

The Mission of the Elect

The work of John the Baptist and The work of Jesus the Christ

PREFACE

From the foundation of the world, it has been our Father's desire to have a family relationship with his creation. To that end and for that purpose, He and His son, Jesus, formed a plan. Throughout the ages, the Bible makes it clear that our Father has communicated His plan for His creation through His servants. He has done that, he tells us, in Hebrews chapter one and verse one, in many and various ways.

Hebrews 1:1 "God after he spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets, in many portions and in many ways in these last days has spoken to us in his son whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the world."

With the arrival of the Messiah, the fundamentals changed. The events and patterns we see in the record of the gospels and the apostolic writings mark, in earnest, the beginning of the Father's active engagement in the reclamation of His creation through His Messiah – the restoration of all things (Acts 3:18-21). With that, a pattern of communication and action is established. It appears to come from nowhere. In reality, it is an enhancement on the calling and redemption of "Israel." And while it preserves the Father's priority and preference for Israel, it represents the matrix through which all of mankind may pass to establish a relationship with their Creator and Father and become part of His eternal family (Hebrews 1 and 2).

THE GOOD NEWS

- The creation was subjected to bondage and emptiness in this present age of man's rule on the earth. The good news is that it was subjected to that futility with the expectation that the Father's glorious purpose for it will be apparent upon its liberation to the care of the Father's elect. Romans 8:18-23.
- The kingdoms, empires and civilizations of man and man's authority will be destroyed. A new, eternal, kingdom and civilization will govern the earth – the Kingdom of the Father. It will be ruled by his Messiah and his elect. I Corinthians 15:20-26.
- The Father, through his son, foretold, by the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer and die so that his creation could be reclaimed and refreshed. Acts 3:18.
- The Messiah has been received in heaven to wait for the appointed time for the restoration of all things to a relationship with the Father. Acts 3:21 and I Corinthians 15:27-28. I Timothy 3:15-16.
- That this is made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8.
- That this Messiah will reign on earth and of his government there will be no end. Isaiah 9.

The Work of John the Baptist

When it was time for the Messiah to begin his work to reclaim the creation, he was preceded by a messenger. That messenger was his cousin and his name was John. They called him John the Baptist or John the baptizer, or John, the dipper. He acquired the name one is what one does – he dipped people into the water – he baptized them. Our word baptize, comes from a Greek word baptizmos. It is another word for our word to bathe by immersion or to dip.

If we are to understand the significance of what John was doing when he baptized, we must reflect on the life experience of another who preceded John. That man was Abram – later, Abraham.

Forefathers

In Genesis 17:1 God Almighty (El Shaddai) is, through the Eternal (YHWH), revealed to Abram. In verse 2, so that El Shaddai can enter into a covenant relationship with Abram, he commands Abram to: “walk before me and be blameless” (perfect or complete). Through that covenant relationship, El Shaddai will bless and multiply Abram. (See, Matthew 5:48). Abram’s name is changed to Abraham. In Hebrew, the change requires one to breathe out at the “h” to pronounce the name. The Holy Spirit is breathed into Abram. He is made alive spiritually through the Holy Spirit, for the dual purposes of begetting, becoming the father, of nations as well as the father of the faithful.¹ With the gift of the Holy Spirit that comes from the Father, John 14:15-18, Abraham is welcomed into the family, Elohim. (See, Genesis 17:4-14). Abraham’s covenant with Elohim was sealed by circumcision.

Abraham's male descendants were to be circumcised from the 8th day after their birth. When Abraham's children were formed into the nation of Israel, provision was made to allow people of other nations, Gentiles, to become part of the commonwealth of Israel. There was a means, or a method, by which they could be assimilated into Israelite society. While there was no specific legal provision to accommodate a grant of citizenship, there was an example of what it meant to be an Israelite.

If one, a “gentile,” wanted to become an Israelite, he or she had to do what an Israelite did. What that meant was that if you were male, you had to be circumcised. Females had no similar requirement. But in either case, a convert had to enter into a covenant to keep the law. The convert also had to give the offerings enumerated as burnt offerings after they had offered the appropriate sacrifices for sin and trespass. And, the convert had to do one more thing – they had to be baptized, or bathed. This was decided on the basis of examples in the law. In Israel, when an individual became unclean, he or she had to present himself or herself to the priest. The priest then would instruct them to go and bathe, or baptize, themselves. See for example, Leviticus 15:27-31. Gentiles were considered ceremonially unclean and therefore had to bathe as a requirement of citizenship in Israel.²

What is as important as the requirement to bathe is the reason for doing so. Notice verse 31 of Leviticus 15. **“Thus you shall keep the sons of Israel separated from their uncleanness, so that they will not die in their uncleanness by their defiling My 1tabernacle that is among them.”** The Eternal, YHWH, dwelt with Israel. The Eternal was clean, pure, so if Israel wanted to dwell with the Eternal, they had to be a “clean,” or Holy, people. See specifically, Leviticus 10:8-11.

