John the Baptist


Abstract

The chief sources for the study of John the Baptist are the New Testament, and one paragraph in the "Antiquities" of Josephus. Neither the Slavonic additions to Josephus' "Jewish War", nor the Mandean literature are of any value, they are both later compilations, and do not draw upon any independent historical sources. John does not appear to have been associated with either the Sadducees or the Pharisees, and certainly not with the Zealots, since his message was not a political one, and he did not advocate violence. Rather, he is to be associated with the non-conformist, sectarian, baptism movement, made up of various, groups active, principally in the Jordan valley, from the 1st Century B.C onwards, and including the Essenes and the Qumran sect. The narrative of John's birth and infancy in Luke 1 was originally compiled separately, and most probably in Hebrew, it is largely legendary in character. It is possible that John, as a youth, was adopted by an Essene group, though this is incapable of proof. John's preaching was grounded in the prophets and in the apocalyptic tradition. He proclaimed the imminent approach of the end of days, and the judgement, when the wicked would be destroyed in a river of fire, while on the righteous would be poured out the blessings of God's holy spirit. The judgement would be executed by "the Coming One", a Messianic figure, in many ways akin to the Son of Man. In, face of the coming judgement, John demanded that men should repent and live righteous lives. His teaching was addressed to Jews, and did not go beyond the boundaries of Jewish ethics. John demanded that his hearers should submit to baptism, which he administered. Proselyte baptism arose rather late to have influenced John, and, in any case it differs from his baptism in several important respects. More helpful are the baptismal rites of sectarian Judaism, especially the Qumran baptism of, initiation, by which a person became a member of the eschatological community of the new covenant. John's baptism is to be understood in terms of such a rite, though there were also important differences. John regarded himself as the eschatological prophet though probably not identifying himself definitely with either the Moses or the Elijah branch of this expectation. He attracted a group of disciples, who shared in his ministry and in his practices of prayer and fasting. John's asceticism was not the result of expulsion from an Essene order, nor can he be regarded as a Nazirite. At was print expression of repentance and humiliation before God. Jesus was originally a follower of John, and submitted to his baptism, but, than he broke away to become an independent preacher. John did not hail Jesus as Messiah at the Baptism, it was only when, he was in prison that this possibility dawned on him. John's hailing of Jesus was a Son of God and Lamb of God cannot be regarded as historical, but it is true that Jesus held a very high opinion of John. During the period when the ministries of John and Jesus overlapped, John went and ministered in Samaria. A survey of Samaritan sectarianism reveals how this was not an impossible or unlikely occurrence, and it can be shown how John's message would find many points of contact. On his return to Peraea, John was arrested by Herod client and imprisoned at Machaerus. John's message, though non-political, could have important political repercussions, and it was as a precaution rather than a punishment that he was put to death. After John's death a group of his disciples continued a separate existence, and they came to regard John as Messiah. The sect was never large nor important, and probably died out in the 3rd Century A.D. There is no evidence that it contributed to the Mandaeen synthesis. Though John's background was the baptism movement, he was nevertheless; an independent and original figure. The chief features of his ministry were its prophetic, roots, its vigour and simplicity, and the primacy of preaching. M research uncovers a picture of John different from details from that found either in Josephus or in the New Testament. In some respects he was a more original and more independent figure than our sources allow but at the same time, on his own merits, he hardly deserved the fame that has been his lot because of his incorporation into the Christian tradition.
John the Baptist (first century C.E.) was a Jewish Nazirite regarded by Christians as being a prophet and forerunner of Jesus Christ. The New Testament describes John as a preacher who baptized his followers in the waters of the Jordan River. Most famously, it is said that he baptized Jesus of Nazareth thereby (according to Christian accounts) fulfilling the biblical prophecy that Elijah would "come first" to usher in the arrival of the Messiah (Malachi 3:1). John the Baptist (also called John the Baptizer) is a prophet of three religions: Christianity, Islam, and Mandaeism. According to the Gospel of Luke 1:36 (And behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren) (KJV), he was a relative of Jesus. That he was a prophet is asserted by the Synoptic Gospels and the Qur'an. He is also commonly referred to as John the Forerunner/Precursor because he was the forerunner of John the Baptist (late 1st century BC – AD 28–36) was a Jewish itinerant preacher in the early 1st century AD. Other titles for John include John the Forerunner in Eastern Christianity, John the Immerser in some Baptist traditions, and the prophet John (Yaḥyā) in Islam. He is sometimes alternatively called John the Baptist. John the Baptist is mentioned by the Roman Jewish historian Josephus and revered as a major religious figure in Christianity, Islam, the Bahá'í Faith, and Mandaeism. He is called