSES IN THE CONVENTIONAL EXPLANATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS

I Six Unanswered Questions

The Conventional Status Accorded to John the Baptist

The conventional status accorded to John the Baptist is that of a herald to the advent of Jesus as the promised Messiah:

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”
(Luke 3:4)

John the Baptist preached a preparatory gospel of repentance and water baptism. Jesus, on the other hand, will

“baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”
(Luke 3:16)

Baptism for the Remission of Sins

Another aspect of John’s baptism was that it was a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

“John did baptise in the wilderness and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”
(Mark 1:4)

Jesus Baptised by John

The baptism of Jesus by John is one of the best attested facts of the four gospels. However, this very fact presented the early church with one of its most painful dilemmas. The implications of this fact and the need to harmonise it with Christian theology threw the later gospel compilers into “damage control”.

Six Unanswered Questions

The compilers of the four gospels viz Mark, Matthew, Luke and John do not present identical material in an identical manner. Even though Matthew and Luke incorporate Mark and Q material they also introduce material unique to themselves. The gospel of John presents its material in a manner which is greatly at odds with the synoptic accounts. However, apart from the differences in presentation of each gospel there are a number of questions which arise from the difficulties later writers had in clarifying the thoughts of earlier writers. The following six questions are not satisfactorily answered by any of the gospel writers:

1. Did Jesus need to have his sins remitted?

2. Why did Jesus get baptised by John (and not vice-versa)?
3. Why didn't John become a follower of Jesus?
4. Why does Luke report of John the Baptist that:
"all men mused in their hearts whether he were Christ or not" (Luke 3:15)?
5. Why did Luke record that John the Baptist was so uncertain of the mission and message of Jesus that he sent two of his disciples to inquire:
"Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?" (Luke 7:19)?
6. Why did Luke insert the words *"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended by me"* (Luke 7:23)?

II

A Critical Examination of the Six Questions

1. Did Jesus Need to Have His Sins Remitted?

In its admission that Jesus submitted to the baptism of John, the early church unwittingly undermined a central tenet of its emerging theology. This theology was based on the immaculate conception of a spotless "Lamb of God" whose undeserved death would atone for the sins of the world. The would-be theologians were caught on the horns of a dilemma. Why did Jesus submit to a baptism of repentance if he had no sins to repent of? Conversely, if he were sinless why submit to a baptism of repentance? Joan Taylor claims that it was "the" problem *"that gave rise to the apologetic modifications of the Baptist story"*. The fact of the baptism could not have been invented because *"no one would have invented something so painfully hard to justify"*. (See Joan E. Taylor's "The Immerser: John the Baptist Within Second Temple Judaism" p. 5).

2. Why Did Jesus Get Baptised by John (and not vice-versa)?

The answer to this question is provided by Matthew with commendable clarity:

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptised of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him."

(Matthew 3:13-15)

If Jesus was "fulfilling all righteousness" why should not this be expected of John as well?

The Matthean explanation does not face up to the real dilemma viz "why would the greater person be baptised by the lesser?" The submission of Jesus to John implies that John had the greater authority.

To the forensic scriptorian the explanation given in Matthew is somewhat glib. The explanation is proffered as if the question were a 'Dorothy Dixier'. The answer is glib because it makes no effort to explain why John was not baptised by Jesus.

The gospel of John would have the reader believe that only a 'Christ' would have the authority to baptise:

"Why baptisest thou then, if thou be not that Christ ...?"

(John 1:25)

If only a Christ had the authority to baptise can it be inferred that John was also a Christ?

We know that the gospel writers make an attempt to differentiate John's baptism from a later one in which Jesus will

"baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

(Luke 3:16)

This new form of baptism establishes the authority of Jesus but does not negate the authority of John.

The explanation of the dilemma of why the lesser should baptise the greater is further complicated by an 'aside' given in the Gospel of John. This 'aside' explains that Jesus himself, performed no baptisms.

"Though Jesus baptised not, only his disciples."

(John 4:1-2)

This 'aside' has the effect of attributing a unique status to Jesus and is presented as an answer to why John did not get baptised by Jesus.

3. Why Didn't John Become a Follower of Jesus?

The gospels do not satisfactorily provide an answer to this question. In fact they seem to imply that the Baptist and his followers belonged to an alternative movement. One would have thought that John the Baptist possessed irrefutable evidence that Jesus was God's "beloved Son", and that he, too, would have become a disciple of Jesus.

4. Why Does Luke Report of John the Baptist that:

"all men mused in their hearts whether he were Christ or not." (Luke 3:15)

John the Baptist must have been an impressive figure for Luke to find it necessary to record that *"ALL MEN mused in their hearts whether he were Christ or not?"* (Caps, mine). Indeed there does not appear to be any difference in their preaching styles (see Luke 3:1-18 and Matthew 3:1-17). It should be noted that Luke introduces John's preaching by quoting from Isaiah and also uses Isaiah when introducing the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

It remains a puzzle to understand why Luke did not simply assign an Elijah role to John the Baptist and leave it at that. By elevating John to the status of a Christ (in the minds of ALL the people) is Luke providing a clue that John was indeed another Christ-like figure? The parallels in the infancy stories of John the Baptist and Jesus suggests that their births were, for Luke, of almost equal status.

5. Why did Luke Record That John the Baptist was so Uncertain of the Mission and Message of Jesus that He Sent Two of His Disciples to Inquire:

"Art thou he that should come? Or should we look for another?" (Luke 7:19)

This note of uncertainty is not a matter alluded to by Mark or John. In their reports there is no uncertainty but rather a clear affirmation of "hearing a voice from heaven". Luke further records of John the Baptist:

“among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.”

(Luke 7:28)

Jesus thus accords a very high status to John.

The perceptive reader is slightly troubled by the extra information provided by Jesus. Is Luke trying to recast history? Is he attempting to acknowledge a criticism of Jesus that the other three gospel writers have glossed over? This criticism appears to be that John the Baptist was, in the minds “of all men”, also entitled to be regarded as a Christ! Thus Luke, in his tortuous manner, has attempted to meet an acknowledged regard for John the Baptist by redefining his Messiahship as a greatness which belongs to the old order.

6. Why Did Luke Insert the Words:

“And blessed is he, whosoever is not offended by me” (Luke 7:23)?

Surely from the text preceding the above statement one would never have thought that anyone could have been offended by the claim of Jesus that

“the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.”

(Luke 7:22)

These events are surely matters of rejoicing not matters for taking offence! Was Luke’s non-sequitur referring to another issue altogether? Had there been some other issue that had caused a rift between John the Baptist and Jesus?

SUMMARY

If the conventional explanation of John’s role given in Mark’s gospel was the ‘total’ explanation why did Matthew and Luke feel the need to amplify and embellish the account? What were the origins of Luke’s account of the birth details of John?

It is apparent to a careful reader of the four gospels that the conventional explanation given by Mark is an oversimplified one. The answers to the six questions posed in this chapter may never be satisfactorily explained but it is clear that there is a lot more to the relationship of John the Baptist and Jesus than is disclosed in the gospel accounts.

In the fifth chapter an attempt will be made to investigate the birth stories of Jesus and John the Baptist to see whether they clarify the relative status of the two personages. In the meantime it is necessary to develop an approach to the theory of history assumed by the writers of the gospels and to sketch some aspects of the New Covenant theology that New Testament writers assume.

CHAPTER 2
SCRIPTURAL FORENSICS

CHAPTER 2

SCRIPTURAL FORENSICS

Written “in” and Omitted “from”

The student of New Testament studies has to investigate both what is written WITHIN the New Testament and what is omitted FROM the New Testament. Because the written material was, in the main, not compiled until fifty or so years after the events described, and because it is the handiwork of several authors with differing perspectives, it contains biases and reportages which are highly subjective. The gospels, in particular, record the most miraculous and incredible events in the most matter-of-fact manner.

It becomes a major task to disentangle writing style from objective reportage.

The ‘omissions’ from the New Testament relate to the details of the historical, geographical, political and religious context that are missing. We learn very little from the New Testament itself about the matters of contention between the ‘Pharisees’ and the ‘Sadducees’ and there is only a passing reference to the Zealots and no reference whatsoever to the Essenes.

Roman Bias

The New Testament references to Rome are all positive. There are no ‘bad’ Romans. This fact is illustrated by the following citations:

- *“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s”* (see Mt, 22:21).
- *“I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”* (Mt, 8:11). About the Centurion of Capernaum (by Jesus).
- *“Now when the Centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying Certainly this was a righteous man.”* (Lk, 23:47).
- *“Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews”* (Acts, 10:22).
- *“Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence.”* (Acts, 5:26).
- *“I found that he (Paul) had committed nothing worthy of death.”* Festus to Agrippa, (Acts, 25:25).
- *“I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man...”* Pilate about Jesus (Lk, 23:14).
- *“Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he (Paul) had not appealed unto Caesar.”* (Acts, 26:32).

It strikes the perceptive reader as an example of bias or writing in a manner to please a feared enemy.

Tragic Irony

There is a tragic irony about the development of the gospels. This concerns the fact that at the death of Jesus the Herodian quislings retained the ascendancy and propagandised their New Covenant's teachings. Those that remained loyal to Jesus were in fact on the losing side. There are reasons to believe that the original teachings of Jesus were realigned with the dominant themes of the Priesthood teachings against which Jesus had railed. One is left with a strong impression that much of the original teachings have been 'hijacked' and transformed by the later gospel writers.

Comparing Early and Later Teachings

The early synoptic gospels make no reference to Jesus having a claim to the Melchizedek Priesthood. However, by the time the Epistle to the Hebrews was written there was an elaborate doctrine which proclaimed Jesus "*a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*". Why, it may be asked, were the earlier gospels silent about such an important doctrine?

Why, it must be asked did Peter continue to preach "*that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come onto one of another nation*" (Acts, 10:28) if it were not part of the original teachings of Jesus? Again, what was behind Peter's persistent attitude against admitting the uncircumcised into fellowship? (see Galatians Ch. 2).

The compiler of The Acts of the Apostles records the story of "*A certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures ..., was instructed in the way of the Lord ... spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.*" (Acts, 18:24-25). How many baptisms were there? If Apollos was "*instructed in the way of the Lord*" why was he preaching the wrong baptism? At what point in time was the baptismal policy changed?

The student of the gospels cannot help noticing that there is a decided difference between the early prohibition against preaching in Samaria (Mat, 10:5) and the much later reportage in the Gospel of John of Jesus conversing with a woman of Samaria. There is a difference between the early teachings and those adopted much later.

Biblical Criticism

Biblical criticism, of whatever variety – literary, traditional, historical, textual, form or redactive, has tended to focus on analytical methods of understanding meaning. Exponents of these methods have emphasised the processes of 'deconstruction'. However, these approaches are somewhat one-eyed and run the risk of not seeing 'the wood for the trees'. It is possible to complement these forms of investigation with a more 'holistic' or synthetic means of investigation. The 'whole' is not 'merely the sum of its parts'.

