

The Baptismal Regeneration / Believer's Baptism Debate

A theological and historical overview of the most contested
subject of the church age.

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Chapter Four

The Gospel And Baptism Of John The Baptist: Was it Christian?

Before we address the question of whether John the Baptist was a gospel preacher and whether his baptism was Christian baptism, we must establish that he was a prophet of God; that his baptism was not a Jewish proselyte ritual; that his baptism was not an Essene proselyte baptism; that his ministry was not a separate dispensation; and finally, that his gospel and baptism were one and the same with that of Christ and the apostles after Pentecost. The necessity for this direction of study is occasioned by the stress of some ritual salvationists in either tracing Christian baptism as far back as the Genesis record or by factoring the Old Testament and the ministry of John the Baptist out of the gospel equation altogether. They demonstrate these errors primarily through the allegorical method of interpretation, of which we will define and discuss in the context of this chapter.

Jesus called John the greatest prophet (even more than a prophet) that had ever been born of a woman (Lk. 7:26-28; Matt. 11:9-12). He said that John was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that a prophet like unto Elijah would appear (Matt. 11:13-15; 7:10-13).¹ Let us consider it established, therefore, that John the Baptist was a prophet.

The Apostle Peter proclaimed that there never was a prophet of God who did not preach the gospel of Christ, when he said: *To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins* (Acts 10:43). Mark said that John's arrival as the forerunner of Christ, in fulfillment of prophecy, was the beginning of the Gospel of Christ:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mk. 1:1-3).

John did not restore temporal Israel to its political autonomy in the land of Palestine, but he did preach a repentance that would receive remission of sin—*John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins* (Mk. 1:4). John knew full well that there was only one source for the remission of sin and admitted this when he said: *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world* (Jn. 1:29b, 36)—not just the sin of the corporate nation of Israel.

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, proclaimed that every prophet since the beginning of the world preached the gospel of Christ:

¹ Of course, Jesus proclaimed His own witness through His works to be greater than that of John the Baptist (Jn. 5:36).

As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began...To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, (Lk. 1:70, 77, 78).

When the rich man in hell requested for Lazarus to return to earth from Paradise to give the plan of salvation to his lost brothers, Abraham replied that they already had the written gospel—*They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them* (cf. Lk. 16:29-31). This was not referring to the Law of Moses, but rather, to his gospel.

Jesus told His disciples that all the things that would befall Him in Jerusalem were spoken by the prophets (Lk. 18:31-33). He told the two disciples on the road to Emmaus that they were fools for not discerning all things concerning Himself in the Old Testament prophets (Lk. 24:25-27). And when Jesus, in disguise, explained the gospel to them from Moses and the prophets it burned within their hearts (Lk. 24:32). When Jesus met with all the disciples in Jerusalem He rehearsed the gospel to them in this wise:

These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me (Lk. 24:44).

The Apostle Peter proclaimed to the Jews at the temple that all of the prophets preached the coming of a suffering Messiah Who could blot out their sins:

But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:18, 19).

It was this Jesus Christ Whom the prophets preached— *And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you* (vs. 20). It was this same Jesus Whom the prophets had been preaching since the world began—*Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began* (vs. 21; cf. Ps. 51:1). Christ is the prophet that Moses prophesied would be like unto Him—

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you (vs. 22).

And it is failure to believe in Him that results in destruction—

And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to

bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.(vs. 23-26).

Jesus Christ Himself was in all of those prophets as they predicted and inquired into the Gospel of Grace—

Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into (I Pet. 1:10-12).

The false prophets of old and new are damned because they deny the only Lord God that bought them—

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction (II Pet. 2:1).

The apostles were preaching the same word that had been spoken by the prophets—*That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour* (II Pet. 3:2).

The Apostle Paul affirmed before Felix that his hope toward God was built upon his belief in the things written in the Law and the Prophets:

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust (Acts 24:14-15).

He testified before Agrippa that he hadn't preached anything that had not been prophesied by the prophets and Moses:

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.(Acts 26:22, 23).

When Paul was taken to Rome, after he had appealed to Caesar, he was allowed to lodge in a home under house arrest. It was there that the Jews appointed him a day wherein he could preach. From morning to evening he preached Jesus Christ from Moses and the prophets:

And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the prophets, from morning till evening (Acts 28:23).

When writing to the Roman church, he reminded them that the gospel of God had been promised by His prophets in the holy Scriptures:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name: Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1-6).

The Scriptures of the prophets had predicted a gospel for all nations:

But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith (Rom. 16:26).

The things Christ preached about Himself are those which were spoken to the Jewish fathers by the prophets—

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds (Heb. 1:1, 2).

Some scholars of dispensationalism may be apprehensive of the path we are taking in this line of reasoning about a unified plan of salvation. They see the gospel of the kingdom as uniquely Jewish, announced by John the Baptist, offered by Jesus, and the offer withdrawn by Jesus. They understand the good news of the kingdom to be the literal restoration and establishment of the nation of Israel in the promised land. To all of this, we agree also. However, integral within this message of the kingdom was the same simple plan of salvation that is the same for all men since the fall of Adam, (cf. Chapter 3 of this present work). Though the visible church on earth is not the literal nation of Israel established, the present form of God's kingdom is spiritual and is entered into by both Jews and Gentiles alike upon reception of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. J. Dwight Pentecost explains the present form of the kingdom as follows:

Notice too that the kingdom of God in this present age formed through the preaching of the Gospel would be made up of Jews, of Samaritans, and of Gentiles...

Paul's life was dedicated to the preaching of the grace of God. But then he went on to say, "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again (Acts 20:25). Paul clearly equated preaching the Gospel of the grace of God with the preaching of the kingdom of God. Once again we see that the

two terms are used interchangeably, as in 28:23 when Paul arrived in Rome and “they arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.” Again the preaching of Gospel was referred to as testimony concerning the kingdom of God. And in verses 30-31 this identification was again made where “for two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Thus as we survey Paul's ministry as recorded in the Book of Acts, we see that he was an ambassador of the kingdom of God—but his message was salvation through the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. No reference is made to support the notion that the earthly Davidic kingdom had been established. Rather, the message concerns entrance into a present form of the kingdom of God by faith in Jesus Christ.²

Philip's evangelism of the Samaritans is described as follows:

But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women (Acts 8:12).

When Paul preached in Iconium, a great number of Jews and Greeks believed (Acts 14:1). When he returned again to Iconium, Luke tells us that he spoke words...

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).³

So, all prophets preached the gospel of Christ; John the Baptist was a prophet who preached the one true gospel; therefore, all of the apostles preached the same gospel as did John the Baptist—

That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior (II Pet. 3:2).

If there is only one plan of salvation that will remit sins and take them away, and if John the Baptist preached it, can we therefore call his baptism a Christian New Testament Baptism? Before we can approach the answer to this question there must be an unmistakable understanding of what John's baptism was not. If the next several pages are too difficult for some Christians to understand, they may wish to skip to the end of the

² J. Dwight Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come: Tracing God's Kingdom Program And Covenant Promises Throughout History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1995), pp. 278, 280-281.

³ For a further study of *kingdom of God* in the NT, see Acts 1:3; 19:8; Rom. 14:17; I Cor. 4:20; 6:9, 10; 15:24, 50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 1:13; 4:11; I Thess. 2:12; II Thess. 1:5; II Tim. 4:1, 18; James 2:5; II Pet. 1:11.

chapter regarding the gospel that John the Baptist preached. However, it is strongly advised that one familiarize himself with all the material in this chapter.

We begin by affirming that John's baptism was neither a continuation of Jewish proselyte baptism nor a transition into Christianity. There is a very informative article by Wm. Sanford La Sor in the *Biblical Archaeology Review* analyzing the various discoveries of ancient Jewish baptismal immersion pools. He points out that archaeologists have discovered forty-eight such ritual baths, and he includes several excellent photographs. La Sor does state that *Christian Initiatory baptism, however, has its parallels in Jewish Proselyte baptism* and further states, *Now—with all this newly available evidence—we can ask what these miqvoat [baptistries] can tell us about Christian baptism, for almost surely these Jewish miqvoat provided the background for Christian baptism.*⁴ If this thesis is correct, it creates a great challenge for Christianity and the Gospel. We will now address this challenge, trusting that the reader will see its relevance.⁵

If there ever was such a rite as proselyte baptism, it should be mentioned at least once in Scripture. In the Old Testament we read of many proselytes to the Jewish nation. There were the Shechemites in Jacob's time (Gen. 34); the multitude that came out of Egypt with the Israelites (Numbers 21:4); Jethro, Moses's father-in-law (Ex. 18:6,7); Shua (Gen. 38:2); Ruth (Ruth 1:6); and many inhabitants of Persia (Esth. 8:17). But in all of these cases, not a word is mentioned of admitting proselytes by baptism.

There was indeed a law listing the qualifications for admitting proselytes to the Jewish religion so that they might enjoy the ordinances and privileges there—they must be circumcised with all their males (Ex. 12:48).

There were proselytes in the times of Hezekiah who came out of the land of Israel to eat the Passover at Jerusalem (II Chron. 30:25). They, therefore, had to be circumcised, but there was no mention of proselyte baptism. Among the families to have come out of Babylon, proselytes are one sort; but they say nothing of their baptism (Ezra 6:21). There was a law regarding marriage of a woman taken captive in a war (Deut. 21:10-14). She had to first become a proselyte by shaving her head, cutting her nails, and putting off the raiment of her captivity; but not a word was written about proselyte baptism for her.

There were many different bathings, baptisms, or dippings required of the Israelites, and these would be equally incumbent, after the fact, upon proselytes as well; yet none of these served to initiate a proselyte. They were for purification from some form of uncleanness in a ceremonial sense. These purification rites were actually baths where

⁴ William Sanford La Sor, *Discovering What Jewish Miqvoat Can Tell Us About Christian Baptism*, *Biblical Archaeological Review*, January/February, 1987, pp. 57, 59.

