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**THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST**

A Thesis presented to the  
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**Bachelor of Divinity**

by

**Reinhold John Mueller**

**Concordia Seminary,  
April 26th, 1938**

Approved by

P. E. Kretzmann.

*Corrections in first  
copy.*

THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

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PART I.

JOHN'S LIFE

## THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

### INTRODUCTION.

At the time of Luther the festival of St. John the Baptist 1) was one of much outward celebration. It emphasized John's person much more than his office. Luther says: "Zuvor hat man den Johannestag gefeiert mit Kronen, Johannesfeuern und Singetänzen, wir aber feiern ihn um Johannes willen." 2) John was honored for his life's sake 3), for his clothes, for his food, for the fact that he drank no wine, beer or the like. To make the lives of the saints the all-important factor in our admiration is the wrong thing to do; still worse is it to make the saints mediators between Christ and us, which is the position that most saints hold. The Catholic Church however has made Christ such a harsh and unmerciful judge, that people think they must have mediators to approach him. Especially the Catholics have made ever so much of the outward life of John by following his life of self-denial, special diets, his fastings and the like. As John lived isolated in the wilderness, so they live isolated in cloisters, chambers and the like, thus trying to gain favor with God, but the true division of the Law and Gospel, which John set forth, they entirely neglect.

It is not in this spirit that one should study John's life. Indeed his wonderful life is an excellent example for everyone, but one must never believe, that by such a life one may gain favor with God and even forgiveness of sin. Indeed one should study the lives of such great men, but at the same time one should remember, that the faith, which such men had, is the important matter, and in the case of great teachers, it is their teaching which is more important than their lives. The word is important not the work. Luther says: "Das Wort nicht die Werke...

1) Johannesfest. 2) Luther VII, 1506. 3) Math. 11,8.

Die Lehre nicht das Leben." 1) Scriptures say: "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: my spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever." 2) John pointed to Christ and was his herald and forerunner. This for Christ's sake should we celebrate a John-festival; that is, for the teachings, which John set forth. John did not perform many works, did not do any miracle, and yet he was the greatest prophet ever born of woman, yet not because of his work, but because of his teachings and doctrines. Luther says, that the life of a man and his teachings are as far apart as heaven and earth. 3)

Thus it is the office of John, which we honor. The office of John was first of all to make the world humble, to call people to repentance, and make them confess their sins, that is, to preach the Law. Secondly he was to preach forgiveness of sins and salvation, the sweet Gospel with all its comfort. Therefore he who reads Walther's "Gesetz und Evangelium" may do well to study the teachings of John at the same time, and he will find it an excellent collateral reading for his study. Of course we know that there are extremes on both sides of Gospel and Law; one person relies on his worship and his own good works, while the other keeps everything for himself, "scharrt alles zu sich", and helps no one, does no works. These extremes are naturally wrong and should be guarded against. John divided Law and Gospel correctly. The entire second part of this paper has been set aside for the teachings of John, where also the Law and Gospel division of John will be taken up.

Since God even prophesied about this prophet; since God called John the greatest of all prophets, let us also more closely study about him.

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1) Luther XI, 2258.

2) Isaiah 59, 21.

3) Luther XI, 2266.

## I. JOHN'S LIFE.

### PROPHECIES

The Old Testament contains ever so many prophecies of our great prophet, priest and king, Jesus. And this Jesus again called John a great prophet. He even says, that none other greater was born of woman than John. So also the Old Testament has special prophecies about John, which is not the case with other prophets.

We find three prophecies about John. The main one is found in the third chapter of Malachi, the first verse: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, sayeth the Lord of hosts." That this prophecy refers to John is proven by John's life, because he did prepare the way of the Lord, thus being His messenger; however we have two passages in the New Testament, which directly refer to this prophecy, Mal.3,1. The first one is Math.11,10: "For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." Here the prophecy is quoted by Christ Himself, speaking to John's disciples, whom John had sent to Christ from the prison. The other passage we find at Mark 1,2: "As it is written in the prophets, Behold I sent my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." This also directly quotes Mal.3,1. Still another passage, which also refers to it, we find at Luke 1,76, spoken by the Baptist's father, in his Benedictus: "And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord, to prepare His way."

In the same book of the Old Testament we find another prophecy about John, namely in the very last two verses of the Old Testament, Mal.4,5-6: "Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lords: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to



the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Reference to this prophecy we find in the New Testament, in Math. 17, 10-13: "And His disciples asked Him, saying, why then say the scribes, that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him, whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spoke unto them of John the Baptist." A parallel we have at Mark 9, 11-13. A more detailed reference to this Mal. 4 prophecy we find Luke 1, 17: "And he shall go before Him, in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord;".

The last prophecy to be mentioned is found in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, verses 3-5. It reads as follows: "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." This prophecy is quoted in part in all four gospels. It is such an excellent example of how the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, of how the Scripture proves itself to be true, that these fulfillments will be mentioned here.

In Mathew 3, 3 we read: "For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." St. Mark, in this connection quotes this and the Mal. 3, 1 passage together, and especially

mentions that this prophecy has been fulfilled in John. He says chapter 1, 2-4: "As it is written in the prophecy<sup>s</sup>, 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."

Luke almost quotes the entire prophecy, chapter 3, 2-6: "As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God;"

In the last gospel, John chapter 1, 23, John himself quotes this very passage, when he was asked by the Levites and priests, as to who he was. "He said; I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah."

Thus we see what special interest God showed in this prophet John, in having the prophets of the Old Testament thus prophesy of him. If God even did as much as to prophesy about him, why should we not study such an important man. So now the announcement of his birth will be taken up.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIRTH

(Luke 1, 5-23)

As a special angel was sent from heaven to announce the birth of our Lord Jesus, so also a special angel came from heaven to announce the birth of John the Baptist. This again shows that God considered him very important, so much so as to have his birth announced in this wonderful way, similar to that of the Lord himself.

God also selected some special parents for this man, who was to be Christ's forerunner. We read of them: "And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."<sup>1)</sup> What a wonderful praise for sinful mankind! A praise given to very few people in the Scriptures. Would that this could be said of the parents of our children also. This praise is given to Zacharias and Elizabeth, in spite of the fact that they were carrying a cross, which easily could have tempted them to be dissatisfied and murmur against God. In spite of their age, they had no children, which was a shame and a disgrace among the Jews. "The superintending priest was one, on whom the snows of at least sixty winters had fallen...sixty years was considered the commencement of agedness."<sup>4)</sup>

The name of Zacharias means "whom the Lord remembered" or "sermon", from זַכְרְיָאֵל. Elizabeth יְזַבְחֵל means peace, not that God has peace, but that we should find peace. Thus Zacharias has Elizabeth, that is to say, where the word of God is, there peace is preached.<sup>2)</sup> Zacharias belonged to the tribe of Aaron, of the order of Abia, and therefore was a priest.<sup>3)</sup>

This christian couple lived at the time of Herod, the king of Judea. This is Herod the Great, also called Askalonita, because he came from a

1) Luke 1, 6.    2) Luther.    3) 1 Chron. 24, 10.  
4) Edersheim: The Life and Time of Jesus the Messiah, p.135.

city of the Philistines called Askalon. He was a son of the Edomite, Antipater. Forty years before Christ he became king. He died 750 or 751 after the founding of Rome. It was he, who so shamefully murdered the children at Bethlehem.

By the special guidance of God it so happened that Zacharias was burning incense at the golden altar in the Holy Place. This was a very special occasion in any priest's life, as it would rarely happen, that the lot would fall upon him, if ever, to perform this sacred act of the priesthood, namely to go into the Holy Place. As was the regular custom, the people without, in the courts, were praying. It was about nine o'clock; the hour of prayer. The priest performing the burning of incense was all alone, attendants and other priests having withdrawn. Just at this moment the celestial visitor comes.

The appearance of the angel was not a dream or something, which Zacharias saw in an unconscious state of mind, but it was an actual appearance. He saw at his left, at the south side of the altar, an angel, who suddenly stood beside him. "The wondrous sight arrested his steps".1) This filled him with fear. "That Zacharias was afraid, not glad, and objected to the angel's news, was psychologically true and correct, had he acted the opposite, it would have been psychologically untrue. This is a proof that the story is true."2) However the angel, as also in the appearance to Mary, soon comforted him saying: "Fear not".3) And why should he not fear? "for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name John."3) The prayer heard was not that, which he was just then praying, as Ps.14,7, but his private prayer for a son.1) This shows that Zacharias must have been constantly praying for a son. An example for everybody, to keep on pleading with the Lord, as did Jacob, when he fought with the Lord. Zacharias kept on pleading with the Lord,

1) Fahling: Life of Christ, p.71.

2) Edersheim: Life and Time of Jesus, p.138.

3) Luke 1,13.

even though it humanly seemed impossible that he should have a child, as he and his wife both were of old age.

It is to be noted that the angel here further prophesies about the Baptist, giving many more details about him than the prophets in the Old Testament had given. As with Jesus, the angel also here gives the name of the child, namely John. This child is to bring joy to his parents, not heartaches and grief. But not only that, he is to bring joy and gladness to many; many are to rejoice at his birth, not only his relatives, but many others also, as his life shows.

The reason why John should be a joy to all, is that he shall be great before the Lord. This is a true and real greatness; may this also be our ambition, that is, to be great before the Lord. We all wish to be great, but is it not too often the wish to be great before men, rather than the greatness before our Lord? To be great before the Lord often means to be small before men, as also was the case with John. The angel says he shall neither drink wine nor strong drink. That is, he shall drink neither wine nor any intoxicating beverage made from fruit besides grapes. This is according to the vow of the Nazarite of old, as given Numbers 6, 2 and 3: "when either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the Lord; He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink.....neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried." We read of only three Nazarites in the Bible, Samson, Samuel and John the Baptist.1) However, what is to distinguish this man most from others, is the fact that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even before his birth, from his mother's womb.

And this child is to have a wonderful work. "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God."2) Thus he is to preach repentance and conversion, a thing, which was much needed in Palestine at that time.

1) Fahling; Life of Christ, p.71.

2) Luke 1,16.

And the angel already here indicates that this child is to be a fulfillment of a prophecy, namely of the Mal.4,5-6 prophecy. He is to go before the Lord in the spirit of Elias, and is to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.<sup>1)</sup> His main mission is to be "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord".<sup>1)</sup>

Zacharias hearing this joyous news, took it to be too good to be true, and could not believe it, but doubted it, even so much as to ask for an outward sign. "The fact that Zacharias asked for a visible sign, made his doubt different from Abraham's and Manoah's."<sup>2)</sup> However this request for a sign was answered quicker than he perhaps expected, for the angel soon announced to him, that he was Gabriel, (which means the might of the strong God), who stands in the presence of God, and that Zacharias will be dumb, until the fulfillment of the tidings. Thus he had to step before the people and could only signal with his hand to them, that he had become dumb, at which the people marveled. This was a dumbness "which however was not caused by a stroke of apoplexy or by terror, nor was it a state of prolonged stupefaction, but it was a miraculous penalty, for the reason that the glad tidings were not believed. In the course of a few minutes three miracles have been noted: the appearance of an angel, a prediction of an extraordinary event and a miraculous dumbness."<sup>3)</sup> Thus we see the man, of whom Luke had just reported, that he was such a christian old man of God, fallen into the sin of doubt. Before this his faith seemed so firm, even in the face of disgrace and shame, and here he falls, when his prayer comes true. However this is also a lesson for everyone, to remember, that one can never be too sure, one must always be on the guard.

~~1) Fahling:Life of Christ, p.71.~~

2) Fahling:Life of Christ,p.72.

1) Luke 1,17.

3) Fahling:Life of Christ,p.78.

## CONCEPTION

(Luke 1,24-56)

About John's conception the Bible tells us this: "and after these days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, thus hath the Lord dealt with me, in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men."1) What the angel had prophesied to Zacharias was already being fulfilled. The Lord's gracious time had come, and the aged wife conceived, through a miracle of God. As a result of this she hid herself for five months. That is, she had no social intercourse with the outside world, but stayed at home. This was not because she was ashamed of her pregnancy. Prof. Heuer writes: "Elizabeth verbarg sich, weil sie in ihrem Glück allein und ungestört sein wollte, weil sie darüber nachdenken wollte. Hätte sie sich geschämt, hätte sie mehr Ursache gehabt in den letzten Monaten sich zu verbergen."2) Dr. Kretzmann says: "Though the fact was not yet known, (namely her pregnancy) even to her intimate friends and relatives, she was aware of it, and she wanted to escape the pitying glances, to which she had never become accustomed, until such a time as her hope would be beyond doubt, when no more reproach could strike her."3) Elizabeth takes all this as the gracious workings of her Lord, saying that He has looked upon her to take away her reproach from among men. Fruitfulness was a promise of God to His people, "and I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee."4) For this reason children were considered as a particular blessing of the Lord, among the Jews.5) However barrenness was considered as a great reproach, as a disapproval of God among the Jews. It is said of Hanna, the mother of Samuel, <sup>was</sup> suffering reproach for this cause.6) In our modern day it is in ever so many cases turned about, that it is considered a shame to have children, which of course is unscriptural, however for Elizabeth her conception meant a real deliverance from reproach and shame. Avoiding the blessing of children is an evil of the western world, against which oriental missionaries may do well to warn their christians. The devil

1) Luke 1,24-25 2) Prof. Heuer in a Referat on John the Baptist

3) Dr. Kretzmann: N.T. Commentary

4) Gen. 17,6 5) Ex. 25,6, Lev. 26,9; Ps. 127,3 6) 1 Sam. 1,6.

7) Luke 1,25-39.

is always busy, trying to influence them to copy the evil habits and customs much rather than the good ones.

It was during this time that Elizabeth received a noble visitor in one of her relatives. The Bible states: "And Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country, with haste, into a city of Judah, and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that, when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she spake out with a loud voice and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a performance of those things, which were told her from the Lord."1) So one of Elizabeth's relatives had also received wonderful glad tidings through an angel, namely that she, Mary, should become the mother of the Saviour, Jesus. As soon as Mary arrives and greets Elizabeth with her salutation, a miracle happens, John leaps in his mother's womb. The angel had told Zacharias, that the child would be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. This word was here literally fulfilled. It was, so to say, John's first service to his Lord, thus taking place, before neither he nor his Lord were born. In all these things we see the miraculous hand of the Lord. How can any modern critics try to explain it all as a regular course of nature? However the Holy Spirit also is upon Elizabeth, for she speaks wonderful words, and shows that she fully understands the situation. She realizes that Mary is to be the mother of the Lord God, and thus rightly call<sup>s</sup> her blessed among women. She considers it a special honor, that the mother of her Lord and Saviour comes to her, and she humbly submits all honor to Mary, even though

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1) Luke 1, 25-39, 45.



Mary is a young relative of hers. She understands that the leaping of the babe, is also a leap for joy, the babe realizing the presence of his Lord. She calls Mary blessed for believing, and assures her, that things will surely come to pass. All this must have strengthened Mary in her faith concerning her son. What Elizabeth said here was "an outpouring of sublime enthusiasm", she was filled "with the gift of divination and prophecy, her words therefore were an unrestrained utterance under the influence of irresponsible feeling. Her statement is a fine bit of exalted poetry." The

Greek reads:

"εὐλογῆμένη σὺ ἐν κοιλίᾳ σου, καὶ εὐλογημένος ὁ κάρπιος τῆς κοιλίας σου,  
καὶ πόθεν μοι τοῦτο, ἵνα ἔλθῃ ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ κυρίου μου πρὸς ἐμὴν;"

The fact that John here leaped in his mother's womb for joy of his Lord, helps to prove the possibility of little children believing in their Saviour. If John already that early knew of his Lord, even granting that it was a miracle, why should not little children believe when they are baptized? Believing, even in an adult, still is a miracle of God, why not take it for a possibility with little children?

Mary stayed at the house of Elizabeth for three months. Whether John was born during this time or not, cannot be definitely stated. It seems that he was not born during this time, as the Scriptures mention nothing of Mary being present at the time. These two women undoubtedly spent blessed three months together, speaking of the special grace the Lord had blessed them with. Especially could they have interesting consultations, as they both understood well, who their future babes were to be, by the revelation both through the angel's words, and also directly to them. -What has been said so far, all took place even before John was born, next comes his real life, his birth.

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1) Luke 1,42-43

## BIRTH AND CIRCUMCISION

(Luke 1,57 - 79)

Now came the time, when Elizabeth did not hide herself anymore, for she was soon to be delivered; her reproach was to be taken from her, for Scripture says "she brought forth a son,"<sup>1)</sup> and this was the birth of the great man, of whom this treatise speaks. Of his birthplace the Encyclopedia ~~says~~ says: "The last of the prophets and the 'forerunner' of Christ, was born in a *πόλις Ιούδα*, (according to rabbinical tradition, at Hebron, but according to an ingenious modern interpretation of the phrase, Jutta), in the beginning of the second half of the year 749 A.U.C.." <sup>2)</sup> The Encyclopedia also says, that Christ was six months younger than John. In this connection Dr. Kretzmann says:

"The text expressly states that the Lord had made great his mercy upon Elizabeth; it was His favor and grace that was here made evident. And everywhere there was rejoicing with the happy parents. On the eighth day, those that were concerned in the festival came together, chiefly the relatives, for this was the day of circumcision, according to God's command, at which time the name was given to the child... Their unanimous opinion was that the name of the boy should be Zacharias 'conative imperfect or imperfect of repeated action', *ἐκκαλοῦν*, not that this had been a binding custom among the Jews, but because the only boy would fitly bear the name of the father."<sup>3)</sup>

"Ordinarily the head of the family made all arrangements; but in the house of Zacharias it seems the relatives and friends had matters pretty well in hand, including even such important details as selecting the name.

