

The Unshakable Certainty

The Preparation has Ended and the Task has Begun

John's Baptism

The three necessary elements through which a proselyte entered the faith of old Israel were:

- 1) Circumcision
- 2) Baptism
- 3) Sacrifice

Only proselytes needed baptism, since they believed circumcision was the mark that made them a descendent of Abraham, therefore acceptable to God. Only Gentiles needed the purification of washing (so they thought).

So when John the Baptist came, it was quite a shock to the pious Jews who thought they were "OK" by tradition. But there were others who feared God and needed the guilt of sin removed, in whom the Law had brought to a head its full work. In the fullness of time John came with a message of repentance (Mk 1:4; Mt 3:2; Lk 3:3).

The Reign of God was about to invade the earth and all men, Jew and Gentile, must repent and be cleansed before the "Irruption of Eternity with Time on Planet Earth."

As the prophet Isaiah said long ago (Isa 40:3; now the cry is Isa 57:14), John came with a summons to men to prepare the way of the Lord (Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4-6). John's message was that a King was on the way and a road must be prepared for Him. (The custom in those days was to prepare the road of its holes and bumps by sending a messenger ahead of the train, and the people responded to the call to fix their portion of the road.)

John's message pointed beyond himself to the One who was to come. Our message is the same (Mal 3:1).

John the Baptist came with an uncompromising demand. His message struck right at the heart of the Jewish corruption that had set in, at the very roots of comfortable Jewish orthodoxy.

The Jews “knew” they were the chosen people (without the evidence or life, 1 Jn 3:14). But they interpreted their chosenness in terms of *privilege* rather than *responsibility* (the uncompromising demands of the Kingdom of God; Jn 9:39-41).

The Jews thought they were already good enough for heaven by virtue of their outward circumcision, which ensures one peace with God, being a descendent of Abraham — no matter what kind of life or lifestyle they lived, or if there was no indication of the heart of David or the heart Jeremiah foretold (Jer 32:39; Dt 5:29; 30:6,8; Jn 8:39-47).

They were so steeped in tradition that they could “honestly” say (with a whitewashed conscience) that an angel was stationed at the gate of hell to keep anyone with the mark of circumcision out and send them on to heaven if the occasion came up. Descent from Abraham was the passport to the favor of God. (A doctrine of eternal security or covering doesn’t make it so for the person, unless it is so in him — “Whoever has the Son has the life.”) That was the belief that John the Baptist poured forth scorn to refute (Mt 3:7-9; Lk 3:7). John insisted that what mattered was a man’s character, therefore he came with his *absolute moral demand* that commanded a moral response and a moral change (as Peter did on the day of Pentecost, and as we will in this day).

- 1) The rich must “communicate” (share their wealth) with the poor;
- 2) The tax collector must be impeccably honest;
- 3) The soldiers should also repent, therefore they would be *unable* to live in that way any longer, which was their only way of making a living — through dishonest gain (the spoils were the professional soldier’s wages);
- 4) That all men must do *good*, that is, the will of God (Lk 3:10-14).

So it was as always — John became a threat. The Greater One was coming. The axe was laid already at the root of the bad tree of Jewish Orthodoxy, which was regarded as *mainstream*. This was the fruitless tree of Mt 21:43, and so it is today (Rev 2:9; 3:9; Rom 2:17-24). The chaff was to be winnowed from the grain. The time of judgment was on the way; the Kingdom of God was at hand (Lk 3:7-9,16; Mt 3:11).

John's prophetic voice cut across the grain of *tradition*. It had been at least 300 years since a prophet had spoken. The priests were sacrificing, the rabbis may have been teaching or expounding the Law, but the voice of prophecy had been silenced and only tradition was practiced.

But in John the Baptist men recognized once again that *accent* and that authority with which the prophets had spoken (within their dulled consciences was a flicker of remembrance of Zion).

