

# Ezekiel 36:25-27 as the *Besorah* for Israel: Evidence and Implications

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## 1. Purpose

Less than a century after the second Temple's destruction two respected sages, R. Jose and R. Meir,<sup>1</sup> apparently viewed Ezekiel 36:25 as a national eschatological marker for Israel.

Our Rabbis taught: Mamzerim and Nethinim will become pure in the future:<sup>2</sup> this is R. Jose's view. R. Meir said: They will not become pure. Said R. Jose to him: But was it not already stated, *And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean?* R. Meir replied, When it is added, *from all your filthiness and from all your idols*, [it implies] but not from bastardy. Said R. Jose to him: When it is [further] said, *will I cleanse you*, you must say, *From bastardy too...* (*Kiddushin* 72b<sup>3</sup>).

Evidently these sages had no doubt Ezekiel's prophecy would literally occur prior to Israel's Kingdom; their dispute is solely over the purifying effect. This *Tannaic* debate raises an arresting question when considered in the broader context of second-century Yeshua-faith, because by that time supersessionist tendencies of non-Jewish Yeshua-believers were well established.<sup>4</sup>

Could the *Besorah* of Yohanan ben Zechariah (ὁ βαπτιστής) and Messiah Yeshua also have been based directly on Ezekiel 36:25-27?

It is nothing short of astonishing that modern commentators like Robert H. Stein candidly admit “the origin of John's baptism is unknown.”<sup>5</sup> NT evidence for

1. R. Meir is considered among the greatest of fourth-generation *Tannaim*. R. Jose (evidently *ben Halaftha*) was Meir's contemporary and mentor of R. Judah *ha Nasi*. Both R. Meir and R. Jose were *talmidim* of R. Akiva.
2. “In the future” (לעתיד לבוא) is a technical term for “in the Messianic future,” cf. Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (containing Vols 1 and 2), (Jerusalem: Horev) 1129.
3. Seder Nashim, *Kiddushin*, Hebrew-English Ed., *Babylonian Talmud*, Rabbi H. Freedman, (New York: Traditional Press). The Bab. Tal. takes R. Jose's view as *halachah*, i.e. Ez. 36:25 can purify offspring of forbidden marriages. The Jerusalem Talmud “ע-ד-סה ע"ב” (קידושין ג. יב-ד, א טז) rejects R. Jose's view but it too sees Ezekiel's prophecy as Israel's eschatological purification.
4. Ignatius, possibly contending against non-Jewish *Judaizers*, nevertheless wrote at the beginning of the second century: “It is outrageous to utter the name of Jesus Christ and live in Judaism. For Christianity believed not in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity, in which people of every tongue believed and were gathered unto God.” *Epistle to the Magnesians* 10:7-8; The *Epistle of Barnabas* 9:18-19 states bluntly: “But moreover the circumcision, in which they have confidence, is abolished; for he said that a circumcision not of the flesh should be practised.” Justin Martyr said in, *Dialogue with Trypho*, “As, therefore, Christ is the Israel and the Jacob, even so we, who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelitic race....understand, therefore, that the seed of Jacob now referred to is something else, and not, as may be supposed, spoken of your people.” Dan Juster writes of the chaotic first century, “Soon gentile followers of Yeshua outnumbered Jewish followers. However, the leadership of living disciples kept the movement in accord with the basic decision of Acts 15. Unfortunately this understanding was soon lost. The period from 60-90 C.E. has been designated by one scholar as the tunnel period of biblical history (S.G.F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church*). When the dust of war and tragedy settled, the situation had drastically changed.” *Jewishness & Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977) 10-11.
5. Robert H. Stein, “Baptism and Becoming a Christian in the New Testament,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*, 2/1 (Spring 1998) 6; Everett Ferguson says scholars speculate on antecedents of Yohanan's rite “in Jewish purificatory washings, in a ‘baptist movement’ within Judaism, in proselyte baptism, or in the washings at Qumran.” Ferguson, *Baptism in the Ancient Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009) 83-4. See also Colin Brown for novel speculation on Yohanan's activity, “What Was John the Baptist Doing?” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 7 (1997): 37-50. Brown suggests “the key to understanding John's baptism lies in seeing the Jordan as the boundary and point of entry into the land promised by Yahweh to Israel...In emulation of the original entry depicted in the Book of Joshua, John's baptism called on Israelites to exit the land, and return across the Jordan under the leadership of John in order to repossess the land as a consecrated people. The crossing of the Jordan holds the key to what John was doing.” But because Yohanan “worked no miracle” (John 10:41) it is extremely difficult to see how he excited Israel as herald of the Kingdom by a “re-enactment” of sacred history, especially since the Jordan never parted.

the source of Yohanan's rite is admittedly circumstantial at best<sup>6</sup> and no explicit citation of Ezekiel 36:25-27 occurs. Moreover, the Church's long-held creed of a universal water rite virtually eliminates consideration of Ezekiel's nationally-exclusive purification as a *literal* source of the *Besorah*. Yet Yeshua-believing Jews, recognizing the legitimacy of long-suppressed *bilateral ecclesiology*,<sup>7</sup> as well as the early effect of supersessionism,<sup>8</sup> should have no reluctance weighing the possibility that Ezekiel 36:25-27 is literally the basis for the *Besorah*.<sup>9</sup>

This paper explores the idea that Yohanan inaugurated<sup>10</sup> Israel's national purification, "*I will throw<sup>11</sup> pure water on you and you shall be pure,*" and that Messiah inaugurated the superlative *Purification*<sup>12</sup> of Israel, and ultimately of all nations, providing a *new heart and a new spirit* to all who repent, and giving them the indwelling Spirit.

I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you back to your own land. *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: I will cleanse you from all your uncleanness and from all your fetishes. And I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit into you: I will remove the heart of stone from your body and give you a heart of flesh; and I will put My spirit into you.* Thus I will cause you to follow My laws and faithfully to observe My rules. Then you shall dwell in the land which I gave to your fathers, and you shall be My people and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36:24-28) *Tanakh*, JPS [Emphasis added]<sup>13</sup>

6. Geoffrey Wainwright observes: "Confronted with the fragmentary and allusive material in the NT concerning baptism (in the Gospels and in the Pauline letters as well as in other writings), the historian and exegete has to make decisions concerning its relation to understandings and practices attested only in (say) Justin, Tertullian and Hippolytus. Do these latter illumine directly what was believed, said and done concerning baptism in NT times? Or do the patristic texts rather represent additions or alterations to the apostolic rites and doctrines?" Geoffrey Wainwright, "Baptism, Baptismal Rites," *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & its Development*, ed. Ralph Martin and Peter Davids, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997) 113.
7. The term *bilateral Ekklesia* refers to the Body of Messiah as comprised of two partnered wings, Yeshua-believing Jews and Yeshua-believers from all nations. For a further description see chapter 4, "Bilateral Ecclesiology, in Solidarity with Israel," of Mark Kinzer's *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, division of Baker Publishing, 2005) 151-179.
8. R. Kendall Soulen argues that "supersessionism has shaped the narrative and doctrinal structure of classical Christian theology in fundamental and systematic ways," and that "the rejection of supersessionism entails the reevaluation of the whole body of classical Christian divinity." Soulen describes economic supersessionism: "Everything that characterized the economy of salvation in its Israelite form becomes obsolete and is replaced by its ecclesial equivalent. The written law of Moses is replaced by the spiritual law of Christ, circumcision by baptism, natural descent by faith as criterion of membership in the people of G-d, and so forth. As a result, *carneal Israel becomes obsolete.*" [Emphasis in the original]. Baptism thus is a *pivotal* issue in supersessionism. R. Kendall Soulen, *The God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1996) 3, 29.
9. The Torah warns of the possibility that the entire people of G-d may fail to understand his command. "*Now if the whole congregation of Israel commits error and the matter escapes the notice of the assembly, and they commit any of the things which the L-RD has commanded not to be done, and they become guilty...*" (Leviticus 4:13) NASB. Surely the Church must, in grave humility, weigh the possibility it may have erred no less than Israel. Paul admonishes the *bilateral Ekklesia* regarding the Torah: "Now these things happened to [Israel] as an example and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall*" (1 Corinthians 10:11-12). Universal Christian baptism thus is not exempt from the possible category of collective error.
10. *Inaugurated eschatology* denotes the view that Israel's Kingdom prophecies have been initiated and currently are in a "now" and "not yet" process proceeding to climactic fulfilment at the *eschaton*. Walter Kaiser writes of the restoration promises in Ezekiel 36: "...Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, has a form of inaugurated eschatology which embodies a 'now' and a 'not yet' aspect of the Spirit's work... the new heart and the new spirit are likewise correctly connected to the Spirit's work in regeneration and the new birth." Walter Kaiser, "The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament," *Pentecostalism in Context: Essays in Honor of William C. Menzies*, ed. Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology, Supplemental Series*, vol. 11 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) cited in *God, Torah, Messiah, the Messianic Jewish Theology of Dr. Louis Goldberg* (San Francisco: Purple Pomegranate Productions, 2009) 45-46.
11. The Hebrew word זָרַק (zarak) in Ezekiel 36:25 is often translated "sprinkle," but it bears such ideas as "scatter, toss, throw, scatter abundantly, strew."
12. Cf. Acts 15:7-9; 11:16; 10:44-46.
13. Versions used for Scripture quotations are noted with the text. Verses without a version noted are the author's rendition.

## 2. Implications

If Yohanan and Messiah did inaugurate Ezekiel's prophecy two major implications follow:

1. The first is resolution of a problematic *Besorah* for Israel. The supersessionist message has never been Good News to Israel. John's gospel pictures Yohanan as the *Voice* of Isaiah proclaiming the Good News and *baptizing with water to manifest [the Messiah] to Israel* (John 1:31). Evidently Yohanan's rite set prophetic conditions *known by Israel to presage Messiah's appearance*. If the Jewish people thought Yohanan had inaugurated Ezekiel 36:25 then it is reasonable to believe an intense expectation of the imminent Kingdom would arise. Christian baptism, in contrast, has a pungent history of excising Jews from their birthright. But first-century Yeshua-believing Jews, observing their heritage in *Apostolic Judaism*,<sup>14</sup> believed the days in which they lived had been foretold by all the prophets, beginning from Samuel (Acts 3:24), and this leads to the likelihood that they saw Ezekiel's purification inaugurated by Yohanan.<sup>15</sup>

2. The second issue resolved is the long-standing baptism controversy. The Church assumes all Christians are to undergo an initiatory water rite allegedly commanded by Messiah<sup>16</sup> which does not directly fulfill any prophecy of the *Tanakh*. The rite is deemed a salvific sacrament by some denominations<sup>17</sup> or a mimetic ordinance by others. Burgeoning Pentecostal and Charismatic groups affirm a palpable *Spirit-baptism* subsequent to conversion.<sup>18</sup> The World Council of Churches, consisting of 349 churches and denominations representing 560 million people, laments persistent baptismal controversies that divide Christians along rigid denominational lines, stating in its ecumenical initiative entitled, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*:

The inability of the churches mutually to recognize their various practices of baptism as sharing in the one baptism, and their actual dividedness in spite of mutual baptismal recognition, have given dramatic visibility to the broken witness of the Church.<sup>19</sup>

14. *Apostolic Judaism* is a term coined by Anders Runesson and Mark Nanos who wish to "introduce Paul as a Torah-observant Jew who believed that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel and the Savior of the Nations." See the description of their forthcoming book, *Paul and Apostolic Judaism: An Introduction*, <http://www.marknanos.com/>
15. Inauguration of the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Hebrews 8:8-12) parallels this possibility.
16. Matthew 28:19 is thought a literal rite in place of a nuanced metaphorical *transformation*, see below.
17. Sacramentalists assert water baptism is the vehicle for conveying the Holy Spirit. Infants receiving sacramental water baptism are Spirit-baptized and regenerated. Cf. Paragraph 1250 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called...The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth." See also paragraph 1265: "Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte 'a new creature,' an adopted son of God, who has become a 'partaker of the divine nature,' member of Christ and coheir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit." See Article 1 *The Sacrament of Baptism, of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/\\_\\_\\_P3G.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P3G.HTM)
18. A central tenet of Pentecostalism is the doctrine of subsequence, meaning a baptism in the Spirit is subsequent to and distinct from the new birth. Critics say Spirit baptism occurs at conversion or, in the case of Sacramentalists, during water baptism.
19. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Lima Text) (World Council of Churches, Faith and Order Commission, 1982) 2 (n 6).

The fact is G-d never entrusted water purification rites to the nations, but to Israel, and *Apostolic Judaism's* "Besorah of the circumcision"<sup>20</sup> almost certainly distinguishes conversion-initiation of Yeshua-believing Jews<sup>21</sup> from their non-Jewish partners. NT data suggests Ezekiel 36:25 was inaugurated for *Israel*, represented by Yeshua-believing Jews. Yet all who repent and turn to the risen Messiah should anticipate his greater Spirit baptism, also promised implicitly in Ezekiel 36:26-27, which was always intended as the universal baptism (cf. Ephesians 4:4-6).

### 3. Form

The paper is divided into two main sections, and then a final section of recommendations:

- **Confirming Evidence**—Reviews twelve points supporting the view that Yohanan inaugurated Ezekiel 36:25. Evidence is presented supporting the idea that the only Messianic water rite known in the NT is Yohanan's and that its form and purpose were consistent with Ezekiel 36:25. The *regenerational* effect of Spirit baptism is considered. A summary of confirming evidence is given.
- **Disconfirming Evidence**—Reviews and rebuts seven points thought to promote a universal Christian water rite (e.g. Matthew 28:19), or thought to demand a form incompatible with Ezekiel 36:25. The meaning of *baptizo* is reviewed. A summary rebuttal is given.

The final section, *Recommended Steps for the Bilateral Ekklesia*, suggests corrective steps to take when Ezekiel 36:25-27 is seen at the heart of the *Besorah*.

### 4. Conclusion

This paper weighs arguments for and against the idea that Yohanan and Messiah Yeshua inaugurated Ezekiel's prophecy. If compelling evidence shows they did, the Jewish wing of the *bilateral Ekklesia* must reassess the *Besorah*, and help guide restoration of the original message for non-Jewish partners so that Good News can truly be proclaimed, not only to Israel but to all nations.

### Confirming Evidence

This section reviews twelve points that imply Yohanan and Messiah Yeshua inaugurated Ezekiel 36:25-27.

20. Galatians 2:7-8.

21. The NT water rite should be viewed, like circumcision, as a distinctive of *Apostolic Judaism*.

### 1. Israel's Sages Anticipate Ezekiel 36:25

Jewish leaders like R. Jose and R. Meir evidently expected literal fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy as they debated its efficacy in *Kiddushin 72b*. Leading Yeshua-believing Jews and others have advanced the idea that Ezekiel 36:25-27 was inaugurated.<sup>22</sup> Few Yeshua-believing Jews today promote Ezekiel 36:25-27 as *literally* inaugurated,<sup>23</sup> yet references to it are liberally sprinkled in biblical articles and scripture commentary footnotes revealing its ongoing impact on eschatology.<sup>24</sup>

### 2. Yohanan Considered Eliyahu by Messiah

For all the prophets and the Torah prophesied until Yochanan. Indeed, if you are willing to accept it, he is Eliyahu, whose coming was predicted. (Matthew 11:13-14) *Complete Jewish Bible*.<sup>25</sup>

That Messiah saw Yohanan as Eliyahu, inaugurator of the *end of days*, obliges consideration of the likelihood that he inaugurated Ezekiel's Kingdom promises. Mark's gospel likewise asserts that Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 speak directly of Yohanan<sup>26</sup> and that his activity is crucial to the *Besorah of Yeshua the Messiah*.<sup>27</sup> If the Prophets *ceased to prophesy of the future* at Yohanan's appearance, then quite reasonably he inaugurated Ezekiel 36:25, another prophetic marker of the Kingdom.

### 3. Yohanan Sent by G-d

[H]e who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' (John 1:33) ESV

Yohanan was "sent" by G-d to baptize. He evidently viewed the holy Prophets as a key source to ascertain G-d's will, evidenced by his self-identification as the

22. The UMJC Theology Committee Report, Part I, September 2, 1983, entitled, "Messianic Jews and The Law of Moses," stated in item three: "The New Covenant promised in Jer. 31:31FF and Ezek. 36:22FF was inaugurated at the time of Yeshua's death and resurrection but will find its complete expression when our Messiah returns." See also Sailhamer, *The Mosaic Law*, "Deuteronomy 30... looks to a future time quite distinct from that of Moses' own day. There are close affinities between this chapter and passages in the prophetic literature which look to the time of the New Covenant, e.g., Jer 31:31ff.; Ezek 36:22ff." John H. Sailhamer, *The Mosaic Law and the Theology of the Pentateuch*, Westminster Theological Journal, 53 (1991) 248 (note 23). See also Ruthven who writes, "Traditional Christian conceptions of the new covenant found New Testament support from Hebrews 9, the Paschal narratives ("the new covenant in my blood") and in the Old Testament, principally from Jeremiah 31:31-33 and Ezekiel 36:26-28." Jon Ruthven, "This Is My Covenant with Them": Isaiah 59:19-21 as the Programmatic Prophecy of the New Covenant in the Acts of the Apostles (Part I)," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 17 (2008) 33.

23. Evidently Ezekiel 36:25-27 is seen as a symbolic rather than prosaic promise of restoration, and the truths behind the symbols may indeed have been inaugurated. But the only element that could be considered symbolic is "throwing pure water," and evidently it is taken so only because conventional wisdom says self-immersion was the norm in second-Temple days.

24. Louis Goldberg noted Ezekiel 36:25-27 several times, including on "Yohanan the Immerser," page 80, and on being born of water and Spirit in John 3:5, page 460, *God, Torah, Messiah, the Messianic Jewish Theology of Dr. Louis Goldberg* (2009); Mark Kinzer noted Ezekiel 36-37 in "Israel in the Besorah" teaching session #2, Tevilah (& Regeneration) and Ezek 36:24-28 in relation to Yochanan 3:3,5, of being born of water and of Spirit. Scott Nassau writes: "Later, Ezekiel reiterates that when G-d gathers his people back from the exile, he will give them a new heart and a new spirit that will divinely enable Israel to live within an obedient covenant relationship with him (Ezek 36:24-28). Yet, in this account, Ezekiel confirms that this will accompany the forgiveness and purification of the nation (Ezek 36:25). Therefore, the *Tanakh* looks forward to a time when G-d will cleanse Israel and place his spirit within his people, which will animate them into a restored relationship with their G-d (Ezek 36:27-28; cf. Deut 30:1-6)." Scott Nassau, "Shavuot and Its Impact upon a Messianic Soteriology" in *Keshet: A Journal of Messianic Judaism*, 22, (Spring/Summer 2008). See the URL: <http://www.keshetjournal.com/Issue-22/Shavuot-and-its-Impact-upon-a-Messianic-Soteriology?Itemid=>

25. David H. Stern, *Complete Jewish Bible* (Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc. 1998).

26. Mark 1:2-3.

27. Mark 1:1.

*Voice* of Isaiah 40:3. Rather than devising a rite or adapting a recent proselyte rite for the coming Kingdom, it seems more likely he simply took responsibility to inaugurate Ezekiel 36:25.<sup>28</sup> G-d certainly *could* fulfill his promises in Ezekiel by *sending* chosen vessels, Yohanan and Messiah Yeshua, each to inaugurate one part of the water-Spirit prophecy.