It is true there were certain wellknown Johns of priestly line, the last of whom had been murdered by Herod about twenty five years before. (John Hyrcanus II, 30 B.C.)"<sup>4)</sup>

However Elizabeth soon interfered with this procedure, saying with a definite note: "Not so; but he shall be called John."<sup>5)</sup> She undoubtedly had learned from her husband all that the angel had told him, and she wished to obey the words of the Lord. This seemed peculiar to the people, since there was no such name within the entire family of Zacharias, so they turned to the father for further information. However he was still dumb and they had to make signs to him. He <sup>so</sup> ~~in~~-turn intimated that he wished a writing tablet. This was undoubtedly a wax-tablet, the kind which was in use at that time. The writing was done with a stylus.

1) Luke 1,57. 2) Encyclopedia Brittanica, about 1900 Edition.

3) Kretzmann: Commentary, N.T. Vol. I. 26/4) Fahling: Life of Christ, p.85-86.

5) Luke 1, 60.

And then, another miracle happened. While writing, Zacharias at the same time spoke, saying "his name is Jahn". This was a definite statement, which left no alternative. Thus the punishment for his doubt was again removed, the Lord showing mercy again. This is always the way of the Lord, He shows His mercy after He chastens. The people wondered at all these things. There was reason for wonder. "A dumb Zacharias, an unusual birth, a singular name, and the sudden recovery of speech-surely a sufficient cause for a religious awe!"<sup>1)</sup> This was the people's first intimation, that this child was indeed an exception, but they were soon to hear more about him.

The name which the Baptist here receives, at his circumcision, also is of significance, as it means grace from God. The Greek Lexicon gives it thus: "  $\{ \text{ἰσχυρῶς} \}$  and  $\{ \text{ἰσχυρῶς} \}$  to whom Jehovah is gracious. (al. whom Jehovah has graciously given), Germ. Gotthold;"<sup>2)</sup> Luther says of this name: "Johannes aber auf Hebräisch heiszt, Gnade oder G<sub>u</sub>nst, aus keinem unserm Verdienst, sondern eitel Gnade und G<sub>u</sub>nst G<sub>o</sub>ttes. Das sagt auch St. Paulus, Röm. 10,15: 'Wie mögen sie predigen, so sie nicht gesandt sind?'"<sup>3)</sup>

Several strange things have thus far already been noted, which took place in the story of Jahn. His birth was announced by Gabriel, the mother of the Lord visited his mother, he is born of parents in their old age, the name given him was not used in his father's family so far, his father has become dumb, and now he suddenly is able to speak again. This was so strange, that the people were filled with fear. However, Zacharias himself again shows his devotion to his God, for he immediately praises God for His mercy. All this pointed to an uncommon future of the boy, so that the people say with wonder: "What manner of child shall this be?"<sup>4)</sup> So we also now ask, what manner of child shall this be? and try to look closer into his life and teaching. Luke states: "and the hand of the Lord was with him."<sup>4)</sup> Dr. Kretzmann says of these words: "This sentence sums up the whole history of John's childhood and anticipates some of the later developments." <sup>5)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Fahling: Life of Christ, p.87. <sup>2)</sup> Thayer: Greek Lexicon of N.T.  
<sup>3)</sup> Luther XI, 182. <sup>4)</sup> Luke 1,66. <sup>5)</sup> Kretzmann: Commentary, N.T. Vol. I. 268

Next in the story follows a wonderful hymn of praise by Zacharias, also called the Benedictus. "It is called the Benedictus on account of the opening word in the Latin version."1) Much could be said about this Benedictus. There are the so-called eighteen benedictions. "The benedictus of Zacharias, steeped in the Old Testament language, is at the same time a commentary for the correct understanding of the Old Testament Messianic promises."1) Sermons have been written on the Benedictus. Luther wrote some on it and also other comments on the passage in his works. Only a few remarks shall be made here; they will be limited to statements concerning John especially. What Zacharias here speaks, is not his own wisdom, but as is expressly stated, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. From the very beginning all glory and honor is given to God. "Zacharias' last words were of unbelief (now after dumbness) his first words are of praise; his last words were a question of doubt (now) his first words a hymn of assurance."2) He speaks as though these things have already taken place, namely as though the Saviour had already come, and had saved all mankind. The horn of salvation is not John, which Luther expressly states, but it is the Lord Himself. Horn, in Hebrew means, power, defiance, rule; Luther, Gewalt, Trotz, Herrschaft, Christus ist unser Haupt."3) Zacharias here has his song couched mostly in terms and phrases of the Old Testament, which often speaks of the Christians' enemies, from whom he is delivered by the Messiah, of the promises made to Abraham, being fulfilled, that God remembered His covenant, all of which points to salvation through the Messiah. Since we are delivered from our enemy, we may now serve God without fear, "in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life."4) This is a perfect description of a New Testament christian. As Paul also stated: "And that ye put on that new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."5) Luther says of this last section, translated by Dr. Kretzmann;

"That he (Zacharias) says, He would deliver us from all our enemies must again be understood, that this kingdom is in battle and in the midst of the enemies; but they shall not win, but loose; and this deliverance and salvation shall serve, that we serve Him eternally with-

1) Fahling; Life of Christ, p. 87-88. 2) Eidersheim; The Life and Times of Jesus, p. 156.  
3) Luther, XL, 2266. 4) Luke 1, 75 5) Eph. 4, 24.

out fear....the word 'without fear' encloses that we are sure of the good of this life and of that yonder. For a christian is sure and certain that his sins are forgiven, though he still feels them; he is also sure, that death cannot harm him, the devil cannot vanquish, the world cannot prevail against him." (1).

The last part of the song of Zacharias is of more interest here, as it speaks directly about J<sub>o</sub>hn the Baptist. This part of the song may be termed "A Hymn of Prophecy". It begins: "And thou child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest." 2) Prof. Heuer remarks about the word *κληθῆσῃ*, 'shalt be called' thus: "*καλεῖσθαι* meint 'genannt werden' wenn es fuer *εἶκει* gebraucht wird." 3) This is spoken to the little child, J<sub>o</sub>hn. He is to be called the prophet of the Highest, as L<sub>u</sub>ther puts it, a servant of the M<sub>o</sub>st High, namely the Lord. J<sub>o</sub>hn was to be a prophet "in the highest and fullest sense of the word". This, Christ later on also bore out, when he said that J<sub>o</sub>hn was even more than a prophet, that he was the greatest ever born of women. 4) His life's work would consist in going before the face of the Lord, as a true herald, to prepare His way before Him, as the prophets had said. 5) That John is to go before the Lord shows, that someone will follow after him, namely the Lord Jesus. Luther says: "

"Johannes sagt sozusagen, Weichet beiseits, gebt Raum, gebt Platz, der Herr kommt. Den Weg bereiten heisst, Das Volk su dem Herrn hinauf-führen. Diesen Herrn und König empfängt niemand, er sei zuvor also ge-demütigt, dasz er von sich selbst garnichts halte. Die Welt will ver-dienen, abgewinnen, aber J<sub>o</sub>hannes sagt, Nein. Wer sich als Sünder bekennt, hat Johannes Stimme gehört." 6)

Another office, which J<sub>o</sub>hn is to have, is "to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins." 7) After J<sub>o</sub>hn has prepared the people by their repentance, he will also preach forgiveness to them. "John is to come and give the people of God a knowledge, which is not to be a knowledge of sin, of wrath, of death, but a knowledge of salvation, that is, such preaching, from which one learns, how to be saved and delivered from death and sin. That is an art of which the world knows not one word." 8) This kind of preaching is possible because of "the tender mercy of God; whereby the Day-spring from on high hath visited us." 9) The mercy of God burns against us, He is filled with mercy, by which the Day-spring, which is the morning star,

1) Luther XI, 2286 2) Luke 1, 76 3) Heuer: Referat on J<sub>o</sub>hn 4) Math. 11, 9.  
5) Is. 40, 3; Mal. 3, 1. 6) Luther 7) Luke 1, 77  
8) Luther, XIII B, 2707. 9) Luke 1, 78.

the light or sun, namely Jesus Christ, hath visited us. Although it is all mercy, yet there is merit there, but it is the merit of our star, namely that of Christ. That great Light, is "to give light to them, that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace." 1) The glory of Christ is to bring light to those in great darkness, as also is set forth by Isaiah: "Arise, ~~arise~~, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee." 2) Even those, who have reached such a darkness that they are in the shadow of death, shall find a way of peace for their feet, by means of the gospel. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." 3) Prof. Heuer has a few remarks of note for this passage as yet, speaking of the knowledge he says: "Er soll die Erkenntniss des Heils wirken, des Heils, das da besteht in der Vergebung der Sünden, (denn so ist wohl *σωτηρίας ἐν ἀφέσει ἑσφατιῶν ἀντῶν* am besten zu fassen) Luther: 'Wo Vergebung der Sünden ist, da ist auch Leben und Seligkeit.' Nicht nur Gesetz predigen, sondern auch Evangelium. *σπλαγχνὰ ἔλεους* ist herzliche Barmherzigkeit, die Vergebung der Sünden." 4) The Day-star mentioned, Prof. Heuer refers to the same picture used in Gen. 24, 17, where the Lord is called the star of Jacob, and in Mal. 4, 2 the sun of righteousness. Luther especially mentions, that here with 'giving light to them that are in darkness,' by no means is meant Christ, descending into hell, but it is meant in the same way as Is. 9, 2 "that people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" 2), namely a light of salvation. This he says is to make us so sure "dasz wir uns weder vor Teuffel, Sünde, Tod, Welt, noch vor allem Unglück fürchten dürfen." 5)

1) Luke 1, 79.

2) Is. 60, 1-2.

3) Ro. 5, 1.

4) Heuer; Referat on J. hn.

5) Kretzmann, N. T. Vol. 1. - Luther XIII B, 2719.

"This certainly means as I think, cutting off all merit and good works from the forgiveness of sins, in order that no one may say: I have earned it.....The remission of sins has only one reason, because God is merciful, and out of such mercy and has sent and given his Son, that he might pay for us, and we should be saved through Him. Therefore it reads thus: forgiveness of sins is not the result of our merit, nor ~~for~~ of our good works, but of the sincere mercy of God, that He has loved us of His own free will. We had with our sins earned the fire of hell, but God looked upon us with His boundless mercy. That is the reason why He sent His Son, and for the sake of His Son forgives us our sins."6)

Of this entire hymn Augustine writes:

"Oh blessed hymn of joy and praise! divinely inspired by the Holy Ghost, and divinely pronounced by the venerable priest, and daily sung in the Church of God. Oh may thy word, be often in my mouth, and the sweetness of them, always in my heart! The expression thou usest, are the comfort of my life; and the subject thou treatest, of the hope of all the world!"7)

Luther says of this passage:

"Also siehest Du, dasz Zacharias, mit den allerfeinsten Worten, das Evangelium und Reich Christi, mit allen seinen Früchten, Farben und Eigenschaften, auf das allermeisterlichste abmalet, dasz es sei ein Wort und Reich der Gnaden, Vergebung, Friedens, Freude, Sicherheit, und alles Gute. Gott gebe, dasz wir es erkennen und empfinden. Amen."8)

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6) Luther, XIII, b, 2709

7) Augustine, in Kretzmann, N.T., vol. I 270.

8) Luther, XL, 2266.

## PREPARATION OF JOHN

"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the desert till the day of his showing unto Israel."1) This first remark refers to his physical growth; that he, as a normal child, grew stronger, gained in stature and weight, soon after his first months of infancy began to walk and to speak, as is the natural case with children. The statement, 'that he waxed strong in spirit', already explains itself, that it refers to his spiritual growth. As was noted before, his parents were devout christians, and as such, they naturally also taught their son the Word Of God as they had it, namely the old testament writings of Moses and the prophets, especially the knowledge of the coming Messiah, whose forerunner he was to be. As the Bible states, that already before his birth the Holy Spirit was with the child, we may here take it, that already from his early youth, the boy John was being prepared for his great task, his life's work, namely to become the forerunner of the Lord Jesus.

That John was in the desert, refers to his life as a Nazarite, to which the angel already pointed before his conception, saying that he "shall drink neither drink nor strong drink".2) Another statement referring to John's mode of living in the desert is found in Mathew: "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdel about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey".3) Dr. Kretzmann well describes this peculiar mode of living of John thus:

"John was an antitype of Elijah, the great prophet and preacher of Israel, both as to his personal appearance and bearing and as to the peculiar difficulties, under which his message went forth, 2 Kings 1,8; 1 Kings 19, 10. His raiment, his usual clothing was not a complete dress or cloak, but a covering or garment thrown over the shoulder, woven out of camel's hair, a rough, uncomfortable protection against the elements. It was held together at the loins by a leathern girdel, without ornamentation. His main article of food was locusts, an edible species as named in Lev. 11, 22: ("Even these of them ye may eat, the locusts after his kind, and the beetle

1) Luke 1,80.      2) Luke 1,15.      3) Math.3,4.



and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind.) still used as meat in the East: legs and wings stripped off and the remainder boiled and roasted. To give at least some variety to the diet, or to serve for sustaining life, when locusts were scarce, John used wild honey, such as was deposited by bees in trees. The austere, ascetic appearance and mode of life of John corresponded with his method, which enjoined renunciation of the world and repentance."1)  
(The two Kings passages mentioned above say that Elijah also was a hairy man, wearing a leather girdel, that he also lived at the time, when the people had gone away from the Lord.)

Because of his selfdenial and peculiar life John created much attention.

Dr. Walther says: "Durch das Leben in der Wüste, mit Heuschrecken und Honig als Speise, hatte Johannes schon das Aufsehen auf sich gelenkt."2) John made splendid use of this opportunity to preach unto the people, who came to see him, both the Law and the Gospel did he preach. Thus he lived in the desert with such peculiar clothes and food, until the time came that the Lord called upon him to open his public ministry.

It is Luther's opinion that John was about eight years old, when he went to the desert, to live there. According to Dr. Kretzmann, the wilderness in which John lived was chiefly the mountainous wilderness southeast of Jerusalem, toward the dead sea, but also the wilderness of Judea and in the valley of the Jordan. "It was the uncultured wilderness stretching forth from Jericho to the fords of the Jordan and southward to the shores of the Dead Sea."3) For John, says Renan, "it was natural that a man of his destinies would lead a hermit life or the like, desert, etc."4) "John was in the desert, assuredly not in order to learn from the Essenes, but to attain religion in lonely fellowship with God, what they sought externally."5)

Some writers mention the Essenes in connection with John.

"The Essenes or Therapentae, were grouped near the birthplace of John, on the Eastern shores of the Dead Sea."6)

"The Essenes were an obscure, ascetic, Jewish order of men of monastic and communistic tendencies, numbering about 4000 members at the time of Christ...They were outside of the pale of the church of God."7)

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1) Kretzmann; Commentary, N.T. Vol. I, 13. 2) Walther  
3) Fahling; Life of Christ, p.135. 4) Renan; Jesus and the Apostles, p.95.  
5) Edersheim; Life and Times, p.260. 6) Renan; Jesus and the Apostles, p.95.  
7) Fahling; Life of Christ, p.134.

Then John is also mentioned in connection with India. It is said of him, that

"he lead there the life of a Yagi of India, clothed with skins etc."1)  
"The teachers of the young were also at times species of Anchorites,  
(Josephus Vita 2), somewhat resembling the 'gourous' of Brahmism, in  
fact might there not in this be a remote influence of the mounis of India?  
Perhaps some of those wandering Bhuddist monks, who overran the world...  
might have turned their steps toward Judea, as they certainly did towards  
Syria and Babylöh."

"Babylon had been for some time a true focus of Buddism..Boudasp (Bodhisat-  
va)was reputed as Chaldean, and the founder of Sabeism. Sabeism was as it's  
etymology indicates,(Note: the Aramean word seba, origin of the name of  
Sabians is synonymous with βαπτισμα ) baptism, that is to say, the re-  
ligion of many baptisms,-the origin of the sect still existing called  
'Christians of St. John' or 'Mendaites', which the Arabs call el-Mogtasila  
'the baptists'."1)

Several more comparisons are found in a German Zeitschrift,

"Die Lebensweise-Beschreibung kommt von der griechischen Pythagoras  
Biographie des Diogenes Laertus...Das andere Beispiel ist der Kyniker  
Menedemus. Josephus sagt Menedemus lebte noch strenger als Johannes."2)  
Der slavische Joseph.-"Damals aber wandelte ein Mann unter den Juden in  
wunderlichen Gewändern, indem er Tierhaare an seinen Körper geklebt hatte,  
wommer er nicht von seinen eigenen bedeckt war. Aber dem Antlitz nach war  
er wie ein Wilder."2)  
"nur eine Parallele (findet sich) zu der evangelischen Notiz über die Lebens-  
weise des Täufer, das ist die Beschreibung des Jacobus des Gerechten bei  
Hegesipp.(Eusebius h. eccl.II 23,4-6.) " 3)  
"Josephus placed himself (yr.53) in the school of an ascetic nomad Banus  
(Vita 2) who presents the greatest resemblance to John the Baptist and  
who was of his school."4)

We note that John's youth is described in the one single verse, Luke 1,80g.

The Encyclopedia says of this verse: "Circumstances of his (namely John's) ear-  
ly years summed up in the single expression at verse 80, Luke 1."5) "Even  
less about the first thirty years of life is known of John's youth than of  
Christ."5) The Bible, in only a few words describes his mode of living; nor  
is it of great importance. It does not belong to his doctrine, yet there are  
ever so many, who have made this part of John's life the most important factor.  
They have made it a doctrine; they have made the outward life, the work, the  
self-denial the great important factor, which all comes down to the same old  
error of seeking salvation through good works. Already at Chr<sup>st</sup>'s time, John's  
own disciples asked Christ why it was, that His disciples did not fast as  
did John's.7) Later on sects and societies formed, who tried to live the life

1) Renan; Jesus and the Apostles, p.94-95. 2) Zeitschrift für d.N.T.Wissenschaft, V.32,1,  
p.72-73. 3) The same, p.75. 4) Renan; Jesus and the Apostles, p. 157.  
5) Encyclopedia Britannica. 6) Edersheim; Life and Times, p.260  
7) Mat.9,14-17; Mark 2,18; Luke 5,33-35.

of John in the desert, but not following his finger pointing at the lamb of God, as the Saviour of the world. Also the Catholics were guilty in this respect, which Luther strongly opposed, as mentioned in the introduction of this paper.