The Father's Work

John the Baptist's Mission a Pattern for the Elect

When John the Baptist arrived, he came to prepare the way for the Messiah as prophesied by Isaiah and recorded in chapter 40:3.³ What John did was something old and something new. What was old was that those who wished to be part of the Kingdom John preached would have to be baptized or bathed for their “uncleanness.” What was new was the fact that the individual no longer performed this function for himself or herself – John the Baptist did that for them. Something else was new; the issue was no longer ceremonial uncleanness or personal hygiene but repentance:

Matthew 3:1 – Now ^ain those days ^bJohn the Baptist ^{*1}came, ²preaching in the ^cwilderness of Judea, saying, 2 **“^aRepent, for ^bthe kingdom of heaven ¹is at hand.”** Or this is the ^aone referred to ¹by Isaiah the prophet when he said, **“^bTHE VOICE OF ONE ²CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ^cMAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!”** ⁴ Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was ^blocusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem ^awas going out to him, and all Judea and all ^bthe district around the Jordan; 6 and they were being ^abaptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

The essence of John's mission was to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. This demanded repentance. Repentance was required for citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven but not for citizenship in Israel. All that was required for citizenship in Israel was the giving of the sacrifices for sin and the whole burnt offerings. John was, himself, an advertisement of what repentance would mean for Israel and the rest of humanity. He did not drink wine and eat meat. He wore a camel hair's garment with a leather belt and ate locusts and wild honey.⁴

Footnote 4: This is a reference to the fact that John the Baptist was a Jew and therefore he would have been circumcised. This is why he is referred to as "John the Baptist" and not "John the Circumciser".

There was one other thing that was not new in John's message and his mission. The Kingdom of Heaven, like the Kingdom of Israel (See, Exodus 12:48 and Leviticus 19:33-34), was for all men everywhere if the requirements for citizenship were met. Luke's account in chapter 3 and verse 6 makes it clear that "all flesh," (Isaiah 40:5) would see salvation – have access to the Messiah. In verse 10 of John 3 we read this:

And the crowds were questioning him, saying, "Then what shall we do?" 11 And he would answer and say to them, "The man who has two tunics is to ^ashare with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise." 12 And **some ^atax collectors also came to be baptized,⁵ and they said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "¹Collect no more than what you have been ordered to." 14 **Some soldiers were questioning him,** saying, "And *what about us*, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or ^aaccuse *anyone* falsely, and ^bbe content with your wages." 15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were ¹wondering in their hearts about John, ^aas to whether he was ²the Christ, 16 ^aJohn answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you ¹with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 "His ^awinnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with ^bunquenchable fire."**

John the Baptist's work begins when he issues a warning: Repent – change. When people who hear his message ask him what it means, he begins to teach. The pattern of communicating, not just with Israel but the whole world, that is established with the coming of Jesus is warning and teaching. This is what it means to “prepare the way of the Lord.” The elect today accomplish the Father's will and prepare the way for Jesus' return the same way John the Baptist did – we issue a warning to repent, to change, to avoid the judgment to come. This initial “baptism” unlike John's is not with water but solely with the word of God.

Both however have one element in common. They are both preparatory to other “baptisms,” one administered by the Messiah – a baptism of the Holy Spirit for the truly repentant or for those who ultimately do not heed the warning and yield to the instruction – a baptism of fire (See Luke 3:16-17).

What cannot be overemphasized is that the purpose of all of these cleansing baptisms – with water, the Holy Spirit and fire – were initiated because the Kingdom of God was at hand. This was not the Messiah coming to reestablish the Kingdom of Israel and the throne of David. This was no longer just about Abraham's children through Isaac and Jacob or any man made civilization. This was something new – it was the Father acting to implement the next phase of His plan to reclaim His creation. If no one else grasped that reality the Scribes and Pharisees did.⁶

John's baptism required repentance and obedience to the law of God. It did not require circumcision. And while it requires bathing to be clean John makes the determination of whether an individual is prepared to be bathed and to do the work to be a part of the Kingdom of Heaven. John does not require ritual offerings and sacrifices for sin. John does impose the requirement that citizens of the Kingdom of God become “living offerings and sacrifices (See, Matthew 3 and the Apostle Paul's instruction in Romans 12:1).

