

The Place where Jesus was Baptized.

Origen's Commentaries on St. John (about 235 A.D.) talk about the place Jesus was baptized in Bethany across the Jordan. In his days a village with the name Bethany did not exist, but there was a village called Bethabara and near it was the place that people in his time believed Jesus had been baptized. There were also a few Greek manuscripts which used the word Bethabara¹ instead of Bethany.

These things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. John 1:28 We are aware of the reading which is found in almost all the copies, These things were done in Bethany. This appears, moreover, to have been the reading at an earlier time; and in Heracleon we read Bethany. We are convinced, however, that we should not read Bethany, but Bethabara. We have visited the places to enquire as to the footsteps of Jesus and His disciples, and of the prophets. Now, Bethany, as the same evangelist tells us, was the town of Lazarus, and of Martha and Mary; it is fifteen stadia from Jerusalem, and the river Jordan is about a hundred and eighty stadia distant from it. Nor is there any other place of the same name in the neighbourhood of the Jordan, but they say that Bethabara is pointed out on the banks of the Jordan, and that John is said to have baptized there. The etymology of the name, too, corresponds with the baptism of him who made ready for the Lord a people prepared for Him; for it yields the meaning House of preparation, while Bethany means House of obedience. Where else was it fitting that he should baptize, who was sent as a messenger before the face of the Christ, to prepare His way before Him, but at the House of preparation? Origenes Commentaries John, 6,24a

Eusebius also talks about this place on the Jordan in his description of places mentioned in the Scriptures.

Bēthaabara - Where John was baptizing" (the penitent) "across the Jordan." The place is pointed out where many of the brothers even now consider it an honor to wash. (Where today many of the brothers, the believers, desiring a renewal of life are baptized in the Depths.) Eusebius Onomasticon The Gospels



Today there are ruins of many monumental sites, all of which were built here to commemorate the place where Jesus was baptized. As also mentioned in some of the ancient writings, these places are about 5 Roman miles (4 ½ miles) from the Dead Sea (bottom right corner of picture).

Very near each other today are two sites across on the eastern bank of the Jordan and one site on the western bank in Israel. In Jordan are the sites ford of Hajlah and Wadi el-Kharrar (directly on the river). On the west bank in Israel there is the site Qasr-al-Yahud.



Qasr-al-Yahud (West Bank). In the background on the East Bank is the baptismal place in Jordan where John is believed to have baptized 'across the Jordan' (Ford Hajlah).

A Latin writing has been found from a pilgrim from Bordeaux also describing this place.

From Jericho (Ariha) to the Dead sea – nine (Roman) miles. The water of it is very bitter, and in it there is no kind of fish whatever, nor any vessel; and if a man casts himself into it in order to swim, the water turns him over.

From thence to the Jordan, where the Lord was baptized by John – five (Roman) miles. There is a place by the river, a little hill upon the further bank, from which Elijah was caught up into heaven. The Bordeaux Pilgrim 333 A.D.

Jerome also describes this place east of Jericho where not only Jesus was baptized, but also the place where the Israelites crossed the Jordan and where Elijah and Elisha crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

She (St. Paula) entered Jericho and saw the city which Hiel founded on Abiram, his first-born, whose gates he built on Segub, his youngest.(12) She contemplated the camp of Galgal and the heap of foreskins and the mystery of the second circumcision and the twelve stones which were carried there from the bed of the Jordan and strengthened the foundations of the twelve apostles, ... Scarcely had night passed when she came with most fervent ardor to the Jordan; she stood on the bank of the river and with the sun rising she remembered the sun of justice, how the priests took dry steps in the midst of the riverbed, and at the command of Elia and Elisha the waters separated and the river offered a passage and the lord purified waters polluted by the flood and stained by the killing of the whole human race with his baptism. Jerome on St. Paula 404 A.D.

There were a number of reports of pilgrims who visited these sites. In 570 A.D. these steps were mentioned.



We arrived at place where the Lord was baptized. This is the place where Elijah was taken up. In that place is the little hill of Hermon. In that part of the Jordan is the spring where St. John used to baptize, and which is two miles from the Jordan, and Elijah was in that valley when the raven brought him bread and meat, the whole valley is full of hermits...I celebrated Epiphany at the Jordan At the spot where the Lord was baptized, there is an obelisk surrounded by a screen, and in the water,

where the river turned back on its bed, stands a wooden cross. On both banks there are marble steps leading down to the water" Pilgrim anonymous Piacenza, Italy 570 AD

At the time of the pilgrim Arculf the water still reached the place where Christian Tradition says that Jesus was baptized. At this time the Jordan river was much wider than it is today.

The holy, venerable spot at which the Lord was baptized by John is permanently covered by the water of the River Jordan... a tall wooden cross has been set up on the holy place... A strong man using a sling can throw a stone from there to the far bank on the Arabian side. From this cross a stone causeway supported on arches stretches to the bank, and people approaching the cross go down a ramp and return up by it to reach the bank. Right at the river's edge stands a small rectangular church which was built, so it is said, at the place where the Lord's clothes were placed when he was baptized. The fact that it is supported on four stone vaults, makes it usable, since the water, which comes in from all sides, is underneath it. It has a tiled roof. This remarkable church is supported, as we have said, by arches and vaults, and stands in the lower part of the valley through which the Jordan flows. But in the upper part there is a great monastery for monks, which has been built on the brow of a small hill nearby, overlooking the church. There is also a church built there in honor of Saint John Baptist which, together with the monastery, is enclosed in a single masonry wall. Pilgrim Arculf (ca. 650)

This also mentions the place where Christian Tradition holds that Jesus was baptized, which still was covered by the waters of the Jordan.

They next went to the monastery of St. John the Baptist. At a distance of a mile from the monastery he went to the spot in the river Jordan where our Lord was Zenith. Here is now a church raised upon stone columns and under the church it is now dry land where our Lord was baptized. A wooden cross stands in the middle of the river, a rope is extended to it over the Jordan. Willibalad (721-727 AD)

The Russian pilgrim Abbot Daniel in ca. 1106 A.D. wrote the following:

On the other side of Jordan near the bathing place there is sort of forest of little trees like the willow. And not far from the river a couple of bow-shots to the east is the place where the prophet Elias was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire and here too is the cave of St. John the Baptist. A beautiful stream of water, which flows over pebbles into the Jordan, was found here, the water is very sweet and very cold. And John the forerunner of Christ drank it, when he inhabited this sacred cavern.



Millions of Pilgrims still come from all over the world to be baptized where Jesus was baptized by John. This picture of such a baptism was made in 1896.

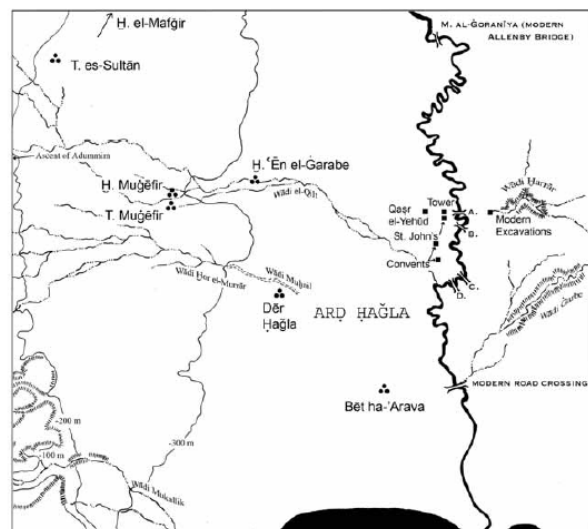


Fig. 3: The southern course of the Jordan River, showing significant archaeological features, as well as major wādī's and Jordan River fords, after map sheets 3053 I and 3153 IV in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Map Service) Jordan 1:50,000 series (K737), edition 1-AMS. The four lettered features of the el-Magtas/Ḥaġla ford system are: A) M. el-Magtas; B) Modern Baptismal Site; C) Old Baptismal Site; D) M. Ḥaġla. © J. Hutton.

Spiritual Relationship between the Sin-Offering water and Baptism

The very first time Scripture records that the ashes of the red heifer were used happened opposite Jericho on the other side of the Jordan River¹.

The twelve thousand Israelites returned to the camp on the Jordan from their victory against the nation of Midian. Not only did they have great spoil, but in this miraculous mission not a single Israelite died in the war!

and they said to Moses: 'your servants have taken the sum of the men of war that are under our charge, and there lacks not one man of us. Num 31,49

Upon their return, Moses commanded them to undergo the cleansing with the ashes of the red heifer before entering the camp.

And encamp you without the camp seven days; whosoever has killed any person, and whosoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves on the third day and on the seventh day, you and your captives. Num 31,19

Not only were the Israelite soldiers to be cleansed, that they might enter the camp, but also the thirty-two thousand virgin captives from Midian². Did not the LORD specifically state that this cleansing would not only be valid for the circumcised, but also for the strangers and sojourners amongst them?

it shall be to the children of Israel, and to the stranger that sojourns among them, for a statute for ever. Num 19,10b

Were not all the Israelites at this time uncircumcised? And were they not all cleansed even though they were not circumcised? And just as the men of war were integrated into the congregation after their immersion, so also their captives, the virgins of Midian.

Eleazar, now the anointed High Priest, commands that the statute be followed.

And Eleazar the priest said to the men of war that went to the battle: 'This is the statute of the law which the LORD has commanded Moses: ... And you shall wash your clothes on the seventh day, and you shall be clean, and afterward you may come into the camp.' Num 31,21,23-24

What does the statute of the Red Heifer ashes require? On the third and seventh day they must be sprinkled with the water mixed with the ashes. On the seventh day, after their sprinkling, they are to wash their clothes. After the purification as prescribed in the statute of the Red Heifer was completed, they would then be immersed in the water of the Jordan. In the evening, after sunset, on the beginning of the eighth day, they could then enter the camp.

What connection is there between the place where the red heifer was sacrificed and this place on the Jordan river opposite Jericho? Did not the sacrifice of the red heifer foretell the crucifixion of Jesus? And did not this place on the Jordan river where the ashes were applied for the purification from sin foretell the forgiveness of sins we receive in baptism? The forgiveness of sins, for which Jesus was crucified, is found in baptism, provided it is ministered in the prescribed way.

The ashes of the red heifer were first applied as sin-offering water at the very place where John baptized Jesus! What greater emphasis could be made concerning the spiritual relation between the sin-offering water and baptism?

¹ Num 31,12 And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the children of Israel, to the camp, to the plains of Moab, which are by the Jordan at Jericho.

² Num 31,35 and thirty and two thousand persons in all, of the women that had not known man by lying with him.

Table of Spiritual Relation between the water mixed with the ashes of the red heifer and baptism:

Except for the very first sacrificed by Moses, all other eight red heifers were burnt outside Jerusalem for the purification from sin.	Jesus is crucified outside Jerusalem as a sin offering to free us from sin.
The ashes are gathered by a clean man and deposited in a newly made clean place.	The body of Jesus is brought by Joseph of Arimathea to a newly made tomb.
Even the smallest particle of the ashes that moves the water transmits the complete sin-offering of the red heifer sacrifice to the water, provided it is prepared in the prescribed way.	The atonement and forgiveness of sins accomplished on the cross is transmitted to baptism, provided it is performed in the prescribed way.
Living water must be mixed with the ashes and they are first to be applied on the third day.	The Holy Spirit is given to the disciples, through which they proclaim his death and resurrection on the third day.
Clean men sprinkle the water mixed with the ashes on the third day upon the unclean.	Disciples of Jesus preach the death (ashes) and resurrection (applying the ashes on the third day) of Jesus on the third day to those living in sin.
The common herb hyssop which grows everywhere is used to sprinkle the water.	Common lay people preach a message which appears foolish and too simple for the wise.
All who are unclean who refuse their sprinkling on the third day will not be cleansed, but defile the Sanctuary and must be cut off from the assembly.	Whoever does not believe their message will not be cleansed. They that believe and are baptized will be saved, but they that believe not will be condemned and will not enter heaven because they would defile it in their sinful state.
Clean men sprinkle the water on the seventh day upon the unclean who have already been sprinkled on the third day.	Disciples of Jesus speak of the vows and the promises involved with entering the eternal covenant through baptism to those in sin, but who have believed the message of his death and resurrection.
The unclean person washes his clothes after the sprinkling on the seventh day.	The sinner repents and makes the vow to live according to the words of the covenant where Jesus is his Lord.
The unclean person is fully immersed and is clean in the evening, the beginning of the eighth day.	The sinner is fully immersed and comes out of the water as a new creature, a saint, cleansed from his sin. His old man has been crucified with Jesus and he has been united with him in his resurrection (on the eighth day, the day after the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, Jesus rose).