In the same 'Zeitschrift' quoted above, there is another remark, which shows how Josephus left all of these outward matters of John's life almost untouched in his writings, in favor of his teachings. The section reads:

"Josephus hat in seiner Archäologie auch dem Täufer Johannes ein kurzes Kapitel gewidmet XVIII 5,2. Da betont er aber fast ausschliesslich die Lehre und lässt die Taufe fast wie etwas Nebensächliches hinzutreten. Von der Kleidung und Nahrung sagt er kein Wort. Vielleicht hat er davon nichts gewusst, sonst hätte er gewiss diese Merkwürdigkeit seinen Lesern nicht vorenthalten, wie er entsprechendes (später) an Barabbarus stark herausstrich."1)

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1) Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft, Vol.32,1,1933, p.73.

JOHN BEFORE THE PUBLIC 1)

Saint Luke gives the details as to the time and place where John the Baptist began his preaching. He writes: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, being governor of Judea, and Herod, being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea, and of the region of Trachonias and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." 2) Tiberius Caesar succeeded Augustus fourteen years after Christ's birth, and this being in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, is therefore the twenty eighth year after Christ. John was at <sup>the</sup> time thirty years of age. The Annas here mentioned had been placed in office by Cyrenius (Quirinius) 8 A.D., but had been deposed by Velirius Gratus, after holding office 7 - 14 A.D. Gratus appointed three others in sight of three years, Ismael, Eliasar, the son of Annas, and Joseph with the by-name of Caiaphas. This Caiaphas was the head of the society of sadducees. Although Annas was deposed, he still had much influence among the Jews. Herod II was tetrarch of Perea, thus the lord of Jesus. 3) His first wife was the daughter of king Aretas of Arabia. From this woman he divorced himself and married the wife of his brother Philip. In the year 39 he was sent into exile by Carigula, to Lyon, Gaul, and later died in Spain.

Philip was tetrarch of Iturea. His wife was the daughter of his brother Aristobulus, Herodias, which later Herod the second enticed from him. He was the best of the sons of Herod the Great. He died about 34 A.D.

Pontius Pilate was the successor of Velirius Gratus, as procurator of governor of Judea, in the year 26 A.D. As such he represented the proconsul of Siria, in Judea and Samaria. In the year 36 A.D. he was put into exile at Vienna Gaul, and is supposed to have died in an accident there in the Rhone, in ice. According to Eusebius he took his own life. -Abilene was a section of

1) Luke 3, 1-18; Math. 3, 1-12; Mark 1, 2-8; John 1, 6-8.

2) Luke 3, 1-2. 3) Luke 23, 7.

land in the so-called hollow Syria, north of Damascus, Luke mentions this Lysinias of Abilene, because the district which Philip governed afterwards formed part of the Jewish territory. The land of the Jews was divided by the Romans in districts as follows: 1. Judea, which Jerusalem as the main city, direct under Rome, with a procurator; 2. Gallilee and Perea; 3. Iturea and Trachonitis, and 4. Abilene. The Encyclopedia gives the place of John's preaching thus: it was "in the wilderness of Judea, the wild district between the Kidron and the dead sea, near Jordan;"<sup>1)</sup> Otherwise not much is mentioned as to the place where John preached. Luke states that <sup>he</sup> he preached in all the region of the Jordan. Mathew says, in the wilderness of the Jewish land, while Mark only mentions the wilderness, John mentions Bathabara, or other reading, Bethany, and also Enon at Salim. It was in this wilderness that John began his life's great work, namely to prepare the way for his Lord, with his main theme: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of God is at hand." 2) He was a great and powerful preacher, a real herald, proclaiming both the Law and the Gospel, giving individual attention to the different people, who came to him in great numbers. He did not fear any of them, but boldly testified the truth. His preaching also had a great effect, for we read that many repented and were baptized of him. The doctrine of his preaching will be taken up in the second part of the theses.

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1) Encyclopedia Britannica

2) Mat. 3, 2.

## JOHN BAPTIZES CHRIST 1)

Among the many people, who came to John to be baptized, also came the very one, who makes the great benefits of baptism possible, namely the Lord Jesus Himself. This was a few months after John started his activity. "It seems that John, whose ministry began in the wilderness of Judea, in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea, had gradually ascended the El Ghor, the Jordan valley, and now reached the most Northern point of his activity"2) about twenty miles from Nazareth. This must indeed have been a great day for John, to be privileged to baptize the Lord himself. He hesitated in baptizing Him, but after the Lord's excellent explanation, he baptized Him. After baptism he witnessed the manifestation of the Holy Trinity. This took place six months after John had entered his ministry, as Jesus was six months younger than John. John was "at the very height of his evangelistic career", when the Lord came to him, to be baptized. Jesus came to John in a friendly way, to become amicably acquainted with John, not as the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were rejectors of God's counsel. "Of the mode of this baptism no details are given."3) This baptism, which John here performed, was of special significance and will be taken up under a special heading in the second part of this thesis.

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1) Math. 3, 13-17; Mark 1, 9-11; Luke 3, 22-23.  
2) Fehling; Life of Christ, p. 140  
3) " " " " " p. 141.

## JOHN'S ACTIVITY AFTER CHRIST'S BAPTISM 1)

The work of John was not completed with the baptism of Christ, as some think, but he did much preaching after that event. His preaching this time emphasized the sweet gospel. John had created much attention in Judea, for the Pharisees sent a delegation to him, to find out more about him. John gives fine testimonies, pointing to the Lord as the only way to salvation, and emphasizing that he himself is not the Messiah, but that Christ is the centre of all salvation. So the pharasaic party had determined to take measures against John, but it had no effect, he overcame the temptation, which they brought before him with the question about the purification.<sup>2)</sup> In John three we find another reference to place. John had moved up the river into Samaria, near to the boundary of Galilee. Here was the town of Salim. This place is mentioned in the Old Testament: "And Jacob came to (Salim) Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padanaram;"<sup>3)</sup> Seven miles north of Salim is Aenon, a place which has many springs. Edersheim has some remarks about some of these places:

"There can be no doubt but that the Baptist must either have crossed into or else that Aenon near Salim was actual within the dominion of Herod. (In a foot-note:) 'Aenon may even have been in Perea itself.- In that case on the Eastern bank of the Jordan.' It was on that occasion, that Herod seized on his person, and that Jesus, who was still within Judean territory withdrew from the intrigues of the Pharisees and the proximity of Herod, through Samaria into Galilee."<sup>4)</sup>

At these places John gave his last testimonies, as his enemies were already closing in on him.

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1) John 1,15-36; 3,22-36.    2) Edersheim; The Life and Times of Jesus, p.654.  
3) Gen.33,18.                4) Edersheim; Life and Times, p.657.

## JOHN'S IMPRISONMENT 1)

The burning zeal, the courage and sincerity of this great preacher could not continue very long without interference. Mark tells us: "For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. For John had said unto Herod, it is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."<sup>2)</sup> Dr. Kretzmann calls this "a laconic account of sordid baseness."<sup>3)</sup> Herod, a tetrarch, only called a king in these passages by courtesy, was openly living in sin, which in German may well be expressed thus: er lebte ganz unverehämt in offenbarer, zügelloszer Hurerei. One may say that he committed a tripple offense against the sixth commandment, and at the same time also grossly transgressed several others. In the first place Herod had a wife of his own. He was legally married to the daughter of Aretus, the king of Arabia, however this wife he rejected, and divorced himself from her. In the second place, he not only took unto himself a new wife, but he enticed away from his half-brother Philip his wife, and brought her to his palace, where he lived with her in adultery openly. In the third place, this woman, Herodias, whom Herod took to wife, was his niece, and therefore the Encyclopedia Brittanica correctly says that it was an "incestuous marriage". She was the daughter of Aristobulus and Berenice. Herodias readily left her rightful husband and came to Herod, thus showing her adulterous character. She brought with her a daughter, Salome, who "equalled her mother in shamelessness"<sup>4)</sup> It was she, who performed the indecent dance before the guests of Herod at the feast of his birthday. "Josephus also concurs in this history and makes mention of Herodias by name, as the wife of his brother, whom Herod had married upon divorcing his former lawful wife. She was the daughter of Aretas, king of the Petrian Arabians; and which Herodias he had parted from her husband, while he was alive."<sup>5)</sup> Herod was a real pleasure-seeker; his philosophy of life may be summed up with the words of Isaiah: "And behold joy

1) Mark 6,17-20; Math.14,3-5; Luke 3,19-20. 2) Mark 6,17

3) Kretzmann; Commentary, N.T. Vol. I p.78. 4) The same, p.78

5) Isaiah 22,15. The Works of F. Josephus, trans. by Whiston, Hist. Ec., lib. 1, 11.



and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine; Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we shall die."1)

"He had resided for some time at Machaerus, a strong fortress of the Jews, west of the Dead Sea. But he built Tiberius, on the sea of Galilee, as his capital, filling it out with all the luxury, that he could devise."2)

John the Baptist did not hesitate to severely reprimand Herod for his heinous sin. He in plain words told him that it was not right, that it was against the law of God to do such a thing. However Luke tells us, that John also reprimanded Herod for other sins, which he committed besides this shameless adultery. Luke says: "But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils, which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison."3) This shows that John also reproved Herod for his misdeeds of injustice, cruelty and luxury. To put an end to this reprimanding and reproving, Herod put innocent John in prison for the present. However this was not only Herod's personal idea, to imprison John. The shameless Herodias, his wife, hated John like poison and would have killed him, but she could not. Reflections cast upon her, were all the more severe for her, because she had to admit her guilt. King Aretus, her father declared war against Herod, to take bloody revenge, for the insult cast upon his daughter. This war would have perhaps been the end of Herod, had not the Romans taken the matter in hand and protected him. Luther says of this affair:

"It so came to pass that Herod the king, was living in open, wellknown offense, for he had the wife of his brother Philip, who was still living, with him, as his lawful wife. This was to John a disagreeable business, since he, through his preaching was supposed to rebuke all offense and turn the people from it; for that was his calling. Therefore he does what a pious preacher should do, he is not concerned about the fact that Herod is a king, but just as he rebuked other people for their sins and admonished them, thus he rebukes and admonishes Herod also, and says that it is not right for him to have his brother's wife. This displeased Herod very much, and the harlot still more, for she was troubled, lest the sermon concerning her bring fruit. For this reason she lay in wait for John and would have liked to kill him, but she could not. Herod also would gladly

1) Isaiah 22,13. 2) Kretzmann; Commentary, N.T. Vol. I, 195.

3) Luke 3,19.

have done it, but he was afraid since he saw what testimony and praise John had with everybody. For that reason, since John would not desist from his rebuking and admonishing, he caused him to be arrested, and put him in prison, in order that he would no longer call out so openly."1)

Edersheim gives a threefold motive as to why John was imprisoned, thus:

- a. Herod was afraid that John's influence may lead to rebellion.
- b. Because John had declared his marriage unlawful.
- c. Pharasaic intrigue caused Herod to fear John. 2)

According to Fahling, Josephus also believed that Herod was afraid of a rebellion.

"Probably in early spring of 28 A.D." was John imprisoned.

"In addition, Josephus suggests that Herod, 'lest the great influence John had over the people might put it into his power and inclination to raise a rebellion'. Ant.XVIII."3)

The fact that Herod was afraid of the people, kept the bloodthirsty Herodias from gaining her point of putting aside John. Mark says: "Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man, and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly."4) Herod was between two fires, the people on the one side, and his shameless wife on the other. Dr. Kretzmann says:

"Incidentally, Herod, as is the case with many a weak character, felt the influence of the mightier and morally greater mind. Herodias had no scruples of any kind; she was determined, she frankly sought to kill John. But feeble, vacillating Herod was between two fires, the people, on the one hand, esteeming John as a prophet, and Herodias, on the other hand, demanding his death. In the mean time Herod, in more than one instance, gave heed to the words of John, and many a word which he heard from the mouth of this fearless exhorter caused him to hesitate and think twice before committing further lawlessness. Thus matters came to a deadlock, while John was kept in prison at Machaerus."5)

Josephus says, "whose testimony there is no reason to (doubt) question, the Baptist was committed to the strong fortress of Machaerus." 6) Machaerus is South of the Dead Sea, about two and half hours Northwest of the ancient Kiriathaim. An excellent fortress. The ruins of Machaerus show the judgement of God. Everything is in ruins; the dungeon is still there.7)

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1) Luther, XIII a, 1162. 2) Edersheim, Life and Time, 657-658.  
3) Fahling: Life of Christ, 198. 4) Mark 6, 19-20. 5) Kretzmann: Commentary, N.T. Vol. I, 195. 6) Edersheim: Life and Time, 658. 7) The same, p. 661.

Many a sincere christian, serving his Lord faithfully, fearing not even the kings and greatest officials, must suffer, just as did John the Baptist, not very often in the same measure, but "many an unbeliever and enemy of Christ is trying to stifle the voice of his conscience by deeds of violence against sincere Christians." 1) This imprisonment of John always is a consolation to missionaries, when the enemies of the gospel oppose them, when they use lies and slanders against them, all of which is nothing compared to what John the Baptist endured here.

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1) Kretzmann: Commentary, N.T. Vol. I, 282.

JOHN'S MESSENGERS TO CHRIST 1)

While John was in prison his activities as a preacher were not altogether halted. We may take for granted that he preached to those who were in prison with him, including prison- and gate-keepers, and perhaps even officials, perhaps even Herod conversed with him at times, as the Bible states that he liked to hear him, and that he listened to him. However, this we definitely know, that John still kept up instructing some of his disciples, who had not as yet joined Christ, following Him. At one time, when John had pointed out Christ to his disciples, two of those, who had heard Jesus speak, followed Him. In John's gospel we read: "Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard Him speak, and they followed Jesus." 2) However, others of John's disciples were not as yet followers of Christ, but were holding on to John. They had no full understanding of Christ's message, and they looked upon Jesus and His work with rather jealous and disapproving eyes. 3) Dr. Kretzmann says:

"They could not distinguish between essentials and non-essentials; they felt that the austere life of John the Baptist belonged to the substance of a moral life. But many of them hovered about Christ and reported to John, what they thought worth while. The great miracle of the raising of the young man at Nain made a deep impression upon some of them, and they hastened to the prison of John, and gave him a report, concerning this last miraculous deed. John now thought the time ripe for a last effort to lead his disciples to Jesus, with the question" as to whether he was the true Messiah or not. 4)

In this way John lead his disciples to the real Saviour, thus proving himself a real herald of the Lord, even shortly before his death, for this is the last of John's acts recorded in Scripture. Jesus gave these disciples such a wonderful answer, and also special praise to John, of which will be dealt with later in the paper.

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1) Luke 7,18-35; Math.11,2-19.

2) John 1,35-37.

3) Math.9,14; John 3,28. 4) Kretzmann;Commentary,N.T.Vol.I, 303.

### JOHN'S BEHEADING AND BURIAL 1)

The sadest of all the sins and crimes of Herod is that of the murder of John the Baptist. It was the latter part of March or the beginning of April 29 A.D. 2) when the "heaven-<sup>en</sup>kindled and shining lamp of John the Baptist was suddenly quenched in blood." 3) The conscience-less man does this heinous deed at the occasion of his birthday. A description of this event is given by Mark, who gives most details, as follows:

"And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday, made a supper to his lords, high captains and chief estates of Galilee; and when the daughter of the said Herodias came in and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth and said unto her mother, what shall I ask? And she said, the head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king and ~~said~~ asked saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist." 4)

Herod, in these lines, is only by courtesy called king, he was not as yet a king, but he was expecting to soon receive the title of king, from the Roman emperor. For this reason he was celebrating his birthday with special style at this time. Lords, high captains and chief estates were invited, that is, state, civil and military officials and the socially important persons of Galilee were invited. It was a great celebration, with much luxury and costly show, much eating and drinking, and various forms of entertainments, after the oriental custom. This was a convenient time for Herodias; it was just the time she was looking for. She still had the evil grudge against John, whom she so far had not been able to kill, but now she saw her chance to let loose her bloodthirsty hopes and plans. When the feast and celebration was at it's height, the guests having had plenty to drink, so that the mind was all the more ready to welcome indecent pleasure, just then Herodias introduced a special number, not on the program. She had her daughter Salome appear in the banquet-hall, and there dance "with reckless abandon and shamelessness." 5) This dance was pleasing to the hearts of

1) Mark 6, 21-29; Mat. 14, 6-12. 2) Fahling: Life of Christ, 334.  
3) Farrar: Life of Christ, I, 384. 4) Mark 6, 21-25. 5) Kretzmann: Com. NT. I, 196.