And, because circumcision and ritual sacrifice are omitted from the requirements to be part of the Kingdom of God, the Scribes and Pharisees need to go away and come back when they have demonstrated by their behavior that they want to be a part of a Kingdom that has nothing to do with one's lineage, the color of one's skin, one's social standing or their gender.⁷

John's message is that pedigree has no place in the Kingdom of God. That was an unusual message in first century Judea among a group of people looking for a Messiah who would put down their Roman oppressors and restore Israel to its position of national power and prominence. The popular belief of the people was not however what the Prophets had taught. Nor was it John's message. Nor would it be the Messiah's message.

Notwithstanding the fact that a shift in focus had occurred with the coming of John, the Father gave Israel priority over the other nations with respect to the announcing of the good news of the coming Messiah and salvation of all mankind.⁸

Matthew 10:1-8 – “Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness... These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in *the way of the Gentiles*, and do not enter *any city of the Samaritans*; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house⁹ of Israel. “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’“Heal *the sick*, raise *the dead*, cleanse *the lepers*, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give.

The Father's Work

Jesus' Baptism and Mission – a Pattern for the Elect

John's baptism was **a** baptism of repentance. It wasn't the only baptism (Luke 3:3, citing Isaiah 40).

“He went into all the region around the Jordan proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

Jesus' Baptism

When the time came for Jesus the Christ to come, and when the Father began communicating to his servants through Jesus Christ, He began with his servant called John who was preparing the way. That servant was illustrating for the church through the ages – to the end of the age of man's rule on the Earth – just what the work of the Church is and the pattern the Church should follow to do the work of preparing the way for the second coming of Christ. Specifically, through its warning and teaching, the Church is to prepare people to receive the Messiah.

Notwithstanding the mission given to John the Baptist, he was not the only one baptizing. Jesus' disciples were baptizing also. In John 3:22 we read that:

"After this, Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized. John was also baptizing in *anon near salem* because water was abundant there and people kept coming and were being baptized and John, of course, had not yet been thrown into prison. Now a discussion about purification arose between John's disciples and a Jew, and 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 all are going to him.' And John answered, 'No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. You, yourselves, are my witnesses that I said, I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him. He who has the bride is the bridegroom, the friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason, my joy has been fulfilled. He must increase but I must decrease."

Acts chapter 19 provides another example of these two very different baptisms. This is the story of Paul coming into Ephesus, verse 1: **"While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They replied, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said, 'Unto what then, were you baptized?' And they answered, 'Into John's baptism.' And Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance telling people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is in Jesus.' Upon hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus and when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. Altogether, there were about 12 of them."**

It is evident from Luke's account of Paul's activities that these two baptisms, these two "works," were operating concurrently. It is equally clear that they were not equivalent. It is also the case that not every one of John's disciples followed Jesus at that time.

John's baptism, which was representative of John's function, was to prepare the way for the Messiah. He was to prepare the whole world – anyone that would come. He was given no limitations. He said it of himself quoting the book of Isaiah, "all flesh should see the salvation of God." It was a baptism of repentance with water to wash away sin. Jesus Christ's baptism, which was representative of His work, like John's baptism was for all mankind. As we have seen however with Jesus' work Israel was given priority for a purpose.¹⁰

What else is distinct about Christ's baptism when compared to John's, is that while John's baptism was a baptism of water to wash away sin, Jesus' baptism was designed to bring death to sin and make the Holy Spirit available – to produce a resurrection into a new life.

Romans 6:1

^aWhat shall we say then? Are we to ^bcontinue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 ^aMay it never be! How shall we who ^bdied to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been ^abaptized into ^bChrist Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been ^aburied with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was ^braised from the dead through the ^cglory of the Father, so we too might walk in ^dnewness of life. 5 For ^aif we have become ¹united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be ²*in the likeness* of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our ^aold ¹self was ^bcrucified with *Him*,

