

JOHN'S THE BAPTIZER'S GARMENTS Lesson 7

I. There Is Scriptural Evidence That The Prophets Wore Garments That Identified Them As Prophets. (But you have to dig for it.)

- A. In a number of passages, the garment is referred to as a "mantle".
1. A mantle was the outermost garment which was worn over other clothing. It was used as a coat or even a blanket for warmth.
 2. A common mantle could be worn by either men or women and were made of fabric.
 3. Three of the Old Testament prophets were said to wear a mantle
 - a. Samuel – **I Samuel 28:14**, who was not only a prophet, but a priest and a judge in Israel
 - b. Elijah – **II Kings 2:8**
 - c. Elisha – **II Kings 2:13-14**
 4. The mantle of the prophets were made of coarse animal hair.
 - a. **II Kings 1:7-8** – there is a difference in translation in some of the widely used versions of the Bible today, which led me to further investigation.
 - b. NKJV, KJV, American Standard, New American Standard all have the following translation:
"⁷ Then he (King Ahaziah) said to them, "What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words ⁸So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."
 - c. The English Standard, Revised Standard and the New International versions all use the following translation: "⁷ He said to them, "What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?" ⁸ They answered him, "He wore a garment of hair, with a belt of leather about his waist." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite."
 - d. The Interlinear Hebrew/English Old Testament reads:
"The man who is possessor of a hair garment with a leather belt on his waist." This helps confirm the thought that prophets were often identified by their coarse hair mantle/robe and leather belt.
 5. **Zechariah 13:4** – this prophesy speaks of a time when sin will flow freely like fountains in the city of Jerusalem.
 - a. In that day, God will cut off the names of the idols of the land and he will expel the unclean spirits and the false prophets.
 - b. Even prophets who remain will be ashamed of their lies and they will stop wearing "the robes of coarse hair" to deceive the people.

- c. Vs 4 says: *"And it shall be in that day that every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will **not** wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive."⁵ But he will say, 'I am no prophet, I am a farmer...'"*
 - e. One of the ways that **false** prophets were able to lead the people of Israel astray to worship false idols was by wearing the "uniform" of the prophet, which was the robe or mantle of coarse hair to deceive the people into believing that they were from God.
- B. In **I Kings 19** we see that Jezebel had sent a message to Elijah saying that by the next day he would be dead because of the damage he had done to the prophets of her false god, Baal.
1. Elijah panicked and ran for his life about a day's travel away. Then he sat under a broom tree and prayed that he might die.
 2. When he fell asleep under the tree, suddenly an angel touched him and said, "Arise and eat."
 - a. He looked around and saw a cake baked on the coals and a jar of water, so he ate and drank and lay down to sleep again.
 - b. The Angel came back and said "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you."
 - c. So Elijah ate and drank and he traveled for 40 days and 40 nights to the mountain of God with no more to eat.
 - d. There he went into a cave and spent the night until the Lord came and asked "What are you doing here?"
 - e. Elijah said, *"I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."*
 - f. God spoke to Elijah instructing him to anoint Elisha as prophet in his place. Then God assured Elijah that there were still 7,000 who had not bowed down to Baal.
 3. When Elijah found Elisha, he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen (24 oxen).
 - a. Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on Elisha.
 - b. Elisha knew immediately what that meant. He had been chosen to follow Elijah and to be trained to replace him.
 - c. Elisha killed two of the oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh and gave it to the people near him to eat. He used the plow to build the fire, then he left to follow Elijah and become his servant.
 - d. The passing of Elijah's "mantle" or robe was equal to an anointing of Elisha.

- C. In **II Kings 2** we find the account of Elijah passing his "mantle of prophesy" on to one who would replace him as prophet in the land because God was about to take Elijah up to heaven in the chariot of fire.
1. When the time came that God was going to take Elijah, he was going from place to place. When he left for each new place he asked Elisha to stay behind, but each time Elisha refused to leave Elijah.
 2. When they came to the Jordan River, Elijah rolled up his mantle and struck the water with it and the water divided so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.
 3. When they crossed the river, Elijah said to Elisha, *"Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?"*
 - a. Elisha said, *"Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."*
 - b. Elijah said, *"You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not it shall not be so"*
 - c. As they spoke a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire. It came between Elisha and Elijah and a whirlwind took Elijah up into heaven in the chariot.
 - d. Elisha saw it, then he tore his own clothes to show his sorrow that Elijah was gone.
 - e. Then Elisha took up Elijah's mantle that had fallen from him and went back to the Jordan River. He took the mantle of Elijah and struck the water and the water was divided so that he crossed over on dry land.
 - f. On the other side Elisha met some prophets from Jericho who said, *"The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha."*
 - g. Immediately Elisha was able to do miracles as Elijah had been able to do

II. In The New Testament, John The Baptizer Continues The Tradition of Wearing The Hairy Garment And Leather Belt Of The Prophet.

