

Preparing a Way in the Wilderness

Jewish prophecy and Christ

Prescript

Have you ever wondered why rabbinical Judaism seems so sparse in its prophecies of the Messiah? This was not always the case. Prior to the first century A.D. there was a rich prophetic tradition pointing to the Messiah – a sacred tradition preserved by the Essenes. After the first century, the Jewish factions who rejected Christ sought to ignore and suppress this tradition.

A problem began with the apostasy of certain Jewish groups. These groups became known to us as Sadducees, Pharisees, Samaritans, and others. To contrast these apostate groups with original Judaism those who followed the ancient Way were called Essenes. They followed the proper Zadok priests, and the order was called “the Way.” They were known to love all people and love the coming Messiah.

Jesus said "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life"

The following is a summary of key excerpts from “The New Covenant of Damascus” by Ken Johnson Th.D

According to the Damascus Document, they (the Essenes) re-founded the order in 197 BC, but they could not completely regain what they had lost. In 177 BC, there was a Christophany (a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ). They were not only retaught what they had lost, but also were instructed to leave Israel, settle in Egypt, and build a Zadok temple there. They were to wait in Egypt until the Romans arrived in Israel, fulfilling the prophecy given in Daniel 11: 30. When Roman control stopped the assassinations, they were to go back to Israel and fulfil Isaiah’s prophecy of preparing the way of the Messiah.

What I find fascinating about this is that within three years of their Christophany (177-175 BC), Antiochus Epiphanies took the throne of the Seleucid Empire. His rule, from 175 to 165 BC, was one of the bloodiest times in Israel’s history. Those who had believed and followed the teaching of the Messiah were spared. Those who had not, suffered immensely. This was just like the believers who heeded Christ’s warning and fled from the Jerusalem temple to Pella right before the temple was destroyed. History keeps repeating itself!

The Community Rule states that the Zadok priesthood knew that when they returned to Israel during the time of the Roman occupation, they would successfully lead a revival and that one from their order would fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah 40: 3, to prepare the way for the Messiah.

When the community returns to Israel, as predicted,

“they are to separate their dwelling from the “men of sin” in order to prepare His Way as it is written, “The voice of him who cries in the desert, ““ Prepare the Way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”” (Community Rule 15)

Instructors should teach initiates

“the Mysteries in this way amid the men of the Community so they can walk blamelessly together in everything that has been revealed to them. This is the time for, making ready the path to the desert, (Isaiah 40: 3) and he will teach them all the discoveries[ci] so at that time they will fulfill God’s will and refuse fellowship with those who still walk in unrighteousness.”

Notice Isaiah says preparing the way of the Messiah is preparing the way for “our God.” The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isaiah 40: 3 KJV)

All the Essenes knew the Messiah was to be God incarnate.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist admitted he was the fulfilment of the voice crying in the wilderness. He said, I am

"the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord," as the prophet Isaiah said.
(John 1: 23 MKJV)

Church father Hippolytus recorded the list of the ones who headed the school of the prophets. It runs down to Zachariah, then a man named Joseph, then Caiaphas tried to buy the title. No one of the Zadok order recognized Caiaphas's authority, and since Joseph died childless, the rightful head fell back to Zachariah who was dead by that time. So, the headship of the order fell to Zachariah's son, John the Baptist.

And when Jesus arrived, the followers of John switched to become followers of Jesus BECAUSE the Essenes recognised Jesus as the fulfilment of their prophecies – as their expected Messiah. So James and John became apostles of Christ.

The Essenes disappeared during the first century – because they realised that Jesus was the fulfilment of all their beliefs... they became the first Christians...

Baptism

"Only by the Spirit's true counsel of God can a man's path, together with his iniquities, be atoned for so that he can see the Light of Life. By following the Holy Spirit of the Community, in truth, he is cleansed of all his iniquities. Once his spirit becomes upright and humble, his sin is atoned. When his soul accepts all the laws of God, his flesh will be cleansed by the sprinkling of cleansing waters because he is made holy by the waters of repentance. Then he will be able to perfect his walk in the ordinances of God, as He had decreed, concerning the appointed times of his assemblies and not turn aside to the right or to the left, nor twist even one of His ways. This is the true atonement that is pleasing to God by which he enters the covenant of the everlasting Community."

Paul the Apostle

During the 40-year period (after the resurrection), the apostle Paul had his conversion experience. He realized the Essene order was the only group who truly understood and accepted the Messiah. They were called the "Way of the Ancients" or the "Way of the Fathers," but most of the time, they were simply called "the Way." Everyone knew what the Essenes/ Christians believed. In Antioch, the followers of the Way first became known as Christians (Acts 11: 26). Paul stated it this way:

"But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets." (Acts 24: 14 NKJV)

"However I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect." (Acts 24: 14 NIV)

The apostle Paul was prophesied to rise up and write a series of epistles (Pauline epistles) containing all the answers. It would be placed in the New Covenant canon. It would even contain a history of his life (Acts).

"One will rise up from my seed in the latter times... enlightening with new knowledge all the Gentiles... giving it to the synagogue of the Gentiles. Until the consummation of the ages, he will be in the synagogues of the Gentiles... and he will be inscribed in the holy books, both his work and his word, and he will be a chosen one of God forever." (Testament of Benjamin 11)