

The Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist)

Angels announced his miraculous birth

(Art: Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness, circa 1635, Jose Leonardo)



Yahya (John the Baptist) called everyone to repent – Surah 42:25

Yahya ibn Zakariyya (John the son of Zechariah) is John the Baptist in English. The Qur'an 3:39 states that *'God gives you (Zechariah) news of John, confirming a Word from God. He will be noble and chaste, a prophet, one of the righteous. We said: 'John hold on to the Scripture firmly.' While he was still a boy, 'We' granted him wisdom, tenderness from 'Us' and purity. He was devout, kind to his parents, not domineering or rebellious.'* Prophet Yahya, (John the Baptist), is regarded as a bridge between Islam and Christian beliefs. Both traditions respect him as rightly guided, and among the company of the righteous.

John the Baptist was the forerunner to announce the coming of a very important prophet.

John the Baptist in the desert,
1650, by Cristofano Allori



John the Baptist is mentioned 5 times in the Qur'an as follows:

Surah 3:39-41 – *'confirming a word from Allah, a master, chaste (unmarried), and righteous prophet.'* Zakariyya asked for a sign that his son's miraculous birth to his aged wife would happen. Allah gave him a sign that he would not speak until the boy was born. His birth was miraculous.

Surah 6:85 – Yahya the righteous prophet. Both his father Zakariyya, and Yahya are listed in this surah as prophets given to *'Believers who do not cloak their faith with wickedness and are securely guided.'* Those who love righteousness love the message of Yahya and be rightly guided.

*St John the Baptist, by
Joseph Edward
Nuttgens &
Gilbert Sheedy*

1950



Surah 19:5-15 – *Zakariyya, Yahya's father received a sign, he was unable to speak until the birth of his son Yahya, because he doubted Allah's promise of a son. He was humble and reverent. Peace was upon Yahya from the day he was born until he died, and the day he was resurrected alive.* In this surah Yahya was told 'to take the book with power'.

The holy books in existence at that time were the Torah, Zabur and the Old Testament that's in the Holy Bible. An ancient copy was discovered in 1947 in Qumran by the Bedouin shepherd, Muhammad Ed Dib (www.bedouinshepherd.com).

The reference to the book with power would have been the Torah. The Qur'an mentions it, and highly regards the acts of prophets like



Musa (Moses) who wrought many powerful miracles during the challenge to Pharaoh to let his enslaved people go to the promised land. These powerful miracles were recorded in the Torah.

Surah 21:90 - Yahya was given by Allah to Elizabeth and Zakariyya in answer to Zakariyya's prayer, and Zakariyya, Elizabeth, and Yahya tried to outdo each other in good deeds.

John the Baptist (Yahya) preceded Jesus (Isa – son of Maryam) and called the people of Israel to ‘repentance’ to prepare their hearts for the coming of the promised Messiah – Surah 3:45-47.

The Angel instructed Maryam to call her son Isa Al Masih – Jesus the Messiah. His name means Saviour and Messiah as given by Allah. The title Saviour means the One who will save people from their sins. Messiah means the anointed One because he was the chosen one, and the returning One on the day of Judgement.

This was predicted in Malachi 4:5-6; *‘Behold I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord, He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to the*



*John the Baptist Baptizing
Jesus, by Greg K. Olsen*

fathers. So that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.'

Jesus confirmed that this prophecy was about John the Baptist in Matthew 11:12-19: *'From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent 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. He who has ears to hear let him hear. But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children playing in the market calling out to other children and saying, we played the flute for you, and you did not dance, we played the dirge, and you did not mourn. John the Baptist said, 'As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is*



*The Preaching of St. John the Baptist,
1566, by Pieter Bruegel the Elder*

coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove his sandals: He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and He will thoroughly clear the threshing floor, and He will gather His wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’ Matthew 3:11-12.

The people of Israel, at the time of Yahya were hard-hearted, deaf, and blind. They had been colonized by the cruel Romans. They felt weak and helpless. They had prayed for deliverance, but no military or political deliverer had come. They were disillusioned and hoped that another prophet like Moses would come.

John's message called the people of Israel to humble themselves by being baptized in the river Jordan, to open their spiritual ears and eyes for the coming Messiah. He prophesied about a 'straight path' to God (Allah). Those from Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the district around Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan.

This is the same response we need to make today. We are all sinful people who have done evil things. We need to obey the call of God (Allah) to repent, and to ask for forgiveness according to Surah 42:25: *'Allah is the One who accepts repentance from his servants and forgives sins and He knows all that we do.'*

In the 'Taste and See' story (www.thepilgrimage.net.nz) there's a helpful repentance prayer.



Limestone relief of John the Baptist from Zakynthos, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Greece.

*'Almighty God, please forgive me of my sin
and cleanse me from all the evil things I have
done, so I may be guided by your Spirit on the
right path to following the teaching of the
Word of God during my pilgrimage on earth.'*

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