Did not the Talmud speak of the sprinkling that happened at the Jordan, that even the uncircumcised are cleansed?

R. Johanan stated in the name of R. Bana'ah: An uncircumcised [Israelite] is eligible to receive sprinkling; for so we find that our ancestors received sprinkling while they were still uncircumcised, since it is said, And the people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, but on the tenth they were not circumcised owing to the fatigue of the journey; when, then, [could the sprinkling] have been performed? Obviously while they were still uncircumcised. Yevamoth 71b

Were not the thirty-two thousand Midianite virgins also sprinkled as they were heathens? Before they entered the congregation of the Israelites they were purified with these ashes, culminating with their immersion in the water of the Jordan. Was not this foretelling how we, through baptism, enter the body of Jesus on this earth?

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. 1.Cor 12,13

Spiritual Meaning of the place where Jesus was Baptized

The following spiritual meaning concerning the place where Jesus was baptized was given by Origenes.

In the spirit of this passage let us also pray that we may receive from God to understand the spiritual meaning of Joshua's passage through Jordan. Of it, also, Paul would have said, I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that all our fathers went through Jordan, and were all baptized into Jesus in the spirit and in the river. Origenes Commentaries John, 6,26,1

Does not the spiritual meaning of the children of Israel crossing the river from the other side of the Jordan into the promised land help us understand how by being baptized into Jesus we enter the kingdom of God by the spirit and the water?

And Joshua, who succeeded Moses, was a type of Jesus Christ, who succeeds the dispensation through the law, and replaces it by the preaching of the Gospel Origenes Commentaries John, 6,26,2

Joshua (Jesus in Greek) followed Moses physically and led the children of Israel into the physical promised land. Jesus followed Moses spiritually and leads God's people into the spiritual promised land, the kingdom of God.

But the baptism to Joshua, which takes place in quite sweet and drinkable water, is in many ways superior to that earlier one, religion having by this time grown clearer and assuming a becoming order. For the ark of the covenant of the Lord our God is carried in procession by the priests and levites, the people following the ministers of God, it, also, accepting the law of holiness. Origenes Commentaries John, 6,26,3

Can it be that the crossing of the Jordan has even more significance as the crossing of the Red Sea? Certainly by this time they had more understanding of Service to God and the law of holiness. Are there not two aspects of baptism shown by the parting of the waters? The first reveals how through baptism we escape from being slaves to the enemies of God, the rulers of darkness. But the second, the crossing of the Jordan, reveals the glory of entering God's kingdom!

For Joshua says to the people, Joshua 3:5 Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow; the Lord will do wonders among you. And he commands the priests to go before the people with the ark of the covenant, wherein is plainly showed forth the mystery of the Father's economy about the Son, which is highly exalted by Him who gave the Son this office; That at the name of Jesus Philippians 2:9-11 every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. This is pointed out by what we find in the book called Joshua, In that day I will begin to exalt you before the children of Israel. Origenes Commentaries John, 6,26,4

Just as Joshua was exalted before the people of Israel as they entered the promised land, Jesus is exalted as we enter the kingdom of God. Though him being exalted he draws all men to himself, thereby bringing them through the water of baptism into his kingdom.

And we hear our Lord Jesus saying to the children of Israel, Joshua 3:9-10 Come hither and hear the words of the Lord your God. Hereby you shall know that the living God is in (among) you; for when we are baptized to Jesus, we know that the living God is in us. Origenes Commentaries John, 6,26,5

Is it not in our baptism that Jesus is manifested in our lives, that we no longer live but Jesus living in us? And are we not born of the Spirit as children of God as we are baptized? What greater way is there to know that he is in us than by the Spirit of God living in us?

And, in the former case, they kept the passover in Egypt, and then began their journey, but with Joshua, after crossing Jordan on the tenth day of the first month they pitched their camp in Galgala;

for a sheep had to be procured before invitations could be issued to the banquet after Joshua's baptism. [Origines Commentaries John, 6,26,6](#)

What significance could be behind the tenth day of the first month being the day they passed through the Jordan³ and were circumcised in Gilgal? Could it not be that both dividings of the water three days apart from the Passover indicate the three days and three nights before the resurrection of Jesus, but in reverse order? They traveled three days and three nights after the Passover was slaughtered before they crossed the Red Sea. And three days and three nights before the Passover, they procured the lamb.

Through the blood on the doorposts they were spared the Judgment of God and could leave Egypt. But not until three days later did they cross the Red Sea and rose from the death their enemies intended to inflict upon them.

On the day they passed through the Jordan they entered the promised land and were cleansed from the shame of Egypt. On this day they entered into the covenant as their foreskins were cut off and buried. But not until three days later did they partake of the Passover, taking to themselves the unleavened bread and wine as they ate the flesh of the lamb.

What spiritual meaning is behind the blood being sprinkled by the hyssop upon the doorposts? Is it not his blood of Jesus applied by the bitter hyssop on the two sides and the upper lentil of our bodily abode on this earth, having the appearance of his cross? And what is the spiritual meaning behind the three days and three nights of continual traveling, in their flight day and night not able to rest and not having enough time to even make leavened bread? What is the spiritual meaning of rising up before sunrise out of the depths of the Red Sea after the third night and being freed from the pangs of death that Pharaoh had commanded? Did not this exodus show the death of Jesus, his three days in the grave and his resurrection after the third night, written upon the Israelites whom he had redeemed in the baptism of Moses?

Equally comparable, if not even more glorious, is the spiritual meaning behind Joshua leading the Israelites to cross the Jordan. Based on the death and resurrection which happened in the baptism of Moses, the officers preached throughout their camp about preparing in three days⁴ to cross the Jordan. On this very day, as the Israelites heard them preaching, there was an oath made to obey Joshua (Jesus)⁵ in all things. Three days later these same officers preached that they were to follow the Ark of the covenant of the LORD wherever it might lead. On the day before they follow the Ark through the Jordan Joshua (Jesus) commands them to sanctify⁶ themselves.

[So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you must go, for you have not passed this way before."](#) Josh 3,1

³ Josh 4,19 And the people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, on the east border of Jericho.

⁴ Josh 1,10-11 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.'"

⁵ Josh 1,16-18 So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

⁶ Josh 3,5 And Joshua said to the people: 'Sanctify yourselves; for to-morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.'

The Ark lead them in a way which they have never gone before. It led them to a very special place on across the Jordan not too far from Jericho.

Does not the spiritual meaning behind this signify the necessity of baptism for entering the kingdom of God? As Jesus was baptized at this very place across the Jordan, did not the heavens itself open, thereby granting access to heaven itself for those who would follow Jesus in a baptism based on repentance and faith in the gospel?

After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened (for him), and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove (and) coming upon him. Mt 3,16

How much more glorious is it that the heavens were opened than the water of the Jordan! Did not the three openings of the waters at this very place signify the opening of heaven which would one day happen here as Elijah would baptize the Messiah? Is not this opening the one and only opening in the gates of Hell through which we leave the kingdom of darkness and enter the kingdom of his dear Son? And did not Spirit descend from heaven like a dove as heaven was opened? Did not this opening also allow a voice from heaven to be heard as God himself spoke.

On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." Mk 1,10

As we believe the gospel and follow Jesus in baptism through this opening in heaven, are we not born again of the Spirit as his beloved Sons?

Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you, 'You must be born from above.' Joh 3,5

As Elijah baptized Jesus and the heavens opened was he not representing the body of Christ going as prophets into all the world and preaching the gospel? And do not all members of Christ's body become members as they enter through this opening?

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. 1.Cor 12,13

And are not all members of Christ's body clothed with the same righteousness with which Christ himself was clothed?

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Gal 3,26-27

There is no son of God living on this earth which has not entered through this opening into heaven. For all sons of God have been born of the water and the Spirit. All sons of God through faith have put on Christ as they were baptized. The only deception Satan attempts is to hinder those pregnant of the Spirit from being born from above through this opening, that they not through baptism become members of Christ's body!

What is the spiritual meaning of being circumcised the very day they passed through the Jordan? Is not circumcision itself a physical reflection of what happens in baptism?

In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, Col 2,11

After we believe the gospel and obey in our hearts the command of Jesus to sanctify ourselves we are led by believing the gospel into the water of baptism. Instead of making the covenant on our

flesh⁷, which sign passes away as our flesh dies, we enter an eternal covenant in which we are properly clothed for the marriage supper of the Lamb! Instead of making the covenant requiring a piece of flesh being cut off and buried we enter the covenant where we die and are buried with Jesus.

[buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. Col 2,12](#)

Instead of making a covenant where our identity changes from being not a people to belonging to Israel we enter a covenant where we are raised from death through our faith and receive our heavenly⁸ citizenship⁹.

[And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, Col 2,13](#)

Instead of making a covenant requiring that we fulfill all the laws, and thereby being condemned for every transgression, we enter a covenant where our iniquity is forgiven and our sin is not even remembered¹⁰! Is that not why Elijah called out, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!?' Do we not enter that same opening in baptism which Jesus opened as he finished his three hours on the cross and cried 'It is finished'? Is it not that same opening which was reflected by the hand of God as the veil to the holiest was rent in two as Jesus cried out from his passion on the mercy seat before his Father to forgive us for our sins?

[having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Col 2,14](#)

Instead of making a covenant where every transgression receives a just recompense we enter a covenant where all the angelic handwritings in the heavenly books are erased for Jesus' sake as an answer for his cry for mercy on our behalf. In his great agony in unbearable pain his cry for mercy was heard and we who have found refuge in him by our baptism do not have to fear the judgment to come, knowing that all that was written against us was nailed to the cross as we were baptized into his death and crucified¹¹ with him.

[Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. Col 2,15](#)

Instead of destroying the army of the Egyptians we see Jesus destroying the army of Satan himself, taking not only his authority and having in his hand the keys of hell, but also making a public spectacle of them everywhere this gospel is preached and the captives are set free.

What is the spiritual meaning of having the reproach of Egypt rolled away from those who were baptized by Joshua (Jesus) and then circumcised the same day? Is not the reproach of the world and of its sin upon us all before we are baptized? And in God's great knowledge he knows of no other way to escape this corruption¹² than following Jesus through this opening into heaven and thereby

⁷ Gen 17,13b and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

⁸ Phil 3,20 but our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we also await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹ Eph 2,19 o then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God,

¹⁰ Jer 31,34b for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more.

¹¹ Gal 2,20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

¹² 2.Petr 1,4b so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature, after escaping from the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire.

leaving the world behind us. Do we not save ourselves from this corruption as we believe the gospel of our salvation and follow Jesus in baptism?

He testified with many other arguments, and was exhorting them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Act 2,40

What is the spiritual meaning of celebrating the Passover only one time in the wilderness in the very first year after they left Egypt and now for the very first time since they entered the Promised Land, having just been baptized and circumcised? Do we not celebrate the Lord's Supper for the very first time after we have entered the covenant and have been baptized?

But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized [illuminated] person... Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought... bread and a cup of wine mixed with water Justin Martyr Apology 65,1

What is the spiritual meaning of strictly commanding that no one is to partake of the Passover who had not been circumcised¹³?

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron: 'This is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no alien eat thereof; but every man's servant that is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. Ex 12,43-44

Is it not that no one is to partake of the Lord's Supper who has not been baptized as our Lord has commanded us? Was it not Jesus himself who commands us not to give that which is holy to the dogs¹⁴?