There was a saying in Israel that even if Israel repented for just one day the Redeemer would come. The same is true now and will be so — true repentance brings about a pure heart, one of flesh and not stone. God's laws are written on our heart and mind. He put His fear into us so that we would obey and do His will. There will be only *one way* and *one heart*. Our Master Yahshua is coming for those who eagerly await Him, who are lifting up holy hands, who glorify Him with only one voice, without dispute or malice, who are in one accord, one soul and one mind, communication (*koinonia*), one judgment, fulfilling the law and the prophets.

It is a fixed part of Jewish belief that before the Messiah comes, there will first come Elijah. That will herald Messiah's coming. The "Elijah" always must come before any end to any age.

Since it was never heard of that a Jew was ever baptized or even needed to be, John excommunicated the whole nation by calling them to repentance and baptism. John's message was for men to repent even if they were Jews — that they, too, most definitely needed to be washed and cleansed from their sins, which only God could do. It

was unheard of for a Jew to do such a thing, to undergo baptism, which only Gentiles had to do for the cleansing of their sins. So unique was this call that Jews came by the scores to accept his message and the Messenger to come (Lk 7:29-30). These people made up a large part of the first churches in Judea, and also the church in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7).

Our Master's Baptism

In baptism our Master Yahshua was approved, recognized, empowered, confirmed as to who He was already from conception, in the womb of Miriam.¹ This was His inner revelation of truth from the Father — “This is my beloved Son, whom I approve of.”²

This is our example of our need for confirmation, approval, empowerment, and recognition by the Spirit, the Son and the Father. Jn 14:23 — “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make our abode with him.” This is no less incarnation than Messiah when He was on Earth (Jn 14:17-18; Jn 17:23).

The hour had struck for Yahshua to respond to the call of John the Baptist. He did not need to have His sins forgiven, nor did He need to be cleansed, but it was for Him to identify with the people's sins, whom He came to die for, and for the power of God to come upon Him in His obedience.

Isa 11:2 — “The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him...” His baptism was a deliberate act of self-identification with men:

- 1) To fulfill justice and righteousness (Mt 3:15) — those who came were earnestly seeking to do God's will and Yahshua took identity with them.

¹ Heb 5:8-9 — Although sonship was His position by birth, He demonstrated what He already was, and proved to be a son. There was no time when the Word of God became divine or was born, for He was always present with the Father, but He was *embodied* at conception (Heb 10:5).

² At His resurrection our Master proved to the world (not to Himself) that He was the Son of God.

- 2) He took identity with men in their preparation for the New Covenant and the coming kingdom, for which they would receive the heart of Jer 32:39; Dt 30:6,8; 5:29 (Jer 9:25).
- 3) He identified Himself with men in their cry for God and the reality of a personal relationship, which they had never felt. He identified with their search for God — “If you search for Me with all your heart, you will find Me” (Jer 29:13). It was these who flocked to the Jordan River, because they heard in John the voice of God in their awakening conscience (Lk 7:29-30).
- 4) Our Master Yahshua identified Himself with sin and the sorrow of mankind.

In the Jews who came the Law had done its full work — they came because of their sense of sin and guilt, which the ritual sacrifice of the blood of goats could not extinguish. Sin drove them to the voice of hope. They felt their need for God and the forgiveness of God, for the freedom from the consciousness of sin and guilt. He identified Himself with sinful man; He took upon Himself their sorrow, their contrition (Isa 57:15; 53:4), their search for God, and became one in heart with the men He came to save. He became what we are in order to make us what He is — un-fallen manhood and the representation of Yahweh.

Yahshua’s baptism was a public demonstration, but even more so it was a private and personal experience of inward consciousness. Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22 — The words came to Yahshua alone to do away with any doubt whatsoever as to who He was, as we also need before we are sent out on any mission. (Otherwise Satan fills your thoughts with doubts, to accuse and discourage the work of God.) So Yahshua went to the wilderness for forty days and disobeyed Satan and then cast Satan out by the finger of God.

