

CHAPTER THREE

The Purpose of the Messiah

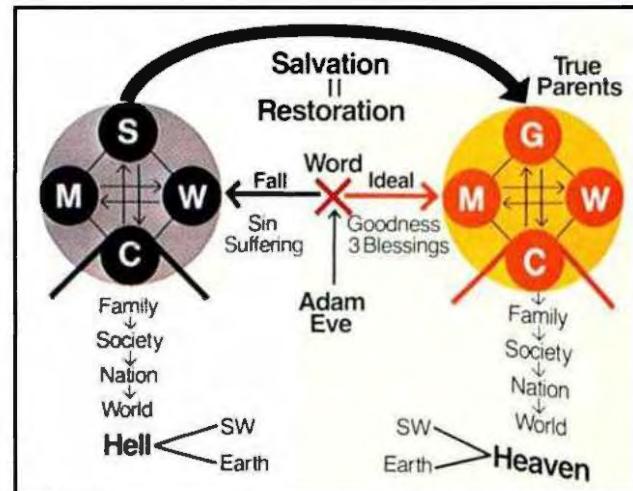
I. GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE DISPENSATION FOR SALVATION

Each person is created as a child of God. When he perfects himself and becomes an embodiment of goodness, he lives in the Kingdom of God on earth and in the spirit world. God's purpose in making the Creation is to feel joy through experiencing his children living in the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the world of God's love and Heart. It is established through and based on the fulfillment of the Three Blessings. However, because of the Fall of the first ancestors, man became the embodiment of sin and evil, and ever since has lived in suffering both on earth and in the spirit world, and the Purpose of the Creation has not been realized. Would God abandon his original Ideal for the Creation and leave it unrealized? No, he would not.

As God says in Isaiah 46:11, “ ‘I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed and I will do it.’ ” God will surely accomplish his purpose. The God of love could not leave fallen man in such a state, for man was created as His child. Instead, God has been working for man's salvation.

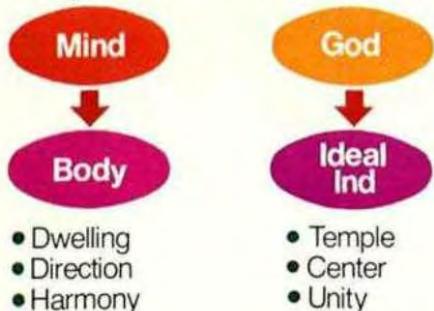
Then what is salvation? Salvation is *restoration*: to save a dying person is to restore him to his normal state; to save a drowning person is to rescue him and restore him to the state he was in before he began to drown. God's salvation of man means God's restoration of fallen and sinful man to his original state of goodness—to the position where he can fulfill the Purpose of the Creation.

Thus, God's purpose in salvation is to restore an individual to the sinless state that God originally created, raise



Ideal Individual

1. Body / Mind ≡ Ideal Ind. / God



Ideal Individual

- 1** Body / Mind ≡ Ideal Ind. / God
- 2** No Religious Life Needed
- 3** No Prayer Needed
- 4** No Savior Needed

him to be an ideal individual, establish an ideal family centered on that individual, and then establish an ideal society, nation, and world, based on that ideal family.

II. THE FULFILLMENT OF THE DISPENSATION FOR SALVATION IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PURPOSE OF THE CREATION