10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100
101
102
103
104
105
106
107
108
109
110
111
112
113
114
115
116
117
118
119
120
121
122
123
124
125
126
127
128
129
130
131
132
133
134
135
136
137
138
139
140
141
142
143
144
145
146
147
148
149
150
151
152
153
154
155
156
157
158
159
160
161
162
163
164
165
166
167
168
169
170
171
172
173
174
175
176
177
178
179
180
181
182
183
184
185
186
187
188
189
190
191
192
193
194
195
196
197
198
199
200
201
202
203
204
205
206
207
208
209
210
211
212
213
214
215
216
217
218
219
220
221
222
223
224
225
226
227
228
229
230
231
232
233
234
235
236
237
238
239
240
241
242
243
244
245
246
247
248
249
250
251
252
253
254
255
256
257
258
259
260
261
262
263
264
265
266
267
268
269
270
271
272
273
274
275
276
277
278
279
280
281
282
283
284
285
286
287
288
289
290
291
292
293
294
295
296
297
298
299
300
301
302
303
304
305
306
307
308
309
310
311
312
313
314
315
316
317
318
319
320
321
322
323
324
325
326
327
328
329
330
331
332
333
334
335
336
337
338
339
340
341
342
343
344
345
346
347
348
349
350
351
352
353
354
355
356
357
358
359
360
361
362
363
364
365
366
367
368
369
370
371
372
373
374
375
376
377
378
379
380
381
382
383
384
385
386
387
388
389
390
391
392
393
394
395
396
397
398
399
400
401
402
403
404
405
406
407
408
409
410
411
412
413
414
415
416
417
418
419
420
421
422
423
424
425
426
427
428
429
430
431
432
433
434
435
436
437
438
439
440
441
442
443
444
445
446
447
448
449
450
451
452
453
454
455
456
457
458
459
460
461
462
463
464
465
466
467
468
469
470
471
472
473
474
475
476
477
478
479
480
481
482
483
484
485
486
487
488
489
490
491
492
493
494
495
496
497
498
499
500
501
502
503
504
505
506
507
508
509
510
511
512
513
514
515
516
517
518
519
520
521
522
523
524
525
526
527
528
529
530
531
532
533
534
535
536
537
538
539
540
541
542
543
544
545
546
547
548
549
550
551
552
553
554
555
556
557
558
559
560
561
562
563
564
565
566
567
568
569
570
571
572
573
574
575
576
577
578
579
580
581
582
583
584
585
586
587
588
589
590
591
592
593
594
595
596
597
598
599
600
601
602
603
604
605
606
607
608
609
610
611
612
613
614
615
616
617
618
619
620
621
622
623
624
625
626
627
628
629
630
631
632
633
634
635
636
637
638
639
640
641
642
643
644
645
646
647
648
649
650
651
652
653
654
655
656
657
658
659
660
661
662
663
664
665
666
667
668
669
670
671
672
673
674
675
676
677
678
679
680
681
682
683
684
685
686
687
688
689
690
691
692
693
694
695
696
697
698
699
700
701
702
703
704
705
706
707
708
709
710
711
712
713
714
715
716
717
718
719
720
721
722
723
724
725
726
727
728
729
730
731
732
733
734
735
736
737
738
739
740
741
742
743
744
745
746
747
748
749
750
751
752
753
754
755
756
757
758
759
760
761
762
763
764
765
766
767
768
769
770
771
772
773
774
775
776
777
778
779
780
781
782
783
784
785
786
787
788
789
790
791
792
793
794
795
796
797
798
799
800
801
802
803
804
805
806
807
808
809
810
811
812
813
814
815
816
817
818
819
820
821
822
823
824
825
826
827
828
829
830
831
832
833
834
835
836
837
838
839
840
841
842
843
844
845
846
847
848
849
850
851
852
853
854
855
856
857
858
859
860
861
862
863
864
865
866
867
868
869
870
871
872
873
874
875
876
877
878
879
880
881
882
883
884
885
886
887
888
889
890
891
892
893
894
895
896
897
898
899
900
901
902
903
904
905
906
907
908
909
910
911
912
913
914
915
916
917
918
919
920
921
922
923
924
925
926
927
928
929
930
931
932
933
934
935
936
937
938
939
940
941
942
943
944
945
946
947
948
949
950
951
952
953
954
955
956
957
958
959
960
961
962
963
964
965
966
967
968
969
970
971
972
973
974
975
976
977
978
979
980
981
982
983
984
985
986
987
988
989
990
991
992
993
994
995
996
997
998
999
1000

in order that our ^cbody of sin might be ²done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for ^ahe who has died is ¹freed from sin. 8 Now ^aif we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been ^araised from the dead, ¹is never to die again; ^bdeath no longer is master over Him.

