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TOPIC:

***HERMENEUTICS OF LK. 3: 7-18 ON THE KALENJIN
PEOPLE OF KENYA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
JUSTICE TODAY.***

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF
ARTS WITH SPECIALIZATION IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY.**

BY:

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Declaration

I the undersigned student Fr. Kiruy Charles Kipkorir hereby declare that this thesis is the original result of my research endeavours in the study of the Hermeneutics of Luke 3:7 – 18 with a critical reading and reflection. It has never been submitted in any other University or any institute of Higher learning for an academic credit. All the scientific information obtained from the literary sources and oral interviews have been dully acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my beloved late faithful father John Kipkirui Arap Kogo who first taught me to think and respect others and my late sister Mary Cheptum who helped me in my earliest time to discern my vocation to the priesthood. I wished they had lived longer to see me a priest.

I also dedicate it to the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret, which is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of faith this year. To Bishop Cornelius Arap Korir, the priests both in and out of Ministry, Reverent Brothers and Sisters and the whole lay faithful of our beloved Diocese.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

The Kalenjin in Kenya are of nomadic origin. Having migrated in the early 9th century from the present-day Sudan, where the desert life was so harsh to them, their lifestyle still to date hinges on the traditions founded on these harsh conditions. In the desert, an individual who is separated from his/her group must be able to count without question on the hospitality of the group through which he/she passes or he/she joins. Anyone may have need of this help and therefore everyone must give it; this is the basis of the Law of Hospitality and Asylum.

The history of the Kalenjin people is akin to the one of the people of Israel whose ancestors lived as Nomads. Because of their closely-knit society, the message of John the Baptist -the message of justice- is very central to their lives for it touches their identity.

PURPOSE OF THE THESIS.

My purpose of writing this thesis is to recapture the revolutionary message of Justice known to the geniuses of these two communities. I intend to critically study the preaching of John the Baptist not in the light of the Kalenjin community but as part of the sacred Scripture that is written to reach "the ends of the World" as Good News. Some Kalenjin men and women like some Israelites of John the Baptist's time have emasculated and domesticated the concept of Justice to only favour the rich and the powerful, casting the poor to abject servitude. The concern for the poor is no longer evident by those who "have". Though the rich do not necessarily cause the sufferings of the poor, their influence and their obsession with the wealth blind them so much that they hardly hear the cries of the poor. Not only are they full up of themselves, but also they use their wealth and influence to exert more pain on the poor. Because of their position and wealth, the people submissively accept them as leaders, though at times they buy their way up to leadership of the community.

On the other hand, some of the poor people no longer struggle to redeem themselves out of poverty. They sit up and wait for “manna” from heaven to fall. With poverty at hand, they easily fall prey into the trap of the rich and participate in any unjust practice in the hope of liberating themselves from poverty. In their effort to attain stability, prosperity and peace that they yearn for, they sometimes use uncouth and unjust means to reach their end. They will participate in tribal clashes or tribal animosities, cattle rustling, corrupt deals, land grabbing, and any other acts of fraud in an attempt to liberate themselves from the serious problems that bedevil them in the society.

I long to see a community that values Justice and expresses Love for God and the Neighbour. Call to conversion and having fair dealings with each other remains the central theme in John the Baptist’s preaching. I am going to demonstrate how the message of John the Baptist can make the option for Justice an integral part of life of a Kalenjin Man and Woman of the 21st century.

THE RATIONALE OF THE THESIS.

Today the Kalenjin community experiences a lot of injustices; they experience a lot of division and lack of concern to one another. “Brother is turning against Brother and Sister against her own Sister.” The community is slowly becoming “a man eat man society.” I want to critically look at the preaching of John the Baptist because from the onset, the Gospels portray a picture of a community in John’s time that is similar to the contemporary Kalenjin community. I would like to see whether his preaching has anything to do with the call to the people of the Kalenjin land back to repentance. I believe that the message of John the Baptist can change the situation because Justice to both the Israelites and Kalenjin was a sign and mark of their very identities although for them the concept was sometimes elusive, thus necessitating the presence of prophets among each society. Like the Israelites, of John the Baptists time, the Kalenjin of today are not faithful to what they teach. What we have in Kalenjin land is the contrary to justice. There are a lot of unjust practices even when some of the Kalenjin hold very high offices in Kenya today. Kalenjin land experiences tribal clashes, “mass massacres” and cattle rustling. We encounter land grabbing and those who dare to criticize these

practices are by every means silenced. These contradict the very identity of a Kalenjin in the way they value justice.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION OF INVESTIGATION.

My Central question of investigation is: "How can the message of John the Baptist in Luke 3:8 be used as a model for justice in the Kalenjin community of Kenya?"

GNT Luke 3:8 ποιήσατε οὖν καρπούς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας καὶ μὴ ἄρξηθε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, Πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. (Produce therefore fruits worthy of repentance and do not begin to say to one another, "we have Abraham as our father", I tell you certainly that God can raise children for Abraham from this stones). As my central point of investigation, the quotation will help me to discern how the message of John the Baptist can help particularly the Kalenjin people in the hope of conversion so that they can have a successful life now and their world to come.

WORKING HYPOTHESIS

John the Baptist has a very strong sermon to those who are unjust in their social dealings. My working hypothesis is a call to the Kalenjin men and women of the 21st century to repentance especially now in Kenya, when we are facing a quagmire of succession. Most of them are uncertain about their cultural, political, religious, economic and social future. They are mostly asking themselves "What can we do?" Like John the Baptist, I feel Justice is at stake. Lk.3: 7-18 is the focal point of their turning world in relations to justice to one another, to neighbours, foreigners and to the poor of the Lord.

There are a couple of suppositions, which I will work by. I will work by the principle that the Kalenjin and the Israelites are both of Semitic origin and both have lived in the desert, which fashioned their lifestyle. Apart from many things they held so dear was the fact that they were once strangers in foreign land, they once suffered at the hands of their enemies, they understand the hardships of the desert, and the situation of being in want. They both understand the position of depending on God and hoping for His grace. When a situation of Injustice arises, they both understand and believe that God will take initiative. This is the point that John the Baptist is expressing to the Israelites of his time.

The Kalenjin today have become so unjust to one another. What has John the Baptist to tell them as recorded in LK.3; 7-18?

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

I will approach the Text in an exegetical method with the Bible as my primary source. I will use the Synchronic method, taking the Text as it is. The parallel Texts (Matt 3:1-12; Mark 1: 2-8 and John 1:19-23) will help me more to understand the Text. In the form analysis I will consider the structure, the setting and the intention of the author of this particular text. As for the textual analysis, I will look at the delimitation of the text and reconstruct it in relations to LK.3: 1-6 and LK. 3:19-20, which are the introduction and conclusion of the text respectively.

In this thesis, I will concentrate so much on the scriptural text, not in the light of the Kalenjin people, that is looking at the text as being at par with the Kalenjin people's culture, but a reality that Kalenjins have to lookup to for direction. I don't intend to bend the text to talk to the Kalenjin people of Kenya, but as part of the Holy Scripture, what has it to say to the Kalenjin people of Kenya today that is just but only the conclusion and application of the text.