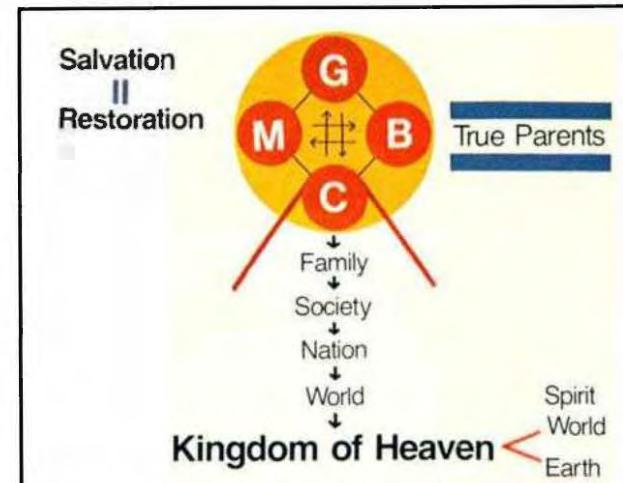
If a person were to become such an ideal individual, namely a restored person who has realized the First Blessing, what would he be like? This perfect individual would have the same relation to God as the body of an individual has to his mind. The mind dwells in the body, and the body acts as the mind directs it. Similarly, a perfect person is a temple of God, and God dwells in his mind. God becomes the center of his thoughts and actions—the center of his life. Such a person of perfected character achieves the ideal of unity with God, just as our body achieves harmony with our mind. This is expressed in 1 Corinthians 3:16, which says, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" and John 14:20 says, "'In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.'"

If Adam and Eve had become such perfect individuals, then in their life in the Garden of Eden would they ever have needed prayer, a religious life, or a savior? Why would prayer have been necessary for those who were continuously living and communicating directly with God? If a religious life is a life of faith in which fallen man desperately gropes in darkness in search of the God he lost, then why should a perfect person who lives his daily life as a temple of God have need of any form of worship? Thus, if man had not fallen in the Garden of Eden, there would be no churches or Bibles, no sermons, no all-night prayer vigils, no revival meetings, nor the like. All each person would need to do is live as the embodiment of goodness, attending God in his everyday life. Just as those who are not drowning have no need of a rescuer, perfected people, who are sinless, have no need of a savior.

Then, if man had established the ideal family, fulfilling God's Second Blessing, what would such a family have become? If Adam and Eve had become husband and wife embodying goodness, giving birth to children embodying goodness, this family would have become the origin of a sinless tribe, society, nation, and world. With this family, the Kingdom of Heaven would have been established, and from that family an ideal society of one world family would have developed, with one set of *true parents* (the first man and

woman) and endless generations of sinless descendants growing in prosperity. God's dispensation for salvation is to develop such heavenly individuals, people who have realized God's Three Blessings and have thus established the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is for this purpose of salvation that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, as savior to this world. Thus, the *Messiah* must stand before God as the origin of all ideal individuals and must establish the ideal family, which is the family that fulfills the Purpose of the Creation and is the place where God's love can dwell. He must then also establish the ideal nation and world, thereby realizing the originally intended Kingdom of Heaven on earth, fulfilling the Purpose of the Creation. This is the purpose for which the Messiah comes.



III. THE DISPENSATION OF SALVATION THROUGH THE CROSS

A. The Crucifixion of Jesus

God truly loved his chosen people, the Israelites, who were to be the foundation for the coming of the Messiah. Many times God prophesied the coming of the Messiah, and he even warned the people to remain alert and wait for him. God even prepared a great witness, John the Baptist, to testify to the Messiah. In fact, the nation of Israel was passionately longing for the Messiah to arrive.

Tragically, however, the much-prepared chosen people failed to recognize the Messiah when he came. The Son of God cried out that he was the Son of God, but his words fell on deaf ears. He was never understood; he was branded a blasphemer and ultimately crucified. Ironically, the pagan rulers of that age knew of Jesus' innocence (Lk 23:14-16; Jn 18:38; Mt 27:19,23; Mk 15:10-14), while those who judged him guilty were his own people and the leaders of Judaism, whom God himself had nurtured and prepared for so long. They were even anxious to send Jesus to the cross. Why?

Christians have traditionally believed that Jesus' death on the cross was predestined as the original plan of God. No, it was not! It was a grievous error to crucify Jesus Christ. The crucifixion of Jesus was the consequence of the sheer ignorance of the people of Israel concerning God's dispensation. God's will was clearly for the chosen people to accept and believe in Jesus (Jn 6:29, 10:37,38) and receive salvation. The people of Israel did not understand who Jesus of Nazareth was, for even as he hung dying on the cross they mocked him, shouting that they would believe in him as savior only if he

came down from the cross. The Bible points out that "he came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (Jn 1:11); and the Apostle Paul testified that "none of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8).