⁵ Emil Schurer D.D., M.A., *A History of the Jewish People in the Times of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1901), Division II, Vol. 2, pp. 321-324. Schurer argues that it should be obvious to all that Christian baptism is the same as Old Testament bathings going back to the Levitical ritual bathing requirements.

people scrubbed for sanitation as well as ceremonial purposes.⁶

If there was such a ritual as proselyte baptism, it would certainly appear in the Apocryphal writings, written between the Old and New Testaments. These were supposedly written by Jews about Jews. Though mention is made of proselytes, there is not a mention of proselyte baptism. One example is Achoir the Ammonite, in the times of Judith, when he cut off the head of Holophernes— *And when Achior had seen all that the God of Israel had done, he believed in God greatly, and circumcised the flesh of his foreskin, and was joined unto the house of Israel unto this day* (Judith 14:10).⁷ Here we see Achoir becoming a proselyte for life, but read nothing of his being baptized.

And with all of the mention of proselytes in the New Testament, one would expect at least one reference to proselyte baptism (Matthew 23:15; Acts 2:10; 6:5; 13:43). In fact, one would expect to see traces of this custom in the literature surrounding the times of John, Christ and the Apostles. But there is no mention of proselyte baptism in Philo the Jew, who lived in first century Alexandria where there should have been more proselytes than in Judea. He mentions proselytes, but speaks nothing of their baptism.⁸

Josephus, the Jewish historian, who lived a little after Philo, was immensely knowledgeable of Jewish affairs. He had been a Jewish priest and understood their rites and ceremonies. He spoke of many Gentile proselytes, and speaks of whole nations becoming Jews by circumcision. He mentions the Idumaeans, whom Hyrcanus conquered and allowed to remain in their own land on condition that they be circumcised and conform to the laws of the Jews.⁹ He writes of the Itureans whom Aristobulus fought against, adding part of their country to Judea. Again, the inhabitants could remain in their country if they were circumcised and conformed to the laws of the Jews. In the context, Josephus quotes Strabo, who, upon the authority of Timogenes, says that he enlarged the country of the Jews, and made part of the country of Iturea theirs, joining them to them by the bond of circumcision.¹⁰ He writes of Helena, queen of Adiabene, and her son Izates, embracing the Jewish religion. He also speaks of another Helena who became married to Monobazus, the king of Adiabene, but not a word is written about

⁶ *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Ed., James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), Vol. 2, pp.408, 409. "In one passage of the Mishna, proselyte baptism seems to be merely a bath of ceremonial purification, which the proselyte must take as one who 'comes from the foreskin.' The ceremonial of the practice likewise would be developed gradually... We find, however, that proselyte baptism was regarded also as a bath of purification, designed to remove the uncleanness of heathenism...thus, in the case of a woman who was desirous of embracing Judaism, and who had taken the bath required after menstruation, this act was credited to her by a certain Rabbi Joshua as equivalent to the bath required of proselytes." But Christian baptism does not purify one physically or spiritually.

⁷ KJV Apocrypha.

⁸ See regulations concerning proselytes. *Philo, The Works of: complete and updated*; Translated by C.C. Young (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), pp. 38, 39.

⁹ *Josephus, Antiquities*, Book XIII, chap. 9.1, William Whiston: translator (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1966) p. 279.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, *Antiquities*, Book XIII, chap. 11.3, p. 282.

proselyte baptism in either case.¹¹ However, Josephus does speak of the Baptism of John the Baptist and how the Jews used it, *not in order to the putting away, [or the remission] of some sins [only] but for the purification of the body; supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness.*¹² Whatever Josephus conceived baptism to mean, he seems to have understood faith and remission of sin to be a prerequisite (Josephus refers to faith and remission as righteousness).

One would also suppose that if such a thing as proselyte baptism existed in the time of John, Jesus and the apostles, there would be some record of it in the Jewish Targums. These were translations of the Hebrew Scriptures into Aramaic when Aramaic was the common language of Palestine after the Babylonian Exile (about 250 B.C. and A.D. 300). After the reading of the Scriptures there would be an oral rendering of them into Aramaic for the worshipers. This practice began at least as early as the prophet Ezra—*So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading* (cf. Neh. 8:5-8).¹³

The next step in the development of targums was to record these oral renditions into writing. The earliest existing material of such like is from Qumran about the second century B.C. In the centuries following the return from exile, Judaism was centered in Babylonia and in Palestine. In Babylonia, the Targum Onkelos was a word-for-word rendering of the Hebrew Pentateuch. Targum Jonathan Ben Uzziel became authoritative from the fourth century A.D. as the official Babylonian version of The Prophets. The only complete version of the Palestinian Targum in existence is Neofiti I from about the third century A.D. Only fragments of the Palestinian Targum on the Pentateuch are in existence among the Cairo Genizah scrolls. There are individual targums on Job-Psalms, Proverbs, the Five Scrolls and Chronicles which were never official and were later in origin than the targums of the Law and the Prophets.¹⁴

These targums are valuable in that they educate us regarding Jewish modes of expression, exegetical methods and interpretation in the early centuries of Christianity. In the Jonathan Ben Uzziel of the prophets, and the Onkelos of the Pentateuch, nothing is mentioned of Jewish proselyte baptism.

Various incomplete targums are extant, some of which would mention a dipping for servitude. This would not be a proselyte of choice, but a proselyte by compulsion in accordance with Gen. 17:12, 13, and would have nothing to do with Christian baptism.

¹¹ Ibid., *Antiquities*, Book XX, chap. 2.1, p. 415.

¹² Ibid., *Antiquities*, Book XIII, chap. 5.1, p382. Note: In Scripture, John the Baptist's baptism was never for physical purification as Josephus thought.

¹³ For an easily readable study consult *The Aramaic Bible: The Targums*, twelve volumes. Project Director, Martin Mc Namara, M.S.C. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992). [separate volumes have distinct publication dates]. Mc Namara is professor of Sacred Scripture at Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Dublin.

¹⁴ For an extensive discussion of the targums and the talmuds, see Emil Schurer, D.D., M.A., *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, Translated by Rev. John Macpherson, M.A., (U.S.A.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998), First Division, Vol I., pp. 117-166.

When an incomplete targum comments on Deut. 21:13 regarding the conditions required for a beautiful captive woman being married to an Israelite, it requires that she dip herself and become a proselytess in his house. But such dipping is not mentioned in the Deuteronomy passage itself, nor is it mentioned in the Targum Onkelos. The mention of dipping comes after the Talmud via an allegorical method of interpretation and does not come within the time of the targums under consideration.

Neither is there any mention of such a custom in the *Book of Traditions*, a collection of all the traditions among the Jews from age to age. It was written by Judah Hakkadosh around 150 A.D. (some say around 220 A.D.), and speaks of proselytes, but not of their baptism into Judaism. Now, if there is mention of a proselytized stranger dipping himself on the evening of the Passover, this is not proselyte baptism. He is unclean from being just circumcised and must bathe for the same reason any Jew would have to bathe if he had contacted anything unclean before eating the Passover. So this rule, according to Shammai, was concerning one already made a proselyte, and therefore the dipping or baptism prescribed to him by Hillel was for ceremonial uncleanness. His circumcision and commitment to Jewish Law made him a proselyte, but being just circumcised made him unclean, as if he had touched a dead body.¹⁵ This dipping was not on account of proselytism, but was common to, and obligatory upon, a circumcised Israelite in order to eat the Passover. Therefore he had to wait seven days until he was purified.¹⁶ This required a body washing which had both symbolic as well as literal, sanitary significance (Nu.19:11-19).

It was an ablutionary (*immersion*) washing of the body that was prescribed on a number of occasions in the Old Testament. It was required for defilement of lepers (Lev. 14:8,9);¹⁷ of those having a bloody issue (Lev. 15:5-13);¹⁸ of those having eaten that which had died (Lev. 17:15,16); of women before marriage (Esther 2:12); after childbirth (Lev. 12:6-8; Lk. 2:22);¹⁹ after menstruation (Lev. 15:19-23; II Sam. 11:4);²⁰ of those

¹⁵ Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley forge, Pa.: The Judson Press, 1969), p. 931. Strong's Theology quotes Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus*, 2,742-744 regarding this exact exchange: "We have positive testimony that the baptism of proselytes existed in the times of Hillel and Shammai. For, whereas the school of Shammai is said to have allowed a proselyte who was circumcised on the eve of the Passover, to partake, after baptism, of the Passover, the school of Hillel forbade it."

¹⁶ Allbert M. Shulman, *Gateway to Judaism: An Encyclopedic Guide to the Doctrines, Ceremonies, Customs, Languages, and Community Life of the Jews* (S. Brunswick; New York; London: Thomas Lyoseloff, 1971) Vol. 1, p. 458. "The founders of Judaism were among the first to realize the value of circumcision to the hygiene and health of the people."

¹⁷ For sanitation purposes it was required that there be two washings of clothes and body and two head shavings, seven days apart. This had not only spiritual significance but also hygienic, removing scales and flakes that might have passed on contagious diseases.

¹⁸ This is a man who is probably infected with gonorrhoea. The passage deals with ceremonial uncleanness as well as hygienic. This is why the passage addresses the contamination of his bed (vss. 4, 5), his chair (v.6), his person (v.7), his spittle (v.8), his saddle (v.9), and anything contacted from his discharge (v.10). The concern was that his uncleanness was infectious. There was a seven-day waiting period after the disease and then a bathing and washing of his clothes (15:13-15).

¹⁹ Having a baby was a fulfillment of a divine command (Gen. 1:28) and therefore not a sin from which to be purified. Thus, the ritual cleansing had a sanitary purpose as well as a ceremonial significance.

who came in contact with the dead (Num. 19:11-22; 31:19-20);²¹ of the high priest bathing himself before performing the rituals of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:4) and of Jews before the Passover (Jn.11:55).²²

The proof that purification rules were for hygienic as well as ceremonial purposes is clearly seen in Deuteronomy 23:12, 13. When a soldier in a military camp went out to defecate at night, he had to take with him a small paddle for digging. He was then required to bury his excrement.²³ Having to defecate was not a sin, but the soldier was to realize the Lord's holiness and omnipresence in the camp at all times. Even in his most private moments the holy God was with him, observing his behavior. But also, digging latrines had much to do with proper hygiene and to prevent disease from spreading through the camp.