Holistic Approaches to Biblical Investigation

Holistic approaches to biblical investigation emphasises the persistence of themes such as Covenants, Messiahs, Priesthoods, Key Ancestral Personages, and Prophets and the meaning of Redemptive History. In examining these persistent themes, it is sometimes more profitable to treat them in a mythological setting rather than an historical one. Only through a perception of the 'larger picture' is it possible to trace the hidden paths of earlier gospel teachings.

The Christian Theory of History

There is a great deal of difference between the theory of history assumed by present day Christians and that assumed by Christians of the first century.

Twenty-first century Christians espouse a linear view of time which places the nativity of Jesus as a mid-point between an original creation and an indeterminate consummation of history. This view was not held by the early Christians. They believed they were at the consummation of history and that a new order was on the verge of breaking through. Consequently they interpreted their 'present' as if it were the end days. Furthermore they believed that the new era would be accompanied by a restitution of the best elements of the old order. For the Jewish Christians the new era was going to be a Kingdom of God's rule and so they searched the scriptures for 'proof-texts' that confirmed their deeply held view. They documented the 'signs of the times' and sought to match these signs with Old Testament texts. In this documentation process they often became too eager and imposed a meaning on a text that it could not bear. They became victims to their own theory of history and at times invented stories to match the Old Testament originals.

Jewish and Christian Concepts of Time and the Use of Midrash

Jewish biblical history is understood in terms of 'midrash'. Midrash is a process which seeks to reveal an eternal truth from a temporal event. Thus sacred texts are given a timeless quality. An historical event of the 'past' exhibits truths applicable to the 'present' and will do so for the 'future'.

The following example of the use of midrash is taken from Joan Taylor's "John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism". It is her midrashic interpretation of the account of the murder of John the Baptist.

A Midrashic Interpretation of the Death of John the Baptist

"The long story of Mark's Gospel should probably not be considered historical in many of its details. It has marked literary characteristics that seem rooted in biblical precedents. Some of the tale of the banquet is likely to derive from popular Jewish imagination, which sought for details of what would have been seen in some quarters as a martyrdom. Herodius's hatred of John is similar to Jezebel's hatred of Elijah (1 Kings 18; 19:2), and her cunning is the same as Jezebel's in regard to Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). Antipas is like Ahab, the manipulated King: "There was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of YHWH, incited by his wife Jezebel" (1 Kings 21:25)."

For Mark, John was Elijah (Mark 9:11-13); it was fitting that he too should be in conflict with a cunning Jezebel and a weak Ahab. John's bold proclamation echoes Nathan before David (2 Sam. 12:1-12) and Elijah before Ahab (1 Kings 21:17-24).

After the daughter dances so pleasingly, Antipas promises to give her anything she wants, even half "his kingdom". Antipas did not, in fact, have a kingdom; he had a tetrarchy, and this was not really his to give away freely to his young stepdaughter. Any such transaction would have needed the approval of Rome. The story of Esther seems to have influenced the Marcan tale. The words of Antipas to Salome are almost exactly the words of King Ahasuerus (Artaxerxes) to Esther: "What is your request? It shall be given to you, even half of my kingdom" (Esther 5:6; 7:2). A banquet follows, and bounded by an oath, the King has to obey Esther's wish. Esther identifies Haman, his trusted official, as an enemy and Haman is killed (Esther 7).⁹

Time, Eternity and Hyparxis

Another way of explaining the meaning of 'midrash' is to understand it in the three dimensions of time outlined by John G. Bennett. In his book "The Dramatic Universe", Bennett proposed that time had three dimensional aspects viz time, eternity and recurrence (hyparxis). Similarly for a

Jewish rabbi there is an original or substantive event and it has a timeless quality which echoes and resonates through history. In addition, the original event, may recur or be imaged from 'time to time' in a 'replay' of the original occurrence.

The Christian Concept of Time

The early Christians were nearly all Jewish and their concept of time differed from the Rabbis only in degree. They claimed that the 'original' events had only presaged or foreshadowed subsequent events that manifested themselves in the life of Jesus. In effect they reversed the emphasis. The 'original' event is understood as an imperfect 'off-print' while the 'copy' is a perfect print. Indeed everything the New Testament writers state about Jesus is given a 'grander' aspect than its early counterpart.

"Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a GREATER than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of heaven is GREATER than he."

(Matthew 11:11)

(Luke 7:28)

and

"But I say unto you, that in this place is one GREATER than the temple."

(Matthew 12:6)

and

"A GREATER than Solomon is here."

(Matthew 12:6)

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a GREATER and MORE PERFECT tabernacle, not made by hands...."

(Heb. 9:17)

and

"for this cause he is the mediator of the NEW COVENANT."

(Heb, 9:15).

Thus the midrashic interpretation of history adopted by the New Testament documenters led them to search for Old Testament events which could be shown to have been both REPEATED and SUPERCEDED in New Testament events. The most general event of the Old Testament that is recycled on a grander scale is that concerning the Old Testament Covenant itself.

CHAPTER 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY

CHAPTER 3

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW COVENANT THEOLOGY

Barbara Thiering's Outline of Herod's Promotion of a New Covenant

In her book "Jesus of the Apocalypse", Barbara Thiering outlines many controversial theories about the pre, present and post events concerning the life of Jesus. Although it is not possible to endorse all her theories it would be short-sighted not to take note of them. One of her more 'reasonable' theories concerns her account of Herod the Great's advocacy and promotion of a pre-Christian New Covenant.¹⁰

Herod's New Israel

Thiering claims that Herod's New Israel had a 'new' Abraham whom she identified as Hillel, the great rabbinic scholar. Hillel is revered as the sage who taught much of the content of the Sermon on the Mount including the Golden Rule. She attributes the introduction of baptism to Hillel. "*For this New Israel, there would be a new Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ... One group of Diaspora Jews, who used a liturgy based on Exodus symbolism, called their leader 'Moses', and a female leader, who acted with him was called 'Miriam', the name of the sister of Moses.*"¹¹

Old Testament Covenants

In its original sense the word 'covenant' referred to a binding agreement between God and man. There are a number of such agreements referred to in the Old Testament. Perhaps the most well known of these is the Abrahamic covenant:

"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee and thy seed in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

(Genesis 17:7-8)

An additional clause in this agreement concerns male circumcision:

"Every male child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you."

(Genesis 17:10-11)

Other covenants of the Old Testament include the Covenant at Sinai (Exodus: 24:3-8), and the covenant of Deuteronomy (Deut: 29:1).

Covenants Sealed with Blood

In Exodus Chapter 24 it is stated:

“And he (Moses) took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said we will do and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.”
(Exodus 24:7-8)

Two points need to be noticed in this quotation. The first is that the original covenant had become written in ‘the book of the covenant’. The second is that the covenant was ratified or sealed by the sprinkling of blood.

The Book of Kings records the finding of “*the book of the law in the house of the LORD*”, by Hilkiah the High Priest (2 Kings 22:8) and the subsequent reading of that book by King Josiah:

“And the King sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the King read in their ears all the works of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.”
(2 Kings 23:1-2)

The Transition From Book of the Covenant to The Books of the Old Testament

The Old Testament books contained the Book of the Covenant and other sacred literature and in due course became hallowed as sacred scripture by the Israelites and Jewish people. Indeed, the ‘Bible’ of the early Christians was the Old Testament, which was an inclusive term for “The Book of the Covenants of Israel”.

The Hope of a New Covenant

The Old Testament held out the promise that there would be a new covenant:

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah.”
(Jeremiah 31:31)

Christianity and the New Covenant

The claim of Christianity is that it is the fulfilment of Jeremiah’s prophecy. It should be noted that the word ‘testament’ is a synonym for ‘covenant’. Jesus is ascribed the following words:

“This cup is the NEW COVENANT in my blood, which is shed for you.”
(Luke 22:20)

and

“This cup is the NEW COVENANT in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”
(1 Cor. 12:25)

The Epistle to the Hebrews makes the claims of Christianity greater than the first covenant:

“By so much was Jesus made a surety of a BETTER COVENANT.”
(Heb: 7:22)

and

“And for this cause he is the mediator of the NEW COVENANT.”
(Heb: 9:15)

“The New Covenant in My Blood”

Again, the early New Testament documents make only one Last Supper reference to “the New Covenant in my blood” (see Mk 14:24 and copied material in Mt 26:28 and elaborated references in Lk 22:20 and Paul’s 1 Cor. 11:25). It is clear from Chapters 7, 8 and 9 of the later Epistle to the Hebrews that the Last Supper remark is only a minor part of an elaborate New Covenant theology. It should be noted that I have treated the four earlier references collectively as referring to one occasion. I even entertain doubts about the historicity of these four earlier references (see below).

The Telescoping of The Passover and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)

The New Testament commentators do not agree on the actual day of the crucifixion. In Mark (14:16) the crucifixion takes place on the day AFTER the passover. In John (18:28) it takes place the day BEFORE.

The fact that they disagree on the day of the crucifixion also implies that there is a degree of unreliability about the time of the ‘last supper’.

Notwithstanding the different dates it is obvious that the commentators wanted to capitalise on the meaning of the Passover to give added significance to the death of Jesus. It was intended that Jesus be proclaimed the first-born son spared of death. He was the paschal lamb whose shed blood broke the power of death.

“For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”

(1 Cor. 5:7)

However, the celebration of the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) also featured a lamb. This lamb was only part of the elaborate annual cleansing ceremonies which also included the sprinkling of bullocks' blood and the transfer of the sins of the people onto a scapegoat. Paul’s words: *“that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures”* (1 Cor. 15:3) makes the second connection with a Jewish festival i.e. the Day of Atonement.

The Last Supper As A Re-enactment of The Passover and Yom Kippur

Thus we have hidden in the simple ‘last supper’ meal an elaborate re-enactment of two very important Jewish festivals. The question needs to be raised as to whether Jesus intended to consciously act out these ceremonies or whether the allusions have been retrospectively injected into a simple “farewell” meal. Although this cannot be answered with certainty one way or the other it is perfectly clear that the later recounting of the rites of blood sacrifices according to the law as told in Hebrews (Ch. 9) betrays a highly elaborated Christian interpretation of the Jewish festival of Atonement. The sophistication of this argument is entirely missing from the much earlier, synoptic accounts except for the phrase “blood of the New Covenant”.