Christians today do not have a clear understanding of the truth behind the historic events that took place in Jesus' time. If God's will for man's salvation could be accomplished only by the Crucifixion, why did he spend so much time preparing a chosen people? Was it not because he did not want to hand his Son over to faithless people?

In the garden at Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, ". . . My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me. . . . My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. . . ." (Mt 26:38,39). Jesus uttered this prayer, not once, but three times. Many Christians, who believe that Jesus' mission was to bring salvation by dying on the cross, explain that Jesus uttered this prayer out of human weakness or frailty. But could Jesus Christ, the savior of mankind, utter any prayer out of weakness?

The first Christian martyr, Stephen, and many of the martyrs who followed, never prayed from such weakness. Did they ever ask, "Let this cup pass from me," as they were dying? How can we say that Jesus was weaker than these martyrs? Especially if the purpose of his coming was to save all mankind by dying on the cross, could there be any reason that he would pray to escape from it?

This prayer of Jesus was not a selfish or timid prayer, uttered out of fear of dying. If the crucifixion had been the very way for Jesus to save mankind, he would gladly have died on the cross thousands of times over. Jesus was beset with anxiety when he thought about his mission as the Messiah, which was to realize God's Purpose for the Creation on earth. His heart was so troubled because he knew how sorrowful God would feel if the completion of the dispensation for salvation were delayed. Jesus also foresaw the sufferings and bloodshed of his disciples and followers, the Christians, who would have to follow his path of suffering and the cross. He also anguished over the troubled future that would come to the people of Israel if they rejected him. With all of this in mind, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus uttered a last desperate prayer to God, repeatedly pleading that God let him remain on earth, even in those hopeless circumstances, so that he could continue his mission and change the hearts of the people to the point where they would accept him.

If Jesus' death on the cross was predestined by God, then why did Jesus say to Judas Iscariot, his betrayer, ". . . woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have

The Reasons Jesus Prayed not to be Crucified

(Matthew 26: 38-39)

- 1** Concern for God
- 2** Concern for his followers
- 3** Concern for Israel

been better for that man if he had not been born' " (Mt 26:24); and how can we explain Jesus' crying out on the cross, " '... My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' " (Mt 27:46). If the crucifixion were truly God's original will for Jesus, then Jesus should have felt resounding joy on the cross, having successfully completed his mission.

B. The Extent of Salvation Available through the Cross and the Purpose of the Second Coming of Christ

Death on the cross was not the mission that God had originally intended for Jesus, his Son. Rather, it became God's painful secondary dispensation necessitated by the faithlessness of the people of Israel. What would have happened if all the people of Israel had believed in Jesus and had welcomed him, loved him, and united with him? Most certainly, complete salvation would have been realized. In other words, Jesus would have completely established the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, the place where the Purpose of the Creation has been realized. God's world would have been realized—the world in which all people believe in and follow the Son of God. The people of Israel would have become the glorious core of heaven. The Jewish and Christian worlds would never have been divided, nor would the early Christians have had to endure any of their terrible sufferings. Furthermore, because the Messiah would have completed his mission, there would be no reason for a Second Coming.

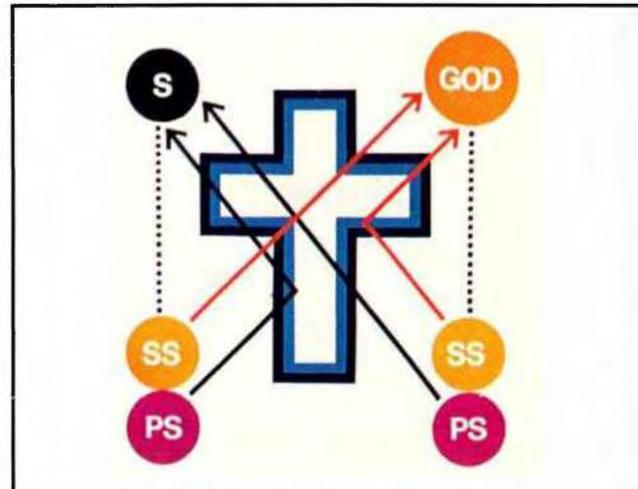
Understanding the question of salvation in this light, we can see that Jesus' crucifixion was a secondary course of salvation and provided only *spiritual salvation*. When the people came to the point of completely disbelieving Jesus and abandoning him, God had to pay the price for the sinful lack of faith of the Israelites and all mankind by giving the life of his only Son to Satan as a ransom. As a result, Satan destroyed Jesus' physical body by nailing him to the cross, and Jesus' blood on the cross became the price for the redemption of mankind.