Why are we discussing the sanitary significance of purification baths in the Old Testament? Because it is important for those who believe in ritual salvation to stress spiritual cleansing when referring to these purification rituals. This is why *they of the circumcision* in the early church considered circumcision essential to salvation. Maimonides, a twelfth century Jewish exegete, taught that the bathing pool [*Jewish Miqvaot*] was definitely not for hygienic cleansing when he wrote: *Now 'uncleanness' is not mud or filth which water can remove but is a matter of scriptural decree and dependent on the intent of the heart.*²⁴ Maimonides observed that the water of a spring *imparts cleanness however little its quantity.*²⁵ Whatever may be said of Maimonides as an industrious and judicious compiler of things out of the Talmud, he should not be considered of greater and higher authority than those writings from which he has compiled them. In Jewish interpretation there is a *Hierarchy of Authority* with an assumption that every later group of scholars is inferior to an earlier one, and is therefore bound by the decrees of its predecessors. This principle should be applied to anything originating with Maimonides.

²⁰ Though this was a periodic rather than a chronic uncleanness (vss. 25-27), the woman was considered unclean for seven days, the same as the man with venereal disease (vss. 2-12). Sexual intercourse was forbidden during menstruation (18:19; 20:18); 15:24 could mean that if a wife's period commenced while having intercourse, the husband would be unclean also and would also be a source of secondary pollution.

²¹ It is easy to see the sanitary as well as the spiritual significance of these rules.

²² The symbolic, spiritual significance of such purification is recorded in Psalms 26:6; 5:17; Ezekiel 36:25; Hebrews 10:22, but sanitary purposes should not be overlooked.

²³ Ibid. *Josephus, Wars* Book II, Chap. 8.7, p.477. Josephus notes that the Essenes had the same requirement for the members of their communities.

²⁴ *Code of Maimonides, Book Ten, the Book of Cleanness*, transl., Herbert Danby (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 526. See also, William Sanford La Sor, "Discovering What Jewish Miqvaot Can Tell Us About Christian Baptism" (*Biblical Archaeology Review*, Jan.-Feb. 1987) p. 52. Also, Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979) pp. 275,463. Maimonides believed in the allegorical method of interpretation; was a rationalist and a Kabbalist. He practically rejected much Talmudism and attempted to show by Aristotelian and Alexandrian methods that the written Law was founded on immutable reason. Some of his contemporary rabbis charged him with *selling the Scriptures to the Greeks*. When Scriptures were incompatible with his reason he held that the Scriptures were to be allegorically explained.

²⁵ Ibid., *Maimonides Book of Cleanness*, p. 526

The allegorical method of interpretation has allowed later Jewish Scholars and Christian theologians through the Reformation to take extreme liberties with the text of Scripture when it served their purposes. Maimonides says of allegorizing that the intention was not to destroy the Biblical reading, but to add to it a poetic figure. And so, if the scholar wishes to glorify the Sabbath, he will read Isaiah 56:2: *Blessed is the man that keepeth the Sabbaath, and he shall be pardoned*, instead of: *That keepeth the*

Sabbaath from polluting it. Hence the incessant Rabbinic formula: *Read not so, but so.*²⁶

Even though Old Testament ablution also had a spiritual significance, that meaning was metaphysical and not made real by the physical rite itself. The only spiritual significance was in pointing to a literal reality of the coming of a suffering Messiah. This precise point has always been a stumbling block for those who believed in ritual regeneration. Ablution was a picture of the literal fact that God's grace and mercy washes away our spiritual filth through the blood of Christ: (Rev. 1:5) *unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.*²⁷

Again, one would expect to read of some form of proselyte baptism in the Jewish Mishnah which defines all matters of civil and religious interest for the Jews. It is regarded as the *corpus juris* of Judaism. The Mishnah addressed agricultural tithes, public feasts, marriage, torts, Temple sacrifices, and ritual purity. It was organized into sixty-three tractates and six orders and was created around 200 A.D. under Rabbi Judah the Prince in Palestine. The text evolved in its exposition and interpretation by the Babylonian and

Palestinian Talmuds. But, according to some scholars, there is no mention in them of a proselyte baptism.²⁸ However, other scholars equally contend that the Mishnah does

²⁶ Ibid. Ferrar, *History of Interpretation*, pp. 104,105: "Concerning allegorization, Ferrar says: "Besides all these methods there was yet another which consisted in altering the words of the text into others which resembled them. It is strange that this absolutely arbitrary device for making the Scriptures say exactly what the interpreter wished to make them say was defended on the same principle of letter-worship as that which lay at the root of the whole system. The method was indefinitely facilitated by the plasticity of words in which the vowel-points could be altered in many ways. Thus the Bible was forced to imply thousands of things of which its writers never dreamed. On the pretence that every word of it was supernaturally communicated by God, it was asserted that if words sounded at all like other words, that secondary meaning must all be implied." Remember in the *Music Man* the famous line: "Pool" starts with "P" and "P" rhymes with "T" and "T" spells "Trouble" right here in River City."

²⁷ See also Ps. 51:2, 7; 65:3; 73:13; 79:9; Prov. 16:6; 20:9; Isa. 1:16, 18; 4:3,4; Dan. 12:10; Acts 22:16; I Cor. 6:11; Tit. 3:5; Heb. 1:3; 9:14; 2 Pet. 1:9; I Jn. 1:7, 9; Rev. 7:14. When the New Testament tells us to clean ourselves it is not speaking of physical sanitation but of spiritual self-discipline (James 4:8; I Cor. 5:7). Peter reminds us that baptism is *not the putting away of the filth of the flesh* (I Pet. 3:21), but OT bathing was the putting away of the filth of the flesh. Yet, OT bathing did not put away the filth of the spirit.

²⁸ Ibid. *Strong syst. Theo.* P. 931. Quoting Broadus in his *American Commentary* on Matt. 3:6..."Proselyte baptism is not mentioned in the Mishna (A. D. 200); the first distinct account of it is in the

teach a proselyte baptism dating from the first century A.D., which is still too late to have its antecedent in ancient Judaism.²⁹ Usually such passages speak of the baptism of one who is already a proselyte as a prerequisite to eating the Passover. This again is not a dipping to become a proselyte, but a dipping for ceremonial uncleanness. If he had just been made a proselyte by such a bath, there would have been no reason for a second dipping to qualify him for the Passover. Just coming out of heathenism and circumcision made him a ceremonially unclean Jewish proselyte, and therefore he had to undergo a purification rite the same as was common to and obligatory upon a circumcised Israelite in order to eat the Passover (See footnote 3). And though female proselytes had to undergo a ritual bathing also, nothing is said of that baptism making them proselyte Jewesses.

If there had been such a ritual as proselyte baptism in the time of John, Christ and the Apostles, we should look for it in the writings of the Christian Fathers of the first four centuries. They, especially converted Jews, would certainly not be ignorant of this if from Judaism Christian baptism was taken.

The Epistle of Barnabas speaks of Jewish rites as being a type of the Christian gospel and of their having their fulfillment in it.³⁰ His goal is to find out what was beforehand said concerning the ordinance of baptism, but does not speak of a proselyte baptism, though he had ample opportunity if he knew anything about it.³¹

Justin Martyr lived in the second century and was a Samaritan who had knowledge of Jewish affairs. He had a great dispute with Trypho the Jew and Tarphon, a Jewish doctor—both frequently mentioned in the Mishnah. Neither of these Jews bring up the subject of proselyte baptism.³² In fact, in answer to a question by Justin regarding what Jewish rites were necessary to be observed, Trypho replies: *to keep the Sabbath; to be circumcised; to observe the new moons; to be baptized or dipped, whoever touches any of these things forbidden by Moses.* This spoke of ceremonial uncleanness from

Babylonian Talmud (Gemara) written in the fifth century; it was not adopted from the Christians, but was one of the Jewish purifications which came to be regarded, after the destruction of the Temple, as a peculiar initiatory rite. There is no mention of it, as a Jewish rite, in the OT, NT, Apocrypha, Philo, or Josephus.”

²⁹ *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), Vol. 1, p. 348. “There is no reference to proselyte baptism in the OT or the Apoc., nor in Josephus or Philo. Some have therefore disputed whether this rite was practiced early enough to have influenced the origin of Christian baptism. It is now generally agreed, however, that the references in Epictetus, the Sibylline Oracles, and the Mishnah enable us, with some confidence, to date the beginnings of the practice not later than from the first century A.D.” But these baptisms were for physical and spiritual purification. Christian baptism was for neither of these purposes.

³⁰ *Epistle of Barnabas, Ante-Nicene Fathers*, chaps. 6-12 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 140-145.

³¹ *Ibid. Epist. of Barn.*, Chap. 11, p. 144..

³² *Ibid. Ante-Nicene Fathers* Vol. 1: Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chap. 13, p. 200. “For Isaiah did not send you to bath, there to wash away murder and other sins, which not even all the water of the sea were sufficient to purge; but as might have been expected, this was that saving bath of the olden time which followed those who repented, and who no longer were purified by the blood of goats and of sheep, or by the ashes of an heifer, or by the offerings of fine flour, but by faith through the blood of Christ, and through His death, who died for this very reason...”

touching a dead body, or bone, or grave.³³ Justin himself makes mention of Jewish proselytes, and calls them circumcised proselytes, but does not mention baptism.³⁴ He does speak of a certain sect, whom he does not consider truly Jews, and calls them Baptists.³⁵ If it was a universal Jewish tradition to receive proselytes by baptism, why would a certain sect be stigmatized by such a name as *Baptists*?