I will refer to some prophetic texts related to this topic due to the fact that John the Baptist was a prophet. I will refer so much to prophet Amos because I find him a prophet who deals so much with Social Justice. It's true, other prophets deal with Justice but for the purpose of this thesis, I prefer Amos because he deals more with Social Justice, quoting examples that are very contemporary in my thesis. I will also make allusion to the other prophets. Quotations from other books of the Bible will lend a hand to me in my research on the hermeneutics of this text. Reading contemporary Jewish literature of John the Baptist's time will help me to bring out more his message and the setting in which he preached. What was the contemporary lifestyle of the people in his time?

The thesis does not aim at calling for conversion of personalities but the call to conversion of the Kalenjin people to abandon pride and act Justly. As for the research on the Kalenjin community, I will contact the old people of the Kalenjin land because not much has been written about the Kalenjin people, their culture and history.

STRUCTURE

The Thesis will comprise of five chapters. There will be an introduction and a conclusion.

In chapter one I will investigate the designated text (Lk. 3:7-18) looking at it critically by checking and studying its structure.

In Chapter Two I will look at the life of John the Baptist, trace the theme of Justice from the prophets especially Amos and the Rabbinical literature of John the Baptist's time as a lead up to his message.

In Chapter Three I will critically consider the Ethical message of John the Baptist (Lk.3: 10-14) as his climactic message found in his preaching. This is a chapter that I consider central in the Thesis.

In Chapter Four, I consider the eschatological and messianic Perspectives of John the Baptist's preaching.

In Chapter five I will look at the real situation as found in the Kalenjin world, (*Sitz-im-leben*) and parallels to John's world and the meaning of John the Baptist's message today to the Kalenjin People.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND THE DELIMITATION OF LUKE 3: 7 – 18.

1.0 Introduction

The fact of giving others their dues is so central to human life as a prerequisite to attaining peace and prosperity. Justice as a cardinal virtue inclines people to give others their due, causing them by its very nature to respect others' personality and to grant them their dues as individuals charged with responsibility of their own destiny. To achieve this, an atmosphere of love should be inculcated in the hearts of all whereby in the process of seeking justice, those who have fallen short in social justice are called in love to repent for their sins.

In many instances, Kalenjin men and women of this century have fallen short of acting justly to their neighbour. The expediency of studying this pericope (Lk 3:7-18) is to call back men and women of Kalenjin community today who are mostly Christian to the process of bringing justice to their world. It is against this background that I envisage first studying the life and works of the author of the Gospel of Luke. This will help me as I attempt to investigate reasons that could have made him write in that form and structure, before delimiting the text in study (Lk 3:7-18).

Though this text has some technical problems; it is still authentic and good enough in my view that one can work through it by the synchronic method. I intend to present the textual problems that are inherent in the text so that the reader of this thesis may be aware of these problems in the pericope. In my view as to the delimitation and textual analysis of the text, the censure of John the Baptist to his audience remains true reminiscence of what the author heard from the eyewitnesses.

1.1.0 General Introduction to the Gospel of Luke.

1.1.1 Author

Luke (*contracted from Lucanus a slave name*) is generally accepted to be the author of both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.¹ He was of Gentile parentage before becoming a Christian and Eusebius states that Antioch was his native city.² He was both a physician (Col. 4:11,14) as well as Historian by profession and the medical and historical terms that occur in the Gospel and the general linguistic style found in both the Gospel and Acts help to identify him more as the author.³ The guesses that he was one of the Greeks who came to Philip for an introduction to Jesus (Jn 12:20-21), or the companion of Cleopas in the walk to Emmaus (Lk 24:13) are pure speculation as that holding that he was one of the Seventy sent out by Jesus. Perhaps the fact that only Luke's Gospel recorded the mission of the seventy creates these speculations.

One thing is clear when we read from the classic introduction to the Gospel (Lk 1:1-4), that he was a man of culture; a man of the schools, and his Greek has a literary flavour⁴ only approached in the New Testament by Paul's writings and by the Epistle to the Hebrews. The first writers who definitely name Luke as the author of the Third Gospel belong to the end of the 2nd century.

1.1.2 The Canonicity and Use of the Gospel.

The Gospel of Luke was recognized as authentic and authoritative in the second half of the 2nd century though it is impossible to show that it had not been thus recognized at a very much earlier date.⁵ Quotations made by Irenaeus (end of the 2nd century) from this Gospel and his argument that there could be only "four" Gospels akin to the four points of the compass which though absurd remains a powerful testimony to the general acceptance of this Gospel along with the other three.

¹ J. Hasting, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 596

² C.P Stuhlmuller, "The Gospel of Luke" in *New Testament Reading Guide*, 4

³ C. Stuhlmuller, "The Gospel According to Luke", 115

⁴ A. Valensin, *The Word of Salvation*, 9

⁵ D. Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 104

1.1.3 The Methodology of Luke.

Through his classic introduction (1:1- 4), Luke announces his methodology and personality. Here, he honestly takes his audience into his confidence, disclosing his point of view and credentials for the great assignment that lies before him in his writing. Though he speaks of 'those matters, which have been fulfilled among us' in our time, he does not assert himself to have been an eyewitness of 'those matters'. Though he was a Gentile and apparently never saw Jesus in the flesh, he engaged himself into recording the great events, which he did not himself partake.

1.1.4 Sources of the Gospel

The redactor of the Gospel must have used at least the preliminary account of the Gospel of Mark⁶ that possibly could have been the proto-Mark. He probably heard this preliminary account in oral form and not the present (written) Gospel of Mark, which he took immense effort to edit it into proper synthesis that formed the now Gospel of Luke. He confirms this in his admission to "have taken pains to use the works of his predecessors, having particular interest in what had been passed on by the eyewitnesses and the earliest preachers".⁷

Although the above is true, there is an uncertain mass of material found in the Gospel of Luke but absent from the Gospel of Mark. It is more generally accepted as extra materials collected from Q 'source' (German Short for Quelle). While this theory may be adopted as a working hypothesis, that Luke made use of "Q" as of the Gospel of Mark, he behaved as no mere copyist. By using his freedom in the both oral and written material, he gave his own interpretation to the end result.⁸

The evangelist Luke may have seen Mary herself or he could easily have seen some of Mary's intimate friends who knew the real facts. His stating "*Mary kept this thing in her heart*"(Lk 2:51) is worth noting for Mary would tell special things of her heart only to particular understanding ears.⁹

⁶ Johnson, T.L. "Book of Luke - Acts," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary vol.4* ed by Freedman N. D. - al., 405

