

The Outgoing and the Incoming

By Peter McArthur



Bible commentators have often wondered why Jesus said to John the Baptizer “**It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness**” at Jesus’ baptism (Mtt 3:15).

We know from Scripture that John was the son of a priest according to the order of Abijah: (Luke 1:5). **In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.** This made their son John, of the Aaronic lineage.

There is a lovely spiritual link here because Aaron’s wife was also named Elisabeth. “**And Aaron took Elisheba [the Hebrew form of Elisabeth] daughter of Amminadab, sister of Naashon, to be his wife.**” (Exo 6:23)

It’s been suggested by some that Zacharias was in line for the Aaronic order of the high priest, based on Lev 10:8-9. Whatever the case, what we do know is that in the days of Christ’s ministry, the high priesthood fluctuated between Annas and Caiaphas. At this closing stage of Temple worship the high priest was in fact appointed by Rome, not elected by the Aaronic priesthood. It’s extremely unlikely that those Roman political appointees were truly God’s high priest. Would God want His final earthly high priest to be one set up by Rome? Unthinkable! So it throws us back to considering that the final human high priest (before Jesus’ anointing) would be one according to the dictates of Scripture.

If such a politically appointed man was not the true high priest from God’s perspective, who was? Could it have been that John the Baptizer was in fact the last (high) priest of the true Aaronic order?

We’re told that John didn’t drink wine, and it’s conjectured that was because he was a Nazarite. However some other qualifications for being a Nazarite (not cutting the hair and not being defiled by touching a dead person) are not mentioned in passages about him. On the

other hand abstinence from wine was a command for the high priest of Aaron's line. **"Do not drink wine or strong drink, neither you nor your sons with you, when you come into the tent of meeting, so that you will not die; it is a perpetual statute throughout your generations."** (Lev 10:9)

It would make perfect sense for the true outgoing high priest of God to baptize Jesus as the incoming (and final) high priest, according to Scriptural dictates. It would've been a kind of spiritual transition of the two priesthoods, and as Scripture shows, baptism (washing in water) was essential, as was the anointing that accompanied it (speaking of Jesus' anointing by the dove of the Holy Spirit).

"And you shall bring Aaron and his sons unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water. And you shall put upon Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister to me in the priest's office." (Exo 40:12-13)

"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." (Luk 3:22)

If this scenario be accurate it gives us a new perspective on John's words **"He must increase, but I must decrease."** (Jhn 3:30). It's as if he's saying that while his own Aaronic priesthood was decreasing, the true and final high priesthood (the order of Melchizedek – Heb 7:11) was increasing.

Be that as it may, John the Baptizer was of the Aaronic priestly line, even though he himself didn't quite take on that whole function, particularly in the Temple. What we do know is that according to Jewish tradition it was the custom for the Outgoing high priest to baptize and purify the Incoming high priest. Hence Jesus said **"it was to fulfill all righteousness"** (Mtt 3:15). John (one priest) introduces another priest (the Great High Priest). Seems to make sense.

This gives us the basis for a Scriptural principle, that of the Outgoing and the Incoming. We find this in embryonic form in Isa 42:9. **"Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you."** Now while this verse in its correct context refers to the fulfilment of certain prophecies, it does give us the foundation for a general principle – that being, **only when the former things predicted have been fulfilled, will the new be announced.**

Let's personalize this for us: God will only open the next door for us once we've walked through the one He's already opened!

Or to use the imagery of pregnancy: We must carry what God's conceived in us until the appointed delivery time!

There is always an Outgoing giving way to an Incoming.

We won't move on until we've obeyed what God has already spoken to us. This flies in the face of that often quoted popular platitude that preachers sprout: "God will open a door for you". This is really a form of False Comfort! Yes it's true that one door closes and another opens, but it's not always the case when it comes to spiritual advancement towards maturity in Christ. There is a Voice to obey, and (tough) lessons to learn.

One season must close before another comes forth. Certainly there is an overlap, particularly in the natural seasons, but we can't always take natural analogies and transfer

them to spiritual principles. Sometimes (often!) spiritual seasons just do NOT overlap, rather they depend of the conclusion of one in order to introduce the next.