CHAPTER 4

THE NEW COVENANT AND THE PRINCIPLES OF REPETITION AND SUPERCESSION

CHAPTER 4

THE NEW COVENANT AND THE PRINCIPLES OF REPETITION AND SUPERCESSION

The Pattern of Repetition and Supercession

The previous chapter outlined the manner in which the characteristics of the emerging New Covenant sought to imitate the characteristics of the Old Covenant and at the same time supercede them. To understand this process is to understand the shaping of the Christian tradition. A similar pattern of repetition and supercession can also be discerned in the doctrines associated with Messiahs, Priesthoods, Key Ancestral Personages (including Prophets) and the meaning of Redemptive History.

Messiahs

David

David, the King of Israel, is a prototypic messiah although his messianity was more political than spiritual. The Gospels make much of the claim that Jesus was a “*son of David*”. Even those not expected to know this fact proclaimed him as such. Young children and the blind agreed with the demons that he should be so-called. As a “son of David” he had an entitlement to be a King of Israel.

Most messiah figures are thought of as Kings though this is not invariably the case. The word ‘mashîach’ (messiah) means “anointed” and it is not used exclusively in relation to royalty. High Priests were also anointed.

Solomon

Solomon, David’s son, was also a messiah figure. It was Solomon who was given the honour of building the first temple in Jerusalem. This honour was denied to David on account of his covetousness of Bathsheba. The New Testament claim is that even though Solomon was “great”,

“behold a greater than Solomon is here.”

(Matt. 12:42)

This is a clear example of applying the principle of repetition and supercession.

Zerubbabel

The temple built by Solomon in 970 BC was destroyed in 586 BC. The restoration of this temple by Zerubbabel took place during the period 559-513 BC. Zerubbabel was in the Davidic line. It was said of him “*I have chosen thee*” – the very words applied to the Servant in Isaiah 42:1. Both Haggai and Zechariah saw in him the “branch” or “shoot” predicted by Jeremiah. However, of even greater significance than the ascribing of these terms is the association of Zerubbabel with Joshua the high priest seated at his right hand (see Zech, 6:11-13). There is no doubt that Zerubbabel was esteemed as a messiah and that his high priest was Joshua.

The New Testament does not mention Zerubbabel by name but there can be little doubt that the many references to Jesus as a temple-builder are but echoes of Zerubbabel's re-building success. It should be noted that a midrashic treatment of Zerubbabel in the New Testament would have had a perfect Old Testament correspondence if John had been regarded as the messiah and Jesus (Joshua) as the high priest.

Priesthoods

The gospels make no mention of any struggle by John the Baptist or Jesus against the legitimacy of the ruling priesthood. That there was such a struggle has to be inferred by 'stitching together' isolated clues such as the animus in the plotting to entrap Jesus and the smiting of the ear of the High Priest's servant by Peter. However, while the gospels do not openly reveal a pre-occupation with priesthood legitimacy the Epistle to the Hebrews devotes a great deal of attention to the issue. Chapter 7 of the Epistle to the Hebrews explains the existence of the Levitical and Melchizedek priesthoods and argues:

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron."

(Heb, 7:11)

The Epistle to the Hebrews continues the argument and makes the following statement:

"... after the similitude there ariseth another priest."

(Heb. 7:15)

but whereas the earlier priests were ordained without an oath, Jesus was ordained by an oath which could not be revoked:

*"Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec:
By so much was Jesus MADE A SURETY OF A BETTER COVENANT"*
(Caps. Mine)

(Vs 21-22)

Again, this is a clear example of the principle of repetition and supercession at work.

Key Ancestral Personages

The following examples of Old Testament personages have been alluded to either overtly or covertly in the New Testament. The parallelism is usually between the Old Testament personage and Jesus but this is not invariably so. The comparison always favours the New Testament character. In the Eleventh Chapter of Hebrews, after the author discourses on the subject of the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sara, Joseph, Moses, (Joshua), Gedeon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel and of the Prophets, he (the author) concludes:

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. God having provided some BETTER thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect"
(Caps. Mine)

(Heb. 11:39-40)

As great as this 'cloud of witnesses' happened to be it still fell short of what appeared in Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant.

Parallelisms

In the following parallelisms the Old Testament personage is given first and the New Testament comparison is with Jesus.

Adam

*“The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit ...
The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.”*

(see 1 Cor 15:45-49)

Abraham

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”

(see John 8:33-59 esp. v. 58)

Melchisedec (Melchizadok)

“Now consider how great this man (Melchisedec) was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.”

(Heb. 7:4)

and

“... for after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest.”

(Heb. 7:15)

Israel (Jacob)

“When the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

(Mt. 19:28)

Joseph

“They drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver.”

(Gen. 37:28)

Moses

There are numerous references to Jesus being a ‘type’ of Moses and some of these will be alluded to in Chapter 5 where the infancy stories of Moses and Jesus are compared. Moses is depicted in the Old Testament as a great deliverer of his people from their bondage and as a great lawgiver.

“For this man (Jesus) was counted worthy of more glory than Moses.”

(Heb. 3:3)

“We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write..”

(John 1:45)

“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

(John 1:17)

Joshua

That Jesus was another Joshua is attested to by understanding that the Jewish rendition of his name is Yeshuah or Joshua. (Jesus' mother's name would have been rendered Miriam). Apart from this basic repetition there are subtle, hidden allusions to Joshua in the New Testament of a midrashic nature. Thus Joshua was said to have parted the waters of the River Jordan in the same manner that Moses had the waters of the Red Sea parted (see Josh. 4:3). The New Testament equivalent is the occasion when the heavens were parted at the baptism of Jesus (see Mk 1:9). The parting of the heavenly waters accords a greater significance to the life of Jesus than to Joshua.

The succession of Moses, the lawgiver, by Joshua, is, in midrashic thinking, bound to give rise to the emergence of another lawgiver succeeded by another Joshua. The New Testament avers that Jesus was both greater than Moses and greater than Joshua, son of Nun. Using similar hyperbolic language the New Israel is baptised in the River Jordan in like manner as the Old Israel "*were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat.*" (see 1 Cor. 10:2-3).

Ahitophopel

Ahitophopel is not a well known Old Testament character but his story is worth mentioning because of its striking New Testament parallel. Ahitophopel betrayed the Lord's anointed, King David, and in an act of remorse he hanged himself (2 Samuel 17:1-23). Similarly, Matthew records:

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he (i.e. Jesus) was condemned, repented himself"...
(v. 3)
".. and went and hanged himself." (v. 5)

(Mt 27:3-10)

The only other New Testament mention of the death of Judas is recorded in Acts 1:16-20. This record tells of Judas' death by disembowelling not by hanging. This disembowelling account also parallels an Old Testament story:

"... and Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground."
(2 Sam. 20:9-10)

The fact that there are two accounts of the death of Judas, each of which has an Old Testament counterpart, illustrates the extent to which truth has become subservient to a theory of history. The two accounts also raise questions about the historicity of Judas' betrayal.

Elijah

The conventional view of the Christian Church is to regard John the Baptist as the New Testament counterpart to the Old Testament Elijah. John was cast in the role of a herald and forerunner to the coming messiah (in most of the gospels) because that role fitted in with the Old Testament expectation:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD."
(Mal, 4:5)

Strangely, though, John the Baptist did not see himself in that light according to the Gospel of John.

"Art thou Elias? (question to John the Baptist)
"And he saith, I am not."

(John 1:21)

There is a suggestion in Luke's gospel that John the Baptist did not even know that Jesus was the messiah. John sent emissaries to Jesus to inquire:

"Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?"

(Lk 7:19)

The uncertainty of John the Baptist about the mission and message of Jesus, as expressed by Luke, is at complete variance with the effusive certainty of John's gospel:

"I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him."

(John 1:32)

and

"And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

(Mk 1:11)

These differences, as with the differences about the death of Judas, introduce a high degree of historical unreliability into the gospel accounts – particularly those aspects dealing with John the Baptist.

One begins to suspect that we are not dealing with original reportage but with a reworked and greatly revised history. The purpose of this present inquiry is to penetrate the façade of this revised version of history. In seeking to do this one is forced to consider the case for an UNCONVENTIONAL VIEW OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Redemptive History

The story of the children of Israel is the story of redemption from bondage and persecution. Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and this act is the great archetypal act of redemption. Its New Testament counterpart is the development of the idea that Jesus is a second Moses whose blood shedding rescued his followers from certain death and opened the gates to the promised land. The redemption of Israel was predicated on the observance of a covenant or covenants. With the followers of Jesus we have the development of the idea of a "new" covenant.

With the experience of the Babylonian captivity there is a repetition of enslavement and bondage, as in Egypt, and there is also the appearance of a messianic warrior-king to re-establish links with their earlier history. The new messiah is Zerubbabel and it is he who rebuilds the temple at Jerusalem.

During the reign of the Maccabees the author of the "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" seeks to explain that Simon and his successor John Hyrcanus were messiahs not of the tribe of Judah but of the tribe of Levi. These two messiahs were Priests, Prophets and Kings. Leslie Fuller outlines their responsibilities:

"to make war against the enemies of Israel, to oppose the powers of Beliar and the demons, and to arise in the defence of the righteous; to act as a mediator to the Gentiles; to possess meekness, righteousness and even freedom from sin, to open the gates of Paradise to the righteous and to eat of the Tree of Life"¹²

(Leslie Fuller, Religious Development of the Intertestamental Period,
Abingdon Bible Commentary, p. 209b)

The degree to which each of these attributes is mirrored in the life of Jesus is something the reader will have to judge for himself.

The Book of Enoch and the Pre-existent Messiah

Finally, the redemptive thread which runs through Old Testament history right up unto the time of Jesus lays particular stress on the emergence of a particular messiah. The characteristics of this messiah are outlined in “*The Book of Enoch the Prophet*” in Chapters 37-71.¹³ This messiah was described as pre-existent, i.e.

“before the world was created and for ever.”

(Enoch 48:5)

This Messiah also had other titles: - the Elect One, the Righteous One and the Son of Man. These titles have been applied to Jesus in the New Testament and their usage virtually confirms that “*The Book of Enoch*” (circa 1st Century BC) was greatly influential in shaping the thought of the gospel writers.

Geographical Repetition

The following excerpt from Joan Taylor’s “*John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism*” extends the principle of repetition and supercession from ‘time’ to ‘space’.

“John’s prime choice of location, if the synoptic Gospels are to be believed, was just beyond Jordan near Jericho. This place had important religious associations. It was in Perea, beyond the Jordan across from Jericho, that Elijah went up in a whirlwind to heaven, in a chariot of fire pulled by horses of fire (2 Kings 2:4-14)..... In gathering people where he did, John met them at a site of great religious and historic significance that would have increased the importance of an immersion there ... This was at the point at which Joshua crossed the Jordan to enter the promised land and take it for the people of Israel (Josh. 1:2,3). In the story of this crossing, Joshua causes the river to part, opposite Jericho, just as Moses had caused the parting of the Sea of Reeds, enabling the Israelites to flee from Egypt.”¹⁴

CHAPTER 5

MIRACULOUS BIRTHS AND MIDRASH

CHAPTER 5

MIRACULOUS BIRTHS AND MIDRASH

Introduction

The previous chapter attempted to demonstrate the extent to which the New Testament writers interpreted the events of the recent past in terms of the pattern of Old Testament history. They did so by applying the principle of repetition and supercession. In this chapter this process will be taken a stage further by examining the birth stories of Jesus and John the Baptist in close detail.

