

The Forerunner of the Christ: An Exegetical-Theological Study on John, the Baptizer and His Mission in Quelle

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Abstract

In the light of Jesus' advent, the role of John the Baptizer was eminent. John the Baptizer has served as the forerunner of Jesus' way.

This paper aims to comprehend the messianic forerunner concept within Quelle whereby John the Baptizer is envisaged as such. Quelle is the document hypothetically drawn from the common material found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. In Quelle, five units have envisaged John as the forerunner of the Messiah: Q 3:2-3; Q 3:7-9; Q 3:16b-17; Q 7:18-20, 22-23; and Q 7:24-28 respectively. Certainly, the discussion on John's function cannot be neglected, inasmuch as he has truly influenced the development of the New Testament tradition, serving as a prominent figure initiating the introduction of the mission of the coming Messiah upon his preaching and witnessing.

Keywords: Messianic Forerunner, New Testament tradition, Quelle

Introduction

The study aims to comprehend the function of John the Baptizer as regarded in Quelle. The Quelle, also called as Q, Q Gospel or Q Sayings, is a German term which literally means 'source'. Being drawn from the early Church's Oral Tradition, Q is part of the common material found in the Synoptic Gospels especially Matthew and Luke, which is known as the hypothetical written collection of primarily Jesus' sayings or logia. By extracting from Matthew and Luke the material that they both have in common, we may be able to hypothetically reconstruct Q.

In Q, the researcher finds that there are at least five units in which John is viewed as a forerunner to the Messiah, Jesus. These can be found in: Q 3:2-3; Q 3:7-9; Q 3:16b-17; Q 7:18-20, 22-23; and Q 7:24-28. These elements contain some traditional materials dealing with John the Baptizer which we can find an apparent contradiction when John is confused whether Jesus is the one who is to come (Q 7:19-20). This even attracted the attention of many scholars who have sought to respond to the problem why John seems to question the identity of Jesus (Lk. 7:19). This apparent contradiction has been one of the major concerns of Bible scholars leading them to rethink what is truly the relationship of John towards the kingdom of God. And eventually, this influenced the way for the scholars to comprehend the role of John, the identity of Jesus and the relationship between them.

Likewise, the study has various implications for the Church today if we accept that John the Baptizer is a paradigmatic witness to follow. Apparently, we are moving into a new cultural epoch when people are ignoring the call of the Church. We cannot deny the fact that we are facing today certain challenges whereby one claims to be the "mensura omnium rerum."² Pope John Paul II (1993) and Pope Francis (2013) have noted that in today's world relativism and deterioration of ethics are on the rise. In addition, Francis further observes, the rejection of the transcendent has become inevitable and new religious movements without God are happening. As Christians present in the here and now, we are encouraged to face these situations ardently. And all the more in this world where Jesus remains on trial,³ we seriously need a John the Baptizer figure who is eager to fight against these challenges. With much zeal and fervour, we need to address these so that our faith will not be shattered.

The Messianic Forerunner Concept in the Jewish Bible (LXX)

The Messianic hope of the Jewish Bible refers to the coming of the expected or the promised deliverer of Israel. After the reign of David and a few generations after the division of the kingdom, the chosen people began looking for a better king whom they perceive as the savior-messiah. The hope for a new David began to develop after many kings failed to rule righteously. Hence, the Jews thought of "his descendant who would come to deliver Israel from captivity and would re-establish their kingdom."⁴ However, to fulfill this, a certain forerunner is to be sent first to prepare the coming of the messiah. "The prophet Elijah is then perceived by the Jews to prepare this coming."⁵

The idea of Elijah as the forerunner of the messiah is a Jewish expectation and scholars like Joachim Jeremias (1971, pp.185-187) and John A. T. Robinson (1958, pp. 276-278) have attested to this conviction. But some also have questioned this notion. Morris M. Faierstein (1981, pp. 75-86), in particular, evaluates the primary evidence and concludes that there is little support for this assertion. He suggests that "Christians may have originated this concept."⁶ Joseph A. Fitzmyer

(1965, pp. 348-72; see also 1979) on the other hand re-examines the earlier argumentation and asserts that “the expectation of Elijah is not widely attested in the Jewish literature.” Indeed, their re-examination and use of the earlier evidence provided them with data that the Elijah expectation is not widely attested in Second Temple Judaism.

In this study, however, the researcher will try to point out and re-evaluate certain pieces of evidence that may indicate the origin of the messianic forerunner concept. Although no existing pre-Christian textual evidence, the researcher agrees with Anthony Ferguson (2018, pp. 127-145) “that there is abundant circumstantial evidence that indicates the concept to be originally from the Jewish Bible”⁸ So then, it might be fitting to quote some passages:

1. Malachi 3:1 and 4:5-6.

<p>Mal 3:1a ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐξαποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου καὶ ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν πρὸ προσώπου μου b καὶ ἐξαίφνης ἦξει εἰς τὸν ναὸν ἑαυτοῦ ὁ κύριος ὃν ὑμεῖς ζητεῖτε καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος τῆς διαθήκης ὃν ὑμεῖς θέλετε c ἰδοὺ ἔρχεται λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ.</p>	<p>1a Behold, I am sending my messenger. And he shall look to the way before me. b And suddenly he will come to his temple: the Lord, whom you seek, even the Messenger of the Covenant whom you desire. c Behold, he is coming, says the Lord Almighty.</p>
<p>4:5 καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω ὑμῖν Ἡλιαν τὸν Θεσβίτην πρὶν ἔλθεῖν ἡμέραν κυρίου τῆν μεγάλην καὶ ἐπιφανῆ</p>	<p>4:5 And behold, I am sending to you Elijah the Tishbite before the great and splendid day of the Lord comes,</p>
<p>6 ὃς ἀποκαταστήσει καρδίαν πατρὸς πρὸς υἱὸν καὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου πρὸς τὸν πλησίον αὐτοῦ μὴ ἔλθωκαὶ πατάξω τὴν γῆν ἄρδην</p>	<p>6 who shall restore the heart of the father to the son, and the heart of a man to his neighbor, lest I come and smite the land utterly.</p>

The book of Malachi 3:1 and 4:5-6 provided the basis for the expectation of Elijah’s eschatological return. Prophet Malachi himself probably inferred this idea from the fact that “Elijah had never died but was taken to heaven in fiery chariots.”⁹

Evidently the use of the term, ‘messianic forerunner’ was associated here with Prophet Elijah. This is because Elijah was portrayed in the Jewish Bible as the forerunner who acted as the Messiah’s herald (ὁ παρασκευαστής).

2. Isaiah 40:3.

The book of Isaiah is “a diverse and complex book that even focusing exclusively on chapter 40:3 has a great deal of discussion on the context and interpretation” (Childs, 1979, pp. 495-496).¹⁰ However, the researcher still finds it suitable to examine the LXX translation of how

the book of Isaiah 40:3 is presented in relation to the messianic forerunner concept.

Isa. 40:3 Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν Κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν.	Isa. 40:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare a way for the Lord; make straight the paths of our God.'
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It is very much evident that the primary reference of this passage was during the exiles in Babylon and the Israelites' return from their long captivity to the land of their father, i.e. the Promised Land. According to Michael Fishbane (2002, p. 201), "the imagery, the circumstances and the design of the prophecy have all seemed to demand such interpretation and at the same time it is clear that the prophet was inspired to use a language which should appropriately express a more important event, e.g. the coming of the forerunner of the messiah; and the work which this forerunner should perform."¹¹ So what did the voice say? What did he call on his audience to do? "Prepare the way of the Lord" (40:3a). The instruction becomes more specific, that is, "to make straight the paths for God" (40:3b).

Messianic Concept in Extra-Biblical Accounts

The Essene Community

The Essenes were a sect of the Second Temple Judaism that flourished from the second century BC to the first century AD. They were an eschatological community expecting the imminent end of the world whereby anticipating a messianic figure as part of their apocalyptic vision. According to the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus (See Mason, 2008), "the community went out into the wilderness of Judea following the commands, as they perceived it, of the prophet Isaiah (40:3) in order to get away from what they saw as the worldliness of the Temple and of the whole Jerusalem."¹²

The Essenes' withdrawal into desert seclusion was an opposition to the ruling powers in the city and of the Temple. Yet what they have done was not limited only to withdrawal. They also continued to study the Scriptures, the book of prophet Isaiah and the Torah, with a firm belief that "[t]hey were the elect of Israel, living in the end of days while requiring always to be in a state of purity with their laws strict and their discipline severe" (Charlesworth, 1992, p. 1).

The Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls Discovery (1946/7)

The Dead Sea Scrolls, also known as the Qumran Caves Scrolls are ancient Jewish and Hebrew religious manuscripts discovered at the Qumran Caves in the northern shore of the Dead Sea. This discovery has provided us details that once in the caves of Qumran existed a sect that is known as the Essene Community, a group that has separated itself from society at large and sees itself as the repository of everything sacred and pure against the Temple and the Jewish institution.

Furthermore, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls provided us details also regarding the diversity of Jewish life and thought in the time of Jesus. These scrolls as we read in Taylor (2012) even suggested that "John the Baptizer and even Jesus himself were members of this group"¹⁴. But still we can't be so certain about it. It was only that what the Qumran scrolls have provided, were pieces of evidence that there had been a group that was against the traditional Jewish thought or the operation of the Temple itself.

As regards the messianic concept in Qumran (4Q265–4Q273), we can find some themes depicting this image like: “the anointed one who is called the Righteous Teacher; an anointed one from the priestly line of Aaron; a future ruler from the royal line of King David; and a heavenly or divine messiah,” (Taylor, 2012). But the popular.” But the popular one is the messiah duo who will share leadership over the nation as King and Priest, like Zerubbabel-Joshua¹⁵ and Nehemiah-Ezra¹⁶ respectively.

Similarities and Differences of John the Baptizer’s Function and the Essenes’

It could be noted that the Baptizer might be a member of the Essene community since both followed an ascetic practices in the same period and geographical area near the Dead Sea or at the wilderness of Judea. The Baptizer was in fact ascetic, “wearing camel’s hair and leather belt with a diet eating only honey and locusts.”¹⁷ In addition, both the Baptizer and the Essene community have emphasized and used prophetic imagery, especially from the book of Isaiah 40:3, stating: “A voice cries out, ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord.’” However, there are also important differences that make it difficult to assume that the Baptizer was a full member of the community. John’s message called Israel to repent and had a missionary quality to it, whereas the Essene community was mostly focused inward only with those belonging to the sect. The Essenes had separated themselves from fellow Jews in order to form a community that they felt as the genuine Israel while John was doing his ministry with all the audience who comes to him: common Jew, Pharisees, Sadducees and the like.

