

Zachariah father of John the Baptist murdered in the temple

While the Bible does not explicitly record the death of [Zechariah](#), the father of John the Baptist, an extensive tradition in apocryphal and historical texts claims he was murdered in the temple.

The Traditions of His Murder

- **The Protoevangelium of James:** This 2nd-century apocryphal text is the primary source for the tradition. It states that during the **Slaughter of the Innocents**, Herod the Great's soldiers murdered Zechariah between the entrance and the altar because he refused to reveal the location of his son, John.
- **Biblical Allusions:** Many scholars believe that when Jesus referred to the murder of "Zechariah son of Berekiah" between the sanctuary and the altar in Matthew 23:35, he may have been referring to this tradition or potentially confusing him with the Old Testament martyr **Zechariah ben Jehoiada** (stoned in the temple in 2 Chronicles 24).
- **Other Historical Records:** The Jewish historian **Josephus** records that a priest named Zacharias was slain by Zealots in the temple and thrown into the Kidron Valley, though some scholars debate if this refers to John's father or a different individual.
- **Archaeological Evidence:** In 2003, a 4th-century inscription was discovered on the **Tomb of Absalom** in Jerusalem that reads: *"This is the tomb of Zachariah, the martyr, the holy priest, the father of John"*.

Comparison of Biblical Zechariahs

Figure	Relation	Recorded Death
Zechariah ben Jehoiada	9th Century BC Priest	Stoned in the Temple court (2 Chronicles 24:21).
Zechariah the Prophet	6th Century BC Author	Biblical death not recorded; traditionally martyred.
Zechariah (Zacharias)	Father of John the Baptist	Biblical death not recorded; traditionally martyred in the Temple by Herod's orders.

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