I **Three Infancy Narratives**

The gospels of Matthew and Luke contain three infancy narratives. The gospel of Mathew tells the story of the birth of Jesus while the gospel of Luke tells of the birth of John the Baptist and the birth of Jesus. The Lucan stories are intertwined and they provide an introductory clue that John and Jesus were related from birth. The gospels of Mark and John omit any references to the birth of these two personages.

The Two Infancy Narratives of Jesus

The two infancy stories of Jesus exhibit common elements and some remarkable differences.

Common Elements of the Jesus infancies¹⁵

- The parents are named Joseph and Mary and although betrothed do not sexually co-habit. (Matt. 1:18 and Luke 1:27, 34).
- Joseph is of Davidic descent. (Matt. 1:16, 20 and Luke 1:27, 32; 2:4).
- The conception of Jesus is not through sexual intercourse but involves God's Spirit. (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:35).
- There is an angelic announcement in both stories. In Matthew an angel appears to Joseph in a dream. (Matt. 1:20-23). In Luke the angel Gabriel appears to Mary. (Luke 1:26-38).
- Both Joseph's angel and Mary's Angel Gabriel declare that the name of the child to be born shall be "Jesus". (Matt. 1:21 and Luke 1:31).
- Both accounts give the reason for the naming of the child. In Matthew (1:21) Joseph's unnamed angel declares:

"Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins"

In the Lucan account the meaning of the name Jesus is given by “*the angel of the Lord to*” shepherds abiding in the field. (Luke 2:8).

- The birth of Jesus is chronologically related to the reign of Herod the Great. (Matt. 2:1 and Luke 1:5).

Differences Between the Infancy Stories of Jesus in Matthew and Luke¹⁶

- In Matthew the wise men locate the ‘house’ in which the star “*stood over where the young child was*” (Matt. 2:11 and 2:9). In Luke the child is born in “*a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn*” (Luke 2:7).
- While Matthew has wise men Luke has shepherds and, with the angel of the Lord, “*a multitude of the heavenly host*” (see Matt. 2:1-12 and Luke 2:8-18).
- Luke knows nothing about the star or the wise men or the malevolence of Herod. Likewise Matthew records nothing of the Angelic Host or the shepherds.
- Only Matthew records the hasty departure of the family by night into Egypt (Matt. 2:13-14). Luke, on the other hand, simply records:

“And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.”

(Luke 2:39)

The genealogical differences of the Matthean and Lucan account are too considerable to examine at this stage of the investigation. It should be noted that, as they stand, they are irreconcilable.

The Infancy Narrative of John the Baptist¹⁷

Only the Gospel of Luke records the details of the Birth of John the Baptist. These are summarised by Robert Funk in the following table:

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST ACCORDING TO LUKE

		LUKE
1.	Genealogy	1:5-6
2.	Miraculous Conception	1:7-25
	Elizabeth’s barrenness	1:7
	Annunciation to Zechariah	1:8-20
	Sign of Zechariah’s muteness	1:21-23
	Conception of John	1:24-25
3.	Birth and naming of John	1:57-79
	Neighbours rejoice	1:58
	Sign of John’s name and circumcision	1:59-66
	Zechariah predicts destiny	1:67-79
4.	Persecution (see Infancy Gospel of James 22:5-8, 23:1-8)	
5.	Childhood	1:80

Luke’s Account of the Birth of John the Baptist¹⁸

John's mother Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron, the brother of Moses and Miriam. Both his father Zechariah and his mother Elizabeth were aged and Elizabeth was said to be barren. Zechariah saw an angel of the Lord on the right side of the altar of the temple. The angel was Gabriel who foretold the greatness of the son about to be born by Elizabeth. Gabriel outlined John's mission and struck Zechariah dumb because of his unbelief. In the sixth month of Elizabeth's confinement Gabriel visited Mary. After Mary's annunciation she visited her cousin Elizabeth.

At this visit "*the babe leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.*" (Lk 1:42). Mary stayed with Elizabeth "*about three months*" (Lk 1:56). The baby was born soon after Mary's departure. On the day of the baby's circumcision Zechariah "*asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John.*" (Lk 1:63). At that instant Zechariah's speech returned. Zechariah then gave a lengthy prophecy about the mission of his son which predicted that John "*shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways.*" (Lk 1:76).

The Parallelism of the Birth Stories of Jesus and John the Baptist¹⁹

John Dominic Crossin in his "Jesus – A Revolutionary Biography" details the parallelism of the lives of Jesus and John the Baptist. He does so in what he describes as "*a drama in five acts*" (p. 6).

Crossin draws attention to the fact that in four of the five parallelisms, of the twin infancy accounts of Jesus and John, Jesus is given a more exalted rating than John.

1. Gabriel's Announcements to Mary and Zechariah

John

"He will be great in the sight of the Lord"

(Lk 1:15)

Jesus

"He shall be great, AND shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" (Caps. Mine)

(Lk 1:32)

2. The Publicised Birth of Each Child

John

When John is born only "neighbours and cousins rejoiced"

(Lk 1:58)

Jesus

When Jesus is born there is "*with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God...*"

(Lk 2:13)

3. The Circumcision

Only in the circumcision and naming of each child is the parallelism given an equal rating. See Lk 1:59-63a for John and Lk 2:21 for Jesus.

4. *Public Presentation*

In the public presentation and prophecy of destiny of each child there is a marked difference in what is said about John and what is said about Jesus.

John

This presentation takes place in his parents' home and the reports "*were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judea.*"

(Lk 1:65)

Jesus

Jesus' presentation takes place not at home but in the temple where Simeon and Anna the prophetess awaited. Anna "*spoke of him to ALL THEM THAT LOOKED FOR REDEMPTION IN JERUSALEM.*" (Caps. Mine)

(Lk 2:38)

5. *Pattern of Development of Each Child*

In the description of each child's growth similar words are used about each child. However, those written about Jesus are greatly embellished.

John

"The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel"

(Lk 1:80)

Jesus

"The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, FILLED WITH WISDOM; AND THE GRACE OF GOD WAS UPON HIM." (Caps. Mine)

(Lk 2:40)

Note that John was reared in the deserts while Jesus "*went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.*"

II

Miraculous Births and Midrash²⁰

Introduction

The birth narratives of Jesus and John the Baptist are given a miraculous flavour in the Matthean and Lucan stories. Strangely enough Mark, John and Paul have no birth stories of either personage. Students of the Old Testament are familiar with the 'miraculous' elements of the birth stories of Moses, Isaac, Samson and Samuel and have no difficulty in finding elements of these accounts written into the New Testament nativity stories.

Moses²¹

The archetypal Moses looms large in the New Covenant retelling of the life of Jesus. His story also plays into the retelling of the birth of John the Baptist. The birth of Moses and his miraculous escape from death at the hands of the Pharaoh is retold in a New Testament dress. In this retelling Pharaoh is identified as the malevolent King Herod who, according to Matthew “*slew all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof, from two years and under.*” (Mt, 2:16). Jesus escaped the wrath of the New Testament Pharaoh and grew up to be a greater law giver than Moses. In the New Testament Jesus’ life is interpreted as the paschal lamb whose shed blood broke the power of death.

Moses’ brother Aaron and his sister Miriam have their New Testament counterparts also. Aaron’s wife is Elisheba and Zecharias’ wife is Elisabeth. (Elisheba is only mentioned once in the Old Testament, see Exod. 6:23). Thus Elisheba and Miriam were sisters-in-law which would make their offspring first cousins. The New Testament Elisheba (Elisabeth) and Miriam (Mary) are reported in Luke as being cousins (not sisters-in-law) but their respective sons would still be cousins.

The father of John the Baptist, Zecharias, is of the “*course of Abia (Abijah)*” which was the eighth of twenty four “lots” listed in 1 Chronicles 24:7-19. In the ordering Abijah precedes Jeshua. Was Luke attempting to show that the ordering of the relationship of John and Jesus was a like pattern to that of Abijah and Jeshua?

Samuel²²

The story of Samuel’s birth is recounted in 1 Samuel Chapter 1. Elkanah’s first wife Hannah had no children – “*the LORD had shut up her womb*” (v. 5). In due time the barren woman conceived a son and dedicated him to the service of the LORD’s priest, Eli, promising also that “*no razor shall come upon his head*” (v. 11). It is not difficult to see the parallelism of John the Baptist’s parents with that of Elkanah and Hannah. However, other elements of the birth of Samuel also find a parallel in the story of Jesus’ birth. A child of promise is presented to an old priest (Samuel to Eli and Jesus to Simeon). It is interesting to note that Hannah used the phrase:

“Let thine handmaiden find grace in thy sight”

(1 Sam. 1:16)

which is equivalent to the words of Gabriel to Mary:

“For thou hast found favour with God”

(Lk 1:30)

There is a striking parallelism in the description of Samuel’s growth and that of Jesus:

“And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour with the LORD, and also with man.”

(1 Samuel 2:26)

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man”

(Lk 2:52)

Samson²³

Samson, the Danite, would not appear to be a likely role model on which to base observations about Jesus or John the Baptist. However, there are aspects about Samson’s birth that may well have influenced the author of Luke’s gospel. Samson’s mother “*was barren and bare not*” (Judges 13:2). “*And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman and said unto her ... thou shalt*

conceive, and bear a son.” (v. 3). The mother was forbidden to drink wine or strong drink or eat any unclean thing. The child that she eventually bore was destined to be a deliverer of Israel which had been *“into the hand of Philistines forty years.”* (Judges 13:1). Her child was to be reared so that:

“no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines”

(Judges 13:5)

Most of these remarks apply to John the Baptist. However, Samson’s destruction of the unclean temple of Dagon could, more aptly, allude to Jesus.

“And Samson took hold of the two middle pillars upon which the house stood ...”

(Judges 16:29-30)

Daniel²⁴

It is not common to associate the Old Testament prophet Daniel with John the Baptist but there are aspects of the birth story of John that suggest Luke might well have had the story of Daniel in mind when writing about Zechariah. It will be recalled that the angel Gabriel came to both Daniel and Zechariah (the father of John) at a time of liturgical prayer. Both men received instruction and were struck dumb (see Daniel 10:15 and Luke 1:20). One also wonders whether Luke also found a parallel about the visit of the twelve-year old Jesus to the temple in the Book of Susanna. This book tells the story of the twelve-year old Daniel receiving the spirit of understanding.