By resurrecting the crucified Jesus, God opened up a way of spiritual salvation, a way to a realm free from satanic invasion. God's victory was not the crucifixion, but Jesus' resurrection. As a result of the crucifixion, the physical selves of mankind are still subject to satanic invasion, even though they were meant to be saved by man's believing in Jesus and being engrafted to him (Rom 11:17). Only man's spirit can attain salvation, by the condition of participating in the resurrection through man's belief in the victorious Christ. Our body still awaits redemption (Rom 8:23).

Thus, even after Jesus' appearance on earth, the world continues to suffer under the power of Satan, and sin merci-

If the People of Israel Had Followed Jesus

- 1** Kingdom of Heaven Established on Earth
- 2** No Jewish—Christian Split
- 3** No Persecution of Christians
- 4** No Second Coming



lessly persists in the bodies of people everywhere. The Apostle Paul lamented, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? . . . I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin" (Rom 7:24,25). As a saint, Paul was devout and in the full grace of the Lord, but his flesh continued to be oppressed by sin. This confession is not limited to Paul alone, but applies to every person alive. This is the reason that the Bible teaches us to "pray constantly" (1 Thess 5:17)—to protect us from satanic invasion. Also, 1 John 1:10 says, "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar . . .," telling us that mankind is still under the bondage of original sin. There is no one who has been cleansed of original sin. It is for this reason that the Messiah must appear again on earth, to liquidate our sins completely and establish the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, fulfilling God's Purpose for the Creation.

Two Kinds of Prophecy Concerning the Messiah



C. Two Kinds of Prophecy Concerning the Messiah

If Jesus' death on the cross was not essential for the fulfillment of his messianic purpose, then why did Isaiah 53 predict the Messiah's suffering and death? Here we must remind ourselves that there are also verses in the Bible which prophecy that the Messiah will come as the Son of God and the King of kings and bring about the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. These prophecies appear in Isaiah 9, 11, and 60, in other verses in the Old Testament, and in Luke 1:31-33.

When God first created man, he created him to grow to perfection only by man's completing a share of responsibility. Man can either accomplish his responsibility, as God wants him to do, or to the contrary, he can fail to accomplish it. Accordingly, it was necessary that God give two kinds of prophecies regarding the fulfillment of His Will.

It is God's responsibility to send the Messiah, but it is man's responsibility to believe in him. Unfortunately, by not accepting Jesus, the Israelites failed to fulfill their responsibility; they did not fulfill God's primary prophecies for the Messiah's coming, which are in Isaiah 9, 11, and 60 and Luke 1:31-33, but, to the contrary, carried out the alternative or secondary prophecy of the suffering Messiah, in Isaiah 53.

IV. JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE RETURN OF ELIJAH

A. The Messiah and Elijah

At this point, there is one matter which we must look into regarding God's dispensation of having Jesus go the way of the cross. God had repeatedly prophesied to the chosen people

about the coming of the Messiah, and the chosen people themselves longed for him and cherished the promise of his coming. How could God send the Messiah in such a way that the chosen people were unable to recognize him? Was it God's will that they not recognize and receive the Messiah? Or did the people fail to recognize him despite God's clearly showing them how he was to come?