Origen, of the beginning of the third century, lived in Alexandria with a great numbers of Jews, and must have known their customs. In his opposition to Heracleon the heretic, he says that *he was not able to shew that ever any prophet baptized*.³⁶ If none of these baptized, except for John the Baptist, then what is the foundation for believing that there was such a baptism of proselytes before John and Christ?

Jerome, living in the same century, spent much time in Judea, having Jews for his teachers, yet he never mentions admitting proselytes by baptism or dipping. In defense of his doctrine of Christian baptism he attempts to take almost every reference to water in the Old Testament and make it a type of baptism. He promises to do this *with all the skill of a rhetorician to sing the praises of water and of baptism*. He argues that the Spirit's moving over the face of the waters to produce the infant world is a type of the *child drawn from the laver of baptism*. The Genesis firmament between heaven and earth teaches that the sinner must go through baptism to enter heaven. The first living beings coming out of the waters pictures believers soaring *out of the laver with wings to heaven*. The fountain in the midst of the Garden of Eden which parts into four river heads is Ezekiel's fountain which flows out of the temple *towards the rising of the sun until it heals the bitter waters and quickens those that are dead*. *When the antediluvian world falls into sin, nothing but a flood of waters can cleanse it again. But as soon as the foul bird of wickedness is driven away, the dove of the Holy Spirit comes to Noah as it came afterwards to Christ in the Jordan, and, carrying in its beak a branch betokening restoration and light, brings tidings of peace to the whole world*. Jerome uses the crossing of the Red Sea as a type of baptism. As the sweet waters of Marah watered the seventy palm trees, *so the cross makes the waters of the law lifegiving to the seventy who are Christ's apostles*. Baptism is pictured by Abraham's and Isaac's digging of wells. The cities of Beersheba and Gihon derive their names from springs, and thus become types of baptism. It is beside a well that Eliezer finds Rebekah; and Rachel, as a drawer of water, *wins a kiss* from Jacob. Jerome leaps from these illustrations directly into the ministries of John the Baptist, Christ and the apostles.³⁷ Clever allegorist that Jerome was, one would think that he would find Christian baptism somewhere in an Old Testament proselyte baptism, if indeed there was such a rite. Yet he does not mention admitting proselytes into Judaism by baptism or dipping.

³³ Ibid. *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chap. 46, Vol. 1, p. 217.

³⁴ Ibid. *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chaps. 122,123, Vol. 1, PP. 260-261.

³⁵ Ibid. *Dialogue with Trypho*, Chap. 80, Vol. 1, p. 239.

³⁶ Ibid. *Origen's Commentary on John*, Chap. 13, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 10, PP. 362,363.

³⁷ *The Principle Works of St. Jerome, The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975) Chap. 69.6, Vol. 6, p. 145.

Mentions of baptism from Tertullian, Cyprian, Gregory Nazianzen, and Basil only speak of the figurative baptism of the Israelites at the Red Sea; or of ritual bathings by immersion for purification from ceremonial uncleanness.

Where did church history first hear of proselyte baptism? It is claimed that it first appears in the Jewish Talmuds, one called *Jerusalem* and the other called *Babylonian*. The Jerusalem Talmud was for Palestinian Jews in the Jerusalem dialect. The Babylonian was for Jews in Babylon according to their dialect. The Talmud is composed of the *Mishnah*—the oral law which was in existence by the end of the second century A.D., and was collected by Rabbi Judah the Prince, and the *Gemara*—the commentaries of the Rabbis on the Mishna from A.D. 200 to 500. There was a strong practice of allegorism in interpretation so as to relativise the Scriptures. It was thought that the law of Moses

had to be adapted to changing conditions in Israel. The sixth part of the Mishnah (*Purification*) enumerates laws regarding Levitical cleanness and uncleanness, clean and unclean persons and objects, and purifications (see footnote 4). The Mishnah became a textbook in rabbinical academies. The Talmud represents the work of Judaism from Ezra to the sixth century.

The Talmuds contain several passages referring to dipping of Israelites and proselytes as well. There is still some serious debate among scholars as to whether these referred to dipping for servitude, for physical pollution, etc., or whether there was a proselyte immersion practiced throughout Jewish history. This debate will continue for years to come, yet neither side will alter the point that John's baptism was from God and not from Jewish tradition. But, from a Bible student's point of view, it must be said that the Talmuds are of too late a date to prove that such a custom existed before and during the ministries of John and Christ, since they were written several centuries after those times.

The *Encyclopedia Judaica Jerusalem*, regarding *Laws of Conversion*, comments on Ex. 12:49: *There shall be one law for the citizen and for the stranger that dwelleth amongst you*, saying that *the sages interpreted to mean that the stranger (proselyte) was the equal of the citizen concerning all the precepts of the Torah*. It would seem, therefore, that if a proselyte underwent a ceremonial immersion [*tevilah*] in a baptistry [*miqvoat*], this would be the same Old Testament sanitary/ceremonial bathing that any Jew would undergo in case of uncleanness.³⁸ Still, this has been an ongoing debate since the first century—

Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua disagreed as to whether someone who immersed himself but was not circumcised or vice versa could be considered a proselyte. According to R. Eliezer, he is a proselyte even if he performed only one of these commandments. R. Joshua however,

³⁸ *Encyclopedia Judaica Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, Israel: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., 1972), Vol. 13, p. 1183.

maintained that immersion was indispensable. The halakhic³⁹ conclusion is that *he is not a proselyte unless he has both been circumcised and has immersed himself.*⁴⁰

The *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* speaks of baptism as a purification rite for Jews and proselytes alike.⁴¹ Also, *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* takes the view that baptism is, *An essential part of the rite of conversion to Judaism in case of either sex is immersion in water to the accompaniment of special prayers. The rite, followed by John the Baptist, was subsequently taken over by the Christian Church.*⁴²

But what is the authority for these halakhic interpretations referring to proselyte baptism? In the eighth century, a group called the *Karaites* contended that Jewish Law

can be inferred only from a literal interpretation of the Scripture. They repudiated the whole concept of Oral Law, from whence we learn of proselyte baptism. The heirs of the anti-kalakhists of modern times were the founders of Reform Judaism in the early nineteenth century.⁴³ If one is confused about these later references to proselyte baptism, he should consult again the principle called *hierarchy of Authority*. Within this hierarchy there is the assumption in halakhah that every later group of scholars is inferior to an earlier one and is therefore bound by the decrees of its predecessors. Therefore, we must consider that earlier sources for these proselyte baptism inferences are wanting, thus creating a lack of authority for these latter statements.

However, if the Bible is the final arbiter for the common Christian, he will realize that God never ordained a requirement for proselytes separate from that required of natural-born Jews. The Old Testament dippings for Jews, and especially priests, were not one-time events, but were repeated for sanitation as well as ceremonial purposes.⁴⁴ There was only one law for Jews and proselytes—

³⁹ Geoffrey Wigoder, Editor-In-Chief, *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1989), pp. 308-311. "*Halakhah* is rabbinic jurisprudence. It is used to indicate a definitive ruling in any particular area of Jewish law. It was held that in certain areas the Torah did not prescribe any specific legislation, but left the matter to the sages to lay down specific legislation. In the early days of the Sanhedrin, the Sadducees questioned the validity of the whole concept of the oral law, halakhic rulings based upon hermeneutic interpretation."

⁴⁰ *Ibid. Encycl. Judaica Jer.*, p. 1183.

⁴¹ *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Abingdon Press) Vol. 1, p.p. 348, 349. Note also, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 98. "...ritual purification by total immersion in water (tevilah). During the Second Temple period, baptism was practiced by many pietist groups and sects (see Essenes; John the Baptist). It was required of converts to Judaism and became the distinctive conversion rite of the Christian church (Mk. 1:9; Acts 2:38, 19:3-5). The practice of total immersion has largely given way in Christianity to a ceremonial sprinkling of water. See also Ablution; Hemerobaptists; Miqveh." Here again the assumption is made that baptism regenerates and purifies which is not the case either in the OT or the NT.

⁴² *The New Standard Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York-Oxford: Facts On File, 1992), p. 112. Here again we have the assumption that Christian baptism had the same significance as OT bathing, which is impossible to defend.

⁴³ *Ibid. Encyclopedia of Judaism*, pp. 308-311.

⁴⁴ The *Hemerobaptists* were a sect of Jews who practiced daily ritual baptism.

One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord (Nu. 15:15).

Moving on in our discussion, one of the strongest contemporary arguments for proselyte baptism is that Christian baptism sprang from the Essene community at Qumran. In 1962 the Rev. Dr. Charles Francis Potter released the second printing of his popular work, *The Lost Years Of Jesus Revealed*. The back cover of the book explained the sum and substance of the challenge under consideration:

For centuries Christian students of the Bible have wondered where Jesus was and what he did during the so-called “eighteen silent years” between the ages twelve and thirty.

The amazing and dramatic scrolls of the great Essene library found in cave after cave near the Dead Sea have given us the answer at last.

That during those “lost years” Jesus was a student at this Essene school is becoming increasingly apparent. Scholars are gradually admitting the startling parallels between his doctrines and vocabulary and those of the Essenes and their “Teacher of Righteousness,” who was evidently executed nearly a century before the birth of Jesus. It is to his title and authority that Jesus probably succeeded.⁴⁵

Dr. J. L. Teicher published several articles to this effect in issues of *Journal of Jewish Studies* between 1950 and 1955. We know from history that the catalyst for Essene theology was the “Teacher of Righteousness”. Dr. Dupont-Sommer wrote: *the Galilean Teacher, as he is presented to us in the New Testament writings, appears in many respects as an astonishing reincarnation of the Teacher of Righteousness.*⁴⁶ J. M. Allegro said: *It now seems probable that the Church took over the sect’s way of life, their discipline, much of their doctrine, and certainly a good deal of their phraseology, in which it is now seen that the New Testament abounds.*⁴⁷ These very same views became popular in the book *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (1955) written by Edmund Wilson, wherein he affirms that Khirbet Qumran is perhaps more than Bethlehem or Nazareth, the cradle of Christianity.⁴⁸ The *Illustrated London News* of September 3, 1955 printed:

John the Baptist was almost certainly an Essene, and must have studied and worked in this building; he undoubtedly derived the idea of ritual immersion, or baptism, from them. Many authorities consider that Christ Himself also studied with them for some time. If that be so, then we have

⁴⁵ The Rev. Dr. Charles Francis Potter, *The Lost Years of Jesus Revealed*, (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1966), Back cover of the book.

