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JOHN THE BAPTIST

By Jerry Healan

John the Baptist had heard of the things that Yahshua was doing among the people, therefore he sent two of his disciples to ask Yahshua if He was the one that they were looking for (Lk. 7:18-19). His disciples came to Yahshua inquiring, "Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Yahshua answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me," Lk. 7:20-23.

When his disciples left to return to John, Yahshua said, "What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appavelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, **Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.**" vv. 24-27.

This quote is taken directly from the book of Malachi, chapter 3:1, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me."

What does all of this mean? The book of Malachi is given its distinctive name because of the name of the one to whom it was given. Malachi is, of course, an Hebrew name, which means "My messenger." The Hebrew word is "malak" and is generally translated as "angel," but in other places it is also translated as "messenger." Angels are messengers whether they are spirit or human.

The Levitical priests were messengers/angels of Yahweh (*malak-im*[the *im* added to a Hebrew word denotes plurality]), "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger (*malak*) of Yahweh of hosts," Mal. 2:7.

WHO WAS JOHN THE BAPTIST?

In the book of Luke, chapter 1, we learn that there is a priest of the course of Abia, who served in the

temple, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth," v. 5. Notice this verse. Zechariah was a priest of Yahweh, which made him a descendant of Aaron the Levite, brother of Moses. Elizabeth was also a daughter, or descendant of Aaron.

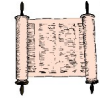
While he was performing the duties of his office an angel (messenger/*malak*) of Yahweh appeared to him, "And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before Yahweh in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of Yahweh standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For **he shall be great in the sight of Yahweh, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.** And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to Yahweh their Elohim. **And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias (EliYah), to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for Yahweh.**" Lk. 1:9-17.

Luke 1:17 is a direct quote from Malachi 4:5-6, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahweh: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

John's purpose, when he came of age, was to go forth as Yahweh's messenger in the spirit and power of EliYah (Elijah) to turn the heart of the fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) to the children (Judah and Israel) and the hearts of the children to the fathers. If he failed, Yahweh proclaimed that He would smite the earth with a curse or destruction. He was to go forth before Yahweh in accord-



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ance with Mal. 3:1. He was to prepare the way for the Messenger of the Covenant.

A most important point concerning John is that he was a descendant of Aaron the high priest of Israel. John's father, Zechariah, was a priest of the course of Abia. John's rightful inheritance would have been that of the priesthood, possibly even the high priest. He was born into a family of the priestly line, which made him a true messenger/angel/*malak* of Yahweh.

JOHN'S BIRTH

John's father, Zechariah, was so shocked with this information that he questioned, "Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years," Lk. 1:18. Because of his incredulous attitude, the angel smote him with dumbness so that he wouldn't be able to speak until John was born. (v. 20).

Elizabeth conceived in accordance with the Angel Gabriel's message and brought forth a son, "Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how Yahweh had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John. And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name. And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all," Lk. 1:57-63.

While this astounded the people, what happened next really caused an uproar throughout all of the hill country of Judaea, "And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised Elohim. And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him. And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be Yahweh Elohim of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to

our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. **And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of Yahweh to prepare his ways;** To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our Elohim; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace," Lk. 1:64-79.

Yahshua witnessed who John was. The Angel Gabriel witnessed who John was. John's own father witnessed who John was. John was conceived by his father Zechariah, but he was given the Holy Spirit from Yahweh even while he was in his mother's womb. This made John great in the sight of Yahweh and the greatest among men. This is why Yahshua proclaimed, "For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women **there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist:** but he that is least in the kingdom of Elohim is greater than he," Lk. 7:28.

THE CONDITION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

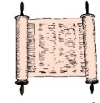
While the Scriptures report the blamelessness of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the fact of the matter is that the temple had fallen into disrepair. Herod, called the Great, had expended massive funds in order to restore the temple, but this restoration came at a price. It has been reported by Josephus and others that Herod instituted the high priest of his own choosing. If there was a priest with whom he disagreed or disliked, he would simply have the man defiled in some way, usually by inflicting wounds which would produce scars and blemishes, therefore disqualifying him.

Herod was made tetrarch or king over the Jewish people by command of Augustus Caesar. His lineage was from Edom (father) and Ishmael (mother). He was supposedly a convert to the Jewish religion, but he built a city north of Jerusalem and named it Caesarea in honor of Caesar, wherein was a temple dedicated to him, honoring him (Caesar) as a god. It is important to note that when Yahshua was presented to the people as the King of the Jews, that they responded, "We have no king but Caesar," Jn. 19:15.