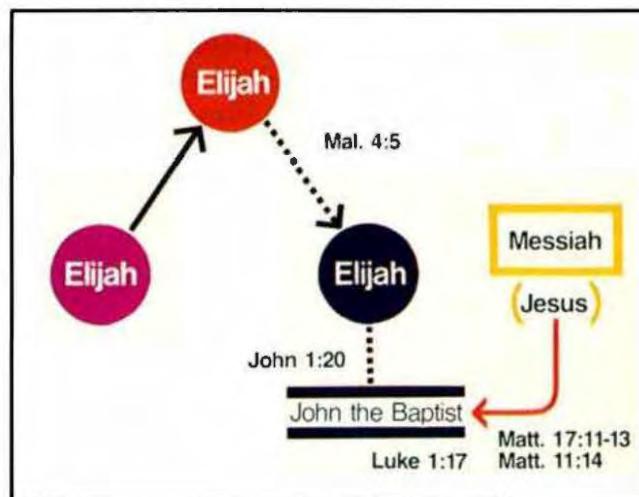
In order to find the answers to these questions, let us first examine the second coming of Elijah. In Malachi, the last book of prophecy in the Old Testament, it says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. . . ." (Mal 4:5,6). The "great and terrible day" that is referred to is the time when the Messiah comes, and thus this prophecy shows that before the Messiah comes, Elijah must first return.

Elijah was a great prophet of Israel who lived nine hundred years before Jesus. There is record of his having ascended into heaven on a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11). The Israelites' longing for the Messiah was actually intensely focused on the arrival of the historical prophet, Elijah. This was because the Old Testament did not clearly foretell when the Messiah would come, but did clearly indicate that Elijah would precede him.

It was under these circumstances that Jesus appeared, proclaiming himself the Messiah. He told the Jewish people that he was the Son of God—this to the very people who thought that he was simply a young man from Nazareth. They had not yet heard any news of Elijah's coming, so they asked, "How could Jesus of Nazareth be the Son of God?"

Thus, when Jesus' disciples went out among the people of Israel, testifying to Jesus, the people doubted that Jesus was the Messiah and challenged the disciples by asking where Elijah was, since Elijah was to precede the Messiah. So Jesus' disciples turned around and asked Jesus, ". . . then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" (Mt 17:10). Jesus replied, ". . . Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. . . ." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist" (Mt 17:10-13).

Jesus understood the meaning of the scribes' important question and indicated that John the Baptist was the second coming of Elijah. Jesus' own disciples could easily believe this, but could the Israelites bring themselves to believe it? John the Baptist did not come directly from heaven, and he himself even denied he was Elijah (Jn 1:21). Jesus himself knew that the people would not easily accept it, saying, ". . .



if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come' " (Mt 11:14).

Jesus said that John the Baptist was the Elijah whom the people had been long awaiting, but since John himself denied it, whom would the people of Israel believe? Naturally, it would depend on how these two men were viewed by the people of that time.

First, how did Jesus appear to the Israelites of the time? Jesus was an obscure young man raised in a humble carpenter's home and was not known to be experienced in spiritual disciplines. Yet Jesus proclaimed himself "lord of the sabbath" (Mt 12:8), was known as one who was abolishing the law (Mt 5:17), was the friend of tax collectors and sinners, and was known as a glutton and a drunkard (Mt 11:19). He put himself on an equal footing with God (Jn 14:9-11) and told the people that they had to love him more than anyone else (Mt 10:37). Because of this, the Jewish leaders went so far as to claim that Jesus was working by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons (Mt 12:24).

On the other hand, how did the Israelites of that time see John the Baptist? He was the son of a prominent family, and the miracles surrounding his conception and birth were known throughout the country Lk 1:5-66). When he was older, he lived on locusts and honey in the wilderness, and thus, in their eyes, he led an exemplary life as a man of faith. In fact, John was held in such high regard that high priests, as well as the common people, even asked if he were the Messiah (Lk 3:15, Jn 1:20).

Under these circumstances, the people of Israel tended to believe more in John the Baptist, who asserted he was not Elijah, than in Jesus, who told them that John the Baptist was Elijah. The people decided that Jesus' view of John as Elijah was untrustworthy, thinking that Jesus said this only to make believable his claims about himself.