And this food is called among us the Eucharist, of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. Justin Martyr Apology 66,1

What is the spiritual meaning of celebrating Passover every year? Is it not his body which is given in the bread, reflected by the week of eating unleavened bread by the Israelites? Was it not his blood which is given in the wine, reflected not only by the wine drunk at the Passover but also by the blood applied by the hyssop on the doorposts? For those who carry within themselves the crucifixion of Jesus, being priests of the living God according to the order of Melchisedek, they may ask of the Father that the unleavened bread be his body and the wine be his blood. As members of Christ's body their prayers are then answered from heaven and the angels observe us as we take to ourselves his body and his blood.

For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, [1912] this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone. Justin Martyr Apology 66,3

¹³ Ex 12,45 A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat thereof.

¹⁴ Mt 7,6a Do not give what is holy to dogs

What is the spiritual meaning that they go in a way which they have never gone before? Is not baptism similar to marriage, where we make a covenant that is to last our whole lives; a covenant that is even greater than marriage and does not end at our death? Is not baptism for everyone who enters it a way they have never gone before?

What is the spiritual meaning of following the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord? Based upon the salvation work which Jesus accomplished on the cross the preachers of the gospel call out to the people to prepare themselves. They that believe their message concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus make then an oath to obey Jesus as their Lord. Once this oath is made the preachers explain to them the details of the Ark of the covenant and what it means to enter this covenant, similar to the making of a marriage covenant.

The Ark speaks of the blood of the cow and goat poured out for atonement on the mercy seat. The Ark speaks also about the covenant that the LORD our God has made; his exceedingly great promises. But the Ark also speaks of holiness and sanctification¹⁵, that can kill¹⁶ those who approach it in a wrong way¹⁷.

In the Ark are the stone tablets which give clear teaching of what it means to serve the LORD alone and no other gods. And above the Ark are the Cherubim, who witness all that happens and every word that is spoken. The ark leads them to a special place where Jesus himself was baptized, across the Jordan, where heaven was opened.

On the tenth of Nissan they crossed the Jordan on dry ground, three days after making their oath. And on this same day in Gilgal they are circumcised. What meaning could this have? Are not the three days preceding the dividing of the water in the Jordan also referring to the resurrection of Jesus? On the third day we enter the water of baptism (the Jordan) where we are united with Jesus in his resurrection. On this same day our old man is crucified with Jesus and all the writings against us are nailed to the cross as we are circumcised with Christ and the piece of flesh buried. And on this same day we enter the heavenly promised land and are seated with Christ himself. Is not the Day of Atonement also celebrated on the tenth day of the first month?

[Then the children of Israel, since the children of those who came out of Egypt had not received circumcision, were circumcised by Joshua with a very sharp stone; the Lord declares that He takes away the reproach of Egypt on the day of Joshua's baptism, when Joshua purified the children of Israel. For it is written: Joshua 5:9 And the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun, This day have I taken away the reproach of Egypt from off you...](#)

And was not all this done at that place where John was baptizing in Bethabara, or in the Greek translations 'Bethany across the Jordan'?

[All this has been added, not, I conceive, without appropriateness, to our study of the baptism at the Jordan, administered by John at Bethabara. Origines Commentaries John, 6,26](#)

Was there not already, even before the baptism of Joshua, a baptism at the time of Moses which happened also at this very same place? Was not this the baptism required by the statute of the Red Heifer? Was not this the very last battle won by Moses?

¹⁵ Lev 10,3 Then Moses said to Aaron: 'This is it that the LORD spoke, saying: Through them that are nigh to me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.' And Aaron held his peace.

¹⁶ Lev 10,1-2 And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire therein, and laid incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. And there came forth fire from before the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.

¹⁷ Lev 16,2 and the LORD said to Moses: 'Speak to Aaron your brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the ark-cover which is upon the ark; that he die not; for I appear in the cloud upon the ark-cover.'

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites; afterward shall you be gathered to your people.' Num 31,1-2

Why did the Israelites need to avenge themselves of Midian? Was it not Midian that just months earlier had sent their daughters to seduce Israel into harlotry and idolatry¹⁸, following the advice of Baalam?

But what other spiritual meaning is connected to this place where Jesus was baptized?

Another point which we must not fail to notice is that when Elijah was about to be taken up in a whirlwind, as if to heaven, 2 Kings 2:8, 11 he took his mantle and wrapped it together and smote the water, which was divided hither and thither, and they went over both of them, that is, he and Elisha. His baptism in the Jordan made him fitter to be taken up, for, as we showed before, Paul gives the name of baptism to such a remarkable passage through the water.

Were not the Israelites baptized by Moses as they crossed the Red Sea¹⁹ on dry ground? Were not the Israelites again baptized by Jesus, the follower of Moses, as they crossed the Jordan on dry ground? And in the same way were not Elijah and Elisha baptized as they went through the Jordan on dry ground? How much purer could Elijah be as he was taken up to heaven, immediately after his baptism? And was not John manifested to Israel at that same place where Elijah was taken up, his hairy mantle falling upon the one who also was girded with a leather girdle, sent to prepare the way for the Messiah himself? Was not John also the follower of Elijah just as Elisha was, with a double portion of the Spirit?

And through this same Jordan Elisha receives, through Elijah, the gift he desired, saying, Let a double portion of your spirit be upon me. What enabled him to receive this gift of the spirit of Elijah was, perhaps, that he had passed through Jordan twice, once with Elijah, and the second time, when, after receiving the mantle of Elijah, he smote the water and said, Where is the God of Elijah, even He? And he smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither. Origenes Commentaries John, 6,27

But what about the exact place on the Jordan where Jesus was baptized? There is only general information concerning where these three baptisms took place. They were all done in the Jordan river near Jericho. The very first baptism occurred at the time of Moses, shortly before he died. The second baptism occurred at the time of Joshua, shortly after 1500 B.C. The third and fourth baptism (Elijah, Elisha) occurred shortly after 800 B.C. And the heaven opened with John at about 30 A.D. Because of the baptisms being spread apart by so many years there was no point of orientation except that they were on the Jordan near Jericho.

Do you not think that the Spirit directed Moses and then Joshua to this very special place on the Jordan where heaven would one day to be opened? Was it only a coincidence that the victorious soldiers received the sprinkling here²⁰ and were then immersed in the Jordan at this very spot? Was there not a great significance of the place where the waters divided before the ark? Do you not think that the Spirit directed Elijah to this very special place on the Jordan where his follower, John, would baptize the Messiah and open heaven for the salvation of mankind? How ridiculous that the fifty

¹⁸ Num 25,1-3 And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people to the sacrifices of their gods; and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself to the Baal of Peor; and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

¹⁹ 1.Cor 10,1-2 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

²⁰ Num 31,19 And encamp you without the camp seven days; whosoever has killed any person, and whosoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves on the third day and on the seventh day, you and your captives.

prophets of Jericho doubted that the LORD had successfully taken Elijah into heaven²¹! How ridiculous to think that the Spirit led these prophets to the wrong place on the Jordan! If the LORD led Abraham on a three day journey into the land of Moriah where Jerusalem is, how unconceivable to think that he told him to sacrifice his Son as a burnt offering on the wrong mount, somewhere else than where his own Son would be slaughtered over twenty-one centuries later! Was it not prophetic as Isaac carried on his back the wood to this mount? Would it not be thinkable that he walked the very path that Jesus walked with the wood on his back?

²¹ 2Kgs 2,16 And they said to him: 'Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray you, and seek your master; lest peradventure the spirit of the LORD has taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley.' And he said: 'you shall not send.'

Elijah Must Come First

Would not the Messiah be carefully watched from the time he would be identified? When was the Messiah first identified to the children of Israel? Was it not during the days of John the Baptist?

In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea (and) saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" Mt 3,1-2

Who was this man crying out in the wilderness clothed in a mantle of camel's hair²² with a leather belt around his waist? Did not Isaiah the prophet foretell his coming?

A voice calls, "In the desert, clear the way of the Lord, straighten out in the wilderness, a highway for our God." Every valley shall be raised, and every mountain and hill shall be lowered, and the crooked terrain shall become a plain and the close mountains a champaigne. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh together shall see that the mouth of the Lord spoke. Isa 40,3-5

And as John appeared, a highway could be seen in the wilderness leading the nation of Israel into the kingdom of heaven. Those who repented and were baptized by him were reconciled with God and received the forgiveness of sins.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: "Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.'" John (the) Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Mk 1,2-4

Was not John the Baptist sent before the LORD himself would come, that the people might be prepared for his coming? And did not the LORD confirm John as being sent from him, forgiving the sins of all who would repent and be baptized by him?

Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall clear the way before me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple, and the messenger of the covenant, whom you delight in, behold, he comes, saith the LORD of hosts. Mal 3,1

Who would be ready when the Lord himself would come to his temple? Would the high priest and the others who serve in the temple receive him?

But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap; And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; Mal 3,2-3a

How would they react as the flames of the refiner's fire start to burn up all of the impurities? How would those responsible for the temple react when the Lord himself would appear? Did the LORD delight in their offerings²³? Did not the LORD require that they be purified by his coming in order for their offerings to be pleasing before him?

and there shall be they that shall offer to the LORD offerings in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to the LORD, as in the days of old, and as in ancient years. Mal 3,3a-4

²² Mt 3,4 John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.

²³ Isa 1,9-11 Except the LORD of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, we should have been like to Gomorrah. Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the LORD; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.

How indescribable was the mercy of God that he visited his people Israel²⁴, after having chastened them for so many centuries! Again, as during the time of Moses, their offerings would once again be pleasing to the LORD. Did not the Lord promise through Malachi that he would send Elijah before the LORD himself would come? Over four hundred years later, where the people walked in darkness²⁵ without the light of any such prophets²⁶, but rather had become heavily oppressed²⁷ by the rulers of darkness who caused their hearts to be far from him²⁸, the LORD came down to have mercy on his people²⁹ and to show himself mindful of the holy covenant he had sworn to Abraham and .

[to show mercy to our fathers and to be mindful of his holy covenant and of the oath he swore to Abraham our father, Lk 1,72-73a](#)

Who was this special son of Zechariah, coming from one of the most respectable priests of the House of Aaron³⁰? What type of a special priest were they to have as a child, where even the angel Gabriel was sent to foretell his birth³¹?

[for he will be great in the sight of \(the\) Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, Lk 1,15](#)

Just as Samson³², he would be especially set apart to the Lord from birth. And unlike any other man who had ever been born, he would be filled with the holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.

Would not this be the one who would come in the spirit of Elijah, having a double portion of his Spirit?

[He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord." Lk 1,17](#)

Was it not Gabriel³³ who told Daniel initially about the Messiah³⁴ being cut off³⁵, telling even the year in which this would happen³⁶ as well as the destruction of the temple? And now Gabriel appeared to

²⁴ Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited and brought redemption to his people. He has raised up a horn for our salvation within the house of David his servant, even as he promised through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old: Lk 1,68-70

²⁵ Isa 9,2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.

²⁶ Isa 29,10 For the LORD has poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes; the prophets, and your heads, the seers, has He covered.

²⁷ Isa 9,1 And afterward more heavily oppressed her, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, In Galilee of the Gentiles.NKJV

²⁸ Isa 29,13 And the Lord said: Forasmuch as this people draw near, and with their mouth and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men learned by rote;

²⁹ Isa 29,14 Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the prudence of their prudent men shall be hid.

³⁰ Lk 1,5 In the days of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the priestly division of Abijah; his wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

³¹ Lk 1,19 And the angel said to him in reply, "I am Gabriel, who stand before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news.

³² Judg 13,4-5 Now therefore beware, I pray you, and drink no wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing. For, lo, you shall conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come upon his head; for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.'

³³ Dan 9,21 yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. NKJV

³⁴ Dan 9,25 Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks;

³⁵ Dan 9,26 And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.

³⁶ Dan 9,24 Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. NKJV

one of the leading priests of the House of Aaron, that his child would be Elijah, turning again the hearts of the people.