#### 4. The Form of Yohanan's Rite is Consistent with Ezekiel 36:25

Mark 1:9 is thought to confirm Yohanan's rite as immersion in the Jordan River, eliminating the possibility that he initiated Ezekiel 36:25. The phrase in question, εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην, in isolation from other NT sources can easily lead to this view. An alternative idea arises when the verse is compared to the Matthew 3:13 parallel, ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰορδάνην (in the vicinity of the Jordan). Mark's use of εἰς may mean no more than being *at* the Jordan, just as ἐπὶ in Matthew cannot be forced to mean they stood *on* the face of the river.<sup>29</sup> Mark 1:9 thus is not proof of the form of Yohanan's rite.

John's gospel never locates Yohanan at the Jordan River, but rather at Bethany *beyond the Jordan*<sup>30</sup> (John 1:28) and at Aenon, a name derived from the Hebrew עֵינַן (*springs*). There his rite was directly related to *purification* (John 3:23-25).<sup>31</sup>

28. The example of Moses during the rebellion of Korach (Numbers 16:28) is instructive: "With this you shall know that the L-rd sent me to do all these deeds, for I did not devise them myself." As a Cohen and prophet, Yohanan would not likely devise a *de novo* rite if one were already promised by prophets of G-d in the *Tanakh*.

29. The Robinson-Pierpont 2005 Byzantine textform for Mark 1:9 reads: Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις, ἦλθεν Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ Ναζαρεθ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη ὑπὸ Ἰωάννου εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην, which can bear the idea, "...and was baptized by Yohanan at the Jordan"; The NT and LXX provide examples of εἰς conveying proximity to a body of water, not entry into it. Mark 7:31, καὶ πάλιν ἐξεληθὼν ἐκ τῶν ὁρίων Τύρου ἦλθεν διὰ Σιδῶνος εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν ὁρίων Δεκαπόλεως; Matthew 17:27, ἵνα δὲ μὴ σκανδαλίσωμεν αὐτούς πορευθεὶς εἰς θάλασσαν βάλῃ ἀγκύστρον; John 9:7, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ὑπάγε νύμφα εἰς τὴν κολυμβήθραν τοῦ Σιλωάμ ὃ ἐρμηνεύεται Ἀπεσταλμένος ἀπῆλθεν οὖν καὶ ἐνίψατο, καὶ ἦλθεν βλέπων; John 9:11 ... καὶ εἶπεν μοι σὺ ὑπάγε εἰς τὸν Σιλωάμ καὶ νύμφα ἀπελθὼν οὖν καὶ νυφάμενος ἀνέβλεψα; LXX 1 Kings 2:8 (Shimei met David to curse him "εἰς the Jordan") καὶ ἰδοὺ μετὰ σοῦ Σεμὶ υἱὸς Γηρα υἱὸς τοῦ Ἰεμενι ἐκ Βαουρμ καὶ αὐτὸς καθήσαστό με κατὰ ὄραν ὀδνηρῶν τῆ ἡμέρα ἢ ἐπορευόμεν εἰς παρεμβολάς καὶ αὐτὸς κατέβη εἰς ἀπαντὴν μου εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην καὶ ὡμοσα αὐτῷ ἐν κυρίῳ, λέγων εἰ θανατώσω σε ἐν ὁμοφαία; 2 Kings 6:4 (lumbermen cut down wood from the banks, even though εἰς is used) καὶ ἐπορεύθη μετ' αὐτῶν καὶ ἦλθον εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην καὶ ἔτεμον τὰ ξύλα. Chrysostom (349–407 CE) evidently preferred to describe the scene of Messiah's baptism with ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰορδάνην, e.g. Τότε φησὶν, παραγίνεται ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰορδάνην πρὸς τὸν Ἰωάννην τοῦ βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ. [00068] De nativitate Joannis Baptistae [2]; Τότε παραγίνεται πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, φησὶν, ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰορδάνην, ἐπὶ τὸ βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ. [00045] In Praecursorem Domini; Τότε παραγίνεται, φησὶν, ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰορδάνην πρὸς τὸν Ἰωάννην, τοῦ βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ. [00013] In Sanctum Joannem Praecursorem [http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/1004/1003\\_\\_Ioannes\\_Crysostomus\\_010/Z\\_7992\\_959\\_96\\_1\\_948\\_8049\\_957\\_951\\_957.html](http://www.documentacatholicaomnia.eu/1004/1003__Ioannes_Crysostomus_010/Z_7992_959_96_1_948_8049_957_951_957.html)

30. The term *beyond the Jordan*, πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, (John 1:28; 3:26; 10:40) occurs some 40 times in the LXX, describing for example the inheritance of Reuben, Gad, and half-tribe Manasseh. So Yohanan would not be confined to the Jordan River. The location of Βηθανία (Bethany), John 1:28, is uncertain. Βηθανία sounds like the Hebrew בֵּית עֵי-יָהּ, i.e. the Place of the Spring of Yah, which is unknown to history. Other speculation includes Place of the Sailing Vessel (בֵּית אֹרִיָהּ) to ford the Jordan, see *Identification of Bethany Beyond the Jordan*, doctoral dissertation by J. Carl Laney (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977) 65. Laney says abundant evidence indicates "cartographers should place it east of the Jordan River near the Hajlah ford in the vicinity of Wadi el-Kharrar." [http://www.bibleplaces.com/Identification\\_of\\_Bethany\\_Beyond\\_the\\_Jordan\\_by\\_J\\_Carl\\_Laney.pdf](http://www.bibleplaces.com/Identification_of_Bethany_Beyond_the_Jordan_by_J_Carl_Laney.pdf); See also UNESCO World Heritage location in Jordan with springs at 20 related sites in an area stretching four kilometers east of the Jordan River. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1556/>.

31. Based on Leviticus 11:36, 14:5-6, Numbers 19:17, et al, Jewish tradition determined that cool, sweet, ever-flowing spring water, i.e. "living water" (מַיִם חַיִּים—*mayim haim*) was highest of six grades for purification (also figuratively in the NT for the *Holy Spirit*, John 7:37-39). Yohanan's eschatological rite doubtless conformed to Jewish purification norms. Conventional views of immersing in the Jordan River leave Colin Brown puzzled, as he recalls Murphy-O'Connor's "question that is never asked: 'Why would the Baptist have chosen a place that was difficult for individuals, impossible for mass baptisms, and virtually inaccessible during the one season in the year when he could expect people to come to him, namely the relatively cool winter months?'" But if Yohanan purified the repentant by throwing "living water" from the springs in the vicinity of the Jordan, that question is moot. "John the Baptist and Jesus: History and Hypotheses," *NJS* 36 (1990) 359-74, esp. 359. (n 2, Brown, "What Was John the Baptist Doing?" *BBR* 7 (1997) 38.); The Mishnah states that the Jordan River south of the Sea of Galilee was "mixed" waters and unsuitable as *living water* to prepare the ashes of the red heifer, Parah 8:10. The Jordan River north of the Galilee, emerging from the "*Banias*" was considered suitable for this purification, cf. Mishnah, *Parah* 8:11.

Robert L. Webb notes that "an interesting feature of the form of John's baptism is that it is described as being performed *by John* (ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, Mark 1:5; cf. v. 9), and John himself states, 'I baptize.'"<sup>32</sup> The *active*<sup>33</sup> and *passive*<sup>34</sup> verbal forms of βαπτίζω point to Yohanan's *active performance of his rite* for those who received it *passively*, conforming to Ezekiel's mode. Yohanan's surname ὁ βαπτιστής is taken to mean he actively performed *something*.<sup>35</sup> Mark's gospel also uses active participles ὁ βαπτίζων<sup>36</sup> and τοῦ βαπτίζοντος<sup>37</sup> for his surname, providing further evidence of active participation.<sup>38</sup> If we fairly conclude that Messiah *actively pours out the Spirit to baptize*<sup>39</sup> (Acts 2:33; 1:5) then nothing prevents Yohanan from *throwing pure water to baptize*.<sup>40</sup>

Jewish tradition permitted pouring nine *qav* (four gallons) over a defiled man (*ba'al qeri*) for *purification* instead of immersing in forty *seah* (a hundred and twenty gallons) (*Berakhot 22a*):

Our Rabbis taught: A *ba'al qeri* over whom nine *qav* of water is cast is clean. Nahmu of Gimzu whispered it to R. Akiva and R. Akiva whispered it to Ben 'Azzai and Ben 'Azzai went out and taught it to his disciples.

R. Joshua ben Levi said...What is the point of immersing in forty *seah*? Nine *qav* are enough. What is the point of immersing? Casting water suffices.

R. Zera told R. Hiyya bar Abba concerning the casting of nine *qav* of water over him:

It is as with forty *seah*: as forty *seah* is by immersion and not by casting, so nine *qav* is by casting and not by immersion.

32. (Matt 3:11 = Luke 3:16; Mark 1:8). Webb adds, "All evidence in Second-Temple Judaism points to Jewish ritual bathing practices being self-administered. John's participation in the act of baptizing...may have contributed to his nickname, *the baptizer*." Robert L. Webb, "Jesus' Baptism: Its Historicity and Implications," *Bulletin for Biblical Research Studies* 10.2 (2000) 280 [http://www.ibr-bbr.org/IBRBulletin/BBR\\_2000/BBR\\_2000\\_2\\_07\\_Webb\\_JesusBaptism.htm](http://www.ibr-bbr.org/IBRBulletin/BBR_2000/BBR_2000_2_07_Webb_JesusBaptism.htm);

33. Active Verb for Baptize: Mt 3:11a; Mk 1:8a; Lk 3:16a; Jn 1:26 Yohanan baptizes with water; Mt 3:11b; Mk 1:8b; Lk 3:16b Messiah will baptize with the Spirit; Mk 1:4, Mk 6:14, 24 Yohanan baptizes; Jn 1:25, 33a Yohanan baptizes the people; Jn 1:33b Yeshua baptizes the people with the Spirit; Jn 3:23a Yohanan baptizes the people; Jn 3:26 Yeshua/disciples baptize the people; Jn 4:1; 4:2 disciples baptize the people.

34. Passive Verb for Baptize: Mt 3:6; Mk 1:5 the people baptized by Yohanan; Mt 3:13 Yeshua baptized by Yohanan; Mt 3:14 Yohanan protests he should be baptized by Yeshua; Mt 3:16, Mk 1:9 Yeshua baptized by Yohanan; Lk 3:7 Crowds baptized by Yohanan; Lk 3:12 Tax collectors baptized by Yohanan; Lk 3:21a the people baptized by Yohanan; Lk 3:21b Yeshua baptized by Yohanan; Lk 7:29 Tax collectors baptized by Yohanan; Lk 7:30 Pharisees not baptized by Yohanan; Jn 3:23b the people are baptized by Yohanan.

35. Ferguson contrasts Yohanan's rite against other Jewish rites: "Unlike all of them, it was an administered rite and not a self-immersion. This practice provides the most plausible explanation for the description of John as 'the Baptist'...John's baptism, moreover, shared...the feature of purification...It differed...in being an eschatological rather than a ceremonial or ritual purification." (noted from Legasse, *Naissance du bapteme*, pp 42-43), Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (2009) 88, 95-96.

36. Mark 1:4; 6:14.

37. Mark 6:24.

38. Yohanan's surname ὁ βαπτιστής may find a Hebrew parallel in הַכֹּהֵן הַמְטַהֵר (the Cohen who purifies) of Leviticus 14:11.

39. Yeshua is also described as ὁ βαπτίζων with Spirit, John 1:33.

40. Matthew 3:14 has Yohanan attempt to dissuade Yeshua from his baptism, saying that he needed to be baptized by Yeshua. Just previously, in verse 11, Yohanan proclaimed Messiah would baptize with the Spirit. It is incongruous to believe Yohanan wanted Messiah to witness his self-immersion in a pool of the Spirit (since there are no "pools of the Spirit") rather than be transformed by Messiah pouring the Spirit on him. If so, then Yohanan's work may easily be viewed as a similar activity with water.

This tradition evidently originated in the last half of the first century since Nahmu of Gimzu was R. Akiva's teacher, and Akiva died in the second Jewish revolt in 135 CE. Acceptance of the form of affusion permits consideration of Ezekiel 36:25 as the source for Yohanan's rite.<sup>41</sup>

What does Yohanan's and Yeshua's baptizing activity accomplish? G.R. Beasley-Murray, who was the James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1973 to 1980, describes the results:

Is it feasible that John might have contrasted his baptism with water as one mode of cleansing and renewal with the Messiah's baptism with Spirit and fire as a more powerful means of cleansing and renewal? Here it is necessary to observe the strict parallelism of language used by the evangelists in contrasting the two baptisms; in Mark, 'I baptize you with water (*hudati*), but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit (*pneumati hagioi*'); in Matthew and Luke, 'I baptize you with water (*en hudati*)...he will baptize with (*en*) Holy Spirit and fire'...the *en* as well as the simple dative signify in each case the instrument or means employed in the baptism. The Spirit is an agency comparable with water and fire. Thus Messiah baptizes for cleansing and renewal in a more glorious way than John.<sup>42</sup>

Beasley-Murray's description is completely in keeping with the "cleansing and renewal" in Ezekiel 36:25-27. Evidently *purification and regeneration* are essential ideas borne by *baptism* in this parallel between Yohanan's water and Messiah's Spirit.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the volume *Ezekiel* by the *Rav Kook Institute* says that Ezekiel's reprimands<sup>44</sup> prove *repentance* is the critical element to initiate the purification and transformation of new heart and spirit in Ezekiel 36:25-26.<sup>45</sup> Repentance and then purification by water, the central elements of Yohanan's work, are thus in full harmony with Ezekiel's prophecy.

Yohanan never hinted that a subsequent *water* baptism would supersede his. Rather he promised the greater Spirit baptism, by Messiah, that was predicated on receiving his repentance rite. The pattern Yohanan presented correlates well with Ezekiel, including the promise, "I will put my Spirit within you," which reverberates throughout the NT.<sup>46</sup>

## 5. Yohanan's Rite, Messiah Yeshua and His Disciples

Yeshua, aware of Yohanan's prophetic origin, insisted on being baptized by him to fulfil all righteousness,<sup>47</sup> which certainly points to fulfilling the Torah and Prophets:

Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete...unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the Torah-teachers and *P'rushim*, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven! (Matthew 5:17, 20) CJB

Yeshua's insistence on undergoing Yohanan's rite harmonizes with an origin from the Torah or Prophets. Nor would Yeshua's lack of sin *prevent* him from participating in solidarity with Israel.<sup>48</sup> After Yohanan baptized Yeshua, the Spirit descended as a dove, as Yohanan witnessed (John 1:32-34), revealing the divine *imprimatur* his rite bore. The sequence of Yeshua's experience parallels Ezekiel 36:25-27 where water purification is followed by impartation of the Spirit, and it also parallels Yohanan's *Besorah*: that he performs a water rite for repentance, and that Messiah will perform a superlative transformation with the Spirit.

John's gospel relates that an unnamed man and Andrew, brother of Peter, were disciples of Yohanan prior to Messiah's baptism (John 1:35-42) which doubtless points to familiarity with Yohanan's rite. We are also told that *prior to Yohanan's arrest*<sup>49</sup> Messiah had his disciples baptize, though separately from Yohanan, and that Messiah made more disciples than Yohanan (John 3:22-26; 4:1-2). The Lukan narrative says that *after Yohanan's arrest*<sup>50</sup> those following Yeshua had received Yohanan's baptism (Luke 7:29).<sup>51</sup> Evidently Yeshua's disciples, including former disciples of Yohanan, performed the rite known as *Yohanan's baptism*. Yohanan suffered death (*Kiddush Hashem*) for national repentance,<sup>52</sup> thus it was fitting to ascribe his name to the rite no matter who performed it.

46. Cf. Titus 3:4-7, Romans 8:1-17.

47. Davies and Allison list seven meanings to "fulfill all righteousness": (1) "According to Jewish expectations," but question this because they surprisingly do not see how Jewish expectation relates to baptism. The seventh possibility advanced is by J. P. Meier, *Law*, 76-80, "fulfilling prophecy" citing Ps 2.7 and Isa. 42.1 quoted during the episode. "The baptism of Jesus brings to realization Scriptural hopes. So when Jesus fulfills all righteousness he is fulfilling Scriptures." Davies and Allison, *Matthew, International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988, 1991, 1997) 325.; H.B. Green says to fulfil all righteousness "Jesus fulfills the prophecies of the OT." *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) 65.

48. Robert L. Webb notes that repentance and confession of sins among Jews bore a corporate character. One's confession was not a "laundry-list" of personal sins. Yohanan's call likewise bore a corporate quality: "Jesus was acknowledging Israel's sin and need to turn around, and he was committing himself to do what he could to bring this about." Robert L. Webb, "Jesus' Baptism: Its Historicity and Implications," *Bulletin for Biblical Research Studies* (2000) 300.

49. Cf. John 3:24.

50. Luke 3:19-20. Following Yohanan's arrest two of his disciples query Yeshua, Luke 7:18-35, cf. Matthew 11:1-19.

51. Robert L. Webb proposes that Yeshua was indeed aligned with Yohanan: "[I]t is eminently plausible for Jesus to have his own followers and to be baptizing in a separate location and yet to be associated with John's movement...[A]ny indication of separateness or rivalry in the Fourth Gospel is only between some of their disciples, not between John and Jesus. The Fourth Gospel portrays John in support of Jesus (3:27-30) and Jesus in support of John (4:1-3)." Webb does think that after Yohanan's arrest Yeshua "moved beyond the conceptual framework of John's movement in certain respects." *Jesus' Baptism*: (2000) 303-4.

41. A guiding principle of second Temple sages was to "make a fence" for the Torah, i.e. to rigorously define parameters associated with a *mitzvah* to prevent transgression. *Mishnaic* tradition on *mikva'ot* (immersion pools) originates from the late second Temple era. Sages of the first Temple era evidently were less rigorous. Ezekiel belongs to the first Temple and exilic side of the purification with water debate, and this might easily mean that throwing pure water was an acceptable form of purification. The Jewish Soncino commentary remarks on the purification with water in Ezekiel 36:25: "Since Israel's evil ways were compared to the *uncleanness of a woman in her impurity* (verse 17), the forgiveness of his sins is characterized as a purification by cleansing water." A. Cohen, *Ezekiel, Soncino Books of the Bible*, (New York: Soncino Press, Ltd., 2nd ed., 1983) 243; Others also comment on the purification of the *niddah* and the dashing with pure water, cf. Abarbanel, *Commentary on the Later Prophets, Ezekiel*, (Jerusalem: Mizrahi, תשטי); Also, L.C. Allen, Ezekiel 20-48, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 29 (Dallas: Word, 1990).

42. Beasley-Murray, G.R., *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, reprinted 1988) 37.

43. Malachi 3:2-3 says the Coming One will *purify* Levites with refiner's fire, which implies the Holy Spirit as well.

44. Cf. Ezekiel 13:6; 14:6; 18:30-32; 33:7-20.

45. כאשר אנו מצרפים לכאן את הנאמר בפרק לו "והבאתי אתכם אל-אדמתכם וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים... ונתתי לכם לב חדש ורוח חדשה אתן בקרבכם והסרתי את-לב האבן מברשכם ונתתי לכם לב בשר."-הרי יוצא מכל הפסוקים, שהתנאי של חזרה בתשובה קודם לטהור ולמתן לב חדש ורוח חדשה Introduction, (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, ירושלים, 1985) 24.