The Prophet Malachi was inspired to warn the Levitical Priesthood, "And now, O ye priests, this



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commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith Yahweh of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it. And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith Yahweh of hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of Yahweh of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith Yahweh of hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law. Have we not all one father? Hath not one Elohim created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of Yahweh which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange Elohim. Yahweh will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto Yahweh of hosts," Mal. 2:1-12.

THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees were a political and religious party who came to power in 139-105 BCE. They rejected the Hasmonean Sadducean priesthood and kings as legitimate rulers of the Temple and state. It was, however, only after a long and protracted struggle with the Sadducees that they won their lasting triumph in the interpretation and execution of the Law. The Sadducees, jealously guarded the privileges and prerogatives established since the days of Solomon, when Zadok, their ancestor, officiated as priest, insisted upon the literal observance of the Law; the Pharisees, on the other hand, claimed prophetic or Mosaic authority for their interpretation at the same time asserting the principles of religious democracy and progress. With reference

to Ex. xix. 6, they maintained that "God gave all the people the heritage, the kingdom, the priesthood, and the holiness."

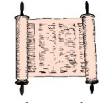
The Pharisees formed a league or brotherhood of their own ("ḥaburah"), admitting only those who, in the presence of three members, pledged themselves to the strict observance of Levitical purity, to the avoidance of closer association with the 'Am ha-Arez (the ignorant and careless boor), to the scrupulous payment of tithes and other imposts due to the priest, the Levite, and the poor, and to a conscientious regard for vows and for other people's property (Dem. ii. 3; Tosef., Dem. ii. 1). They called their members "ḥaberim" (brothers), while they passed under the name of "Perishaya," or "Perushim."

Pharisaic declaration of the principle that the Torah is "the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob" (Deut. xxxiii. 3, Hebr.). In establishing schools and synagogues everywhere and enjoining each father to see that his son was instructed in the Law (Yer. Ket. vii. 32c; Kid. 29a; Sifre, Deut. 46), the Pharisees made the Torah a power for the education of the Jewish people all over the world, a power whose influence, in fact, was felt even outside of the Jewish race (see R. Meir in Sifra, Aḥare Mot, 13; Matt. xxiii. 15; comp. Gen. R. xxviii.; Jellinek, "B. H." vi., p. xlvi.). The same sanctity that the priests in the Temple claimed for their meals, at which they gathered with the recitation of benedictions (I Sam. ix. 13) and after ablutions, the Pharisees established for their meals, which were partaken of in holy assemblies after purifications and amidst benedictions (Geiger, "Urschrift," pp. 121-124). Especially were the Sabbath and holy days made the means of sanctification, and, as at the sacrifices, wine was used in honor of the day. A true Pharisee observed the same degree of purity in his daily meals as did the priest in the Temple (Tosef., Dem. ii. 2; so did Abraham, according to B. M. 87a), **wherefore it was necessary that he should avoid contact with the 'am ha-arez** (the ignorant and careless boor).

Amidst the bitter struggle which ensued (between the Pharisees and Sadducees), the Pharisees appeared before Pompey asking him to interfere and restore the old priesthood while abolishing the royalty of the Hasmonians altogether ("Ant." xiv. 3, § 2). The defilement of the Temple by Pompey was regarded by the Pharisees as a divine punishment of Sadducean misrule (Psalms of Solomon, i., ii., viii. 12-19). After the national independence had been lost, the Pharisees gained in influence while the star of the Sadducees waned. Herod found his chief opponents among the latter, and so he put the



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leaders of the Sanhedrin to death while endeavoring by a milder treatment to win the favor of the leaders of the Pharisees, who, though they refused to take the oath of allegiance, were otherwise friendly to him ("Ant." xiv. 9, § 4; xv. 1, § 1; 10, § 4; 11, §§ 5-6). (*Jewish Encyclopedia Online*)

The Pharisees were, depending on the time, a political party, a social movement, and a school of thought among Jews that flourished during the **Second Temple Era (536 BCE–70 CE)**. After the destruction of the Second Temple, the Pharisaic sect was re-established as **Rabbinic Judaism** — which ultimately produced normative, traditional Judaism, the basis for all contemporary forms of Judaism, with the possible exception of the **Karaites**. (*Wikipedia*)

THE REBELLION

Herein is the problem. The Pharisees rejected the Aaronic/Levitical priesthood, establishing themselves as priests and kings. While this movement looked good on the surface, the problem is that Yahweh, Himself distinguished between the Aaronic priesthood compared to the rest of Israel, including the other families of Levites. This is revealed in the instance with the rebellion of Korah and his followers.