The event of baptism does not happen for the sake of the crowd, but for the sake of the one being baptized, as it was with Yahshua — “This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased.” This was the moment of decision. Yahshua recognized His appointed hour. It

was the moment when He decided once and for all to cut the cables and to launch out into the deep, to embark. The preparation had ended and the task was begun (the Race).

Our Master's baptism was the moment of assurance for Him. Deep within, in His inmost being, He received the ultimate, unshakable certainty that He was, as no man has ever been, the Son of God incarnate in human life and nature. That was at His baptism. It was the moment of decision. He recognized that His appointed hour had come (to set His face like flint and accomplish His mission to the cross and to death). It was the moment when He decided once and for all to cut the cables and launch out into the deep. He was embarking.

I guess when we start the Race, we will know what is ahead of us. At Yom Kippur, at the beginning of the Race, we know the flesh is crucified, cut off, and that we are going to live for Him. In the Race we don't stumble over those things we have stumbled over before. We know those things; we see our iniquities. We are preparing for that Race.

His face looked as if it had been carved in granite — that is what it means that He set His face like flint. His countenance bore the mark of that inner struggle and the determination of His soul. He had us in mind. We now have to have Him in mind in our life. The road to Jerusalem was the one He was taking. No man ever looked forward to death and the agony of the cross where the sins of the world would be placed upon Him, a righteous man who knew no sin. And then He would be separated from His Father, which He could not conceive of except in utter horror.

To every man comes the moment within his heart and soul of a little shiver of doubt, a faint question mark, the terrible feeling he may be mistaken, the grim possibility that he may be on the wrong road.

Our Master's baptism was the moment when the last of these doubts perished forever. In that moment, there came to Him the experience of knowing that His Father was God and He was His Son. In baptism came the utter conviction of the approval of

His Father, of the certainty of His will for Him. He never doubted Himself or His task again (Acts 1:8; Ps 2:7).

At that time, Yahshua was fully and finally chosen for the work which God brought Him into the world to do. Through the long years of preparation, Yahshua had to prove and prepare Himself. But now in this moment, God was confirming Him for His unique sonship for a unique task. It meant He was to be prepared for Gethsemane and the cross. So He set His face like flint to accomplish this purpose of the ages.

Brought into Time and Space

It meant God offered, and Yahshua accepted the supreme task of being Savior of the world. He was chosen as from the foundation of the world — a lamb slain. Baptism was the moment of assurance, of utter certainty that the way ahead was clear (and it should be clear to us). This was the moment of equipping — the Holy Spirit of God came upon Him (Mk 1:10; Mt 3:16; Lk 3:22). It is the personal and private experience that you have responded to the call (many are called, but few are chosen). The coming of the Spirit of God is the preparation and the equipping for a great task (Acts 1:8; Lk 24:49; Mt 28:18-20).

Jdg 3:10 — Othniel

Jdg 6:34 — Gideon

Jdg 11:29 — Jephthah

Jdg 13:25 — Samson

1 Sam 10:10 — Shaul

Isa 11:2-5 — the King anointed by God

Isa 42:1; 61:1; 1 Jn 2:27 — the Servant of God

The coming of the Spirit was the preparation for a special task.

Isa 11:2 — When our Master Yahshua came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon Him and said, “My Son...” Up until this time, He had only

been told who He was and read about Himself in the Scriptures. Now the Father spoke to Him and confirmed His convictions. It wasn't that He knew who He was in the cradle, or when He was growing up. He might have heard some things, but I don't know exactly what they told Him. He is just like us — there has to be that final confirmation and conviction of who we say we are, especially when we go to that first Yom Kippur and when we start the Race.

It is as if we are being prepared now. The preparation had ended in His baptism, and the Race (or the task) had begun when He went to the waters and the Holy Spirit came upon Him. It makes us think that the Holy Spirit is going to come upon us in a way we don't know yet. But we have to be prepared for that.