**6. Messiah's Public Endorsement of Yohanan's Baptism: A Mitzvah for Israel**

Yeshua endorsed Yohanan's rite to Israel's leadership as a *mitzvah* of G-d<sup>53</sup> which implies he believed it fulfilled prophecy. Messiah indeed rode the donkey into Jerusalem to fulfil prophecy. When challenged by Sanhedrin representatives about his authority Yeshua asked: "Was Yohanan's baptism from Heaven or from men?" Even if "Yohanan's baptism" is taken as a *metonymy* for Yohanan (i.e. τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου → Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής) the effect is unchanged. Yohanan operated in the spirit and power of Eliyahu and his rite provided his surname, ὁ βαπτιστής. The gospels present Yohanan convinced that his rite was a *binding obligation* for Israel. It was not an option.<sup>54</sup> If Messiah endorsed Ἰωάννης ὁ βαπτιστής then *ipso facto* he endorsed τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου. Yeshua's challenge leads to an inescapable conclusion from anyone who sees him as Messiah:

Yohanan's rite was a divine revelation to Israel and remains an obligation in the same way Israel remains obligated to receive Yeshua as Messiah.

This scenario makes sense if Yohanan's rite was from the *Tanakh*, where Yeshua's life and deeds were prophesied. Ezekiel 36:25 is the leading prospect.

**7. Luke-Acts: No Universal Water Rite, No Annulment of Yohanan's Rite**

Luke-Acts contains no command from Messiah establishing a universal Christian water rite.<sup>55</sup> This is no trifling matter, because the risen Yeshua was not silent about water baptism. He spoke explicitly of Yohanan's Messianic rite moments before ascending.<sup>56</sup> Messiah did not annul Yohanan's rite, rather he taught that the promised Spirit baptism was to occur soon.

Only weeks earlier Yeshua publicly endorsed Yohanan's rite as a *mitzvah for Israel* (Luke 20:1-8), so the apostles had every motivation to continue to perform it *after* the resurrection to repentant Jews, *in the name of Messiah*<sup>57</sup> who endorsed it. This would be especially true if they saw Yohanan's rite foretold by the Prophets of Israel. The similarities of the following two Lukan passages readily testify of a pre-and-post-resurrection view of the same rite.

52. Cf. Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 9:7-9.

53. Matthew 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33; Luke 20:1-8.

54. Webb observes: "John preached imminent judgment coming upon all and called people to repentance and baptism. Neither was optional—repentance and its expression in baptism went hand in hand. It was a repentance-baptism." Robert L. Webb, "Jesus' Baptism: Its Historicity and Implications," *Bulletin for Biblical Research Studies* (2000) 280.

55. Cf. Hans Kosmala, "The Conclusion of Matthew," *Studies, Essays and Reviews* Vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1978) 1-16. The critical text of Mark, up to 16:8, lacks a universal rite, as does the short ending. The long ending of Mark contains a universal baptism but it is typically thought to have been added by someone other than Mark. John's gospel lacks a universal rite. John 3:5 must not be wrested from the context of a Jewish leader inquiring about Yeshua's Messiahship in Jerusalem at Passover. Matthew 28:19 is treated below.

56. Cf. Acts 1:4-5.

57. Jews of lesser social rank used the name of a higher authority for confirmation, cf. Acts 4:7-12. The Talmud is replete with citations of rabbis speaking "in the name" of some other rabbi. Peter was not considered a rabbi in Jewish culture. How much more reasonable is it then that as Yeshua's *emissary*, he spoke *in the name* of his Lord, Yeshua the Messiah.

LUKE 3:3, 16	ACTS 2:22, 38
1. Yohanan "preaches [to Israel]"	(1.) Peter preaches to the <i>men of Israel</i>
2. a baptism	(3.) "Repent
3. of repentance	(2.) and be baptized
4. for the <i>remission of sins</i> ."	(5.) in the name of Yeshua the Messiah
5. and promises that the <i>Greater One</i>	(4.) for remission of sins
6. would baptize with the <i>Spirit</i> .	(6.) and you shall receive the <i>Holy Spirit</i> ."

The subject of baptism in Acts is admittedly complex, but when set into an interpretive framework provided by Ezekiel 36:25-27 the difficulties diminish. Acts is treated below in *Disconfirming Evidence* in consideration of widespread assertions of inconsistency.

**8. Yohanan's Rite and Jewish Expectations**

John's gospel poses a Pharisaical question to Yohanan that implies Jewish expectation of an end-time rite to be performed by an eschatological figure.

Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Messiah, nor Eliyahu, nor the Prophet?  
(John 1:25)

A.M. Hunter affirms "[t]he Jews expected a general purifying of G-d's People before Messiah came."<sup>58</sup> G.R. Beasley-Murray contends, "The question 'Why then are you baptizing' hardly proceeds from the view that the Messiah, or Elijah or the prophet, will baptize at their appearing (*contra* Bultmann, 88), but seeks to know John's authority for calling on Jewish people to be baptized for the kingdom of G-d, a demand by no means acceptable to Pharisees or Sadducees."<sup>59</sup> Beasley-Murray evidently argues that Yohanan's rite was unanticipated, yet heartily received as harbinger of the Kingdom, and that Pharisees and Sadducees would not dispute it had only he claimed to be Messiah, Elijah or the Prophet, for they would have the authority for such prophetic *hidushim*; all this in light of the already promised purification in Ezekiel 36:25. Beasley-Murray's argument diminishes the likelihood that Yohanan's rite fulfilled prophecy of the *Tanakh*, but it is not convincing. R.C.H. Lenski says of John 1:25, "Passages like Ezek. 36:25, 37:23 led the Jews to expect a lustration and cleansing of the people."<sup>60</sup>

58. A.M. Hunter, *The Gospel of John, The Cambridge Bible Commentary, NEB*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965) 22.; Robert Kysar shares a similar view, see *John, The Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986) 35.

59. Beasley-Murray, John, vol. 36, *Word Biblical Commentary*, (Dallas: Word, 1987) 24; so also D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991) 145. *Kiddushin* 72b leads one to believe Jewish sages looked for a purification prior to the Kingdom, supporting the idea the Pharisees *expected* the rite they saw Yohanan performing.

60. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943-1961) 116.

If, on the other hand, one presses for an adapted proselyte baptism, why would the Pharisees ask about Messiah, Eliyahu or the Prophet? Pharisees were Jewish experts observing Yohanan directly and presumably far better at discerning proselyte baptism as the source of his rite than any *modern exegete*, yet that rite never required the authority of Messiah, Eliyahu or the Prophet. How would a derivative adaptation *require* their authority? Furthermore, Ezekiel 36:25, being a portent of Israel's Kingdom, evidently would require a *major* eschatological figure.

### 9. John 3:5 Water and Spirit: Yohanan's Rite and Messiah's Spirit Baptism

Yeshua answered, 'Yes, indeed, I tell you that unless a person is born from water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.' (John 3:5) CJB

Yeshua's demand for being born of water and Spirit often elicits comparison with Ezekiel 36:25-27.<sup>61</sup> James Dunn writes:

It should not go unnoticed that the closest parallels to the water and Spirit correlation of John 3.5 are to be found in Ezek. 36.25-27 and 1QS 4.20-22.<sup>62</sup>

Dunn adds that "John's baptism seems to have been for the Baptist himself a symbol of the eschatological purging effected through the Spirit."<sup>63</sup> D. A. Carson similarly describes prophetic precursors to John 3:5:

Most important of all is Ezekiel 36:25-27, where water and spirit come together so forcefully, the first to signify cleansing from impurity, and the second to depict the transformation of heart that will enable people to follow G-d wholly...In short, *born of water and spirit*...signals a new begetting, a new birth that cleanses and renews, the eschatological cleansing and renewal promised by the Old Testament prophets.<sup>64</sup>

Messiah's teaching of being "born again" is a *loud echo* of Ezekiel's new heart and new spirit, of removal of the heart of stone and reception of a heart of flesh. G.R. Beasley-Murray writes concerning John 3:5 that "[i]f the text is to be read as it stands, there is much to be said for the interpretation enunciated by Bengel, and characteristic of British exposition:"

61. Cf. Leon Morris' first of three possibilities for the water of John 3:5 reads: "(i) 'water' stands for purification (cf. 2:6). If this is the correct explanation there is probably a backward look at the baptism of John. This was a 'baptism of repentance' (Mark 1:4). It was concerned with purifying (v.25), and it could be explicitly contrasted with the baptism of the Spirit (1:33). The meaning then will be that Nicodemus should enter into all that 'water' symbolizes, namely repentance and the like, and that he should also enter into the experience which is summed up as 'born of...the Spirit', namely the totally new divine life that Jesus would impart...<sup>27</sup> '...Except you are born of all that water baptism signified, repentance; and that which the Spirit accomplishes, regeneration, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of G-d.'...Ezek. 36:25f combines the ideas of water purification and the giving of 'a new spirit'...". Nevertheless, Morris takes the second possibility he lists as more likely, to him, i.e. that the water of John 3:5 relates to male sexual emission, called "water" in other ancient literature. Morris rejects the third possibility, i.e. Christian water baptism. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John, The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971, Revised 1995) 191.

62. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (1970) 192.

63. Ibid.

64. D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (1991) 195-6. See also F.F. Bruce, *New Testament History* (New York: Doubleday, 1971) 156-7. See also C. Marvin Pate, "Matthew, Peshet and Restoration of Israel," in ch. 3, "The Hermeneutic of Restoration," of his book, *Communities of the Last Days, The Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament & the Story of Israel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000) 96.

Water denotes the baptism of John into (i.e. preparing for) Christ Jesus (Gnomon 2:275). Such a view assumes that entry into the kingdom of God requires baptism of water and of the Spirit. The conjunction of water and Spirit in eschatological hope is deeply rooted in the Jewish consciousness, as is attested by Ezek. 36:25-27 and various apocalyptic writings.<sup>65</sup>

Beasley-Murray admits Yohanan's rite and Messiah's soon outpoured Spirit are widely thought represented in John 3:5 and are derived from Ezekiel 36:25-27. This suits the Messianic context of the conversation; Nicodemus, a Sanhedrin member and leader of Israel, approached Yeshua on his Messianic credentials. Immediately after this meeting Yeshua had his disciples baptize (John 3:22).

### 10. Outpouring of the Spirit on Shavuot

The foregoing shows that commentators correlate Ezekiel 36:25-27 with John 3:3-7. Paul's "regeneration and renewal" in Titus 3:5-6 is analogous to Ezekiel's transformation as well. Evidently Messiah inaugurated the innermost transformation promised by Ezekiel, as well as Joel's outpouring, when he began to *baptize* with the Spirit on Shavuot (Pentecost).<sup>66</sup>

Darrell Bock says Spirit baptism on Shavuot is "the 'promise of the Father' that was spoken of in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4."<sup>67</sup> When Peter declares "this is that" in his quotation of Joel 2:28-32 (Acts 2:17-21) he means it is the "beginning" or inauguration of the prophecy, not its complete fulfillment. Peter evidently selected Joel as representative of several prophecies of the giving of the Spirit.<sup>68</sup> Few would doubt Isaiah 44:3-5 represents the same bestowal of the Spirit on Shavuot, even if it is never cited in the NT:

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They shall spring up among the grass like willows by flowing streams. This one will say, 'I am the Lord's,' another will call on the name of Jacob, and another will write on his hand, 'The Lord's,' and name himself by the name of Israel." (Isaiah 44:3-5) ESV

NT writers simply could not cite every passage of the Prophets that could apply to an eschatological situation.

65. Beasley-Murray nevertheless goes on to say that he thinks the Qumran texts were most influential behind this passage. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1999) 49.

66. A *midrash* on Messianic redemption in Psalm 14 directly links Ezekiel 36:26-27 with the Spirit's outpouring in Joel: "In the Messianic age to come both will come to pass [Ezekiel 36:26-27 and Joel 2:28 (3:1) are cited]." See *Treasury of Midrashim—the Twelve Minor Prophets*, on Joel, אֹרֶזֶר הַמְדֻרְשִׁים, תְּרִי עֶשֶׂר, (Jerusalem: Machon Hamidrash) (Joel, י"ח ע' 18).

67. Bock says of Spirit baptism on Shavuot: "[A] careful study of the use of Joel in Acts 2 shows that 'this is that' is not 'this is all of that' or 'this is like that,' the meaning rather, is 'this is the beginning of that,' since the cosmic signs of Joel 2 are not fulfilled in the first coming of Jesus." *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. By Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992) 48.

68. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, as progressive dispensationalists, see a continuity of the doctrine of Spirit baptism from the OT through the church age into the future millennium, in contrast to classic and revised dispensationalists who see Spirit baptism restricted solely to the "Church Age." Larry D. Pettegrew, "Dispensationalists and Spirit Baptism," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 8/1 (Spring 1997) 29-46. But it seems difficult to believe there is absolutely no difference in how the Holy Spirit interacts with humanity after Messiah's Sacrifice. The ripping of the *parochet* from top to bottom seems to signify G-d's great desire to be free from the sanctuary's restrictions, forced on him by human iniquity. With Messiah's sacrifice not only does humanity have opportunity to freely access G-d, much more G-d can now freely approach humanity without an instantaneous fiery eruption.



The Lukan description of Shavuot, coupled with Luke 24:49 of being “clothed with power from on high,” leave no doubt that reception of the Spirit was not ambiguous. Vivid experiences of Joel’s prophecy would be anticipated. Ezekiel 36:26-27 does not explicitly tell of dreams, visions or prophecy, but Ezekiel doubtless thought all Israel would experience a Spirit-led life as he had. Ezekiel saw visions of heaven including the *Merkavah*, visions of the departure of G-d and his glorious return. The word of the L-rd came to him often and he sometimes described it vividly such as the hand of the L-rd G-d that fell upon him (8:1; 1:3; 37:1) or that the Spirit lifted him up (3:12; 11:1). Ezekiel 39:29 says, “I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel.” There is good reason to expect, in parallel with Joel, that a prophetic life for Israel is contained in Ezekiel 36:26-27.<sup>69</sup>

A spiritual precursor to Joel and Ezekiel found in the Torah is hinted as an anticipated hope *for all Israel*. Seventy elders received the Spirit that was on Moses. We read, “When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again.” (Alternatively, *did not cease*.)<sup>70</sup> (Numbers 11:16-25). The salient verse of this episode reads:

But Moshe replied, “Are you so zealous to protect me? I wish all of ADONAI’s people were prophets! I wish ADONAI would put his Spirit on all of them!” (Numbers 11:29) CJB

ויאמר לו משה המקנא אתה לי ומי יתן כל-עם יהוה נביאים כִּי-יתן יהוה את-רוחו עליהם:

*Moshe Rabbenu wished that all the people of G-d* (certainly including all Israel) would be given the Spirit, *that all would be prophets* (strongly supporting

the idea the elders became prophets and did not cease to prophesy).<sup>71</sup> Moreover, a wish by Moses recorded in the Torah cannot be dismissed as just wishing on a star. The context is clear that reception of the Spirit was discernible, as also reported in NT episodes. The Numbers event can be seen to foreshadow the reception of the Spirit promised in the gospels and realized in Acts.<sup>72</sup>

In Numbers the people were told to “sanctify” themselves, apparently the elders included. Yohanan’s work of baptizing could also be described in terms of sanctifying the people, making them ready for the coming King. For Jews, as custodians of G-d’s revealed symbols of spiritual reality, *sanctification* involving repentance and a water rite *prior* to receiving the Spirit, as in Ezekiel 36:25-27, is quite sensible. Yet the elders of Numbers did not receive the Spirit *during* a water rite, nor did the 120 disciples on Shavuot, nor the Gentiles in Acts 10. Joel’s outpouring of the Spirit likewise shows *no dependence* on a water rite at all. While there is no *demand* for a coincidental water rite to receive the Spirit,<sup>73</sup> evidence in the Torah, Joel, Ezekiel and the NT demonstrates a palpable reception of the Spirit by recipients, which was evidential to observers.

### 11. Josephus on Yohanan

Josephus recorded the profound impact of Yohanan on the Jewish people in *Antiquities*, which apparently most scholars take as authentic.<sup>74</sup> Some scholars accept partial authenticity of the *Testimonium Flavianum* on Yeshua as Messiah, though it remains plagued by controversy. No version of the *Testimonium* refers to a universal Christian rite, even though by the time of *Antiquities* the Yeshua-believing movement was notable among Jews, even if a minority.

69. Prophecies of the *Tanakh* tend to reveal a partial aspect of a broader promise. It is not surprising that Ezekiel’s promise did not focus on spiritual gifts, though it did focus on obedience to G-d, while Joel focuses on spiritual gifts, but not strictly on Spirit-led obedience.

70. There is a question as to the meaning of *יספו*, the final two words of verse 25, *ויאצל מן-הרוח אשר עליו, ויתן על-שבעים איש הזקנים וחי, כנוח עליהם הרוח, ויתנבאו ולא יספו*. There is doubt whether the elders did not prophesy again, or whether they “*did not cease*” prophesying. The NKJV has “they never did so again,” but then notes, “the Targum and Vulgate read ‘*did not cease*.’” *Targum Onkelos*, says, *ורבי מן רוחא דעלוהי, ויהב על שבעין גברא סביא; והוא כד שרת עליהון רוח נבואה, ומתנבן, ולא פסקין*. The second clause says, “When the Spirit of prophecy rested on them they prophesy and do not cease.” The Vulgate and translation read that the seventy *did not cease prophesying afterwards*: *descenditque Dominus per nubem et locutus est ad eum auferens de spiritu qui erat in Mosen et dans septuaginta viris cumque requiesisset in eis spiritus prophetaverunt nec ultra cessarunt*. “And the L-rd came down in a cloud, and spoke to him, taking away of the spirit that was in Moses, and giving to the seventy men. And when the spirit had rested on them they prophesied, nor did they cease afterwards.”

The LXX has, *καὶ ἐπρόφησαν αὐτοὶ καὶ οὐκ ἔτι προσέθευτο*, “and they prophesied and *no longer continued*.” The NIV says, “they did not do so again” but then too notes, “*Or prophesied and continued to do so*.” Others, including Young’s *Literal Translation*, take this view: “...and it cometh to pass at the resting of the Spirit on them, that they prophesy, and do not cease.”

The reason behind receiving the Spirit was to make the elders fit to stand between Israel and G-d. That would require readily accessible divine insight, and that would lead one to believe that they did have remarkable spiritual experiences, whether they were continually prophesying or not.

71. Cf. Luke’s citation of Joel in Acts 2:17-18 *twice* says that recipients of the outpoured Spirit would prophesy. Evidently many commentators do not realize the implication of Numbers 11:29. Cf. “It seems that the temporary gift of prophecy to these elders was primarily to establish their credentials as Spirit-empowered leaders rather than to make of them ongoing agents of the prophecy of the Spirit.” Roland B. Allen, “Numbers,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reference Software, 1989-1998), 11:25, cited by Gregory J. Leeper in, “The Nature of the Pentecostal Gift with Special Reference to Numbers 11 and Acts 2,” *A/PS* 6:1 (2003) 28. Leeper continues, “The intent of the speech is to verify God’s appointing and enabling for a task.” (Ibid. 28). How one can assert that the “intent” of prophetic speech in Israel is evidential verification of role seems to ignore the declaration in Amos 3:8, “the L-rd has spoken, *who can but prophesy*.” In other words, a person upon whom the Spirit comes is *impelled by a palpable experience*, resulting in various expressions, including vocal prophesy. To assert that the “intent” of prophesy is to “verify” a role simply imposes an exegetical restriction on an experience where none is demanded.

72. One might also note that the seventy had long been leaders in the *Kahal* of G-d, and yet only in later life were they Spirit-filled, publicly and evidentially.

73. Beasley-Murray affirms: “Naturally, God does not bind the impartation of the Spirit to the rite of baptism, any more than He binds His other gifts to it or to any other rite.” Cited by Luther B. McIntyre Jr. “Baptism and Forgiveness in Acts 2:38” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 (January-March 1996) 57, from Beasley-Murray, *Baptism* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1962) 273.