Mark describes the terrible deed thus:

"And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake and for their sakes, which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought; and he went and beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel; and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb."1) Mathew adds this "and (they) went and told Jesus."2)

If one takes Luther's viewpoint, that the whole affair was planned by the Herod family beforehand, then one must take the fact that Herod was sorry, only as a sorrow of a hypocrite. Dr. Kretzmann says: "Herod....was sorry, touched for a moment with regret, and because, for the once he realized that he had been tricked, yet his foolish rash repeated oaths had been heard by the guests, and the cowardly tyrant feared their criticism."3) No matter which view one takes, the sorrow of Herod could not have been sincere, as his next action showed. There may have been some gasping about the tables, when they heard the terrible request, because he wished to keep his promise like a man, or as a gentleman, which usually is what is given for an excuse for such evil oaths. Or as the Chinese would say "because he did not want to lose face." He did not wish to offend the shameless Salome, did not want to make a joke of the affair, and so the adulterer became a murderer, "the ghastly spectacle was enacted to the bitter end."4) Thus a "ruler's adulterous union was cemented with a prophet's blood."5) The king commanded an officer, who was a courier and at the same time the executioner, to behead the innocent John, and soon the gruesome scene took place in the palace, the head of John the Baptist was brought in on a large platter, and handed to the shameless damsel, who brought it to her bloodthirsty mother, in her private room. "The young woman truly was a match for her mother in depravity: Her indecent, sensual dance is paralleled by her cool acceptance of the horrible gift. The closing chapter of John's career: His disciples took the dead body and buried it, after which they notified Jesus, probably with the intention of warning him."6) For Scriptures say, that when Jesus

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1) Mark 6,26-29    2) Mat.14,12    3) Kretzmann, Commentary, N.T., Vol. I, 78  
4) " " " " " " " " " " 196  
5) Farrar; Life of Christ, I, 387    6) " " " " " " " " " " 78-79.

heard of it "He departed thence by ship into a desert place." 1) "What  
"What a depth of pathos and a wealth of suggestion in the three words  
'and told Jesus'." 2) Stoeckhardt says:

"What here is related of the court and court-life of king Herod is a faithful picture of the world, of the life of the world, and of the lust of the world. The smooth, pliant children of the world are for the most part, even when they pretend to be honorable, what Herod and Herodias were, harlots and adulterers, and if not murderers, yet thieves, perjurers, deceivers etc. But the chief sin of the world is this, that she will not listen to admonition, that she spurns the word of God, and is angry against those who warn her against destruction and perdition. Wherever the world, even the apparently decent, cultured, fashionable world, celebrates her festivals, there the delights of feasting, of reveling and drunkenness, are indulged in, there one finds swearing, blaspheming, cursing, there gambling and dancing and rioting are the order of the day, and wine and passion inflame heart and mind. There a dissolute, godless conduct is in evidence, the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh; the pride of life. And the end of the delight and joy is often murder, the shedding of blood, and other great shame and vice." 3)

Luther has several, special lessons, which he draws from this sad story, which are worthy to be noted here. He says:

"Now this is the most important point, that we learn two things from John. The first is for the preachers. Whoever is in the office of preacher, should not esteem his life dearly, but do the  $\frac{1}{2}$  work of his calling, and freely, without dread rebuke whatever is offensive. That is well pleasing to God, and therewith, we read in the prophet Ezekiel, everyone saves his own soul; for else he must give account for the sins of those, whom he does not rebuke, as he should do by reason of his office..... The other point is not only for preachers but for all Christians, that we learn especially from this example, that God is not evilly inclined toward us, even though he permits us to be persecuted, to come under the cross, and to suffer all the stress... He that wants to be in the kingdom of Christ dare not be afraid of the cross and death. For such is the testament of the Lord Christ, and he, Christ Himself has entered thus into the kingdom." 4)

"Therefore let noone have a terror concerning suffering and cross. Let noone envy the persecuters of the gospel, that they are enjoying honors, are great and mighty. For cross and suffering is the only way by which thou shalt come to the heritage and the kingdom of God; and all saints, and Christ Himself, have gone this way. Who, then, would be terrorized and complain about it? And it will be seen how quickly the change will come for the tyrants, that their suffering will come upon them in due time and finally last in eternity. From this may God mercifully keep us, and rather let us, with the sainted John the Baptist, suffer all manner of ignominy and disgrace, that we may but come to the kingdom of God; as our Lord Christ says that it is appointed to us, as to Him, cross and suffering." 5)

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1) Math. 14, 13    2) Fahling: Life of Christ, 341  
3) Stoeckhardt; Bibl. Gesch. d. N. T., 121.    4) Luther, XIII, 1164-1165  
5) Luther, XIII a, 1167.



About Herod's political reason for killing John, Fahlings quotes Josephus in this manner: " We agree with the interpretation of Josephus ~~as~~ as an outsider and with his ascription of fear to Herod as an additional motive why he imprisoned John, but not as though John had been a revolutionary. It is true that Herod did fear the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet."1)

Already on this earth, Herod reaped some of the fruits of sinful life. His adulterous wife, Herodias brought him no success, but "she proved to be a curse and ruin of Antipas. First came the murder of John the Baptist, then came a war with Aretas....in which Herod was worsted, and finally the wild abitions of Herodias directed Antipas to Rome to solicit the title of king conferred upon his own brother Agrippa I."2) Herod was also haunted by John, his evil conscience troubled him, when he heard of Jesus and his work, he believed it was John the Baptist risen from the dead.3) Also Josephus speaks of the punishment of Herod, when he mentions the war he had with Aretas:

"in which war, when it came to a battle he says that all of Herods army was destroyed, and that he suffered this because of his wicked contrivance against John. Moreover they say Josephus, by acknowledging John to have been a most righteous man, and the Baptist, conspires in his testimony with what is written in the gospels. He also relates that Herod lost his kingdom for the sake of the said Herodias together with whom he was himself condemned to be banished to Vienna, a city of Gaul. And this act is in the 18th book of the antiquities where he writes this of John verbatim: 'the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and that very justly, as a punishment for what he did against John that was called the Baptist.'"4)

1) Fahlings: Life of Christ, 335      2) The same, p337-338.  
3) Math.6,14-16.    4)The works of Flavius Josephus, transl.by Whiston:  
about A.D.330.Hist.Eccles.lib.1.cap.11.

## JOHN'S CHARACTERISTICS

Let here be mentioned some of the characteristics of this great prophet. First of all a distinguishing mark of John was his self-denial. Mathew says: "And the same John had his raiment of camel hair and a leathern girdle about his loins, and his meat was locusts and wild honey."<sup>1</sup>) This is not for our direct example, yet it teaches that a Christian, and by all means a minister and missionary is not to seek after the pleasures and riches of this world, but rather be satisfied with moderate and even poor living if it is necessary.

John had great courage. Again Mathew says: "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?"<sup>2</sup>) And in a different chapter he says: "For John said unto him (Herod), it is not lawful for thee to have her (namely Herodias)."<sup>3</sup>) In one of his sermons Luther says this about John's courage: "Johannes ist nicht heimlich, sondern offen vor aller Welt schreit eine Stimme....Johannes spricht scharf... 'Otterngesüchte'...Johannes Bekenntnis ist gross, er schilt grosse Lehrer und Führer."<sup>4</sup>) Perhaps someone would say "he certainly had the nerve", but, may his great courage be an inducement for missionaries to have greater zeal for mission work, without fear of the enemies and gain-sayers.

John was a powerful preacher. Mark states: "And there went unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."<sup>5</sup>) People from all sides came to hear this great preacher. As will be seen later, his greatness, as a preacher, was in setting forth the simple truths of the word of God, and correctly dividing between Law and Gospel. Thus, like a Luther, like a Walther, John already, long before both of these men, divided these big truths, Law and Gospel. Again a good example to be followed.

John was obedient. The Bible says: "And Jesus, answering said unto him,

1) Math. 3,4    2) Math. 3,7    3) Math. 14,4    4) Luther, XI, 106    5) Mark 1,5.

suffer it to be so now; for it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him."1) John humiliated himself as soon as the Lord came to be baptized and rather had it that the Lord baptize him; yet as soon as the Lord explained, he obeyed and performed the act.

John was very humble. Scriptures say: "And preached saying, there cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose."2) The passage John 1, 19-23 tells of the time, when the Jews sent priests and Levites to ask John who he was, and he so excellently answered them, testifying and confessing. This was a real temptation for him, it was an excellent opportunity to receive great honor and praise. Great men from the capital city came to him to see him, they wanted to make a Christ of him. When that was impossible and refused, they wished to make an Elias out of him, and then a prophet. However John most humbly answered them, that he was a voice in the wilderness.3) Also his selfdenial itself already shows his humility.

John had a burning zeal. The gospel reads: "He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season, to rejoice in his light."4) These are Christ's words concerning John, a true proof. Here one may test oneself by asking, 'Would the Lord be able to say the same of me?' Am I always filled with such zeal in my tasks in the kingdom?

John was also honored by Christ, at other occasions. Mathew says: "Verily among them that were born of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." These words are spoken by Jesus, and in Luke is another word, reading thus:

"What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in king's courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, and I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written. Behold, I sent my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."6)

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1) Mat. 3, 15. 2) Mark 1, 7. 3) Luther, XI, 98  
4) John 5, 35. 5) Mat. 11, 11. 6) Luke 7, 24-27.

John was not like a reed, a grass blown by the wind to this and to that side, something like when the wind blows the bamboo in China, but he was firm, sincere and true. Even though the great men of his time came to hear him, John remained firm and true in his preaching. One may ask here, how could John deny that he was Elias and a prophet, when asked, while Christ calls him both. This cannot be used to say that John was not sincere; on the contrary, it was because of the fact that John was true and sincere, that he told these people that he was not Elias. This, because he knew, that they were taking it in the sense, that he was the old Elias risen from the dead, while the Bible states, that John came in the spirit of Elias, that he was to be a prophet like Elias, which he truly was, as will be seen later. Nor was he a prophet in the sense in which they asked him, namely THE PROPHET, priest and bishop, who was to save them, that is the Christ. This wrong conception, which they had of him, John rebuked many times, and he strongly confessed, that he was not the Christ.1)

So John also was faithful. When he so humbly did not accept any of the honors, which some of his enquirers tried to put upon him, it was because he was faithful to his calling, thus placing all glory and honor on Him, whose herald he was, namely Christ. At the time when the Pharisees asked John, why he was baptizing, though not being a prophet, thus showing their deceitful heart, John did not waver, but he boldly confessed Christ, whose way he was preparing. He remained faithful and true. Even while John was in prison, he still remained faithful and true, even there instructing his disciples, and leading them to Christ.

Josephus has this to say of the great prophet: "for Herod slew him, who was a good man, and one that commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness to one another and piety towards God."2)

Edersheim has this praise for John for overcoming the temptation: "Not to rebel, nor to murmur but even to rejoice in this as the right and proper thing, for which he had longed as the end of his own work—this implies a purity, simplicity and grandeur of purpose and a strength of conviction unsurpassed among men. The moral height of this testimony of John and the evidential force of the interest of the narrative seem to us among the strongest evidences in favor of the gospel history."3)

1) Luther XI, 98. 2) Works of F. Josephus, Whiston, Hist. eccles. lib. 1. cap. 11. 3) Edersheim: Life and Times, p. 655.

A negative characteristic of John is that he did no miracle. The Bible states: "And many resorted unto him (Christ), and said, John did no miracle; but all things that John spake of this man (Christ) were true. And many believed on Him there."1) The people took special note of this fact, that John performed no miracle, as did Christ, and as some of the former prophets also did. But it speaks well for John, that these people say, that what John had told them of Christ was indeed true. If John was such a powerful preacher, and even is called the greatest prophet by Christ, and yet did no miracle, why should preachers today seek to do all kinds of miracles, faithhealing and the like, to make their preaching more attractive?

John was not worldly. This goes together with his selfdenial. Christ says: "But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?"2) John was not dressed like a king, nor did he live like one, that is not the style of the preacher, to parade about in costly robes, and to live in the lusts and the pleasures of the world.

Finally this great preacher, just because of all these fine, excellent characteristics, had to suffer martyrdom.3)

Three noted paintings, in which John the Baptist is portrait, may be mentioned here. In the Hospital of St. John at Bruges there is a painting of the "Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine" in which John is in the background with a lamb. It is painted by Memline. He painted another one which is in the Imperial Gallery, Vienna, entitled "Virgin and Donor" in which the two Johns are shown. The third one is at the Institute of Chicago, entitled "Life of John the Baptist" by Giovanni da Paolo.4)

This is the life of that great prophet, John the Baptist, who preached not much longer than two years, as he was cut off by the heartless Herod. Many a lesson may be taken from his life to much benefit, yet, let us not follow those, who make his life, his self-denial the all important factor and try to gain heaven by good works, but let us rather pay special attention to the teachings of this great man. This is the aim of the second part.

1) John 10,41. 2) Mat. 11,8. 3) Mat. 14,10. 4) The Volume Library: p. 1119, 1128, 1132.

**PART II.**

**JOHN'S TEACHING**

## THE FORERUNNER

"Repent ye; for the kingdom of God is at hand."<sup>1)</sup>

With these powerful words the great preacher, John, opened his ministry. This was "the chief content, the matter, the burden of his heralding, the admonition to repentance, the watchword which characterized his preaching. He deemed a complete change of mind and heart necessary as preparation for the advent of the Messiah." <sup>2)</sup> He was a true forerunner of the Lord as was prophesied of him long before his birth.

In olden days it was the custom at weddings, that a forerunner would announce the wedding of a couple, and invite the guests to the ceremony and to the feast. This, as a rule, was a special friend, in fact, in most cases, the best man of the bridal group.- When great officials of different lands visit each other, forerunners announce the arrival of such visitors. This is seen much in China, even when ordinary officials, say a provincial official, is to arrive, forerunners come in advance, prepare a place and also the people for the event by putting out postures of welcome and the like. So the King of Kings also had a special forerunner to prepare His way, of whom we find several prophecies in the Old Testament. John the Baptist was the true fulfillment of these prophecies.

Malachi speaks of the forerunner: "Behold I will send my messenger and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, says the Lord of hosts."<sup>3)</sup> However the main passage referring to the forerunner is the Isaiah passage: "

"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our Lord God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it."<sup>4)</sup>

1) Math. 3, 2. 2) Kretzmann: Commentary, N.T. Vol. I, 13. 3) Mal. 3, 1. 4) Is. 40, 3-5.

John was that messenger, who prepared the way for the Lord. Luther says:

"Den Weg bereiten heiszt das Volk zu dem Herrn hinauf führen. Diesen Herrn und König emphäht niemand, er sei zuvor also gedemütiget, dasz er von sich selbst garnichts halte. Die Welt will verdienen, abgewinnen, aber Johannes sagt, Nein. Wer sich als Sünder bekennt, hat Johannes Stimme gehört."1)

"Bereiten, (das heiszt) den Weg zurichten, aus dem Wege schaffen, was den Weg Christi hindert, (das heiszt), die guten Werke, Hoffertigkeit, u.s.w."2)

This very thing is what John did, which will be seen more clearly in discussing the Isaiah passage, upon which the Malachi passage is undoubtedly based. The Lord, whom the Israelites were seeking is the Messiah, that is, the believers, among the Jews, were seeking Him. It was upon this very hope and belief, that the Old Testament Christians were saved. This Saviour was to come suddenly and dwell amidst them. The "messenger of the covenant" is the Lord Jesus Himself, the angel of the Lord. He was the delight of the people. "He shall come, says the Lord of hosts." In deed He shall come and did come, as we of the New Testament so well know.

The Isaiah passage says that a voice crieth in the wilderness. It does not mention the name, not even his office, but simply a voice, that crieth. This crying voice was the herald of the great King, the Messiah. He was such a humble herald, he did not care to have himself count for anything, but his voice cried out loud for His master's sake; He should increase, while he himself wished to decrease. The voice cried: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." The people were to prepare a way in the midst of their spiritual wilderness, in which they were by nature, that is, they should prepare their hearts to receive the great king. They are to make straight a highway in the desert. Every valley shall be exalted, that is, the hearts of the people, which have been humbled by the "hammerblows of the Law" shall be lifted up and consoled. Stoeckhardt says: "Die Kleinmütigen (Thale) sollen Mut und Vertrauen fassen." "Every mountain and hill shall be made low." That is, those who were proud and self-righteous are to be taught to despair in their own virtue and works. Stoeckhardt says:

"Die Stolzen und Hoffertigen (nämlich die Berge und Hügel) sollen sich demütigen."

1) Luther XI, 2266. 2) Luther XI, 73. 3) Stoeckhardt, Bibl. Gesch. N.T. 22. 3)



"The crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain." That is, all the false notions, ideas concerning the Lord and His word, would be cleared up, all objections and sin, which caused difficulties, were to be removed by the message of the New Testament. Stoeckhardt says: "Die falschen und verkehrten Herzen (was krum und uneben ist) sollen einfältig und lauter werden." 1) "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together." This wonderful act was the coming of the Son of God unto earth, when He was born in Bethlehem, "full of grace and truth". 2) "All flesh", that is, all men were given an opportunity to hear the gospel of salvation. Scriptures say: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." 3) All this is true, "for the Lord hath spoken it." That these statements about the valleys and hills and so on, are to be understood allegorically, is brought out by the last statement, that all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord. Thus John was not to do any excavating among the hills of Judea, but rather in the hearts of men, to prepare them for this glory of the Lord Jesus.

John did this very thing. Those who were cast down by their sins, who truly repented, he comforted by baptizing them and granting them forgiveness, and leading them to the true Saviour. To the proud and self-righteous Pharisees, Sadducees and others, he preached the Law in its full color, calling them "generation of vipers" ("Otterngesüchte"), and pleaded with them to bring forth good fruits, warning them that the ax was ready to cut off those who were fruitless. To those, who had false notions about salvation, thinking to be saved by their own works; to those who held that John was the Messiah, and others who had doubts as to how to be saved, John gave the only and true solution to their problems, namely the true way to salvation through Christ Jesus. His excellent words bear this out: "Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth the sins of the world." 4)

1) Stoeckhardt; Bibl. Gesch. d. N.T. 22. 2) John 1, 14. 3) Mat. 24, 14. 4) John 1, 29.

In this way he prepared the way, made it clear, leveled off the hills, filled in the valleys, and straightened what was crooked.1)

That John was unmistakably the forerunner and messenger is also proved beyond doubt by the direct quotations of these prophecies in the New Testament. Mathew 11,10 refers to the Malachi 3,1 passage. Here Christ quotes it. Another direct quotation is found at Mark 1,2. Another one refers to it, that is Luke 1,76. The Isaiah prophecy is quoted in part, in all four gospels: Math.3,3; Mark 1,2-4; Luke 3,4-6; John 1,23. These passages have been given in full at the beginning of the paper. 2)

Thus it is clear what the office of John was, namely to be the forerunner of Christ, as was already appointed by prophecy in the Old Testament. Luther says: "Das eigentliche Amt Johannes,(war) alle Welt demütigen, alle sind Sünder; Römer 3,23 Sie sind alzumal Sünder und mangeln des Ruhms den sie an Gott haben sollen." The other office of John was to comfort the people of God with the Gospel.