This baptism was recognized as the confirmation of who He was, who He had been already from conception in the womb of Miriam. This was His inner revelation of truth from the Father. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Mt 3:17). What do we say at our *bar mitzvah* celebrations? "This is my son, in whom I am well-pleased." That was His approval, "My beloved Son." Isn't that amazing? "This is My Son." That was confirmation — that ended all doubt. It was cast away forever.

David Zerubbabel — This takes away that horrible farce of Christianity that He was born with this halo around Him and He walked through life like that. It restores His humanity. At the age of 12 in the temple, things were dawning in His heart. Things were working in Him, but He was still the carpenter's son. He came to the point of His baptism, and His heart was probably just pounding out of His chest. What was going on in His heart when Yochanan prophesied and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"? Then He heard His Father's confirmation, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He was a man. It wasn't some rehearsed thing, so everyone could see and hear something. It was for Him that He could be confirmed and have confidence.

It is an example of our need for this confirmation or approval, of this power or empowerment, this recognition by the Spirit. We need the confirmation daily of knowing who we are through the encouragement that we get. Our Master said, "If anyone loves

Me he will keep My word, and We will come and make Our abode in him” (Our home with him, Jn 14:23). That was one of the wonderful times in my life that I can remember when I was reading that — it was just as if it ended everything. That was way back in California. “If anyone keeps My word I will love him, and My Father will love him, and I will make Myself real to him” (Jn 14:21). At our Master’s resurrection, He proved to the world, not to Himself, His sonship and His divinity.

There was no time when the divine Word of God became divine, or was born, for He always was present with the Father. There was no time when He wasn’t present with the Father. There was a time when the Man Yahshua was born who was “our Lord” and Savior, but the Word of God was not born – but dwelled in “our Lord” (1 Cor 6:17; Heb 10:5; Lk 1:35). A human was conceived in Mary’s womb in whom the divine Spirit took up His home (Col 1:19; 2:9; Jn 1:1).

How many times has Havah repeated that, “Holy Mary, Mother of God”? It takes His humanity away and capitalizes on His divinity. It takes His struggle away, the things He had to go through. He was like us. We see in Jn 1:12 and 1:14, we become sons of God, and the Son of God became like us. The word translated *become* is actually *made to be*. The word *become* is not in there. When we believe, we become like Him as He became like us (1 Cor 6:17).

Shoresh — When the throne of grace ceased to be the central element in the church, the confessional became that. You couldn’t ever really believe that you could overcome, so you just confessed, confessed, and confessed.

Mevaser — In 1 Jn 1:1 it says “the Word of Life” and in verse 2 it says the life was manifested, which means it became visible. What Yônêq said there in Jn 1:12 and 1:14 — in verse 12 it says, “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.” Then in verse 14 it says, “The Word became flesh and was manifested among men.” It hit me — that is the same thing as what Yônêq has been telling us, that the Word is incarnate in us, just as He was in our Master. We are the “Third Incarnation.” It made me want to walk that way today, that He could be

made manifest, incarnate, made visible in my life. That is who we are. That same life that was in Him, He intended to be in us (1 Cor 6:17).

Our Master came in the fullness of time and in the fullness of the apostasy of the religious system. That is where we came as well, right there. We had to struggle to find out who we were. Can this be us? He had to go through the same thing. He would be looking through the Scriptures, and the confirmation He felt would continue to work in Him. But the time came when He had to embark.

Daveed ben B'riyth — In Heb 10:9 it says, “I have come to do your will, O God.’ He takes away the first that He may establish the second.” And in verse 5 it says, “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body you have prepared for Me.”

This is the Word speaking — “a body you have prepared for Me.”