Christ's baptism is more than just a cleansing. It is a death to sin and a resurrection to a new life. It is a symbol of His work of regeneration, and renewal (See, I Peter 3:21-22). Despite, however, Jesus activity, John continued to work until he was thrown into prison and beheaded. John continued to prepare people that came to him to be in a frame of mind where they could receive the Messiah (Acts 19).

The importance of this pattern for the Church today is that it teaches us that we have a responsibility to prosecute our Father's work on two fronts. Like John, we are here to prepare the way for the Messiah. Like John, we are here through what we write, what we do, what we teach, what we say, what we are - to prepare people's minds, to embrace the Messiah, when he comes. This is the "witness" of Matthew 24:14. It is a proclamation of good news. It is the good news that mankind can change and have a relationship with his Makers and it is also a warning of what will happen to those who do not "obey the gospel of God" (I Peter 4:17). We are, to the degree that we have the opportunity, as John did, to both warn the world and its nations to change to escape the judgment to come. The second front of our Father's work is to make disciples of those He calls (John 6:44) and to teach them what it means to change (Matthew 28:18-20).

In Romans 10:11 we are told – "... that no one who believes in Him will be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed, and how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard, how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him, and how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. But not all obeyed the good news. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our message?' So faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes through the word of Christ."

The word of Christ that goes forth from the church – those that elect to undertake the mission – the communication that flows through the son from the Father then through His Church to the world, performs a washing on those who hear it and respond to it. If allowed to do so, it begins to regenerate the minds of those people and it prepares them to respond to Jesus Christ and to receive the Holy Spirit. Not all will take that step but have still been warned and taught – prepared for the coming of the Messiah.

And for the Church, the washing that comes from the “water of the word” is what sanctifies His Church, sets it apart so that he can dwell with it (see, Ephesians 5:26). According to the Apostle Paul, Jesus did in fact sacrifice Himself for just that purpose. If the purpose of this baptism, this washing, sounds similar to the purpose for washing in Israel as outlined in Leviticus it is because it is similar. The difference is that Jesus baptism is about sin which separates us from our Father, not ceremonial uncleanness.

The Apostle Paul in Colossians provides us with some additional insight on the parallel work of John the Baptist and Jesus and the process in which the Church is engaged and the work to which it has been called.

Colossians 1:3 – "In our prayers for you, we always thank God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so has it been bearing fruit among you from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God... (verse 24) I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake and in my flesh, I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church. I became its servant according to God's commission that was given to me for you to make the word of God fully known the mystery that has been hidden throughout the ages and generations, but has now been revealed to his saints. To them, God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery which is Christ in you the hope of glory. It is He whom we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom so that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

In Colossians 3:1-16 Paul addresses the work of the Church not to the world but within the Church.

"So if you have been raised with Christ," i.e., you have had the baptism of Jesus Christ, "Seek the things that are above, for Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above and not on things that are on earth, for you have died, been dead to sin. Your life is hidden with Christ. When Christ who is your life is revealed then you also will be revealed. Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly, fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed which is idolatry. On account of these things, the wrath of God is coming on

those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed when you were living that life, but now you must get rid of all such things; anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive language from your mouth, do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourself with the new self which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal, there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all and in all, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bare one another and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love which binds everything together in perfect harmony and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which in deed you were called into one body, and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. **Teach and admonish one another in all wisdom and with gratitude in your hearts, sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God."**

These things are accomplished in the Church, Paul says, the same way that they are accomplished in those that we deal with who aren't, through admonition, or warning, and teaching in love.

The mission is the same, because the objective is the same, to present every individual mature in Christ.

