

Week #	253	Series:	The Gospels
Title:	John the Immerser		
Scriptures:	Malachi 3:1; Malachi 4:5-6; Luke 1:15-16; Luke 3:1-3; Matthew 1:1-2; Mark 1:1-3; John 1:19; John 1:20-21; Deuteronomy 18:17-18; II Kings 1:7-8; Matthew 3:4; John 1:22-24; John 1:25; Matthew 3:11a; Matthew 13:6-10; Hebrews 6:1-3; Matthew 3:5-12; Matthew 28:16-20;		

**Notes:**

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**John the Immerser:**

For over 400 years, between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament period, God was silent. No prophets, no angels, no burning bushes or other such miraculous appearances of God. God had promised a deliverer would come to rescue His people, and they were waiting for His appearance. He also promised someone would come *before* the Messiah, to “prepare the way for the Lord.” In fact, one of the last things said by God was this word to Malachi about John.

Malachi 3:1

<sup>1</sup> “Look! I am sending my messenger to clear the way before me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple. Yes, the messenger of the covenant, in whom you take such delight — look! Here he comes,” says *ADONAI-Tzva’ot [Lord of Hosts]*.

Malachi 4:5-6

<sup>5</sup> Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

We talked before about the amazing story of John’s start. In Luke’s book he accounts that the angel Gabriel showed up to Zacharias in the Temple telling him of this son he and his wife would have. A son, John, who would “be filled with the Holy Spirit”. He would also “turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God ... to make ready for the Lord a people prepared” (Luke 1:15-16).

Just like prophets in the Old Testament, John proclaimed God’s Word to God’s people. He did this in order to warn them of judgment regarding their sin, but also to offer hope regarding the ways in which God would fulfill His promise. People had to see their need for forgiveness. They needed to learn identifying with the One who could forgive their sins was necessary for their salvation. John the Immerser would be the final voice from God before the very Word of God – Yeshua – came to speak to and dwell among His people. John the Immerser is mentioned in all four of the Gospels. Luke gives us a little bit of information about when this takes place.

Luke 3:1-3

<sup>1</sup> In the fifteenth year of Emperor Tiberius’ rule; when Pontius Pilate was governor of Y’hudah [Judea], Herod ruler of the Galil [Galilee], his brother Philip ruler of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, <sup>2</sup> with ‘Anan [Annas] and Kayafa [Caiaphas] being the *cohanim g’dolim [high priests]*; the word of God came to Yochanan Ben-



the priesthood. They kept the High Priest’s garments under lock and key and allowed only the priest of their choice to wear the sacred vestments on certain days. Luke specifically mentions two of Rome’s favorite High Priests: Annas and Caiaphas.

Annas, Caiaphas, and the rest of the collaborators who passed for High Priests in those days headed the religious sect of the Sadducees. Luke refers to the sect of Sadducees as the association of the high priests (Acts 5:17). The Sadducees rejected the interpretations of the Pharisees and the traditions of their fathers. They had no love for the sages, the Pharisees, or even each other. Utterly corrupt, sick with political power and clerical greed, the Annas family and the rest of the Sadducees maintained their control in Judea only by means of devout allegiance to Rome and endless intrigues. Throughout much of the first century, Annas held the power behind the Temple and the sect of the Sadducees. In addition to Caiaphas, five of his sons and one grandson held the office of High Priest. His family virtually monopolized the High Priesthood between 6 AD and 66 AD. Annas pulled their strings like a puppet master.

John traveled the Jordan River region of Judea preaching to the people of turning from sin and following God. He often came into conflict with these Sadducees and other Roman sympathizers from Jerusalem.

Matthew says in 1:1-2

- <sup>1</sup> It was during those days that Yochanan [John] the Immerser arrived in the desert of Y’hudah [Judea] and began proclaiming the message,
- <sup>2</sup> “Turn from your sins to God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!”

The desert of Judea (or Judean Wilderness) runs from north of Jericho to the southern end of the Dead Sea. It lies on the western side of the lower Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea area.

All four Gospels quote Isaiah’s prophecy about this man who was to come.

Mark 1:1-3

- <sup>1</sup> The beginning of the Good News of Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of God: <sup>2</sup> **It is written in the prophet Yesha’yahu [Isaiah], “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare the way before you.”** <sup>3</sup> **“The voice of someone crying out: ‘In the desert prepare the way for ADONAI! Make straight paths for him!’”**

This portion is found in Isaiah 40:3. John’s mission was laid out about 700 years before his birth. We talked before about his miraculous conception story. There are two (possibly three) people in the Bible who are called from birth to the Nazarite vow – Samson and John (possibly Samuel). Samson did not take this vow, or the reason for it, very seriously at all. He challenged God’s authority in his daily life all the time, and eventually lost the gift God had given him (his strength) because of his life’s choices. John, on the other hand, took his vow very seriously. He knew from a very young age what God wanted of him – what his mission was.

