

## **John the Baptist Harmonizing the Gospel Accounts**

One method of learning about a character or event is to integrate or harmonize the sequence of events to aid in the observation of the relevant details. In this example, to learn all about John the Baptist, one must integrate all relevant passages of him in the New Testament (Matt 3:1-17; 11:2-19; 14:1-12; 17:2-13; Mark 1:1-11, 14-15; 6:14-32; Luke 1:1-80; 3:1-22; 7:18-35; John 1:6-36; 3:22-36; 5:33-35). However, there is a risk that one must bear in mind, which is the loss of context when various passages are stitched together. As such, this method is an example of another approach of study.

### **Introduction**

A man came, one sent from God, and his name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. (John 1:6-8)

This was the true Light that, coming into the world, enlightens every person. He was in the world, and the world came into being through Him, and yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own people did not accept Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God. (John 1:9-13)

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us; and we saw His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and called out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who is coming after me has proved to be my superior, because He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; God the only Son, who is in the arms of the Father, He has explained Him. (John 1:14-18)

### **Birth**

Since many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting to me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in an orderly sequence, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4)

In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord. And yet they had no child, because Elizabeth was infertile, and they were both advanced in years. (Luke 1:5-7)

Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering. Now an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. Zechariah was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him. (Luke 1:8-12)

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice over his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of fathers back to their children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:13-17)

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Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in her years." (Luke 1:18)

The angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time." (Luke 1:19-20)

And meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple, and he repeatedly made signs to them, and remained speechless. When the days of his priestly service were concluded, he went back home. (Luke 1:21-22)

Now after these days his wife Elizabeth became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, "This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among people." (Luke 1:24-25)

Now at this time Mary set out and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord." (Luke 1:39-45)

And Mary said:

"My soul exalts the Lord,  
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.  
For He has had regard for the humble state of His bond-servant;  
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed. (Luke 1:46-48)

For the Mighty One has done great things for me;  
And holy is His name.  
And His mercy is to generation after generation  
Toward those who fear Him.  
He has done mighty deeds with His arm;  
He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
He has brought down rulers from their thrones,  
And has exalted those who were humble.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
And sent the rich away empty-handed.  
He has given help to His servant Israel,  
In remembrance of His mercy,  
Just as He spoke to our fathers,  
To Abraham and his descendants forever."

Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home. (Luke 1:49-56)

Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her. (Luke 1:57-58)

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And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zechariah, after his father. And yet his mother responded and said, "No indeed; but he shall be called John." And they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, "His name is John." And they were all amazed. (Luke 1:59-63)

And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began speaking in praise of God. And fear came on all those who lived around them; and all these matters were being talked about in the entire hill country of Judea. All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, "What then will this child turn out to be?" For indeed the hand of the Lord was with him. (Luke 1:64-66)

And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,  
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us  
In the house of His servant David—  
Just as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient times—  
Salvation from our enemies,  
And from the hand of all who hate us; (Luke 1:67-71)

To show mercy to our fathers,  
And to remember His holy covenant,  
The oath which He swore to our father Abraham,  
To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies,  
Would serve Him without fear,  
In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. (Luke 1:72-75)

And you, child, also will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways;  
To give His people the knowledge of salvation  
By the forgiveness of their sins, (Luke 1:76-77)

Because of the tender mercy of our God,  
With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,  
To shine on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,  
To guide our feet into the way of peace."

Now the child grew and was becoming strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel. (Luke 1:78-80)

## **Ministry**

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. (Luke 3:1-2)

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And he came into all the region around the Jordan (he beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God – Mark 1:1), preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand – Matt 3:2); as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“The voice of one calling out in the wilderness,  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
Make His paths straight!  
Every ravine will be filled,  
And every mountain and hill will be lowered;  
The crooked will become straight,  
And the rough roads smooth;  
And all flesh will see the salvation of God!’” (Luke 3:3-6; Matt 3:1-3; Mark 1:1-3)

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea was going out to him (and all the region around the Jordan – Matt 3:5), and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey. (Mark 1:4-6; Matt 3:4-6)

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees (the crowds – Luke 3:7) coming for baptism, he said to them, “You offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance; and do not assume that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’; for I tell you that God is able, from these stones, to raise up children for Abraham. And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore, every tree that does not bear good fruit is being cut down and thrown into the fire. (Matt 3:7-10; Luke 3:7-9)

And the crowds were questioning him, saying, “Then what are we to do?” And he would answer and say to them, “The one who has two tunics is to share with the one who has none; and the one who has food is to do likewise.” Now even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they said to him, “Teacher, what are we to do?” And he said to them, “Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.” And soldiers also were questioning him, saying, “What are we to do, we as well?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone, nor harass anyone, and be content with your wages.” (Luke 3:10-14)

This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” And he confessed and did not deny; and this is what he confessed: “I am not the Christ.” (John 1:19-20)