74. The passage reads: “But to some of the Jews the destruction of Herod’s army seemed to be divine vengeance, and certainly a just vengeance, for his treatment of John, surnamed Baptist. For Herod had put him to death, though he was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives and practice justice towards their fellows and piety towards G-d, and so doing to join in baptism. In his view this was a necessary preliminary if baptism was to be acceptable to G-d. They must not employ it to gain pardon for whatever sins they committed, but as a consecration of the body implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleansed by right behavior...Yet the verdict of the Jews was that the destruction visited upon Herod’s army was a vindication of John, since G-d saw fit to inflict such a blow on Herod.” *Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, Books XVIII-XIX*, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 9 (English L. Feldman), (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) 81-85.



Josephus did not say what the source of Yohanan's rite was, but in light of the divine retribution thought to have been meted out, it reasonably may have been considered inauguration of a prophecy of the *Tanakh*.<sup>75</sup> Josephus described the rite "as a consecration of the body implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleansed by right behavior," where water purifies the body (cf. Hebrews 10:22, John 3:25). David Flusser cites Josephus saying purification by water "is not obtainable without previous 'cleansing of the soul,' i.e. repentance."<sup>76</sup>

Though *Antiquities* was composed two decades after the Temple's destruction Josephus provides a corrective for apparent confusion about Yohanan's rite, i.e. "they must not employ it to gain pardon for whatever sins they committed." This sounds suspiciously like an attempt to address the teaching of early fathers like Ignatius who wrote, "[Yeshua] was born and baptized, that through his passion He might purify water, to the washing away of sins" (Ephesians 4:9).<sup>77</sup>

## 12. Text of Ezekiel in the Judean Wilderness

Yohanan grew up in the wilderness (Luke 1:80) and evidently did not lack access to Ezekiel. Hector Patmore notes that few fragments of Ezekiel have been found at Qumran and in the Judean desert, yet they reflect the MT and the impact of the text seems to have been significant.<sup>78</sup> The Ezekiel fragment, *MasEzek* (1043–2220) [*Mas Id*], as well as accompanying Deuteronomy fragments found by Yigal Yadin under the synagogue floor on Masada conform to the Masoretic Text (MT). Patmore noted the estimated composition date of *MasEzek* based on paleographic evidence:

According to Talmon, the script is an 'early Herodian bookhand' or 'formal Herodian script' and can be dated to the second half of the last century BCE. The fragments cover Ezek. 35.11–38.14 (including 36.23b-38).<sup>79</sup>

75. Ferguson finds it "notable that no mention of [proselyte baptism] occurs in Philo, Josephus, or Joseph and Aseneth," Ferguson, *Baptism in the Ancient Church* (2009) 77.

76. David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnus Press, Hebrew University, 1988) 50-1.; Chilton also affirms: "Josephus more accurately observed that John's baptism was not understood to seek pardon for sins, but to purify the body." Bruce Chilton, "John the Baptist: His Immersion and his Death" (chapter 2 of) *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 35. See also Catherine M. Murphy, *John the Baptist: Prophet of Purity for a New Age* (2003) 5-6.

77. Perhaps Josephus, living in Rome, knew Yeshua-believers viewed Yohanan as the forerunner of Messiah and that his rite was performed by Yeshua-believers, but by then was under the notion that sins were washed away as Ignatius appears to hold. Barnabas 11:2 writes: "Now concerning the water, it is written in reference to Israel, how that they would not receive the baptism which brings remission of sins, but would build one for themselves," followed by the castigation of Jeremiah 2:12-13. Yohanan's rite was based on repentance and included remission of sins, so was this in mind? If not, a subsequent "Christian" rite, rejected by Israel, also produces remission of sin for Barnabas. He quoted Isaiah 16:1-2, 45:2, 33:16-17, Psalm 1, and then in 11:36 says, "This He says, because we go down into the water laden with sins and filth, and rise up from it bearing fruit in the heart, resting our fear and hope on Jesus in the spirit." Barnabas evidently asserts that regeneration occurs in the water, like Ignatius and Justin, contra Josephus.

78. Patmore writes: "Remnants of Ezekiel manuscripts have been found both at Qumran and at Masada. Tragically, only small fragments from six manuscripts of Ezekiel have survived at Qumran (1Q9, 3Q1, 4Q73-75, 11Q4), although the relatively small number of manuscripts does not seem to reflect the evident importance of Ezekiel to the community, as the *New Jerusalem* text, the *Temple Scroll*, and their self-identification as 'Sons of Zadok' bears witness. The small quantity of manuscripts that has been preserved at both sites, on the whole, reflects the textual tradition of the MT. "The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel: The Implications of the Manuscript Finds from Masada and Qumran," Hector M. Patmore, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, Vol 32.2, (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore: SAGE Publications, 2007) 232-3.

79. Patmore, "The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel," (2007) 236.

Emanuel Tov writes that "[t]he two scrolls found under the floor of the synagogue at Masada are identical to the medieval MT, and hence were forerunners of that text." Tov goes on to say that the precision of the Ezekiel and Deuteronomy fragments, together with the wide upper and lower margins, leads to the likelihood they were "luxury biblical scrolls" prepared in the manner "prescribed in rabbinic literature for the copying of Scripture scrolls." Tov describes that procedure:

We surmise that a carefully copied biblical text such as found in the Judean Desert is mentioned in rabbinic literature as a 'corrected scroll,' *sefer muggah*. The temple employed professional *maggihim*, 'correctors' or 'revisers,' whose task it was to safeguard precision in the copying of the text: 'Maggihim of books in Jerusalem received their fees from the temple funds' (b. Ketub. 106a). This description implies that the correcting procedure based on the master copy in the temple was financed from the temple resources which thus provided an *imprimatur*. This was the only way to safeguard the proper distribution of precise copies of Scripture. Safrai even suggests that the pilgrims who came to Jerusalem had their biblical texts corrected by the temple scribes.<sup>80</sup>

Impressive archaeological evidence indicates that decades prior to Yohanan's birth, Israel possessed a stable MT of Ezekiel in use in the Judean wilderness where he grew up, as witnessed by *MasEzek* and the Qumran fragments.<sup>81</sup>

## Summary of Confirming Evidence

Ancient Jewish sages and modern Yeshua-believing Jews have seen Ezekiel 36:25-27 as a literal prophecy leading to Israel's Kingdom. Yohanan also self-identified with Isaiah 40:3, leading to the likelihood he drew his rite from Ezekiel 36:25, not a recent decree for proselytes. Messiah considered Yohanan the inaugurator of the Kingdom, in which the Prophets ceased to prophesy of the future, leading to the likelihood that Yohanan's rite was the inauguration of Ezekiel's promise. NT data on the form of Yohanan's rite is consistent with Ezekiel 36:25, and less so with self-immersion. Messiah also publicly endorsed Yohanan's rite to Sanhedrin leaders, signifying it was a *mitzvah* of G-d with precisely the same obligation as receiving him as King, leading to the likelihood Yohanan's rite fulfilled prophecy of the *Tanakh*. The risen Messiah was not silent about Yohanan's Messianic water

80. Emanuel Tov, "The Text of the Bible in the Ancient Synagogues," *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible and Qumran* (Collected Papers, 2008) 3-4, 15. <http://www.emanuel Tov.info/>

81. The omission of Ezekiel 36:23-38 in the LXX-allied Papyrus 967 of the Chester Beatty collection, dated from the end of the 2nd century to the beginning of the 3rd century CE, has led some scholars to propose a *vorlage* lacking that passage. However, subsequent discoveries of MT Ezekiel fragments containing the passage and that are dated much earlier than papyrus 967 render such a scenario improbable, leading others to suggest loss of a folio. Leslie Allen thinks "[i]t is probable that we are to envisage two separate phenomena, redaction amplification within the Hebrew text and coincidental omission of a wider block of material in the Greek tradition." Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1990) 177. Michael N. Van Der Meer notes: "The conclusion must be, then, that from a text-critical, literary-critical and linguistic point of view, there is no decisive evidence for regarding the eschatological passage Ezekiel 36:23bβ3-38 as a late addition to the book of Ezekiel. The absence of the passage in the earliest recoverable stage of the transmission of the Greek version may be due to the loss of a folio...The eschatological ideas expressed in Ezekiel 36:23-38 need therefore not be dated to a late post-exilic or even Maccabean period, but fit the exilic or early post-exilic period." "A New Spirit in an Old Corpus? Text-Critical, Literary-Critical and Linguistic Observations regarding Ezekiel 36:16-38," by Michael N. Van Der Meer, in F. Postma, K. Spronk, E. Talstra (eds.), *The New Things. Eschatology in Old Testament Prophecy, Festschrift for Henk Leene* (Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese van de Bijbel en zijn Tradities. Supplement Series 3) (Maastricht: Uitgeverij Shaker Publishing, 2002) 147-158.

rite in Luke-Acts, but gave no command for a new universal Christian water rite; he simply says Spirit baptism is now available. He did not annul Yohanan's rite for Israel in Luke-Acts. The NT is replete with echoes of Ezekiel's regeneration and renewal of the Spirit now available by Messiah's Spirit baptism.

This impressive circumstantial evidence cannot be dismissed easily.

### Disconfirming Evidence

Seven arguments stand out as evidence against the idea that Ezekiel 36:25-27 was inaugurated: **1.** no explicit citation of Ezekiel's prophecy occurs in the NT; **2.** the Greek word βαπτίζω means to immerse, not sprinkle; **3.** Messiah commanded a universal rite in Matthew 28:19; **4.** Peter ordered water baptism for non-Jews in Acts 10:47-48; **5.** Paul appears to teach a water rite by immersion; **6.** Pentecostal *subsequence* of Spirit-baptism in Luke-Acts weighs against Ezekiel 36:25-27; and **7.** Ezekiel 36:25 is believed to be the Numbers 19 purification with ashes of the red heifer.

The evidence is weighty but not indisputable. This section rebuts the seven arguments and finds that they do not sustain objection to the possibility that Ezekiel 36:25-27 was inaugurated.

#### 1. No Explicit Citation of Ezekiel 36:25-27 in the NT

The argument against the inauguration of Ezekiel's prophecy because the NT lacks a citation proves less decisive when one considers the frequency with which other key prophecies were cited. The *New Covenant* of Jeremiah 31 occurs *only* in Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17. Five authors briefly refer to Isaiah 53 six times<sup>82</sup> but Mark, Hebrews, James and Jude lack a reference. Luke 22:37 has Yeshua citing Isaiah 53:12, but no other NT writer has Yeshua quote from the passage. Matthew does not cite Isaiah 53 in his passion, though in 8:17 he cites Isaiah 53:4 in a different context. With the crucial *New Covenant* prophecy of Jeremiah scarcely quoted, and *Isaiah 53* quoted infrequently, lack of an Ezekiel citation is not sufficient warrant to dismiss it as the foundation of the *Besorah*.

Then too, many hundreds<sup>83</sup> of allusions to the *Tanakh* are seen in the NT. John 3:5 is typically thought to allude to Ezekiel 36:25-27. F. F. Bruce remarks on Hebrews 10:22:

Behind this passage (of God sprinkling the repentant to cleanse from impurity) from the Qumran Rule of the Community, as indeed behind the thought of the writer to the Hebrews and other New Testament writers, we may discern such an Old Testament prophecy

82. The *Greek NT* 4th Ed., "Index of Quotations" has two references for Jeremiah's *New Covenant*, He 8.8-12; 10.16-17, and six for Isaiah 53, Jn 12:38; Ro 10:16; Mt 8:17; Ac 8:32-33; 1 Pe 2:22; Lk 22:37. *Greek NT*, 4th Revised Edition (Stuttgart: United Bible Society, 1993) 888.

83. The *GNT* "Index of Allusions and verbal Parallels" covers pages 891-901 with some 240 listings per page.

as that of Ezek. 36:25f., where the terminology of the ancient ritual ablutions is used to describe God's inward cleansing of His people in the age of restoration.<sup>84</sup>

If βαπτίζω bears the ideas of *purification* and *transformation* (see below) then an additional allusion can be seen in the saying that Yohanan baptizes with water and Messiah baptizes with the Spirit.

Kingdom-related prophecies *beyond* those cited in the NT evidently were considered inaugurated by Yeshua-believing Jews according to Acts 3:24: "All the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days." Following the Temple's destruction, Yeshua-believing Jews may have preferred allusions to Ezekiel 36:25-27 over direct citation since by all appearances, Israel's Kingdom would not be established at once. A satisfactory account of *inaugurated prophecy* would require more papyrus than needed for the essential *Besorah*.

#### 2. The Verb Baptizo (βαπτίζω): Immersion or Purification?

The Messianic Movement evidently views the Greek verb βαπτίζω in terms of mode, almost certainly in view of the Jewish archetype, *immersion in a mikveh*, together with the assumption that Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12 speak of a water rite. This weighs against the idea that the NT Messianic rite was in the form of Ezekiel 36:25.

Howard Marshall cautions that allusions to "down-pouring of the Spirit from above" imply that "our understanding of 'baptize' as 'dip, immerse or plunge' may stand in need of revision."<sup>85</sup> Marshall says βαπτίζω "took on the metaphorical meaning of being overwhelmed by something."<sup>86</sup> He argues that the word's development proceeded *beyond overwhelmed* and suggests that it "does not so much draw attention to the mode of drenching...as to the fact of the drenching and the cleansing which it conveys," concluding that Yohanan's intent was "I have cleansed/purified you with water, but he will cleanse/purify you with the Holy Spirit."<sup>87</sup> Marshall sees *baptize* representing more a *resulting cleansing effect* than mode of action.<sup>88</sup>

84. F.F. Bruce, *Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, reprint 1984) 249-252.; See also Beasley-Murray, *Baptism* (1962) 247-250.; Hebrews 10:22 και λελουσμένοι το σώμα ύδατι καθαρῶ, cf. Ezekiel 36:25 και θανῶ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς καθαρῶν ὕδατος; A widespread view, typified by William Lane, says the verse refers to *Christian baptism*, e.g. "The reference in v22b is almost certainly to Christian baptism, which replaces all previous cleansing rites." *Hebrews 9-13*, vol. 47b, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1991) 287. Nothing in v 22 says it *replaces* all previous rites, though it would be the sole *eschatological* rite for Jews.

85. Howard Marshall, Chapter 1, "The Meaning of the Verb 'Baptize.'" *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 8-24.; See also Everett Ferguson. "[Baptizo] also meant to overwhelm and so could be used whether the object was placed in an element (which was more common) or was overwhelmed by it (often in metaphorical usages)." Ferguson, *Baptism in the Ancient Church* (2009) 59.

86. Marshall, "The Meaning of the Verb 'Baptize,'" *Dimensions of Baptism: BTS* (2002) 17.

87. *Ibid.* 22.

88. That the word βαπτίζω cannot be limited to the idea of טביל (*dip, immerse*) is demonstrated in the Hebrew translation of Josephus by the *Mossad Bialik* which uses טבע (*sunk*), not טביל (*dip*) for βαπτίζω when describing the sinking of ships, cf. מלחמה (*Wars*) 2:20:1 (p 183), 3:7:15 (p 209), 3:8:5 (p 220-1), 3:10:9 (p 232) Wars also uses ההריב (*destroy*) 4:3:3 (p 244), (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1968, 2002); קדמוניות (*Antiquities* Vol. 1) 9:10:2 (p 333) (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1944, tenth printing 2007).

The following examples<sup>89</sup> indeed show that βαπτίζω was used to describe the *effect* of real events that were not accomplished by physical immersion. Whether they fall in the category of metaphor, faded metaphor or dead metaphor<sup>90</sup> is open to debate.

And I, perceiving that the youth was overwhelmed [bewildered] (BAPTIZED), wishing to give him a respite, etc. (Speaking of young Cleinias, confounded with the sophistical questions and subtleties...). Ex. 135, p 65, Plato, Euthydemus, of the Disputer, ch. VII.

What so great wrong have we done, as in a few days to be [overwhelmed] (BAPTIZED) with such a multitude of evils? ex. 111, p 54. Achilles Tatius, Leucippe and Clitophon. III. ch. 10.

For this is he who found the wretched Cimon [overcome by grief] (BAPTIZED), and did not neglect him when abandoned. ex. 102, p 51. Libanius, Epistle 962, to Gessius.

For grief for him, [overwhelming] (BAPTIZING) the soul, and clouding the understanding, brings as it were a mist even upon the eyes, and we differ little from those who are now living in darkness. Ex. 114, p 55, Libanius, Funeral discourse on the Emperor Julian, ch. 148.

Mark and Luke parallel these usages when they wrote of Yeshua:

You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? (Mark 10:38) NASB

I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished! (Luke 12:50) ESV

In light of similar usage by Greeks it appears unlikely that either Mark or Luke had Jewish rites in mind. In any case, here two gospel writers present Messiah using a *metaphorical* form of baptism, not a literal water rite, which must be kept in mind when considering Matthew 28:19.

Such writers as Plato, Plutarch and Philo of Alexandria used βαπτίζω for *drunkenness*.

And I know some, who, when they become slightly intoxicated, before they are completely [drunk] (BAPTIZED) provide, by contributions and tickets, a carousal for the morrow; regarding the hope of the future revel as part of the present festivity. Ex. 142, p 68, Philo, *Contemplative Life*.

For I myself am one of those who yesterday were [drunk] (BAPTIZED). Ex. 146, p 69-70, Plato, *Banquet*, ch. IV.

89. Examples presented are from the Baptist publication by T.J. Conant, *Baptizein* (New York: American Bible Union, 1861) which remains a handy collection of 175 ancient Greek usages of βαπτίζω. Occasionally a descriptive word is added in brackets [ ], or replaces "whelm." Conant translated βαπτίζω "whelm" ~70 times, and "overwhelm" 10 times, and not immersion. <http://www.archive.org/details/TheMeaningAndUseOfBaptizeinPt01HighRebaptizoBaptised>.

90. Caird writes of the development of metaphors: "But by repeated use [a metaphor] becomes a stock or faded metaphor, and at that point the dictionary will list the new reference as part of its sense, labelling it as figurative. The final stage is the dead metaphor, when users are no longer conscious of the word's origin, and the label (fig.) drops from the dictionary definition. A large proportion of the word-stock of any language will prove on scrutiny to have come into existence in this fashion." G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (London: Duckworth, 1981), 66.

When an old man drinks, and Silenus takes possession of him, immediately he is mute for some time, and seems like one heavy-headed and [drunk] (BAPTIZED).<sup>91</sup> Ex. 148, p 71, Lucian, *Bacchus*.

Then [stupefying] (BAPTIZING) potently, he set me free. ex. 150, p 72. Aristophon (Athenaeus, Philosopher's Banquet, IX. 44.) [A slave-girl imbibed a drug with a resulting powerful experience.]

For Philo, a native Greek-speaking Jew of the first century, a man *baptized* was a man *drunk* from wine.<sup>92</sup> By all appearances this is a *dead metaphor* for Philo, since Plato used it identically centuries earlier.

No one doubts that βαπτίζω refers to traditional Jewish *purification* rites in Mark 7:4 no matter what form is assumed.

[W]hen they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash [βαπτίσονται]. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as the washing [βαπτισμούς] of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches. (Mark 7:4) ESV

Luke 11:38 appears to relate to *purification of hands*, as the following translation assumes:

[T]he Parush was surprised that he didn't begin by doing *n'tilat yadayim* [ἐβαπτίσθη] before the meal. (Luke 11:38) CJB

Purification of hands is typically accomplished by pouring. The BDAG lists its first definition of βαπτίζω as:

1. wash ceremonially for purpose of purification, wash, purify, of a broad range of repeated ritual washing rooted in Israelite tradition... (Mk 7:4; Lk 11:38).