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John 1:19

**Notes:**

<sup>19</sup> Here is Yochanan's [John's] testimony: when the Judeans sent *cohanim* [priests] and *L'vi'im* [Levites] from Yerushalayim [Jerusalem] to ask him, "Who are you?"

Notice it says these Judeans sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem in the south. These were the very traditionalist groups, like the Sadducees. The Levite tribe was the only tribe not given their own land when it was divided up. Instead, the Levites lived all over in each territory. The ones that live near Jerusalem (in Judea) would have had many of the same traditionalist views as the Sadducees. However, they had all read (and memorized!) the text. They knew there was something different about this man John who came out of the wilderness.

Why was it important that he came out of the wilderness?

John 1:20-21

<sup>20</sup> he was very straightforward and stated clearly, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup> "Then who are you?" they asked him. "Are you Eliyahu [Elijah]?" "No, I am not," he said. "Are you 'the prophet,' the one we're expecting?" "No," he replied.

John is being asked some very interesting questions by this group of men. First, he is asked if he is the Messiah. They knew what to look for from the scripture, and they could see the signs all around them. They knew this Messiah would be very soon. John, of course, answers them that he is not the Messiah. They ask if he is Elijah the prophet. Again he says no. Then they ask if he is "the prophet" that was to come. Again he says no. Who is this "prophet"?

In Deuteronomy Moses warns the people against imitating other nations and falling into idolatry. Moses reminds the people of specific practices they should avoid and how God would judge the people who engage in them. Israel was to be distinct—holy and blameless—gaining their approval from God and not from other nations. Those nations listened to falsehood and engaged in detestable practices. Israel was not to do that.

In order to ensure that Israel would know God's direction, He would raise up for Israel a prophet like Moses.

Deuteronomy 18:17-18

<sup>17</sup> "And the LORD said to me: 'What they have spoken is good. <sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

There were many prophets raised up through the years by God to fulfill what God needed in their lifetime. However, the final Prophet would be Jesus. One of the reasons they were questioning whether he was Elijah was because of the physical description given for John and Elijah.



If you will remember from our study of the Tabernacle, the bread also represents the Word of God. So it is, of course, what God wanted to draw our attention to in mentioning that John ate wild honey. He consumed the Word of God and was then able to 1. Know his mission, and 2. Perform his mission.

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John 1:22-24

<sup>22</sup> So they said to him, "Who are you? — so that we can give an answer to the people who sent us. What do you have to say about yourself?"

<sup>23</sup> He answered in the words of Yesha'yahu [Isaiah] the prophet, "I am

**The voice of someone crying out: 'In the desert make the way of ADONAI straight!'"**

<sup>24</sup> Some of those who had been sent were *P'rushim* [*Pharisees*].

Remember – the Pharisees were from the Galilee region in the north. These men did not believe the same as those from Judea. They were much more charismatic in their beliefs. In fact, John could have very well been a Pharisee himself (though it is never indicated). Jesus, as we know, was a Pharisee.

John 1:25

<sup>25</sup> They asked him, "If you are neither the Messiah nor Eliyahu [Elijah] nor 'the prophet,' then why are you immersing people?"

This is a strange question. Why would it matter that he is immersing people?

Matthew 3:11a

<sup>11</sup> It's true that I am immersing you in water so that you might turn from sin to God;...

John tells them that the reason for him immersing people is because of repentance. He is the one, as Malachi said, that would "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers." This was said in more than just the physical human sense. It is also meant on a spiritual level of bringing the hearts of the people of Israel back to their Father – God. In other words, repentance. That was the message he was to always teach – and part of repentance is cleansing in water, or a mikvah. Jesus performed a mikvah on his disciples during the Passover dinner just before his arrest.

Matthew 13:6-10

<sup>6</sup> He came to Shim'on Kefa [Peter], who said to him, "Lord! You are washing my feet?" <sup>7</sup> Yeshua answered him, "You don't understand yet what I am doing, but in time you will understand." <sup>8</sup> "No!" said Kefa [Peter], "You will never wash my feet!" Yeshua answered him, "If I don't wash you, you have no share with me." <sup>9</sup> "Lord," Shim'on Kefa [Peter] replied, "not only my feet, but my hands and head too!"

<sup>10</sup> Yeshua said to him, "A man who has had a bath doesn't need to wash, except his feet — his body is already clean. And you people are clean, but not all of you."



is that of living a holy and set apart, powerful life for God. God’s ultimate judgment is coming, and each and every one of us is given the same calling as John the Immerser was. We are called to go and tell.

Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>18</sup>Yeshua came and talked with them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup>Therefore, go and make people from all nations into *talmidim [disciples]*, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the *Ruach HaKodesh [Holy Spirit]*, <sup>20</sup>and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember! I will be with you always, yes, even until the end of the age.”

The authority of Almighty God was given to Jesus, and then He gave it to us, with this one purpose – go and tell others, allowing them the opportunity for repentance, and give them the opportunity to be baptized – not only in water, but also with the Holy Spirit. With this baptism of Holy Spirit also comes power – the power we will need to complete our mission in these last days.

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