Perhaps, the Baptizer might have once lived in this community or was adopted by the community during his younger years after the death of his parents, only to leave the group for the following reasons: to lead his own disciples, to preach the baptism of repentance for all, and to prepare the way of the Messiah.

The Messianic Forerunner Concept in Q

1. The Beginning of Q (Q 3:2-3) (With Greek texts from Nestle-Aland’s Novum Testamentum Graece)

Matthew 3		Luke 3	
1 Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις παραγίνεται Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστῆς κηρῦσσων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τῆς Ἰουδαίας	1 In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the wilderness of Judea	1 Ἐν ἔτει δὲ πεντεκαδεκάτῳ τῆς ἡγεμονίας Τιβερίου Καίσαρος, ἡγεμονεύοντος Ποντίου Πιλάτου τῆς Ἰουδαίας, καὶ τετρααρχούντος τῆς Γαλιλαίας Ἡρώδου...	1. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee...
2 [καὶ] λέγων, Μετανοεῖτε ἥγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. 5 τότε ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία καὶ πᾶσα ἡ περιχώρος τοῦ Ἰορδάνου.	2 [and] saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” 5 At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him.	2 ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέως Ἄννα καὶ Καϊάφα ἐγένετο ῥῆμα θεοῦ ἐπὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν	2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3. He

The Beginning of Q (Q 3:2-3) (Continuation)

		<p>Ζαχαρίου υἱὸν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. 3 καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς πᾶσαν [τὴν] περίχωρον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεςιν ἁμαρτιῶν.</p>	<p>went throughout [the] whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.</p>
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In the table above, we may find that both Luke and Matthew indicate something as to the time and place of John the Baptizer's appearance. In Matthew: ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκεῖναις... ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, while in Luke: Ἐν ἔτει δὲ πεντεκαιδεκάτῳ τῆς ἡγεμονίας Τιβερίου Καίσαρος... ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. Both contain also the words, "πᾶσα ἡ περίχωρος τοῦ Ἰορδάνου." So then, following a reconstruction made by John S. Kloppenborg (1987), we have Q 3:2-3 as the introduction:

Q 3:2 Ἐν δὲ ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκεῖναις ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ. **3** κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεςιν ἁμαρτιῶν. καὶ ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσόλυμίται πάντες καὶ πᾶσα ἡ περίχωρος τοῦ Ἰορδάνου.

Q 3:2 Now in those days John was in the wilderness, **3** preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out to him all the Judean country, and of Jerusalem, and all the surrounding region of the Jordan.

As to this reconstructed material, we may find the agreement between Matthew and Luke as in their use of a time and place reference to introduce the pericope about John. Luke, in accordance with his historical style, sought to add some historical evidence that provides the story to be more specific. While Matthew on the other hand, has presented his temporal indicator, "ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκεῖναις" in a broader one. The latter presentation is considered a better alternative since "this is reminiscent of the Old Testament accounts presenting the locus, 'in the wilderness.'"¹⁸

Furthermore, Kloppenborg argues that the phrase, "πᾶσα ἡ περίχωρος τοῦ Ἰορδάνου," is intertextually related to the Sodom and Gomorrah story in the book of Genesis 13, "Lot, lifting up his eyes, saw the entire region round about the Jordan (πᾶσαν τὴν περίχωρον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου) how well watered it was as far as Zoar. And Lot chose for himself the entire region round about the Jordan (πᾶσαν τὴν περίχωρον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου) and set out eastward separating from Abram who settled in the land of Canaan. Lot settled in a city of the regions round about (ἐν πόλει τῶν περιχώρων) and pitched his tents near Sodom."¹⁹

For Kloppenborg, the double occurrence of the complete phrase at Gen. 13:10-11 and the occurrence of other shortened forms of the phrase in Gen. 13:12 provide him with a strong basis for thinking that when the complete phrase occurs at the Gospels of Matthew 3:5 and Luke 3:3, a literary device might mean to recall the Sodom and Gomorrah story. Hence, a nuanced thinking might suffice to say that the reconstructed beginning of Q where John the Baptizer warns of impending fiery judgment is reminiscent of the Sodom and Gomorrah story.

Thus far, we have been able to reconstruct Q's introduction as containing two elements: πᾶσα ἡ περίχωρος τοῦ Ἰορδάνου and ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκεῖναις. Moreover, beyond these two elements, we also have to consider the following elements as deriving from the beginning of Q: κηρύσσων in relation with what John is doing, i.e. preaching; βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεςιν ἁμαρτιῶν, that his

preaching is specifically about a repentance for the remission of sins; and πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα and οἱ Ἱεροσολυμίται πάντες, e.g. John's baptism is addressing a group of people - all the country of Judea and of Jerusalem. It might have been rather hyperbole to say that all the country of Judea and of Jerusalem went out to be baptized but still the hyperbolic address may suggest the success obtained by John. Above all, this connects to his ministry with the prophet Isaiah's clamor in 40:3, which states "the voice crying in the wilderness is addressed to the whole people and is meant to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah" (Guillemette, 1988, p. 132).

