

January 16-22, 2023

John 1

“WE HAVE FOUND THE MESSIAH”

Summary: *John 1. Christ is the Word of God—He created all things and was made flesh—John baptizes Jesus and testifies that He is the Lamb of God—John, Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathanael believe in Christ and follow Him.*

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How does pre-mortal life prepare us to serve in mortality?

Those who followed Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ were permitted to come to the earth to experience mortality and progress toward eternal life. Premortal life is referred to in the scriptures. “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified the, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5) “Now the Lord . . . “And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made.” (Doctrine and Covenants 49:17) “. . . And I, the Lord God, had created all the children of men; and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them; and there was not yet flesh upon the earth, neither in the water, neither in the air . . .” (Moses 3:5) We can sense the reality of this principle as we read how two expectant mother’s babies reacted when aged Elisabeth and young Mary greeted each other. “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.” (Luke 1:41-44) Imagine the joy and get a glimpse of

eternity as the spirit testified to them of their motherly mortal missions. Elisabeth’s son became known as John the Baptist, who preceded Jesus and prepared the way for the Messiah. John’s father was Zacharias, a priest in the temple when he received the remarkable vision that his aged and barren wife would bear a son. It parallels the Abraham/Sarah scenario of having a child at their advanced age. Those sons were prepared before earth life for their mortal missions.

How do Yatta, Juda and Utah relate to the “Tops of the Mountains?”

Zacharias, a worthy priest in the temple, his wife Elisabeth, and John the Baptist initially lived in a city of “Judah.” Being priests, they likely lived in a town that was disciplined by priestly rules of cleanliness. “. . . there were 48 Levitical cities which were traditionally set apart, usually four from every tribe, for the exclusive residence of the Levites. Included in these were the six cities of refuge.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) “And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: . . . Now Elisabeth’s full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass,

that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John . . . And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all.”

(Luke 1:39-63) *Ein Kerem* in the fertile watershed hills just outside Jerusalem is the traditional birthplace of John.

However, another small Arab town named Yatta, just outside the hills of Hebron may be a more likely location for their residence. It is farther from Jerusalem and seems a more likely place to hide than Ein Kerem. As mentioned in a previous Old Testament lesson supplement, that town’s name, Yatta, may be a derivation of the word Judah. It also has an archaeological ruin that may be a “Levite” synagogue. It is tempting to give archaeology, plus a written account of “City of Juda,” a little more credence than just tradition. With a linguistic twist we could say that John came from Utah! Utah means “tops of the mountains” and the area of Judah, and specifically, Yatta, is in the tops of the mountains of Israel. John from Judah preceded the era of the Savior’s first coming. Prophets from Utah are preceding the era of the Savior’s second coming.

How contrasting is Zacarias’ martyrdom blood and temple sacrificial blood?

Later, like other holy witnesses, both Zacharias and his son John were killed by wicked people and a priesthood (or priestcraft) that existed among righteous priestly men and women who anticipated the awaited arrival of the Messiah. “That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.”

(Matthew 23:35) “When Herod’s edict went forth to destroy the young children, John was about six months older than Jesus, and came under this hellish edict, and Zacharias caused his mother to take him into the mountains, where he was raised on locusts and wild honey. When his father refused to disclose his hiding place and being the officiating high priest at the Temple that year, was slain by Herod’s order, between the porch and the altar, as Jesus said. John’s head was taken to Herod, the son of this infant murderer, in a charger -- notwithstanding there was never a greater prophet born of a woman than him!” **(Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Five 1842-43 p.261)** There was a righteous branch of priesthood and priestly functions that continued at the time of John’s birth. “The authority of the priesthood was manifest in the days of the Savior’s coming. By virtue of the priesthood held by Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, the angel appeared to him. Simeon, the prophet, blessed the infant Jesus, and the scriptures say that Simeon was filled with the Holy Ghost. So, there were a few still remaining who had faith and the power of the priesthood.” **(Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.3, p.86)**

What eternal priesthood ordinances did Zacharias and John have?