One also wonders whether the story of Daniel (Daniel 3:19) in the fiery furnace inspired the concept of Baptism by fire (Luke 3:16). It also strikes the perceptive reader as more than a co-incidence that the only Old Testament references to Gabriel occur in the Book of Daniel (Daniel 8:16 and 9:21).

CHAPTER 6

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CONVENTIONAL THEORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS

CHAPTER 6

SHORTCOMINGS OF THE CONVENTIONAL THEORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO JESUS

Introduction

After examining the four gospel accounts concerning the relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus one is left with a feeling of disquiet. They do not yield a consistent and believable story. Luke, in particular, appears intent on ‘damage control’ and introduces gratuitous new information that raises a suspicion of ‘special pleading’ to counter widespread rumours. The gospel of John harms the case for the conventional theory. When the shortcomings of the gospel accounts are considered alongside the information gleaned from extra-gospel sources one is left with the impression of a ‘cover up’. The gospels appear to have been compiled by the very people Jesus railed against. They do not disclose clear statements of the theory of history on which they were based nor do they make clear the New Covenant theology which controls their selection of material.

I

Shortcomings of the Gospels

The following list of shortcomings does not include those relating to the general unreliability of the gospels and their more evident contradictions. It relates only to issues concerning the relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus.

Nine Unresolved Gospel Issues

- If John the Baptist witnessed the heavens open and saw the Spirit of God descend on Jesus and heard a voice declare: *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Mt, 3:16-17; Mk 1:10-11; Lk 3:22), why did he later send two of his disciples to ask of Jesus:

“Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?”

(Lk 7:19)

- Why did John not join the Jesus movement when two of his disciples did? (John 1:37).
- Why did the masses “muse” in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not? (Lk 3:15).
- Why did some of the people say of Jesus that he was *“John The Baptist”*? (Mt 16:14; Mk 8:28; Lk 9:19).
- Why did some say of John:

“why baptisest thou then, if thou be not that Christ?”

(John 1:25)

- Why do the gospels report Jesus as evasive and unwilling to respond to the question: “*The baptism of John whence was it? From Heaven or men?*” (Mt 21:25, Mk 11:30, Lk 20:4).
- Why is the mission of Jesus understood in Priesthood terms by the writer of The Epistle to the Hebrews when no such slant is even hinted at in the gospels?
- What was the point being made by the compiler of John’s gospel when he made the gratuitous aside:

“*Though Jesus himself baptised not, but his disciples.*”

(John 4:2)

- Why did Jesus submit to a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins if he was “*in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*” (Heb. 4:15).

Gospel Writers Overstatement of the Superiority of Jesus over John the Baptist

Least is Greater

The gospels go to inordinate lengths to state the case of Jesus’ superiority over John. Although Matthew and Luke declare:

“*Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.*”

this is qualified by the remainder of the statement:

“*notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*”

(Mt 11:11)

(The Lucan version inserts the word ‘prophet’ after the word ‘greater’ (Lk 7:28)).

However, the superiority of Jesus over John is illustrated more clearly in the fact that Jesus drank wine and that he performed miracles.

Winedrinking

The gospels make much of John’s asceticism and contrast this unfavourably with the open commensality of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus “*fast not*” (Mt 9:14), whereas the disciples of John fast often. One would have thought that fasting would have been an admirable quality but it is regarded as an inferior or inappropriate attribute by the gospel writers.

Miracles

The gospels do not agree on the time Jesus commenced a separate ministry from John the Baptist but they do make a point in differentiating the styles of the ministries.

The gospel of John would have us believe that Jesus commenced his ministry the day after his baptism.

“*The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee*”

(John 1:35)

However, the synoptists aver that after his baptism:

“immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan”

(Mark 1:12-13)

(Mt 4:1-2)

(Lk 4:1-2)

The gospels openly differentiate the style of the two ministries on the basis that Jesus performed miracles whereas *“John did no miracle”* (John 10:41). Matthew (10:5) and Luke (7:22) provide a list of the miracles performed by Jesus. This list appears to be a catalogue of verses spliced together from Isaiah:

“Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how the blind see (Cf Isaiah 29:18), the lame walk (Isaiah 35:6), the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear (Isaiah 35:5), the dead are raised (Isaiah 61:1), to the poor the gospel is preached (Cf Isaiah 61:1)”

The question arises: did Jesus actually utter these words?

*Joan Taylor’s Comments*²⁵

“Since mention of John the Baptist in the New Testament is obviously overlaid with a developing insistence on Jesus’ superiority, we can suppose that the issue of John himself was a problem for the early Church. Clearly, John was not a nobody in his time, and the Gospels accord him respect. However, John was not permitted too much respect; people had to know his place. As John Meier states, most often “the interpretation aims at neutralising the Baptist’s independence to make him safe for Christianity”.”

(p. 5 “The Immerser: John the Baptist Within Second Temple Judaism”
by Joan E. Taylor)

II

Further Disquiet from Information Gleaned from Extra-Gospel Sources

Introduction

The gospels themselves do not provide adequate definitions of the terms Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots and make no reference at all to Essenes, Nazarites and Zadokites. Maybe these omissions signify nothing but they strike the perceptive reader as difficult to explain when so much attention is given to presenting the Roman occupiers in such a favourable light. With the discovery of the Zadokite Fragments in 1896 and the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 New Testament scholars are beginning to sketch-in more details of the spiritual, political and cultural environments of gospel events.²⁶ While the identities of the ‘Teacher of Righteousness’ and The ‘Wicked Priest’ remain unknown at least the scrolls provide a unique insight into the social ferment of the gospel times and establish a more believable framework in which to understand the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus.

Pharisees²⁷

The Pharisees are frequently referred to in the gospels and may be described as respected teachers with a reputation for righteousness. Luke, however, undermines their reputation by demonstrating they misunderstood the meaning of Jesus’ teaching. Sometimes Pharisees are linked with the Scribes but the terms are not synonymous. In the Gospel of Mark Pharisees are linked with Herodians.

“And they send unto him certain of the Pharisees, and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words.”

(Mark 12:13)

The Lucan record of this saying is as follows:

“And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.”

(Lk 20:20)

The linking of the Pharisees with the Scribes and the Herodians conveys a description of collective odium. Matthew goes a stage further and lumps the Pharisees into the same category as the Sadducees:

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

(Matt. 3:7)

These words Matthew attributes to John. The same epithet “generation of vipers” is later ascribed by Matthew to Jesus (see Matt. 12:34).

Sadducees²⁸

The Sadducees (Tsadukim) claimed to be descended from Zadok (Tsadok), the original Solomonic high priest.¹⁹ The Damascus Document calls them *“the chosen ones of Israel”*. Unfortunately some fell from grace by worshipping Ashtoreth *“and continuously polluted the sanctuary”*. Others departed from Judah into the land of Damascus where they *“entered into the New Covenant”*. The Damascus Document explains that:

“these will escape at the time of the visitation. But those who remain will be handed over to the sword when the MESSIAH OF AARON AND ISRAEL COMES.” (Caps. Mine)

(see p. 102 “The Mystery and Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls” by Hershel Shanks)

The Sadducees may be distinguished from the Pharisees in that they *“represented the old conservative positions of the priesthood and inherited the tradition of the older scribism”* (i.e. written law) while the Pharisees *“were the champions of the oral law”*. The Sadducean Priesthood controlled Temple practice until *“the last twenty years of the Temple’s existence”* when it fell under the effective control of a Pharisaic council.

Zealots²⁹

The Zealots were a fanatical section of the Pharisees and were both religious and political revolutionaries. They *“were either heroic martyrs or murderers, according to one’s point of view. They harassed the Romans throughout the first century AD bringing about the catastrophic destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.”*³⁰ Barbara Thiering suggests that they regarded the Jesus movement as traitorous to the Jewish cause and they conspired to get rid of Jesus. She also says: *“Holding the belief of the Pharisees in resurrection from the dead, the remnants of the zealots committed mass suicide on Masada in AD 74, stirred by a speech from their leader Eleazer, who urged that they would rise again gloriously.”*³¹

Essenes³²

The Essenes were small bands of ascetic communities who ranked with the Pharisees and Sadducees but kept themselves distant from the mainstream of life. They were organised into

*“several grades and formed a closely knit brotherhood.”*³³ They practised ritual purification by baptism and were, in the main, celibate. They did, however, receive children of other people when they were still young and capable of instruction.³⁴ Some scholars have suggested that John the Baptist was raised as an Essene. His asceticism, dress and baptismal activity agree with such a theory. However, his public confrontation against the Pharisees and Sadducees suggests otherwise. Perhaps he was a product of an Essenic 'convent' education.

The Essenes also objected to the non-Zadokite usurpation of the priesthood. Unlike the Sadducees, the Essenes were unwilling *“to adjust to the political realities of Hasmonean rule.”*³⁵ A further observation needs to be made about the Essenes. They did not all live in isolated desert communities. There were also Essenes of the Diaspora although their centre was at Qumran. It was the Essenes who wrote and hid the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is a tantalising proposition to consider the Essenic communities of the Diaspora as the authors of the gospels and the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Nazarites

In the Old Testament, Nazarites were persons consecrated to God and bound by a pledge never to cut their hair, drink wine or touch a corpse (see Numbers 6:1-12). Samson, Samuel and Daniel are held up as Old Testament examples of Nazarites. By the time of the New Testament era they had developed into communities according to Schonfield. Schonfield claims that as northerners, the Nazarites *“were opposed to the Judean or southern traditions, which they believed had falsified the Law of Moses.”*³⁶

Schonfield also goes on record as saying the Nazarites became *“a family dynasty, and adds that Jesus’ brothers constituted a ‘dynastic blood-line’ a dynasty claiming sacred legitimacy because of a blood relationship to Jesus.”*³⁷ (“Those Incredible Christians”, p. 123)

The gospels even try to obscure the existence of the Nazarites by confusing them with Nazarenes or citizens of Nazareth

“And he came and dwelt in a city of Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”

(Matt. 2:23)

There was no such town or city called Nazareth in Old Testament times and there was no such prophecy.

Zadokites

The Zadokite Fragments were discovered in 1896 and are thought to have been written in the middle of the first century BC. The name 'Zadokite' comes from the name of the sect whose covenant is found in the fragments of the book. Professor Leslie Fuller refers to the Zadokite eschatology as *“one of their most interesting features.”*³⁸

Professor Fuller then writes:

*“Their authors expected a Messiah from Aaron (i.e. the family of Levi), to be preceded by a ‘Star’ or a ‘Lawgiver’ and ‘Teacher of Righteousness’. This differs from the Old Testament tradition of a Messiah born from the tribe of Judah.”*³⁹

The information about a sect which was contemporaneous with the life of John the Baptist and Jesus is not proof that either one or both of them were Zadokites but it is highly suggestive that they might have been. The Zadokites name is a diminutive version of Melchizedek (Melchizadok) and

they were comprised of persons who sought the re-instatement of the rightful Zadokite priesthood. It should be noted that the Sadducees claimed to be descended from Zadok, the original Solomonic high priest.

The Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest

The Dead Sea Scrolls describe the leader of the Qumran community ‘The Teacher of Righteousness’. It is clear that this community rejected the authority of the priesthood of the Jerusalem temple. It is usual to refer to the High Priest of the Jerusalem temple as the ‘Wicked Priest’. However, this usual interpretation is challenged by Dr Barbara Thiering. She sees the conflict between the Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest (Man of a Lie) as a disguised reference to a conflict between John the Baptist and Jesus.⁴⁰

The Three Genealogies Theory of Robert Graves

Matthew and Luke each have genealogies of Jesus which cannot be reconciled to each other. Lockhart draws attention to the claim of Robert Graves that Matthew’s genealogy was in fact a composite of “*two unrelated lines tacked together: the first Davidic, the second Aaronic.*”⁴¹

If this observation is true the author of Matthew’s gospel appears to have made a determined effort to have the messianic claim about Jesus credentialled on two accounts i.e. as a descendant of Aaron and a descendant of David. Graves also makes the claim that:

“no genealogy corresponding with Luke’s record from Nathan to Jesus can be found anywhere in Hebrew scripture.”

(Graves, Robert and Pedro Joshua, “The Nazarene Gospel Restored”, 1953, p. 66)⁴²

Thus in Matthew there is the rather odd inclusion of an Aaronic line, and in Luke

“We have a genealogy that runs modestly through Nathan, a son of David who never came to the throne.”

(Quoted by Lockhart from Graves et al on p. 345, “Jesus the Heretic”)

III

Defensive Writing Style of Gospel Compilers

In assessing the scattered fragments of information concerning John the Baptist one cannot feel comfortable about the many loose ends and unanswered questions. The gospel writers give the impression that they are writing defensively and modifying an earlier tradition. The infancy stories of John and Jesus appear too contrived and Luke tries a little too hard to assign a subordinate position to John. Again, the death of John is over melodramatic. One notes that care is taken not to blame Antipas entirely for John’s death. Indeed one is surprised to learn from Barbara Thiering that “*a rumour was current: that it was Jesus who was responsible for the Baptist’s death.*”⁴⁴

These factors and later editorialising make the task of the New Testament historian very difficult. In assessing the role assignments of John the Baptist and Jesus this unreliability is both a source of annoyance and an opportunity for speculative thought.

CHAPTER 7

A SPECULATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PROCESSES OF ROLE RE-ASSIGNMENT OF JOHN AND JESUS

CHAPTER 7

A SPECULATIVE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PROCESSES OF ROLE RE-ASSIGNMENT OF JOHN AND JESUS

I ***Spiritual Geology***

The student of the New Testament and especially of the Gospels, is a type of spiritual geologist who has collected a number of stratified samples from a disturbed region and seeks to describe the region before it became disturbed. The samples' earliest strata are identical signifying a common place and agreed age but succeeding strata show traces of upheaval and fault lines. There are processes of a metamorphic nature in each of the samples which make it difficult to align them and yield a clear picture.

The Cultural Strata

The earliest strata contains the Old Testament, the Intertestamental Literature and the Talmud. It also includes information about the Zealots, the Hasidim, the Therapeutae, the Boethusians, the Hellenes, the Herodians, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Samaritans, the Essenic Communities and the Maccabean revolts.

The Historical Strata

The next strata contains information about the Hasmonean rulers and the Parthian invasion of Judea in 40 BC, the conquest of the Parthians by Herod the Great and his reign as a Roman vassal for thirty-three years until 4 BC. Next came evidence of the reign of Archelaus until the zealot uprising in 6 AD. This strata also has information about the Agrippas and the appointment of Pilate as Procurator. The New Testament gospels describe events of this period but they were not compiled until much later. This second strata of material provides the historical context in which the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus are to be understood.

The Theological Strata

The third strata is the theological strata which sits atop the earlier historical and cultural stratas. Unfortunately this third strata has undergone metamorphosis through the heat generated by the crucifixion of Jesus and the later destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD. These upheavals fused the historical and the theological strata. It was during this time that Matthew, Luke and the later Pauline epistles were written. The gospel of John and the book of Revelation comprise the final literary sedimentia of the period.

Unreliability of Gospel Information

In the vast array of cultural, historical and theological information to be analysed the gospels are the most important and yet they are the most unreliable of all the sources. Their unreliability is related to:

- their date of compilation
- their pseudonymous authorship
- their lack of a common chronology
- their Roman bias
- their failure to make explicit the theory of history on which they are based
- their forced midrashic interpretations of Old Testament events
- their editorial emendations.

Criteria for the Selection of Reliable Texts

Given the degree of unreliability of the main source it is usual for scholars to make explicit the theory upon which they select one 'fact' or one 'interpreted fact' over another. For the literal fundamentalist the principle is to accept everything as stated in a particular translation. For John Dominic Crossin the principle of 'double attestation' or agreement from at least two gospel sources is necessary before developing a theory.⁴⁵ The participants of 'The Jesus Seminar' used a four-point rating scale to determine the most authentic words of Jesus.⁴⁶ John P. Meier advocates 'multiple attestation', 'dissimilarity' and 'potential embarrassment' as criteria. Dissimilarity or 'discontinuity' is the principle that a statement or event is probably true if it is dissimilar to the expected cultural context of Judaism.⁴⁷ The potential embarrassment of a statement or an event points to its veracity. It is unlikely that the early church would allow potentially offensive material to remain in the gospel records if it did not have a grain of truth in it. Meier also posits "the criterion of coherence". This principle accepts the validity of data on the basis that it ties in with a wide range of other data.

The Nain Miracle Analysed

In the final analysis it is not possible to state unequivocally completely binding principles of textual reliability. The reason is that not all texts deal with matters of fact. For example the story concerning the miracle of the raising of the Widow's son at Nain is only mentioned by Luke (Lk 7:11-17) and is, on the surface, presented as a matter of fact. It should not be rejected as valid on the grounds that it is not 'multiply-attested'. If it did appear as a story in several gospels this would not be grounds for its acceptance. For the perceptually-aware reader the story of the miracle of raising the dead has been inserted into the narrative at this particular place for two reasons. Firstly, it was to provide 'evidence' that Jesus was a greater miracle worker than Elijah. Whereas Elijah had raised a widow's son to life he had done so in the home of the widow (see 1 Kings 17:17-24) but the widow's son of Nain had been raised while the bier was en route to the burial place. Secondly the incident appears immediately before the check list of miracles supplied by Jesus to John's disciples. On this check list (Lk 7:22) there is a claim by Jesus that the dead had been raised. However Luke had not provided any evidence that Jesus had performed such a miracle hence the editor had to insert such an example to satisfy the fulfilment of the 'prophecy' he wanted to include in his narrative.

An Important Criteria

The principles of dual or multiple attestation, discontinuity and potential embarrassment are useful criteria for assessing the reliability of gospel data. However, there is a greater measure which can be applied viz, the consistency of data with the emerging doctrines of a New Covenant Theology.

The New Covenant Theology as a Restoration Theology

The New Covenant Theology provided a hidden foundation base and an underpinning for a great deal of gospel superstructure. This theology had as its fundamental tenet the proposition that Israel could only be redeemed of its oppression if it returned to the pattern of living in the halcyon days of the patriarchal order of yester-year. The New Covenant Theology was a ‘Restoration’ Theology which asserted that the Lord Jehovah would only bless his people when they lived according to the divine pattern. If the ‘covenanters’ kept their part of the pact then the Lord Jehovah would bless them on an even grander scale than He blessed the Old Israel.

The Prophecy of Jeremiah

The New Covenant concept was also based on a prophecy of Jeremiah:

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of Judah.”

(Jeremiah 31:31)

The New Covenant Theology Not Formulated by Jesus or John the Baptist

The New Covenant theology which developed in Israel was much older than New Testament events. Its doctrines were formulated before the birth of John the Baptist and Jesus and these doctrines continued to be developed after their deaths. Indeed it is highly probable that John the Baptist was groomed to be a key figure in the implementation process of those who formulated the program of fulfilment. It should be noted that neither John the Baptist nor Jesus formulated the master plan, though they both became accessories. It is highly likely that the original blue-print of the New Covenant Theology was originally drawn up by an Essenic Brotherhood who lived “without the camp” and away from the contaminating influences of an illegitimate priesthood. There can be little doubt that Paul was thoroughly conversant with the specifications of the New Covenant Theology before he became a Christian convert. It is also likely that the illegitimate Priesthood of the Herodians produced their own brand of New Covenant Theology alongside that of the Essenes and Zadokites.

Aspects of the New Covenant Theology

If the archetypal pattern were to be faithfully imaged in its essential details, and yet superceded, this would require a New Covenant and the emergence of such elements as:

- a new Genesis
- a new Adam
- a new Abraham
- a new Israel and a new set of twelve tribes
- a new Joseph

- a new Moses
- a new Aaron
- a new Joshua
- a new David
- a new Solomon and Nathan
- a new Elijah
- a new Samuel
- a new Daniel
- a new Jonah
- a new Zerubbabel

In addition to these personages the New Covenant Theology required:

- a new Melchizedek Priesthood
- a new Levitical Priesthood
- a new set of Commandments
- a new liturgy
- a new calendar, and
- a new lectionary.

Only when these elements were in place would the redemptive process take place and the Kingdom of God replace the occupation forces of Rome.

John the Baptist and His Place in the New Theological Framework

It is highly likely that John the Baptist was groomed to be the new messianic Zerubbabel who would bring about the destruction of the illegitimate Herodian Priesthood with the assistance of the armed Zealot insurrectionists. A great deal of the gospel teachings attributed to Jesus were originally proclaimed by John. This fact can be deduced from the similarity of the teachings of John to the teachings of Jesus that have survived in the gospels. It seems that John thought of Jesus as Elijah (*“the coming one”*) (Mt 11:2-6 and Lk 7:18-23). John certainly denied that he was Elijah (John 1:21 and Acts 13:25).

John the Baptist was such an authoritative figure that Jesus submitted to baptism by him. It appears that this authority was originally paramount but was gradually eroded following John’s death. In the later gospels there is an inversion of the Elijah expectation. Jesus, the newly appointed leader of the restoration movement is attributed as saying:

"If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come."

(i.e. John the Baptist, see Mt 11:14)

The New Israel Movement and the Appointment of Jesus

Following the death of John the Baptist those with the necessary authority in the New Israel movement appointed Jesus as John's replacement. Jesus was a less contentious figure-head and he could be trusted not to condone violence against the Romans.