Korah was a son of Kohath, a Levite. He, along with Dathan and Abiram, sons of Reuben, questioned the authority of Moses and Aaron accusing them of taking them out of a land of milk and honey and delivering them into the barren wilderness in order to become a king and priest over the people. (Num. 16) The spirit of the Pharisees, in questioning the Aaronic priesthood, and corrupting the books of Moses to satisfy their own rebellion, are a repeat of the rebellion of Korah. That rebellion continues to this very day.

The Pharisees knew John the Baptist. They knew of the circumstances of his birth. They knew that he was an Aaronic priest by inheritance. But they were in the process of denying the authority of the priesthood and even the Temple. They had wrested control over the people and the priesthood. The Pharisees were in contention with the Sadducees as to how things should be done in the office of the priesthood and imposed their own will upon them.

Furthermore, as stated in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, and other works, the Pharisees were in the process of removing the authority of the priesthood and temple through the establishment of the synagogues and Rabbinic authority. Both John and Yahshua warned them of their errors. When the

Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism he warned, "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that Elohim is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," Mt. 3:7-12.

Yahshua also warned, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation," Mt. 23:29-36.

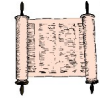
The Pharisaic traditions are admittedly extant in today's world in the guise of Rabbinic Judaism! How can one go to Rabbinic Judaism in order to learn the truth of the Scriptures? They deny the very One of Whom the Scriptures testify, Yahshua the Messiah! They have even forbidden the knowledge of the true names of the Father and the Son, Yahweh and Yahshua. The name Yahweh is, to them, an abomination to speak. Yahweh, in accordance with the Scriptures, has taken His name out of their mouths (Jer. 44:26).

JOHN'S MINISTRY

John was sent to prepare the way for Yahshua the



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Messiah as has already been addressed. Yahshua said of John, "And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of Elohim is greater than he. And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified Elohim, being baptized with the baptism of John. **But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of Yahweh against themselves, being not baptized of him,**" Lk. 7:24-30.

Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin. He admitted to Yahshua, "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Yahshua by night, and said unto him, **Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from Elohim: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except Elohim be with him,**" Jn. 3:1-2.

They knew that John was a messenger sent by Yahweh. They also knew, through John's ministry that the Messiah, the Messenger of the covenant was soon to appear. Yet, the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of Yahweh against themselves, just as Korah and his followers rejected the counsel of Yahweh through Moses and Aaron.

Yes, the priesthood had become corrupted. But the people knew that John, who was of the priestly lineage, was a special messenger because of his birth, not only the physical miracle of that birth, because his parents were past the age of bearing children, but because of his lineage from Aaron. His parents were blameless in the law and so was he. But John was sent to testify that a greater than himself, a greater priesthood was on the way. He was sent to testify that a change was coming. He was to prepare the people's hearts for that change. The publicans and sinners recognized John's ministry and baptism, but the very people who studied the Scriptures intensely, being men of letters, thought too highly of themselves and trusted in their own authority, knowledge and righteousness than to submit to John and Yahshua.

THE PHARISEE'S INVITATION

With this in mind, let's take a look at an instance that occurred during Yahshua's ministry, "And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Yahshua sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner," Lk. 7:36-39.

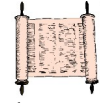
In accordance with the dictates of the Pharisees, they were to avoid contact with the Am ha-Arez or the common people of the land, including especially the Gentiles. Anyone who was not a Pharisee was not considered to be a brother, or a member of their brotherhood, and therefore, was common, ignorant and unclean. Since the Pharisee rejected the counsel of John, he didn't understand who Yahshua was. Notice that he says, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that touches him: for she is a sinner."

Yahshua, being Who He was, knew what the Pharisee was thinking, "And Yahshua answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little," vv. 40-17.

Notice the difference between the way that Yahshua was received by the Pharisee compared to the sinful woman. While the Pharisee saw that



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Yahshua was a Master or Teacher, he didn't even receive Yahshua in accordance with the truth as to Who He was. The tradition of the day was that when a person entered into a household, a servant would wash the sand off of his feet with a pan of water. The Pharisee didn't even have this service performed for Yahshua. Guests would be received with a kiss. He gave Yahshua no kiss. He also gave Yahshua no ointment for His head, in other words, he wasn't willing to even allow Yahshua to refresh Himself before they ate the meal. Another point of this instance is that the woman, even though a sinner, DID NOT reject the counsels of Yahweh through John. She obviously was one of those who came to John' baptism of repentance and had the way prepared in her heart to receive the Messenger of the Covenant, Yahshua the Messiah.

In the parable presented by Yahshua, both people, the Pharisee and the woman are debtors to Yahweh. In other words, both are sinners. While the Pharisee was seeking to fulfill the righteousness of the law, the fact of the matter is that no matter how perfectly we can do so, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of Yahweh." The Pharisees were so careful to fulfill the law that they placed many, many grievous burdens on the people. They were so smug and complacent in their own ability to fulfill righteousness that they lost sight of the fact that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," Isa. 64:6. Also, James writes, "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For **whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.** For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty," Jas. 2:8-12.