Hebrews 9:10 says the Torah commanded *diverse baptisms* (διαφόροις βαπτισμοῖς). The author of Hebrews can hardly be writing about "diverse forms of immersion" since immersions in a *mikveh* are consistently identical, but rather about a range of "*purification and sanctification rites*." Colin Brown writes:

91. This example describes the effect water of the Silenus spring had on those who drank it. The baptism has nothing to do with immersion but with the peculiar effect, a usage which evidently was well-understood by readers (*baptizo* as being *drunk*). The author had no fear readers would mistakenly interpret *baptizo* to indicate physical immersion in the spring.

92. The Hebrew translation of *Contemplative Life* by the *Mossad Bialik* renders βαπτίζω with השתכר (*drunk*), not נטבל (*immersed*). ... וידועים לי אנשים אחדים אשר בהיותם מבוסמים, אך בטרם ישתכרו כליה... cf. *Philo*, Vol. 1., *Contemplative Life* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1986) 46.; Ferguson writes: "The metaphorical use of baptizo for the effects of drunkenness began quite early, if we trust the reading of the Greek Anthology's epigram attributed to Evenus...Plato includes a quotation showing the metaphorical use of baptizo for drunkenness: I am myself one of those who yesterday was drunk." Regarding Philo's use of βαπτίζω, Ferguson agrees effect is implied. "Philo, who does not use βαπτω, employs βαπτίζω exclusively in a metaphorical sense. In accord with his classical counterparts he writes of some 'before they are completely overwhelmed [βαπτισθηναί]' with intoxication (*Contemplative Life* 5-46). More often he speaks philosophically: 'the river of senses that drowns [επιλυζοντα] and overwhelms [βαπτίζοντα] the soul in the corruption of passions' (Allegorical Laws 3.[6].18). The senses 'drown [overwhelm, βαπτίζη] the mind' (*Migration of Abraham* 37.204). Immoralities 'plunge (sic) [βαπτίζοντα] the soul in disasters' (The Worse Attacks the Better 48.176). 'Reason is drowned [overwhelmed, βαπτίζομενου]' by food and drink." Ferguson describes another usage for drowning, "Epictetus preserves a common usage for being drowned in a shipwreck: 'Just as they would not any more prefer to be drowned [βαπτίζεσθαι] in a large ship elegantly and richly adorned with gold, neither would they like to suffer distress while living in an immense and expensive house.'" Ferguson concludes: "*Baptizo* meant to dip, usually a thorough submerging, but it also meant to overwhelm and so could be used whether the object was placed in an element (which was more common) or was overwhelmed by it (often in metaphorical usages). The secular usage for 'destroy' or 'perish,' as in a person drowning or a ship sinking, did not make this the primary connotation; such was the effect of the submerging and the one could substitute the effect for the act, *but that was a secondary application*." [Emphasis added], Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Ancient Church* (2009) 50, 52, 57-59.

“Heb. 9:10 refers to the purification of persons. Presumably this reflects the Jewish usage of the term [βαπτισμος].”<sup>93</sup> Yohanan’s rite is also found in a setting related to purification.

Therefore there arose a discussion on the part of John’s disciples with a Jew about purification. (John 3:25) NASB

The author of Acts states twice that Spirit baptism (Acts 1:5; 11:16) is accomplished by *pouring out the Spirit* (Acts 2:33; 10:45), and he previously linked baptism to purification (Luke 11:37-41).

The evidence is not convincing that βαπτίζω and cognates were *limited* to immersion. NT evidence shows βαπτίζω being used for *purification* and for events performed by affusion, both of which are consistent with Ezekiel’s prophecy.

### 3. Matthew 28:19: Universal Transformation, but Is It a Water Rite?

Therefore, go and make people from all nations into *talmidim*, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the *Ruach HaKodesh*. (Matthew 28:19) CJB

Yeshua once commanded his closest disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees<sup>94</sup> and rebuked them for failing to understand that he did not speak in literalities but in metaphor. It appears Matthew 28:19 has likewise mistakenly been considered literal when it should be viewed as a nuanced metaphor.

The venerable thirteen-volume *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia* candidly observed, “If Matt. xxviii, 19 cannot be considered as a baptismal command, we have no direct word of Jesus which institutes baptism.”<sup>95</sup> According to Schaff, Matthew 28:19 *alone* is taken by the Church as Messiah’s command for a universal Christian water rite. Maxwell Johnson raises the salient question:

Indeed, if Jesus himself actually commanded baptism “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” it would be quite difficult to understand the numerous references throughout the Acts of the Apostles to baptism simply “in the name of Jesus” (see Act 2:38) with no indications whatsoever of such trinitarian language.<sup>96</sup>

93. Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Exeter, Devon, U.K: The Paternoster Press, 1986) 149.

94. Matthew 16:6.

95. The *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. I: Aachen—Basilians <http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/encyc/encyc01/articles/baptism.html>

96. Maxwell E. Johnson, *Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999) 2.

No NT source has the Messianic *water* rite performed with a Matthean formula.<sup>97</sup> At the same time, no explicit mention of *water* is made in Matthew 28:19. The verse could be referring to *union-life transformation*.<sup>98</sup>

Criticism that this verse does not speak of a *water rite* is especially relevant in light of another passage, apparently subsequent in time, where Messiah spoke explicitly of Yohanan’s rite (Acts 1:5). He did not annul Yohanan’s rite, but promised a greater Spirit baptism. Acts 1:4-9 is an iteration of the “Great Commission” as momentous as Matthew 28:19 and Messiah was not silent about water, yet we do *not* see Yohanan’s rite replaced by a universal one.

Donald Hagner quotes D.A. Carson favorably on Matthew 28:19: “There is no evidence we have Jesus’ *ipsissima verba* here,” and also says “...it is very clear that the words are recast in Matthew’s style and vocabulary.”<sup>99</sup> Matthew composed his gospel decades after the resurrection, when work among the nations was well in progress, and evidently introduced Messiah’s instruction of sending apostles to the nations at this resurrection encounter. According to Acts 10, some ten years after the resurrection, the apostles were not going to the nations freely. Matthew’s method, locating this evidently later command immediately after the

97. Regarding the *Didache*, Professor Jonathan Draper writes that “[s]ince it was discovered in a monastery in Constantinople and published by P. Bryennios in 1883, the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* has continued to be one of the most disputed of early Christian texts. It has been depicted by scholars as anything between the original of the Apostolic Decree (c. 50 AD) and a late archaising fiction of the early third century.” <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didache.html>; The *Didache* is recognized as a Jewish composition. Chapter 7 concerns baptism and reproduces Matthew 28:19, adding ἐν ὕδατι ζῶντι (in living water). The *Didache* thus makes Matthew 28:19 an explicit formula for water baptism in Jewish purification terminology. Possibly this community did not realize the origin of Yohanan’s rite, still practiced by Yeshua-believing Jews, and took Matthew 28:19 as the command for the Messianic rite. Both the candidate for baptism and administrator are enjoined to fast one or two days prior to baptism, contrary to NT practice. Oskar Skarsaune writes it is “beyond dispute” that the *Didache* is “based on a Jewish catechism addressed to gentiles... scholars therefore often refer to it as a ‘Jewish proselyte catechism.’ That may be somewhat misleading, however. The original group of addressees becomes quite conspicuous in 6:2f: ‘If you can bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect, but if you cannot, do what you can. And concerning food, bear what you can, but keep strictly from that which is offered to idols, for it is the worship of dead gods.’” Skarsaune believes the most natural setting for such an exhortation is to “godfearing gentiles” in Diaspora synagogues, who did *not* undergo full conversion to Judaism and thus are not obliged to obey all Torah commandments. Skarsaune says “very likely, chs. 1-6 are based on a Jewish catechism for gentile godfearers.” Oskar Skarsaune, *Jewish Influence in the Early Church* (Jerusalem: Caspari Center, 1997) 113. The *Didache* can hardly be taken to *prove* the practices of second Temple Yeshua-believing Jews.

98. William Hendriksen takes the εἰς to mean “into” the name, and not “in” the name, as though it were performed “on the authority of” G-d, but he then comments: “Not as if the rite of baptism *as such* brings a person into vital union with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” So Hendriksen admits the goal is “vital union,” a reality far beyond the power of a water rite. This accords with what he stated previously, “Being baptized into the name of,” therefore means ‘being brought into vital relationship with’ that One...” William Hendriksen, *Matthew* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973) 1000-1. “The editor [of Matthew] may well have written [Matthew 28:19]...without at all wishing to represent Christ as having prescribed a fuller formula, but simply the intention of summing up the end and aim of the Christian life into which the convert entered at baptism.” W.C. Allen, *Gospel According to S. Matthew, The International Critical Commentary* (1907) 307.

99. Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14-28, Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1998) 888, 883. Hagner comments that scholarly criticism casts doubt on Matthew 28:19 as originally written in the current triune form. “There is a good possibility that in its original form, as witnessed by the ante-Nicene Eusebian form, the text read ‘make disciples in my name’ (see Conybeare). This shorter reading preserves the symmetrical rhythm of the passage, whereas the triadic formula fits awkwardly into the structure as one might expect if it were an interpolation... It is Kosmala, [Hans Kosmala, “The Conclusion of Matthew,” *Studies, Essays and Reviews* Vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1978) 1-16.] however, who has argued most effectively for the shorter reading, pointing to the central importance of “name of Jesus” in early Christian preaching, the practice of baptism in the name of Jesus, and the singular “in his name” with reference to the hope of the Gentiles in Isa. 42:4b, quoted by Matthew in 12:18-21.” *Ibid.*, 887-888. Apparently the earliest extant texts containing Matthew 28:19 are fourth-century, and have the triune form, as do all subsequent texts. Earlier texts are incomplete, with the verse missing. Conybeare found 17 uses of the short reading of Matthew 28:19 in Eusebius, with only 5 of the triune form, and those in his later works. The shorter version omits baptism and the triune name.

resurrection, accords with his apostolic vocation to faithfully represent the will of his master as he then understood it.<sup>100</sup>

Two other NT writers have Messiah using βαπτίζω to describe, not a *water* rite, but rather an overwhelming experience of suffering.<sup>101</sup> John's gospel has Messiah say he *purified his disciples* through the *word he spoke* to them (John 15:3),<sup>102</sup> which parallels *union-life transformation* produced by the *didactic* work of the apostles.<sup>103</sup>

Messiah's apostle to the nations, Paul, did perform the Messianic rite (in the name of *Yeshua the Messiah*) yet said Messiah *did not send him to baptize* (1 Corinthians 1:17).<sup>104</sup> The verb *sent* (ἀποστέλλω) recalls his apostleship and this raises grave doubts about Matthew 28:19 as a command to *water* baptize the nations.<sup>105</sup>

No convincing proof supports the idea that Matthew 28:19 is a command for a water rite, but abundant evidence indicates it is not. Messianic water baptism in Acts reflects Yohanan's rite which had not been replaced, but remained a *mitzvah* for Israel per Matthew 21:23-27.

#### 4. Peter Orders Non-Jews Baptized: Christian Conversion or Jewish Purification?

Matthew 28:19 and Acts 10:47-48 are viewed as twin buttresses of Christian baptism and are thought to prove that Peter performed the rite Messiah had commanded. But Peter's command for Cornelius' house, like Messiah's command in Matthew, is not indisputable proof of a universal rite.

The conceptual backdrop for Acts 10:1-11:18 is summarized in "what *G-d* has purified, you shall not consider defiled" (Acts 10:15), a point emphasized three times by *G-d* in two renditions by Luke (Acts 10:11-16; 11:5-10). *Yeshua*-believing Jews strove for purity against defilement and avoided non-Jews whom

they considered unclean.<sup>106</sup> They were not yet aware that Messianic salvation was available to the nations *prior to Israel's Kingdom restoration* (Acts 1:6) via the proclamation of the Good News.<sup>107</sup> The paradigm shift that occurred in Cornelius' house was far greater than non-Jews now trusting Messiah. *Yeshua*-believing Jews came to realize Messiah's sacrifice had purifying power far more wonderful than they had imagined.<sup>108</sup>

Darrell Bock observes that apostles were not the initiators of this change, but that "G-d directs and confirms this effort to expand the gospel."<sup>109</sup> *Yeshua*-believing Jews followed and learned as *G-d* proceeded, step-by-step, commanding Cornelius<sup>110</sup> via the angel to send men to "fetch" an apostle (Acts 10:4-6), and giving Peter a vision to show he wanted him to go to non-Jews (Acts 10:17-20).<sup>111</sup> Peter expressed his Jewish sensitivities, yet willingness to obey *G-d*, when he said:

You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. (Acts 10:28) ESV<sup>112</sup>

Peter did not fully know *G-d*'s plan at this point because he simply asked why they sent for him. When Cornelius explained the angel's command (Acts 10:29-33) Peter realized *G-d* is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35). Prior to this he evidently had no awareness of universal salvation as seen in Matthew 28:19. Peter reached a new level of understanding *G-d*'s plan.

Peter began to declare the Good News and *explicitly* mentioned *Yohanan's rite* as an element of the *Besorah* of *Yeshua* (Acts 10:37).<sup>113</sup> He proclaimed Messiah's works, his death and resurrection, and that he is the Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:38-42). He added:

106. NT Jewish thought on Gentile uncleanness evidently centered on diet, since that was the focal point of Peter's sheet vision, cf. Leviticus 11:1-47. *G-d* warned: "Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. I am the L-RD your *G-d*...therefore be holy, because I am holy" (Leviticus 11:43-45).

107. Evidently the Messianic eschatology of the first *Yeshua*-believing Jews emphasized the *national redemption of Israel*, which is entirely in line with promises in Ezekiel 36.

108. *G-d* never abolished "clean and unclean" but revealed that Messiah's sacrifice purifies from *all* defilement, permitting *G-d*'s reconciliation with non-Jews and revealing that the purity laws incumbent on Israel are nevertheless a shadow and form of Messiah's greater reality.

109. Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007) 390.

110. Joseph Fitzmyer writes "the first Gentile to whom the word is carried bears a Latin name, Cornelius." Fitzmyer believes previous salvation stories in Acts are not about Gentiles. Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 31, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 448.

111. "The vision accorded Peter is not meant for his glorification, but rather to make clear that it is *G-d*'s will that Gentiles become part of *G-d*'s people without the obligation of obeying prescriptions of the Mosaic law." Fitzmyer, *Acts* (1997) 448.

112. "Peter still thinks like a Jew, as he addresses the assembled Gentiles...Luke makes Peter state that it was unlawful for a Jew, not only to visit the house of a Gentile, but even to come into close contact with one." But Fitzmyer does believe the vision of the sheet has abrogated Jewish life, including food and association with non-Jews. Fitzmyer, *Acts* (1997) 461.

113. "The outline of Peter's summary very much parallels Mark's presentation of Jesus's Ministry: John the Baptist, the Galilean ministry, and then Jesus meeting his fate in Jerusalem. Luke's Gospel follows this outline as well." Bock, *Acts* (2007) 397. This is apparently the *Besorah* Peter announced for ten years. The question arises, why mention *Yohanan's rite* if it was inferior to a "Christian" rite? Mention of *Yohanan's rite* in the *Besorah* for ten years is evidence it was the only one of which Peter was aware.

100. In any case Matthew 28:19 has Messiah saying, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age," and this certainly leaves open the possibility of additional commands long after the resurrection.

101. Cf. Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50.

102. ἦδη ὑμεῖς καθαροὶ ἐστε διὰ τὸν λόγον ὃν λελάληκα ὑμῖν.

103. While the following exegetes doubtless believe in a universal Christian rite, their comments express a reality far beyond symbolic ritual. Donald Hagner writes: "[T]his baptism brings a person *into an existence* that is fundamentally determined by, i.e. ruled by, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit." [Emphasis added], *Matthew 14-28, Word Biblical Commentary* (1995) 888.; R.V.G. Tasker writes: "Furthermore, it may well be that the true explanation why the early church did not at once administer baptism in the threefold name, is that the words of xxviii 19 were not originally meant by our Lord as a baptismal formula. He was not giving instructions about the actual words to be used in the service of baptism, but, as has already been suggested, was indicating that the baptized person would by baptism pass into the possession of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." *St. Matthew, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976) 275. So also J. K. Howard, *New Testament Baptism* (London: Pickering and Inglis Ltd., 1970) 45, Simcox, *The First Gospel. Its meaning and message*. Greenwich, Conn: Seabury Press, 1963) 311, and Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew* (London: E. Stock, 1909) 433.

104. A typical rebuttal is that Paul meant he was not mainly concerned with baptism. But that should have been obvious to the Corinthians because he had baptized so few. The implication is that Paul's statement is absolute; Messiah did not send him to baptize, which makes sense if Paul continued to perform *Yohanan's* Messianic rite for *Yeshua*-believing Jews, even though he was primarily *sent* to non-Jews.

105. At the very least it would be remarkable that the early *Yeshua*-believing community could be convinced Messiah sent apostles to baptize the nations, but Paul, the *premiere apostle to the nations* performed it so infrequently.

To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. (Acts 10:43) ESV

Suddenly Messiah poured out the Spirit,<sup>114</sup> satisfied that the non-Jews had trusted him for forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:44-46). This Gift promised to Israel is now seen as the inheritance of anyone who trusts Yeshua.<sup>115</sup> Bock observes, “The Jews, called literally the ‘believers out of circumcision’ (οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς πιστοὶ, *hoi ek peritomēs pistoi*), are amazed that this gift of the Spirit, which is so fundamentally tied to salvation, can be given to Gentiles.”<sup>116</sup> Their astonishment tells us they did not understand G-d’s plan. Did they gain *full* understanding in the moments they observed the scene? Bock evidently believes so: “Peter understands the significance of the Spirit’s distribution. The Spirit is the sign of the eschaton’s presence and shows that God is blessing the Gentiles directly.” But Peter asked his defilement-resisting companions<sup>117</sup> if they had cause to *forbid*<sup>118</sup> water for baptism, evidently revealing less than one hundred percent certainty.<sup>119</sup> Peter seeks consensus and provides opportunity for opposing views,<sup>120</sup> i.e. this is no cut-and-dried command. They see no conflict and baptize them (Acts 10:47-48). The question remains, why?

- No evidence supports the idea this rite was the execution of Matthew 28:19.<sup>121</sup>
- Evidence points to defilement-resisting Jews performing their *Kingdom purification*.

These Jewish witnesses apparently ordered *bodily purification* for Cornelius’ house from the same reasoning applicable to all Jews.<sup>122</sup> Peter’s command evidently did not flow out of awareness of a universal Church, but of a *purified* remnant of Israel.

Upon return to Jerusalem some in the Yeshua-believing community<sup>123</sup> complained that Peter had defiled himself by associating with non-Jews, prompting

114. Cf. Acts 2:33.

115. Cf. Galatians 3:14.; “In recording the amazement of the Jews that the Spirit has fallen on Gentiles, a promise traced throughout Luke-Acts reappears (Luke 3:15-17; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:16-41; 11:15-17; 15:8).” Bock, *Acts* (2007) 400.

116. “G-d is working directly to make the point. There is no apostolic intermediary on earth who helps with the distribution. Those present immediately understand the importance of what has taken place, appreciating the divine initiative.” Bock, *Acts* (2007) 400-401.

117. Peter did not ask non-Jews if they wanted to be baptized, but queried Jewish companions if, as Jews, they could permit this rite for non-Jews. He doubtless considered the rite subject to evaluation by Torah principles.

118. Use of *κωλύω* may parallel Jewish legal *binding injunctions* (איסור) or *release from obligations* (היתר) (Matthew 16:19).