John was between the Old and the New Testament. He was the end of the old and the beginning of the new. Luther says: "

"Die Propheten haben von Johannes geweisagt, von dem, der da spricht, 'Siehe, das ist Gottes Lamm, das der Welt Sünde trägt.' Das Neue Testament geht an, und will Johannes sagen: Ich bin der erste der solches weiset und anzeigt."3)

"Johannes ist der Ursprung des Neuen Testaments. Johannes sagt nämlich: 'Ich bin nicht Christus.' Joh.1,20. 'Der ist's, der nach mir kommen wird.' Joh.1,27. 'Der wird euch mit dem Heiligen Geist und mit Feuer taufen.' Math.3,11. Der ist's der Euch die Sünde vergibt."4)

May this incite pastors and missionaries to become all the more zealous to serve the Lord, by laboring to prepare some hearts of the many millions in the world, who are still heathen, to also realize the necessity they have of a Saviour, that they may repent and then accept Him as the only way to their salvation and redemption.

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1) See Kretzmann:Commentary,N.T. 279-280. 2) This paper, p.4-5.  
3) Luther VII,1509. 4) Luther VII, 1527.

## BEGINNING OF JOHN'S PREACHING

Of John's preaching the Bible states: "And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins:", and Mathew gives the wording of John's sermon thus: "And saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of God is at hand."1) As stated before, this was John's theme, this is how John prepared the way for the Lord, for it is in connection with this theme, that all three, Mathew, Mark and Luke quote the Old Testament prophecies, saying that they were thus fulfilled. Edersheim gives John's theme thus: "the grand burden of his(John's) message was the announcement of the approach of the Kingdom of heaven and the needed preparation of his hearers for that Kingdom."2) Another author gives these two themes: "Zwei Themen: 1. Die Busztaufe; 2. Das Kommen des Stärkeren. Bei Mathäus steht die kuszere Erscheinung voran. Bei Lukas fehlt merkwürdigerweise das biographische Stück ganz."3) The command 'to repent' is a forcible word. *Μετανοείτε*, is to undergo a complete change of mind (for the better). Thayer especially refers to this passage, Mathew 3,2, giving the meaning as "to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's sins." Ändert euren Sinn. "Tut Busze" Luther puts it. Edersheim says: "'change your mind', repent, which implies not only a turning from the past, but a turning to the Christ in newness of mind."5) "Repent" was a summary of all of John's preaching. This shows that there is nothing good within man, as Paul says: "For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing, for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do."6) And again: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject unto the law of God, neither in deed can be. So then they, that are in the flesh cannot please God."7) Repentance and faith are necessary.

1) Luke 3,3; Math.3,2. 2) Edersheim: Life & Times of Jesus, 265.  
3) Zeitschrift f.d. N.T. Wissenschaft, V.32, #1, 65f. 4) Thayer: Greek-English Lexicon. 5) Edersheim: Life and Times, 270. 6) Rom.7,18-19. 7) Rom.8,7-8.

And now the cause why John calls the people to repentance, namely because "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This is the kingdom of God. It was about to appear on earth, in the appearance of it's ruler, Jesus Christ, and thus it would appear in all it's glory, although at times this glory is hidden by the misery on earth, but will be fully revealed in it's splendour and beauty in heaven. This kingdom is a heavenly kingdom in contrast to an earthly kingdom, which the Jews were dreaming of. And now, all those, who would repent and believe in this ruler of the kingdom, would thus have a chance to enter into this very kingdom of bliss and glory, freely, without gold, silver or their own merit.

Concerning the use of the word kingdom in the New Testament Edersheim has this to say: "In fact an analysis of 119 passages in the New Testament, where the expression "Kingdom" occurs, shows that it means the rule of God:(in this view the expression occurs 34 times); which was manifested in and through Christ;(so in seventeen passages); is apparent in the Church;(eleven passages); gradually develops amidst hindrances;(24 passages); is triumphant at the second coming of Christ (the end); (12 passages); and finally perfected in the world to come (31 passages). 1)

Luther understands this under the theme of John: "

"But this is repentance, if I believe God's word, which reveals to me and excuses me of being a sinner and condemned before God, and am terrified with all my heart, because I have ever been disobedient to my God, have not rightly looked upon and considered his commandments, much less have kept the greatest of the least, and yet do not despair, but let myself be directed to Jesus, to seek mercy and help with Him, and also firmly believe I shall find it. For He is the lamb of God, destined from eternity for this purpose, that He shall bear the sins of the whole world and for them by His death."2)

The powerful preaching of John soon showed it's effect, for Mathew states: "Then went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about ~~the~~ Jordan, confessing their sins."3) The word which John preached traveled very swiftly, first from house to house, from one region to the next, and so on until the capital city was also reached, and people

1)Edersheim;Life and Times of Jesus,p270. 2)Luther VII,689. 3)Math.3,5-6.

came streaming from the big city and from all the regions of the Jordan. The people from Jerusalem even came out. That the people from the haughty, disdainful, conservative city came out into the wilderness is of note. It is a remarkable testimony for the power of the word, when openly and fearlessly proclaimed!"1) Note the repetition of the word 'all': "all Judea", and "all the region round about Jordan", which emphasizes the great numbers, which came to hear John's preaching. This fact is also brought out by Luke: "Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him";2) which cannot mean that they were small groups, but must have been great numbers, masses. And of these numbers it says, that they confessed their sins and were baptized; therefore the preaching had it's good effect on them. They confessed publicly their transgressions against the ten commandments. "This confession of sins by individuals was a new thing in Israel. There was a collective confession on the great Day of Atonement, and individual confession in certain specific cases (Num.5,7), but no great spontaneous self-unburdenment of penitent souls - every man apart. It must have been a stirring sight."3) After their confession, which had to be sincere, for John would allow no sham and deceit, John baptized these people, thus granting them forgiveness freely, not because of their good merits, but by grace. "It was an awakening such as the land had not witnessed since the time of the ancient prophets."4)

Now more about John's preaching. Luke says: "Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"5) That in this multitude there were many Pharisees and Sadducees is known from the parallel passage in Mathew: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism".6) It was a perplexing and disagreeable situation for John to have these sects come to him. For they were bound to have the wrong motive for coming. The religion of both of these sects was nothing

1) Kretzmann: P. Commentary, N.T., 1, 14. 2) Luke 3, 7. 3) Expositors Grk. Test. 1, 81.  
4) " " " " " " " " " " 5) " " " " " " " " " " 6) Math 3, 7.

but "a thin veneer of form and show of pomp, without the assent of the heart." 1) What would they want at a baptism like that of John, where sincere repentance was required? Perhaps it was plain curiosity, perhaps it was even at that an act of show, trying to impress the people, as to how interested they were in everything religious, but whatever their purpose was, they appeared on the scene and were on the hands of John. And what does he preach to them, the sweet gospel of forgiveness? No, by no means, but he gives them the full cup of the law. He says: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you, to flee from the wrath to come?" John was filled with intense moral dislike and repugnance at the sight of these people, which caused him to shrink from them, and to denounce them as deceitful and malicious. He calls them offspring of snakes, poisonous, slimy, stinging reptiles. This is not only the language of John, but the Bible also at other places uses the same terms of the enemies of the Word. The psalmist says: "They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah." 2) Again: "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder, that stoppeth her ear." 3) Isaiah has two passages: "For out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent... They hatch cockatrice' eggs and weave the spider's web; he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper." 4) Outwardly it certainly looked as though these people had come to flee from God's wrath, by making application to enter into the kingdom, but it was only a "piti~~f~~ful attempt to escape... by feigning piety and giving themselves the resemblance of truthseekers," 5) but thus no one enters the kingdom. No one can escape the punishment of hypocrisy, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." 6)

John thus having unmasked these hypocrites, makes his demand:

"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance". 7) He demands an

1) Kretzmann: P. Commentary, N. T., 1, 14. 2) Ps. 140, 3. 3) Ps. 58, 4.

4) Is. 14, 29; Is. 29, 5. 5) Kretzmann: P. C., N. T., 1, 280. 6) Ro., 1, 18. 7) Luke, 3, 8.

entire change of mind, not only fruits, but fruits meet of repentance. Deeds of love and kindness, that are the result of an honest repentant, X humble heart, which has turned to Christ, are the only fruits wanted. "Not fictitious, but real, actual fruits are demanded, such as measure up to the thoroughness of the change of heart."1) Unless they show such repentance and fruit, John cannot consent to baptize them. Luther says:

"In order, that they might not glory in their repentance and righteousness, he says to them furthermore; bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. As though he would say: you want to be righteous before ~~at~~ all men and depend upon your own works; change this foolish notion, acknowledge yourselves to be poor sinners, and perform other and better fruits of repentance."2)

Now John gives a special warning, which is very fitting for the Pharisees. He says: "and begin 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."3) "The fact, that Mathew 3,8 has: 'Think not (instead of begin not to say) to say within yourselves,' need cause us no uneasiness, for the Aramaic word which John undoubtedly used in this sentence, with a very slight change in vocalization, may mean either 'think' or 'begin'. And the Lord, by accepting both forms, has authorized both readings."4) Mathew has *δὲ* *σοφνε* 'think, imagine', while Luke has *ἐπὶ* *πρῶτον* 'be first, begin'. Many Jews and especially the Pharisees had the false conception, of being in favor with God, because they had Abraham as their father; because they were direct lineal descendants of him, and could prove the same with their geneologies. This always had been their boast, and with this boast they even dared to approach Christ, saying to Him: "We be Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man; How sayest thou, ye shall be free?..They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."And again: "I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word has no place in you."5) Thus they had an altogether false idea as to what really true children of

1) Kretzmann: P. Commentary, N.T., 1, 280. 2) Luther XII, 1054

3) Luke 3, 7b-8. 4) Kretzmann: P.C., N.T., 1, 280. 5) John 8, 33. 37. 38.

of Abraham were. They, according to Luther, reasoned like this:

"We are God's people, whom he has chosen before all nations on earth, and to whom he has given circumcision; so we have and observe the law, visit God's temple at Jerusalem, and exercise ourselves in the holy service, which God himself has ordered. In short, we go our way, in the spiritual and worldly government, as both have been fixed and ordered through Moses by God's command; are also of the blood and tribe of the holy patriarchs; Abraham is our father, etc. What do we lack that we should not be pious and holy, dear and pleasing to God, and be saved? All this he (John) says, does not concern the matter. For God is not interested in knowing that you are proficient in boasting much and high concerning the law, the temple, the fathers etc. He wants you to fear Him and believe His promise, to obey and accept Him, whom He has promised to you and now sends. The alternative is that He will reject and exterminate you, with all your glory, with which He himself has endowed and ornamented you before all nations."1)

Just to be an external member of God's church is of no avail. The real child of Abraham, is one, who has the same trust and belief in God's grace and mercy in sending a Saviour into the world to save all nations, as he. Therefore not everyone, who is a descendant of Abraham according to the flesh is a true child of Abraham. St. Paul says: "that he (Abraham) might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcized; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:"2) John wishes to impress the Jews that it was not at all a settled fact that they were in favor with God, but that rather the contrary was true, as his further remarks show. The Jews were so boastful, as even to think, that God could not do without them, but John tells them, that God could easily turn the stones, that were about them before their eyes, into children of Abraham, into believers, that He does not need these conceited Jews, filled with pride and haughtiness. And this is not all. John furthermore says:

"And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees; every tree therefore, which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."3) A severe but true word. The ax of punishment was already prepared, it was already placed at the roots of the barren trees, the punishment was already awaiting those descendants of Abraham, who were despicing the word. If they would not show good fruits, accent on the

1) Luther VII, 682. 2) Rom. 4, 11b. 3) Luke 3, 9.



word good, they would be cut off from the people of God, and as cut-down trees be cast into the fire, namely hell-fire, and thus would never see the beautiful kingdom of the Messiah, the kingdom which arose in their very midst. However, also of the entire Jewish nation, were these words true, that the ax was laid to the roots. The nation's cup of sin was over-running. John the Baptist was the very last prophet, the last gracious word, sent to them by the Lord, admonishing them to repent before it would be too late. But we know that, as a whole, the Jewish nation rejected Christ and His work, and the inevitable punishment came upon them, in the destruction of Jerusalem, and unspeakable is the punishment awaiting them in the hereafter.

At this point Luke records a section, which Mathew does not mention. He gives an account, how John gave individual attention, counsel to the people. Luke states: "And the people asked him saying, What shall we do? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do likewise."1) John's preaching had not been without fruit. The people accepted the rebuke, repented, and had come to the point where they wished to be instructed as to just how they might show their evidence of repentance and faith. John had so strongly spoken against the outward works that they ask him now, to teach them just what works are acceptable, by saying, "What shall we do?" John gives them lessons in sanctification by pointing them to some works of benevolence. They were in the great sin "of mercenary grasping meanness"2) of which the Jews are known to be guilty to the present day. Therefore John tells them to be willing to share with their needy brethren, both as to clothing and as to meat.-To help the poor and needy is indeed pleasing to God. Mathew says: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."3) Under some circumstances this may even become our duty. John however, by no means is here encouraging begging, because of outright laziness.

1) Luke 3,10-11. 2) Kretzmann:P.Commentary,1,281. 3) Math. 11,42.

Also publicans came. "Then came publicans to be baptized and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, exact no more than that which is appointed you."1) The sins of the publicans was a known one, namely that of greed, covetousness and fraud. It was an easy matter for them to exact more money, taxes, than legitimate, and thus *often* kept great sums for themselves and became rich quickly. If these people were really repentant, they could not go on with such a sinful life, and John briefly answers them, not to exact any more than was legitimate, which was their great sin. What a lesson for grafters and profiteers of today!

The last individual counsel is given to soldiers. Luke says: "And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."2) The soldiers were guilty of just these sins, which John mentions. "In the work of their calling, the temptation to bully the people, and to receive bribes and hushmoney was very great, Mathew 28,12. They extorted money by intimidation in the case of the poor, they obtained money by acting as informers against the rich."3) We know how the Jews bribed the soldiers of Pilate to lie about Jesus' resurrection.- John here teaches, that each one is to do works according to his own station, for which the Law of God makes provision respectively.

This is well for a minister and missionary to note, that John gives such individual advice. To show a man, where he can improve himself, applying the Law of God to his very station, is bound to have some good results. Furthermore John calls the sins by their right colors, he does not try to cover them up in any way. But ministers should not only become preachers of the Law, as John also preached more than the Law.

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1) Luke 3, 12-13    2) Luke 3, 14    3) Kretzmann:P. Commentary,N.T.,1,281.

John points to Christ, as Luke says:

"And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused<sup>d</sup> in their hearts of John whether he were the Christ or not, John answered saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire."<sup>1</sup>)

The fearless testimony of John made such a powerful impression upon the ~~people~~ people, that they were beginning to think that he was the Messiah, in fact many firmly believed it, as John in definite terms denied it, saying: "I am not the Christ."<sup>2</sup>) So John also here opposes the idea with all vehemence, as soon as he notices that they are having such thoughts. "His statement seems to have been a formal, solemn, public declaration,"<sup>3</sup>) He only wished to be the forerunner and herald, his baptism was only preparing the people for the great mission of his master, the Messiah. He was only obeying orders, in doing his duties. However, the mightier, the Master is to come, ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> whom he considers himself not worthy to perform even the lowest services, that of the lowest slave<sup>s</sup> service, namely unloosening the sandals and bearing them for him. This great humbleness of John is in parallel with his other known remarks, "He must increase, but I must decrease."<sup>4</sup>) Christ is to come and baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. In and through the gospel, He will give them a peculiar baptism, namely those who will accept Him, will receive the Holy Spirit, who will sanctify them. "A twofold effect of Christ's work is here predicted; to those who with penitent hearts accept Him as Saviour, He will give the precious boon of the Holy Spirit, with all the glorious gifts and power." "And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizes with the Holy Ghost."<sup>5</sup>) Here Christ is definitely pointed out as <sup>the</sup> one, who baptized with the Holy Ghost. According to Acts Christ Himself says unto His disciples, shortly before He ascended into heaven: "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Christ thus was referring to the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day.

<sup>1</sup>) Luke 3,15-16. <sup>2</sup>) John 1,20. <sup>3</sup>) Kretzmann: P. Com., N.T. 1, 281.

<sup>4</sup>) John 3,30. <sup>5</sup>) John 1,33; (Mark 1,8.) <sup>6</sup>) Acts 1,5.

which was the greatest baptism with the Holy Ghost recorded in Scripture. However those who would be so impenitent, that they would reject the purchased salvation, Christ will immerse them in fire. However this expression may also be taken as a hendiadys. In this way, "fire" would refer to the Holy Spirit, who would cleanse the people of their sins through Christ's merits, thus purging them as fire does metals. He would give sinners strength to bring forth fruits, which John demanded. But woe unto those, who would not accept Christ, they would not receive the Spirit, but on the contrary, but would be cast out, as the next words in Luke say: "whose fan is in his hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat in His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable."1) This oriental picture of a threshing floor is quite familiar to missionaries in the Orient, who have many a chance to see this old-time method still in practice. Here it is compared to God's threshing floor, which is the earth. The test He uses to separate the wheat from the chaff, is the individual's standing over towards Jesus and His salvation. Those, who are in faith will be gathered into heaven, the Lord's garner. However, those who will be found too light will be blown away with the fan, and will be burned with fire in hell, a fire which is unquenchable. The final purging will take place on judgement day, when all those who have relied on their own merits and self-righteousness, will hopelessly reap their fruits. "For behold the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them, neither root nor branch."2) "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,"3) However this was not all of John's preaching at this time, for we read: "And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people."4).

1) Luke 3,17 2) Mal.4,1 3) Math. 25,41 4) Luke 3,18.

