

Nativity of John the Baptist

History is full of those who have claimed that: either they were gods, or that they came from God, or that they bore messages from God. In addition to Our Blessed Lord, there have been thousands: Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius and even most recently, Warren Jeffs and Sylvia Browne, just to name a few.

So in order to determine whether any of these are justified in their claims, there needs to be tests available to all men, all civilizations and all ages. And these tests need to be verified by reason and by history: Reason, because everybody has it, even those without faith have reason; and history, because everyone lives in it and should know something about it. Of these tests, there are simply two:

First, anyone who comes from God, or in the name of God or with a message from God, should be pre-announced. Brides pre-announce their weddings and automobile manufacturers pre-announce what customers can expect in the 2018 models. If God is going to send someone to this earth, then the least that He can do is to let us know. This requirement will do away with anyone suddenly appearing upon the stage of history and saying, "I am God," or "I have a message from God."

Second, he who comes should be able to work wonders or signs to validate his message. Not to do things that would excite us and make us say, “WOW!” but rather, miracles that would prove God was with him.

Line up the claimants that came from God according their words so they can be judged: Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Marx, witch doctors, Hindu philosophers, university professors, the founder of the latest cult, and ask the first question. “Were any of you ever pre-announced?”

“Buddha, did anyone ever know you were coming to this earth?”

“Confucius, was the place of your birth prophesied?”

“Socrates, did anyone foretell you would die from hemlock?”

“Is there a single one of you who can point to an historical record in which it was foretold:

- ✓ where you would live,
- ✓ where and how you would die,
- ✓ what your character would be,
- ✓ the manner of your teaching,
- ✓ the kind of enemies you would provoke by your teaching?

There were no predictions about Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, or anyone else; they just came and said, "Here I am, believe me." But Our Blessed Lord was different. There were predictions about Christ. Because of all the Old Testament prophecies, His coming was not unexpected.

If you search out the various Messianic predictions in the Old Testament, and compare them with the life and work of Our Blessed Lord, it is clear the Old Testament prophecies pointed to Christ and the kingdom He established:

- ✓ God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that through them all the nations would be blessed;
- ✓ The prophecy that the tribe of Judah would be supreme among the other Hebrew Tribes until the coming of the Messiah whom all nations would obey;
- ✓ The prediction in Isaiah 7 of the virgin birth of the Messiah;
- ✓ The prediction in Isaiah 53 of the Suffering Servant;

And once these prophecies were fulfilled in Our Blessed Lord, there were no more prophecies.

In addition to the Old Testament prophecies, Our Blessed Lord was announced by the Archangel Gabriel to His Mother, who also confirmed that Elizabeth held John the Baptist in her womb:

For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.

Second, there should be certain signs, wonders or miracles that attest to his truthfulness. Our Blessed Lord explained why He worked miracles. From the Gospel of John:

If I perform miracles, even if you do not believe me, believe the miracles, so that you may realize and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.
JN 10:38

Also remember that His works were accomplished before the eyes of multitudes of people, and that is why none of the miracles of Our Blessed Lord were ever actually denied, not even His Resurrection. The Apostles were forbidden to teach them, but the miracles were never denied. And finally, His miracles were inseparable from His person. They differed from the prophets and others since theirs were an answer to prayer granted by a higher power, namely God. Whereas, Jesus' miracles flowed from Himself.

How many miracles did He actually work? The specific number of miracles mentioned in the Gospels is 35:

- ✓ Three of these miracles tell of raising the dead: a child, a young man and an adult;

- ✓ nine related to nature
- ✓ and 23 to healing.

In addition, there were miracles that related to the life of Our Blessed Lord Himself, for example, the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection and the Ascension. Yet it must not be thought that these are the only miracles Our Blessed Lord ever worked, considering the way John concluded His gospel:

There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world could contain the books that would be written.
JN 21:25

Given the question asked by the crowds in John 7, namely, “When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man has done?” (JN 7:31), not only was Our Blessed Lord pre-announced, but his miracles were pre-announced as well.

At Christmas and Easter, and the non-believers get angry at the believers. New Jersey-based American Atheists are trying to convince the world that they’re right and we’re wrong with their Christmas Season Times Square billboard ad, "Keep the Merry!" and "Dump the Myth!"

In answering the atheists, I will quote my favorite author, Fulton Sheen.

To the atheist, Sheen said, “I am very happy to hear you say you believe in the existence of God.”

The atheist said, “But I don’t believe in the existence of God.”

Sheen said, “I understand you to say just the contrary. If I were to go through Central Park and denied the existence of half man and half beasts and monsters, what would happen?

The atheist said, “I imagine they would lock you up.”

Sheen said, “But don’t you put God in the same category as half man and half beasts and monsters? Why don’t they lock you up? They don’t lock you up because God is as real as real can be. You cannot have a prohibition against something unless there is something to prohibit. How can there be atheism unless there is Someone to atheate?”ⁱ

ⁱ Sheen, Your Life Is Worth Living p.14