⁷ Riecke Bo. *The Gospel of Luke*, 19

⁸ S.O. Abogunrin, "Luke" in *International Bible Commentary*, 1372

⁹ Fitzmyer, A.J. *Luke the theologian. Aspects of his teaching*, 63 - 73

1.1.5 The Style of Luke.

Luke's writing is classical and periodic; with pure Greek throughout that demonstrates the unity of his writing, tying himself to the Hebraistic language of the written account and perhaps also for the received oral tradition to which he gave explanation.¹⁰ He preferred the use of nuances that are common to his audience and clearly attempted to correct awkward phrases in Matthew and Mark leaving no doubt that he had their Gospels before him.¹¹ There are many examples to demonstrate this point; The sea of Gennesaret is but a "lake" (for he may have seen more of the world than the Galilee fishermen), Peter is often called "Simon" and the comparison of the Greek in Luke 7; 8, where he inserts τασσόμενος "set" removes the harshness of Mt. 8; 9, ἄνθρωπος εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν "a man under authority". He substituted the Greek φόρον (tribute) in Luke 20; 22 for κῆνσον which is best translated in the Latin "census" in Matthew and Mark (Mat. 22; 17, Mar 12; 14) in referring to tax, as he attempts to make his writing clear for Roman use. He omits Hosanna, Eli Eli lama sabachthani, Rabbi, Golgotha (for which he substitutes the Greek κράλιος). He uses the title "Lawyers" six times instead of "scribes"¹² as well preferring to translate ἐπιστάτης as master instead of rabbi six times, as this is plainer to Gentiles and making his choice of materials be in accord with the new light in which "the apostle of the Gentiles"¹³ was inspired to set gospel facts.

1.1.6 Structure of the Gospel Luke

The structure of the Gospel of Luke and the sequence seems to be basically and entirely dependent on Mark's Gospel even though in some places the evangelist Luke had different aims. It is necessary therefore to take Mark's Gospel as our given starting point if we are to understand the Gospel of Luke and for the rest note where Luke exhibits difference in his omissions and insertions.¹⁴

¹⁰ G.W. Lampe, *Luke in Peake's commentary on the Bible* ed by Black - Rowley, 820

¹¹ Johnson, T.L. "Book of Luke - Acts," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary vol. 4* ed by Freedman N. D. - al., 408

¹² J. Hasting, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 599

¹³ Stuhlmuller. *New Testament Reading guide*, 6

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 4

For the purpose of this thesis, the structure of Gospel of Luke can be placed as,

- I. Prologue 1; 1-4. (This gives an account of what actually happened from the beginning).
- II. Infancy narratives (1; 5-2; 52).
- III. Preparation for Ministry (3; 1-4; 13).
- IV. The Galilean Ministry (4; 14 -9; 50).
 - a) The Beginnings (4; 14 - 44)
 - b) Call of disciples (5; 1-6; 16).
 - c) Sermon on the Plain (6; 17 -49)
 - d) At Capernaum and the surrounding districts (7; 1 - 8; 56).
 - e) Incidents centering on the twelve (9; 1 -50).
- V. From Galilee to Jerusalem (9; 51 -19; 27).
 - a) Jesus and the Samaritans (9; 51 -10; 37).
 - b) On the value of meditation and prayer (10; 38 -11; 13).
 - c) Jesus and the Pharisees (11; 14 -54).
 - d) Jesus' advice to his disciples (12; 1 -53).
 - e) Various sayings and events (12; 5 -19; 27).
- VI. In Jerusalem (19; 28 -21; 38).
- VI. Passion and the Resurrection narratives (22; 1 - 24; 53).¹⁵

From this structure we discern three historical moments that can represent three periods,

- The period of the old covenant, which remains a distinct reality for which the transition to the period of the new covenant constitutes a significant problem.
- Period between incarnation and ascension which is made up of episodes of Galilean ministry, the journey to Judea and the events in Jerusalem and finally,
- The period after ascension, which is presented as a continuing eschatological age that is quite clearly regarded as the standpoint of historical development.¹⁶

¹⁵ Guthrie Donald. *New Testament Introduction*, 110

Through this structure, a very important reality for the reader of the Gospel of Luke to recognize is some notable insertions that are not found in the other synoptic Gospels;

1. The early History, a material very peculiar to Luke (Lk 1:5-2:52, 3:10-14).
2. The material (Lk 6:20-8:3) that somehow corresponds with the Sermon on the Mount in Mathew (5:1-7:29).
3. The travel narratives in Luke (9:51-18:14), which are seen as great insertion. It appears that Luke having perceived a Lacuna in the writings of Mark (9-10) and Mathew (18-19), felt the need of filling in the gap by his long discourse.¹⁷

1.1.7. The Dating of the Gospel.

There are various dates that can be proposed as the possible dates for the writing of the Gospel of Luke.¹⁸ The Book of Acts that was written after it (Acts 1:1) ends with Paul's two year modified imprisonment at Rome, (Acts 28:30,31). The book of Acts closes abruptly without informing us of the result of his appeal to Caesar, doubtless because when he wrote no event subsequent to the two years had transpired (63 CE). This leaves therefore two probable dates for the writing of the Gospel:

- a) Probably at Caesarea, between 58-60 CE,¹⁹ if we consider the author being in the company of Paul in Rome and
- b) The possibility of somewhat later years, as this verdict could be formed with the following dates in mind.
 - Paul's arrival in Rome in 60 CE
 - Nero's persecution of the Roman Christian in 65 CE
 - The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE.²⁰

I seem to favour the year 70 CE or immediately after on the grounds that by reading the Gospel of Luke (21:20 – 24), one can construe Luke's possession of some knowledge about the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans, an event that occurred in the year 70 CE.

¹⁶ Riecke Bo. *The Gospel of Luke*, 30

¹⁷ Ibid, 37

¹⁸ G.W. Lampe, *Luke in Peake's commentary on the Bible* ed by Black – Rowley, 820

¹⁹ A. Valensin, *The word of salvation*, 67

²⁰ Stuhlmuller, *New Testament Reading guide*, 3

1.1.8 The Gospel of Luke and the Synoptics

As an Historian, Luke gives accuracy to the discourses as the observations and occasional sayings through his professional knowledge. An example is when he presents Jesus, he appropriately dwells on the special healing power of the great Physician (Lk 5:17; Acts 10:38) where he describes symptoms in a professional manner and testifies as a physician to the reality of demoniacal possession preventing it being confounded with mental illness (4:41). More than the other Gospels, the evangelist Luke presents Jesus in private prayers with many clear instances.²¹

Though the preface (1:1-4), and the accounts of the events preceding Jesus' ministry (1:5-2; 52) are peculiar to the Gospel of Luke, he mainly agrees with Matthew and Mark in the order and the events of Jesus' ministry (3:1-9:50).

1.2.0 Delimitation of Luke 3: 7-18.

1.2.1. Introduction of John the Baptist in the Gospel of Luke.

Luke describes John the Baptist's ministry with a formula in 3; 3, identifying it as a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah; "*A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all mankind shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken*"(40:3-5). In his own way, he is clearer about the ministry of John the Baptist than the other Evangelists. In his writing, Luke distinctively interweaves the birth narratives of John the Baptist and that of Jesus, which can be set out as follows:

A) The announcement of John the Baptists Birth-1: 5-25

B) The announcement of Jesus Birth-1: 26-35

C) The two mothers meet-1: 36-45

B1) Mary praises God for Jesus -1: 46-56

A1) Zechariah praises God for John-1: 57-80.