Lo, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord, that he may turn the heart of the fathers back through the children, and the heart of the children back through their fathers-lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction. Mal 3,23-24

Was it not this same Gabriel who also went to Mary³⁷, bearing the news of her bringing birth to a child³⁸ who is the Son of God, who would rule on the throne of David, whose rule would never end³⁹?

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. Lk 1,31-33

Did not Gabriel, as he was giving the news to Mary about her giving birth to the Son of God⁴⁰, also mention the birth of John⁴¹? And did not even his father Zechariah prophecy concerning his child John, that he would prepare the way of the LORD?

And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, Lk 1,76

After being so harshly reproved for their sins, the Lord sent John that his beloved people Israel would once again be shown his mercy by which they would be led out of darkness into the dawning of a new day⁴².

during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. Lk 3,2

As John was about thirty years old⁴³, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to him in the desert of Judea⁴⁴. How astonished was the nation of Israel at his appearance! Who was this man calling out from the wilderness that the Israelites should repent? Was this not the Messiah? Had the hope of Israel finally come?

Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. Lk 3,15

How great was the Spirit of God moving throughout the wilderness of Judea! What was the LORD doing? So Pharisees⁴⁵, priests and Levites were sent to John to ask him directly, whether he was the Messiah.

³⁷ Lk 1,26-27 In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.

³⁸ Isa 9,5 For a child has been born to us, a son given to us, and the authority is upon his shoulder, and the wondrous adviser, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, called his name, "the prince of peace."

³⁹ Isa 9,7a That the government may be increased, and of peace there be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it through justice and through righteousness from henceforth even for ever.

⁴⁰ Lk 1,35 And the angel said to her in reply, "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

⁴¹ Lk 1,36-37 And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God."

⁴² because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high will visit us to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace." Lk 1,78-79

⁴³ Lk 3,23 When Jesus began his ministry he was about thirty years of age. (John was 6 months older than Jesus)

⁴⁴ Lk 1,80 The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel.

⁴⁵ Joh 1,24 Some Pharisees were also sent.

And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites (to him) to ask him, "Who are you?" he admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Messiah." Joh 1,19

If he was not the Messiah, then who was he? Certainly he was one of those foretold by the prophets!

So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself? Joh 1,21-22

Then he told them that he was the one who would introduce to Israel the Messiah, who was shortly to follow him. He was sent to cry out in the desert and make the highway for Israel to come to him.

How great was the calling of John! Was not the very reason for him baptizing, that he would make known to Israel the Messiah, the Son of God?

"I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." Joh 1,31

How surprised they were to hear that the Messiah was about to follow him! But then why was he baptizing? Should not the Messiah be the one?

They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." Joh 1,25-27

Who was this one who was so great that John was not even worthy of untying his sandals? How could it be that the Messiah was amongst them, but they could not recognize him? Was not this the call of John, to make the Messiah known to Israel and prepare the way that leads to him?

Why did John deny being Elijah as he was asked so directly, seeing the angel Gabriel had told his father directly that he was the Elijah who would turn back the hearts of the fathers to their children? Could it be that the Pharisees believed that Elijah the person, who never died but was taken by a chariot to heaven, would come with the same body again? Did not John know that he was not this person Elijah, but rather the prophet who was to come after him, having the spirit of Elijah even from his birth?

At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. Mt 3,5-6

As all Israel was coming to John, confessing their sins and being baptized by him in the wilderness of Judea on the other side of the Jordan river, John warned the people about the refiner's fire which would shortly begin purifying the sons of Levi.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. Mt 3,7

How many of the Sons of Levi were Pharisees and Sadducees! And how closely did they work together with the chief priests! John was warning them about the refiner's fire which the Lord was about to light.

I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Mt 3,11

The refiner's fire would purify the sons of Levi. Would not some of them be purified as fire purifies gold and silver? But the rest of them would be burnt as chaff with unquenchable fire!

Who was this mighty one, who would baptize with the holy Spirit and fire, whose sandals John was not even worthy of carrying?

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then he allowed him. Mt 3,13-15

John regarded Jesus so much greater than himself, that he could not imagine Jesus coming to be baptized by him. Why did Jesus need to be baptized? What sin had he committed? Was not this the one whom the LORD had told him would come? Yet Jesus had been sent to John by his Father, to be baptized by him together with the rest of Israel as they confessed their sins.

After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened (for him), and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove (and) coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "***This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.***" Mt 3,16-17

Was not the descending of the Spirit the sign that the LORD had told John about? Was not this the way the Father had decided to confirm to John that he was the Messiah?

I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God." Joh 1,33-34

What a joy filled John and his disciples! The long awaited Messiah had now arrived! This is the one whom Moses and the prophets had written about, the Lamb of God, the Red Heifer, the sin-offering to take away the sin of the world.

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'

How jubilant were his disciples as Jesus was identified by John as being the long awaited Messiah! What new wondrous thing did the LORD now plan for his people Israel?

The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." Joh 1,35-36

Could they not directly talk with the Messiah? What would happen if they might meet him personally? How would it be to spend time with the Messiah?

The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. Joh 1,37-39a

What an experience! How strong did the Holy Spirit rest upon him⁴⁶! Quickly they went and informed the others who were also waiting expectantly for the one John had been talking about.

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed) Joh 1,40

⁴⁶ Joh 3,34 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.

Immediately Simon left to meet him! It was too good to be true! The Messiah had come and Simon Peter could meet him personally.

Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Kephas" (which is translated Peter). Joh 1,42

What history was in the making! The long awaited Messiah had come and anyone who wished could approach him and be taught by him!

The next day he decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. Joh 1,43

Philip knew that Jesus was the one whom John had testified to. Was not his friend Nathaniel also waiting in expectancy for his appearing?

Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth."

Was not this the one that Moses continually talked about? Did not all the prophets speak of his coming? What a great joy filled Nathaniel as he discovered for himself that Jesus was the Messiah.

Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Joh 1,49-51

What about the place where all the people of Israel came to John, confessing their sins and being baptized by him in the Jordan? Was not Bethany⁴⁷ the place where John first baptized in, across the Jordan⁴⁸? Did not the sky open in this same place over seven hundred years earlier as Elijah was taken to heaven?

At the time of Jesus this area across the Jordan belonged to the wilderness of Judea⁴⁹. The people from Jerusalem would then cross over the Jordan to where John was baptizing. What was so significant about where John was baptizing⁵⁰, on the other side of the Jordan not too far from Jericho?

Was it not here that Elijah⁵¹ had been taken up to heaven⁵²? After going to Jericho⁵³ Elijah went with Elisha to the Jordan River⁵⁴. It was here that the waters of the Jordan parted and they walked over together on dry ground.

And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. 2Kgs 2,8

⁴⁷ Joh 10,40 He went back across the Jordan to the place where John first baptized, and there he remained.

⁴⁸ See Appendix 1 – Baptismal Place of Jesus

⁴⁹ Mt 19,1 When Jesus finished these words, he left Galilee and went to the district of Judea across the Jordan

⁵⁰ Eusebius Onomasticon The Gospels - Bēthaabara - Where John was baptizing" (the penitent) "across the Jordan." The place is pointed out where many of the brothers even now consider it an honor to wash. (Where today many of the brothers, the believers, desiring a renewal of life are baptized in the Depths.)

⁵¹ Origen, Commentary on John, 26-27 Another point which we must not fail to notice is that when Elijah was about to be taken up in a whirlwind, as if to heaven, he took his mantle and wrapped it together and smote the water, which was divided hither and thither, and they went over both of them, that is, he and Elisha. His baptism in the Jordan made him fitter to be taken up

⁵² Origen, Commentary on John, 26-27 Another point which we must not fail to notice is that when Elijah was about to be taken up in a whirlwind, as if to heaven, he took his mantle and wrapped it together and smote the water, which was divided hither and thither, and they went over both of them, that is, he and Elisha. His baptism in the Jordan made him fitter to be taken up

⁵³ 2Kgs 2,4 And Elijah said to him: 'Elisha, tarry here, I pray you; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.' And he said: 'As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.' So they came to Jericho.

⁵⁴ 2Kgs 2,6 And Elijah said to him: 'Tarry here, I pray you; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.' And he said: 'As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.' And they two went on.

And once Elijah was across the Jordan by Jericho, where John was first baptizing, he was taken up to heaven. Was it not here that John was baptizing⁵⁵ as Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized by him?

[This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing. Joh 1,28](#)

Is it a coincidence that John was manifested to Israel near the place where Elijah ascended to heaven?

[The child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to Israel. Lk 1,80](#)

Was not the whole nation of Israel waiting for the return of Elijah, who would prepare the way for the Messiah? What did Elijah wear for clothing? Was it not a garment of hair with a girdle of leather about his loins?

[And they answered him: 'He was a hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins.' And he said: 'It is Elijah the Tishbite.' 2Kgs 1,8](#)

Was not his anointing also in his hairy mantle, which he used to strike the waters that they should divide? Was not this similar to the anointing that Moses had in his rod⁵⁶? And did not this fall into the hands of Elisha as Elijah ascended into heaven?

[And he saw him no more; and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of the Jordan. 2Kgs 2,12-13](#)

Did not the mantle of Elijah, his hairy garment, fall from heaven into the hands of Elisha as Elijah seated himself in the heavenly chariot? And did not Elisha, opposite Jericho, strike the waters across the Jordan?

[And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said: 'Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?' and when he also had smitten the waters, they were divided hither and thither; and Elisha went over. 2Kgs 2,14](#)

And the follower of Elijah had a double portion of the spirit of Elijah. In this same way the hairy mantle of Elijah fell upon John⁵⁷. At the very place where Elijah finished his calling and was taken up to heaven John began his calling and was manifested to Israel. Elijah returned to prepare the way of the Messiah, but not as a physical reappearance, but in the person of John the Baptist, wearing a mantle of camel's hair. Did not Elisha tear his own mantle and his own clothing as he received the mantle from Elijah? And were not camels in the days of John the transporters through the highways of the desert⁵⁸? Did not Jesus himself confirm John as being Elijah?

[And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come. Mt 11,14](#)

But did the scribes of the Law recognize John as being Elijah? Were they not convinced that Elijah himself with his same body would return? Do not many Israelites even today expect that Elijah will return before the Messiah comes? Did not those who knew the scriptures tell the disciples of Jesus that he cannot be the Messiah, for Elijah must come first?

[Then the disciples asked him, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" Mt 17,10](#)

⁵⁵ Origen, Commentary on John, 25 But John baptizes beyond Jordan, in the regions verging on the outside of Judæa, in Bethabara

⁵⁶ Ex 14,16a And lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it;

⁵⁷ Mt 3,4 John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist.

⁵⁸ Isa 40,3b make plain in the desert a highway for our God.

How could the people of Israel have been so unprepared for their Messiah that they would not even recognize the coming of Elijah?

He said in reply, "Elijah will indeed come and restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him but did to him whatever they pleased. So also will the Son of Man suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist. Mt 17,11-13

And just as the religious leaders of the time missed the coming of the Messiah, though he was confirmed by his Father by the awesome miracles he did, they also missed the coming of Elijah!

Did not the Lord lead Elijah on his last day on earth as he leads each one of us to eternal life? First Elijah was at Gilgal⁵⁹, the place where the flesh of the foreskins had been cut off. Is not this also in our lives a place where we are ready to have the LORD cut us away from the lusts of the flesh? Then the Spirit called Elijah to Beth -El (the house of God). Beth-El is where Jacob had his first personal experience with the LORD⁶⁰. It is here that he first met himself the God of Abraham and Isaac⁶¹. How important that we personally come to the knowledge that Jesus is the Messiah, which often happens in the House of God as we hear the gospel and the Spirit confirms it in our hearts. Was it not in Beth-El that the LORD gave his last command to Jacob to multiply and reach the nations just as Jesus gave his last command to his disciples to multiply and reach the nations?