⁴⁶ Cited in: F. F. Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Great Britain: Paternoster Press, 1966) p. 139.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Bruce, *Second Thoughts*, p. 139, quoting *The Radio Times*, January 13, 1956, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Edmund Wilson, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 94. “But what was the relation of Jesus to the ritual and doctrine of the sect, which the Gospels so persistently echo? Could he have been actually a member of the sect during those early years of his life when we know nothing about him—where he was or how he occupied himself—or was his contact with it, as Albright believes, chiefly by way of John the Baptist.”

in this little building something unique indeed, for alone of all the ancient remains in Jordan, this has remained unchanged—indeed, unseen and unknown, to this day. These, then, are the very walls He looked upon, the corridors and rooms through which he wandered and in which He sat...⁴⁹

Heinrich Hirsch Graetz believed firmly that Christianity arose out of Essenism. He had a great deal to say about this point in the course of his research.⁵⁰ His main evidence consisted in the fact that John the Baptist was an Essene in all his manner of life and had all of their traits. In fact, he believed that the whole church behaved in all respects like an Essene community. In Vol. II of his famous six volume work on the History of the Jews he wrote:

Jesus must, from the idiosyncrasies of his nature, have been powerfully attracted by the Essenes, who led a contemplative life apart from the world and its vanities. When John the Baptist—or more correctly the Essene—invited all to come and receive baptism in the Jordan, to repent and prepare for the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus hastened to obey the call, and was baptized by him. Although it cannot be proved that Jesus was formally admitted into the order of the Essenes, much in his life and work can only be explained by the supposition that he had adopted their fundamental principles.⁵¹

Dr. Joseph Klausner was a great Jewish scholar of the first half of the twentieth century. He was a leading thinker in Jewish circles of rabbinical studies. Taking exception with the Essene connection view of John the Baptist and Jesus he wrote:

Many Scholars, and especially Graetz, have wished to see in Christianity a purely Essene movement. This is not true. Jesus' object was not to form a community of solitaires, nor, as we shall see later, did he consistently practice monasticism and asceticism. Furthermore, even the early Nazarenes were no Jewish nationalists as were the Essenes, for whereas the latter played their own part in the war between Judaea and Rome, the former fled from Jerusalem to Pella, beyond Jordan. The Christians seek to

⁴⁹ Ibid. Cited in : *Second Thoughts*, p. 139.

⁵⁰ Heinrich Hirsch Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1893), Vol. II: *From the Reign of Hyrcanus (135 B.C.E.) to the Completion of the Babylonian Talmud (500 C.E.)*, pp. 219, 220: "The Essenes, who had no families, were obliged to augment their numbers from without. They could only add to the community by dint of mystical persuasions, and, as believing followers of Jesus, they continued their propaganda and attracted new adherents from the lower classes, whom the leaders of the Pharisees had neglected or avoided."

⁵¹ Ibid., Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Vol. II, p. 150. See also, Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 110. Klausner cites the works of the famous Jewish author H. Graetz in his complete works about Jesus. It was originally written in German but it never appeared in its original form, since it was almost all embodied in his "History of the Jews" (III⁵ Leipzig, 1905, pp. 376, 407-415). The French translator and editor was Moses Hess. Its French title is: H. Graetz, *Sinai et Golgotha, ou les origines du judaisme et du christianisme, suivi d'un examen critique des Evangiles anciens et modernes. Traduit et mis en ordre par Maurice Hess*, Paris, 1867. Pages 270-362 deals with the life of Jesus and his teaching, the history of subsequent Christianity being touched on briefly.

save the soul of the individual: the Essenes sought to save the community by social means.⁵²

It will be the next task of this current study to demonstrate that the beliefs and practices of both John and Jesus would have disqualified both of them from the disciplines of the Qumran sect. If they had joined, they would no doubt have been expelled for heresy, ritual uncleanness and unseparate practices. We will enumerate fifteen contradistinctions between Christianity and the Essene sect, although it would be possible to list many more.

(1) Although there were married Essenes living in the world, the strict Essene communities practiced celibacy.⁵³ Philo stated that they were a celibate order, writing that *they repudiate marriage; and at the same time they practice continence in an eminent degree; for no one of the Essenes ever marries a wife.*⁵⁴ Josephus states that they shun marriage in order to guard themselves from the wantonness of woman and *are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.*⁵⁵ Albert M. Shulman said: *They were essentially a celibate people, frowning upon all association with women, although some did marry.*⁵⁶

Though Christ was not married, He associated with several women such as Mary and her sister, Martha (Matt. 27, 28); the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn. 4); and the woman taken in adultery (Jn. 8). Neither John nor Jesus required their disciples to be unmarried. In Matt. 8:14, 15 Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law at his house. In Christianity there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28). Therefore, Christ's close, yet virtuous, association with women would have disqualified Him from association with the Essene sect.

(2) The Essenes required the practice of communism, as states Josephus: *These men are despisers of riches and so very communicative as raises our admiration. Nor is there any one to be found among them who hath more than another; for it is a law among them, that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order.*⁵⁷ Shulman states that *Only those who would subscribe to the vow of poverty could be admitted to the order.*⁵⁸

⁵² Ibid. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, P. 211.

⁵³ Ibid., Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Vol. II, p. 24. "It was almost impossible for Essenes to mix with women, as by the slightest contact with them they risked coming under the Levitical condemnation of uncleanness, and, led on from one deduction to another, they began to avoid, if not to despise, the married state."

⁵⁴ Ibid. *The Works of Philo*, p. 746, *Hypothetica* 11, 14-17.

⁵⁵ Ibid. *Josephus, Complete Works, Wars of the Jews*, Book II, chap. 8.2. Also, Frank M. Cross points out that there was an order within the movement that married. *The Ancient Library of Qumran And Modern Biblical Studies* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1958), p. 72

⁵⁶ Albert M. Shulman, *Gateway to Judaism: An Encyclopedic Guide to the Doctrines, Ceremonies, Customs, Languages, and Community Life of the Jews* (South Brunswick-New York-London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1971), Vol. II, P. 621.

⁵⁷ Ibid. *Josephus*, p. 476, *Wars of the Jews* (Book II, Chap. 8.3).

⁵⁸ Ibid. *Gateway to Judaism*, p. 621.

Although the Jerusalem church practiced community of goods, it was never

prescribed by God (Acts 5). The experiment was not successful, and Paul spent much time raising money during his missionary journeys to assist the saints of Jerusalem in their poverty (II Cor. 8). The Apostle John spoke of the "haves" and "have-nots" and the need for the former to have compassion on the latter (I Jn. 3:17). Paul was speaking of degrees of wealth in the church when he said: *He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully* (II Cor. 9:6). Paul did not mandate a vow of poverty but advised: *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God love a cheerful giver* (9:7). The fact that there was both bounty and poverty in Christianity was the very basis of Paul's collections (II Cor. 8). Therefore, it is doubtful that the founders of Christianity would have been qualified members of the Essene sect.

(3) Essene custom seems to have required morning prayer facing the rising sun. Cross translates the passage in *Wars of the Jews* (Book II, Chap. 8.5) to mean, not that they worshipped the Sun, but that they prayed toward the Sun.⁵⁹ When the Prophet Daniel would pray at sun up he would face the Temple (Dan. 6:10). Jesus taught praying in secret (Matt. 6:6), and praying in Christ's name (Jn. 14:13). There is only one mediator between God and man, Who is omnipresent, and therefore direction is not important (I Tim. 2:5). There is no mechanical formula for prayer in the teachings of Christianity. Christ prayed early in the morning (Mk. 1:35), with others (Lk. 11:1), and on a mountain (Matt. 14:23). In the Bible one could pray standing (Neh. 9:5); kneeling (Ezra 9:5); sitting (I Chron. 17:16-27); bowing (Ex. 24:8); or with hands uplifted (I Tim. 2:8). The early church could pray in the upper room (Acts 1); in a house (Acts 12:5-17); by a river (Acts 16:13); or on a beach (Acts 21:5). What mattered was the condition of the heart and the mediation of Jesus Christ (I Jn. 5:14; Matt. 21:22; Jn. 14:13). When the question arose as to where true worship took place (on Mt. Gerizim or Mt. Zion), Jesus replied: *But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth* (Jn. 4:23, 24). Because they did not teach mechanical or ritualistic prayer, there is reason to doubt that Christ and John would have been compatible with Essenes in their worship.

(4) The Essenes were a counter-Israel cult with a counter priesthood. They were a dissident priestly sect. According to Cross, *The priests of Qumran regarded the Jerusalem sanctuary as defiled, its priests false, its calendar unorthodox.*⁶⁰ Josephus stated that: *when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple, they do not offer sacrifices, because they have more pure lustrations of their own; on which account they are excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves.*⁶¹

But, in the New Testament, no explanation is needed for the function of the non-Zadokian priest in the story of the *good Samaritan* (Luke 10:31). Essenes would not

⁵⁹ Ibid. *Ancient Library of Qumran*, p. 77.

⁶⁰ Ibid. *Ancient Library of Qumran*, p. 96, 97.

⁶¹ Ibid. *Josephus*, p. 377, *Antiquities* (Book XVIII, Chap. 1.5).

have recognized the priesthood of John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, a priest of the division of Abijah who served, according to lot, in the Jerusalem Temple (Luke 1:5, 9). Jesus recognized the legal functions of priests at Jerusalem in declaring lepers clean (Matt. 8:4;

Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14; 17:14; see Lev. 14:3). He had no basic quarrel with the prescribed function of the temple and the priesthood of His day. When Mary and Joseph brought the baby Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised, they offered a sacrifice and placed Him in the arms of Simeon the priest. Simeon had received revelations from the Holy Spirit about the arrival of the Messiah and prophesied to Joseph and Mary concerning the child (Lk. 2:21-35). Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples (Matt. 26:17-19).