Daveed ben B'riyth — It dawned on me a little bit more that there is a body prepared on earth to carry out His will. I was thinking about the anger we were talking about yesterday, dealing violently (Mt 11:12) with the things that we stumble over in order to do His will. We have to be passionate. I could see how He walked. That is why He said, “I am the way, follow Me. Pick up your cross and follow Me.” I was very thankful to wake up to these things a little bit more. It filled me what was in our Master that day, when the fullness of time had come and He went forward, cutting off everything behind, old Israel, His whole identity, and starting something new that His Abba had told Him to do. That is what He had been sent for. Yom Kippur is going to be the same thing, the starting of the Race. I can leave behind all these things that entangle me, and I can build up along with my brothers and sisters, by the grace that He supplies.

Yes. We have the 49-year period of the Race, knowing the effect it is going to cause. If we can see that and pass it on to our children to have vision, exactly what they are living for, then I think it is going to help us tremendously. Our Master had to have that vision of what He was going to cause by walking perfectly, without sin and never losing communion with His Father — that He could rule over these things, the temptations that He was faced with just as we are. It says He had all the temptations we face, yet without sin — because He kept, maintained His communion with His Father.

That was the only way He could do it. We have the same Spirit dwelling in us. Blessed is every man upon whom the Spirit dwells permanently (Eph 5:18).

The power of the Holy Spirit came upon our Master Yahshua whom the person of the Holy Spirit indwelt. In the moment of baptism, Yahshua was divinely equipped for His task. For Him it was the moment of enlightenment and the moment of self-dedication, the moment the dove came upon Him and never departed for He never grieved the Spirit in Him. So the Spirit stayed upon Him until He finished His work.

Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; and Lk 3:22 come from Psalm 2. In Ps 2:7 is a description of a testing time in the life of the King of a holy nation. The heathen rage and rebel, but the King can have perfect confidence, because God has taken him as His son, and his course is safe in the hands and the power and in the promise of God. Not only will his own realm be safe and his own throne secure and his enemies conquered and subdued; the day will come when God will extend His kingdom to the ends of the earth.

This Psalm came down to our Master Yahshua, and now it comes to us as His anointed royal priests. It also comes from Isa 42:1, and Isa 53, the One who was wounded for our transgressions... and silent before the shearers (verse 7). When our Master Yahshua heard these words, He must have realized with binding certainty that His ultimate victory was certain, but the way to it was the way of sorrow and suffering, of self-sacrificial service and self-dedication (as an offering for the sins of men).

So when Yahshua heard this voice, He knew that He was God's chosen Messiah, the Lamb of God, but He also knew that the only way that it would be established would be with His whole heart and soul. Jer 32:42 was the way of the cross. His first obstacles were just ahead of Him (Mt 3:16-17; 4:1).

In His baptism we see the self-identification of Yahshua with men and the self-dedication of Yahshua to the purpose of God. This is truly the baptism of fire we are baptized with, which was kindled in the Savior's heart (Lk 12:49). For in that moment of baptism, there was kindled in the heart of Yahshua a flame of sacrificial love which

nothing in time or in eternity could ever put out (Jn 1:5; Heb 12:1). After His baptism, He was on His way to the cross. He set His face like flint. His preparation had ended and the task had begun.

Our Master Yahshua was a lamb slain before the foundation of the world. After His baptism, He was on His way to the cross to be the slain lamb, to go into death. He went into the wilderness to be tempted. All that Satan offered Him would be a distraction from going to the cross, the very reason He was sent into the world (Mt 4). Satan tried to get Him to avoid the cross. He had to become sin (2 Cor 5:21). Sin is self-centeredness, the desire for a person's own satisfaction. He became all of the breaking of the Ten Commandments. He became sin, and the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). He went to the cross as a criminal, desiring to die and to enter death on behalf of all. The sins of the world were put on Him (2 Cor 5:15). All our sins and guilt were placed on Him. He became our own sins and paid the penalty of them (Rom 6:23). Now He wants to kindle a fire in His offspring to complete for Him all His desire (Isa 53:10-11; Lk 12:49-53).