²¹ Lk 3:21,5:16,6:12,9:18,9:28-29, 11:1,22:32,41,42,44-46, 23:46

By this chiasm, John the Baptist and Jesus are made close allies in the scheme of salvation but John the Baptist is made subordinate to Jesus,²² an indication that he was just a precursor to Jesus in Luke's view.

Though Luke presents the close relationship of John the Baptist and Jesus through the relationship of their mothers, presenting both births as miraculous (1:26-38), he creates a parallelism between John the Baptist's birth out of historical barrenness and Jesus' who was conceived by an unmarried virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit. He casts the call of John the Baptist in the form of an Old Testament prophetic call (3:2), extending the quotation from Isaiah (40:3) more than the evangelist Mark (1:3) by the addition of the prophecy of Isaiah (40:4-5) in 3:5-6 *Vis a Vis* Jesus the Son of God, an indication of difference in the nature of their mission. In doing so, he articulates his theme of the universality of salvation, which he has announced earlier in the words of Simeon (2:30-32). Moreover, in describing the expectation of the people, the evangelist Luke (3:15) characterizes the time of John the Baptist's preaching in the same way as he had earlier described the situation of other pious Israelites in the infancy narrative (2:25-26,37-38).

1.2.2. The Introductory text of the Mission of John the Baptist by Luke

The Text (Lk 3:1 – 6)

1 Ἐν ἔτει δὲ πεντεκαίδεκάτῳ τῆς ἡγεμονίας Τιβερίου Καίσαρος, ἡγεμονεύοντος Ποντίου Πιλάτου τῆς Ἰουδαίας, καὶ τετρααρχοῦντος τῆς Γαλιλαίας Ἡρώδου, Φιλίππου δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ τετρααρχοῦντος τῆς Ἰτουραίας καὶ Τραχωνίτιδος χώρας, καὶ Λυσανίου τῆς Ἀβιληνῆς τετρααρχοῦντος,
2 ἐπὶ ἀρχιερέως Ἄννα καὶ Καϊάφα, ἐγένετο ῥῆμα θεοῦ ἐπὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν Ζαχαρίου υἱὸν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ.
3 καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς πᾶσαν [τὴν] περίχωρον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου κηρῦσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν,
4 ὡς γέγραπται ἐν βίβλῳ λόγων Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου, Φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου, εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ·
5 πᾶσα φάραγξ πληρωθήσεται καὶ πᾶν ὄρος καὶ βουνὸς ταπεινωθήσεται, καὶ ἔσται τὰ σκολιὰ εἰς εὐθείαν καὶ αἱ τραχεῖαι εἰς ὁδοὺς λείας·
6 καὶ ὄψεται πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ.²³

²² Johnson, T.L. "Book of Luke – Acts," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. 4 ed by Freedman N. D. - al., 889

²³ Text as in the *Novum Testamentum Graece, Nestle-Aland*

Translation

- 1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene.
- 2 During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert.
- 3 He went throughout (the) whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,
- 4 As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.
5. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth,
6. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God".²⁴

Textual criticism

There are some textual problems found in this text but they do not change much the essence and meaning of the text.

In v 1, The manuscript D prefers ἐπιτροπεύοντος which means "hold the office of governor (ἐπίτροπος), be in charge or be procurator".²⁵ The verb in the present active participle form of ἡγεμονεύοντος and in the genitive masculine singular could mean "be governor or rule". So the manuscript D uses ἐπιτροπεύοντος for better clarity and to describe the work of Pontius Pilate who was not only holding the office of governor but was a governor and procurator. The presence of the word Τετραάρχουτος should have been τετραρχούτος²⁶ but τετραάρχουτος was permitted for the sake of etymological clarity since this was the tendency in Hellenistic Greek of the time.

²⁴ Translation by the *New American Bible*

²⁵ W.F. Arndt, - F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek- English Lexicon*, 303

²⁶ *Ibid*, 303

In v 2, the manuscripts C D pc it and the Vulgate have Καίφα instead of Καϊάφα which could have been the problem of the copying because no lexicon attests to the difference in meaning of the words.

In v 3, manuscripts A B L N W Ψ 1⁸⁴⁴ pc omits τήν. It is not clear why these manuscripts omitted the article τήν which is the accusative feminine singular of the article ἡ (the) in their writing.

In v 4, D manuscript in the end of the verse opted to substitute αὐτοῦ which is the genitive singular form of the verb αὐτός with ὑμῶν which is in plural form. Αὐτοῖ (of him) makes a change in the object of the sentence. This happens due to the fact that the paraphrasing of Isaiah 40:3 is not so clear whether in application to Jesus, it would still remain in the third person plural or will change to third person singular. This was due to the fact that the address to God in Hebrew was in plural form if Gen 1:26 (*“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”*) is something to go by. The syscp on her part have opted to use τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν to replace αὐτοῦ.

In v 5, The verb εὐθείας has been inserted by B D Ξ 892p lat. In the place of εὐθείαν. It is not so clear why the author opted for the plural than the singular form.

In v 6, D (r¹) sy^{sc} manuscripts have opted to replace τοῦ θεοῦ (of God), with κυρίου. κυρίου is derived from κύριος, which is strictly substantive of the adjective κύριος, meaning one having legal power as lord or master with the implications of strength and authority.²⁷

1.2.3 Explanation of the text

The author in this pericope sets the delimitation of the text on the public ministry of John the Baptist and creates the historical moment well enough for a Prophet to be present among his people. There is an historical shift from the exposition of the humble life of Jesus in Nazareth (2:52) to a new theme, the preparation of the public ministry of Jesus through the introduction of John the Baptist who is the precursor of his mission. Although Luke is indebted in this section to the Gospel of Mark and a collection of

²⁷ The work of the Textual Analysis is as indicated by Nestle – Aland in *Novum Testamentum Graece*.Stuttart.Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1991

sayings of John the Baptist that are his sources, he clearly marks this introduction to the ministry of Jesus with his own individual style.

Luke starts by giving historical setting and dates that are so important to his readers. In this Luke makes a six-fold attempt to indicate the time when John the Baptist began his ministry introducing him as a revival of the function of the prophecy, a ministry that had been silent for some time. He begins with the Roman Emperor, Tiberius Caesar who ruled the provinces two years before Augustus Caesar died, then mentions Pontius Pilate Procurator of Judea, Herod Antipas Tetrarch of Galilee (and Perea), Philip, Tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, Lysanias, Tetrarch of Abilene (all with the genitive absolute construction) and concludes with the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas (son-in-law and successor of Annas).

As an ancient, the reason for detailing these should be understood that being a man of his time, he did not have our modern system of chronology, hence naming the rulers was the common way of computing time. Objection has been made to the mention and dating Lysanias to this period because Josephus tells of a Lysanias who was King of Abila up to 36 BCE as the one referred to by Luke with the same date. But an inscription has been found on the site of Abilene with mention of "Lysanias the tetrarch" and at the time to which Luke refers.

According to Luke, John the Baptist's mission was "to prepare" the Lord's ways or go before the Him, causing many to turn to the Lord, a way of speaking about repentance and giving the people knowledge of salvation in release of their sin. By the quotation from Isa 40:3 in the Gospel of Luke (3:4), we have our first direct, rather than purely circumstantial, evidence of a parallelism and a justification of both relations and actions of John the Baptist and the Qumran community as we will explain in the next chapter.

