
JOHN THE BAPTIST

**THE BAPTISM OF JESUS IS RECORDED
IN MATTHEW 3:13-17:**

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."



Jesus Christ said: "I tell you the truth: among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist."

Even though John was a great prophet, he meets a tragic ending at the hand of Herod Antipas. The historian Josephus, gives us this account:

"Herod (Antipas) was caught up in a quarrel with the King of Petra, Aretas, whose daughter he had married and with whom he had lived with for some time. But once while he was staying in Rome with his half brother Herod (also known as Philip, the son of Herod the Great by Mariamme, the daughter of Simon the high priest), Antipas fell in love with his brother's wife Herodias, and he promised to marry her and divorce Areta's daughter.

But Areta's daughter uncovered Herod's plan, and asked Herod if she could leave to visit Machaerus. From there she fled to her father in Arabia, and told him what Herod was planning.

For this reason and a dispute over land boundaries, Aretas attacked Herod whose whole army was destroyed. Herod sent word of this to Tiberius. Caesar was filled with rage, and ordered the Syrian governor, Vitellius, to declare a state of war with Aretas. But many of the Jews felt that Herod's disaster was God's judgement on him for his treatment of John, known as the Baptist. Although John was a good man and taught the Jews to worship God and to lead righteous lives and practice justice toward others, Herod had him executed. John preached that baptism should not be used to obtain a pardon from sins committed, but as a consecration of the body . . . Great crowds began to gather around John because of his preaching and Herod feared that John's great persuasive power over men would lead to rebellion. Therefore, he decided that it would be better to kill him before he caused an uprising. John was brought in chain's to the fortress of Machaerus and was put to death in that prison. The Jews believed that God avenged John by the destruction of Herod's army."

(Jewish Antiquities Book 18 Chapter 5)

Now lets look at how the Biblical account matches up with the account of Josephus.

1) Josephus stated that John the Baptist exhorted the people to lead righteous lives.

THE BIBLE states the same in Matthew 3:8, John told the people to produce good fruit in keeping with a repentant life.

2) Josephus states the Baptist told the people to practice justice toward their neighbors.

THE BIBLE states in Luke 3:11-18 that John told a crowd of people:

"The man who has two tunics should share with the one who has none, and the one who has food should do the same." . . . To the tax collectors he said "Don't collect any more taxes than you are required to." . . . And to a group of soldiers he said: "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely."

3) Josephus wrote: "John taught that baptism should not be used to obtain pardon for sins committed, but to consecrate the body"

This statement appears to be contrary to Luke 3:3 which says: "He went into all the country along the Jordan preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

But if you read this passage carefully, it says a **BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE** for the forgiveness of sins.

REPENTANCE being the key word, meaning to have a change of mind and heart toward God. To turn to Him while turning away from sin and asking for God's forgiveness. The outward act of Water baptism itself does not forgive sins, nor can any act performed by man. Jesus at the cross took on himself all the sins of the world, and only by accepting him as your Savior can you have your sins forgiven.

Therefore, Baptism is our act of obedience to the Lord's command and is God's promise to us that,

just as water washes away dirt from our bodies, Christ's shed blood washes away all the filth from our soul's, in other words, all our sins.

4) The Bible in Matthew 14:3-10 says: 'For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

And although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod. Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, "Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter." And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison.'



Josephus wrote the same thing: "Herod had fallen in love with the wife of his half-brother and he promised to marry her and divorce Areta's daughter (which he did, and in doing so broke one of the Ten

Commandments by committing adultery.) . . . Herod had John executed . . . John was brought in chains to Machaerus and was put to death in that prison."

THE GREATEST STATEMENTS MADE BY JOHN BAPTIST:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold!, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"... "I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God."

John 1:29-34

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but who-ever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

John 3:36

Next Chapter >>