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

(Mt. 11:12)

Jesus was instructed to continue his opposition against the illegitimate priesthood but to "*render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's*" (Lk 20:25). The success of the movement depended on strict adherence to this principle. This can be inferred by the remarks made to Pilate:

"If thou let this man go thou art not Caesar's friend.."

(John 19:12)

The gospels present Jesus as a well-credentialled replacement being of the House of David and having some valid claim to the succession to the throne of Israel. Moreover he was a populist who was not tainted with too close an association with the rabidity of the zealots and he came from Galilee not Judea where John had caused trouble.

However, as events were to unfold Jesus proved to be an embarrassment to the authorities who had appointed him and he was betrayed by his Zadokitic movement to the Herodian Priesthood. They arranged his arrest and bore witness against him at his trial and he was subsequently crucified. Paul was a member of this Herodian priesthood.

II

The Period Between the Crucifixion and the Destruction of Jerusalem

Two Factions and the New Israel Movement

This is an important period in the history of the Restoration Movement. It is probably more accurate to describe the movement as consisting of two competing factions. The Herodian Priesthood comprised one faction. They wanted to find a means of legitimising their claims and had gone a long way down the path of identifying counterparts to the Old Israel. The second faction were the Zadokites who were intent on preserving their different version of a New Covenant theology.

The Herodians wanted to extend admission into the New Israel to the gentiles while the Zadokites were purists. Those that remained loyal to John and Jesus were the Zadokites who wanted nothing to do with the gentiles.

Paul As Broker Between the Two Factions

Paul was almost certainly an Herodian and was a member of the planning committee to extend admission of gentiles to the New Israel.

Paul understood that the populist movement led by Jesus had too great a hold on the public imagination for it to be opposed or ignored. He set about a plan to unite the two factions and was ultimately successful in brokering a deal. This deal was based on a mutual agreement on three important matters:

- the basics of New Covenant Theology
- role reassignment of John the Baptist and Jesus
- territorial jurisdiction.

Three Basics of the United Mission

The basics of New Covenant Theology included the recognition of Jesus as a High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek and John a High Priest after the Order of Aaron. Jesus was to be recognised as greater than Adam, Abraham, Jacob etc. and the inaugurator of a new spiritual kingdom into which one could gain entry upon repentance and baptism.

The role reassignment of John the Baptist and Jesus established that John should no longer be regarded as a messiah. His role should henceforth be an Elijah who was the herald of Jesus as the expected messiah. This role reassignment also implied an obligation to attribute as many of John's teachings to Jesus as possible.

The mutual agreement also determined that James would head the mission activities of the New Israel Movement in Palestine while Paul would have jurisdiction outside Palestine. Originally Paul directed his missionary activities to the Jews of the Diaspora. Only later did he extend his reach to the gentiles.

The Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD

The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD not only destroyed Herod's Temple but completely routed the Zadokitic purists and the Essenes as well as the Zealots. The Jerusalem headquarters of the New Israel Movement fell into disarray and the leadership of James collapsed and was taken up by Paul who was not in Jerusalem at the time of its destruction. By this time Paul had begun to admit gentiles into the New Israel Movement. This was in accordance with his Herodian leanings.

III

The Transformation of the New Israel Movement into the Church of Christ

A Great Persecution of the Church

After the destruction of Jerusalem the New Israel Movement fell into the hands of those who once opposed Jesus. Paul, under the name of Saul, had been a bitter opponent of the Jesus Movement. At the stoning of Stephen:

"Saul was consenting unto his death."

The passage goes on to say:

"And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

Editing of Early Gospel Fragments

After the destruction of Jerusalem it was necessary to go into “damage control” and up-date the early literary fragments circulating at that time. These fragments included the “gospels” of Mark and Thomas and the “Q” sayings and they became the basis of two newer gospels viz “Matthew” and “Luke”. These newer gospels were compiled by Essenic scholars of the Diaspora. These scholars took great pains in their “re-write” of the fragments not to offend the Roman authorities. They also sought to re-define the roles of John the Baptist and Jesus according to the agreed principles of the deal brokered by Paul. They could not tamper with the messianic mission of John in a thoroughgoing way because there were believers of John still alive. However, they wrote of him in a manner which accorded him deference as the last and greatest prophet of the Old Israel and as an Elijah to the New Israel. This role definition left the claim to John’s messiahship still intact and made of him a bridge between the Old Israel and the New Israel. It was a clever solution to a tricky problem.

The Dual Messiahs

A decision was made to accord both John and Jesus messiahship status and a genealogy which credentialled John as a son of David through Solomon and Jesus as a son of David through Nathan. This family tree was re-inforced by a ‘miraculous’ nativity story for each of them. John’s nativity was a re-presentation of the Aaron-Elisabeth relationship combined with elements of the Samuel story. Jesus’ birth was told in terms of the Moses story.

The Emergence of the Superiority of Jesus

The gospels called “Matthew” and “Luke” sought to preserve the stature of John but demonstrate that on every scale of measurement Jesus was superior. John preached to the poor but Jesus does more: he performs miracles. John baptises with water but Jesus has water plus the Holy Ghost. Chapter 5 lists four aspects of the early life of John and Jesus and illustrates that Jesus has the superior rating on each aspect. In fact these two gospels ‘over prove’ their case and cast suspicion on their special pleading.

The Epistle to the Hebrews and its New Covenant Theology

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written at the time Matthew and Luke were compiled. The Epistle contains more explicit New Covenant doctrine than the two gospels and should be regarded as a companion volume to the two gospels. The Epistle defined Jesus as a priest after the Order of Melchizedek and “*a surety of a better covenant*”. Once Jesus had been so defined the New Israel Movement could be better described as The Church of Christ.

From Messiah to Christ

The terms ‘Messiah’ and ‘Christ’ are normally regarded as equivalent, if not synonymous, terms. While ‘Messiah’ was derived from the Hebrew word ‘mashiach’ meaning ‘anointed one’, the word ‘Christ’ derives from the Greek word ‘Christos’ which supposedly also meant ‘anointed one’. However, I think there were subtle but important differences in the usages of the Hebrew term and the Greek one. The Hebrew word was used of earthly beings such as kings or priests. The Greek word was used of a spiritual or ideal agent. To acknowledge Jesus as a messiah is not the same as acknowledging him as the Christ. In one it is an acknowledgement as an earthly king in the other it

is an acknowledgement of him as a spiritual agent. To acknowledge him as both is to combine the earthly with the heavenly power and to give him dual authority as a Son of Man and a Son of God.

History to Geschichilich

One can only speculate on the motives of the author or the redactor of “John’s” gospel when he wrote the words:

“We have found the Messiah, which is being interpreted, the Christ.”

(John 1:41)

Did Andrew actually say all of these words? Was the final adjectival qualifying clause or interpretive clause actually Andrew’s or was it an explanation added by a later editor? If the words/titles were equivalent what was the point in giving the extra explanation? Surely it would be simpler just to say:

“We have found the Christ.”?

The perceptive reader can make much of Andrew’s explanatory declaration. It is indeed the key to the Christology of the whole gospel! This particular verse (John 1:41), in one bold pronouncement accomplishes two extremely important tasks. It, firstly, blurs the distinction between the hebraic term ‘messiah’ and the hellenised or platonic term ‘christ’ and, secondly it makes nonsense of Peter’s confessional statement so studiously arrived at in Matthew 16:16. If Andrew knew from the beginning that Jesus was the Christ what was the big deal in Peter’s later discovery? Why do the synoptists go to such lengths to portray a messianic secret? Since Andrew was Simon Peter’s brother surely Peter would also have known from the beginning!

The wheel has turned a complete circle when we read the so-called gospel of John. The reader is no longer reading history. The iconoclast has been transformed into an icon and history has become geschichtlich. The Kingdom of God which was to have been on earth has been translated into a Kingdom of Heaven where citizenship was available to all those

“which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God.”

(John 1:13)

NOTES

FOREWORD

1. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus*, (p. 127).
2. Hershel Shanks, *The Mystery and Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (pps xv-xvi).
3. Ibid, (p. 196).
4. R. Lewis, *The Thirteenth Stone*, (p. 98).
5. Barbara Thiering, *Jesus of the Apocalypse*, (p. xvi).

INTRODUCTION

6. Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism*, (p. 7).
7. Ibid, (p. 321).
8. Ibid, (p. 262).

Chapter 2.

9. Ibid, (pps 246-247)

Chapter 3.

10. Barbara Thiering, *Jesus of the Apocalypse*, Chapter 2. From Herod to Ephesus (pps 3-14).
11. Ibid, (p. 5).

Chapter 4.

12. Leslie Fuller, *Religious Development of the Intertestamental Period*, Abingdon Bible Commentary, (p. 209).
13. *The Book of Enoch*, Chapters 37-41.
14. Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser, John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism*, (pps 213-214).

Chapter 5.

15. John Shelby Spong, *Born of a Woman*, (pps 47-48).
16. Ibid, (pps 49-50).
17. Robert Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, (p. 290).
18. Ibid, (p. 289).
19. John Dominic Crossin, *Jesus A Revolutionary Biography*, (pps 5-10).
20. Robert Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, (pps 281-285).
21. John Dominic Crossin, *Jesus A Revolutionary Biography*, (pps 10-15).
22. John Shelby Spong, *Liberating the Gospels*, (p. 216).
23. John Shelby Spong, *Born of a Woman*, (p. 96).
24. Ibid, (p. 121).

Chapter 6.

25. Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser, John the Baptist Within Second Temple Judaism*, (p. 5).
26. Leslie E. Fuller, *The Literature of the Intertestamental Period*, Abingdon Bible Commentary, (p. 193).
27. Hershel Shanks, *The Mystery and Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (p. xix).
28. Ibid, (p. xx).
29. Joan E. Taylor, *The Immerser, John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism*, (pps 236-238).
30. Barbara Thiering, *Jesus of the Apocalypse*, (p. 42).
31. Ibid, (p. 42).
32. Joan Taylor, *The Immerser, John the Baptist within Second Temple Judaism* (esp. Chapter 2), John and the Essenes (pps 15-48).
33. Canon George H. Box, *The Historical and Religious Backgrounds of the Early Christian Movement*, Abingdon Bible Commentary, (p. 842).
34. Herschel Shanks, *The Mystery and Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (p. 85).
35. Ibid, (p. xx).
36. Douglas Lockhart, *Jesus the Heretic*, (p. 141).

37. Ibid, (p. 123).
38. Leslie Fuller, *The Literature of the Intertestamental Periods*, Abingdon Bible Commentary, (p. 193).
39. Ibid (p. 193).
40. Barbara Thiering, *Jesus of the Apocalypse*, (p. xvi).
41. Douglas Lockhart, *Jesus the Heretic*, (p. 345).
42. Ibid (p. 345).
43. Ibid (p. 345).
44. Barbara Thiering, *Jesus of the Apocalypse* (p. 54).

Chapter 7.

