

Wherefore Then Serveth the Law (Gal 3:19)? – Part 7

Understanding justification 'by faith', particularly under the Mosaic Covenant, helps make more sense out of certain controversial and confusing subjects such as the ministry of John the Baptist and baptism with water for the remission of sins.

A little background before focusing in on John's ministry. Israel could and should have anticipated certain things surrounding the arrival of John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel was to expect a prophet to show up like unto Moses (**Dt 18:15-19; Acts 3:22**), who would offer redemption from the hands of her enemies such as Moses did (**Lk 1:68-80**). On top of this, one from the lineage of David would rise to sit on David's throne judging among the nations (**Mt 1:1; 21:9; Mr 12:36; Ac 2:22-36**). To make a long story short, the end result was to be a prophesied new covenant to be made with the house of Israel which now awaits the arrival of her Messiah (**Heb 8:8-12**). This new covenant, built on better promises, replaces the old. Fulfillment of a promise made to Abraham's seed, to inherit a land, would also be fulfilled at this time (**Gen 12:1-7**).

The cross was a stumblingblock (**1Cor 1:23**) to the Jew along the way to the fulfillment of these promises. The sufferings and glory of Christ were mysterious to the prophets who wrote about them (**1Pet 1:11**) and even hid to the disciples who ministered alongside of Jesus for three years (**John 20:9; Lk 18:31-34; 24:44-46**). The cross was hidden deep in the law and prophets for good reason... "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." **1 Corinthians 2:8**

Our focus now turns back to John... "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, **2** And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. **3** For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." **Matthew 3:1-3** "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. **5** And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins." **Mark 1:4-5**

IMPORTANT! The enactment of covenant promises to Israel at this time, along with the blotting out of sins as a nation, was fully dependent upon Israel's response to the kingdom gospel... "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; **20** And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:" **Acts 3:19-20**

Starting with John the Baptist, Israelites were beginning to be baptized for the remission of sins that would be blotted out at the return of Messiah and establishment of the new covenant. How does this parallel with Moses and the old covenant?

Moses' baptism with water, which preceded institution of the divers' washings under the Mosaic Covenant, were all part of a sanctifying and purifying process put in place for Israel. **Exodus 19:10** And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, **Exodus 19:14** And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

Divers washings were put in place for various reasons and failure to carry out resulted in either death, bearing one's iniquity or being cut off from the congregation (**Ex 30:17-20; Lev 17:15-16; 22:1-9**). There was even a water of separation, involving the ashes of a red heifer, established for the purification of sins that if not obeyed resulted in... "and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness *is* yet upon him." (**Num 19:1-22 (13)**).

John the Baptist's baptism with water was also a water of purification (**John 3:25-26; Heb 10:22**) and most definitely a water of separation... "And now also the axe 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... John answered, saying unto *them* all, I indeed baptize you with water; but..." (**Lk 3:9-18 (9, 16)**).

John's ministry confused many of the Jews who then required of John as to exactly who he was in sending priests and Levites. **John 1:19-22** And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? **20** And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. **21** And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. **22** Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? **John 1:24-25** And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. **25** And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet was THE question!

The Jews recognized the instruction given to Moses in Exodus 19, as to having the People wash their clothes in sanctifying them, as a baptism with water. They also admitted to the expectation of one to arrive baptizing with water. Elias was a legit suggestion (**Mt 11:14; 16:14; 17:3-10**), but didn't exactly fit the profile. The Lord Jesus does as both Christ and a prophet, but in particular the prophet like unto Moses to arrive. There is a remarkable comparison between Moses and Jesus as to baptizing with water. Though both accredited, neither personally carried out the function.

John 4:1-2 When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, **2** (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,)

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Why? Why wasn't Jesus personally baptizing converts with water? The real question is... why would He?! Why would He who could verbally forgive others of their sins, baptize for the remission of sins?! He wouldn't and He didn't! As the disciples were baptizing Jews for the remission of sins that would be blotted out/reckoned at the establishment of the new covenant, Jesus stepped outside the box twice (**Lk 7:47-49; Mk 2:6-10**) to prove that He could and if for no other reason than to agitate the scribes... "But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, **7** Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? **8** And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? **9** Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? **10** But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,..." **Mark 2:6-10**

Only if one can come to biblical understanding what remission of sins looked like under the old covenant to be replaced by the new covenant with Israel (Heb 8:7-13), will John's and the Apostles' baptism for the remission of sins and Jesus' restraint make any bible-sense. What then adds to this confusion is the heretical notion that Paul was ministering the new covenant, as being perverted in other translations (Cp. **2Cor 3:6** 'new testament' KJB w/**2Cor 3:6** 'new covenant' ESV; NIV; NKJV; etc.), as the church today is not under that covenant. Other than in name, there is no such thing as a new covenant church today.

How then does God justifying the circumcision 'by faith' come into play under John the Baptist's ministry? "And all the people that heard *him*, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. **30** But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." **Luke 7:29-30** This is exactly what OT justification 'by faith' looked like! Faithful obedience led to imputed righteousness! To further prove a distinction, Apollos, a mighty man in the scriptures and convert of John the Baptist, who justified God having been baptized by John, '...helped them much which had believed through grace', in Acts 18:24-27!

This principle of 'by faith' justification, under the kingdom gospel to Israel, is seen throughout the pre & post ministries of the Apostles... 'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved' (**Mt 16:16**), and "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,..." **Acts 2:38**

The door 'of faith', which is through faith and by grace without works, was opened up to the Gentiles between Acts 13 & 14 (**Acts 14:26-27**). Next post will show Abraham and David as God's example to the Jew as to what exactly that justification which is 'of faith' looked like.

2 Tim 2:15 "Study...!"