Jesus was neither a Zadokian nor an Aaronic priest. His priesthood surpassed these (Hebrews 7:11); reaching back to Melchizedek (7:15-17); containing the perfection missing in the Aaronic system (7:18); being based on God's oath (7:20-22); being permanent (7:23-25); having no need to purge Himself as did the sons of Aaron (7:26-28); continuing in heaven where God has erected the true sanctuary of which Moses' tent was but a shadow (8:1-7); fulfilling the promise of a New Covenant (8:8-13); its sacrifice needing no repeating for it was once-for-all (7:27; 9:12); its offering not being animal but the body and blood of Jesus Christ (10:4, 10-14); resulting in access to God for all Christians, not just the priestly order (10:11-22); and its effectiveness in the lives of God's people being guaranteed by Christ's constant intercession (7:25). Therefore, John and Jesus could not have been a part of a separatist Zadokian-Essene sect.

(5) The Essenes lived mostly to themselves in a monastic communal environment that was fortified with walls and stringent membership requirements. Anyone seeking admission to their brotherhood underwent three years probation. During the first year, he wore the white linen habit and loin-cloth (characteristic of the sect)⁶² and carried the small trowel which every Essene used to dig a latrine, as prescribed in Deuteronomy 23:12-14. At the end of the first year, the novice was admitted to their baptismal water of purification, but two more years would elapse before he could be admitted to the communal meal. Even then there was a swearing of a list of tremendous oaths before he could touch their food.⁶³

John baptized people as soon as he saw that they had repented or believed (Acts 19:4, 5). There was no probation period on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37, 38). There was no waiting period of instruction for the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:18). John baptized publicans (possibly Gentile money handlers) without requiring them to become Jews (Lk. 3:12). John felt that he needed to be baptized, a need he would not have felt if he were an

⁶² Ibid. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, Vol. II, p. 26: "The Essenes were distinguished also by other peculiarities, They were always clothed in white linen." Ibid., But Klausner notes a contrast in clothing in *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 243: "From his clothing of camel's hair it would seem that he [John the Baptist] looked upon himself as a prophet, for it is said of the prophets that they 'wore camel's hair;' and from his wearing a leathern girdle, that he supposed himself to be Elijah."

⁶³ Ibid. *Josephus*, p. 477, *Wars* (Book II, Chap. 8.7). Josephus describes the long lists of requirements for joining the Essene sect.

Essene and if his baptism was Essene baptism (Matt. 3:14). Luke said that any who *gladly received his word were baptized* the same day (Acts 2:41). Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch as soon as he believed (Acts 8:36-39). Jesus told His disciples to present the gospel to all nations, baptize believers, and then teach them to observe all things (Matt. 28:18-20). Therefore, John and Jesus required disciples to be baptized too soon after conversion to be a part of an Essene tradition.

(6) The Essenes would not anoint themselves with oil. Again, Josephus says: *They think that oil is a defilement; and if one of them be anointed without his own approbation, it is wiped off his body; for they think to be sweaty is a good thing.*⁶⁴ But the disciples of Christ went out two by two laying hands on the sick and anointing them with oil (Mk. 6:13). When Jesus was eating in the home of a Pharisee, a woman in the city, *which was a sinner* [i.e. Mary Magdalene, John 11:2], anointed Him with oil (Lk. 7:46; cf Mk. 16:6-13). See also Mary, sister of Martha in John 12:2-5. Jesus described the Good Samaritan as one who poured oil into the wounds of the man left by the side of the road (Lk. 10:34). The writer of Hebrews describes the Son as having been anointed by the Father with the *oil of gladness* (Heb. 1:9). The Apostle James told the sick to call the elders to pray for him and anoint him with oil (James 5:14). Most ointments in the Bible contained an oil base, to which aromatic spices, especially myrrh, were added (Ex. 30:23-25). Therefore, Jesus would have been seen as having unclean skin that was not rough enough and sweaty enough to be considered an Essene.

(7) We see a contrast with Essene baptism, as we have noted above, in the three-year probation before admission to the sect. Essene baptism was for physical and spiritual purification. The Baptism of John, Jesus and the apostles was for neither. The New Testament rite was believer's baptism (Acts 2:41). John's baptism was called the *Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins* (Lk. 3:3). John did not baptize people so that they would repent and have remission of sins but only if they already had done so. Christians in the New Testament were added to the visible church the same day they were ritually immersed (Acts. 2:41). A key difference to be noted well is that Old Testament ritual bathings and Essene ablution were self-administered (Lev. 14:8, 9; Nu. 19:7,8), whereas John's and Apostolic baptism required an administrator (Acts 8:38, 39; Matt. 3:13, 14; 28:19; Jn. 3:23). Therefore, John and the disciples would have made themselves ceremonially unclean by touching their candidates for baptism, thus disqualifying themselves from Essene communion.

(8) Another point of difference was that of physical separatism.⁶⁵ Hippolytus said that Essenes would not handle a coin which bore the likeness of the emperor or any other man, for the very act of looking at such a thing was regarded by them as one of the forms

⁶⁴ Ibid. *Josephus*, p. 476, *Wars* (Book II, Chap. 8.3).

⁶⁵ Ibid., Graetz, *History of the Jews*, p. 24. Of Essene separation he writes: "...an Essene, was consequently obliged to avoid any intercourse with those who were less strict than himself, lest he should be contaminated by their proximity. Such considerations compelled him to frequent the society of, and to unite himself with, those only who shared his views. To keep their purity unspotted, the Essenes were thus induced to form themselves into a separate order, the first rule of which commanded implicit obedience to the laws of scrupulous cleanliness."

of idolatry forbidden in the Second Commandment.⁶⁶ When the Pharisees tried to entrap Jesus on the subject of taxes He said: *Shew me the tribute money* (Matt. 22:19), then He made particular note of Caesar's image and superscription on the coin (22:20, 21). Jesus often associated with publicans who were tax collectors handling many coins for the Roman government (Matt. 9:10). Among Jews they were also rejected because they had contact with Gentiles and were, therefore, ritually unclean. *Publicans and sinners* are cited together as examples of undesirable types (Matt. 9:11; 11:19; Luke 15:1). Jews regarded Publicans as ceremonially unclean, on account of their continual contact with Gentiles, and their need to work on the Sabbath. Thus the rabbis taught that their pupils should not eat with such persons. This explains the expressions *tax collectors and sinners* (Matt. 9:10f.; 11:19; Mk. 2:15f.; Lk. 5:30; 7:34; 15:1) and *tax collectors and harlots* (Matt. 21:31). Matthew, one of the twelve, was himself a publican (Mtt. 10:3). The Scribes and Pharisees complained that Jesus ate with publicans and sinners (Lk. 5:30).⁶⁷ He was called a *friend of publicans* (Matt. 11:19). Jesus said that publicans would go to heaven before the Pharisees (Matt. 21:31, 32). John baptized publicans and told them to continue collecting taxes, but fairly this time (Lk. 3:12, 13). Publicans felt free to draw near to Jesus (Lk. 15:1). Jesus abode in the home of Zacchaeus the publican (Lk. 19:5). He told Peter that he would find a coin in the mouth of a fish with which to pay tribute (Matt. 17:27). The Scribes and Pharisees complained that Christ's disciples did not wash their hands when they ate bread (Matt. 15:2). Jesus was always laying hands on the sick (Mk. 5:23; 6:5; 8:25). He prophesied that his followers would lay hands on the sick (Mk. 16:18). Therefore, the Essenes would have considered Jesus an unclean, unseparate idolator and unqualified for Essene communion.

(9) We see a huge difference in their observance of the Sabbath laws.⁶⁸ In the Gospels, even the strictest rabbis would allow a domestic animal to be rescued from a pit on the Sabbath. But in the Zadokite *Laws*, a human may be rescued but not an animal. About twenty-five Sabbath regulations are listed among the Zadokite *Laws*, and they are a total contrast from the words of Jesus when He said: *The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath* (Mk. 2:27). Christ's interpretation was based on the purpose for which the Sabbath was originally instituted. In addition, the New Testament Christians do not have a Sabbath day, for Christ Himself is their rest. Note the words of the Apostle Paul to the Colossian church: *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days* (Col. 2:16). Jesus and His disciples gleaned corn on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1), He healed on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:10), performed miracles on the Sabbath, and was considered a Sabbath-breaker (John

⁶⁶ Ibid. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol 5, p. 136. Hippolytus, *The Refutation Of All Heresies*, Chap. 21: "Wherefore no one of those goes into a city, lest (by so doing) he should enter through a gate at which statues are erected, regarding it a violation of law to pass beneath images....And if they happen to come in contact with them (of another party) they immediately resort to ablution, as if they had touched one belonging to an alien tribe.

⁶⁷ Ibid. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, p. 25. Of the Essenes he writes: "It was only those whose views coincided with their own who could be allowed to cook food for them, and from such likewise had to be procured their clothes, tools, implements of trade and other things, in order to ensure that, in their manufacture, the laws of cleanliness had been duly carried out."

⁶⁸ Ibid. Graetz, *History of the Jews*, p. 24. Of the Essene Sabbath he writes: "In their eyes the mere act of moving a vessel from one place to another would count as a desecration of that holy day. Even the calls of nature were not attended to on that day."

9:16). Therefore, the Essenes would have considered Christ to have been in an unclean violation of their strict Sabbath laws and unqualified for communion with their sect.

10. The Qumran sect bound themselves to the old covenant of Moses. Bruce states: *What the people as a whole had failed to do, they themselves would do as a righteous Israel within Israel, and do it so faithfully that their obedience would compensate for their brethren's disobedience.*⁶⁹ Many scholars see Israel the nation as the suffering servant in Isaiah chapter fifty-three. Contrast this thought with the words of the Apostle Paul: *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous* (Romans 5:19). Philip taught the Ethiopian eunuch that the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 was none other than Jesus Christ (Acts 8:32-35). Paul confronted Peter, saying: *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified* (Gal. 2:16). Paul affirmed to the Romans: *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law* (Rom. 3:28). Therefore, Jesus and John would not have been committed to the Law of Moses according to the dictates of Essene standards of discipline, disqualifying them from communion with the sect.