119. Bock apparently sees no uncertainty: “Peter asks if there is anything to prevent their being baptized. The interrogative particle (*mētī*) tells us the expected answer: ‘No, nothing should prevent this.’ (Culy and Parsons 2003: 216).” Bock, *Acts* (2007) 401. But the phrasing “nothing *should* prevent” leaves open the possibility some factor *might* oppose. This verse may actually hint at bold Peter *in character*, cf. Luke 9:33, where he spoke out, “not knowing what he was saying,” and Luke 22:33; 22:49 (John 18:10); Luke 22:54-62; 24:12.

120. But lack of full appreciation of what occurred might render their cumulative opinion mistaken.

121. Luke-Acts has no command from Messiah for a water rite that replaces Yohanan’s, cf. Luke 7:29-30; Acts 1:5.

122. Also relevant in view of the purification promised Israel in Ezekiel 36:25.

123. Bock observes: “Marshall (1980: 195) is right that the RSV’s rendering, ‘circumcision party,’ is not correct (see the same phrase in 10:45 merely of Jewish Christians). The NET renders this ‘circumcised believers.’ These sensitive Jewish Christians are not organized but react out of an instinctive concern for the law and the covenant. Marshall notes that the problem is one of both food and fellowship (also Bruce 1990: 267).” Bock, *Acts* (2007) 406.

him to retell the story (Acts 11:2-16). In his repetition he explicitly mentioned Yohanan’s rite but did not mention baptizing the non-Jews. Instead he said he recalled Messiah’s word moments before ascension: “Yohanan baptized with water and you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 11:16). This water-Spirit parallelism occurs six times in the NT<sup>124</sup> which must indicate its profound significance. Robert Guelich writes on Mark 1:4, 8:

To view the Spirit as the agent of cleansing, the one bringing the eschatological forgiveness of sins, corresponds with the Baptist’s preaching of repentance-baptism to be lived out in one’s daily life with a view to the ultimate forgiveness of sins (1:4). Those submitting to John’s baptism (cleansing clearly implied) prepare themselves for the Greater One’s baptism by the Holy Spirit (cleansing also implied) who ultimately forgives their sins as an eschatological act of salvation (1:8).<sup>125</sup>

Beasley-Murray likewise says Messiah baptizes “for cleansing and renewal in a more glorious way” than Yohanan.<sup>126</sup> Peter thus quoted Messiah to end the dispute over Jewish association with non-Jews who were “defiled” according to the Torah. Non-Jews who receive the outpoured Spirit are “baptized,” i.e. *purified*, and also enjoy intimacy with G-d just as Jews do.<sup>127</sup>

Peter’s recollection of Messiah’s word in Acts 11:16 is a Lukan device permitting him to admit discreetly he had misunderstood the *full* significance of Spirit-baptism when he ordered the non-Jews water baptized. Peter had thought, quite reasonably, that non-Jews need purification like any Jew and did not realize Spirit-baptism is the *Ultimate Purification* for humanity, though later he declared this very idea to the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:7-9). Luke, in effect, resolves Peter’s *misstep* of ordering water baptism for non-Jews.

Three principal implications result from this view: **1.** The Messianic rite practiced in Acts by Yeshua-believing Jews is Yohanan’s and should still be performed for repentant Jews; **2.** Spirit baptism is the salvation event for non-Jews, and ultimately is the culminating salvation event for Jews as well; and **3.** there is no universal Christian conversion-initiation water rite.

The conventional view sees no explicit mention of a *misstep* by Peter, so he made no mistake when he ordered the non-Jews water baptized. Conventional commentators view the significance of Acts 11:16 in a way that supports universal Christian baptism. Peter witnessed non-Jews receive the eschatological Spirit and *immediately understood* they too were eligible for all the graces of

124. Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; John 1:33; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5; 11:16.

125. Robert A. Guelich, Mark 1-8:26, v 34A, WBC (1989) 25.

126. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism* (1988) 37.

127. Peter’s recognition in Acts 11:16 of Spirit baptism as the true purification must then also be the background for 1 Peter 3:21 about the baptism that provides salvation, ὁ ἀντίτυπον νῦν καὶ ἡμᾶς σὸφζει βάπτισμα, οὐ σαρκὸς ἀπόθεσις ὀύπου, ἀλλὰ συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτημα εἰς Θεόν, δι’ ἀναστάσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The baptism that saves is explicitly said to be *not of flesh for the putting away of filth*, but of a συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς, a *good conscience*, supporting the view that he speaks of Spirit baptism. The equating of Acts 2:28 with 1 Peter 3:21 must certainly be reconsidered in light of Acts 11:16.

Yeshua-faith, including a now universal water rite. He repeated the water-Spirit parallelism of Messiah as evidence that non-Jews received the same Spirit that Yeshua-believing Jews had, proof that G-d accepted them and that Jews must also accept them.<sup>128</sup>

The conventional view puts no stress on the purification of defiled non-Jews, even though that is the conceptual foundation of the entire passage. Nor does it deal with the fact that this episode cannot be the prototype for long-promoted Christian baptism, because Messiah poured out the Spirit before a water rite.<sup>129</sup> Finally this passage presents Spirit-baptism in sharply-drawn definition, not agnostic vagueness.

The Cornelius episode concludes with the Jerusalem Community accepting G-d's transcendent revelation:

On hearing these things, they stopped objecting and began to praise God, saying, "This means that God has enabled the Goyim as well to do *t'shuwah* and have life!" (Acts 11:18) CJB

So here they *finally see* something akin to the command in Matthew 28:19, but this was decades *before* Matthew penned his gospel. It seems doubtless that this episode influenced his rendering of Matthew 28:19, but his nuanced use of *baptize* has nothing to do with Peter's command to baptize non-Jews.

#### **Luke-Acts: Baptismal Inconsistency?**

Baptism episodes in Luke-Acts are often thought inexplicably incoherent, including Cornelius' experience discussed above. But the difficulties subside when the three repetitions of Yohanan baptizing with water and Messiah baptizing with the Spirit<sup>130</sup> are taken as scaffolding for the subject in Luke-Acts, and that this water-Spirit parallelism itself is seen based on Ezekiel 36:25-27.

**1. Luke 3:16**—Luke establishes Yohanan's miraculous origin, providing unassailable prophetic credentials. Yohanan arrives on the scene preaching Israel's purification with water, but promising a Mightier One would *purify* with the Spirit. Messiah is described as possessor of the Spirit (Luke 4:18-19) who demonstrates the Spirit's power (Luke 11:19) and who will distribute the Spirit as power from on high (Luke 24:49).

**2. Acts 1:5**—The foundation of baptism for Acts is tied to the promised Spirit in contrast to the work of Yohanan, this time from Messiah. Luke thus lays the theological basis *for the reader* to understand baptism in Acts, even if the

128. Cf. Bock, "So the implication here is that Peter allowed them to be baptized in water as a confirmation of their faith and presence in the new community (on water and Spirit, John 3:5; Ezek. 36:25-27; Bruce 1990: 269). Peter remembers this teaching of Jesus about the Spirit as the sign of the promise and repeats it here in verse 16." Bock, *Acts* (2007) 409. Also F.F. Bruce, *Acts*, NICNT (1988) 222.

129. This episode contradicts the sacramental notion that a water rite, of necessity, conveys the Holy Spirit, *ex opere operato*. Rather than engaging the issue Joseph Fitzmyer simply disregards it: "One should not ask how they might have received the Spirit without having been baptized; that would be to miss the point of the Lucan story. Gentiles are baptized, because that is part of the process by which one becomes a Christian." Fitzmyer, *Acts* (1997) 467.

130. In the mouths of Yohanan (Luke 3:16), Messiah (Acts 1:5) and Peter (Acts 11:16).

characters described did not fully comprehend. Yohanan's rite was not annulled for Yeshua-believing Jews, but Messiah's work of baptizing, *purifying*, with the Spirit was not fully understood to be of far greater importance.

**3. Acts 11:16**—The initial chapters of Acts describe growing awareness of Messiah's greatness by Yeshua-believing Jews. Full understanding of Messiah's work of baptizing with the Spirit occurs in Acts 10-11. The outpouring of the Spirit on Cornelius' house was quickly seen as proof that Messiah uses the Spirit for *ultimate purification*. From that point on in Acts, Luke describes being baptized with the Spirit, though Yohanan's rite is never annulled for Israel (cf. Acts 13:24).

Robert L. Reymond, a Reformed theologian, noted eleven *Apostolic Baptisms*<sup>131</sup> in the NT (in Acts and 1 Corinthians) in his article on baptism in *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*. Like most commentators, Reymond believes all refer to water baptism of "Christians." But there are reasons to question his assumptions. As seen above, significant implications result from the identity of the recipient, whether Jewish-Israelite, or non-Jewish. Acts also explicitly describes Spirit baptism, so it is crucial to weigh the possibility that Luke describes Spirit-baptism in cases that are less clear, and not simply assume he wrote of a water rite.

What follows are the first nine baptisms Reymond lists, which are found in Acts. Each entry is followed with general comments and a remark on whether the recipient is certainly Jewish or Gentile, or whether the identity is ambiguous, and whether the baptism is certainly water or Spirit, or rather if the text is ambiguous.

#### **1. Jews in Acts 2:37-41<sup>132</sup>: Jewish, certain; water, certain**

The men of Israel are called to water baptism by Jewish apostles, easily affirmed as a post-resurrection proclamation of Israel's Messianic water rite announced by Yohanan.

#### **2. Samaritans in Acts 8:12-17: Israelite, certain; water, certain**

Samaritan origins as Israelites and their claim to the Torah obligate them no less than Jews to repent and receive Yeshua as Messiah of Israel. Yohanan's purification is for Israel

131. Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) 926.

132. Acts 2:38 relates *solely* to Yeshua-believing Jews who are obligated to Torah-loyal behavior. Peter commands the Jewish audience to repent and undergo Yohanan's eschatological purification rite in Messiah's name. Many denominations mistakenly apply this verse to *all Christians*, teaching there is no salvation from eternal damnation unless one undergoes a water rite to obtain forgiveness of sins, unwittingly putting performance of a water rite *above* faith in Messiah for his gracious salvation.



and eminently suitable for them. The delay in giving the Spirit apparently signals G-d's demand to ensure full reparation of the breach between Jews and Samaritans.<sup>133</sup>

### 3. The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:35-38: Jewish, ambiguous; water, certain

Exegetes say εὐνοῦχος could refer to *either* government position *or* physical emasculation. John Stott says the Ethiopian's pilgrimage to Jerusalem "may mean that he was actually Jewish, either by birth or conversion, for the Jewish dispersion had penetrated at least into Egypt and probably beyond...It seems unlikely that he was a Gentile, since Luke does not present him as the first Gentile convert."<sup>134</sup> So the Ethiopian may well be a Jewish official, not emasculated, on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and eligible for Yohanan's rite.

### 4. Paul in Acts 9:18; see 22:16: Jewish, certain; Spirit, ambiguous

Though Ananias and Shaul are Jews and eligible for Yohanan's water baptism, this episode evidently is speaking of Spirit baptism. Ananias lays his hands on Shaul before speaking. His mission is to restore Shaul's sight and fill him with the Spirit. His eyes were healed, and arising he "was baptized" passively. Evidently *baptized* refers to being filled with the Spirit. Luke confidently assumes throughout Luke-Acts that readers know about being filled with the Spirit (cf. Luke 1:15, 41, 67; Luke 2:25, Luke 11:13).

The idea that Acts 22:16 may speak of Spirit baptism by Messiah, where Ananias told Shaul to arise and "*get baptized,*" by calling on Messiah's name, makes better sense than the wide-ranging attempts at explaining the text as referring to a water rite.<sup>135</sup>

133. Evidently G-d wanted Messiah's highest representatives in Jerusalem to ensure full Samaritan repentance from the 1000-year estrangement from Jerusalem and Judah; Ben Witherington notes that Acts 8:16 "is another example of a narrative aside. It suggests that Theophilus would need an explanation to the effect that the Holy Spirit had not yet fallen on any of the Samaritans, but rather they previously had only received water baptism in Jesus' name. Theophilus might have assumed from accounts in Acts 2-3 that water and Spirit would in normal course of affairs come more closely together." *The Acts of the Apostles: a Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 286. Acts 8:16 is thus a qualification about the goings-on in Samaria and one must heed unusual features of the verse, such as the periphrasis, βαπτισμένοι ὑπῆρχον—Thayer's translation of Winer's grammar states: "Huparchein with the Part(icip)le in Acts viii 16...is not a mere circumlocution for the finite verb, for "*bebapt. esan*" would be the regular expression, there being no other form for the Plup (erfect)." Winer, George Benedict, *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament*. 7th ed, translation by J. Henry Thayer (Philadelphia: Smith, English, & Co., 1869) 350. By writing "not a mere circumlocution" Winer says *huparchein* coupled with *bebaptismenoi* has grammatical significance different from *bebaptismenoi esan*, the regular expression for the pluperfect, i.e. a fixed state of existence in the past that resulted from a finished action. Perhaps βαπτισμένοι ὑπῆρχον does not indicate the pluperfect, unlike typical translations, cf. "they were baptized." *Make a Beginning*—J.R. Lumby says of Acts 8:16: "16. *huperchon*. This verb seems to be used with somewhat of its original force = 'to make a beginning.' These men had taken one step, and had been baptized and thus admitted into the community." Lumby, *The Acts of the Apostles, Cambridge Greek Testament* (Cambridge: University Press, 1920) 181. So *huperchon* was flexible and usage subject to interpretation. The *Expositor's Greek Testament* by Nicoll cites Lumby's "to make a beginning." Furthermore, item 354 of Blass, Debrunner, Funk 9/10th edition grammar (BDF) says: "*Huparchein* only with the perfect participle...is sometimes used in an analogous way to denote *the beginning of a state or condition*" (emphasis added). Blass, F. & Debrunner, A. *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament*, translated by Robert Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 8th printing 1975). So *huparchein* can cause a periphrasis to indicate the beginning of a state. BDF concludes in item 414 that the periphrasis is "perfect passive infinitive" which apparently indicates, "to have been baptized." BDF evidently assumes that *baptize* speaks of water unless explicitly told otherwise. But if Luke rather relates to New Covenant spiritual transformation, then *huparchein* may instead indicate an initial and incomplete stage of being baptized into the name of the Lord Yeshua (i.e. *beginning* to have been baptized...). In addition, Howard Marshall commented: "It is to be noted that the story presupposes that it can be known whether or not a person has received the Spirit." *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980) 158.

134. John Stott, *The Message of Acts*, (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994) 160.; so also Fitzmyer, *Acts* (1997) 410.

135. See for example the survey in Stanley E. Porter's article 'Did Paul Baptize Himself?' Porter writes: "The use of the middle, here seems to indicate that Ananias does not tell Paul to baptize someone else (that would require the active voice form), nor does he tell him to be baptized by someone (that would require the passive voice form), but he does tell him to be involved in the baptismal process, with Paul the subject of the verb. The action of baptism is internal to the process itself, rather than an action acted upon another or being caused by someone or something external to the process. Whether someone else was actually involved in the process by Paul is not something that can be decided by the use of the middle voice form, and to ask it to do so is to ask the wrong question of the Greek middle." Porter suggests the following gloss, "get up, experience baptism and wash away your sins" which is amenable to Spirit baptism by Messiah. "Did Paul Baptize Himself? A Problem of the Greek Voice System" in *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies*, edited by Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 91-109.

### 5. Caesareans in Acts 10:44-48: Gentile, certain; water, certain

#### *Peter's Momentary Misstep—The Church's Age-Long Misunderstanding*

The command for non-Jewish water baptism was not a conversion-initiation rite for the universal Church.<sup>136</sup> Rather it was a superfluous but logical *misstep* by Peter resulting from life-long discipline as a purity-observant Jew, as he related to Torah-ignorant non-Jews. The full understanding is made explicit in Acts 11:16.

Lest anyone doubt the possibility of a misstep, Galatians 2:11-14 tells of Peter acting inappropriately among non-Jewish Yeshua-believers, apparently the result of ingrained defilement consciousness. Acts 18 shows Apollos with a deficient understanding of baptism, and in Acts 19 recipients of baptism in Ephesus had a deficient experience. The point is others in Acts also experienced misunderstanding about baptism. Moreover, Peter quickly provides the correct view in Acts 11:16.

### 6. Lydia in Acts 16:13-15: Gentile, ambiguous; Spirit, ambiguous

Lydia's house was passively baptized. We are not told whether it was *water by Paul* or *Spirit by Messiah*. The reading of Acts up to this point leads more naturally to the Spirit by Messiah. She was at a place of prayer on *Shabbat* and though obviously a "God-fearer" she *might* have been Jewish.

### 7. Philippian jailer in Acts 16:30-34: Gentile, certain; Spirit, ambiguous?

The Jailer's house was passively baptized, immediately. We are not told whether it was *water by Paul* or *Spirit by Messiah*. The reading of Acts up to this point leads more naturally to the Spirit by Messiah.

The word "*immediately,*" *parachrema* (παραχρόνῃμα) adds weight to the idea that this is miraculous Spirit baptism. It only occurs for supernatural events in all fifteen usages by Luke (Lk 1:64, 4:39, 5:25, 8:44,47, 13:13, 18:43, 19:11, 22:60, Ac 3:7, 5:10, 12:23, 13:11, 16:26, 16:33). This includes the doors of the jail that sprang open immediately—*παραχρόνῃμα*—just earlier in verse 26. Luke's use here may also imply that reception of the Spirit was not always quite as immediate.

### 8. Corinthians in Acts 18:8: Gentile, ambiguous; Spirit, ambiguous

The context of Luke-Acts makes it most reasonable to assume the unnamed baptism the Corinthians receive passively is Spirit baptism, which then naturally corresponds to 1 Corinthians 12:13 (but not to 1 Corinthians 1, though Jews in Corinth such as Crispus would participate in Yohanan's purification, see below).

We now read of Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew, in Acts 18:24-28, speaking boldly to the Jews in Ephesus about Yeshua the Messiah but only aware of Yohanan's rite. Since Apollos was Jewish and preaching in the synagogue, it is no surprise that he would administer the Messianic rite for Israel, and would do so very likely

136. Neither is this proselyte baptism. There is no evidence proselyte baptism was then in practice, and if it had been proselyte baptism, Cornelius' house literally became Jews and part of Israel.

in the name of Messiah whom he announced.<sup>137</sup> Yet we are told of a deficiency in Apollos' understanding of baptism, namely that he *only knew* Yohanan's baptism. Commentators typically say this means he did not know of the later Christian water rite commanded by Messiah, even though he was teaching about him.<sup>138</sup> But it is equally possible he was ignorant that Messiah now baptizes by pouring out the Spirit. So Apollos was ignorant of either Spirit baptism or a universal Christian rite for conversion-initiation into the Church.

No internal evidence in Luke-Acts suggests Messiah commanded a rite to supersede Yohanan's to Israel, and in Acts 10-11 he revealed the superiority of Spirit baptism. Taken together, that would leave us with the first alternative, that Apollos was ignorant of Spirit baptism. Aquila and Pricilla rectified Apollos' lack of understanding.

### 9. John's disciples in Acts 19:1-7: Jewish, ambiguous; Spirit, ambiguous

Many exegetes say these are disciples of Messiah, not of Yohanan, no matter if their experience was deficient.<sup>139</sup> The section immediately preceding, Acts 18:24-28, describes Apollos, who zealously proclaimed the *Besorah*, but knew only Yohanan's rite, not realizing Messiah now pours out the Spirit. These disciples who have not received the Spirit appear to have heard the *Besorah* from Apollos and are probably Jewish. Paul's question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit, believing?" εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες clearly points to the ultimate remedy of the Ephesian lack as Spirit baptism from Messiah, not a new universal Christian rite.