And God said to him: 'I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of you, and kings shall come out of your loins; And God went up from him in the place where He spoke with him. Gen 35,11-12

And just as God at Beth-El ascended to heaven as Israel watched, so did Jesus ascend to heaven as his apostles watched⁶².

He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature...

So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. Mk 16,15,19

And so we are told the good news in Beth-El (the Church) by the prophets of the LORD. Then the Spirit led Elijah to Jericho. Was not Jericho the City of the Palms⁶³, a destroyed stronghold of the enemy that had now had become a blessing to God's people? And do we not, once we have a personal experience with the LORD, knowing that Jesus is the Messiah, experience God's blessing towards us, even though God's enemy had been ruling us for so long? And as we go to Jericho we meet others already walking with the LORD, an oasis for our souls as we hear the word of God and are filled with the waters of the Spirit. And they tell us about what is about to happen to us, even on

⁵⁹ 2Kgs 2,1 And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah by a whirlwind into heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

⁶⁰ Gen 28,15-17 And, behold, I am with you, and will keep you whithersoever you go, and will bring you back into this land; for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.' And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said: 'Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.' And he was afraid, and said: 'How full of awe is this place! this is none other than the house of God (Beth-El), and this is the gate of heaven.'

⁶¹ Gen 35,6-7 So Jacob came to Luz, which is in the land of Canaan--the same is Beth-el--he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el, because there God was revealed to him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

⁶² Act 1,8-9 But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.

⁶³ Deut 34,3 and the South, and the Plain, even the valley of Jericho the city of palm-trees, as far as Zoar.

that very same day⁶⁴! Is it not the will of the Father that on the day we believe we are raised with Christ and are seated with him in heaven?

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved), raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Eph 2,5-7

Is that not why all the examples of Acts display clearly that it is the will of the Father that we are baptized upon believing, even the very same day⁶⁵? From Jericho the Spirit then leads Elijah to the Jordan river⁶⁶. Does not the Spirit then lead to the water of baptism? Shortly before we get there we pass again Gilgal. And here we confess our sins and turn from the lusts of our flesh. Directly after passing Gilgal, as he arrives on the Jordan, he strikes the waters and they divide. And so do we go directly from Gilgal, where we speak our baptismal oath, into the Jordan, whose waters divide before us. Once we reach the other side of the Jordan we ascend to our special seat with Jesus at the right hand of God. We are born of above and no longer belong to this world.

And just as Elisha, the follower of Elijah, John opened up the Jordan, that the way of salvation might be revealed to all nations. Through his voice in the wilderness there was a highway for the people of Israel leading into the kingdom of God, the heavenly Promised Land!

What else in the history of Israel happened across the Jordan near Jericho? Was it not here that the waters parted as Joshua crossed over with the children of Israel into the Promised Land⁶⁷? Did not this parting of the waters even exceed that of Moses⁶⁸, as the Sea of Reeds parted? For in this crossing they inherited that which the Lord had promised Abraham.

And in the same way as John and then Jesus baptized, those who repented inherited the blessing of Abraham as promised the day Isaac was offered.

After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the region of Judea, where he spent some time with them baptizing. Joh 3,22

John prepared the way for Jesus and his disciples. Instead of going to John, now the highway prepared in the wilderness was leading directly to the Messiah, to Jesus himself.

So they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing and everyone is coming to him."

Now everyone was coming to Jesus and his disciples to be baptized, even more than those who came to John⁶⁹! What did John think about this? Certainly his disciples were not happy at all!

John answered and said, "No one can receive anything except what has been given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said (that) I am not the Messiah, but that I was sent before him. Joh 3,27-28

⁶⁴ 2Kgs 2,5 And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came near to Elisha, and said to him: 'Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from your head to-day?' And he answered: 'Yea, I know it; hold you your peace.'

⁶⁵ Act 2,41; Act 2,47; Act 4,3-4; Act 8,12; Act 8,37-40; Act 9,18; Act 10,47-48; Act 16,15; Act 16,33; Act 18,8; Act 19,5; Act 22,16

⁶⁶ 2Kgs 2,6 And Elijah said to him: 'Tarry here, I pray you; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.' And he said: 'As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.' And they two went on.

⁶⁷ See Appendix 2 – Crossing the Jordan with Joshua

⁶⁸ Origen, Commentary on John, 26 But the baptism to Joshua, which takes place in quite sweet and drinkable water, is in many ways superior to that earlier one

⁶⁹ Joh 4,1-2 Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself was not baptizing, just his disciples),

John had told all of the people that he was not the Messiah, but rather he was sent before him. How glad he was that the Israelites received the Messiah! This was the very purpose why he was born!

The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man, who stands and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made complete. Joh 3,29

How great it was for John to hear the bridegroom's wife calling to his bride! How happy are we as we fulfill the calling of God on our lives!

He must increase; I must decrease. The one who comes from above is above all. The one who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of earthly things. But the one who comes from heaven (is above all). Joh 3,30-31

And then John warns the people to listen very carefully to what Jesus says, for he knows that Jesus is that stone⁷⁰ which will be for so many a stone of stumbling⁷¹.

He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. Whoever does accept his testimony certifies that God is trustworthy. For the one whom God sent speaks the words of God. He does not ration his gift of the Spirit. The Father loves the Son and has given everything over to him. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him. Joh 3,32-36

How clearly did John identify to Israel the Red Heifer! And from this time on the eyes of the priests were especially watching his every move. Were they not often confronted with the words that John had spoken about Jesus?

Where was John's baptism from? Was it of heavenly or of human origin?" They discussed this among themselves and said, "If we say 'Of heavenly origin,' he will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we fear the crowd, for they all regard John as a prophet." So they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know." He himself said to them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things. Mt 21,25-27

Did not this rock of stumbling cause the leaders of Israel to fall because of their unwillingness to listen to the Prophet like Moses, the Son of God, the Messiah?

Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him. Mt 21,31a-32

Did not John open to all the people of Israel, even the most wicked, the entrance into the kingdom of God? How many tax collectors and prostitutes became disciples of Jesus? And yet in his life, because he died before the kingdom had come, he never personally entered it.

Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Mt 11,11

The very purpose of his life was to make the entrance into the kingdom as clear as possible, that all Israel might see it. Was that not why he fasted and prayed continually?

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force. Mt 11,12

⁷⁰ Isa 8,14 And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

⁷¹ Lk 2,34-35 "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Did not the religious leader reject John and the plan that God had to make a new covenant with the house of Israel? How unmovable they had become in their traditions and religious structures!

All the people who listened, including the tax collectors, and who were baptized with the baptism of John, acknowledged the righteousness of God; but the Pharisees and scholars of the law, who were not baptized by him, rejected the plan of God for themselves. Lk 7,29-30

Did they not even consider John as having a demon because of his violent givenness for the kingdom of God?

For John the Baptist came neither eating food nor drinking wine, and you said, 'He is possessed by a demon.' Lk 7,33

How impossible is it to enter the kingdom of God by simply visiting the synagogues and keeping traditions! Does not a birth require violent birth pangs? Who can leave the kingdom of the dark prince and enter the kingdom of light without even putting up a fight?

The law and the prophets lasted until John; but from then on the kingdom of God is proclaimed, and everyone who enters does so with violence. Lk 16,16

Crossing the Jordan with Joshua

Moses was one hundred and twenty years old⁷² as he was gathered to his kindred. Joshua, who loved the LORD and loved being in his presence⁷³, received from the LORD the leadership of the Israelites.

After Moses, the servant of the LORD, had died, the LORD said to Moses' aide Joshua, son of Nun: My servant Moses is dead. So prepare to cross the Jordan here, with all the people into the land I will give the Israelites. Josh 1,1-2

The first command on Joshua from the LORD was to prepare to cross the Jordan. What did the LORD mean, when he commanded Joshua to prepare to cross the Jordan? What should Joshua do, to prepare to cross the Jordan? And how can we prepare to be baptized? Just as with Joshua, the first command that a disciple of Jesus is given from the LORD is to prepare to be baptized.

Now when Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John (although Jesus himself was not baptizing, just his disciples) Joh 4,1-2

Very many people were going to Jesus to become his disciples. Jesus was baptizing on the Jordan, not far from where John was baptizing. Just months earlier, everyone was going to John to be baptized. A few of these people became disciples of John, but most of them came to John, not because they wanted to be his disciples, but because they wanted to repent of their sins and be cleansed.

With Jesus it was different. Jesus saw baptism as the first step to becoming his disciple. John prepared the people for Jesus, he called them to repentance. If any of those who had repented and had been baptized by John wanted to become a disciple of Jesus, they had to be baptized again.⁷⁴ The baptism of Jesus was based on the oath of discipleship, while the baptism of John simply required that you confessed your sins and repented. Those who were baptized by Jesus became his disciples, where he was their Lord, their master.

We prepare ourselves for crossing the Jordan when we make the necessary preparation in our lives to repent. For those who like sin and do not want to leave the darkness, they are not permitted to cross the Jordan. They must remain in the wilderness like the generation who left Egypt with Moses. The only two who crossed the Jordan were Joshua and Caleb, because they loved the LORD and wished to follow him with all their hearts. Those whose hearts were hard and did not repent died in the wilderness.

His message of repentance was to prepare them for the Messiah, who was to follow. John was sent to turn the hearts of the people. John was that the messenger who was to proceed the LORD, as he was about to enter his temple.

Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me; And suddenly there will come to the temple the LORD whom you seek, And the messenger of the covenant whom you desire. Yes, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who will endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when

⁷² Deut 34,7 Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were undimmed and his vigor unabated.

⁷³ Ex 33,11 And the LORD spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he would return into the camp; but his minister Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the Tent.

⁷⁴ Act 19,3-5 He said, "How were you baptized?" They replied, "With the baptism of John." Paul then said, "John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

he appears? For he is like the refiner's fire, or like the fuller's lye. He will sit refining and purifying (silver), and he will purify the sons of Levi, Refining them like gold or like silver that they may offer due sacrifice to the LORD. Mal 3,1-3

After hundreds of years of silence, the LORD was to suddenly appear in his temple. Wanting to prevent the judgment against all who would not receive him, which would cause the land being doomed, he sent his messenger before him to prepare his way. The LORD was to purify the Sons of Levi, but this purification would be a very hot fire. Who would be able to endure the day of his coming?

If we become his disciples, we must also bear the refiner's flame. And so John came so that the Messiah would be known to Israel. Andrew, the brother of Peter, had been prepared for him. Also Nathaniel (Bartholomew) and Philip had been prepared by John for the Messiah. And John told them all, that Jesus was the Messiah.

Another way we prepare to cross the Jordan is by believing the testimony that God gives of his Son, that Jesus is the Messiah. Believing this is not passive. Rather, if we truly believe in our hearts that he is the Messiah, then we will automatically believe the words he speaks. Today it is not possible to hear Andrew coming to us and saying, 'We have found the Messiah'. The disciples of Jesus are now in Heaven, they are no longer on this earth. But they have written their testimony down, that you might believe on the Messiah and have eternal life.

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of (his) disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may (come to) believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name. Joh 20,30-31

Joshua (Jesus) was only able to lead the children of Israel to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land because they believed the LORD. The generation who had left Egypt did not trust the LORD, but hardened their hearts in disbelief. And for this very reason they could not enter what God had promised them. They all died without crossing the Jordan and their bodies were all buried in the wilderness.

For in fact we have received the good news just as they did. But the word that they heard did not profit them, for they were not united in faith with those who listened. Hebr 4,2

Baptism is no different than putting a dog underneath the water for those who do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah and who do not wish to be his whole hearted disciples. They will be no different when they come out of the water than when they went in. For this reason, the LORD has ordained that only those who believe shall cross the Jordan. Did not Peter require of those baptized on Pentecost that they believe on Jesus as the Messiah? Only those who received his words were baptized! And was it not the same with Phillip, as he spoke to the Eunuch in the chariot of the death of Jesus, the Messiah?

As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" Act 8,36 NAS

After hearing the gospel from Philip, after hearing about the Messiah, after hearing about the testimony of John and repentance, after hearing about Jesus being crucified and rising from death, after hearing about baptism he asked Philip, 'What is to prevent my being baptized?'