- A. John was chosen by God for the monumental task of preparing the Jews to receive the promised "Messiah", The Christ and the Savior of the world. **Luke 1**
1. God chose a priest named Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth, to be the parents of John, even though they were well advanced in years and had no children.
 2. An angel of the Lord informed Zacharias that his wife would give birth to a son and that he was to be named John.
 3. The angel designated these things about their unborn son:
 - a. he will be great in the sight of the Lord

- b. he will drink neither wine nor strong drink (Nazirite Vow)
 - c. He will go before the Christ in the spirit of Elijah to turn the hearts of the children of Israel back to God.
 - d. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord.
4. Zacharias was so shocked he asked, *"How shall I know this is true? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years."* **vs. 18**
- a. The angel answered that his name was *"Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God and was sent to speak to you these glad tidings."*
 - b. However, since Zacharias doubted his word, the angel said he would be unable to speak until the child was born.
 - c. Six months later, the same angel, Gabriel, also gave Mary the news that she too would bear a child who would be great and would be called the Son of the Highest – his name would be Jesus.
5. In due time, Elizabeth gave birth to a son.
- a. On the eighth day after Jewish boys are born, a ceremony is held where the baby is circumcised and his name is given to him.
 - b. They began to call him Zacharias, like his father, but Elizabeth stopped them saying *"No, he shall be called John."* **vs. 60**
 - c. Strangely, her neighbors argued with her saying, *"There is no one in your family called John."* so they insisted upon verifying the name with Zacharias.
 - d. Zacharias asked for a writing tablet and he wrote, *"His name is John."* and immediately Zacharias could speak for the first time since Gabriel spoke to him.
- B. There is no information about John until he began his work preparing the way of the Lord. He was about thirty years old at this time, since we know that he was only six months older than Jesus.
1. **Luke 3** – In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar:
- a. Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea
 - b. Herod, Tetrarch of Galilee. (A tetrarch is one who is ruler of one-fourth of a province.)
 - c. Annas and Caiaphas were high priests.
2. The word of the Lord came to John in the wilderness.
- a. **John was clothed with camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist** and he ate locusts (which was a clean food in the Law of Moses) and wild honey (also a clean food).
 - b. After studying the garments of Old Testament prophets, we can more easily see why John's clothing is mentioned. It was the "uniform" of a prophet.
 - c. The people of Judea heard that a prophet was in the area and they sought him out. This was how they recognized him.

3. The Jews sent out priests and Levites to ask John who he was?
 - a. They asked if he was the Christ, but John said, "I am not."
 - b. They asked if he was Elijah, but John said, "I am not."
 - c. They asked if he was THE Prophet but John again said, "No."
 - d. Notice that the Jews did not understand that THE Prophet was the same as THE Christ.
4. To explain who he was John quoted **Isaiah 40:3-5** to describe his mission.

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.' ⁵ Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight and the rough ways smooth; ⁶ And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."
- C. The Jews were very curious as to why John had the authority to command or "institute" a new commandment regarding baptism. (There are no examples of the Jews practicing baptism under the Law of Moses.)
 1. **John 1:25** - The Pharisees still didn't understand, so they asked:

"Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor THE Prophet?"
 2. **John 1:26** - John replied, *"I baptize with water, but there stands one among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose."*
 3. When they heard John's message, many asked, "What should we do?"
 4. John taught them that repentance produces fruit that everyone can see by the changes in your life.
 - John taught them to share what they had with those in need.
 - John taught the tax collector to stop overtaxing the people.
 - John taught the soldiers not to intimidate the people but to be fair with them.
 5. **Luke 3:3** – What was John's baptism for?
 - a. John's job was to reach out to the disobedient Jews who needed to repent of their sins and turn back to God in order that they would be in a spiritual condition to accept the Christ when he came.
 - b. Baptism was an outward act that confirmed an inward cleansing and renewal of heart through true repentance. These penitent Jews could then look forward to the coming of the Christ who would be able to provide the forgiveness of sins.
 - ☆ c. **Certainly no one would claim that John the Baptizer had the authority to "forgive sins", therefore his baptism did not promise that.** It promised that those who truly repented and proved it through a changed life would be prepared to accept the

blessings that would soon come through belief in the Christ, the Son of God.

6. **Romans 6:3-4** – These two verses explain to us that the baptism taught in the first century when the church began was specifically an act that symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism without that symbolism is NOT a proper baptism.
 - a. When one stands in the water before being baptized, it is the old sinful person who has **heard the gospel** of Christ **and believed it**.
Romans 10:17 – *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*
 - b. This person has also made a **confession** before others that he believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
Romans 10:9 – *"...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."* (but not by this ALONE according to other verses)
 - c. This person has truly **repented** of all sins.
II Peter 3:9 – *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that **all** should come to repentance."*
 - d. This person is now ready to have his sins washed away in baptism by being totally immersed in water. This immersion is symbolic of the death and burial of Jesus Christ. Our old sinful self dies and is buried in the watery grave. We know this because the Greek word "baptize" means "to be immersed".
Romans 6:3 – *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death?"*
 - e. When he is raised up out of the water of baptism, his sins have been washed away and he is a "new creation" or a new person free from sin.
Acts 22:16 – Ananias said to Saul: *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."*
Romans 6:4 – *"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*
7. As you can see, John's baptism was NOT for the same reason as the baptism that was instituted on the Day of Pentecost in **Acts 2** when Peter said, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (**Acts 2:38**)