You must be a SON in order to become an HEIR. We often have to be restrained in a small place before God lets us loose in a broad place.

When the Father sees that one spiritual season has been fulfilled, He declares a new one. Isa 42:9B “**Before they happen, I cause you to hear**”. This requires a hearing heart on our part, even a willingness to want to hear so we can truly hear and so obey! It's a sequence that requires patience and faith.

Have you noticed in Scripture how the building always comes before the GLORY can fall; Solomon's Temple for instance. The principle being that hard work, dedication and struggle usually precedes enjoying the beauty that follows.

Imagine looking at the construction site at the Temple with all its dust, rubble, noise, etc. It would take a lot to imagine what the final product would look like. The building (the Outgoing) would've been something you got used to during construction over many years of toil, and the completion (the Incoming) would seem somewhat strange (but beautiful) after so many years of toiling and living amid what had become “the norm”.

So we find there are some issues here for us, and it's partly because we've been so used to living in the “Outgoing” that the new “Incoming” can look rather odd to us.

Here are some of the issues that might complicate our moving on:

1. Because we tire of the “old” during the season of building we can easily jump at whatever looks “right” even if it seems at variance with Scripture.
2. We can become over-cautious about moving on, and miss the season that's coming.
3. We may settle for a lesser calling, because the new Incoming may seem to be inconvenient in our eyes.
4. We allow other people's plans and expectations dictate to us.

It's often at this point that some believers fall into deception because of the above. Look at some of the deceptions that have surrounded many of the popular ministries over the past 10 years or so. False prophecies about revival, strange manifestations of angel feathers, gold glitter and orbs.

On the other hand just because there's the cry of the new “Incoming” season, we can again jump the gun and shout “Heresy”. They did that to Jesus remember?

So how do we get around this and remain faithful and discerning? No easy or quick answer here, but over the centuries believers have learnt that abiding in the Secret Place of God's heart and mind (His “purpose” if you like) brings you closer to see the seasons as they alter.

Perhaps this is why many saints feel a renewed call to true intimacy, and set about to refine their ability to hear His voice afresh.

Maybe, just maybe, amid all the issues of modern life, all the anxieties of the daily TV news, and the myriad doctrine and teachings filling our bookshelves and beaming through the internet – maybe the Father is trying to get some of us ready for a new “Incoming”.

It may well be so different (even odd) that only those who've been hearing Him already will actually understand.

God's way is nearly always to use a REMNANT to bring in the New. Scripture has many examples of the "few" who precede the "many".

1. Noah and his family of seven people; then a re-populating of the whole earth.
2. Abraham who becomes the father to thousands.
3. Joseph the loner who becomes the life saver of all his people.
4. Zacharias and Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna; all who were a remnant awaiting Israel's consolation (Luk 1: 5-6 / 2:25-38)
5. Twelve disciples to start with, then many who followed later.
6. One hundred and twenty on the Day of Pentecost, then three thousand get saved that same day (Acts 1:14-2:41).

A remnant first, who are willing to seek intimacy, to hear and then obey. A "few" who know the seasons are changing, who are willing to move from living in the "Outgoing" in order to abide in the new "Incoming".

I'm not talking here about strange fanciful new doctrines, odd spiritual manifestations that purport to validate weird occult-like experiences, or the babbling of false "prophetic" voices. Rather I'm attempting to alert us to the change of spiritual seasons, and to be vigilant and discerning for what is coming.

First the Father prepares a remnant, and then He increases the number. First the Outgoing, followed by the Incoming.

By the way, the Remnant should not be seen to be a special kind of elect group or special spiritual elite. There are many in this current season with claims to be Apostles, God's chosen mouth pieces, an elect who shall reign over the rest of us. They are not the Remnant ones according to Scriptural principles.

Those we read about in Scripture like Abraham, Simeon or Anna, etc probably had NO idea at all of their calling – they just heard the voice of the Father, hungered after what He imparted to them and obeyed. They would not have seen themselves to be any sort of elite persons or privileged ones. Yes, they certainly knew their God, and were aware of "being called" but not in any advantaged way - unlike so many today who claim mighty things for themselves and their carnal ministries!

May we be faithful, alert, discerning – and ready!

Blessings to you in the Messiah.

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