In this way John testified of Christ, and thus was a witness of the light, as John states: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men, through Him might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."1) Thus John was sent out by God, by His special purpose and plan with a special mission to perform, namely that of forerunner of the Messiah. He was not to do a great work of his own, but that of another, he was to point to, testify of another, much greater than he, namely Christ, the Light. "This topic was simple but comprehensive." That one topic was the sum and substance of his witnessing. Every preacher that wishes to witness like John, must preach about the Light, Jesus, the Christ. He brings Light unto everyone that cometh into the world. Here God's universal grace is brought out, that all men should believe and be saved, it is God's object and will that all should be saved. Christ is the son of righteousness and grace. His rays of beauty and glory are for every man. Without Christ there is no light, there is no salvation.

This ends the first section of John's preaching, recorded in Scripture. His preaching should not only be taken as an example, but one should also apply his sermon to <sup>one's</sup> himself, one should hear his voice and humble <sup>one's</sup> himself before God as a sinner pleading for His grace. Luther says:

"Wer sich nun also erkennt und fühlt, dass er vor Gott ein Sünder sei und gar nichts, der hat die Stimme Johannes gefühlt: 'Bereitet dem Herrn den Weg', gebet ihm Raum, es ist ein anderer hier, der mir nachfolgt, der grösser ist, denn Ich bin, den sollt ihr hören, dem sollt ihr gehorchen."2)

Blessed is he, who thus hears the voice of John and comes to the true light.

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1) John 1,6-9

2) Luther XI, 2294.

JOHN'S BAPTISM

That John did much baptizing in connection with his preaching one can see from passages and references made to the same, such as:

Math. 3, 6: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism." v. 6. "And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

Mark 1, 4: "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."

Luke 3, 12: "Then came also publicans to be baptized and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?"

Luke 7, 29: "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John."

John 1, 26: "John answered them saying, I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not."

John 3, 23: "And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came and were baptized."

Acts 10, 37: "That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached."

Acts 13, 24: "When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel." (Paul at Antioch in Pisidia. Peter's sermon at Cornelius.)

Acts 19, 3: "And he (Paul) said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said (the Ephesians), Unto John's baptism."

Thus John baptized with water and the benefit thereof was the remission of sins. Renan in writing about John's baptism has a very modernistic idea when he calls John's baptism only an outward sign. He says: "Baptism with John was only a sign destined to make an impression and to prepare the minds of the people for some great movement." 1) Renan also has the peculiar idea that John taught communism, when he asked the rich to share with the poor. 1) John did baptize in the Jordan. In this connection Meyer, in writing about the baptism sees an interesting symbolism in the Jordan water. He says:

"that Jordan water, flowing downwards to the Dead Sea, was symbolical. In the beauty of its origin, in the purity of its origin amid the snows of Hermon, and in the beauty of its earlier course it was an emblem of man's original constitution...very good but now these sullied and troubled waters went on to the Dead Sea of death...how apt an emblem was there of the history of our race, contaminated by the evil that is in the world through lust and meriting the wages of sin-death." 2)

However these baptisms were not a new thing, which John was foisting upon the people, not a "strange ceremony". There were many washings (baptisms) in the Old Testament. So there were many washings before "but never before had it been proposed that Israel should undergo a baptism of repentance, although there are indications of a deeper insight into the meaning of Levitical baptisms." 3)

1) Renan: Jesus and the Apostles, 97-99. 2) Meyer: John the Baptist, 95. 3) Edersheim: Life and Times, 273.

Now as to the washing in the Old Testament, the first to be mentioned is one for the unclean:

"And the Lord said unto Moses: Go unto the people and sanctify them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes." 1)  
"Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even." 2)

Then there was a baptism of priests at the consecration; "and shalt wash them (Aaron and his sons) with water," is told Moses. 3)

Defilement of the body also made washing necessary, as recorded in Exodus:

"And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, to wash withal; and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet therein. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation they shall wash with water that they die not; or when they come near unto the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord; so they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not; and it shall be a statute unto them forever, even to him and his seed through their generations." 4)

Also the psalms mention some washings:

"I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar oh Lord." 5)  
"Verily I have cleansed mine heart in vain, and washed mine hands in innocency." 5)

And one who had touched a carcass was commanded to wash both his clothes and his body. 6) Those who had recovered from leprosy had to wash. 7) On the day of atonement the high priest performed some special ablutions both at the beginning and at the conclusion of his duties. 8) The man who lead the scape-goat to the wilderness, the one who carried out of the camp the bullock and the goat for sin-offering had to wash his flesh with water. 9) The Levites were sprinkled with water at their consecration. 10). The priest and laymen, who prepared the ashes of the red heifer had to bathe. 11). And there were still some other ceremonial washings or baptisms, which will not be mentioned here. 12).

The most interesting of the Jewish washings or baptisms, and the one to which John's baptisms, in it's outward form, was related to, was the baptism of proselytes. Outsiders, who thus wished to become members of the

1) Ex. 19, 10. 2) Num. 19, 7. (Heb. 9, 10.) 3) Ex. 29, 4b. (Ex. 29, 1-9; 40, 12; Heb. 10, 22. 4) Ex. 30, 17-21. (Ex. 40, 30-32.) 5) Lev. 11, 24-28. 39. 40; 5, 2; 22, 4-6.) 6) Lev. 136. 34. 7) (Lev. 16, 4. 24.) 8) Lev. 16, 28-28. 9) (Num. 8, 5-7. 21.) 10) (Num. 19, 7-10. 11) (Lev. 15, 1-29; Num. 19, 11-28; Deut. 21, 1-9; 23, 10-11.) x 5) Ps. 26, 6; Ps. 73, 13.

Jewish Church, were instructed in certain parts of the Law, and after making profession of their faith were immersed in water, and after that were considered full-fledged Israelites. Edersheim notes four kinds of such baptisms:

- |                  |                   |    |                                 |
|------------------|-------------------|----|---------------------------------|
| 1. Ger ha shaar  | גַּרְהַשְׂאָר     | 78 | Proselytes of the gate.         |
| 2. Ger to shabh  | גַּרְתּוֹשָׁבַיִם | 78 | Sojourner settled among Israel. |
| 3. Ger hasedeq   | גַּרְהַשְׂדֵּק    | 78 | Proselyte of righteousness.     |
| 4. Ger haberrith | גַּרְהַבְרִית     | 78 | Proselyte of the covenant. "1)  |

"It is not necessary to discuss the much-vexed question of the source of which the Baptist derived his baptism- some say from the Essenes..... It is enough for us to remember that he was 'sent' to baptize, that the idea of his baptizing was 'from heaven' and that in his hands the rite assumed altogether novel and important functions." 2)

In order to become better acquainted with John's baptism, it will help to discuss the difference between his and that of Christ's baptism, about which subject much has been written and said.

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1) Edersheim: Life and Time of Jesus the Messiah, II, p.745.  
2) Meyer: John the Baptist, p.84.



## JOHN'S AND CHRIST'S BAPTISM

It may be said from the outset that there are no essential differences between John's and Christ's baptism, but several minor ones, which, if considered as differences at all, are not a matter of importance. Dr. Pieper says that the correct view of this matter is not important, since John is not baptizing anymore. 1) Fahling says: "While it is of not particular, present interest or practical value to discuss what degree of difference, if any, or similarity between it(John's baptism) and the sacrament of baptism instituted by Christ, it is clear that his baptism was a divine institution as he said himself "he that sent me to baptize with water".2) "It was not(only)merely an initiatory ceremony but an actual and effectual means of grace, bestowing upon those who received it upon sincere repentance, & forgiveness of sins."2)

John's baptism and that commanded by Christ have many things in agreement, which will be mentioned first. Both have a divine command. John had it: "Annas and Caiphaz being the high priests, 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."3) And John himself says: "And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water etc."4) When Christ asks the priests and elders: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or of men?"5) He implies the answer: 'from heaven'. In Luke it says that those who were not baptized rejected God's counsel, showing that John baptized at God's command: "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."6)

John's baptism was, as Christ's, a commanded baptism, one in accord with water. John says: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance."7) And again: "I indeed have baptized you with water."8).

1) Pieper; Dogmatic, III, 337-339. 2) Fahling; Life of Christ, 137.  
3) Luke 3, 2-3 4) John, 1, 33. 5) Mat. 21, 25. 6) Luke 7, 30 7) Mat. 3, 11a.  
8) Mark 1, 8; (Luke 3, 16; John 1, 26; 3, 23.)

Finally, like that of Christ's commanded baptism, it was one unto repentance for the forgiveness of sins. "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." 1) Meyer gives three different signs or symptoms of repentance, in connection with John's baptism. They are: "1. Confession. 2. Fruits worthy of repentance. 3. The baptism of repentance." 2)

However the following differences between the two baptisms might be noted. In Acts we read of St. Paul rebaptizing some of the Ephesians, who had already been baptized with John's baptism. After Paul heard of them, that they were baptized with John's baptism, 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. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." 3)

The chief points of difference between the two baptisms are indicated in this passage. John's baptism is consistently called a "baptism of repentance". It was administered to adults only, to such as confessed their sins, as had reached the age of discretion as Mathew says: "And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins," while the baptism of Christ is for all people, including the children, as Peter, after admonishing the people to be baptized, says: "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord, our God, shall call." 4)

Prof. Heuer, in his paper on John the Baptist mentions this:

"Zum Beweis für den Unterschied gibt man Apost. 19, 1-6 an. Das scheint so, aber hermeneutische Regel ist, 'dass man, wenn eine Person redend eingeführt wird, die Rede derselben erst dann abgeschlossen sein lässt, wenn der Kontext selbst uns zwingt, die Rede als abgeschlossen zu fassen.' Es zwingt uns aber hier der Kontext nicht. Wie bei Apost. 2, 38. Pauli Rede ended erst mit Vers 5." 5)

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1) Mark 1, 4; (Luke 3, 3). 2) Meyer; John the Baptist, 79-83. 3) Acts 19, 4-5.  
4) Mat. 3, 6; (Mark 1, 5); Acts 2, 39. 5) Heuer; Syn. Ber. Minn. 1912, 39.

Acts 19,4-5 read: "Then said Paul, 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. v.5. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." The argument is, that v.5 belongs to Paul's speech, saying that John baptized people in the name of the Lord Jesus. However that does not seem correct here. Verse five is the statement of Luke, referring to the people who heard Paul's speech and consequently were baptized by Paul in the name of the Lord Jesus. In this connection Dr. Kretzmann says: "Both, for grammatical and historical reasons, v.5 cannot be regarded as belonging to Paul's words. CP., however, Syn.-Ber., Minn. Dist., 1912, 39." 1)

"The baptism of Jesus works and transmits the forgiveness of sins as a gift which has been earned; the baptism of John points forward to the winning of this precious boon through the redemption to be made through Jesus Christ. In short the baptism of John was typical, preparatory, as was his preaching; the glorious fulfillment has come in and with Christ." 2)

Dr. Pieper, in this connection quotes Thomasius, who speaks against the identity of John's and Christ's baptism. Dr. Pieper points out the following: According to scripture John's baptism also was a true means of grace "vis dativa and vis effectiva". On Pentecost day people were baptized with christian baptism for the forgiveness of sins "εἰς ἴψου τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν", so also was John's baptism for repentance to forgiveness of sins "βαπτίζου μετάνοιαν εἰς ἴψου ἁμαρτιῶν". John's baptism gave forgiveness of sins without works "ein Mensch aus den Pharisäern in Gottes Reich kommt", just as the new baptism gives forgiveness without works.

It is interesting to note what the Encyclopedia Britannica has to say about this baptism. "In the New Testament itself there are two distinct kinds of baptism spoken of- the baptism of John and Christian baptism. Treatises on Jewish antiquities speak of the baptism of proselytes." 3)

1) Kretzmann: P. Commentary, N.T., I, 629. 2) Same, p. 17. 3) Enc. Brit., III, 348-349.

Note: The baptisms do not seem to be of such distinct kind as here set forth.

The following are excerpts from the Britannica, while the notes are personal remarks added:

"We know very little about the baptism of John, and all attempts to describe it minutely are founded either upon conjecture or upon it's identity with the baptism of proselytes."

Note: True it is, the Bible does not say much regarding John's baptism.

"Was John's baptism an initiation, and if so, initiation into what?"

Note: This may be easily answered, although it is preferred to use the term admission to the word initiation. It was an admission to the kingdom of heaven, as it gave forgiveness, and Luther says: "Wo Vergebung der Sünden ist, da ist auch Leben und Seligkeit."1)

"Did Christ baptize in his life-time, or did Christian baptism ~~prop-~~  
~~erly~~ properly begin after Christ's death, and after the mission of the Holy Ghost?"

Note: John 3,22 says that Christ baptized, however Dr. Kretzmann says that the disciples of Christ did it in His name. "Incidentally His disciples performed the rite of baptism in His name."2)

"What was the formula of John's baptism, and was there any change or growth in the formula of Christian baptism?"

Note: The formula of John's baptism, if any, is not recorded. The formula was not given by Christ, until the day of His ascension, so there is no discussion as to whether it was changed.

"The Tübinger school for example, think that the formula in Acts II is much earlier than the complete and more developed one in Math.28,19."

Note: In Acts 2,38 it says: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." There is no doubt that Peter, here is referring to the same formula, that Christ had given, namely that of the trinity, however, he is not here baptizing, and not using the full formula, in his admonition for the people to be baptized.

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1) Luther: Small Catechism, 6th. Chief Part. 2) Kretzmann: P. Commentary, 1,424.

The Encyclopedia Britannica concludes thus:

"All these questions require to be answered with much more precision than the present state of our information admits of, before we can define the precise relation subsisting between the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ." 1)

Note: It may be stated again, as Dr. Pieper says, that it is not important to try and make hair-fine distinctions.

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1) Encyclopedia Britannica, 1900 Edition, Vol. III, 348-349.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S BAPTISM

Mathew tells of the wonderful story of Christ's Baptism in this way:

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and low, the heavens were opened unto Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon Him, and lo, a voice from heaven saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."1)

Christ comes to John to be baptized, the king comes to His herald; not that John would seek for Christ, as one may expect, but also this fact fitted in with Christ's statement "for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness". Jesus came from Galilee and Mark adds that He came from Nazareth. Jesus had been living there in His boyhood, of which we know so little, but now He comes forth, and we see Him humble Himself under the Law, asking to be baptized by His herald. However, John hesitated to baptize Christ, saying: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" John the Evangelist states that John did not know Christ at this time. However, "this passage (Math.3,14) is not out of harmony with Joh1, 31.33, where John says that he did not know Jesus. The apparent contradiction is in the translation only. In the original the word used ( $\eta\delta\epsilon\iota\upsilon$ ) signifies 'to recognize beyond the possibility of doubt, to be sure of the identity'. John had known of the existence of the Messiah, either from His mother or by direct revelation, but he did not know Him personally. When Jesus came, the majesty and dignity of His bearing caused John to surmise His identity, hence his hesitency. But the actual identifying sign, which removed all doubts and made the recognition absolute, did not happen until after the baptism, as John relates in his gospel."2)

John had good reasons for hesitating to baptize Christ. Luther speaks of the occasion thus:

"Why does he come and seek baptism, as there is no sin and uncleanness in Him, which baptism would remove? That will be a blessed baptism. John here is getting a sinner, who in his own person has no sin, and yet is the greatest sinner, that has and bears the sins of the world. For this reason He permits Himself to be baptized, and confesses with this action

1) Math.3,13-17. 2) Kretzmann:P.Commentary, 1,15.

that He is a sinner, not for Himself, but for us. For He here takes my place and thy place, and stands in our stead, who are sinners, He must become a sinner for all; He assumes the form of our sinful flesh and complains, as many psalms testify, on the cross and His passion, on the weight of the sins, which He bears." 1)

However Jesus overrules John's objection, answering: "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." The outstanding traits of Jesus' vicarious work were obedience and fulfillment. Every righteous ordinance and Law given to man, He wanted to obey and fulfill. So He says, "it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." From ancient times the teachers of the Church have found here a wider and larger reference, Luther gives it thus:

"Jesus says.....If that shall be performed that the poor sinners may come to righteousness and be saved, you must baptize me. Because for the sake of sinners I have become a sinner, must therefore do what God has charged the sinners to do, in order that they may become just through me." 2)

Of these words "suffer it to be so etc", Meyer says: "with such words our Lord overruled the objections of his loyal and faithful forerunner. This is the first recorded utterance of Christ after a silence of more than twenty years; the first also of His public ministry; it demands our passing notice. In His baptism(the) our Lord acknowledged the divine authority of the forerunner." 3)

The righteousness, of which Christ speaks, Luther explains thus:

"Was ist das, 'alle Gerechtigkeit zu erfüllen'? Was ist 'alle Gerechtigkeit'? Das ist alle Gerechtigkeit; sich selber ungerecht achten vor Gott, und von Herzen bekennen, dass niemand kann bestehen vor seinem Urteil, sondern müsse sich büßen vor ihm, sie seien also heilig, als sie immer wollen, und sich Sünder bekennen; wie auch David, da er doch ein Mann war, wie ihn Gott haben wollte, begehrte, dass ihn Gott nicht vor Gericht(fordern wollte)forderte; denn da mochte weder er weder alle Menschen bestehen, Ps.143,2." 4)

We thus see Christ here humbling Himself to the level of the sinner, He counts Himself as one of them, under obligations to obey their laws, and therefore says to John, "Suffer it to be so now." John now understood Christ's purpose of the baptism, and he quiesced, and "he suffered Him", namely to be baptized.

1) Luther VII, 691; XI, 2130. 2) Luther XIII, 1575; XI, 2139.  
3) Meyer: John the Baptist, 93-94. 4) Luther XI, 2139.