"And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, **Who is this that forgiveth sins also?** And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace," Lk. 7:48-50.

Notice once again that those at the table with the Pharisee really couldn't understand that Yahshua had the power to forgive sins. Why? Because they rejected John the Baptist and the counsel of Yahweh.

Only Yahweh can forgive sins. John's ministry prepared people in their hearts to be able to receive Yahshua as to Who He really was. Malachi witnesses that Yahshua is Yahweh and that He is the

Messenger of the Covenant that the people were waiting for.

JUDE'S WARNING

Jude was inspired to warn, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. **For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, unrighteous men, turning (perverting) the grace of our Elohim into lasciviousness,** and denying (contradicting) the only Sovereign Yahweh, and our Sovereign Yahshua the Messiah," vv. 3-4.

Who were these men? He gives us another inkling in verse 11, "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core."

Korah (Core) is mentioned here. We have already found out that the Pharisees had usurped the Levitical priesthood, declaring themselves to be priests. Furthermore, Yahshua addressed their wickedness in the instance found in Matthew 15 and Mark 7 concerning their questions about the washing of hands, "Then came to Yahshua scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of Yahweh by your tradition? For Yahweh commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of Yahweh of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted,



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shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch," Mt. 15:1-14.

What were the Pharisees doing? They were negating the commandments of Yahweh through their own traditions so that they might personally profit even at the expense of their own fathers and mothers. This is the gainsaying of Balaam.

They had gone the way of Cain because he murdered his own brother Abel who was more righteous than himself. They murdered Yahshua, Who was the Righteous and Just One, the Holy One of Israel!

PAUL'S WITNESS

The Apostle Paul was a Pharisee. What did Paul proclaim concerning his Pharisaic background? "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Sovereign. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, **which worship Yahweh in the spirit**, and rejoice in the Messiah Yahshua, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; **as touching the law, a Pharisee**; Concerning zeal, persecuting the assembly; **touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless**. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for the Messiah. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of the Messiah Yahshua my Sovereign: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win the Messiah, **And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of the Messiah, the righteousness which is of Yahweh by faith**: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of the Messiah Yahshua. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of Yahweh in the Messiah

Yahshua," Phil. 3:1-14.

What did he say? What did he mean, "...beware of the concision?" He explained it in the next verse! "For we are the circumcision, which worship Yahweh in the spirit, and rejoice in the Messiah Yahshua, and have no confidence in the flesh." He was warning to beware of those who would come seeking to circumcise the flesh by the hands of man. The way of righteousness is no longer by one's own efforts. That was of the covenant of Moses. Israel had promised that they would be obedient to the law, the commandments of Yahweh and Yahweh had promised them that He would bless them for their obedience. But the culmination of the righteousness of Israel, which was found in the Pharisees, was found to be so lacking.

Paul had that righteousness, his own righteousness of the law, as a Pharisee, but he willingly cast it all aside and counted it to be dung so that he could win the Messiah and the power of the Spirit that is made available through Him.

CONCLUSION

John the Baptist was of the Aaronic Priesthood. The priests were established by Yahweh to be His messengers to the people. John's birth was miraculously brought about by Yahweh in order to prepare the way in the hearts of the people for the wondrous appearance of Yahshua the Messiah.

The Pharisees were in the process of overthrowing the importance of the established priesthood and temple by declaring themselves to be the priests in the rebellion and spirit of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. They rejected the counsel of John and therefore, were blinded as to who Yahshua truly was. They rejected Yahshua as the Messiah.

When the Pharisee invited Yahshua to dine with him and his company, he neglected to treat Yahshua with the proper respect shown to others, but the sinful woman recognized who Yahshua was and revealed a repentant heart by washing his feet in her tears and wiping them with her hair, kissing His feet and anointing them with oil.

Paul, a Pharisee who was blameless in the law, regarded all that he had gained in that capacity as dung so that he might gain Yahshua the Messiah. Jude declares that unrighteousness men had crept into the assembly who were foreordained to the condemnation of denying or contradicting Yahweh and Yahshua. They resisted John's witness, Yahshua's witness and Paul's witness.

Modern day Rabbinic Judaism is nothing more than ancient Pharisaism under a different name. Those who have been persuaded to walk in the



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ways of Rabbinic Judaism must repent of the error of their ways, embrace the witness of John, Yahshua and Paul and build their lives up on the most solid of all foundations, Yahweh's word, which is Yahshua the Messiah.

May Yahweh give you eyes to see and understand.

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