

John the Baptist

John in the Book of Acts

Introduction

- John's impact is still felt long after his death in A.D. 28.
- His influence is still clear in the Book of Acts and the beginning of the Church Age.

Marking the Commencement of Christ's Ministry

- Shortly after Christ's Ascension (Reese - A.D. 30), the eleven remaining disciples are led to replace Judas's vacated place among them – Acts 1:15-20
- One of the primary requirements was that the new apostle would have followed Christ throughout His earthly ministry – Acts 1:21-22
- The beginning of Christ's public ministry is declared to be "the baptism of John".
 - This is not referring generally to John's ministry, but specifically to Christ's baptism by John.

Marking the Commencement of the Gospel

- According to Peter – Acts 10
 - In God's divine providence, Cornelius is to become the first Gentile convert to the Gospel (Reese – A.D. 39) – Acts 10:1-33
 - Peter stresses that Cornelius already knew about the events of Christ's ministry and this knowledge was accurate and trustworthy – Acts 10:36-41.
 - Geological bounds - these details are said to be known throughout all of Judea and had begun in Galilee, which was nearer to Caesarea than Judea/Jerusalem.
 - Chronological bounds – John's appearance and message are highlighted as the beginning of the Gospel story.
- According to Paul – Acts 13
 - Paul preaches to the Jews in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch on his First Missionary Journey (Reese – A.D. 46) – Acts 13:14-43
 - Paul begins his message with a retelling of Israel's history – Acts 13:17-22
 - Note – this appears to be common in preaching to the Jews, see Stephen's speech in Acts 7.
 - Paul shifts from Old Testament history to the Gospel by Christ's connection to David – Acts 13:23
 - Paul begins the Gospel story with the ministry of John – Acts 13:24-25

Apollos

- An Alexandrian Jew named Apollos appears in Ephesus preaching the doctrines of John but not knowing of Christ (Reese – A.D. 52) – Acts 18:24-25
 - Think about it: Apollos is from Egypt, yet may have heard John preach in Judea, but is now in Asia Minor. That’s a lot of miles to get the Gospel!
 - John Gill comments on Apollos “knowing only the baptism of John” – “which must be understood, not of the ordinance of baptism singly, as administered by John, but of the whole ministry of John; as of that ordinance, so of his doctrine concerning repentance and remission of sins; and concerning Christ that was to come, and concerning his being come, and who he was, whom John pointed at, and taught the people to believe in: but perhaps he might know very little, if anything, of the miracles of Christ, or of his death and resurrection from the dead, and the benefits and effects thereof; and of the pouring out of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, and the light and knowledge which were communicated thereby.”
- Paul being absent, Aquila and Priscilla disciple Apollos and he becomes a mighty preacher of the Gospel – Acts 18:26-28

Disciples in Ephesus

- Paul returns to Ephesus on his Third Missionary Journey (Reese – A.D. 53) – Acts 19:1
- Here he encounters a group of followers of John’s teachings – Acts 19:1
 - It is doubtful that they really had personally heard John or were baptized by him for three reasons: (1) time passed, (2) distance from Judea (about 600 miles), (3) ignorance of John’s primary message.
 - I think they were baptized in anticipation of *a messiah* but not *the Messiah*.
 - It could also be that by this point John’s baptism had been corrupted from a symbol of repentance to a display of piety.
- After Paul explains the truth of John’s baptism and the faith if required, these twelve men are all baptized correctly – Acts 19:4-5