And now follows the wonderful manifestation of the Holy Trinity. As soon as Christ was baptized, He quickly, straightway came out of the water and stood at the river bank. His baptism was important, but what was to take place now, was still more important, a miracle. The heaven cleft open above Christ, the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Jesus, and the heavenly Father's voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was a glorious apparition", an actual happening, not a vision as in the case of Jacob, Stephen and others. 1)

That not only Jesus but also John saw this apparition, is known from the gospel which states:

"And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not, but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He, which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." 2)

That John saw all this with his own eyes was a great strengthening for him, and especially for his office. He thus became the true witness of Christ the Messiah as the second person of the Godhead, which he could testify to his people. This event was "a miraculous witness of God the Father to the Sonship of Jesus". 3) It was a special strengthening for Christ also, for here He was truly anointed with the Holy Spirit, without measure, above His fellows. 4) Christ had the Spirit before, already from eternity, but here He also fully received it according to His human nature. That the work of Christ is here approved of by the Father, in fact by the Holy Trinity, the entire Godhead having a share in the great work of our salvation, is of great comfort to us, for whom this great work was performed.

"It is an idle speculation to enquire why the dove was chosen; and to find the comparison in the perfect gentleness, purity, and fulness of life of this bird. Let us rather emphasize the fact that God wanted to convey the idea of an unlimited imparting of the Holy Spirit to His Son according to His human nature, Ps.45,8; Acts 10,38." 5)

1) Gen.28,12; Acts 7,55-56;10,11. 2) John 1,32-34.

3) Kretzmann;P.Commentary,N.T.,1,282. 4) Ps.45,7; Heb.1,9. 5)Kretzmann:P.C.1,16.



Luther in this connection points out that all this was especially done for our sakes, and not for Christ's sake. No one had to prove to Christ or tell Him, that He was God's beloved Son, but it all was said for us. Luther points to the special comfort this gives us, thus:

"Nun wie könnte sich Gott mehr ausschütten und liebevoller oder süßer dargeben, denn dasz er spreche, es gefalle ihm von Herzen wohl, dasz sein Sohn Christus so freundlich mit mir redet, so herzlich mich meinet, und so für groszer Liebe mich leidet, stirbt und alles tut. Meinst Du nicht, wo ein menschlich Herz sollte recht fühlen solch Wohlgefallen Gottes an Christo, wenn er uns so dient, es müsst vor Freuden in hundert tausend Stücke zerspringen; denn da würde es sehen in den Abgrund des väterlichen Herzens, ja, in die grundlosze und ewige Güte und Liebe Gottes, die er zu uns trägt und von Ewigkeit getragen hat." 1)

Professor Heuer says: "Jesu hat so die Taufe geweiht. Hat die himmlischen Gaben auch in die neutestamentliche Taufe gelegt."

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1) Luther XI, 2243. 2) Heuer; Syn. Ber. Minn. Dist. 1912.

JOHN'S SERMONS AFTER CHRIST'S BAPTISM

What John preached after the baptism of Christ is recorded in

John 1 and John 3. The first part reads:

"John bare witness of Him and cried, saying, this was He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me; for He was before me. And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." 1) ~~Again~~

Again John takes the part of a true herald. He bears witness of his master, showing forth the glory of the Messiah. "His witnessing and preaching had been in the nature of continual, earnest, impressive, urging and pleading, in order to prepare the hearts for the reception of Christ." 2) That John says, that Christ was before him, that is in point of honor, authority, power and glory, although John was before Christ in point of time according to Christ's human nature. He points to the fulness of Christ and His grace. No matter how much we draw on the grace of the Lord, it is new every morning. The supply is inexhaustible, as St. Paul says: "Moreover the Law entered, that the offence might abound. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." 3) Moses, who was a mere man, brought the Law, but Christ is both God and man, He brought grace and truth, which will last forever. God is the essence of grace and faithfulness, but this fact was hidden, and Christ came and revealed it fully. As He knows the Father, ~~As He knows the Father,~~ and has seen Him, while no one else has seen Him, He could reveal Him. He revealed Him not as a threatening God, but as a most merciful, gracious Father. And now comes the embassy of the Jews to John.

"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, who art thou? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, what then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." 4)

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1) John 1, 15-18. 2) Kretzmann: P. Commentary, N.T., 1, 408. 3) Rom. 5, 20. 4) John 1, 19-23.

The appearance of John, his peculiar way of living, and his special kind of preaching soon caused sensational comment among the people. This caused the Jews to send a delegation to John to right-out ask him, "Who art thou?", accent on the 'thou'. They had a strong suspicion, that he was the Messiah. "According to a Rabinic tradition the Sanhedrin was under a special obligation to prevent the appearing of false prophets.... The wedding of Cana was on a Wednesday, we arrive at a Thursday for the day on which the committee of the Sanhedrin called on John."1) John could have easily accepted the greatest honor, namely that of being the Son of God, but he sincerely declines it, definitely answering that he is not the Christ. Also the next question as to whether he is Elias, he denies. This he does even though Malachi and Christ Himself call him Elias.2) However he correctly denied it, because both passages speak of John as having the spirit and power of Elias, not that the old Elias was to appear again, which was the thing, these Jews thought, namely that Elias the Thesbite had appeared on earth again. Fahling says: "

"but he (John) was not Elias, in the sense in which they had put the question; for they expected a physical return of that prophet before the coming of the Lord, and therefore he could not admit the suggested identity without misleading them. "And he said, I am not."...The Investigating Committee, were on the look-out for false prophets but missing the prophet of all prophets, the Messiah."3)

Likewise he also denies that he is a prophet, or the prophet, for a similar reason. The Jews understood under prophet in Deut. not the one prophet, the Messiah, but some other special prophet, who was to usher in the messianic reign. As the delegation presses for a definite answer, John makes a fine confession by quoting Isaiah, saying that he is a 'voice in the wilderness'.4) This prophecy he so well fulfilled, as has been seen before.

Now the Pharisees, who had come with them, begin to question John. The gospel reads: "And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him and said unto him, why baptizeth thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them saying, I baptize with water; but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing."5)

1) Fahling: Life of Christ, 148. 2) Mal. 4, 5; Mat. 17, 10-13, 161. 4) Is. 40, 3. 5) John 1, 24-28

The Pharisees were much interested in what authority John had for his office, so they ask, why he baptizes, when he is neither Christ, Elias, ~~nor~~ nor a prophet. Luther says, that the Pharisees here are threatening John, severely criticising him for baptizing. That they here show their true color of deceit (Betrug), that before, they asked so interestedly as to whether he was Christ and so on, giving the show as though they were much interested in the Saviour and his work, but now their deceitfulness shows forth. However John remains true to his cause. He does not make any <sup>save</sup> promises to ~~save~~ his reputation (his face) or the like. He emphasizes his baptism, but contrasts it, ~~but contrasts it with~~ that of Christ. Again he makes his humble statement, confessing that he is not worthy to unloose even as much as the sandals of his Lord. "John's example of confessing Christ before the enemies of true salvation should encourage the Christians of all times to stand up courageously for Christ." 1) Some critics say that John well knew how to snatch honor to himself, when he quoted the Isaiah prophecy, applying it to himself. However the opposite is true, John was humble in quoting it, as he was humble in every way, as has been seen before. And now John comes with some sweet Gospel. John points to the Lamb of God, as the Bible states:

"The next day John seeth Christ coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world. This is He of whom I said, after me cometh a man, which is preferred before me. And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come, baptizing with water. And John bare record saying, I saw the Spirit, descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."

What a wonderful testimony, what a fine Gospel was not this, when John, in the hearing of the many, who were about him, said: "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world," while Christ was coming toward him. He undoubtedly had the Isaiah 53 passage in mind, when speaking

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1) Kretzmann; P. Commentary, N.T., 1, 410. 2) John 1, 29-34.

these words. For "Christ was the prophesied lamb, the sacrificial lamb, the lamb that was led to the slaughter. And He was the lamb of God, He was provided by God, sent out by God, He came with God's full consent and will." 1) Luther likes this preaching of John so well that he says of it; "This is preaching of exceptional beauty and consolation of Christ, our Saviour; we can never reach it with our words, yea, not even with our thoughts." 2) John identifies Christ still more by referring the people back to his words of the day before, namely that Christ is the one, who was before John, and so on. That John says he did not know Christ, is not a contradiction, as has been pointed out before. John knew of the Messiah, but he personally did not altogether know Him, until he witnessed the grand manifestation at Christ's baptism, which occasion he here mentions. He gives here a little inside-look into his wonderful life, by saying that it had been revealed to him before, that the Spirit would descend upon the Messiah as a special sign to him, of Christ's identity. And since he had seen and witnessed all this, he could now bear witness with much certainty. He could preach and proclaim with absolute definiteness that this Jesus, who had received the Holy Ghost without measure was the Son of God.

Note: "All truly christian preaching must have the essential content of the proclamation and witness of John. A true christian preacher will first prepare the way for the coming of the Lord through the preaching of repentance. He that is no sinner and does not want to acknowledge himself as a sinner, has no need of a Saviour. But then follows the preaching of Christ, of Jesus of Nazareth, of the Redeemer of the world. Only by and through such preaching is the eternal Light revealed to men." 3)

A statement of Luther quoted by several writers in this connection, is this: "Ist die Sünde auf deinen Rücken so bist Du verloren, ist sie auf Jesum, so bist Du selig." Thus only if our sin is upon the Lamb of God can we be saved.

Next the Bible tells of how some of John's disciples heeded his testimony. "Again the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, And they followed Jesus." 4)

1) Kretzmann; P. Commentary, N.T., 1, 410. 2) Luther, VII, 1717.

3) " " " " " " " 1, 411. 4) John 1, 35-37.

We see how John did not grow weary of testifying. Just the day before he had pointed out Christ to his hearers, but we read of no special results. However, this time, two disciples, who heard his witness, followed Christ and became His disciples. What a blessing, if we could lead all of our hearers to the Lamb of God in this way, that is, lead them to sincerely believe in the Saviour, and thus become true disciples, heirs of eternal life, which Christ has gained for us all, by taking our sin away. And now we turn to John's second testimony of Christ.

This is recorded in John<sup>3</sup>, which speaks of Christ's ministry and John's baptism. "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there He tarried with them and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon, near to Salim, because there was much water there; and they came and were baptized. For John was not yet cast in prison."<sup>1</sup>) It now so happened that John and Christ were working in the same region. Both were baptizing. It is usually taken, that Christ Himself, did not baptize, but His disciples did the baptizing. 2) As these great teachers were not so far away from each other, there soon arose disputes, arguments concerning purifying, amongst the disciples.

The Bible states them thus:

"Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him. John answered and said, a man can receive nothing except it be given from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, that I am not the Christ but am sent before Him. He that hath the bride, is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled."<sup>3</sup>)

The question which was causing argument was concerning washings and baptisms. They were such as what the relation of the Jewish washings were to the baptisms of John and that of Christ, and especially the question as to whose baptism was the correct one, Christ's or John's, and of course the disciples of John did not like Christ's baptism. They do not mention Christ's

1) John 3,22-24. 2) Kretzmann: P. Commentary, N.T. 1, 424. 3) John 3, 25-29.

name, but only refer to Him, as the one, of whom John gave witness beyond the Jordan. They show jealous resentment against Jesus. However they were in the wrong and John soon puts them on the right track. They should have been surprised, that John kept up his work and baptism after the Messiah had appeared. The only reason John was keeping at his work and baptism, was because he aimed to lead more people to this lamb of God. John says, that no one can receive anything except from God, that is, no one can assume rights, powers, privileges and have success, unless it be given him from heaven. Both ~~had~~ John and Christ had their power and authority from heaven. Both had their work to do. It was God's will, that people should now flock to Christ. And it was John's aim and purpose to lead people to the Christ, as he further states. He calls upon his disciples to even help him bear witness, that he has always denied that he was Christ, and that on the contrary he has taken the part of a forerunner. He uses the parable to illustrate, namely that Christ, the groom, has the bride, the Church, and it is natural that all believers will seek salvation in their groom and Saviour. However, he, John, is the friend of the groom, he only stands by; but he has great joy in hearing the groom's voice, how He leads His sheep to safety. It was a fulfillment of John's hopes and joy, that people were turning to Christ, for this assured him, that his work had not been in vain. What an ideal preacher was not this man John? This fact is still more brought out, by the last section of his preaching.

It reads thus in Scripture:

"He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he has seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal, that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him. 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."1)

1) John 3, 30-36.

The fact which John mentions, that Christ must increase, is a simple conclusion, which he draws, according to which motto he lived during his entire lifetime. He ever so often humbled himself under his master, the Messiah, whose shoes' latchet, he said, he was not worthy to unloose. As the friend of the bridegroom he leads, points, directs people to this groom, the Saviour, who can give them salvation. "This is the motto of all true servants of the Lord. They see the fulfillment of all their hopes and expectations in the fact that the people in the congregation do not cling to the pastor's person, but accept the Word that is preached to them and put their trust in that alone." 1) Whether the last words of this section are spoken by John the Baptist or the Evangelist, makes little difference as far as the content of the statement is concerned. The superiority of Christ is set forth. He is above all. // "John and all earth-born preachers, in spite of their high calling, are still on the earth, can only speak in the humility of earthly ability." 2) Also John's preaching came from above. It was revealed unto him. However, Christ, although He appeared as a mere man, yet His supremacy was universal. Although Christ is over all, yet His Gospel-preaching, like others, was as a whole not accepted. But he who received it, has it as a seal and he confirms the fact, that God is truth. Christ naturally speaks God's word, as He is God Himself, His words are truth, for "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him", as the psalmist says: "Thou loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness: Therefore God, Thy God, hath annointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." 3) The Father does not only give Christ the fulness of the Spirit, but gives unto Him also all power; all the world is in His hand. Here is a "glimpse into the secret of the Trinity." The Father from Eternity gives Christ everything. This Trinity worketh faith in the believers, faith in the Son; and all such will have everlasting life. However those, who will not accept the Son, and will not believe, will not see life, but will be

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1) Ketzmann: P. Commentary, N.T., 1, 425. 2) Same, p. 426. 3) Psalm 45, 7.



under the wrath of God; that is, they will be punished in everlasting hellfire. This ends the sermons of John the Baptist. What a preacher was he not? What can one not learn from him? More of an application to this will be made in the conclusion of the paper.

## JOHN'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING CHRIST

John bears such wonderful record and testimony concerning Christ, that this matter will be taken up here under a special heading, where his testimonies are gathered together. Will first quote the Bible passages referring to his testimony.

John 1,29: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

John 1,36: "And looking upon Jesus, as He walked he saith, Behold the Lamb of God."

These two passages, almost every child and adult within the Church knows, although they may not know, that it was John the Baptist, who spoke them.

John 3, 28-36 is the passage, which has just been discussed in treating the last part of John's preaching, where he gives the parable of the groom and bride, and makes the known statement "He must increase, but I must decrease." Two thoughts, which Meyer mentions in connection with this known statement may be mentioned here yet: "First: the only hope of a decreasing self is an increasing Christ...-Second: We must view our relationship to Christ as the betrothal and marriage of our soul to our Maker and Redeemer, who is also our husband." 1)

John 10,41: "And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true."

Regarding John's testimony Luther says:

"Adam, Abel, Noah, Patriarchen, David predigten von dem kommenden Christus, Johannes: Ich aber sage: Ja, Er wird kommen, aber also, dasz er schon gegenwärtig, und vorhanden ist." 2)

"Denn er lehrt von Christum dem Herrn, nicht von Mose dem Knechte." 3)

"Jesus war unbekannt, verachtet, kein Ansehen, Mark 6,3 'Ist er nicht der Zimmermanns Marias Sohn? Und ärgerten sich an ihm.' Johannes spricht 'Dieser ist's, Ich taufe mit Wasser, aber Er ist mitten unter Euch getreten."

"Johannes ist ein Diener und Führer zu dem Licht, der da ist Christus, unser lieber Heiland. Er ist der Führer zum Licht, ~~selbst~~ nicht das Licht selbst, wie die Römischen, die Heiligen zum Licht selbst machen. Johannes warnt vor falschen Lichtern." 5)

1) Meyer: John the Baptist, 129. 2) Luther 7, 2053. 3) Luther VII, 121.  
4) Luther VII, 1586. 5) Luther VII, 1508.

Edersheim says that John points to the difference between himself and Christ. His baptism is a preparatory one. Christ's is the divine baptism in the Holy Ghost and with fire. John's work was preparing, Christ's that of final decision. John had a new rite, baptism of repentance. 1) Edersheim gives John's twofold testimony thus:

"John learned two lessons at baptism:

1. About the kingdom: 'to fulfill all righteousness'.
2. About the King: the spirit, the voice explained the promised sign." 2)

In spite of the fact that John was tempted by deputations who came to ask him questions, John testified bravely and overcame all temptations.

Edersheim again says:

"He (John) overcame - the first temptation by the humility of his intense sincerity, the second by the absolute simplicity of his own experimental conviction; the first by what he had seen, the second by what he had heard concerning the Christ, at the banks of the Jordan." 3)

"The last recorded testimony of the Baptist had pointed to Christ as the bridegroom." 4)

"In simple Judean illustration he was only 'the friend of the bridegroom. He claimed not the bride. His was another joy - that of hearing the voice of her rightful bridegroom, whose groomsman he was. In the sound of that voice lay the fulfillment of his office.'" 5)

We may think, 'what is it so special about John, that he was the first to point to Christ?' However, we too make much about first discoveries, the first new achievements of some note, some new feat, such as the first wireless communication, Linbergh's first crossing of the Atlantic ocean and the like; why should not John's first pointing directly to the Messiah be considered something special?

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1) Edersheim: Life and Times of Christ the Messiah Vol.I, 270.

2) The same, p.236. 3) The same, p.340. 4) The same, p.663. 5) The same, p.656.

## CHRIST'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING JOHN

John by this time had been cast into prison, but as mentioned in the first part of the paper, John still kept up his good work, by leading his disciples to Christ. This time he sent two disciples to Christ to ask whether he be the Messiah or not. Renan thinks that "there is nothing to inform us" as to whether John was certain about Christ's Messiahship or not. However Fahling correctly does not believe "that there was any doubt in the mind of him who had said 'Behold the lamb etc.' and who had already released some of his best disciples to Jesus."1) However here is mainly to be discussed the wonderful answer Christ gave to the messengers of John.

