

What a remarkable time in which to live it must have been when both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ walked the Earth and spoke of the wonderful Kingdom of God that was at hand! In John and Jesus you have the two greatest prophets that ever walked upon the Earth. In John is the last of the Prophets of God pointing towards the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and in Jesus you have the One Who was the fulfillment of the Law of Moses, the One in Whose blood the New Covenant was to be established.

John the Baptist appears at the beginning of John's Gospel (and the other Gospels) and then falls to the background because he is a link or a bridge between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He is prominent at the beginning of the Gospel because he is part of the roots of the Gospel. The roots of Jesus go back into eternity itself (John 1:1), and John's roots go back to the Old Testament. John is like one of those great tree roots that protrudes above the ground a few feet out from the trunk of the tree.

Over and over we will see in the *Gospel of John* how John the writer explains Jesus in terms of the Old Testament. Jesus did not appear on the scene of history without historical preparation. God had been at work in Israel for two thousand years, and even before that, putting in place a historical backdrop that would make Jesus' life and ministry more intelligible.

John the Baptist is a root partly under ground in the Old Testament and partly exposed in the New Testament. He has a foot in both worlds – a prophet something like Elijah (but not Elijah reincarnated [John 1:21]), and a voice crying that the long-expected Messiah had come. It was John the Baptist who declared Jesus to be “***The Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world***” (John 1:29 [RSV]). To as many as receive Him, who believe on His name (John 1:12), their sins are taken away (John 1:29; 1 John 3:5), the wrath of God is removed (John 3:36; 1 John 2:2) and they are made the children of God (John 1:12) and given eternal life (John 3:16).