2. John the Baptizer's Preaching of Repentance (Q 3:7-9)

Matthew 3

Matthew 3		Luke 3	
<p>7 Ἰδὼν δὲ πολλοὺς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων ἐρχομένους ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς; 8 ποιήσατε οὖν καρπὸν ἄξιον τῆς μετανοίας 9 καὶ μὴ δόξητε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, Πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. 10 ἤδη δὲ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται.</p>	<p>7 When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. 9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 10 Even now the axe lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.</p>	<p>7 Ἐλεγεν οὖν τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ὄχλοις βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, Γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς; 8 ποιήσατε οὖν καρποὺς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας καὶ μὴ ἄρξησθε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, Πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. 9 ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται.</p>	<p>7 He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance; and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 9 Even now the axe lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."</p>

The reconstruction:

Q 3:7 ἰδὼν δὲ πολλοὺς τῶν Φαρισαίων ἐρχομένους ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς; **8a** ποιήσατε οὖν καρπὸν ἄξιον τῆς μετανοίας **b** καὶ μὴ δόξητε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς· πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. **9** ἤδη δὲ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν

τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται.

Q 3:7 But seeing many of the Pharisees coming against his baptism, he said to them: “Offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? **8a** Make the fruit worthy of repentance **b** and do not think to say within yourselves, “We have Abraham as a father.” For I say to you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham. **9** But the axe already lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not produce good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire.

In Q 3:7-9, John seems to be confronting a notion that any Jew, by virtue of his/her genealogical tie to Abraham, might be bound to inherit God’s promise. Yet, John has insisted that God accepts no one solely on the basis of physical descent. Besides, God could easily raise up stones as children to Abraham in lieu of them if He wills it.

In addition, the nearness of God’s judgment is implied: firstly, by the urgent command to flee from the coming wrath (Q 7:7); and secondly, by the metaphor of the axe being laid (ἤδη) at the root of the trees (Q 7:9). With these phrases, we might say that “John’s prophecy about the coming judgment can be understood with a reference to the Messiah’s imminent coming, like the Son of Man inaugurating the final judgment.”²⁰ Furthermore, as regards the ‘fruit’ concept in verse 8a and verse 9, the Baptizer was undoubtedly modelling his message on the prophets who frequently emphasized “inward reform and moral conduct over religious ritual”.²¹ The fact that he links this fruit with repentance, this indicates that he was talking about turning from sin and adhering to God’s commandments. The baptism of John is probably seen as an outward symbol of one’s reformed life and religious commitment. If part of his audience was rejecting baptism, he perhaps took this as evidence that they were unrepentant. Thus, “a tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”²²

3. John’s Preaching of the Coming One (Q 3:16b-17)

Matthew 3		Luke 3	
11 ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι εἰς μετάνοιαν, ὁ δὲ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μου ἐστίν, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς τὰ ὑποδήματα βαστάσαι· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ	11 I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire.	16 ἀπεκρίνατο λέγων πᾶσιν ὁ Ἰωάννης, Ἐγὼ μὲν ὕδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς· ἐρχεται δὲ ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς λῦσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ	16 John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you in water; but the Coming One is mightier than I, whose latchet of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie, he will baptize you in the (Holy) Spirit and in fire
12 οὗ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ διακαθαριεῖ τὴν ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ καὶ συναΐξει τὸν σίτον αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην, τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστω.	12 His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”	17 οὗ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ διακαθαίρει τὴν ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ καὶ συναγαγεῖν τὸν σίτον εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστω.	17 whose winnowing shovel is in his hand and he will purge his threshing floor and gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire.”

The reconstruction:

Q 3:16b ἐγὼ μὲν ὑμᾶς βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι· **c** ὁ δὲ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μου ἐστίν, **d** οὐδ' οὐκ εἰμι ἰκανὸς λύσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ, **e** αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ· **17** οὐ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ διακαθάραι τὴν ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ καὶ συνάξει τὸν σῖτον εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστα.

Q 3:16b “I baptize you in water; **c** but the Coming One is mightier than I, **d** whose latchet of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie, **e** he will baptize you in the (Holy) Spirit and in fire **17** whose winnowing shovel is in his hand and he will purge his threshing floor and gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire.”

The concern that needs to be resolved here is the key phrase or title that John the Baptizer applies to his expected figure. Q 3:16c uses ὁ ἰσχυρότερος (mightier) and the verb ἔρχεται (coming), e.g. ἔρχεται δὲ ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου. The terminology at 3:16 should therefore be seen as ‘messianic’ and as anticipating the coming of Jesus. Although John’s preaching in 3:16b-17 is imbued with several metaphors that are difficult to interpret, these can all be understood as having their fulfillment in the person of Jesus. So then, Q has most likely presupposed this idea when it portrays the Baptizer as announcing that the Coming One mightier than him will baptize in the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, the phrase in Q 3:16c, ὁ δὲ ὀπίσω μου ἐρχόμενος ἰσχυρότερός μου ἐστίν, (but the Coming One is mightier than I) raises up the idea of discipleship. This coheres with Q 3:16d where the sandals saying imply politely with a famous dictum regarding discipleship “that all manner of service a slave renders to his master, a disciple to his teacher, except that of taking off his shoe.”²³ (Cf. Morris, 1974, p. 97).