And *hearing* they were *baptized into the name of the Lord Yeshua*. This verse is Luke's remark on what happened. It is not the record of Paul pronouncing a formula. Though widely believed the Ephesians were rebaptized with water, this time in the name of the Lord, is this really the case? Are we to believe these disciples of Messiah needed water baptism *again*, in his name, so they could *afterward* receive the Spirit, Paul's crucial concern? This would be the sequence because in the following verse the Spirit came upon them when Paul laid his hands on them, not during a ritual with water.

There is no evidence that the hundred and twenty on *Shavuot* were baptized with any baptism other than Yohanan's, *just like the Ephesians*, yet Messiah baptized them with his Spirit. Also on *Shavuot* the three thousand were baptized with a baptism "of repentance" to be able to receive the Spirit and these Ephesians had already undergone the "baptism of repentance."

If the contrast between water and Spirit is the foundation for baptism in Acts, then since they had already undergone Yohanan's baptism there was only one other. The crucial issue that triggered Paul's questioning was receiving the Spirit. So it seems far more likely that Luke is *not* describing a baptismal formula of water baptism, but rather he *narrates* a new state of being—εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ. They were baptized with the Spirit and were truly baptized into the name of the Lord Yeshua, entering the realm where his name rules. This new state was entered as Paul laid hands on them and the Holy Spirit came upon them.<sup>140</sup>

When the thrice-repeated water-Spirit parallel in Luke-Acts is taken as the basis for evaluating baptism in Acts we see a reasonable flow of thought, especially when Ezekiel 36:25-27 is kept in mind as background for the idea. The purification by water that Yeshua-believing Jews practiced is not to be confused with the magnificent *Purification* Messiah accomplishes by baptizing with the Spirit. Peter's command in Cornelius' house must no longer be considered initiation-conversion for the Church, but rather a Jewish purification performed by Torah-loyal Jews, and recognized as such in Acts 11:16.

### 5. Co-entombed with Messiah: Water Rite or Inner Transformation?

Those observing a rite of immersion point to Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12 as evidence that Paul practiced this form, which challenges the idea that Ezekiel 36:25-27 was inaugurated. But Paul was also aware of *affusion* in the process of salvation, supporting Ezekiel's prophecy.

[G-d] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior. (Titus 3:5-6) ESV

Philip H. Towner sees Ezekiel 36:25-27ff throughout this letter and observes on Titus 3:5 that,

[T]he epicenter of that network of texts [in Ezekiel] is the promise of renewal by the 'in-giving' of the Spirit (36:27). Given the potency of the Spirit-tradition and some verbal and conceptual cues, this language ('the washing [*loutron*] of regeneration,' 'renewal by the Holy Spirit') would call to mind vivid images of the Spirit-promise in

140. Only four places in Acts are thought to describe a "formula" for baptism. The Messianic water rite commanded twice by Peter—Acts 2:38, Acts 10:48—"In the name of Yeshua the Messiah"—ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, and Luke's two narratives on Samaritans and Ephesians that speak of the "Lord Yeshua"—Acts 8:16, Acts 19:5—baptized in (into) the name of the Lord Yeshua.—εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ. The formulations are different. F.F. Bruce said "[t]here is probably a slight difference in force between this phrase (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι Ἰησοῦ) and εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ (8:16; 19:5). Here [in Acts 2:38] the ἐν is to be understood instrumentally; the name of Jesus is an attendant circumstance of baptism... ἐπὶ, [means] 'on the authority of someone.'" Regarding εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Bruce says, "So the person baptized 'into the name of the Lord Jesus' passes into the sphere in which Jesus is acknowledged as Lord, becoming (so to speak) Jesus' property." *Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990); 129, 221. We note that this difference might be related to receiving the Holy Spirit; Acts 8:16, Acts 19:5 are episodes where the Spirit was not initially received. Philip Schaff has a similar view as Bruce: "The Greek phrase *baptizein en or epi toi onomati Iesou* means that the act of baptism takes place with the utterance of the name of Jesus; *baptizein eis to onoma Iesou* means that the person baptized enters into the relation of belonging to Christ, of being his property." <http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/encyc/encyc01/articles/baptism.html>

137. F.F. Bruce writes that Apollos evidently did not know of water baptism in the name of Messiah Yeshua. *The Book of the Acts—Revised*, (1988) 359.

138. Cf. Fitzmyer who says, "This would make Apollos a "Johannine" Christian at most, to use Conzelmann's term, or an adept of "an immature form of Christianity" (Käsemann, "Disciples of John")." Fitzmyer, *Acts* (1997) 639.

139. The remaining twenty-six usages of μαθητής in Acts beyond 19:1 all refer to Yeshua-believers. Three times Luke introduces "disciples" without a definite article, 9:10 Ananias; 9:36 Tabitha; 16:1 Timothy. The following examples of τις in Acts point to the virtual certainty that the anarthrous τινες μαθητάς in 19:1 are Yeshua-believers. Acts 5:1 Ἀνὴρ δὲ τις Ἀνανίας ὀνόματι; 9:10 ... ἦν δὲ τις μαθητής ἐν Δαμασκῷ ὀνόματι Ἀνανίας; 9:36 Ἐν Ἰόππῃ δὲ τις ἦν μαθητρία ὀνόματι Ταβιθά; 16:1 ... καὶ ἰδοὺ μαθητὴς τις ἦν ἔξει ὀνόματι Τιμόθεος; 16:14 καὶ τις γυνὴ ὀνόματι Λυδία; 18:2 καὶ εὐρών τινα Ἰουδαίου ὀνόματι Ἀκύλαν; 18:24 Ἰουδαίος δὲ τις Ἀπολλῶς ὀνόματι, Ἀλεξανδρεὺς τῷ γένει; 19:1 ... [κατ]ελθεῖν εἰς Ἐφεσον καὶ εὐρεῖν τινες μαθητάς.

Ezek 36:25-27—which included imagery of sprinkling with water, renewal of the heart, and the gift of the Spirit.<sup>141</sup>

Paul asserts G-d “saved *us*” through this λουτρον (washing),<sup>142</sup> which Towner says was not water, but Spirit, that *might* be symbolized by a water rite.<sup>143</sup> Paul provides another description of the salvation event in Romans:

Because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (Romans 5:5) ESV

James Dunn comments on Romans 5:5:

The perfect tense of *ekkekxutoi* (poured out) as usual indicates a continuing effect of a past event. Here again the experiential nature of what Paul has in mind, with some element of ecstasy not excluded, cf. Acts 2:1-4, comes strongly into view, under the vivid metaphor of a cloudburst on a parched countryside.

Here it is important to recall that in prophetic expectation the outpouring of the Spirit was looked for as the mark of the new age (see particularly Isa 32:15; 34:16; 44:3; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26-27; 37:4-14; Joel 2:28-32).<sup>144</sup>

Paul’s view of Messianic salvation evidently included Ezekiel 36:25-27. Yet in Romans 6:3 Paul writes of union with Messiah, being *baptized into “his” death*. Did Paul speak of a water rite here, or rather a fundamental *transformation* of life? Certainly this is a state of existence far beyond anything a water rite can produce or symbolize.<sup>145</sup> Paul amplifies the idea in verse 4, of being co-entombed (συνετάφημεν)<sup>146</sup> with Messiah in a βάπτισμα *into death*. No matter what side of the denominational divide, all agree that the reality of βάπτισμα *into death* is a transaction only the Spirit accomplishes. Paul’s use of baptism speaks explicitly of spiritual transformation and might have nothing to do with a *literal* water rite.

Though James Dunn sees βαπτίζω related to water, he nevertheless cautions against subordinating Pauline Spirit events to a water rite:

Reception of the Spirit was generally a vivid experience in the remembered beginnings of Christian commitment, and Paul refers to it repeatedly, and could do so, precisely because it was such a striking highlight in the crucial transition...Later generations, for whom the central or even only remembered experience of Christian beginnings was their [water] baptism, need to take care lest they assume that it was always that way. Paul’s testimony is quite to the contrary. It was the experienced Spirit which made the greatest impact on their lives and in their memory...The focal and most memorable feature of their conversion and initiation was the gift of the Spirit.<sup>147</sup>

One might easily conclude βαπτίζω and βάπτισμα in Pauline usage speak *directly* of the Spirit without reference to water (cf. Acts 1:5). Dunn admits as much in his exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12:13, saying that the likely source for the idea of *being baptized into one Body* is found in the second half of the saying “Yohanan baptized with water, *Messiah baptizes with the Spirit*.”<sup>148</sup> Dunn says of 1 Corinthians 12:13:

In the light of such a tradition history of the motif (“baptized in Spirit”) it is at least likely that Paul, in his own use of it, likewise alluded simply to the Corinthians’ experience of receiving the Spirit.

If, as Dunn suggests, 1 Corinthians 12:13 refers directly to Messiah baptizing with the Spirit, then why not *Spirit Baptism* as well for Galatians 3:26-28,<sup>149</sup> Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:11-12,<sup>150</sup> and Ephesians 4:5, all of which are ambiguous regarding water, but which *demand* a real transaction by the Spirit.

Paul refers to baptism in eight passages of five epistles<sup>151</sup> and was not bound to a single “Christian” technical idea. Four differing usages occur in 1 Corinthians, two of which are not specifically “Christian,” i.e. 10:2, Israel baptized into

141. “Ezekiel echoes—linked by the key themes and word groups of ‘cleansing’, ‘lawlessness’, ‘nationhood’—encompasses the new Spirit-reality, even if he delays explicit reference to the Spirit until [Titus] 3:5-6.” Towner lists Ezekiel 36:25-29, 31, 33 as the basis of Spirit promise in Paul’s thought. Philip Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus, The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006) 765-784.

142. Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:11.

143. “‘Washing’ in everyday usage refers to literal cleansing with water, or to the place of bathing. But here, as in Eph 5:26, the term falls into the metaphorical sphere, with the image of washing referring to a spiritual cleansing. Some have seen in this image a reference to the rite of water baptism, but there is reason to see it rather as a reference to the work of the Spirit in terms of a ‘washing’ that, then, the outward rite of water baptism might serve to symbolize.” Towner, NICNT (2006) 781. The λουτρον of Ephesians 5:26 bears similar import, ἵνα αὐτὴν ἀγάσῃ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι, and here we are told the analogy is directly related to “water of the word” of the Good News about Messiah. Cf. 1 Corinthians 6:11, ἀλλὰ ἀπελούσασθε, ἀλλὰ ἡγιασθήτε, ἀλλὰ ἐδικαιώθητε ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν.

144. James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, vol. 38, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1988) 253-66.

145. Howard Marshall observes: “The theological point which Paul is making is thus not drawn from baptism as such but from the historical fact of what happened to Christ, and hence it is not tied to a particular mode of baptism. Immersion may afford a useful symbolism of burial with Christ, but we do not need to presuppose immersion in order to explain Paul’s terminology any more than in the case of circumcision regarded as an aspect of baptism (Col. 2:11-12).” See “The Meaning of the Verb ‘Baptize,’” *Dimensions of Baptism: Biblical and Theological Studies* (2002) 22.

146. Paul used this word, συνετάφημεν (co-entombed), with eleven others, to describe the profound “union” Yeshua-believers share with Messiah. Consider the following twelve shared aspects of his suffering, death, resurrection and exaltation: 1) Romans 8:17, συμπάσχω, co-suffer; 2) Romans 6:6, συσταυρώσω, co-crucified; 3) 2 Timothy 2:11, συναποθνήσκω, co-died; 4) Romans 6:5, σύμφυτος, co-united (in death); 5) Romans 6:4, συνθάπτω, co-entombed; 6) Ephesians 2:5, συζωοποιέω, co-quicken; 7) 2 Timothy 2:11, συζάω, co-live; 8) Ephesians 2:6, συνεγείρω, co-raised; 9) Romans 8:17, συνδοξάζω, co-glorified; 10) Ephesians 2:6, συγκαθίζω, co-seated; 11) 2 Timothy 2:12, συμβασιλεύω, co-reign; 12) Romans 8:17, συγκληρονόμος, co-heirs.

147. James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998) 452-3.

148. “On any analysis of the tradition history lying behind this talk of being ‘baptized in the Spirit’ there is one obvious trail to be followed—though surprisingly neglected by most commentators. It is the trail which begins in the tradition of John the Baptist’s most striking utterance: ‘I baptize you with water, but he [the Coming One] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit (and fire).’” Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (1998) 450.; See also Gordon Fee: “What makes the Corinthians one is their common experience of the Spirit, the very Spirit responsible for and manifested in the great diversity just argued for in vv. 4-11. For Paul the reception of the Spirit is the *sine qua non* of Christian life. The Spirit is what distinguishes the believer from the nonbeliever (2:10-14); the Spirit is what especially marks the beginning of Christian life (Gal. 3:2-3); the Spirit above all is what makes a person a child of G-d (Rom. 8:14-17).” Fee says that the word *baptize* by no means proves water was intended, for though it was used as a Christian technical term “one may not thereby assume that Paul intended its technical sense here.” Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987) 603-4.

149. Mark Nanos sees Galatians 3:27 referring to a water rite and notes a blatant contradiction. Paul’s argument against circumcision results from his desire to “undermine a natural aspect of any ritualized approach to identity such as is undertaken in the rite of proselyte conversion,” yet Paul supposedly performed a water rite that, in effect, *negated this intended outcome*. See *The Irony of Galatians, Paul’s Letter in First-Century Context* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress 2002) 225.

150. Paul’s *circumcision of Messiah* motif (Colossians 2:11, cf. Romans 2:28-29, Philippians 3:3) likely draws directly from an eschatological Torah promise (Deuteronomy 30:6, cf. Deuteronomy 10:16), “The L-RD your G-d will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”

151. βαπτίζω, βάπτισμα or βαπτισμός are found in Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 1:13-17; 10:1-2; 12:13; 15:29; Romans 6:3-4; Ephesians 4:5 and Colossians 2:12.

Moses,<sup>152</sup> and 15:29, *baptizing* for the dead.<sup>153</sup> The “one baptism” motif for the *Ek-klesia* (Ephesians 4:5) evidently drives home the fact his readers knew of *diverse baptisms*, most likely from the *Apostolic Judaism* of Yeshua-believing Jews. Paul makes no explicit citation of Ezekiel 36:26-27, but it cannot be denied that the washing of “regeneration and renewal” in Titus 3:5-6 is a deafening echo of it.

Paul did baptize a very small number, according to 1 Corinthians 1, and said he did not “know” if he had baptized others. Paul’s demure approach to the water rite makes little sense for a sacramental *water-Spirit* baptism. His affirmation of not being *sent to baptize* makes little sense if Messiah commanded a universal water rite in Matthew 28:19. The following are the last two lines of Reymond’s list of eleven *Apostolic Baptisms*.<sup>154</sup>

#### 10a. Crispus in 1 Corinthians 1:14: Jewish, certain; water, certain

Crispus was the synagogue president and certainly Jewish, and thus eligible for Yohanan’s eschatological rite for Israel.

#### 10b. Gaius in 1 Corinthians 1:14: Jewish, ambiguous; water, certain

Gaius may have been Jewish. There is no proof he was non-Jewish.

#### 11. Stephanas’ household in 1 Corinthians 1:16 : Jewish, ambiguous; water, certain

The members of Stephanas’ household were the first believers in the region (1 Corinthians 16:15). They likely were Jews, since Paul customarily approached Jewish people first then went to non-Jews.

Evidently Paul occasionally performed the Messianic water rite for Yeshua-believing Jews<sup>155</sup> even though he was sent by Messiah to the nations.

In Paul’s battle against circumcision for righteousness he rhetorically contrasted the basis for the Galatian reception of the Spirit by the term *out of works of Torah* (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) against *out of hearing of faith* (ἐξ ἀκοῆς πίστεως). Suppose sacramental baptism was true and that *ex opere operato*, water baptism was accompanied by Spirit baptism. For ordinary Galatians a water rite related to Israel’s Messiah and performed by Jews who practiced numerous Torah rites would look exactly like any other *work of Torah*. If so, a sacramental water rite that looked exactly like a *work of Torah* would have provided the Spirit, and neophyte Galatians doubtless would have answered affirmatively. Paul’s question of Galatians 3:2 thus *rules out* a sacramental water-Spirit baptism, but affirms an evidential reception of the Spirit by *hearing of faith*, an event vivid enough to refer to directly, and evidently is the event of being *baptized into Messiah* in Galatians 3:27.

#### 6. Spirit Baptism in Luke-Acts: Subsequent Immersion or Initial Palpable Purification?

Pentecostals, Charismatics and Neo-charismatics, newcomers in post-Reformation Christian history,<sup>156</sup> believe Messiah’s work in the world by the Spirit, accompanied by *pneumatika* and *charismata*, did not cease upon inscripturation of the *Besorah*. Conviction that Messiah continues to pour out the Spirit evidentially is consistent with Ezekiel’s promise of a *Spirit-changed life for Israel*. Vivid modern experiences of being filled with the Spirit,<sup>157</sup> and of operation of *pneumatika* and *charismata*, appear to show Messiah is not constrained by *cessationist*<sup>158</sup> theology.<sup>159</sup>

Nevertheless, a central tenet of Pentecostal theology, *subsequence*, says that Spirit-baptism in Luke-Acts has nothing to do with *regeneration* but with subsequent *empowerment*. “The baptism in the Spirit is subsequent to and distinct

152. Popular teaching says Israel was immersed in the cloud and sea which is thought prototypical of NT immersion. When the prepositions are examined one is hard-pressed to sustain the idea. Rather the cloud and sea are seen as agents of influence to change Israel’s mind about Moses, cf. Exodus 14:30-31.

οὐ θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν ἀδελφοί (for I don’t wish you to be ignorant, brothers)  
ὅτι οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν πάντες (that all our fathers)  
ὑπὸ τὴν νεφέλην ἦσαν (under the cloud were) καὶ πάντες (and all)  
διὰ τῆς θαλάσσης διήλθον (through the sea passed-through) καὶ πάντες (and all)  
εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν (into Moses were baptized)  
ἐν τῇ, νεφέλῃ, καὶ (by the cloud, and)  
ἐν τῇ, θαλάσσῃ, (by the sea)

The spatial relationship to the cloud and sea is described by ὑπὸ and διὰ. Paul’s choice of ἐν, with both cloud and sea as datives, indicates they are “instruments of influence” to baptize the people εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν, into Moses. Paul did *not* write that the people self-immersed in the cloud and sea in the name of Moses.

153. It may be that “*baptizing* for the sake of the dead” refers to the Jewish practice of purifying deceased Jews with water prior to burial to be prepared for the resurrection. F.F. Bruce observed that the washing of Tabitha (Acts 9:37) was “in accordance with the Jewish custom of purification of the dead” and cites the Mishnah, *Shabbat* 23.5, *The Book of the Acts—Revised*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988) 199. Paul would have used the middle-passive forms of the verb and participle in 1 Corinthians 15:29 to indicate subject-focus. So Paul’s argument against deniers of the resurrection may have included a remark about the Jewish practice of purifying their dead *specifically* because they, *the Jewish people who perform the purification*, believe in the resurrection.

154. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (1998) 926.

155. In accord with his dictum in 1 Corinthians 7:18-19, that one who was circumcised (Jewish) when called, let him not be uncircumcised (he should not abandon his Jewish heritage). Peter and Apollos also directed much of their energy toward Jews so their performance of Israel’s eschatological purification for Jews is unsurprising (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:12).

