

By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is Vice President of the ABC/NYS Board of Mission.

John The Baptizer

The good news of Jesus the Christ begins with John the Baptizer, emerging from the wilderness with a call to repentance for the forgiveness of sins. It is John who is tasked with preparing the way for the coming Messiah.

And so I wonder: What was John's life like growing up, born for this specific purpose? It must have been a favorite story told to him by his parents from the time he was very little. How he was a miracle sent by God. How the angel of God came to his dad in the temple and told him he was going to have a son, and because he asked the angel how this could possibly happen, the angel tied his tongue until after John's circumcision, the covenantal obligation, performed on the eighth day after his birth in accordance with the Law.



After all, his dad was *Zechariah* - one of the priests who served in the temple. How could *Zechariah of all people* not believe that the angel of the Lord might speak to him as he was performing his duties in the temple? And how could he

By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is Vice President of the ABC/NYS Board of Mission.

John The Baptizer

The good news of Jesus the Christ begins with John the Baptizer, emerging from the wilderness with a call to repentance for the forgiveness of sins. It is John who is tasked with preparing the way for the coming Messiah.

And so I wonder: What was John's life like growing up, born for this specific purpose? It must have been a favorite story told to him by his parents from the time he was very little. How he was a miracle sent by God. How the angel of God came to his dad in the temple and told him he was going to have a son, and because he asked the angel how this could possibly happen, the angel tied his tongue until after John's circumcision, the covenantal obligation, performed on the eighth day after his birth in accordance with the Law.



After all, his dad was *Zechariah* - one of the priests who served in the temple. How could *Zechariah of all people* not believe that the angel of the Lord might speak to him as he was performing his duties in the temple? And how could he

not believe the words of that angel, *knowing* that God had performed so many miracles for the salvation of his people throughout the generations? And yet he questioned, and because he questioned God had to prove his power once again, to this priest accountable to faith of God's people.

And John's parents were old, *very* old, not like his cousin Jesus' mom who was very young. But miraculously, he was told, they *both* were conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit of God!

Yes, Thanksgiving happened every day for Zechariah and Elizabeth as they raised their son in the way of their faith, celebrating the somber holidays along with the joyous ones, in gratefulness and obedience, just as God commanded. With love and grace they raised their son, a blessed and cherished treasure from God.

But as he grew John saw the world as wicked and harsh. Born into a family of priests, he was surrounded by those who were responsible for encouraging the faith of the people and teaching the Law of Moses. But he began to see that their lives betrayed a false piety; serving in the temple for the glory of God, yet their hearts were hard and their enforcement of the Law was rigid and detached. John sees them as a *brood of vipers* (Luke 3:7) whose intent is to tear the flesh and devour those whom they were sent to nurture and bless.

And so the story of *Jesus* begins with *John's call to repentance for the forgiveness of sins*, as he prepares the way *with his life* for the one who would *also give his life* to prove *eternal* life through belief and faithfulness to the One true God of the universe.

John's job was to baptize with water, preparing the way for Jesus who would baptize with the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of the ancient prophecy foretold by the prophets: "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my Spirit." (Joel 2:28-29)

Thus the advent for the Messiah begins: *O come O come Emmanuel, and random captive Israel who mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear - rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel and comfort thee O Israel.*

Amen.

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Image: Giovanni Battista Gaulli: The Preaching of St. John the Baptist.Circa 1690.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org>. File: Baciccio - The Preaching of St John the Baptist - WGA01117.jpg

not believe the words of that angel, *knowing* that God had performed so many miracles for the salvation of his people throughout the generations? And yet he questioned, and because he questioned God had to prove his power once again, to this priest accountable to faith of God's people.

And John's parents were old, *very* old, not like his cousin Jesus' mom who was very young. But miraculously, he was told, they *both* were conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit of God!

Yes, Thanksgiving happened every day for Zechariah and Elizabeth as they raised their son in the way of their faith, celebrating the somber holidays along with the joyous ones, in gratefulness and obedience, just as God commanded. With love and grace they raised their son, a blessed and cherished treasure from God.

But as he grew John saw the world as wicked and harsh. Born into a family of priests, he was surrounded by those who were responsible for encouraging the faith of the people and teaching the Law of Moses. But he began to see that their lives betrayed a false piety; serving in the temple for the glory of God, yet their hearts were hard and their enforcement of the Law was rigid and detached. John sees them as a *brood of vipers* (Luke 3:7) whose intent is to tear the flesh and devour those whom they were sent to nurture and bless.

And so the story of *Jesus* begins with *John's call to repentance for the forgiveness of sins*, as he prepares the way *with his life* for the one who would *also give his life* to prove *eternal* life through belief and faithfulness to the One true God of the universe.

John's job was to baptize with water, preparing the way for Jesus who would baptize with the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of the ancient prophecy foretold by the prophets: "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my Spirit." (Joel 2:28-29)

Thus the advent for the Messiah begins: *O come O come Emmanuel, and random captive Israel who mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear - rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel and comfort thee O Israel.*

Amen.

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Image: Giovanni Battista Gaulli: The Preaching of St. John the Baptist.Circa 1690.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org>. File: Baciccio - The Preaching of St John the Baptist - WGA01117.jpg