His question made clear to Philip that the Eunuch wanted to receive the riches of eternal life, the pearl of great price. He wanted to repent, he was ready to be a disciple of Jesus. So Philip told him the answer to his question.

And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Act 8,37 NAS

Did not Paul require the same of those who heard his preaching of the Gospel? Can you name a single exception, where someone who didn't believe the gospel was baptized?

If someone today wishes to be baptized, to cross the Jordan, then he must be prepared, he must believe with all his heart.

So Joshua commanded the officers of the people: "Go through the camp and instruct the people, 'Prepare your provisions, for three days from now you shall cross the Jordan here, to march in and take possession of the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you.'" Josh 1,10-11

Before they crossed the Jordan they made all of the necessary preparations. No longer were the children of Israel disbelieving. They did not simply sit there in disbelief, murmuring against Joshua as they did against Moses. The generation at the time of Moses most likely wouldn't have prepared, they would have questioned Joshua, 'How shall we enter the land with all of our provisions? We have no boats and the Jordan River is deep?' Only after seeing the waters depart, as at the shores of the Red Sea, would they believe. They may have said, 'Let us wait these three days and see if the waters part. Then we will prepare our provisions, otherwise we may be wasting our time'.

The children of the disobedient generation who died in the wilderness had learned to believe and had learned also to obey. What was their answer to Joshua?

"We will do all you have commanded us," they answered Joshua, "and we will go wherever you send us. We will obey you as completely as we obeyed Moses. But may the LORD, your God, be with you as he was with Moses. If anyone rebels against your orders and does not obey every command you give him, he shall be put to death. But be firm and steadfast." Josh 1,16-18

If we wish to cross the Jordan, we must be willing to obey Jesus and go wherever he sends us. We must obey him completely; he must be in all truth the Lord of our lives. If anyone rebels and does not do what the Lord commands, then it is better that this person does not cross the Jordan.

Joshua had given his first command to the people of Israel, 'Prepare to cross the Jordan in three days'. Believing Joshua, they did as he said and prepared their provisions. Those who believe the disciples of Jesus preaching the gospel, they also make the practical considerations of leaving their old lives behind, of repenting, of leaving the darkness of lies and seduction, and entering the kingdom of God.

A few days earlier he sent out secretly two spies to Jericho, who returned three days later⁷⁵. They arrived at the house of Rehab and heard of her faith, that they would shortly destroy Jericho. And because of her faith, she pleaded with them that she and her house would be spared. And in accordance to her wish, she put a scarlet cord⁷⁶ outside the window on the wall of the city, marking her house. Is not this scarlet cord similar to the scarlet cord thrown into the fire of the Red Heifer? Were not the sins of this harlot as scarlet, yet because of her believing they would be white as snow?

After three days⁷⁷ they then arrived back to the camp, the day before Joshua gave the command to prepare to cross the Jordan. How very important is faith for preparing to cross the Jordan!

⁷⁵ Josh 2,16 "Go up into the hill country," she suggested to them, "that your pursuers may not find you. Hide there for three days, until they return; then you may proceed on your way."

⁷⁶ Josh 2,21 She said, "According to your words, so be it." So she sent them away, and they departed; and she tied the scarlet cord in the window.

⁷⁷ Josh 2,22a They departed and came to the hill country, and remained there for three days until the pursuers returned.

Then the two men returned and came down from the hill country and crossed over and came to Joshua the son of Nun, and they related to him all that had happened to them. They said to Joshua, "Surely the LORD has given all the land into our hands; moreover, all the inhabitants of the land have melted away before us." Josh 2,23-24

After hearing this report, all of the people of Israel were filled with confidence in the LORD. And sometimes, before we cross the Jordan, the Lord gives us a very special encouragement and confidence, that we will overcome all of the giants and the fortified cities of the enemy on the other side of the Jordan.

Early the next morning, Joshua moved with all the Israelites from Shittim to the Jordan, where they lodged before crossing over. Three days later the officers went through the camp... Josh 3,1-2a

After hearing this report, all the Israelites moved to the banks of the Jordan. Just as Joshua had told them, they knew in three days they would be crossing the Jordan. They were not afraid of the giants or the fortified cities, as their parents had been. They believed the LORD, and through the virtue of true faith, they obeyed him.

Three days later the officers went through the camp and issued these instructions to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD, your God, which the levitical priests will carry, you must also break camp and follow it, that you may know the way to take, for you have not gone over this road before. But let there be a space of two thousand cubits between you and the ark. Do not come nearer to it."

The officers went throughout the camp and proclaimed a message concerning the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant is the place where the atoning sacrifice takes place once a year. When in the LORD's sanctuary, nobody was permitted to see it except the high priest. But on this very special day, the day they were to cross the Jordan, everyone was going to see it. Not only were they going to see it, but they were commanded to follow it!

What was more holy in the sanctuary than the Ark of the Covenant? Was it not for this reason that the veil separated it from the rest of the tabernacle as the holy of holies? And wasn't the holiness of the ark based upon the mercy seat, where the atoning sacrifice was made once a year by the high priest? Was it not at this very same bank of the Jordan, where John cried out concerning Jesus, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!?' Did not John's disciples Andrew and Philip obey the voice in the wilderness at the shore of the Jordan as they became disciples of Jesus?

Joshua also said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will perform wonders among you." Josh 3,5

The last step of preparation was to now take place. If there was any sin of any type in their lives, now was the time to get rid of it. No idols were to enter the water, no sexual uncleanness, no lies, no hatred, but rather forgiveness. Before the LORD would do this very great wonder, they were to sanctify themselves. The time had come for them to inherit a land flowing with milk and honey, the land the LORD had promised to Abraham six hundred and eighty five years earlier.

And he directed the priests to take up the Ark of the Covenant and go on ahead of the people; and they did so. Josh 3,6

Just as the officers were commanded by Jesus (Joshua) to proclaim to the Israelites to look to the ark, so we are commanded by Jesus to proclaim to the whole world the atoning sacrifice of his Son. And just as those who believed the officers followed the ark and were led into the

waters of the Jordan, so are those who believe us concerning the atoning sacrifice of Jesus lead into the water of baptism.

Now command the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to come to a halt in the Jordan when they reach the edge of the waters." So Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come here and listen to the words of the LORD, your God." He continued: "This is how you will know that there is a living God in your midst, who at your approach will dispossess the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. The ark of the covenant of the LORD of the whole earth will precede you into the Jordan. Josh 3,8-11

The Israelites were to wait at the edge of the waters and Joshua spoke to them of the covenant that God made with them. The covenant he made with them was that they would be his people, he would give them the land of Israel to live in and he would be in their midst. So these words of the covenant were spoken to them on this bank. Their faith had led them to this water, and because of their faith the LORD reckoned them worthy of receiving this promise.

When we believe on his death, as presented to us by the gospel, we also hear by the waters the words of the covenant which God made through his son Jesus. Just as the LORD promised Abraham, 'To your descendants I will give this land' he also promised him another people of covenant, not by virtue of natural birth, but by a spiritual birth, having that same faith of Abraham. Did not the LORD promise Abraham at the site where the Messiah would one day be sacrificed, and this time with an oath, two covenant people?

'By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have hearkened to my voice.' Gen 22,16b-18

Abraham is the father of a great people, the only nation upon this earth which he chose for himself. And to this nation is also given the promises for all times, that the Messiah will rule from here all nations. Also this nation will be in the latter days the glorious crown of the second people, as foretold in Isaiah, Zechariah and many of the other prophets. This second people are those of all nations who through his seed (singular), that is Jesus, the Messiah, have received the blessing of Abraham. The LORD bestowed this blessing upon Abraham because of his faith.

In his obedience he offering up his Son Isaac as a foreshadow of Jesus, the Son of God, on that same mountain where God knew his own Son would one day be offered as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. For it was on this mount that the blessing for all nations was provided for, purchased by the blood of Jesus. This is the mount which the LORD led Abraham to, taking three days, in the land of Moriah, where Jerusalem is today. And Abraham named this special mount, 'The LORD Will Provide', for on this mount the LORD provided the sacrifice by which the people of all nations enter the eternal covenant.

And on the side of the waters we hear the words of this eternal covenant. It is for the forgiveness of our sins that we have approached the water, to receive the atoning sacrifice provided for us on the mount. And it is also for a love relationship, that Jesus be LORD of our lives and we be his disciples. The LORD makes his oath to us as God's word is spoken. This time, however, this oath is spoken to us personally; 'though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow'. And we make our oath to him, personally. Having repented from our sins and renounced the devil, we say, 'As for me and my house, we shall serve the LORD' and personally to Jesus, 'My Lord and my God'. Following the oaths of the covenant we cross the Jordan.

When the soles of the feet of the priests carrying the ark of the LORD, the Lord of the whole earth, touch the water of the Jordan, it will cease to flow; for the water flowing down from upstream will halt in a solid bank. Josh 3,13

Just as the Red Sea parted with the water on both sides being a solid bank, so could the children of Israel see again this solid bank of water as they crossed the Jordan. By the crossing of the Red Sea they were saved from their enemies, the Egyptians. By the crossing of the Jordan they entered into the Promised Land, the land of their future for them and their descendants as long as the earth remains.

Just as the ark was the place where the atoning sacrifice was made for the people of the first covenant, so is the cross of Jesus for those of the new covenant. The significance of the ark is great, but it was not to be worshipped in any way. Nor are we to bow before the cross, or anything upon the earth, but alone before the LORD and before the Lamb, sitting at his right hand. The LORD, who thrones above the mercy seat is to be worshipped. The LORD, who died upon the cross and rose from the dead, the Lamb of God seated at the right hand of the Father, is to be worshipped, not only by us as his church, but also by all of the angels! For was it not the LORD himself, who said to him:

The LORD says to you, my lord: "Take your throne at my right hand, while I make your enemies your footstool." The scepter of your sovereign might the LORD will extend from Zion. The LORD says: "Rule over your enemies! Yours is princely power from the day of your birth. In holy splendor before the daystar, like the dew I begot you." The LORD has sworn and will not waver: "Like Melchizedek you are a priest forever." At your right hand is the Lord, who crushes kings on the day of wrath Ps 110,1-5

And again, when talking about the everlasting dominion of Jesus:

I saw One like a son of man coming, on the clouds of heaven; When he reached the Ancient One and was presented before him, He received dominion, glory, and kingship; nations and peoples of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away, his kingship shall not be destroyed. Dan 7,13-14

And was not this same son of man the Lamb of God on the throne, seen by John in his revelation?

and they cried out in a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and blessing." Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: "To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever." Rev 5,12-13

But who will stand at the coming of the Messiah? Who will accept his rule as LORD in their lives in a world full of temptations and darkness?

Why do the nations gather together? Why do their people devise useless plots? Kings take their stands. Rulers make plans together against the LORD and against his Messiah by saying, "Let's break apart their chains and shake off their ropes." Ps 2,1-3 GWT

Despite the gathering of the nations against the Messiah, his kingdom will be from one end of the earth to the other. Woe to those who stand up against him, the one appointed to judge the living and the dead! For the Messiah will come a second time, this time to judge the earth. And all who lay in the dust will rise before him.

Then he speaks to them in his anger. In his burning anger he terrifies them by saying, "I have installed my own king on Zion, my holy mountain." I will announce the LORD's decree. He said to me: "You are my Son. Today I have become your Father. Ask me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your own possession. You will break them with an iron scepter. You will smash them to pieces like pottery." Ps 2,5-9

How futile to be found as those who resist the will of God as he exalts his Son as King of kings and LORD or Lords! For the Messiah is also the Son, destined to an eternal kingdom. His enemies will be made his footstool and those who resist him will be smashed to pieces by his iron scepter. The meek Lamb of God is also the Lion of Judah. For those who do not bow their knees on this earth, they will certainly bow them after their death⁷⁸, but then it will be too late to change their eternal judgment.

Let us fear and honor the Son as we fear and honor the Father⁷⁹. Let us kiss him in love, and do homage before him who is to rule all nations! For only they who love his name shall inherit and dwell in the Promised Land⁸⁰!

Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the LORD with reverence and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him! Ps 2,10-12 NAS

They who do not take heed to his warning do it to their own shame! There is a very special rest for the people of God, but it is only for those who will take refuge in Him. By finding refuge in the Messiah, and calling the LORD our shepherd, we will be led by him in green pastures; he will lead us to drink by the still waters and refresh our souls.

And so, just as the ark of the LORD, the LORD of all the earth, went before those who crossed the Jordan with Jesus (Joshua), so does the cross of Jesus, the LORD of all the earth, go before us as we enter the waters of baptism and are born as he was born, by the Holy Spirit. By faith we are entering a covenant where Jesus is our Lord, we are taking refuge under his wings! We have left Egypt, we have left the wilderness where the dead bodies of the unbelieving have been buried. They did not take refuge in the Messiah, the Son. They did not let themselves be led by Jesus to the green pastures and the still waters, to the Promised Land.

Why did he who knew no sin enter the waters of baptism, if not for our sakes that were to enter with him the new covenant? The people of the first covenant entered the land of Israel for the first time as a nation under the instruction of Jesus (Joshua). At this time Israel was a land flowing with milk and honey.

The people of the new covenant, first declared in the baptism of John, enter through the water the Kingdom of God⁸¹. Was it not fitting of the LORD, that Jesus himself was baptized by John in the Jordan River, in the desert of Judea, near or even at the place where the waters of the Jordan parted? How fitting that this is the only door leading out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God!

All people of all nations had been locked up since Adam behind the carefully guarded walls by the prince of darkness. Only through the miracle of God did a few individuals like Noah and Abraham escape from this kingdom. And now, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, a huge section of the wall has been broken through. Both his death and resurrection are to be attained in the water of

⁷⁸ Phil 2,9 Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

⁷⁹ Joh 5,22-23 Nor does the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to his Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

⁸⁰ Ps 69,36 The seed also of His servants shall inherit it; and they that love His name shall dwell therein.

⁸¹ Joh 3,5 Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.

baptism by those who hearken to the evangelists. Just as the officers proclaiming to the Israelites to follow the ark into the Jordan, the evangelists cry out to all people, follow Jesus into the water of the covenant. How impossible it is for anyone to escape who does not listen and does not let himself be led by the ark across the Jordan!

He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Col 1,13-14

And was it not that same cloud which had led the people of Israel faithfully for forty years? And was he not beckoning them to the bank of the Jordan? Was not the new covenant established upon the atonement? Was not the yearly atonement upon the Ark of the Covenant only a shadow of the eternal atonement accomplished by the sacrifice of the Messiah himself?

he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due. Is 53,8b

Instead of stroke of judgment hitting us, it hit him as he was cut off out of the land of the living. Because of our guilt we were condemned to eternal judgment, yet he took it in our place.

All we like sheep did go astray, we turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath made to light on him the iniquity of us all. Is 53,6

Did not the LORD speak to Moses from above the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant? Was it not concerning the sacrifices for sin that he instructed him? Would the establishing of the new covenant require an even greater sacrifice?

If He would render Himself as a guilt offering Is 53,10b NAS

What did Isaiah see as he spoke of this very unusual human sacrifice? Certainly the priest would never take an Israelite and render him as a guilt offering! Such a sacrifice would never be permitted in the first covenant! When did an Israelite ever render Himself as a guilt offering for the iniquity of us all?

because he bared his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Is 53,12

Could it be that the atoning sacrifices of the first covenant were foretelling of a more perfect sacrifice, on which the new covenant would one day be established?

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Jer 31,31

As the Messiah arrived in the temple, the first covenant had already shown great erosion of age. The tent had fallen to the ground. The temple of Solomon had been utterly destroyed. The Ark of the Covenant had disappeared. Moses had established the covenant of the law, but this covenant had been broken. A covenant based on loving the Lord with all their hearts had become an observance of abundant meaningless rites and traditions. The hearts had become closed to the leading of the cloud and they became absorbed with keeping the precepts of man in their attempt to establish their own righteousness. To everything God had commanded them through Moses, they had added countless other precepts, thereby breaking the covenant. Was not this the sin of Saul, who thought sacrifices could be compared with obedience?

It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they broke my covenant and I had to show myself their master, says the LORD.

The generations following those who entered the Promised Land did not obey the words the LORD spoken to Moses. They did not follow the example of Moses and Aaron. Instead they worshipped other gods. Later they replaced obedience to the word of God with regulations and precepts of man, where their hearts were far from him.

The Lord said: Since this people draws near with words only and honors me with their lips alone, though their hearts are far from me, And their reverence for me has become routine observance of the precepts of men, therefore I will again deal with this people in surprising and wondrous fashion: The wisdom of its wise men shall perish and the understanding of its prudent men be hid. Isa 29,13-14

And the LORD, longsuffering and patient, has never ceased in his love for Israel. Instead of dealing harshly towards them, he foretold of dealing surprisingly and wondrous, yet where he would hide it from the wise and the prudent. Was it not in God's wisdom, that his eternal covenant with Israel be hidden from the rulers? Was not the stone of the Lord's eternal temple far too valuable to have been given over to the builders?

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. By the LORD has this been done; it is wonderful in our eyes. Ps 118,22-23

Yet the Lord knew that the covenant would be broken even from the beginning. Even during the days of Moses, as the first covenant was being established, he foretold of the new covenant, based not upon Moses, but upon the Messiah. Even as Jesus (Joshua) was speaking to them the promise of his covenant on the Jordan, the council of the LORD was already firm. The Jesus speaking this covenant to them on the waters of a Jordan was foretelling of the coming Messiah, who would also be called Jesus, speaking his covenant to those about to cross the water of the new covenant into the kingdom of God.

I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him. Deut 18,18-19

The LORD spoke to Moses from above the mercy seat and he spoke to Moses on the mount. Moses was obedient and did what the LORD said. He was commanded by the LORD to write down his words⁸² and read them to the people⁸³. With the new covenant established by the Messiah it was different. His words were given him directly; they were put in his mouth. He did not speak to the people from behind a veil. But for many, who were not willing to take refuge in Him, his words were only heard in parables⁸⁴. For all who do not hearken to him, it will be required of them.

Why would God want to keep secret from the Israelites of the first covenant so much of his wisdom? Why would the LORD hide the untold riches from the people he so greatly loved?

What could possibly be the plan that the LORD had, that the Messiah would not be recognized by the leaders of Israel? What secrets did he choose not to tell the wise or the prudent? Had they not been waiting for centuries for his coming? Was he not the Red Heifer, being watched for by the whole nation?

⁸² Deut 31,26 Take this scroll of the law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD, your God, that there it may be a witness against you.

⁸³ Deut 31,12 Assemble the people--men, women and children, as well as the aliens who live in your communities--that they may hear it and learn it, and so fear the LORD, your God, and carefully observe all the words of this law.

⁸⁴ I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter dark sayings concerning days of old; Ps 78,2 Jewish Publication Society

The Messiah did not come to restore the ruins of the first covenant! He laid the cornerstone for a completely new temple. This temple would not be a shadow of the heavenly. No, the kingdom of Heaven would itself be established on earth! The Promised Land would not be a beautiful country on this earth, but Heaven itself! And those who would enter this kingdom by the waters of baptism would be seated with the Messiah in the heavens.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ (by grace you have been saved), raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Eph 2,5-8

Is it not true that all of our righteousness before the holiness of God appear as filthy rags⁸⁵? How could the Messiah be built into the temple being run by the leaders of Israel? How fitting that the wisdom of the wise and prudent was brought to nothing!

Instead, this new tabernacle of the living God would not be limited to the boundaries of Israel, but would be known everywhere and be a mountain that fills the whole earth!

I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations, To open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness. I am the LORD, this is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. Isa 42,6-8

The Messiah of Israel will become the light of the nations! He, who comes forth from Jacob shall himself be the covenant of the people! And to whom has he been sent? Is it not to the blind, to the prisoners, to those in the dungeons and living in darkness? Where can the atoning sacrifice be so glorious as in the eyes of those dead in their trespasses and sins? To whom is the light of the nations so valuable, as to those living in the dungeons of darkness? What is this new covenant which will be made to include both Jews and heathen?

Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the peoples, a prince and commander to the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you know not, and a nation that knew not you shall run to you; because of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, for He has glorified you. Is 53,3-5

This new covenant is to be an everlasting covenant. The covenant of marriage is sworn by an oath which only lasts until in death we do part. The covenant of circumcision was made upon flesh which must die. The eternal covenant is based upon eternal promises, an oath that continues after death, for all eternity.

The everlasting covenant does not have Moses as its commander. It is him who is witnessed to the peoples who is also the commander. The prince is the same one whose death we proclaim. The LORD, the God of Israel, will glorify this prince. And to this prince a new nation shall come to exist, which did not exist earlier. His reign would be throughout the whole earth, yet established on the Throne of David!

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. Is 9,7b

⁸⁵ Isa 64,6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

The LORD established a first government by the establishing of the first covenant, Israel. On the throne of the first government, the throne of David, the new government will be established. This government will not be established on the first covenant, but on the everlasting covenant which is for the peoples, not just Israel.

And just as the new covenant is everlasting, this government will have no end. He who is to rule this government is the son which was given to us. For our sakes he came to this earth. Yet that same son who came as a simple child shall be called the Mighty God! Yes, Jesus, the son of Mary is the ruler of the eternal government. He has been glorified; he sits at the right hand of the Father. He shall be called the Eternal Father! He shall be called the Prince of Peace! And just as John cried out, so do those who belong to his kingdom cry out in intercession: 'your Kingdom come to the earth as it is in Heaven'.

[In the lifetime of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed or delivered up to another people; rather, it shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and put an end to them, and it shall stand forever. Dan 2,44](#)

And so in the lifetime of the kings of Rome, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, the word of the LORD came to John. The LORD of heaven placed the laver of salvation before the gateway leading into his kingdom. The time had arrived for the establishing of the new covenant.

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the LORD. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more. Jer 31,31-34

And so, in God's perfect wisdom, he made a new covenant with the house of Israel, this time with the mediator being the Messiah himself! And this time the laws would not be written on stone, but upon hearts desiring to know the LORD, desiring to be his people. The God who spoke almost solely to Moses and Joshua in the first covenant would now speak to all, from the least to the greatest, in the new covenant. Instead of threatening them with a curse for disobedience, he would forgive their evildoings and not even remember their sins.

How blessed are those who would belong to this new covenant, to whom the LORD would not even impute iniquity! How manifest his favor to each individual belonging to the eternal covenant! Are they not the bride, sparkling jewels on his diadem?

[and I will give them their recompense in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the LORD hath blessed. Isa 8b-9](#)

Starting with the Israelites who listened to Jesus, an everlasting covenant was made amongst the nations. And those of the Israelites who entered the everlasting covenant became known amongst the nations. The great favor the LORD showed them made known to all the earth that these are the seed which the LORD has blessed. Through them the peoples of the earth acknowledged that the LORD, the God of Israel is the true God, creator of heaven and earth.

[I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of victory, as a bridegroom putteth on a priestly diadem, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. Isa 61,10](#)

But what happened to those who would not listen to Jesus? What about the rest of the Israelites who would not hearken to the prophet like as to Moses? How did the LORD require it of them?

Was not Jerusalem destroyed in such a cruel way? Was not the temple laid waste and did not an end come to the covenant of sacrifices? Like a grain of wheat dying in the ground, the glory of Israel died and came to an end. Is not this what John had prophesied?

I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. Mt 3,11-12

Under the threat of unquenchable fire he proclaimed Jesus to them. He knew that their hearts were not prepared to receive the Messiah. Did not John give to the religious leaders their last warning of the wrath to come?

You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Mt 3,7-10

It was the final hour and the ax was already being laid upon the roots. Who would prepare themselves; who would sanctify themselves for the receiving of the Messiah? Let him repent with a sincere heart and produce good fruit as evidence. The fire was already blazing. The trees not bearing good fruit would shortly be thrown in and go up in smoke.