(11) The Essenes looked for a reinstatement of the Aaronic priesthood and a new temple made with hands with a worthy priesthood.⁷⁰ In the early days of the Jerusalem church *a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith* (Acts 6:7), but there is no indication that they retained their priestly status within the Christian community. Christians were taught that they were all *a royal priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ* (I Peter 2:5). They, and not the Essenes, were the true *Israel of God*, the *chosen race*, and God's own people. The Essenes saw themselves as the *Israel of God* by law and the Christians were the *Israel of God* by grace. Therefore, Jesus would have been training early Christians to be totally distinct from the Essene sect.

(12) The Qumran sect cannot be distinguished from their *Teacher of Righteousness*, who was a Zadokian priest.⁷¹ Cross quotes 1QS9:9-11 as it speaks of *the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.*⁷² But in the Bible, Christ is a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:17, 21), which has its roots in the days of Abraham, 430 years before the Law of Moses (Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10). When Jesus asked His disciples: *Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*, the disciples responded with what they had heard: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the Old Testament prophets (Matt. 16: 13-16). But no one seems to have heard that He was the Essene

⁶⁹ Ibid. Bruce, *Second Thoughts*, p. 147.

⁷⁰ Miller Burrows, *Burrows on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), Vol. 2, pp. 69, 70: "In calling Jesus the Christ, the New Testament presupposes the messianic expectation of the average Jew, not the special two-Messiah concept of the Essenes... The Christian belief that several different forms of the Messianic hope were fulfilled in Jesus does not seem to have any parallel in the Qumran texts."

⁷¹ Dr. Hugh J. Schonfield wrote: "The nearest individual approach to the achievement of Jesus is the prophetic and didactic power which the Essenes associated with the unnamed Teacher of Righteousness."

⁷² Ibid. *Ancient Library of Qumran*, p. 168.

Teacher of Righteous returned to restore Israel.⁷³ Therefore, Christ's own priesthood disqualified Him from association in the Essene sect. The same would be true of John's descent from the priestly line of Abijah.

(13) The Essenes expected a militant Davidic Messiah who would deliver Israel politically.⁷⁴ Jesus repudiated this concept from the days of His temptations in the wilderness right up to His death. Yes, He was the Messiah of David's line and will establish Israel at His second coming. But He refused to accept the kingship which the Jews of Galilee tried to force upon Him, even though this caused considerable disillusionment among many who had followed Him up to that point (Jn. 12:12-16). If He had called for a holy war, thousands would have followed Him, but instead, *Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence* (John 18:36). Therefore, Christ's rejection of any form of Zealotism disqualified Him as an Essene Messiah.

(14) As stated above, the Qumran citizens saw themselves as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. They did not appear to have seen this fulfillment in any of their messianic figures. Jesus, on the other hand, became the *Suffering Servant* which was the very essence of His messianic role. When the Essenes finally had to abandon their fortress, some of them might have found their way to the Jerusalem Church. There they would have learned that their hopes were fulfilled, not in the militant way in which they expected, but by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.⁷⁵ Therefore, Christ's refusal to recognize the Essenes as the *suffering servant* would have alienated Him from their sect.

(15) The role of *suffering servant* could never have been fulfilled by a total withdrawal from contact with the sinful world. Philo affirmed that the Essenes separated themselves physically from other Jews and, in so far as possible, eschewed all contact with non-Essenes.⁷⁶ Jesus was condemned because He welcomed sinners; accepted invitations to their homes, and ate their food. But even the Pharisees who condemned Him were not nearly as separate as the Qumran sect. Jesus would lay hands on the sick, thus making Himself ceremonially unclean by Essene standards. He has always been

⁷³ Ibid. *Burrows on the Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 68. Miller Burrows writes: "To the very end, in spite of all his efforts to instill a very different conception (Mark 8:31-33; 9:31f), the disciples hoped that he would 'restore the kingdom to Israel' (Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6). This was what the Qumran sect expected of the Davidic Messiah; he was to be, as Bruce says, 'the victorious captain of the sons of light in the final conflict with the sons of darkness'; but, Bruce adds, 'Jesus repudiated this kind of Messiahship'; indeed, he 'rejected the whole conception of such a warfare.'"

⁷⁴ Ibid. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 245. "Had not the movement [Christianity] from the very beginning been impregnated with some seed, no matter how minute, of anti-Jewish nationalism, there never could have arisen the religion which so definitely tears away national barriers. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.*"

⁷⁵ For *suffering servant* see Mk. 8:31; 9:12; Lk. 22:15; 24:26; Acts 3:18; 26:23; 17:3; Phil. 3:10; Heb. 5:8; 9:26; 13:12; I Pet 1:11; 2:121-23; 3:18; 4:1; 5:1.

⁷⁶ Ibid. *Works of Philo, (quod omnis Probus Liber Sit) XII(76)*, p. 689: "These men, in the first place, live in villages, avoiding all cities on account of the habitual lawlessness of those who inhabit them, well knowing that such a moral disease is contracted from association with wicked men, just as real disease might be from an impure atmosphere, and that this would stamp an incurable evil on their souls."

known to Christians as the *friend of sinners*. The true *suffering servant* of Old Testament Prophecy would not be separate from Gentiles but, on the contrary, the Father said I will call Christ *a light of the Gentiles* (Isa, 42:6; Lk. 2:32). Jesus commissioned His disciples to take the gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Obedience to such a commission would have defiled an Essene and disqualified him from communion with the sect.

The proliferation of published material connecting Christian baptism with Mosaic ritual or Essene purification has made this discussion necessary to the study of the issues under present consideration.⁷⁷ Many who espouse an Old Testament or Essene proselyte baptism stress the sacramental saving nature of the rite.⁷⁸ Therefore, a few more questions need to be asked. First, if John took up this ritual as he found it among the Jews, then why do the Scriptures represent him as the first administrator of Christian baptism?⁷⁹ Why do the Scriptures single him out as *the baptist* if his baptism was a common ritual in Israel? John 1:6, 33 tells us that he was sent from God with direct instructions to baptize with water. The Jews thought it was some new thing and sent a committee to confront him concerning it saying: *Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?* (Jn 1:25). What was so strange about this if it was a common thing among Jews?

Jesus affirmed that John's baptism was commissioned straight from Heaven and not from the traditions of men:

The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus,

⁷⁷ Dr. Charles F. Potter, *Did Jesus Write This Book?* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1967), p. 143. Potter writes: "However, of all the *'ologies* and *'ists* involved in the serious riddle of Qumran and its caves, theology takes the lead because of the relationship between the Essenes, Jesus Christ and early Christianity. Bishop Lightfoot and his followers thought they had settled the question in the nineteenth century by dismissing the Essenes as having nothing to do with Christ and Christianity. A hundred years earlier, during the Age of Enlightenment, discussions frequently revolved around these questions: Was Jesus God? Was he or wasn't he an Essene? Wasn't Christianity the product of Essenism? Debates were long and hot and volumes pro and con were printed and distributed...Illustrative of that rationalistic age is a sentence from a letter (dated October 17, 1770) written by Frederick the Great to encyclopedist d'Alembert: 'Jesus was really an Essene; he was imbued with the Essene ethics, which, in their turn, owe much to Zeno [a Greek stoic philosopher].'"

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 348, 349: "Some have maintained that the significance of proselyte baptism was purely ceremonial, but in view of the fact that commandments of the Law were read during the administration of the rite, it is probable that we should, with H. H. Rowley, see proselyte baptism as *not an act of ritual purification alone but an act of self-dedication to the God of Israel, involving spiritual factors as well as physical, with a fundamentally sacramental character.*" But Christian baptism does not have a sacramental character in that it is not a means of saving grace and does not purify the recipient in any physical or spiritual way.

⁷⁹ John's baptism is called, *the baptism of repentance*, because a change of mind was required previous to his baptism (Matt. 3:6, 7, 8; Mk. 1:4). So also, the apostles of Christ exhorted men to repent, to profess their repentance, and give evidence of it, previous to their baptism (Acts 2:38; 26:20).

and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things (Matt. 21:25-27).⁸⁰

But if it was from the tradition of men, the Jews could have readily proclaimed: *of men*.

Also, if Christian baptism is Jewish proselyte baptism, why baptize natural Jews? Why did the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were natural Jews, come to be baptized of John? The Pharisees, of all people, would have been fit for a Jewish baptism, but were declared unfit for John's—

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to *our* father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham (Matt. 3:7-9).⁸¹

When the Pharisees rejected the baptism of John, they were not rejecting the tradition of men, but the very counsel of God—*But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him* (Lk. 7:30). The *Bible Knowledge Commentary* has a unique comment about John 3:25 regarding John's baptism:

The zealous disciples of John the Baptist found themselves at a disadvantage in an argument. A certain Jew asked why he should join John's group. He (and others; cf. "They" in v. 26) argued about ceremonial washing. Since there were Essene lustrations and Pharisaic washings, why should Jews follow another washing, John's baptism? Besides, the group following Jesus was larger (v. 26).⁸²

Why did Jesus commission His disciples to baptize all nations indiscriminately and without circumcision? Really, could anyone become a Jewish proselyte and be baptized without first being circumcised? And, *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan* (Matt. 3:5). Why such a multitude if John's baptism was such a common thing?

⁸⁰ Jesus was baptized by John (Matt. 3:13-17). Christ's disciples were baptized by John, since Jesus baptized no one (Jn. 4:2). So, the baptism of John, and the baptism of Christ and His apostles, were simultaneous. One did not succeed the other, and there were not three Bible baptisms being administered at the same time with different meanings. It was all one ritual (Jn. 3:22, 23, 26; 4:1, 2).