45. John Dominic Crossin, *Jesus – A Revolutionary Biography*.
46. Robert Funk and Roy W. Hoover and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels – The Search For the Authentic Words of Jesus* (pp 34-38).
47. Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus*, (pps 129-130).
48. John Shelby Spong, *Liberating the Gospels*, (p. 147).
49. Mark Smith, *A Backpacker's Journey into the Gospels*, Chapter 8 (unpublished).

APPENDIX

1. Number of New Testament verses pertaining to John the Baptist

GOSPEL	NO. VERSES	RELATIVE TO JOHN THE BAPTIST	% AGE
Matthew	1071	61	5.6
Mark	661	29	4.4
Luke	1153	92	7.1
John	869	50	5.8

(Table 1)

Note: The Acts of the Apostles contains 15 verses concerning John the Baptist.

2. Analysis of Matthew's references to John the Baptist

Chapter	Vv's	Comments
3	1-17	<p>Preaching in wilderness. Message of repentance. Reference to Isaiah <i>"The voice of one crying in the wilderness"</i>. Pharisees and Sadducees. O Generation of vipers. Prophecy of he that cometh after me. John baptises Jesus. Heavens open.</p>
9	14-17	<p>Disciples of John ask Jesus: <i>"why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?"</i> Comparison with bridegrooms presence, new cloth and old garments, new wine and old bottles.</p>
11	2-19	<p>John sends two emissaries to enquire of Jesus: <i>"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"</i> Jesus refers to his miracles. <i>"Blessed is he (i.e. John the Baptist) whosoever shall not be offended."</i> Discourse by Jesus about John: <i>"more than a prophet"</i>. Least in kingdom is greater. From days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. All the prophets and the law prophesied until John. <i>"John came neither eating or drinking and they say he hath a devil."</i></p>

14	1-12	Details of the death of John the Baptist during festivities of Herod's birthday. Daughter of Herodias granted <i>"whatsoever she would ask."</i>
17	12-13	<i>"Elias has come already..."</i> <i>"Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."</i>
21	23-27	<i>"By what authority doest thou these things?"</i> <i>"The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven or men?"</i>
21	32	(Preceded by the parable of the two sons). <i>"John came unto you in the way of righteousness and ye believed him not."</i>

3. Analysis of Mark's references to John the Baptist

Chapter	Vv's	Comments
1	4-11	(Cf Mt 3:1-12 and Lk 3:1-18) Mission and message of John the Baptist. Isaiah quotation. John's dress. Prediction of <i>"one mightier than I."</i> Baptism of Jesus and voice from heaven.
1	14	(v. 14 Notes that <i>"Now after that John was put in prison."</i>)
6	14-29	Beheading of John. Cf. Matt 14:1-12 and Lk 9:7-9. This is a retrospective account given after explaining Jesus was not John the Baptist risen from the dead, nor was he Elias.
8	28	Single reference. <i>"Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say Elias."</i> (Cf Matthew 16:13-20 and Luke 9:18-21).
11	30-33	Baptism of John, <i>"was it from heaven?"</i> (Cf Matthew 16:23-32 and Luke 20:1-8)

4.

Analysis of Luke's references to John the Baptist

Chapter	Vv's	Comments
1	5-25	Birth of John the Baptist. Priest Zacharias and wife Elizabeth (daughter of Aaron). Angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias and predicted " <i>he shall go before him (the Lord) and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.</i> " Zacharias struck dumb. Elizabeth conceives and in the 6th month Gabriel visits Mary.
1	41-45	Mary visits Elizabeth and " <i>Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.</i> " And " <i>the babe leaped in her womb.</i> " Mary stayed 3 months
1	57-80	John born and on the 8th day was circumcised. Named "John" and Zacharias could speak. Rejoicing " <i>throughout all the hill country of Judea</i> ". Zacharias' prophecy about John. John " <i>was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.</i> "
3	2-21	Preaching by John of the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Isaiah citation (Cf Matt. 3:1-12 and Mk, 1:1-8). " <i>O Generation of vipers</i> ", " <i>Begin not to say WE have Abraham to our father</i> ", " <i>Now axe is laid unto the root of the trees</i> ", " <i>He that hath two coats</i> ", etc.
3	2-21	" <i>all men mused in their hearts of John whether he were the Christ or not.</i> " John baptises Jesus and the " <i>heaven was opened</i> " and the " <i>Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove, and a voice came from heaven.</i> "
5	33	"Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?"
5	34-35	Reference to marriage " <i>the bridegroom is with them.</i> "
5	36-39	Parable of new garment, new wine and old wine.
7	20-23	John's emissaries sent to Jesus.
7	24-30	Jesus' discourse about the mission of John the Baptist. " <i>there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.</i> "
7	31-34	" <i>Son of man is come eating and drinking.</i> "
9	7-9	Herod perplexed by reports about Jesus.

9	19	Some say Jesus is " <i>John the Baptist, some say Elias.</i> " etc.
20	4-8	Question concerning John's baptismal authority not answered.

5. Analysis of John's references to John the Baptist

Chapter	Vv's	Comments
1	6-8	John came " <i>to bear witness of the Light.</i> "
1	15-18	" <i>For the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.</i> "
1	19-28	" <i>I am not the Christ</i> ", I am not Elias, I am not that prophet. " <i>I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness.</i> " " <i>Why baptisest thou then, if thou be not that Christ?</i> "
1	29-34	John's testimony " <i>Behold the Lamb of God</i> " ... " <i>And I knew him not</i> " <i>And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God</i> ".
1	40	(Andrew was one of two disciples of John who followed Jesus).
3	23-24	John baptising in Aenon near to Salim. John's testimony about.
3	25-36	Jesus " <i>He must increase, but I must decrease.</i> "
4	1-2	" <i>Jesus himself baptised not, but his disciples.</i> "
5	32-35	Jesus' testimony about John.
5	36	" <i>But I have greater witness than that of John.</i> "
10	41	" <i>John did no miracle but all things that John spake of this man were true.</i> "

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Standard References

1. *The Holy Bible*, King James Version, Cambridge University Press.
2. *The Apocrypha*, Oxford University.
3. *The Book of Enoch the Prophet*, translated by Richard Laurence, Wizard Bookshelf, Minneapolis, 1976.
4. *The Five Gospels – The Search For the Authentic Words of Jesus* A New Translation and Commentary by Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover and The Jesus Seminar. Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993.
5. *The Apocryphal New Testament Being The Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles and Apocalypses*, translated by Montague Rhodes James, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1924.
6. *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, translated by Geza Vermes, New York: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 1997.

Other References

7. Taylor, Joan E. *The Immerser: John the Baptist Within Second Temple Judaism*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.
8. Shanks, Hershel. *The Mystery and Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Random House, New York, 1998.
9. Eisenman, Robert and Michael Wise. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered*. New York, Penguin Books, 1992.
10. Thiering, Barbara. *Jesus of the Apocalypse*, Doubleday, 1995.
11. Crossin, John Dominic. *Jesus – A Revolutionary Biography*, Harper/San Francisco, 1994.
12. Funk, Robert W. *Honest to Jesus*, A Polebridge Press Book, Hodder and Stoughton, 1996.
13. Spong, John Shelby. *Born of a Woman – A Bishop Rethinks the Birth of Jesus*, Harper, San Francisco, 1992.
14. Spong, John Shelby. *Liberating the Gospels – Reading the Bible with Jewish Eyes*, Harper, San Francisco, 1996.
15. Schonfield, Hugh J. *The Passover Plot*, Macdonald and Janes, London, 1974.
16. Smith, Morton. *Jesus the Magician*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1978.
17. Lockhart, Douglas. *Jesus the Heretic*, Element Books, Rocport Mass., 1997.

18. Johnson, Luke Timothy. *The Real Jesus – The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels.* Harper, San Francisco, 1997.
19. Fredriksen, Paula. *Jesus of Nazareth King of the Jews.* Griffin Press Pty Ltd. SA, 2000.
20. Powell, Mark Allan. *The Jesus Debate, Modern Historians Investigate the Life of Christ.* Lion Publishing Paperback Edition, 1999.

This book provides contemporary snapshots of Jesus:

Jesus the Peasant Sage: The Jesus Seminar
 Jesus the Social Revolutionary: John Dominic Crossan
 Jesus the Religious Mystic: Marcus J. Borg
 Jesus the Prophet of the End-time: E.P. Sanders
 Jesus the Marginal Jew: John P. Meier
 Jesus the True Messiah: N.T. Wright
 Jesus the Social Prophet: Richard Horsley
 Jesus the Charismatic Jew: Geza Vermes
 Jesus the Jewish Sage: Ben Witherington III
 Jesus the Cynic Philosopher: F. Gerald Downing
 A Myth of Innocence: Burton Mack

21. Lewis, R. *The Thirteenth Stone,* 2nd Edition, Fountainhead Press, Plymouth and Freemantle, 1994 (1997).
22. The Abingdon Bible Commentary, The Abingdon Press, 1929.
 - The Religion of Israel by H. Wheeler Robinson (pps 165-176)
 - Israel's Messianic Hope by John Edgar McFadyen (pps 177-186)
 - The Literature of the Intertestamental Period, Leslie E. Fuller (pps 187-199)
 - The Religious Development of the Intertestamental Period, Leslie E. Fuller (pps 200-216)
 - The Historical and Religious Backgrounds of the Early Christian Movements, George Herbert Box (pps 839-852)
 - The Life of Jesus Christ by Joseph F. McFadyen (pps 891-903).

Secondary References

1. Angus, S.: *The Mystery Religions and Christianity: A Study in the Religious Background of Early Christianity*, John Murray, London. 1925.
2. Hoskyns, Sir E., Davey, Noel: *The Riddle of the New Testament*, Faber and Faber, London. 1958.
3. Grant, Michael: *Jesus*, Cox and Wyman. 1977.
4. Marsh, John: *Jesus in His Lifetime*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London. 1981.
5. Allegro, John M.: *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth*, Westbridge Books – A Division of David and Charles. 1979.
6. Silberman, Neil Asher: *The Hidden Scrolls; Christianity, Judaism and the War for the Dead Sea Scrolls*; G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1994.
7. Vermes, Geza. Jesus the Jew, *A Historian's Reading of the Gospels*. Fortress Press, Philadelphia. 1981.
8. Jones, Ian. Joshua, *The Man They Called Jesus*. Lothian Books. 1999.
9. Eisenman, Robert and Wise, Michael: *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered*, Element Books Ltd. 1992.
10. Thiering, Barbara
Jesus the Man – A New Interpretation from the Dead Sea Scrolls (1992)
11. Thiering Barbara
The Book That Jesus Wrote (1998)
12. Johnson, Luke Timothy: *The Real Jesus – The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth of the Traditional Gospels*, 1997, Harper, San Francisco.
13. Hamilton, Edith: *Mythology*, 1969, A Mentor Book from North American Library.