There is a theological problem created in v 6 when the narrative ends with unresolved tension between promise that "all mankind shall see the promise of God" and the reality. Unlike prophet Isaiah (Isa 40:5b) who mentions the source of this promise, John the Baptist remains silent and moves to another theme without clear synthesis. Nevertheless this narrative helps to prevent the despair by early believers who were

living without a solution. According to the evangelist Luke, rejection and suffering are incorporated into the anecdote in which an animated hope in God's promise persists. There are two very important points in my view that the author had about Jesus that need to be noted as an introduction to the pericope.

- That He was the fulfillment of the promise that all flesh will see the salvation of God and that this is not trimmed back even though there is no clear way in which it can be realized.
- That He is the celebration of the breakthroughs towards inclusive salvation to all mankind. This will become clear even later when the author will be narrating Jesus' mission to the outcasts of Israel and the early church's surge into the Gentile world.

With this introduction one can understand why the evangelist Luke gives a long introduction to the ministry of John the Baptist who was the precursor of Jesus.

1.2.4 The Mission of John the Baptist

The Text (Lk 3:7-18)

7 Ἐλεγεν οὖν τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ὄχλοις βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, Γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς; 8 ποιήσατε οὖν καρποὺς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας καὶ μὴ ἄρρησθε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, Πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. 9 ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται. 10 Καὶ ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ ὄχλοι λέγοντες, Τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν; 11 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, Ὁ ἔχων δύο χιτῶνας μεταδότω τῷ μὴ ἔχοντι, καὶ ὁ ἔχων βρώματα ὁμοίως ποιείτω. 12 ἦλθον δὲ καὶ τελῶναι βαπτισθῆναι καὶ εἶπαν πρὸς αὐτόν, Διδάσκαλε, τί ποιήσωμεν; 13 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Μηδὲν πλέον παρὰ τὸ διατεταγμένον ὑμῖν πράσσετε. 14 ἐπηρώτων δὲ αὐτόν καὶ στρατευόμενοι λέγοντες, Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς; καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Μηδένα διασεῖσητε μηδὲ συκοφαντήσητε καὶ ἀρκείσθε τοῖς ὄψωνίοις ὑμῶν. 15 Προσδοκῶντος δὲ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ διαλογιζομένων πάντων ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου, μήποτε αὐτὸς εἴη ὁ Χριστός, 16 ἀπεκρίνατο λέγων πᾶσιν ὁ Ἰωάννης,

Ἐγὼ μὲν ὕδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς· ἔρχεται δὲ ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς
λύσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ
πυρὶ· 17 οὐδὲ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ διακαθάραι τὴν ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ καὶ συναγαγεῖν
τὸν σίτον εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστῳ. 18 Πολλὰ
μὲν οὖν καὶ ἕτερα παρακαλῶν εὐηγγελίζετο τὸν λαόν.²⁸

Translation

7. *He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, "You offspring of vipers. Who warned you to escape from the coming wrath?"*
8. *Give some evidence that you mean to repent; and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones.*
9. *Even now the axe lies at the root of the tree. Therefore every tree that does not produce fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."*
10. *And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?"*
11. *He answered to them in reply, "Whoever possesses two clothes should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise".*
12. *Even tax collectors came likewise to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?"*
13. *He then answered to them saying, "Collect no more than what is approved".*
14. *Soldiers also asked him in the same manner saying, "And what is it that we should do?" And He said to them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages".*
15. *Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah.*
16. *John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

²⁸ Text as in Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*

- 17 *His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire”.*
- 18 *Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.²⁹*

Textual Criticism.

Some manuscripts with the hope of rendering the text clearer use different terms thereby causing morphological problems noted in this pericope.

In v 7, the manuscript D it replaced βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ with βαπτισθῆναι ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ. The change from ὑπ’ (preposition in the genitive) which means *With, by, by means of, at the hands of* to the neuter verb ἐνώπιον (from ἐνώπιος) meaning *in sight or in front* slightly changes the meaning of the text. To be Baptized “by him” brings John the Baptist more to light in the process of Baptism as an active participant while Baptism “in his sight”, makes him more a passive witness in this great event for those coming before him. In any case ἐνώπιον does not clearly indicate whether he was actively involved or passively present while others actively took charge. The manuscript sy^{sp} reduces this description by the use of only βαπτισθῆναι.

In v 8, the Manuscripts D W pc er sy^h bo substitutes καρπούς ἀξίους with καρπὸν ἀξίον again reducing from accusative plural to accusative singular. This could have been caused by the author’s understanding of the subject and the object of the preaching of John the Baptist.

The manuscripts L Ξ 33.579, 1241 pc Sy^h inserted into the text at the beginning of the verse the conjunction ὅτι which means “that”. This conjunction can also be used, as declaratively after speech verbs to turn a direct assertion into an indirect assertion or after verbs of perception to introduce what is perceived. It is also used to introduce direct discourse, though not translated but represented in written English conversation by quotation marks.

In v 9, the Manuscripts D and sy^{scp} prefer καρπούς Καλοῦς, which is in the accusative plural rather than καρπὸν καλόν, which is in the accusative singular. This change is

²⁹ It is a Personal translation

caused by the hope to make the text clearer in D and sy^{SCP} who see the call of repentance as directed to the whole family of the Israelite people rather than to the individuals that came before John for Baptism for baptism.

In v 10, the manuscripts D and sa^{mss} have inserted into their texts ἵνα σωθῶμεν which would translate “so that we may be saved” in the subjunctive mood rather than the verb subjunctive aorist active, first person plural, ποιήσωμεν (from ποιέω) which would translate “might we make, do, cause, effect, bring about, accomplish, perform, provide, produce, yield, bear, put forth or give”. With the translation of ποιήσωμεν, one would find possible reason that would fairly aid to the understanding why there is the choice to ἵνα σωθῶμεν because within the verb is the object and intention of the questioner. On the other hand b q vg^{mss} sa^{mss} prefer ἵνα ζῶμεν which would translate “so that we may live”. Here like in the phrase ἵνα σωθῶμεν, the intention and object of the audience is also included.

In v 11, the Manuscripts A C² D Ξ Ψ prefer λεγει which is in the present tense active 3rd person singular to indicative imperfect active 3rd person singular ἔλεγεν. Here the use of the verb λεγει implies that John was addressing a particular audience before him where he addressed once while the use of the verb ἔλεγεν suggests that John may have done the action, “said” not only once, for the verb implies repeated action. The manuscript W prefers indicative 3rd person aorist singular verb, εἶπεν (*he told*) which would have the similar meaning with λεγει.

In v 12, the Manuscripts D a inserted the adverb; ὁμοίως which means likewise, similarly or in the same way before βαπτισθῆναι. The addition of the adverb is meant to indicate a sense of comparison, that like those who had come before John, this also came doing the same (asking a question). The manuscript D alone inserted another phrase at the end of the verse ἵνα σωθῶμεν (*so that we may be saved*). Like in v10 above, the manuscript D inserted the addition to indicate more the object and intention for their question.