Instead of them crying out to the LORD, that he would return to Israel as he had been in the time of Moses, they had become comfortable in their lives without the pillar of cloud. Is that not what they cried out to Moses on the Mount?

When the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the trumpet blast and the mountain smoking, they all feared and trembled. So they took up a position much farther away and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we shall die." Ex 20,18-19

The LORD wished to reveal himself to them, but they continually hardened their hearts. They did not want God to speak with them. How disbelieving were they to think that the LORD would kill them as he tried to teach them the fear of the LORD.

With their hearts as hard as stone, the LORD wrote his commands on tablets of stone. At the very time the LORD was writing his commands on the stone tablets of the covenant, every single Israelite not with Moses was worshiping a golden calf and crying out to it, 'This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt'.

Do you really think that it was different at the time when the Messiah arrived? Is that not the reason why the LORD first sent John the Baptist to the Jordan River to baptize?

Lo, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, Before the day of the LORD comes, the great and terrible day, To turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the land with doom. Mal 3,23-24

How strongly would the LORD have cursed Israel if they had in one accord rejected the Messiah! Was not this why he first sent John? Was not John born to one of the most respected families in Israel? Was not his father a priest from the house of Aaron? Was it not as he was doing service in the sanctuary that Gabriel appeared to him? And was it not known throughout all of the countryside

even from his birth that he was a prophet who would prepare the way for the LORD, the Messiah? What better way could the LORD soften the hearts of his people, that they might listen to him as he would appear!

How different was John than anyone else in Israel! Although from one of the most respected priestly families, he fasted day and night in intercession for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Wearing a hairy garment made of camel's hair with a leather girdle about his loins⁸⁶, his food being locusts and wild honey, he cried out for his people Israel. This was a priest from the house of Aaron fulfilling his service outside the temple, outside the camp. Unlike Elijah, who only opened his mouth in rare occasions because of the hardness of their hearts, John began crying loudly in the wilderness for the people to repent. And the people of Israel heard his crying.

What was John interceding for? Was it not that the people return to the LORD. Was it not that the pillar of cloud would return to the people? Was not his greatest intercession that the LORD would have mercy on his people; that he would remember the holy covenant, even though their hearts were hard like stone?

Did not his father prophecy, after not being able to speak for nine months? And was not his wife old and barren from her youth? Was not this so unusual and obviously from the LORD that the rumor of it reached people throughout Judea⁸⁷? Zechariah the priest, from the house of Aaron, prophesied as the day of his birth arrived.

And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high will visit us to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace. Lk 1,76-79

The people of Israel were in great darkness and in death's shadow. Yet the leaders were completely unaware of this darkness, all of their thoughts being involved with keeping the traditions of their fathers. And suddenly the LORD appeared in his temple, the pillar of cloud had returned!

At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. Mt 3,5-6

Most of the Israelites expected to never again see the pillar of cloud. Where was the God of their fathers? Why did his miraculous works cease, from which they heard every Sabbath in the synagogue? How long would they continue to suffer under the cruel yoke of the Romans and the even more cruel yoke of sin?

And then the Messiah arrived on the banks of the Jordan!

I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God. Joh 1,31-34

John did not come simply to baptize for repentance. With his own words he says, 'I came baptizing with water that he might be made known to Israel'. John foretold the coming of the Messiah. As he baptized Jesus and saw the Spirit come down and remain on him, he told all of

⁸⁶ 2Kgs 1,7-8 The king asked them, "What was the man like who came up to you and said these things to you?" Wearing a hairy garment," they replied, "with a leather girdle about his loins." "It is Elijah the Tishbite!" he exclaimed.

⁸⁷ Lk 1,65-66 Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

Israel that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah. The cloud of pillar came again, only this time he descended in the form of a dove on the Messiah.

Who was this Jesus, who was raised in Nazareth? How greatly did the miracles exceed any of the prophets of earlier times! He would speak and the dead would rise from their graves. Great crowds of people followed him, bringing those sick with various diseases to him and he healed them all.

How different was that from Elijah, who in his lifetime worked only a handful of miracles! How different was that from Moses, who never worked any healings or raised any dead people, but was only a servant to the pillar of cloud! In Jesus the pillar of cloud had descended and remained! He was the Messiah, the mediator of the new everlasting covenant with Israel.

What did John say as he saw all of the people leaving him and going to Jesus to be baptized?

[So they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, the one who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you testified, here he is baptizing and everyone is coming to him." Joh 3,26](#)

Was he jealous of Jesus? This certainly marked the end of his appearance to Israel! John was not jealous, but greatly rejoiced!

[You yourselves can testify that I said \(that\) I am not the Messiah, but that I was sent before him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man, who stands and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. So this joy of mine has been made complete. Joh 3,28-29](#)

John said, 'He must increase; I must decrease.' And before he was thrown into prison he gave his sharp warning to those who would not listen to Jesus, the Messiah.

[Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever disobeys the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him. Joh 3,36](#)

In the wilderness of Judea Joshua was preparing to cross the Jordan. The people sanctified themselves and their hearts were upright before the LORD. After waiting for forty years they were ready to be led into the Promised Land. And then Joshua made a very bold confession, yet a confession which was spoken in obedience to what the LORD had told him.

[When the soles of the feet of the priests carrying the ark of the LORD, the Lord of the whole earth, touch the water of the Jordan, it will cease to flow; for the water flowing down from upstream will halt in a solid bank. Josh 3,13](#)

How could Joshua be so certain that such a great miracle was about happen? Maybe it would be better to not say this, but begin building boats? After all, all they wanted to do was cross the Jordan. What did it matter how they entered the Promised Land?

But Joshua had learned to hear the voice of the LORD! He didn't need even consider that the LORD might not do this great miracle. The LORD had told him that this would happen, and he then told the Israelites what the LORD had told him. Certainly there were some who were not so convinced, but they didn't utter a word. 'We will see if the LORD is with Joshua as he was with Moses' they must have thought.

[The people struck their tents to cross the Jordan, with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant ahead of them. Josh 3,14](#)

Still nothing had happened! The priests were ordered to carry the ark across the Jordan. Unless something happened soon, both the priests and the ark would meet a tragic end. The priests didn't swerve in their confidence. At that time of the year the water of the Jordan was overflowing the

banks. The priests carrying the ark who were in the front reached the water. Did they stop? Or did they walk right into the water of the Jordan?

No sooner had these priestly bearers of the ark waded into the waters at the edge of the Jordan, which overflows all its banks during the entire season of the harvest, than the waters flowing from upstream halted, backing up in a solid mass for a very great distance indeed, from Adam, a city in the direction of Zarethan; while those flowing downstream toward the Salt Sea of the Arabah disappeared entirely. Thus the people crossed over opposite Jericho. Josh 3,15-16

The whole camp of the Israelites saw the miracle together. A large solid mass of water rose upstream in the distance and the rest of the waters disappeared, flowing down into the Salt Sea. Just as Joshua had spoken, the LORD revealed himself. Those who may not have been so certain silently rejoiced as they hurried across the Jordan. Even though they did have some doubts in their heart, they still entered into the Promised Land. But it was this experience that gave them confidence in their leader Joshua⁸⁸.

As someone believes the proclamation of the Messiah's death, they are led to the water. They are told about the great miracle which is about to take place. Before they go into the water they are told all of their sins will be forgiven, they will come free from the slavery of sin and enter the kingdom of God. They also might have some doubts in their heart. Maybe they hear a quiet voice saying, how can this water change my life? Will it really set me free from sin? Is it not just a symbolic act? Yet they have followed the voice of the one proclaiming Jesus. Their feet come to the water and in spite of their doubts they enter in, obeying the message of the gospel. And as they rise out of the water they realize that something is happening that they didn't expect. The doors of Heaven were opened to them and they had just walked in. They realize the oath they had promised has become their most valuable possession as Jesus becomes LORD of their lives and they are born into the kingdom of God.

Unknown to the one baptized, angels had been watching. There was a book that Jesus commanded to be opened, the Book of Life. And in agreement to true repentance and the confession of faith, a new name was written into this book. Calls of glory and joy could be heard clear across the court as the book was closed. Angels were given charge, being told; see to it, that their names are not removed from this book. Protect them from the evil one! Assist them in keeping their oath of faithfulness to Jesus as their LORD. No higher duty could ever be assigned an angel!

Then the angels saw the old man crucified with Jesus. Jesus himself had also been present, being deeply moved by the words spoken beside the waters. He, and only he, opened one of the huge books of judgment. He patiently removed numbers of chapters. Every word which had been spoken, every deed committed and every temptation they had yielded to, they were all written here. A single episode of masturbation was described in minute detail, with every motive and intent of the heart carefully recorded. The guilt of the one baptized was no question to the angels; their sin was scarlet, red like crimson. Because of this abundant sin, there was no other answer. Silently the body of sin was placed upon the cross; it was cut off as the heavenly circumcision was complete. All of the pages of handwritings were then taken by Jesus and nailed upon his cross, a cross which had now become a graveyard for the old man of countless saints. And on this eternal grave these pages of transgressions were to remain, never again to be opened.

Just as in the womb of a woman, the word of God had been planted solidly years earlier and had been slowly growing. The Spirit of God had found access into the heart and conceived. The unborn

⁸⁸ Josh 3,7 Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know I am with you, as I was with Moses.

child had been developing constantly. As the wind, you could hear it blowing and you could hear the sound it makes, but you could not tell from where it was coming or where it was going. And so was a new creation being prepared for eternity and glory. The one who baptized and those who aided him had the appearance of midwives to the angels. And as the baptism was complete, a new baby had been born into the kingdom of God. The angels cried out for joy concerning this new baby. The Father couldn't remain silent in his bowels of mercy. But none was so overjoyed with this new child of God as Jesus himself.

Taking a special garment, which had been prepared for this very occasion, Jesus wraps it upon the saint, even while he is still dripping from the water of the laver. And as belonging to the new, everlasting covenant, the name of Jesus is entrusted to this beloved child and written upon his forehead.

In the middle of the Jordan River the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant stood and didn't continue. All of the people went over on dry ground, even the wheels of the carts did not sink.

[And the priests that bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, while all Israel passed over on dry ground, until all the nation were passed clean over the Jordan. Josh 3,17](#)

The Ark of the Covenant found its place on dry ground. That very special seat where the Cherubim look in admiration was now in the midst of the Jordan River.

How accurately had the Cherubim observed this baptism! How intently did they try to grasp the glory of the atoning sacrifice! And yet how solemnly earnest they were towards the one receiving this untold honor, that the oath be guarded with faithfulness and the thief, the devil, be contended with and resisted!

And all together they looked at this new saint, freshly washed in the blood of the Lamb. After the circumcision, the sin had become white as snow. The bitter smell of hyssop could be sensed, still remaining in the garment from the suffering of the crucifixion.

Now cleansed from sin, the greatest gift of heaven is about to be delivered. Hands are laid upon the wet hair and the voices of the midwives cry out before the Throne of the Father. The words, spoken only a little louder than a whisper upon the earth were amplified before the throne and could be heard by all, 'receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'. The Father on the throne nods in delight, for he himself had made the promise. And as the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the water of the Jordan, so the Holy Spirit descends upon this new son of God, who is ordained to live as Jesus lived and be led as Jesus had been led. And he gave abundant gifts.

ⁱ Greek Manuscript using Bethabara instead of Bethany

Identification of the Papyri, Unicals as used by the United Bible Society in The Greek New Testament – Second Edition)

Syr2 (2nd century), SyrS(2nd), copsa(3rd), arm(4th), Byz, Geo(5th), 0113 (5th), C2 (5th),
,SyrPal(5th), II (9th), ¥ (8th), 083 (6th),, f1 (12th), f13 (11th), 33(9th), 892(9th), 1079 (10th),
1230(12th), 1365 (12th), 1546(13th), 1646(12th)

The oldest manuscripts in Syriac, Coptic, Armenian and Byzantine all use Bethabara instead of Bethany.