

Why John The Baptizer Made Such a Splash!

When John the Baptizer appeared on the scene, he did not appear in a spiritual vacuum. Instead, he came into a Jewish religious culture that was **primed** and **ready** for something important to happen!

Ever since the Jewish people were carried into exile (596-586 B.C.) and subsequently allowed to return to Jerusalem around 515 B.C. and rebuild the [Jewish Temple](#), they had been ruled by other empires – the [Babylonians](#), the [Persians](#), the [Greeks](#), the [Ptolemies](#), the [Hasmoneans](#), and finally the [Romans](#). Generation after generation of Jews had longed for freedom and independence. The constant goal was the re-establishment of the Davidic kingship in Jerusalem. To accomplish this, Jews believed that God would send a warrior-king, his Messiah, who would throw off Roman oppression and install his throne in Jerusalem.

It was also Jewish tradition that Elijah, who had not died, but been taken up into heaven in a “Chariot of fire” ([2 Kings 2:11](#)), would return and herald the imminent coming of the Messiah-warrior-king. So it is significant that the angel who appears to John's father in the Temple, prior to John's birth, says of John, “And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah” ([Luke 1:17](#)). Luke presents John as God's designated herald of the coming Messiah-warrior-king.

So when John comes, its a big deal! He comes dressed like Elijah (camel's hair clothing and a leather belt; see [Mark 1:6](#) & [2 Kings 1:8](#)) so that there will be no mistaking his mission. And when he comes, he sounds like a prophet, speaking hard words, calling the people of Israel out of their sinful ways and encouraging repentance, as did the prophets who came before him.