Let us also remember that in Q 3:16b-17, we are dealing with metaphorical language. Other than the metaphor on the Baptizer’s unworthiness to untie the Coming One’s sandals, John articulated also that the Coming One will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire whose winnowing shovel is in his hand and will purge his threshing floor and gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn in unquenchable fire. Speaking of the ‘fire’ metaphor, we can perceive that this is referring to an eschatological judgment.”²⁴ John’s prophecy about the Coming One baptizing with the Holy Spirit anticipates a wonderful experience. And the whole reason why John is enjoining repentance and baptism in his ministry is that he believes that people can still repent and escape the coming punishment. Thus, he declares that the Coming One will not only ‘burn the chaff with unquenchable fire’ but also ‘cleanse his threshing floor’ and ‘gather the wheat into his granary’ (Q 3:17).

The imagery about the storing of grain in the granary can perhaps be understood as having an earlier fulfillment of the Coming One’s ministry. The granary is beyond reasonable doubt, a metaphor for the kingdom of God. And during his earthly ministry, Jesus whom we claim as this Messiah – the Coming One as John would name it, is surely engaged in bringing people into this kingdom.

4. John’s Question and Jesus’ Reply (Q 7:18-20, 22-23)

Matthew 11		Luke 7	
2 Ὁ δὲ Ἰωάννης ἀκούσας ἐν τῷ	2 When John heard in prison of the works of	18 Καὶ ἀπήγγειλαν Ἰωάννη οἱ μαθηταὶ	18 The disciples of John told him about

John's Question and Jesus' Reply (Q 7:18-20, 22-23) (Continuation)

<p>δεσμοτηρίῳ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ χριστοῦ πέμψας διὰ τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· 3 σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἕτερον προσδοκῶμεν; 4 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· πορευθέντες ἀπαγγείλατε Ἰωάννῃ ἃ ἀκούετε καὶ βλέπετε· 5 τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν καὶ χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν, λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν, καὶ νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται καὶ πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται· 6 καὶ μακάριός ἐστιν ὃς ἐὰν μὴ σκανδαλισθῇ ἐν ἐμοί</p>	<p>the Messiah, he sent his disciples to him 3 with this question, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” 4 Jesus said to them in reply, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5 the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. 6 And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.”</p>	<p>αὐτοῦ περὶ πάντων τούτων· καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος δύο τινὰς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ὁ Ἰωάννης 19 ἐπεμψεν πρὸς τὸν κύριον λέγων· σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν; 20 παραγενόμενοι δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἄνδρες εἶπαν· Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστὴς ἀπέστειλεν ἡμᾶς πρὸς σέ λέγων· σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν; 22 καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· πορευθέντες ἀπαγγείλατε Ἰωάννῃ ἃ εἶδετε καὶ ἠκούσατε· τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν, χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν, λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν, νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται, πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται· 23 καὶ μακάριός ἐστιν ὃς ἐὰν μὴ σκανδαλισθῇ ἐν ἐμοί.</p>	<p>all these things. John summoned two of his disciples 19 and sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” 20 When the men came to him, they said, “John the Baptizer has sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?’” 22 And he said to them in reply, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. 23 And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.”</p>
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The reconstruction:

Q 7:18 Καὶ ἀπήγγειλαν Ἰωάννῃ [οντι ἐν τῷ δεσμοτηρίῳ] οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ Ἰησοῦς καὶ προσκαλεσάμενος τινὰς τῶν μαθητῶν αὐτοῦ ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐπεμψεν αὐτῷ λέγων· **19** σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἕτερον προσδοκῶμεν; **20** παραγενόμενοι δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἄνδρες εἶπαν· Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστὴς ἀπέστειλεν ἡμᾶς πρὸς σέ λέγων· Σὺ εἶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἢ ἄλλον προσδοκῶμεν; **22a** καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· **b** πορευθέντες ἀπαγγείλατε Ἰωάννῃ ἃ ἀκούετε καὶ βλέπετε· **c** τυφλοὶ ἀναβλέπουσιν καὶ χωλοὶ περιπατοῦσιν, λεπροὶ καθαρίζονται καὶ κωφοὶ ἀκούουσιν, νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται καὶ πτωχοὶ εὐαγγελίζονται· **23** καὶ μακάριός ἐστιν ὃς ἐὰν μὴ σκανδαλισθῇ ἐν ἐμοί.

Q 7:18 And his disciples declared to John [while he was in prison] the works of Jesus. And having called some of his disciples, John sent to him, saying, **19** “Are you the Coming One or shall we look for another?” **20** And when the men had come to him they said, “John the Baptizer has sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you the Coming One, or shall we look for another?’” **22a** And having answered, Jesus said to them, **b** “Go, report to John what things you hear and see: **c** the blind regain

their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor are evangelized; **23** and blessed is he who does not stumble on account of me.”

In Q 7:18-22, Jesus’ seemingly incongruous reply to the question posed by John is an expression that Jesus “could be the one presumably preached by John as the ‘fiery judge’ whom the latter prophesied in 3:16b-17.”²⁵ Jesus’ answer to John in Q 7:22 could be understood in light of 4Q521, which is known as the “Messianic Apocalypse” (Puech, 1999, 545-65) that speaks of the Messiah’s (משיח) glorious deeds. Among these are: freeing of prisoners; healing of the blind; straightening out the twisted; healing of the pierced; raising of the dead; and evangelizing of the poor.