ENDNOTES

¹ **Abraham** -- (*'āb*). *Father, forefather of a multitude.* The noun *'āb* occurs 1191 times in the Hebrew OT, plus nine times in the Aramaic (the form *'ābī*, Job 34:36, KJV “my desire,” is probably a verb, “I desire,” from *bāyā*, KB, cf. ASV, “would that”). Most instances refer to a literal father (from Gen 2:24, even before the fact of paternity, 4:1, down to Mal 1:6); but *'āb* may designate any man who occupies a position or receives recognition similar to that of a father: the “father” of a servant is his master (II Kgs 2:12); “a father to the poor” (Job 29:16) is their protector; “a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (Isa 22:21) is their governor; and “a father to Pharaoh” (Gen 45:8) is his advisor. The title “Father” is thus used for one in authority (II Kgs 2:12), whether prophet (II Kgs 6:21), priest (Jud 18:19), or king (I Sam 24:11 [H 12]), or even—as a personification—the grave, “Thou art my father” (Job 17:14). In other passages *'āb* refers to a grandfather (Gen 28:13; 32:9 [H 10]) or more remote ancestor (Gen 10:21; I Kgs 15:11; cf. Ex 10:6, “fathers’ fathers”), especially if founding a tribal unit, e.g. **Abraham as the father of the Hebrews (Deut 26:5; Isa 51:2; Jn 8:39)**, although Jacob is probably their “first forefather [who] sinned” (Isa 43:27; cf. v. 28). Yahweh became the Father of Israel his son (Isa 63:16) when he formed the nation (Isa 64:8; Deut 32:18). Yet his fatherhood concerns primarily that covenantal, saving relationship, in which he loved Israel (Hos 11:1; Jer 31:20), “bought” them by redemption from Egypt (Deut 32:6), and continued to remember his “firstborn son” (Ex 4:22; Jer 31:9) with providential direction and fatherly care (Jer 31:9–10). Among the OT’s proper nouns that employ the element *'āb*, the most famous is Abraham, though at his call he bore the shorter name, Abram (*'abrām*, Gen 11:26–12:1), literally, “Father [God] (is) lofty.” It thereby shifts the application of *'āb* from God to Abraham, who hereafter becomes “father” of the faithful, both in respect to his subjective attitude (of faith, Gal 3:7; Rom 4:16) and his objective inheritance (of righteousness, Gal 3:29; Rom 4:11, 13).

² See, Cambridge History of Judaism, vol. 3 pp. 471-500 for a discussion of Jewish Baptist sects.

³ See Matthew 3:1-3; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:2-17.

⁴ See, II Corinthians 7:1 and verses 9-11 for the Apostle Paul’s description of repentance.

⁵ Jews were not typically tax collectors. Romans or their appointed representatives typically collected taxes. The soldiers would have been Roman soldiers. It is worth noting that repentance, preparation to receive the Messiah, did not require mustering out of the military. For further evidence of this see Acts 10 and the story of Cornelius the Centurion.

ENDNOTES

⁶ Matthew 3:7 -- But when he saw many of the ^aPharisees and ^bSadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You ^cbrood of vipers, who warned you to flee from ^dthe wrath to come? ^aTherefore bear fruit ^bin keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘^aWe have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. 10 “The ^aaxe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore ^bevery tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 “As for me, ^aI baptize you ^lwith water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; ^bHe will baptize you ^lwith the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 “His ^awinnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will ^bgather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the ^cchaff with ^dunquenchable fire.”

⁷ Query whether if John’s example had been carefully scrutinized and properly understood by the early Apostles whether the Acts 15 conference was really ever necessary. But, we don’t always see what we should, when it is available to us.

⁸ See Jeremiah 31-33. Specifically note 31:35-38. Chapter 32 speaks to curing Israel’s defect by giving them a new heart. In this era of the Church of God, attempts have been made to dismiss the priority of Israel given by the Father and thus undermine the purpose for the priority. These attempts were part of the effort to corrupt doctrine in the 1970s and 1990s. The prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) make it clear that Israel has a key role in the millennium and in the Father’s plan of salvation for the nations. Satan’s interest in dismissing the primacy of Israel is to further the lie of Genesis 3, that mankind, without the Messiah, can become like Elohim.

⁹ οἶκος *oikos*; gen. *oikou*, masc. noun. A house, dwelling, home.

(I) Generally (Matt. 9:6, 7; Mark 5:19; Luke 1:40; John 7:53; Acts 10:22). With the preposition *en* (1722) in, *en oikō*, at home (1 Cor. 11:34; 14:35; Sept.: Gen. 39:2, 16); with the prep. *katá* (2596) with the acc., possessing a distributive meaning, *kat’ oikon*, from house to house, in private houses (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 8:3; 20:20; Rom. 16:5, the church at a private home).⁹

¹⁰ It is critical in understanding the priority given Israel to focus on Exodus 19:5. They were called by the Father as his firstborn and he, through the Eternal tells them, and us, that they were his special possession (treasure). They were given the covenant, the oracles, the Holy Days. Israel was exposed to the mind of the Father through the law but they were not, at that time, with very few exceptions given His Holy Spirit. Paul tells us in Romans 9-11 that Israel did not fulfill their purpose because they did not obey the law. They did not obey the law because they did not approach it in faith (Hebrews 11:6), they sought to obey, to the extent they did, based on their own will. Israel’s experience confirms the experience of Adam and Eve and proves that no person or group of people without the Holy Spirit can change their nature. Romans 8:3-8.