Verse 14 has a lot of variations. Manuscripts 3 4 1 2 A C³ E Ψ sy^h replaces Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς with Τί ποιήσωμεν ἵνα σωθῶμεν. The phrase Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ

ἡμεῖς would literary translates “*what might we do and we*” while Τί ποιήσωμεν ἵνα σωθῶμεν would translate “*what might we do so that we may be saved*”. Like what the manuscript D had already done in verses 10 and 12 above, the manuscripts mentioned tried to answer the intention and object of the questions and the author’s intention as he reads on John the Baptist’s preaching; a calling to repentance so as to be saved.

The manuscripts \aleph A C³ W Ψ f¹³ prefer to replace αὐτοῖς with προ αὐτούς. Αὐτοῖς (*to them*) is a personal pronoun in the genitive plural case while προ αὐτούς (*towards them*) is the accusative plural of the same masculine pronoun.

The Manuscripts \aleph^* H and sy^{sup} prefer Μηδε to replace Μηδένα (from μηδεῖς), which would translate negative of the numeral one, used where the negative particle μή would be appropriate in the construction or as an adjective with a noun *not one, no*. As a substantive, it could be used of a person *nobody, none, not one* or with a double negative, *nobody at all*. Μηδε is derived from μηδέ which is a negative disjunctive particle from μή (*not*) and δέ (*and or but*).

In v 15, the manuscripts 131 sy^c omits περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου that translates “*concerning John*” but no reasons are given for this omission but the sentence does not change because the implication is still found in the concluding phrase μήποτε αὐτὸς εἶη ὁ Χριστός that translates “*whether he be the messiah*”.

In v 16, the manuscript D replaces ἀπεκρίνατο λέγων πᾶσιν ὁ Ἰωάννης, which would translate “*John answered them all saying*” with ἐπιγνούς τὰ διανοήματα αὐτῶν εἶπεν which translates “*perceiving the thoughts he told them*”. The replacement by D manuscript is most likely meant to enlighten the reader of the fact that the response of John the Baptist is not after “a question” but as soon as John the Baptist noticed their anxiety, he responded to their thoughts, which he had perceived as to their questioning “whether he was the Messiah”.

In v 17, the Manuscripts \aleph^2 A C (D) L W Ξ Ψ f^{1,13} lat. sy sa^{ms} bo^{pt} replaced the verb infinitive aorist active διακαθάραι which translates as “*to clean out*” with καὶ διακαθάρει which translates as “*and he cleaned out*” and as well replaced the aorist

infinitive active verb συναγαγεῖν which translates as “to gather” with συναζει which translates “he gathered” thus changing the implications of the text.

In v 18, the manuscript D replaced the participle παρακαλῶν with the participle παραινῶν. The participle Παρακαλῶν is derived from the verb παρακαλέω meaning “I call someone, summon, call for or I invite, I call on (for help), summon to one’s aid” while the participle παραινῶν is derived from the verb παραινέω which implies “I strongly advise, recommend or urge”. Both παρακαλῶν and παραινῶν are participle present active verbs in nominative masculine singular.³⁰

1.2.5 Form criticism

The evangelist Luke presents the preaching of John the Baptist (3:7-18) who urges the crowds to reform in view of the coming wrath (3:7-9), offering the them certain standards for reforming social conduct (3:10-14), and announcing to the them the coming of one mightier than him (3:15-18).

In examining the literary forms of this pericope I will be basing my comments on the obvious style of the author of the Gospel taking into account the structural analysis, the syntactic unity, which defines its logical connection among its various components, contexts and semantic analysis to conform to the vocabulary. This is to conform with the socio- cultural milieu of John the Baptist’s time to avoid misunderstanding and attempt to recapture as close as possible the theological teaching of John the Baptist according to Luke.

1.2.6 The Structure and Delimitation of the Text. (LK 3:1-18)

From the internal evidence, there is a big leap from the episode in Lk 2:52 to Lk 3:1. The evangelist Luke created a strong shift from the preceding episode to the introduction of the pericope in study. In the former story, Jesus is twelve years old whereas in the latter, he is already old enough for taking up his ministry.

³⁰ The explanation of the terms in the text is conferred from W.F. Arndt – F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek- English Lexicon and the critical apparatus are as indicated in Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece*

Even though Lk 3:1-6 is not part of the works of this thesis, it forms a very important introduction, setting pace for the delimitation for the actual preaching of John the Baptist. It serves as a link, the first still point to the turning Jewish world as regards social Justice in the New Testament. By identifying the personalities mentioned, a reality of facts in time and space is set while on the other hand, the quotation of the Old Testament prophecies serves to create a prevision of this hope it promises though not yet realized. It serves more as the introduction of a very strong charismatic leader that is able to pull crowds.

It is also important to note that while reading Luke 3:19, there is a clear shifts to the introduction a new nuance; the relationship of John the Baptist and Herod, which already anticipates the exit of the charismatic man of God to be advanced in v 20, thus creating an inclusion that is important to our study. The conclusion to me therefore that LK 3:7 -18 is one unit is based on the above process of delimitation. A parallelism therefore can be formed;

A -Ministry of John the Baptist – v 1-6

B -General calling and Expectation of the people –v 7-9

C – The Crowds’ question John the Baptist – v 10

John the Baptist’s answer –v 11

D - TheTax collector’s question –v 12

John’s answer – v 13

C1 – The Soldiers’ question to John the Baptist – v 14a

John the Baptist’s answer – v 14b

B1 -General expectation of the people –v 15

A1 - John’s answer about his ministry and mission – v 16-18³¹

³¹ Personal delimitation

1.2.7 The Setting

As noted above, the setting of the pericope has many shifts. The introduction (Lk 3:1-6) is a characteristic feature of the author to set pace for his audience, giving the timing, nature and reason for his writing. He goes at pains to quote more than the other evangelists, quotations that he regards as the special message of hope from the prophet Isaiah (Is 40:3-5).

From verse seven, there is an introduction of general preaching of John the Baptist, which encapsulates general call to repentance to the people of Israel who felt that they were a people of the promise. Luke introduces the audience of John in confrontation with him by characteristic use of the subjunctive verbs spelt in the questions of the crowds, *Τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν;* the Tax collectors, *Διδάσκαλε, τί ποιήσωμεν;* and the Soldiers, *Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς;*. After the nice rapport of John the Baptist with his audience, he revisits the expectation of the general public and their experience of John the Baptist. He again revisits the introduction of John's ministry and mission.

1.2.8 Conclusion.

The justification of the study of this text in its textual analysis is based on the assumption that this particular text can lay a basis for the process of reconstruction of justice in the Kalenjin community. Through the study of the peculiarity and speciality of Luke's structure and writing, the thesis finds roots in the process of reconstruction of social justice in the community. By identifying the special nuances that the author of the Gospel intended to pass to his audience, I intended to trace true roots and basis to argue for justice to the poor in the Kalenjin community.