- a. This was a confusing subject for some in the first century as well.
- b. **Acts 18:24-28** – Tells us an account of some friends of Paul who were tent makers named Priscilla and Aquilla.
- Apollos, a Jewish convert to Christianity, came to Ephesus where Priscilla and Aquilla had been working with Paul.
 - Apollos was an eloquent speaker and he preached the gospel of Christ accurately except when he spoke of baptism, for he knew only about the baptism of John the Baptizer.
 - Priscilla and Aquilla took him aside privately after his speech and “taught him the word of the Lord more perfectly”, which means they explained “baptism into Jesus Christ”
 - **Acts 19:1-5** – Apollos then came upon some disciples who also only knew the baptism of John the Baptizer. When Apollos explained that John’s baptism was for repentance and to look forward to the one who would come after John, which is Jesus Christ, those disciples were **baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.**



- c. These passages confirm that one baptism is NOT as good as another. It must be done in accordance with the commandments and the examples we find in the New Testament.
- Those who are baptized must be of the age when they can be taught the word of God and can to understand the concepts of sin, forgiveness of sin and the importance of making a lifetime commitment to serve God.
 - Obviously those things cannot be done by an infant nor a very small child. Some maturity is required to understand concepts regarding eternity.
 - Proper baptism must be a total immersion in water or it cannot be symbolic of the “burial and resurrection of Christ”. That eliminates the practice of sprinkling or pouring water over one’s head.
 - Ideally it should be done the moment a person is convicted by hearing the gospel of Christ which brings him to repentance. He also must be willing to confess belief in Jesus as the Son of God. No one can predict what will happen in the immediate future that may prevent baptism from occurring – therefore, it should be done immediately to ensure the salvation of one’s soul.

III. John had a very important job, but he understood that when the Christ was identified and began his own ministry, John’s job would be done.

- A. John the Baptizer and Jesus were related although they did not know each other. Mary and Elizabeth were relatives and John was six months older than Jesus. (**Luke 1:36**)
- B. John baptized Jesus which inaugurated the ministry of Jesus and marked the beginning of the end of John's mission.
1. John said of Jesus: **John 3:30** – "He must increase, but I must decrease."
 2. John made enemies with his preaching just as Jesus did.
 3. Herod the Tetrarch had married the wife of his brother Phillip.
 4. John spoke loudly and often that they were adulterers and this angered Herod's wife Herodias.
 5. Herod had John thrown in prison for his preaching even though he wanted to execute John, but he was afraid of the Jews because they considered him a prophet. (**Matthew 14**)
 6. When Herod's birthday was celebrated, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod.
 7. Herod liked her dancing so much that he promised to give her anything she wanted.
 8. Her mother was filled with hate for John the Baptizer because of the things John said about her marriage to Herod. She told her daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptizer on a platter.
 9. When the king heard her request, he was sorry, but because he had made an oath and he didn't want to be embarrassed in front of his guests, he granted her request.
 10. Herod sent someone to the prison to behead John and bring the head back on a platter.
 11. John's disciples took his body and buried it and then they told Jesus what happened to John.
- C. Jesus had some remarkable things to say about John the Baptizer.
1. In **Matthew 17** Jesus was transfigured on the mountain with Peter, James and John as witnesses. They also saw Moses and Elijah.
 2. When they came down from the mountain, Jesus told them not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.
 3. His disciples asked Jesus saying, "*Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?*"
 4. Jesus said to them, "*Elijah has come already, and they did not know him but did to him whatever they wished. Likewise the Son of Man is also about to suffer at their hands.*" (**Matthew 17:12**)
 5. Peter and James and John understood then that he was speaking of John the Baptizer. He had died at the hands of an evil government

- official. Jesus was about to face death at the hands of corrupt Jewish leaders and a heartless government as well.
6. **Matthew 11:11** – Jesus spoke of John the Baptizer to a multitude following him. *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women, there has not risen one greater than John the Baptizer;"*
 7. Jesus followed that commendation by saying, *"but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* As great as John was, he never got to see the arrival of the kingdom of God.
- D. John's message was that "The Christ is coming. Get prepared to receive Him."
1. John knew the kingdom was "at hand" – or arriving soon.
 2. In Acts 2, we learn that the Apostles preached the first gospel message to the huge crowds in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and 3,000 were baptized and added to the Lord's church that day.
- E. Our job is the same as John's when you think about it. He preached "The Christ is coming!" and it is our duty to preach "Jesus, the Christ is coming AGAIN."
- F. It is also our duty to call upon the lost to believe in Jesus Christ, confess belief that He is the Son of God, repent of sins and be baptized according to the example set in the New Testament church in the first century.
- G. The lighted sign outside of our building says, **"First Century Christians in the 21st Century."** As long as we abide by the teachings that the Apostles left us, we are still the same church today as they were then and we are in the kingdom of God that John anticipated.