⁸¹ In the phrase *works meet for repentance*, the word *meet* (*axois*) means "worthy", or "appropriate" as in I Cor. 16:4; or "deserving" as in Matt. 10:10; or "worth" considering or accepting as in (I Tim. 1:15). In the NT the thought of merit is excluded; we are recipients of the gospel only as we receive it (Matt. 10:11, 13; 22:8; Acts 13:46; Heb. 11:38; Rev. 3:4). The *meet* John wanted was a demonstration that they had changed their minds about his gospel of Christ. Paul admonishes his readers to walk worthy of the gospel, their calling, and the Lord (I Th. 2:12; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; Eph. 4:1; 3 Jn. 6), thus linking the motive and goal of Christian action, the motivating power residing in God's prior action. Hence the warning not to receive the Lord's Supper unworthily (*anaxios*) does not refer legalistically to a moral quality but to an attitude determined by the gospel.

⁸² Ibid. *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, New Testament Edition, pp. 282, 283.

Many scholars have used Isa. 1:16; Ezek. 16:9 and 26:29 as predictions of Christian baptism, but they refer to pursuits of personal righteousness, or else an act of God in bestowing salvation apart from any ritual. One would have to experience divine inspiration in order to get baptismal regeneration from these passages. And if the Old Testament does not speak of being admitted to Judaism by baptism, then such a Jewish practice would have been a tradition and doctrine of men. Would Jesus have condemned the traditions of men and then have proceeded to establish one of them as a divine ordinance? Instead, Jesus said to the Scribes and Pharisees: *Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?... Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition...But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men* (Matt. 15:3, 6, 9). Nothing can make a rite a Christian ordinance but by its being instituted by God Himself. John's ministry was based on the Word of God as it came to him—but *he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me* (John 1:33), and—*the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins* (Lk. 3:2, 3).

The Ethiopian Eunuch had come to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8:27). If he was already a Jewish proselyte and had undergone their proselyte baptism, how did he know that he needed to undergo a Christian believer's baptism (Acts 8:36)? Many of the Jews on the Day of Pentecost were proselytes (Acts 2:10). If proselyte baptism and Christian baptism were the same, why did Peter command those who believed to be baptized (Acts 2:38)? Why do we assume that any proselytes became converted on the Day of Pentecost? Because the Grecians, or Hellenists, whose widows were neglected in the daily ministrations, no doubt included widows of Jewish proselytes whose husbands had been members of the Jerusalem church and had been baptized. This is why Nicholas the *proselyte of Antioch* was one of the men appointed to administer the benevolent fund to these widows (Acts 6:1, 5)? Why then would he, as one of the first deacons of the Jerusalem church, have submitted to Christian baptism?

Finally, if baptism and circumcision always co-existed, where did Christianity get the idea that baptism replaces circumcision? This question will be discussed more thoroughly in the next section of this study.

Some scholars, admitting the point we have made regarding proselyte baptism, will argue that John the Baptist's ministry was a parenthetical bridge between the Old and New Testaments. Is there a *dispensation of John* in the Bible? As we have noted before, the Holy Spirit proclaimed John's ministry as *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God* (Mk. 1:1). When Peter was called to present the Gospel to Gentiles, he professed the same, saying:

In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, *after the baptism which John preached* (Acts 10:35-37).

Jesus said: *The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it* (Lk. 16:16). John did not foretell the imminent coming of the Messiah, but announced that the Messiah/King was present—*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matt. 3:1, 2). The phrase *is at hand* is in the perfect tense and therefore it was before the crucifixion, resurrection, or Day of Pentecost that John knew that he must decrease and that Christ must be preeminent (Jn. 3:30).

A simple resolution to the whole debate can be accomplished by comparing the gospel of John the Baptist with that of Christ, and again with that of the apostles. John said: *repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matt. 3:2); Jesus said: *Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Matt. 4:17); and Luke said concerning Paul that he, *dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him* (Acts 28:30, 31).

The Apostle Paul equated his gospel and baptism with John the Baptist when he said: *John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus* (Acts 19:4). And John the Evangelist said of Jesus: *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life* (Jn. 3:15).

John the Baptist said: *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world* (Jn. 1:29, 36); Phillip identifies the lamb of Isaiah 53, who is dumb before his shearer, as none other than Jesus Christ (Acts 8:32-35); Peter calls Christ *a lamb without blemish and without spot* (I Pet. 1:19); and in the book of Revelation Christ Himself *stood a Lamb as it had been slain* (Rev. 5:6).

John the Evangelist records John the Baptist as saying:⁸³ *He that believeth on the*

⁸³ Most theologians will not allow John the Baptist to have said or understood the statement in v. 36, and therefore insist that these are the words of John the Evangelist. Though John the Evangelist is recording these words, they could be considered the testimony of John the Baptist. This would be perfectly consistent with Paul's description of the Baptist's gospel in Acts 19:4. Tertullian was certain of this in the third century when he said: "Moreover, when John (the Baptist) was asked what he happened to know of Jesus, he said: *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" Ibid., *Ante-Nicene Fathers, [Against Praxeas, Chapter XXI]* Vol. III, p., 616, see also p. 674. Also, Victorinus of fourth century Africa, perhaps the first systematic theologian of the Trinity, said: "Moreover, John the Baptist had also anticipated this, by saying to his disciples: *For God giveth not the*

Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (Jn. 3:36);⁸⁴ Paul said of John the Baptist: John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus (Acts 19:4); John the

Evangelist records Jesus as saying: *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3:18); yet the Apostle Peter said: To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43). John the Baptist's plan of personal salvation and John the Evangelist's were the same.*

John the Baptist *came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe (Jn. 1:7); Simeon the Priest called Jesus A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel (Lk. 2:32); Jesus said of Himself: And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light (Jn. 3:19); yet when Paul was called into the ministry, God commanded that he would be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth (Acts 13:47; cf, 26:18, 23). Paul shows us that even the devil knows this to be true when he says: In whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (II Cor. 4:4). Jesus said of Himself: I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life (Jn. 8:12); and, As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world (Jn. 9:5); and again: believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light...I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness (Jn. 12:36, 46).*

John the Baptist, Christ, and the Apostles taught salvation by grace through faith in Christ, and therefore John's gospel was not a parenthetical plan of salvation. When Apollos joined the ministries of Aquila and Priscilla, he knew only the baptism of John but was never asked to be rebaptized (Acts 18:24-28).⁸⁵ John's baptism was considered Christian. It was John who baptized Jesus Christ (Matt. 3:13-16). So, when a Christian follows the Lord in baptism, it is John's baptism. Christian baptism is a profession of faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. When the Jerusalem Church felt it was necessary to replace Judas, the betrayer of Christ, the replacement had to be someone

Spirit by measure unto him. The Father, says he, loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands." Ibid., [Commentary on the Apocalypse of the Blessed John, From the First Chapter] Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. VII, p. 345.

⁸⁴ Henry M. Morris, *Defenders Study Bible: King James Version* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Word Publishing, 1995), p. 1138. (Note on Jn. 3:31) "Since there is no contextual break after John 3:30, it is reasonable to infer that the testimony of John the Baptist continues through John 3:36. These words demonstrate still further the remarkable understanding he had concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ. In John 3:31, the phrase *from above* is the same Greek word as *again* in John 3:3. Thus to be *born again* is to be *born from above*."

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 1211. (Acts 19:4) "...John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus" See note: "...Not even Apollos, who also had known *only the baptism of John* until Aquila and Priscilla gave him further instruction (Acts 18:25, 26), needed to be rebaptized. The same is true of the twelve apostles.

who had been with them since John's ministry—*Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection* (Acts 1:21, 22).⁸⁶

If John's baptism was parenthetical, then so was that of the disciples before Pentecost (Jn. 3:22-24). If this was not Christian baptism, then why were none of these rebaptized in order to enter the New Testament church? It was said that the disciples of Christ baptized more converts than the disciples of John (Jn. 4:1, 2; cf. Jn. 3:26). If John's converts were not rebaptized, and if the disciples themselves were not rebaptized, then the New Testament church began with a multitude of "converts" who refused to embrace Christian baptism—if John's baptism was not Christian.

If the reader does not yet understand the import of this question, he will when he later sees how essential it is for many baptismal regenerationists to factor the dying thief out of the gospel equation. They will admit that he was saved without being baptized because Christian baptism was not essential to salvation until Pentecost and thereafter.⁸⁷ But, as we have seen, the gospel is not one of the things that changed at Pentecost, and no one saved and baptized during the ministries of John and Christ were required to be rebaptized. For those theologians who believe that regeneration happens by or at baptism, it is fundamental to factor John the Baptist out of the gospel equation. Why? Because John the Baptist required regeneration and proof of it prior to his baptism. This is why the next chapter of this present work will be fundamentally important to the reader for demonstrating that salvation in the NT was independent of, and prior to, ritual baptism..

So, in summarization, we have seen that Jewish proselyte baptism cannot be cited prior to and during the establishment of Christianity except through the allegorical method of interpretation.⁸⁸ We have observed that John and Jesus could not have been members of the Essene sect. We have noted that there is no *Jonic*, parenthetical dispensation of the gospel. We have established that many Jewish proselytes joined the Jerusalem church and were required to be baptized. We have failed to see where any

⁸⁶ See footnotes 78 & 79.

⁸⁷ Ibid. *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 349: "The rite of baptism with water as the symbol of entry into the Christian community was practiced from the day of Pentecost onward."

⁸⁸ For a most informative study of first century Jewish proselytism see: *Jewish Proselytism at the Time of Christian Origins: Chimera or Reality*, in *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Francis Watson, Editor (Sheffield, England: sheffield Accademic Press, 62, 1996), pp. 62-103.

born-again converts baptized by John or the disciples needed rebaptism after Pentecost.⁸⁹ And, we have documented that the gospels of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles were one and the same.

⁸⁹ In chapter nine of this present work we will discuss the “so-called” disciples of John the Baptist who were rebaptized (Acts 19).