The preaching of John the Baptist as recorded in the Gospel of Luke, which by itself is longer than in the other Gospels, in my view is the best pericope that can be used in the process of reconstructing justice of a society that has already domesticated it. In this pericope, the evangelist Luke has also encapsulated within the preaching of John the Baptist his message so that as he goes ahead to introduce John the Baptist and his ministry, he is able to pass his message on social justice with the hope that his readers would find a synthesis.

CHAPTER TWO

JUSTICE IN JUDAISM

2.0 Introduction

The study of the life and the vocation of John the Baptist is so crucial and important to this thesis. By looking at the background and religious formation of John the Baptist, the thesis will set base more for the text (Lk 3:7- 18) as good for the purpose and authentic for the mission of reconstruction of justice in the Kalenjii community which is torn apart by injustices. The legacy of John the Baptist in his preaching remains as the “axis” to this thesis in its turning and development and needs to be studied more so as to be applied.

Like anybody else, John the Baptist grew up in an environment that helped to shape his life and behaviour. Even the style of speech and outlook on issues was so much shaped by the environment he grew up in so that the conclusion that his vocation was identical with his whole life from the very moment of his conception is not misplaced. His influence spread all over based on his creative power and imaginative skills, which with time had been shaped by his experience and the exposure to the environment lay. It is only against this background that we would understand why John the Baptist spoke in the manner he did. In this chapter we will consider the background of John the Baptist, the environment where the prophet of his time and our time grew up and most specifically the prophecy and the rabbinical teachings that were available to him in his time and age. Knowing these well will help greatly in understanding why he said what he said then. By studying the history and the development of the understanding of the concept of justice in Israel, one would be able to understand why John the Baptist articulated his message of social justice in the manner he did.

2.1.0 John the Baptist as the Inter-Testamental Figure

The Evangelist Luke introduced John the Baptist as being born of ageing parents into a priestly family in the hill country of Judea and received his upbringing in the wilderness

(Lk.1: 5-80).³² He next presents him living as an ascetic prophet preaching and administering a baptism of repentance in the Jordan valley (Lk 3:1-20) and not as we should expect, exercising his priestly office like his father before him in the temple. The expression of Luke; ἦλθεν εἰς πᾶσαν [τὴν] περίχωρον τοῦ Ἰορδάνου (*He went throughout (the) whole region of the Jordan*) suggest the idea of an itinerant preaching.³³

There is a hypothesis that holds that perhaps on the death of his parents John was reared in the desert discipline of the Qumran community.³⁴ This hypothesis is founded on the fact that the Qumran community had a custom that allowed the practice of adoption of other men's children, regarding them as their kind and moulding them in accordance with their own principles.³⁵ The community was situated close to his home; closer still to where he made his comeback in the wilderness of Judea (Mt 3:1. I agree with this hypothesis because it would explain why John the Baptist could have severed his connection with the temple cult and appear to be fiercely opposed to Jerusalem priesthood (Lk 3:7). It is interesting to note that when he emerges into history, he in some way appears an individual prophet, who gathered disciples and gave them a discipline of prayer (Lk 11:1, 5:33) and fasting (Mark 2:18)³⁶. Through his preaching, he appeared to have made no attempt to initiate his audience into any kind of order. He only offered a final opportunity for conversion to them, believing in one Baptism³⁷ and not offering irrevocable condemnation of his generation like the Essenes, as we will see later. It is nevertheless important to note that whatever he received, he molded into his own, remaining with a distinct with his own personality. But however much he had cut links with the Qumran community, he kept the desert life, stressing asceticism, purification and separation from the evils that marked its discipline giving reason for people to come out to him for baptism.³⁸

³² Fitzmyer, A.J. *Luke the theologian, Aspects of his teaching*, 92

³³ H. Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke*, 18

³⁴ J. Robinson, *Twelve New Testament Studies*, 12.

³⁵ J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, 325.

³⁶ M.A. Knibb, *The Qumran community*, 113

³⁷ Hugo Echegaray, *The Practice of Jesus*, 59

³⁸ E. Stauffer, *New Testament Theology*, 21.

2.1.1 The Concept of Justice in Judaism

Justice has historically and theoretically singularly characterized Judaism as a moral value. The hunt for the Jews begins in God's message through Moses to the children of Israel that "*Justice alone shall you pursue*" (Deut. 16:20). His commandments to men and women, and especially to Israel, are essentially for the purpose of the establishment of justice in the world (Ps. 119:137–144) where men and women fulfill this purpose by acting in accordance with God's laws and in other ways imitating the divine quality of Justice (Deut. 13:5). On the theoretical view, many basic Jewish concepts revolved around the notion of Justice, which is the chief and primary attribute of God's action.³⁹ It is worth noting that the word "Justice" (צֶדֶק) is rarely found in the Old Testament and in its place is mostly found the word (צִדְקָה) that can be translated righteousness.⁴⁰ To the Jews, the process of establishing justice in the world is a foretaste to the messianic reign of universal justice and all history like the Torah that is its paradigm begins and ends with justice. The two main biblical terms for justice, *Zedek* (צֶדֶק) and *Zedakah* (צִדְקָה) refer to both divine and human, as well as to the works of justice⁴¹ which in essence is synonymous with קִדְּוָה *holiness* (Isa. 5:16) and is consistently paired with חֶסֶד *hesed*.⁴²

In Jewish thought, justice was essentially substantive and depended on the ultimate messianic value of promise making it essentially different from the classic Greek-Western philosophical view⁴³ where it was generally considered under the "distributive" and "retributive". As substantive, it was concerned with the full development of human person especially in their social life permeating all human relations and social institutions. The logical conclusion therefore was that Man was obliged to adhere to

³⁹ C.B. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 155.

⁴⁰ Stigers, H.G. *A Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament vol. 2 ed by Haris, R.L - al*, 754

⁴¹ Exo. 9; 27, Prov. 10; 25, Ps. 18; 21–25

⁴² Isa. 45; 19, Ps. 103; 17ff

⁴³ J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, 824.

God's precepts by acting on the principle of compassionate justice. The right living in accordance with the covenant was clear;

כִּי אִם־עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד וְהִצַּנְע לֶכֶת עִם־אֱלֹהֶיךָ , “to exercise justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic. 6:8).

2.1.2 Understanding of Justice in the Old Testament Community.

Through the call of Abraham and his descendants and through God's revelation to Moses in Sinai, God established a covenant with the Israelites (Exo.19: 3-6). This view was so essential to children of Israel who at Sinai, God had promised to take care of them if they were to be identified in their faithful worship of Him alone. They were called to care for one another, create a just community and a special concern for the vulnerable members of the society,⁴⁴ which included the widows and the orphans, the poor and the strangers (Exo. 20-23). The institution of the jubilee year may also in a way be considered as a social blue print founded on the deeply religious concept of Justice and equality which intended to apply the simple sabbatical principle (Lev. 25; 2 – 7) to a society which had become more economically complex.⁴⁵ Thus in principle, the tribes of Israel were to be kept in a sort of classless equilibrium, minimizing the gap between the rich and the poor.