Remarkably, Q 7:22 and 4Q521 could allude to some biblical texts like the book of prophet Isaiah 35, “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame leap like a deer and the mute tongue shout for joy”²⁶ and Isaiah 61, “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”²⁷ Hence, Q 7:22 and 4Q521 undoubtedly reflect a shared Jewish tradition which is undisputable.

Furthermore in Q 7:22-23, John is clearly portrayed both as a prophet and as someone who announced the coming of the Messiah. The significance of the latter action rests, of course, in Q’s conception of Jesus. John did something that no other prophet before him had done, which is to prepare the way for Jesus, the promised Messiah.

5. Jesus’ Encomium on John (Q 7:24-28)

Matthew 11		Luke 7	
7 Τούτων δὲ πορευομένων ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγειν τοῖς ὄχλοις περὶ Ἰωάννου· τί ἐξήλθατε εἰς τὴν ἔρημον θεάσασθαι; κάλαμον ὑπὸ ἀνέμου σαλευόμενος; 8 ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; ἄνθρωπον ἐν μαλακοῖς; ἰδοὺ οἱ τὰ μαλακὰ φοροῦντες ἐν τοῖς οἴκοις τῶν βασιλέων εἰσίν. 9 ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; προφήτην; ναὶ λέγω ὑμῖν, καὶ περισσότερον προφήτου. 10 οὗτός ἐστιν περὶ οὗ γέγραπται· ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν	7 As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. 9 Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written: ‘Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way	24 Ἀπελθόντων δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων Ἰωάννου ἤρξατο λέγειν πρὸς τοὺς ὄχλους περὶ Ἰωάννου. τί ἐξήλθατε εἰς τὴν ἔρημον θεάσασθαι; κάλαμον ὑπὸ ἀνέμου σαλευόμενος; 25 ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; ἄνθρωπον ἐν μαλακοῖς ἱματίοις ἠμφιεσμένον; ἰδοὺ οἱ ἐν ἱματισμῷ ἐνδόξῳ καὶ τρυφῇ ὑπάρχοντες ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις εἰσίν. 26 ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; προφήτην; ναὶ λέγω ὑμῖν, καὶ περισσότερον προφήτου. 27 οὗτός	24 When the messengers of John had left, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John. “What did you go out to the desert to see - a reed swayed by the wind? 25 Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine garments? Those who dress luxuriously and live sumptuously are found in royal palaces. 26 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom scripture says:

Jesus' Encomium on John (Q 7:24-28) (Continuation)

<p>ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ σου. 11 Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν· οὐκ ἐγήγερται ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν μείζων Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ· ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστίν.</p>	<p>before you.’ 11 Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.</p>	<p>ἐστὶν περὶ οὗ γέγραπται. ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου. 28 λέγω ὑμῖν, μείζων ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν Ἰωάννου οὐδεὶς ἐστίν. ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστίν.</p>	<p>‘Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will prepare your way before you.’ 28 I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”</p>
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The reconstruction:

Q 7:24 τούτων δὲ ἀπελθόντων ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγειν τοῖς ὄχλοις περὶ Ἰωάννου· τί ἐξήλθατε εἰς τὴν ἔρημον θεάσασθαι; κάλαμον ὑπὸ ἀνέμου σαλευόμενον; **25** ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; ἄνθρωπον ἐν μαλακοῖς ἡμφιεσμένον; ἰδοὺ οὐ τὰ μαλακὰ φοροῦντες ἐν τοῖς οἴκοις τῶν βασιλείων εἰσίν. **26a** ἀλλὰ τί ἐξήλθατε ἰδεῖν; προφήτην; **b** ναὶ λέγω ὑμῖν, καὶ περισσώτερον προφήτου. **27a** οὗτός ἐστιν περὶ οὗ γέγραπται· **b** ἰδοὺ [[ἐγὼ]] ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου, **c** ὃς κατασκευάσει τὴν ὁδὸν σου ἔμπροσθέν σου. **d** φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ. **28a** Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν· οὐκ ἐγήγερται ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν μείζων Ἰωάννου· **b** ὁ δὲ μικρότερος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων αὐτοῦ ἐστίν.

Q 7:24a And when they had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? **25** What then did you go out to see? A person robed in soft clothing? Behold, those wearing soft clothing are found in royal palaces. **26a** What then did you go out to see? A prophet? **b** Yes, I tell you: more than a prophet! **27a** This is he of whom it has been written: **b** Behold, I am sending my messenger before you, **c** who will prepare your way before you. **d** A voice crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight. **28a** Amen, I say to you: among those born of women none is greater than John; **b** yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.

Because Matthew and Luke agree so well in this portion, the text is less disputed as really copied from the Q document. The questions Jesus asked about John in Q 7:24-26a are probably not meant to have any deep symbolic meaning in themselves, rather they instead provide us with some useful pieces about how John was understood in Q. For example, we can see here that John’s ministry in the wilderness (ἡ ἔρημος) was not thought to have taken place in a waterless desert besides, reeds grow near the Jordan river. Furthermore, the contrast of John with kings dressed in soft and luxurious clothing (Q 7:25) suggests that John had a distinctive dress, probably that of an ascetic (Matthew 3:4). But while these questions may be of some significance to us historically, they only really speak to John’s important role, being the “forerunner to the Messiah.”²⁸

