

The Forgotten Jesus Podcast

S4E12

Was John An Essene and The Leper Messiah - (Matthew 3:1-7)

Description – Today we finally drill down to look at both sides of the argument of John the Baptist possibly being an Essene

We've been discussing the Essene community over the past two episodes, and the cultural and religious backgrounds of the nation.

What were the Messianic Miracles that the people were looking for the Messiah to do?

1. The healing of a man born blind
 - a. Had to be someone born blind, never had their eyesight. Not someone who had sight, but then lost it, and had it restored. This was a person who had never seen.
2. The healing of someone with leprosy.
 - a. Only two examples of this in the Bible:
 - i. Moses's sister Mariam
 - ii. Naaman, who wasn't even a Jew.
3. The casting out of a demon from a deaf / mute man.
 - a. Protocol when you were casting out a demon was for you to have the demon name itself, but how can you do that when someone is deaf and cant hear, and mute who can't speak?
4. Resurrection after someone was dead for 3 days.

The Jewish people believed the Messiah would also fulfill the role of the Leper Messiah.

Where do we get this from? **Isaiah 53:4-5**

⁴Yet he himself bore our sicknesses, and he carried our pains; but we in turn regarded him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and we are healed by his wounds.

So when the Messiah comes, the suffering servant, He would take on our sickness, our pains.

Remember, not only are the teachings and miracles of Jesus inspired, but even the locations are inspired.

Look at **Matthew 8:1-4**

When he came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. ²Right away a man with leprosy came up and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

³ Reaching out his hand, Jesus touched him, saying, "I am willing; be made clean." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴ Then Jesus told him, "See that you don't tell anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

If you got Leprosy, it was a death sentence. You went home or out to the side of the road by yourself to live a pitiful life and then die.

So right as Jesus is coming down from the mountain from teaching the sermon on the mount, the next thing that happens is this leper comes up to him. This man knows exactly who Jesus is. He says, "Lord, if you are willing..."

Jesus reaches out his hand, touches the man and cleanses him. He tells the man not to tell anyone, but to go to the religious and the priests to show himself and make an offering to prove that this man has been cleansed according to the law of Moses. The priesthood should have known this was the sign they were looking for; that the Messiah was here!

The Leper Messiah from Isaiah 53:4-5. Jesus was able to cleanse this man, and keep himself clean, even though the law said you were unclean if you touched a leper.

Of course, all of this has nothing to do with John being an Essene. :-)

So, was John an Essene? Yes... and No.

Reasons John could have been an Essene:

1. John adopted the very means by which the Essenes lived: Water Baptism
 - a. They were committed to Baptism as a way to cleanse themselves and cleanse them of their sins.
 - b. The Essene baptism was a baptism of repentance. Meaning every time you were baptized you were leaving behind these sins and moving away from them.
2. John's ministry was setup near the Dead Sea, where the Jordan River meets the Dead Sea.
3. The Essenes had no problem calling out religious hypocrisy.
 - a. John calling the religious and the priests, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee the wrath to come?"
4. The Essenes believed that the kingdom of God would come by standing up and being bold for what they believed.
 - a. John also called out Herod for his affairs, which is what cost him his life.
5. John was likely an Orphan.
 - a. He was by birth part of the priesthood, but his parents were very old when John was born.
 - b. It's possible that he went to live with the Essenes when he was orphaned. We know they were big on adoption and taking in orphans.

Reasons John would not have been an Essene:

1. They would never leave the community long term.
 - a. They were always around the Qumran area.
 - b. John Baptized all over the wilderness
2. John's baptism was a different experience than the Essene baptism.
 - a. He was the forerunner to the Messiah
 - b. His baptism was preparing the people for the coming kingdom.
3. The Essenes never believed Jesus was the Messiah.
 - a. John knew Jesus was the Messiah after he baptized him and saw the Holy Spirit descending upon him.
 - b. They are in the wilderness and hearing news about Jesus, but ultimately don't recognize him as messiah as a group.