B. The Mission of John the Baptist

Then why did Jesus say that John the Baptist was Elijah? As Luke 1:17 indicates, John the Baptist came with the mission of Elijah. The people of Israel, who believed the words of the Old Testament literally, assumed that the original Elijah would actually come down from heaven. But God chose John and sent him with the mission of Elijah.

John the Baptist himself declared that he was "sent before" the Messiah (Jn 3:28), to "make straight the way of the Lord" (Jn 1:23). Being a man with such a unique and important mission, John, by his own wisdom, should have known that he himself was Elijah.

Many of the chief priests and of the people of Israel who

Jesus' Image versus John the Baptist's Image

Jesus	John
1 From humble family	1 From prominent family
2 Not ascetic	2 Miracles at birth
3 Startling proclamations	3 Ascetic
4 Lower-class associates	4 Supported by Jewish leaders
5 Denounced by Jewish leaders	

respected John the Baptist thought that he might even be the Messiah. Therefore, if John had proclaimed that he was Elijah and had testified that Jesus was the Messiah, the Jewish people of that time would have been able to recognize and receive Jesus, thereby obtaining salvation. Then Jesus' family background and seeming lack of experience in spiritual disciplines would not have mattered. However, because of his ignorance of God's dispensation, John insisted that he was *not* Elijah. This was the main factor that prevented the people of Israel from coming to Jesus.

In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist said that he baptized with water, but that the one who would come after him (the Messiah) would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire; he said that he was not even worthy to untie the thong of his sandal (Jn 1:27). In John 1:33, John said, "I myself did not know him; but he [God] who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit [Christ].'" And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.' " Thus God gave John the Baptist a direct revelation that Jesus was the Son of God. Although John did initially fulfill his mission to testify to Jesus Christ, regretfully he did not testify to Jesus throughout his life.

After meeting the Messiah, everyone should believe in him and serve him throughout their lives. This was especially true for John the Baptist, who came with the mission of Elijah, which was to prepare the Messiah's way (Lk 1:76). Therefore, John should have served and attended Jesus as one of his disciples. John's father was told of his son's mission when he was born and he prophesied, saying, "...And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people . . ." (Lk 1:76,77). However, we cannot find any instance in the Bible where John the Baptist actually served Jesus.

Just before John the Baptist died in prison, having lived without fulfilling his mission to serve Jesus, he began to have doubts concerning his life and Jesus and sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, "...Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Mt 11:3). This verse proves beyond any shadow of a doubt that John did not believe in Jesus and failed to serve him.

Jesus was indignant at such a question and answered quite judgmentally, "...blessed is he who takes no offense at me" (Mt 11:6), indicating that despite Israel's great respect for John, John had already failed his mission.

Jesus also said, "...among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is

least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he' " (Mt 11:11). If one were the greatest born of women, surely he should be equally great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Then how could John the Baptist, who was born as the greatest in history, be less than the least in heaven?

God sent John the Baptist as the greatest of prophets, for he was to serve the Messiah and testify to him before all the people. But he was a dismal failure in fulfilling his responsibility. Matthew 11:12 also explains this, saying, " 'From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force.' " If John the Baptist had served Jesus well, fulfilling his responsibility, he would have become Jesus' chief disciple; but because he failed, Peter, who made the greatest effort among Jesus' disciples, became the leader of the Twelve.

In order to prepare the people of Israel to have faith in Jesus, God gave many testimonies to John's parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, who were representatives of the Judaism of that time. God continually worked miracles so that the people would accept that he was directly working in the conception and birth of John the Baptist. Undoubtedly, John was told by his parents about his being related to Jesus, and, as mentioned above, he must have received many revelations directly from God.

Yet, despite all of this preparation, John the Baptist failed because of his disbelief and ignorance. Moreover, his personal ignorance and disbelief led not only to his individual loss, but also to the disbelief of most of the people and ultimately to Jesus' crucifixion.