The historical John the Baptizer was undoubtedly a well-known man in the social world where Jesus has lived and operated. In Q 7:28, Jesus declares John as among those born of women

no one is greater than. But the saying was not framed simply to praise John. Rather, the Baptizer's greatness is mentioned only in order to emphasize Jesus' greatness in the kingdom of God. It would not be unreasonable to think that the reason Jesus' greatness is expected to exceed even John's in the kingdom is that Jesus saw his own self as the designated King. In fact, Jesus' royal prerogative is implied in what we can perceive in Luke 22 and Matthew 19, when Jesus says that He will appoint His disciples to "sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."²⁹

Although differently articulated in both Matthew and Luke's versions, Jesus could still be envisaged as a King. And this could be referred to the promise in the 2nd book of Samuel, "I will raise up your offspring after you and I will establish your kingdom. He it is, who shall build a house for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me"³⁰ So then, it would be reasonable to speak of the greatness of Jesus far more beyond than John. As Raymond E. Brown (2015, 43-97) argues, "John is probably greatest among human beings, but he is not Jesus, who although less than John, is greater than he in the Kingdom of God." Jesus attests this by saying, "Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John, yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."³¹

Conclusion

The researcher concludes that John the Baptizer is portrayed in Q as indeed the forerunner of Jesus the Messiah. John the Baptizer is truly greater than any prophet. Quelle depicts him as more than any prophet and this is of course, vis-à-vis Jesus the Christ. Inasmuch as Jesus is regarded as a key figure in the redemptive history, then the role that the forerunner ought to fulfill is far greater than any prophet's role. We could now perceive this role as Christological in the sense that it is not John the Baptizer, but rather, Jesus who is actually the center of attraction. In fact, Jesus is the 'Word' (רַבֵּד – Dabar) proclaimed by the 'Voice' (קוֹל – Qōl) in the 'Wilderness' (מִדְבָּר – Midbar).

In today's context, we can learn a lot from the mission John the Baptizer has been entrusted with. The Baptizer has been faithful with his role in relation to Christ. As Christians, we ought to share also in the mission of our Lord. Like John the Baptizer, we need to preach the value of repentance so as the active response to the demands of our faith that we may bear fruit (Q 3:8). We must humbly serve each other also so that like John the Baptizer, we become able to turn the people to God while declaring ourselves to decrease that God may increase.

Notes

¹ New American Bible (2013). In the New Testament, John is most often referred to as 'the Baptist' ('ὁ βαπτιστής) which is a kind of a formal title. Yet concerning chronology, 'the Baptizer' ('ὁ βαπτίζων), the present active participle form, appears earlier since in Mark's Gospel (Mk. 1:4), he is called such (Cf. The Greek New Testament (1968). It might be that due to the influence of Matthew and Luke who refer to John in the noun form (βαπτιστής) as opposed to Mark's participial form (βαπτίζων), the scribes use the more popular title. Nonetheless, the researcher prefers to use 'ὁ βαπτίζων since this is more descriptive of John's function out in the wilderness. See also Nil Guillemette (1988, p. 5).

² "Homo est mensura omnium rerum" means "The human person is the measure of all things". Protagoras, the author of this dictum, was a 'Sophist', paid to teach the skills of wisdom and on how to attain the knowledge of things. By this, he means that there are no objective truths and each can

be a measure on how things behave.

3 Jesus in this world is on trial. A concrete manifestation of this is the depiction of Jesus in Dan Brown's book, the *Da Vinci Code* (2003), suggesting that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene. See also Simcha Jacobovici and Barrie Wilson, *The Lost Gospel, Decoding the Ancient Text that Reveals Jesus' Marriage to Mary Magdalene* (2014). Other portrayal of Jesus' trial is in Theodore W. Jennings Jr's, *The Man Jesus Loved: Homoerotic Narratives from the New Testament* (2003), arguing that Jesus was an active homosexual.

4 2nd Book of Samuel 7:1-17. David and his descendants were appointed by God to rule all of Israel. Israel here encompasses a united kingdom that includes both the tribe of Judah in the south, David's home territory where he first came to power and the ten northern tribes of Israel where Saul ruled before David took over. After the death of David's son and heir, Solomon, the tribes of Israel split from the united kingdom and thus, beginning with David's grandson Rehoboam, the house of David ruled only Judah with its capital in Jerusalem. The tradition that the legitimate ruler of greater Israel is always a descendant of David is one of the most prominent and enduring in the Bible. Along these lines, the Hebrew Bible makes sure that it is clear that all the kings of the kingdom of Judah were, in fact, descendants of David. For instance, though at one point all the descendants of David had apparently been slaughtered, the narrative recounts that a legitimate Davidic child, Joash, was hidden by the priests and later emerged to restore the throne to the Davidic line (2Kgs. 11:1-12). In addition in the New Testament, both Matthew and Luke trace Jesus' lineage to David (Matthew 1:6 and Luke 3:31).

5 The Book of the Prophet Malachi 4:5.

6 Faierstein argued that contrary to the accepted scholarly consensus, almost no evidence has been preserved which indicates that the concept of Elijah as forerunner of the Messiah was widely known or accepted in the first century C.E. According to Faierstein, the only solid piece of evidence is the Baraita in b. 'Erub. 43a-b; but the passage is lately added (early third century C.E.) whereby, notwithstanding its uniqueness, may have been influenced only by the Gospel tradition.

8 The researcher intends to follow Ferguson's claim that there has been circumstantial evidence that supports the main conviction that Jews before the rise of Christianity have expected Elijah to precede the messiah.

