

Mark 1:1-3; Matthew 3:2-3; Luke 3:3-6

“John the Immerser Preparing the Way for the Lord”

“The beginning of the gospel of Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY [Malachi 3:1]; THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT’ [Isaiah 40:3]” (Mark 1:1-3).

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, ‘THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!’ [Isaiah 40:3]” (Matthew 3:2-3).

“And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH; AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD’ [Isaiah 40:3-5]” (Luke 3:3-6).

Early in the Synoptic Gospels (which for the Gospel of Mark includes its first statements), readers encounter the figure of John the Immerser or Baptist, who is portrayed as a prophet, after figures in the Tanach such as Elijah. That John the Immerser/Baptist, who dipped people in water as a sign of a new personal status for them and/or a new phase of history emerging, was to announce the imminent arrival of the Messiah, is something which proponents of either a high or low Christology should agree upon. The fact that Tanach prophecy is something directly quoted in Mark 1:1-3; Matthew 3:2-3; Luke 3:3-6—Isaiah 40:3-5 specifically—should grab our attention in determining whether anything significant is being communicated about the nature of the Messiah.

Translated from the Hebrew Masoretic Text, Isaiah 40:3-5 reads,

“A voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all flesh will see *it* together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

The fullest quotation of Isaiah 40:3-5, in the three Synoptics, appears in the reference from Luke 3:3-6, and it is easy to deduce that Luke’s Gospel has employed the Greek Septuagint. As Isaiah 40:3-5 is translated from the LXX,

“A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare of the way of the Lord; make straight the paths of our God. Every ravine shall be filled up, and every mountain and hill be made low, and all the crooked ways shall become straight, and the rough place shall become plains. Then the glory of the Lord shall appear, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God, because the Lord has spoken’” (NETS).

Isaiah 40:3 makes light of preparations being made for *derekh* YHWH (דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה) or *tēn hodon Kuriou* (τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου). There is little doubting the fact that “a way for Yahweh” (New Jerusalem Bible) or “the way of HASHEM” (ATS) is being applied to the arrival of Yeshua the Messiah on the scene of history. There is no attempt by any of the Synoptics to modify Isaiah 40:3 along the lines of “Make ready the way of the Lord’s *Messiah*,” in which case a supernatural

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agent sent from Heaven, which could be a created being, would be enacting the expectations foretold by Isaiah 40:3-5. Instead, the LORD or YHWH of Isaiah 40:3 is directly invoked, intending to be read as John the Immerser/Baptist preparing the way for the arrival of YHWH/Adonai/HaShem. **Such is an assertion of a high Christology of Yeshua the Messiah being God, integrated into the Divine Identity.** As Robert M. Bowman, Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski concur in their book *Putting Jesus in His Place*,

“...Isaiah states repeatedly that *God* is coming to redeem, restore, and rule over his people (Isa. 40:9-11; 43:10-13; 59:15-20). Perhaps the most famous such statement in Isaiah is the following....{quotes Isaiah 40:3, NKJV}....The Synoptic Gospels quote this passage and apply it to John the Baptist preparing the way for the Lord Jesus (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6). The New Testament teaching that Jesus is God...has significant precedent in Isaiah.”³²

Mark 1:9-11; Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22

“The Holy Spirit Rests Upon the Immersed Yeshua”

“In those days Yeshua came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased’” (Mark 1:9-11).

“Then Yeshua arrived from Galilee at the Jordan *coming* to John, to be baptized by him. But John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?’ But Yeshua answering said to him, ‘Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he permitted Him. After being baptized, Yeshua came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased’” (Matthew 3:13-17).

“Now when all the people were baptized, Yeshua was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased’” (Luke 3:21-22).

Questions about the nature of Yeshua have been asked throughout religious history, based on what took place at His immersion or baptism by John. As Yeshua emerged from the water, a voice from Heaven, clearly that of God the Father, spoke out “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matthew 3:17), which was a certain statement of approval about what the Messiah was about to perform.

In much of religious history, those who have held to some kind of low Christology may have perhaps proposed that at this point, Yeshua was to be regarded as the Son of the Father, and received some sort of Divine status. Often labeled as Adoptionism, the *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* defines it as, “A view of Jesus Christ that sees him as a human who was adopted or chosen by God to be elevated into being God’s divine Son or a member of the Trinity.”³³ The *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* further describes it as, “The theory that asserts that God adopted Jesus of Nazareth as his Son. In other words, Jesus was born human

³² Bowman and Komoszewski, pp 137-138.

³³ *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 4.