156. The Pew Forum, *On Religion & Public Life*, reports: “Pentecostalism and related charismatic movements represent one of the fastest-growing segments of global Christianity. At least a quarter of the world’s 2 billion Christians are thought to be members of these lively, highly personal faiths, which emphasize such spiritually renewing ‘gifts of the Holy Spirit’ as speaking in tongues, divine healing and prophesying.” <http://pewforum.org/Christian/Evangelical-Protestant-Churches/Pentecostal-Resource-Page.aspx>; The WCC reports: “According to the World Christian Database, classical Pentecostals number 78 million, Charismatics 192 million and Neo-charismatics 318 million.” <http://www.oikoumene.org/member-churches/church-families/pentecostal-churches.html>

157. Cf. Professor Frank Macchia, “...I entered the room then I fell to my knees and began to pray. I began to cry and to search for words that I could not find. Meanwhile, my schoolmates began to pray for me. I felt a fountain well up within me. It grew stronger and stronger until it burst forth with great strength. I began to pray in tongues. It was not forced, neither from me nor from God. In fact, it seemed at the moment to be the most natural thing to do. By now I lay there on the floor with my eyes fixed on that cross. I felt God’s powerful presence embrace me, and while accepting my calling to the ministry, I made promises to God that have accompanied me throughout my life.” Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006) 13.

158. *Cessationism* holds that the Spirit has ceased to operate with evidential *charismata* after some point early in the Messianic era, typically said to be either the inscripturation of the *Besorah* or the canonization of NT scripture.

159. Even a critic of Pentecostal theology like James Dunn does not dismiss possibility of vibrant Spirit experience. “[I]n case it should be thought that I have been less than just to the Pentecostals let me simply add in reference to these questions that Pentecostal teaching of spiritual gifts, including glossolalia, while still unbalanced, is much more soundly based on the NT than is generally recognized.” Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (1970) 229. For a systematic refutation of cessationism see, *On the Cessation of the Charismata, The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles* (1993, 2008) by Jon Ruthven, Professor Emeritus, Regent University. Note that in the Apostolic era spiritual volatility was known and required treatment (cf. 1 Corinthians 12-14). So the presence of spiritual failure or excess in modern times does not of itself prove Pentecostal experience is fundamentally erroneous.

from the new birth.”<sup>160</sup> This view virtually eliminates the possibility that Luke considered Ezekiel 36:26-27 inaugurated.

Robert P. Menzies justifies Pentecostal *subsequence* by distinguishing Lukan Spirit-baptism as *charismatic* but Pauline as *soteriological*. Lukan “baptism (immersion) in the Spirit” is not regeneration, but a subsequent *empowering* for testimony to Messiah.<sup>161</sup>

[I]f it can be demonstrated that Luke views the work of the Spirit exclusively in Charismatic or prophetic terms (that is, unrelated to soteriological themes such as justification, cleansing, sanctification) then it is not possible to associate the Pentecostal gift with conversion or salvation.<sup>162</sup>

Surprisingly, Robert Guelich arrives at a similar idea about Luke in his study on Mark. Guelich probes the concept of Messiah baptizing with the Spirit (cf. Mark 1:8) and states that the “role of the Spirit accompanying God’s promise of salvation for his own has its roots in Ezek 36:25-27: ‘I will sprinkle clean water on you...I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes,’” and adds that the “expectation of the Holy Spirit as the agent of ultimate cleansing (similar to Qumran’s expectations)”<sup>163</sup> would not be surprising. Yet like Menzies, Guelich says Markan Spirit-baptism as *purification* is not analogous to the Lukan Spirit-baptism for *power*.<sup>164</sup>

Evidently the root of *subsequence* rests on the conviction that *mode* (immersion) is the key idea of βαπτίζω in Luke-Acts, rather than the *effect* of *purification*. Thus Menzies and Guelich can justify distinguishing Lukan and Pauline and Markan Spirit-baptisms. A problem arises however if βαπτίζω in Luke-Acts refers to *purification* and not the *mode* of immersion, because the process of salvation does not consist of two Spirit *purifications*.<sup>165</sup>

160. “The Baptism in the Holy Spirit: The Initial Experience and Continuing Evidences of the Spirit-Filled Life,” *General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God* on August 11, 2000, page 3.

161. Stronstad wrote, “If we have interpreted Luke’s Pentecost narrative correctly, then the gift of the Spirit is not for salvation, but it is for witness and service. In other words, with the transfer of the Spirit to the disciples on the day of Pentecost, they become a charismatic community, heirs to the earlier charismatic ministry of Jesus.” Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke*, (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1990) 62. See also Robert P. Menzies, “Luke’s Understanding of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. A Pentecostal Perspective,” *PentecoStudies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2007, p. 108–126.

162. Menzies’ distinction between Lukan charismatic theology and Pauline soteriological theology falters in light of the fact that in Acts 1:5, 8 Luke has Messiah say, not “the Spirit,” but “the Holy Spirit” provides them the power (ὁμοίως δὲ ἐν πνεύματι βαπτισθήσεσθε ἅγιω – ἄλλα λήψεσθε δόναμιν ἐπελθόντος τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς, καὶ ἔσεσθέ μου μάρτυρες). For Jews, daily engaged in discerning holy from unholy and pure from impure, specifying that disciples would soon receive the Holy Spirit implies a magnificent transforming effect of divine holiness in their lives. Nevertheless, the argument for a palpable experience of being baptized with the Holy Spirit that empowers the recipient is essentially correct. ‘Evidential Tongues: An Essay on Theological Method,’ by Robert P. Menzies, *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* Volume 1, Number 2 (August 1998) 5.

163. Guelich, *Mark* (1989) 25.

164. Guelich says Mark did not intend for ‘the baptism with the Holy Spirit’ to be read through the Lukan eyes of Acts. “We have no hint of his bestowing the Spirit as a gift of power on his followers [in Mark’s gospel].” Guelich, *Mark* (1989) 25. But surely the giving of the *eschatological Spirit* by Messiah to Israel would imply no omission of such gifts either, even if not noted explicitly.

165. Bear in mind the 120 were *baptized* when *filled* with the Spirit on Shavuot (Acts 2:4-Acts 1:5) but after Shavuot Peter was *filled* (Acts 4:8) and not baptized, and the prayer group too was *filled* (Acts 4:31) and not baptized. Disciples can be filled often with the Spirit, but *baptized* once only. Βαπτίζω in Acts then apparently describes a non-repeatable, qualitative *New Covenant transformation*, and has nothing to do with a repeatable *quantitative immersion*. Cf. Luke 1:15, 41, 67; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9.

In Luke-Acts both Yohanan and Yeshua say the Messianic rite is followed by the greater event of being baptized with the Spirit.<sup>166</sup> If Yohanan’s rite purified the flesh,<sup>167</sup> then Messiah’s Spirit outpouring correspondingly *purifies* the heart.<sup>168</sup> This, in fact, is precisely Peter’s realization in Acts 15:8-9; 11:16. So Luke’s charismatic description of Cornelius’ house in Acts 10:44-46 evidently encompasses Spirit *baptism* and *purification of hearts*, all of which must constitute “conversion.”

Cessationist critics insist *subsequence* is unsound, yet it appears *cessationism* itself is based on an unsustainable non-charismatic “conversion” experience. *Subsequence* evidently arose out of Reform tradition as a supplement to non-charismatic conversion to explain and justify palpable experiences with the Spirit.<sup>169</sup> However a vivid, charismatic *order of conversion* in the NT calls *cessationism* to task and obviates the need for Pentecostal *subsequence*.

Paul describes dramatic Spirit experiences in Romans (cf. 5:5; 8:9-17, 26-27) and then presents his *order of salvation* in Romans 10, emphasizing a charismatic “salvation” by citing Joel 2:32, the final verse describing the Spirit’s outpouring, which was quoted on *Shavuot*.

If you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord and believe in your heart that G-d raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For, ‘everyone who calls on the name of the L-rd will be saved.’ (Romans 10:8-13).

Jews hearing the epistle read aloud, alerted by the words “for the Scripture says,” would doubtless recall Joel’s Spirit-outpouring, here juxtaposed with *calling on Yeshua as Lord*. Evidently, faith in the ascended Messiah includes faith that he *pours out the eschatological Spirit*, the reception of which *effects* salvation. Pauline portrayals of *salvation*<sup>170</sup> simply do not justify *conversion* that lacks a palpable Spirit experience, which elsewhere is described in terms of being “baptized with the Spirit” because of transformational effect.

Contrary to Pentecostal *subsequence* theology, Luke used βαπτίζω to signify *purification* of one’s inmost being during conversion-initiation, which, contrary to cessationist views, does indeed result in evidential empowerment for

166. Luke 3:16, Acts 1:5.

167. “A third function of John’s baptism was that it purified from uncleanness. Josephus states that ‘baptism certainly would appear acceptable to him [i.e., God] if used for purification of the body’ (Ant. 18.117).” Robert L. Webb, *Jesus’ Baptism: Its Historicity and Implications*, *Bulletin for Biblical Research Studies* 10:2 (2000) 282.

168. See Psalm 51 as a prophecy of what Messiah would do permanently for all who trust him.

169. Apparently *cessationism* and *subsequence* both flow from Reform theology. The Reform tenet, *Sola Fide*, led to rationalizing the gospel while *Sola Scriptura* led to *cessationism*. Yet Wesleyan Perfectionism, Methodism, holiness movements, and Keswickism promoted personal experience, resisted rationalization of the gospel and were precursors to Pentecostalism. Both streams evidently resisted the Roman Church’s assertion that *ex opere operato* the Spirit must accomplish baptismal regeneration.

170. Titus 3:5-6 the Spirit is “poured out richly.” Romans 10:12, “for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.” Titus 3:6, οὐ ἐξέχεεν ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς πλουσίως διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σωτήρος ἡμῶν, Romans 10:12, πλουτοῦν εἰς πάντας τοὺς ἐπακαλουμένους αὐτόν. Surely these verses describe the same wonderful eschatological Gift of the Spirit.

testimony. But Paul did not ignore charismatic experience in his Roman *order of salvation*, though in other passages he did typically emphasize *regeneration*, as promised in Ezekiel 36:26-27.

### 7. Ezekiel 36:25 vis-a-vis Numbers 19 Sprinkling of Red Heifer Ashes

Some scholars and sages evidently believe the word *zarak* (זרק) *throw, sprinkle*, identifies Ezekiel 36:25 with Numbers 19:13, 20, which speaks of sprinkling red heifer ashes. However, in Numbers we read that *mey nidah* (מי נידה), i.e. waters of separation, were not *dashed*, while Ezekiel writes of dashing *mayim tehorim* (מים טהורים), i.e. pure water. Though the *Rav Kook Institute* commentary views Ezekiel 36:25 symbolically,<sup>171</sup> it nevertheless notes that on the face of it, the *pure water* is not the *waters of separation* of Numbers.<sup>172</sup> The presence of *zarak* in Ezekiel provides no sufficient justification to conclude that he refers to Numbers 19:20 because *zarak* was used for various rites, e.g. Exodus 24:5 where Moses *sprinkled* the blood of the covenant.

In Ezekiel 36:25-27 G-d says *he will be responsible* for the throwing of pure water and the spiritual transformation, both of which appear as once-for-all, non-repeated events. In contrast, since the days of Moses purification by red heifer ashes was a *standing order* anytime a Jew was defiled by the dead. During second-Temple days Israel evidently was careful to observe this rite.<sup>173</sup>

R. Chaim Richman of the *Machon HaMikdash* (the Temple Institute) is a leading figure today in preparing for rebuilding the Temple and has every motivation to conflate Ezekiel 36:25 with Numbers 19. However R. Richman ultimately denies there is a direct relationship<sup>174</sup> and concludes the “*pure waters*” of Ezekiel are Divine knowledge. He thus believes Ezekiel 36:25 is a real eschatological promise couched in metaphorical terms and is spiritual, not physical.

R. Akiva linked Ezekiel 36:25 and the purification of the *mikveh* in a Hebrew word-play he contrived recorded in the Mishnah.

Happy are you Israel. Before whom do you purify yourselves? Who purifies you? Your Father in Heaven! It is written, *‘I will sprinkle pure water on you and you shall be clean.’*

171. דרכת המים הטהורים אינה אלא סמל לטהור וחידוש כמו ארץ בנקיון כפי ואסבה את מובחך ה' (תה' כו ז) עמוד רפז-רפז יחזקאל לו הערה.

172. הערה ב. – לפי פשוטו של מקרא “מים חיים” שבפרקנו אינם מי-נידה... עמוד רפז-רפז יחזקאל לו.

173. Mishnah, *Parah* 3.5: Moses prepared the first batch of red heifer ashes and Ezra, of second-Temple days, prepared the second, after which seven more were prepared. The batch Moses prepared was not replenished during the *Mishkan* and first Temple. Yet in second-Temple days eight batches including Ezra's were prepared.

174. Richman states: “This book began with the words of the prophet Ezekiel... ‘Then I shall sprinkle pure waters upon you...’ Yet as one of the holy sages asks, to what water is this verse actually referring? It can't be speaking of the waters mixed with the heifer's ashes—for although that solution is the key to cleansing, purifying all it touches—the mixture itself is impure, which is why it contaminates those who were already pure!” R. Chaim Richman, *The Mystery of the Red Heifer: Divine Promise of Purity*, (no longer in print), (Jerusalem, 5757/1997), online (2005) [http://www.templeinstitute.org/red\\_heifer/symbolic\\_levels.htm](http://www.templeinstitute.org/red_heifer/symbolic_levels.htm)

And it is written, *‘The L-RD is Israel's mikveh* (or hope).’ Just as the *mikveh* purifies the unclean, so the L-RD purifies Israel.<sup>175</sup>

While R. Akiva's word-play speaks of purification far beyond that obtained by water (and is evidently the basis for R. Richman's view above) he nevertheless linked the *mikveh* purifying the unclean to Ezekiel 36:25. That would not lend support to the idea that R. Akiva considered Ezekiel 36:25 a direct reference to Numbers 19.

### Summary Rebuttal of Disconfirming Evidence

No explicit citation of Ezekiel 36:25-27 occurs in the NT, yet convincing evidence, led by John 3:5 and Titus 3:5-6, implies authors had it in mind as they composed their works. Crucial prophecies of the *Tanakh* were cited sparingly, so lack of an Ezekiel citation is not decisive in determining whether the prophecy was considered inaugurated or not.

While at its core βαπτίζω bears the idea of *immerse*, Greeks developed a range of meaning akin to *overwhelm*, as well as *drunkenness*, and in the NT it bears the idea of *purification*, including in cases of affusion.

Scholars recognize Matthew 28:19 demands *transformation* beyond performance of a rite and formula. NT baptism episodes do not correlate well with a universal rite and triune formula. Jewish apostles did not associate with non-Jews as late as Acts 10, meaning that the rites they performed prior to that time *were not the execution of Matthew 28:19*. The premiere Apostle to the nations said he was not sent by Messiah to baptize. Two gospel writers<sup>176</sup> have Messiah use the very word βαπτίζω *metaphorically*, not for a literal water rite. Evidence is convincing that Messiah never intended a *literal* rite. Per Matthew 21:23-27, Yohanan's rite stands as a *mitzvah* of G-d, to be announced to Israel by Yeshua-believing Jews as part of the *Besorah*.

Peter's command to baptize Cornelius *cannot be taken as the execution of Matthew 28:19*. Peter, as the leader of *Apostolic Judaism*, evidently thought non-Jews should be purified as all Jewish followers of Yohanan and Messiah had been. Acts 10-11 is saturated with Jewish concern over defilement. The evidence points to eventual Jewish realization that Messiah's great *Purification*, baptizing with the Spirit, supersedes even Yohanan's rite for Israel.

Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12 evidently address a fundamental spiritual transformation, not performance of a rite. Titus 3:5-6 implies that Paul knew

175. Tractate *Yoma* 8:9 (85b) of the Mishnah—R. Akiva's combines Ezekiel 36:25 with Jeremiah 17:13 in a “*drash*” (*homiletical*) form of teaching, linking two images, purification in a *mikveh* and the dashing of Ezekiel. Jeremiah reads:

מקוה ישראל יהיה כל-עובדיך יבשו וסורי בארץ יכתבו כי עובו מקור מים-חיים את יהוה:

Not only is G-d the hope or “*mikveh*” of Israel, he is also מקור מים-חיים את יהוה—a “source of *Living Water*.” Ezekiel 36:25 is not of necessity related to sprinkling red heifer ashes, but it does relate to מים-חיים. This “*drash*” form of teaching would not preclude R. Akiva taking Ezekiel 36:25 as the eschatological purification from a “*pashat*” (literal) point of view.

176. Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50.

Ezekiel's promise of renewal and regeneration had been inaugurated. Paul's "One Baptism" evidently refers to Spirit baptism.

The Pentecostal doctrine of *subsequence* is based on a needlessly restricted understanding of βαπτισμω that excludes *purification* from Spirit-baptism in Luke-Acts. Yet, the cessationist position that Pentecostals attempt to circumvent also falters in view of Pauline "charismatic" conversions.

The Numbers 19 rite was a standing order that the Jewish people observed fastidiously in second-Temple days. Ezekiel evidently speaks of a one-time eschatological purification with pure water, not the water of separation of Numbers 19. Early Jewish sages evidently viewed Ezekiel 36:25 as distinct from Numbers 19, even if later commentators link them directly.<sup>177</sup>

### Recommended Steps for the Bilateral Ekklesia

What steps should the *bilateral Ekklesia* take if the *Besorah* is understood to be based directly on Ezekiel 36:25-27?

#### The Jewish Wing:

- Yeshua-believing Jews must promote Messiah's original intent of *transformation* in Matthew 28:19. Originally the command sent eleven leaders of *Apostolic Judaism* to take the *Besorah* to the nations. Modern Yeshua-believing Jews must strive, with due respect, to restore the original order of this Great Commission.
- As circumcision is a Jewish distinctive, so Yeshua-believing Jews must return Ezekiel 36:25 (Yohanan's rite in the NT) to its place as a Jewish distinctive for Israel in the eschatological context of the *Besorah*.
- Yeshua-believing Jews must herald Messiah's superlative Spirit baptism with due honor as the inauguration of Joel 2:28-32, Isaiah 44:3 and Ezekiel 36:26-27.
- Yeshua-believing Jews must gain practical expertise with purification, being able to justify Ezekiel 36:25 as a literal rite consistent with Torah demands for purity, and able to perform it as the eschatological Jewish rite for national repentance and purification.

#### The Non-Jewish Wing:

- Non-Jewish partners in the *bilateral Ekklesia* must take to heart Paul's admonition in Romans 11:18: "Remember it is not you who support the

root, but the root that supports you." Positive support of Yeshua-believing Jews by non-Jewish partners is crucial for such a foundational restoration of the *Besorah*.

- Non-Jewish Yeshua-believing partners must relinquish practice of the universal water rite that is at odds with the original *Besorah*.
- Non-Jewish Yeshua-believers must recognize Messiah's superlative Spirit baptism not only as the inauguration of Joel 2:28-32, Isaiah 44:3 and Ezekiel 36:26-27, but as the "One Baptism" for the *bilateral Ekklesia*.

#### Both Wings:

- Jewish and non-Jewish Yeshua-believers should jointly recognize the *Se'udat haAdon* (the Lord's Supper) as the Ecclesial emblem of unity, not a water rite.
- Jewish and non-Jewish Yeshua-believers must duly respect each other, acknowledging Jewish responsibility to Torah-loyal *Apostolic Judaism*, as well as full partnership with non-Jewish Yeshua-believers, liberated from sin, in the Body of Messiah. ☺

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177. Cf. *Haftarah* of Ezekiel 36:16-38 for Shabbat of *Parashat Parah* (Red Heifer).