9 2nd Book of Kings 2:1-18. The story speaks of Elijah being brought to heaven by the chariots of fire. "Elijah traveled with Elisha to the Jordan River where he smote the river with his mantle...and the two passed over on dry ground. They stood conversing and Elisha asked and received a double portion of anointing from Elijah. Afterward, a chariot of fire separated the two and took Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind."

10 Historical critical scholarship has made out a strong case for holding that the oracles of chapters 36 to 47 were originally addressed to Hebrew exiles in Babylon by an unnamed exilic prophet during the sixth century. However, the present canonical shape of the book of Isaiah has furnished these chapters with a very different setting. Chapters 40 to 47 are now understood as a prophetic word of promise offered to Israel by the eighth-century prophet, Isaiah ben Amoz.

11 The people being addressed were a pre-restoration community. This finds historical support in the Midrash on Lamentations 1:2, which cites Isaiah 40:3 as a Messianic blessing.

12 The book deals with a period of enormous consequence from King Herod to the first phase of the war against Rome and covers the succession struggle of Herod's sons, Judea's incorporation as a Roman province and the events leading up to the revolution.

14 Lawrence Schiffman (1987) also argues that John the Baptizer and Jesus may not be members of the Essenes but at least, both were influenced by them.

15 Book of the Prophet Zechariah 3:1-10, 4:6-14.

16 Book of the Prophet Nehemiah 8:9.

17 Gospel of Matthew 3: 4-5.

18 Ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκεῖναις occurs 34 times in the LXX Bible (e.g. Gen. 6:4; Exod. 2:11; Judg. 18:1; 2 Sam. 16:23; 2 Kgs. 20:1; Joel 4:1; Dan. 10:2). Permutations also occur such as ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις and ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις, i.e. "in those days and at that time" (Zech. 8:9; Pss. 17:32; and Jer. 33:15).

19 The book of Genesis 13:10-12.

20 Gospel of Luke 17:22-30. "The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. There will be those who will say to you, Look there he is, (or) look, here he is. Don't go after them, or follow them for as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so shall the Son of Man be. But first, he must suffer greatly and be rejected as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be in the days of the Son of Man... Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot: they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. So thus, shall it be in a day that the Son of Man is revealed." Here, what the evangelist implies about the Messiah's imminent coming is akin to the days of Noah and the days of Lot whereby, people will be going on with their businesses as usual, eating, drinking, marrying, etc. but the same day when the Son of Man comes.

21 Book of Prophet Jeremiah. 4:4. "For the sake of the Lord, be circumcised, remove the foreskins of your hearts... Lest my anger break out like fire, and burn till none can quench it, because of your evil deeds. See also Book of Prophet Micah 6:8. "...do right, love goodness and walk humbly with your God."

22 Q 3:9. This verse threatens that every tree that does not bear fruit will be destroyed, i.e. that people who do not repent will face divine punishment. Similar imagery is used in the books of Prophets Isaiah 10:34 and Jeremiah 46:22 which could be the inspiration of this verse.

23 John the Baptizer sees himself as unfit to loosen the thong of Jesus' sandals. A rabbinic saying runs, 'Every service which a slave performs for his master shall a disciple do for this teacher except the loosing of his sandal-thong'. Untying the sandal-thong was just too much but John selects precisely this duty, regarded as too menial for a disciple, as that for which he was unworthy.

24 Gospel of Luke 3:16e. The evangelist may associate John's prophecy about the baptism "in fire and the Holy Spirit" with the experience recorded in the Book of Acts of the Apostles 2:3 where 'tongues like fire' (γλῶσσαι ὡσεὶ πυρός) are said to have descended and rested upon the heads of those who

were filled with the Spirit.

²⁵ Q 7:18-23 connects very well that when John asks if Jesus is truly the Messiah, Jesus rather responded to John by pointing his messianic miracles, implying that he is indeed the Messiah. But it is less obvious how the saying in Q 7:23 fits into this unit. One fairly common line of interpretation sees the offense here as stemming from the fact that Jesus had not fulfilled John's earlier prophecies. However, on this interpretation, Jesus responds in Q 7:22-23 by telling John, in effect, not to be put off by his ministry of healing and preaching when John had expected Jesus to act as a fiery judge. Thus, this is to be understood that Jesus is seen in Q 7:23 as gently and subtly rebuking John for his misunderstandings and doubts about Jesus.

²⁶ Book of Prophet Isaiah 35:5-6.

²⁷ Book of Prophet Isaiah 61:1-2.

²⁸ Q 7:26-27. Jesus told the crowds about John the Baptizer as more than a prophet because of preparing the way of the Lord, serving as the forerunner to the Messiah.

²⁹ Gospel of Luke 22:28-30. Luke writes, "It is you who have stood by me in my trials; and I confer a kingdom on you, just as my Father conferred one on me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." While the version in the Gospel of Matthew 19:28 states, "Amen, I say to you that you have followed me, in the new age, when the Son of Man is seated on his throne of glory, will yourselves sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

³⁰ 2nd Book of Samuel 7: 12-16.

³¹ Q 7:28. John the Baptizer was the last and greatest figure of the era before the Messiah. In preparing the way for the kingdom and introducing the Messiah, John was the 'Elijah' of whom the prophet Malachi spoke (Cf. Matthew 11:13-15; and Malachi 4:5).

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