And so they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” (John 1:21)

Then they said to him, “Who are you? Tell us, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” He said, “I am the voice of one calling out in the wilderness, ‘Make the way of the Lord straight,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.” (John 1:19-23)

And the messengers had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, and said to him, “Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” (John 1:24-25)

Now while the people were in a state of expectation and they all were thinking carefully in their hearts about John, whether he himself perhaps was the Christ, (Luke 3:15)

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John responded to them all, saying, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but He is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the straps of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Luke 3:16-17; Matt 3:11-12; Mark 1:7-8; John 1:26-27)

These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing people. (John 1:28)

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him (came from Nazareth in Galilee – Mark 1:9, to be baptized by him – Matt 3:13; Mark 1:9), and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29; Matt 3:13; Mark 1:9)

But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have the need to be baptized by You, and yet You are coming to me?" But Jesus, answering, said to him, "Allow it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. (Matt 3:14-15)

After He was baptized (Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized, and while He was praying – Luke 3:21), Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and settling on Him, and behold, a voice from the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son (You are My beloved Son – Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22), with whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3:16-17; Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:21-22)

"This is He in behalf of whom I said, 'After me is coming a Man who has proved to be my superior, because He existed before me.' And I did not recognize Him, but so that He would be revealed to Israel, I came baptizing in water." And John testified, saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. And I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God." (John 1:29-35)

Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. (John 1:29-37)

After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea; and there He was spending time with them and baptizing. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon, near Salim, because there was an abundance of water there; and people were coming and being baptized - for John had not yet been thrown into prison. (John 3:22-24)

Then a matter of dispute developed on the part of John's disciples with a Jew about purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified - behold, He is baptizing and all the people are coming to Him." John replied, "A person can receive not even one thing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent ahead of Him.' He who has the bride is the groom; but the friend of the groom, who stands and listens to him, rejoices greatly because of the groom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made full. He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:25-30)

"He who comes from above is above all; the one who is only from the earth is of the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. What He has seen and heard, of this He testifies; and no one accepts His testimony. The one who has accepted His testimony has certified that God is true. For He whom God sent speaks the words of God; for He does not give the Spirit sparingly. The Father loves the Son and has entrusted all things to His hand. The one who believes in the Son has eternal life; but the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:31-36)

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So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people. But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him regarding Herodias, his brother's wife, and regarding all the evil things which Herod had done, Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20)

**Prison**

Now after John was taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:14-15)

Now while in prison, John heard about the works of Christ, and he sent word by his disciples, and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or are we to look for someone else?" (Matt 11:2-3; Luke 7:18-20)

At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind. (Luke 7:21)

Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see: those who are blind receive sight and those who limp walk, those with leprosy are cleansed and those who are deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is any person who does not take offense at Me." (Matt 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23)

As these disciples of John were going away, Jesus began speaking to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces! But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written:

'Behold, I am sending My messenger ahead of You,  
Who will prepare Your way before You.'" (Matt 11:7-10; Luke 7:24-25)

"Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt 11:11; Luke 7:28)

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has been treated violently, and violent men take it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. The one who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matt 11:12-15)

When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John. (Luke 7:29-30)

"To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children who sit in the marketplace and call to one another, and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a song of mourning, and you did not weep (mourn – Matt 11:17).' For John the Baptist has come neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a heavy drinker, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' And yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children (deeds – Matt 11:19)." (Luke 7:31-35; Matt 11:11-19)

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At that time Herod the tetrarch (King Herod – Mark 6:14) heard the news about Jesus, and said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he himself has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.” (Matt 14:1-2; Mark 6:14)

But others were saying, “He is Elijah.” And others were saying, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.” But when Herod heard about it, he kept saying, “John, whom I beheaded, has risen!” (Mark 6:15-16)

For Herod himself had sent men and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her. For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” And Herodias held a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death, and could not do so; for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he had been protecting him. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; and yet he used to enjoy listening to him. (Mark 6:17-20; Matt 14:3-5)

An opportune day came when Herod, on his birthday, held a banquet for his nobles and military commanders, and the leading people of Galilee; and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want, and I will give it to you.” And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you, up to half of my kingdom.” And she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.” Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” And although the king was very sorry, because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her. Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about this, they came and carried away his body, and laid it in a tomb. (Mark 6:21-29; Matt 14:6-12)

Now when Jesus heard about John, He withdrew from there in a boat to a secluded place by Himself; and when the people heard about this, they followed Him on foot from the cities. (Matt 14:13)

## **Epilogue**

And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Peter responded and said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If You want, I will make three tabernacles here: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice from the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, “Get up, and do not be afraid.” And raising their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone. (Matt 17:2-7)

When they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.” And His disciples asked Him, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” And He answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things; but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wanted. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.” Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist. (Matt 17:8-13)

You have sent messengers to John, and he has testified to the truth. But the testimony I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and shining, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. (John 5:33-35)