Luke states:

"And in that same hour he cured many infirmities and plagues and of evil spirits, and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."2)

The disciples could not have come to Christ at a more fitting time. For they just arrived to see Christ perform all kinds of miracles, which are mentioned in detail in the Gospel. And to these miracles Christ points in answer to the disciples of John. These were the very fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, such as:

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert."3)

Again: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;"4)

Any one who knew the Old Testament and would see these things being fulfilled could have no doubt, that Christ was the Messiah. Christ adds a warning, that those are blessed, who take no offense in Him, thus admonishing them not to take offense. This was the danger, as Christ did not turn

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1) Renan: Jesus and the Apostles, 153. 2) Luke 7, 21-23. 3) Is. 35, 5-6. 4) Is. 61, 1-2. (Fahling: Life of Christ, 285.

out to be, what most people, even the disciples of John expected the Messiah to be. They expected Christ to be a person like John, who practiced much self-denial, lived in the wilderness and so on, but as Christ did none of these things, they were offended.

Now Christ gives testimony about John, the King about His herald.

The gospel reads:

"And when the messengers of John were departed, He began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in king's courts. But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, and I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, ~~be~~ behold, I sent my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee."1)

Christ first puts aside some of the people's false idea about John. He asks if they consider him a reed, blown to and fro by the wind. Luther says, that Christ's question indicates that some of the people had this idea of John, namely that he was two-faced. If they did, they had no reason for it, for John certainly always was sincere and on the contrary was faithful to his call, no matter what temptations came to him. That there are many such "Rohrprediger" and "Rohrchristen" is indeed true. How many people in our day do not like to call all religions the true religion, and sad to state, that even many preachers really are blown to and fro in their beliefs and convictions. Next Jesus points to the fact that John is not parading about like a king, dressed in precious garments and ornaments, but on the contrary is living a life of self-denial, which the people knew only too well. Then Jesus points directly to the fact that John is the angel-messenger, who was to go before Him, and quotes the Malachi 3,1 prophecy. As Jesus Himself quotes this prophecy, there should remain no doubt for any one, that John was the very messenger.

But Christ has further praises for John, which are stated in Luke as follows:

1) Luke 7, 24-27.

"For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; But he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves being not baptized of him." 1)

"In solemn terms Christ gives His own evaluation of the worth of John the Baptist." Not only has no one arisen, as great a prophet as John, but among all mankind there will be no greater. And yet "he who is comparatively less in the kingdom of heaven, according to the standard of that kingdom, or who occupies a lower place in it, is greater than John, in respect of the development of his faith and spiritual life." 2) Although John was the herald, yet he only saw the dawn of the kingdom. All believers of the New Testament, be they ever so small, see a greater light than John, for they have the whole revelation of the great work of salvation before them. The work of redemption has been worked out, has been fully completed, and in that sense they are greater than John. This word of Christ had its effect: many people were baptized by John, even publicans, but as has "always been the fate of the Gospel-message with the regard to the majority of people", there were some who "rejected and spurned this counsel of love; they refused to be baptized by John", namely the Pharisees and lawyers.

Finally, Christ gives yet a parable, namely that of children in the market-place.

"And the Lord said, whereunto, then shall I liken the men of this generation? And to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the market-place, and calling one to another and saying we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to ~~to~~ you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, he hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of all her children." 3)

Jesus here, with this parable chides and scolds the inconsistency of the Jews, and especially of the Pharisees, comparing them, with capricious (freakinsh) children in the streets. They try to play many games, but they

1) Luke 7, 28-30 2) Schaff: Commentary, Matthew, 206. 3) Luke 7, 31-35.

cannot agree upon any. If the one side suggests one game, then the others do not respond in the play, and thus they come to nothing; just so the Jews and Pharisees. John comes and lives a life of self-denial, him they call a man with a devil, Christ does the opposite, lives and goes about like the rest of the people, and Him they call a winebiber and a gluttonous man, a friend of the publicans and sinners. The Greek, which Christ uses here has a play on words, 'dance' and 'lament', bringing out the emphasis of His thought, thus:

"νοησαμην ὑμῶν καὶ οὐκ ὤρχήσασθε.  
"ἐδρηνώσαμεν καὶ οὐκ ἔκλαύσατε." 1)

"There is no disagreement between this passage and that of Mathew 11, 19. (One has 'justified of all her children', the other 'justified of her works'.) (ἔργον — τέκνον). By a slight change in the vocalization the Aramaic word used by Jesus may mean either 'works' or 'children'. Both renderings are inspired and accepted by God." 2) The personal divine wisdom, Christ, Prov.8, was obliged to justify Himself against the judicial verdict of those who should have been His children by faith, but who refused to accept Him. His works stood the test of God's judgement in spite of their unbelief. Thus ends the speech of Christ concerning John the Baptist. Now let us look at the character of John's teaching, as a final heading/.

## CHARACTER OF JOHN'S TEACHING

Some may think that John was the "horn of salvation" but that is not the case. Christ was this "horn of salvation". 1) A negative characteristic of John's teaching was, that he did no miracle. Of this Luther says: "

"Aber dies hat Gott sonderlich verwahrt, dasz St. Johannes kein Zeichen getan hat, wie in John 10,41; sondern das ist sein Werk gewesen, dasz er von Christus sagt und auf Christum geseicht hat. Christus aber, der nicht ein so strenges Leben geführt, hat viel Wunderzeichen getan, und wie auch andere Apostel viel höher sind mit Wunderzeichen denn Johannes; ja, er hat auch wohl etliche gehabt, die ihm des Lebens halben gleich gewesen sind." 2)

A characteristic, which John was to have according to prophecy, even foretold before his birth, was that he was to be like Elias. Luther says:

"Er (Johannes) ist Elias, der kommen soll...Kein Elias wird kommen." 3)  
"Wie Elias die Heiligkeit Ahabs umstiesz; so also musz auch Johannes tähn, musz zu Trümmern stossen alles was unser ist: Hütet Euch vor den zukünftigen Zorn, musz er sagen; denn Ihr seid verdammt in den Tod und Hölle, und (predigen) dasz wir allein auf Christum kommen müssen. Und das heiszt, dann kommen in der Kraft und Geist Elia." 4)

Edersheim in this connection says: "

"It was to a society secure, prosperous luxurious, yet in imminent danger of perishing from hidden festering disease; and to a religious community, which presented the appearance of hopeless perversion, and yet contained the germ of a possible regeneration, that both Elijah and John the Baptism came. Both suddenly appeared to threaten terrible judgement, but also to open unthought-of possibilities of good and, as if to deepen still more the impression of this contrast, both appeared in a manner unexpected, and even anti the habits of their contemporaries. John came suddenly out of the wilderness of Judea, as Elijah from the wilds of Gilead. John bore the same strange aszetic appearance as his predecessor; the message of John was the counterpart of that of Elijah, his baptism that of Elijah's novel rite on Mt. Carmel." 5)

Edersheim thus has well shown the comparison of John and Elijah. How Christ called John Elias, has been discussed before, as well as other passages in Scripture, calling John Elijah.

John's teaching was an 'Isaiah-preaching. "Brightly reflected from Isaiah was that of the anointed Messiah, Christ, the representative, the priest, king and prophet, in whom the institution and sacramental mea-

1) Luther XI, 2273. 2) The same, p. 2268. 3) The same, p. 98. 4) The same, p. 2266  
5) Edersheim: Life and Time of Christ the Messiah, 1, 255.



ning of the priesthood and of sacrifices found their fulfilment. 1) Edersheim has some more praise for John in words like this: "Nothing more noble can be conceived than the selfabnegation of the Baptist in circumstances, which <sup>would</sup> not only have turned aside an impostor or an enthusiast, but must have severely tried the constancy of the truest man." 2) He was "the greatest of those born of women, was also the most humble, the most retiring and self-forgetful." 3) To show how the Old Testament prophecies had effected John's teaching, Edersheim says: "The prophecies had been the Music of his soul for thirty years." 4)

Three outstanding features of John were, says Meyer: "1. His independence. 2. His simplicity. 3. His noble office. 5)

Among the writings about John, one finds quite a few questions, which well show the kind of thoughts, which may have been in the mind of John, but he overcame all of them, and did not let any of these seemingly difficult matters get into the way of his teaching. First some questions concerning his paralleled ministry with Jesus. "

"But why did John continue to baptize? Was it because Jesus had not yet come forth? Was John mistaken that he should? Or was it because John was not convinced of the Messiahship of Jesus, or must the parallel ministry be looked upon as a splitting asunder of the Messianic moment? Certainly not." 6)

And when John was cast into prison, could he not have <sup>had</sup> thoughts as these:

"Was this the kingdom he had come to announce as near at hand; for which he had longed, prayed, toiled, suffered, utterly denied himself and all that made life pleasant, and the rosy morning which he had hailed with hymns of praise? Where was the Christ? Was he the Christ? ~~What~~ What was he doing? Was he eating and drinking all this while with publicans and sinners, when he the baptist was suffering for him? Was he in his person and work so quite different from himself? And why was he so? 7)

From what has already been fully discussed, we know exactly how John would have answered these questions. He well understood, and also made his disciples understand, teaching them to cling unto the Lamb of God.

Windisch makes efforts to show the contrasts between Jesus and John, such as to their ways of living, their food, their clothing, their death. 8)

1) Edersheim: Life and Time of Christ the Messiah, I, 337. 2) Same, p. 655.  
3) Same, p. 338. 4) Same, p. 339. 5) Meyer: John the Baptist, 162f. 6) Fahling: Life of Christ, p. 174. 7) Edersheim: Life and Time, I, 661. 8) Zeitschrift f. N.T. v. 32, 1, 80.

The contrasts which Meyer makes between Jesus' and John's deaths are these: John's death was a tragic close, that of Jesus a beginning. John had no control over death, while Jesus meant to die. John's grave proved that he was dead; the grave of Jesus proved the opposite, as it was empty, and thus showed that Christ had arisen.<sup>1)</sup>

A new and interesting comparison is that of John and Luther. This comparison is made by Dr. Krauss. The following are notes taken from his book "Unser Erbteil", where he goes into detail with this comparison.

John reformed the Jewish Church, at a time when there was no more true prophet, who uncovered the blindness of Israel, to wake it from its spiritual sleep. Luther reformed the Church under similar conditions. As before the time of John, so also before the time of Luther did people try to gain forgiveness of sin by works. The majority of the Jews believed to become clean and righteous before God by means of the outward sacrifice, while a small group tried to appease the wrath of God, by seeking a special holiness. "Minze, Dill und Kimmel", giving the tenth, fasting and putting on a sour face. Thus also the Christians of the time of Luther.

John taught repentance and Gospel, so also Luther. John caused an awakening 'Eregung' among the people, so did Luther in the whole world. John chided the righteous pharisees, Luther the indulgence sellers. John says, "Ihr Ottergezüchte", Luther says against the abomination of indulgence: "Ihr Ottergezüchte, wer hat denn Euch gewiesen, dasz ihr durch Ablassbriefe, um Geld mögt Vergebung der Sünden und Gnade bei Gott erkaufen? Glaubts ja nicht, dasz ihr bei Euch sollt sagen: 'Wir haben ja die heilige Römische Kirche zu Mutter, und den Papst zu Rom zum Vater, darum kann es uns nicht fehlen. Es wird Euch wohl fehlen; die werden sammt ihren Meistern zum Teufel fahren, die vermeinen, durch Ablassbriefe ihre Seligkeit ~~zugewisz~~ zu werden.' Theeses 32. "Darum sehet zu, tüt ~~Busze~~ rechtschaffene Busze!"

1) Meyer: John the Baptist, 210 ff.

John brought the Gospel and pointed to Christ; so Luther also brought the  $\nabla$  awaited and expected comfort.

John had success, so also Luther. John pointed his people to the Scripture, the Prophet Isaiah, so also Luther. He translated the Bible and gave it into the hands of the people.

Luther reformed the Church like John. John called the pharisees and scribes, in spite of their special works of righteousness, hypocritical generation of vipers, and on the other hand unto those, who with a true heart, asked how to do works of repentance, he pointed to the works, according to the Ten Commandments. Luther did likewise.

John gave individual counsel to the people as how to improve their lives, he taught his disciples how to pray, so also Luther. As John, so Luther adorned his teaching with his life and works. As John was not like a reed, so was Luther also steadfast, even to his blessed end.

As John did not, by 'soft-footing', try to enter the houses of kings and officials, so also Luther did not either; he did not fear to tell high officials of the truth, be it ever so dangerous for him. John according to Christ's testimony, was the greatest prophet, yet he was very humble at heart. He did not do like the pharisees, reject the publicans and prostitutes, who followed his call to repentance, but he had an open ear for any one that came to him. However, he strongly confessed and spoke against those who wished to honor him more than he was worthy of. Still he did wish to be held for what the Lord had appointed him, that is for the Lord's herald, for in that case, he was not only defending himself, but the honor of God. So also Luther.

As John was persecuted, so also Luther. As John confessed his Lord unto death, so also Luther. 1)

Meyer, in his book on John also makes a comparison between John and Savorola. 2)

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1) Dr. Krauss: Unser Erbyell, p. 83 ff.

2) Meyer: John the Baptist.

John was the greatest prophet. This, Christ first of all proclaimed to the world. Luther says: "Keiner ist ein vortreflicherer Prediger gewesen, der von so groszen und gegenwärtigen Sachen geredet hätte."<sup>1)</sup>

"Viele loben Johannes um sein Leben....Kleidung, Speise, kein Wein, Bier u.s.w....dies sind nicht Johannes höchsten Werke, sondern er hat auf Christum gezeigt....der grösste von Weibern geboren um seiner Lehre willen....Worte und Werke unterscheidet die Schrift wie Himmel und Erde....Zacharias lobt seinen Sohn, dasz Gott sein Volk hätte heimgesucht....Johannes allein, dasz er Christá Vorläufer sei."<sup>2)</sup>

Fahling says, that in the "noble reply" which John gave his disciples when they asked and complained that Jesus was also baptizing, John showed forth his "inherent greatness".<sup>3)</sup> In connection with great prophet he says: "In fact the correct understanding of the whole matter is this: the purpose and the person of the herald, the nature of the preparation, the nature of the king and the kingdom required intelligent attention and believing hearts."<sup>4)</sup>

John's central doctrine we have mentioned before in his words<sup>5)</sup> "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Encyclopedia Britannica also gives this as his central doctrine, namely the kingdom of heaven. John stood between the Old and the New Testament, between Moses and Christ. In Mathew we read: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth and the violent take it by force, for all the prophets and the Law prophesies unto John." John brings the people into heaven and takes away hell.<sup>6)</sup> Although John lived long before a Luther or a Walther, he already in his day well distinguished between Law and Gospel. Luther says in a sermon about John, this:

"Darum ist wohl und mit Fleiss zu merken, dasz Gott zweierlei Worte oder Predigten von Anbegin aller Zeit gesandt, Gesetz und Evangelium. Diese zwei Predigten muss Du wohl unterscheiden und erkennen: denn Ich sage Dir, dasz ausser der Schrift kein Buch geschrieben ist, auch von keinen Heiligen, das vorhanden sei, dar in diese zwei Predigten recht unterschieden<sup>7)</sup> waren gehandelt, da doch grosse Macht anliegt zu wissen....Zwei Extreme: dieser hängt an seinen Gottesdienst und eigenen Werken, der andere scharrt allein zu sich und hilft niemand.... (James 1, 22-24). Das Reich Gottes stehet nicht in Worten sondern in Taten..Seid Täter des Worts und nicht Hörer allein." <sup>7)</sup>

1) Luther VII, 122. 2) Luther XI, 2266. 3) Fahling: Life of Christ, 176.  
4) Fahling: Life of Christ, 287. 5) Math. 11, 12-13. 6) Luther XI, 2258.

John's preaching was called a voice, Luther calls it "wunderliche Rede, er ist eine Stimme, gerade 'wie Aaron soll dein Mund sein". 1) This he truly was, he was a voice calling out into the world, the true word of God, both Law and Gospel. From the wilderness came forth his voice, calling out into the open, where everyone could hear it.

John was the beginner of the New Testament preaching. In his preaching the entire New Testament preaching has been pictured. He was a voice, preaching, not a scriptural writing of the word. In the Old Testament there was the Law in the tent, in the New Testament the preaching is in the wilderness, openly, "uter frein Himmel". He preached with a clear, loud voice, without fear. In the New Testament, both the Law and the Gospel is preached at it's proper place and time. 2) Thus this great man was the beginning of the preaching, which we are doing today.

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1) Luther 11, 106.    2) The same, 106.

## C O N C L U S I O N

This great preacher, John, is an 'up-to-date' model and type for conscientious and evangelical preachers. He was a type in that he was a fearless and frank preacher, who under all circumstances called sin sin, no matter if it struck poor or rich, humble or respectable, servants or masters. In our day the contrary is often the case. Namely, when preachers become 'reed-preachers'(Rohrprediger), and like Absalom, always speak to the people in such a way, as to make themselves likeable, and gain praise and honor. Not so with John. As far as a type is concerned, all of John's characteristics might be remembered as an example to us. That he was courageous, obedient, humble, zealous for his work, sincere, true, not worldly, willing to sacrifice, preach powerfully, and was faithful to the end, should be an incentive to any preacher. Let us believe like John, and we can be certain that we are a true christian. Let us beware not to try to do away with sin with good works, which John so emphatically opposed. 1) The preacher's own salvation should move him to condemn sin, as did John. If he does not do so, he becomes guilty himself; furthermore, also the salvation of his neighbors should move him, for if he does not punish sin, he will make it very hard for those, who conscientiously do it. 2) Finally, let us be faithful to the very end, as was John the Baptist, and thus heed the exhortation of Revelation: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." 3) In that way we will be able to hear the pleasant words "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." 4)

THE END

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1) Luther XI, 106. 2) Synodalrede, Minn. District 1912. 3) Rev. 2, 10. 4) Mat. 25, 23.

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