Many Jewish traditions, including clothes and manner of worship that are still used today, reflect temple functions of that time. They are familiar to Latter-day Saints because the symbols in the temple are eternal signs and tokens. In Zacharias’ time, they observed the same ordinances we use today. We have previously discussed temple symbols in Jewish worship such as clothing, robe, sash, apron, shoes removed, and men separated from women in special worship environment. “. . . For our own part we cannot believe that the ancients in all ages were so ignorant of the system of

heaven as many suppose, since all that were ever saved, were saved through the power of this great plan of redemption, as much before the coming of Christ as since; if not, God has had different plans in operation (if we may so express it), to bring men back to dwell with Himself; and this we cannot believe, since there has been no change in the constitution of man since he fell; and the ordinance or institution of offering blood in sacrifice, was only designed to be performed till Christ was offered up and shed His blood -- as said before -- that man might look forward in faith to that time. It will be noticed that, according to Paul, (see **Gal. 3:8**) the Gospel was preached to Abraham. We would like to be informed in what name the Gospel was then preached, whether it was in the name of Christ or some other name. If in any other name, was it the Gospel? And if it was the Gospel, and that preached in the name of Christ, had it any ordinances? If not, was it the Gospel? And if it has ordinances, what were they? . . . From these few facts, we conclude that whenever the Lord revealed Himself to men in ancient days, and commanded them to offer sacrifice to Him, that it was done that they might look forward in faith to the time of His coming and rely upon the power of that atonement for a remission of their sins. And this they have done, thousands who have gone before us, whose garments are spotless, and who are, like Job, waiting with an assurance like his, that they will see Him in the latter day upon the earth, even in their flesh . . . We may conclude, that though there were different dispensations, yet all things which God communicated to His people were calculated to draw their minds to the great object, and to teach them to rely upon God alone as the author of their salvation, as contained in His law." (**Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Two 1834-37 p.59-60**)

What do we know about John directing his followers to Jesus?

John knew who the Savior was. Like all prophets, he bore witness of the Lord and desired to bring people to Him. "Why did John send two of his disciples to Jesus to ask if he were the promised Messiah? (**Matt. 11:2-6; Luke 7:19-23**) Any inference that the Baptist was uncertain or doubtful in his own mind, as to the identity and mission of the Master, is totally unwarranted. In reality, the imprisoned Elias and forerunner of our Lord was using this means to persuade his disciples to forsake him and follow Jesus." (**Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.1, p.251**)

What was the three-fold mission of John?

"There is not a prophet who has borne greater or more important testimony of Jesus than that which fell from John's lips. (**Luke 7:28**) Joseph Smith gave three reasons why John was considered one of the greatest prophets. *First*, he was entrusted with a divine mission of preparing the way before the face of the Lord. Whoever had such a trust committed to him before or since? No man. *Secondly* he was entrusted with the important mission, and it was required at his hands, to baptize the Son of Man. Whoever had the honor of doing that? Whoever had so great a privilege and glory? Whoever led the Son of God into the waters of baptism, and had the privilege of beholding the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove, or rather in the sign of the dove, in witness of that administration? *Thirdly*, John, at that time was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on earth. And holding the keys of power, the Jews had to obey his instructions or be damned, by their own law; and Christ himself fulfilled all righteousness in becoming obedient to the law which he

had given to Moses on the mount, and thereby magnified it and made it honorable, instead of destroying it. The son of Zacharias wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven, and these three reasons constitute him the greatest prophet born of woman. (**Teachings, pp. 275-276.**) (**Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.1, p.262 - p.263**) [Italics added for emphasis]

How was John's mission to turn the people to the Messiah?

The Hebrew the word "turn" is the same word as repent, hence "men turn to God" and sometimes the term is used that "God repents," as Jonah used it; "Who can tell God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" (**Jonah 3:9**) Actually, it is His *turning* to man as man *turns* to Him, giving a great symbolism to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers." (**Joseph Smith—History 1:38, 39, Pearl of Great Price**) John *turned* people back to the light, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." (**Isaiah 9:2**) "For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." (**Isaiah 60:2**) "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." (**John 1:4-5**) "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." (**John 12:46**) John *turned* people away from darkness, "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the

prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." (**Isaiah 42:7**)

John immersed people in water to *turn* them to the "Fountain of Living Waters.", "with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." (**Isaiah 12:3**) "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." (**Isaiah 41:18**) "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (**John 3:5**) "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (**John 7:37-38**) John *turned* people to a new life, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live." (**Isaiah 38:16**) "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore, will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." (**Isaiah 43:4**) "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." (**John 1:4**) "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (**John 3:16**) John *turned* people to anticipate the Lamb of God, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." (**Isaiah 53:7**) "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (**John 1:29**)