The Prophets constantly reminded the people that God was more concerned with justice, mercy and righteousness than with correct ritual or periodic fasting (Amos 5:21, 24, Isa 58:6-7). They taught that sincere worship and humble fasting are of course superb and important, but they pointed out that these practices became outrageous pretence if not accompanied by Justice and mercy for the oppressed and the poor.⁴⁶ They reminded them that God acted in the history of the people of Israel, liberating them from their bondage in Egypt and thus indicating compassion, faithfulness and concern for justice and freedom.⁴⁷ In fact there is an opinion that maintains that it was because of Israel's

⁴⁴ C.B. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 156

⁴⁵ H. Herman, *Social Justice in the Bible*, 35

⁴⁶ J. Parkers, *A History of Jewish people*, 41

⁴⁷ J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, 824

humbleness and meekness that they were found worthy of becoming a chosen people. This may perhaps be connected with the view expressed that God's reason for election of Israel was due to the fact that in history they were a persecuted people, with all the great Biblical characters such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David having been oppressed and especially chosen by God.⁴⁸ To borrow the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel, the prophets were "the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor".⁴⁹ They spoke in the name of God and functioned as the conscience of the nation in Israel where the rich oppressed the poor and the rulers were corrupt, cruel and exploitative. By announcing a punishment by God that was meant to correct the people's evil ways and bring them back to the covenant, the prophets acted as mediators through whom the divine life made its way into the world otherwise sealed against it.⁵⁰ In this, they revealed not only a God who requires fidelity, justice and righteousness but also a God who in the end is compassionate and merciful, forgiving and faithful.⁵¹ This steadfast love of God gives the prophets and Israel reason to hope.

2.2.0 Prophets and Prophecy in the Old Testament

The title of a Prophet, (ὁ προφήτης) was used for Old Testament personalities endowed with the gift of prophecy (προφητεία)⁵² and was generally seen as one who spoke for God, proclaiming what God wanted to make known to His people. The prefix *προ* may indicate either a sense of place (*before, in front of, publicly*) or time (*either previously or in advance*) and the context must be used to determine the presence of either or both elements.

- (a) With the prefix primarily of place, the prophet was seen as one who declared God's message publicly as a foreteller, teacher, admonisher or preacher.
- (b) With the prefix denoting time, the prophet was seen as a foreteller with special knowledge of the future.

⁴⁸ J. Nausner ed., *Understanding Jewish theology*, 71

⁴⁹ M. McKenna, *Prophets*, 6

⁵⁰ W. Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament*, 212

⁵¹ K. Werner, *The Bible as History*, 378.

⁵² J.A. Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 211.

The Hebrew word for “prophet”, נָבִיא (*nabiy*) from נָבָא (*naaba*) which means “to bubble forth as a fountain,” was a term as far back as the Pentateuch, depicted people called to give prophecy in Israel. The Israelite prophets did not declare a blind fate threatening irreversible doom from which there is no escape like the Greek’s prophets, but they had a moral purpose which according to them the merciful and loving God gave concerned warning to the impenitent, that by turning from their sins, they may prevent righteous punishment upon them.⁵³ According to the Jewish Prophets, God did not give up His sovereignty by the appointment of human kings, but through the prophets, reproved, encouraged, set up, or put down bad regimes⁵⁴ as occasion required, making them participate more in national politics.

In the times of exile, the prophets strengthened the faith of the scattered remnant of believers, preparing them to the Messianic age when its spirit would be written on the heart, and the law less needed (Jer. 3:16, 31:31) and by speaking in the name of the true God and conforming to His word assured others of their divine mission. The fulfillment of their predictions remained the test of their authority⁵⁵ declaring repentance as prerequisite to prosperity. They sometimes gave their own declaration of their divine mission against their inclination “as they were prepared to risk all their courage to speak the truth and act with integrity”.⁵⁶

As a conclusion, the prophets performed as a new order to witness for God in plainer warnings to the nations who under the judges had repeatedly apostatized and no longer regarded the ceremonial law, a role which traditionally belonged to the priests⁵⁷ (Lev, 10:11) especially in the northern Kingdom where true priesthood was not present from the beginning.

⁵³ J. Mulenbug, *Old Testament Prophecy* in Peake’s Commentary of the Bible ed. by Black – Rowley, 475

⁵⁴ J.A. Soggin, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 229.

⁵⁵ Von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, 38.

⁵⁶ M. McKenna, *Prophets*, 18.

⁵⁷ M. Burrows, *The Social Institutions of Israel* in Peake’s Commentary on the Bible ed. by Black – Rowley, 139

2.2.1 Justice in Pre-Prophetic Period

Abraham and his descendants who later were called the Israelites, respected their one and only God as a “living God”, who took an active part in the history of His people. Their religion combined the belief of being a “preserve for God” as they were aware of the fact that He had made them His chosen people, with a certain universalism that looked forward to God’s reign over all mankind. They looked at Him not only as special God for Israel but also the sole Lord of the entire universe, regarding Him as a just One, who would reward all people for their morally good lives or punish them according to their evil lives.⁵⁸

2.2.2 General Understanding of Justice in the prophetic times

The study of the understanding of Justice in the Prophetic times is indeed to set pace for the development and the economy of Justice to which John the Baptist will inherit. It is true that in Israel’s history, the option for the economically disadvantaged and the materially deprived that consequently suffered powerlessness, exploitation and oppression was a remarkable option to the prophets. They abhorred the injustices to the poor and were torn to shreds by it. “They had no life but God’s honour, which was the only hope for the poor”.⁵⁹ To them, the option for this class of people was not optional for God, for He frequently made decisive actions and a deliberate choice which reflected value as well as desires flowing from the core of His nature⁶⁰ to always liberate them. The prophets therefore had no option but standing with the poor, being present with the poor, seeing the world from the perspective of the poor, working with the poor and advocating for the poor.

2.2.3 Pre-Exilic Prophets.

A) Israel.

We will sample two prophets who prophesied in Israel before the Exile. Amos and Hosea were among other prophets who prophesied before the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel (722 B.C.E.) but it was only their oracles that were recorded.

⁵⁸ A. Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, 111

⁵⁹ M. McKenna, *Prophets*, 2

⁶⁰ C.B. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 155.

D) Prophet Amos

Amos prophesied during the brief period of peace and prosperity that both Israel and Judah enjoyed at the time of Jeroboam II, king of Israel (786–746)⁶¹ who inflicted a decisive defeat on the Arameans of Damascus (II Kings 14; 25–27). This prosperity made the relatively small class of rich landowners and government officials “be swallowed up by greed and conveniently forget their relationship with God founded on Justice and faithfulness”.⁶² They instead oppressed the poor and indulged in the undignified practices of their pagan neighbours leading to various forms of social injustices.

Amos though not belonging to the order (Amos 7:14) received the gift to qualify him the office. With divinely inspired foresight, he knew that these evils would bring about a time of crisis when the anger of God would bring about inevitable doom (Amos 1:3, 6, 9) not only to the pagan nations (Amos 1:3–2:3) but also Judah and especially Israel (Amos 2:4–6; 14). He based his prediction of the two nations’ (*Israel and Judah*) punishments on the much older concept of their election by God as His Chosen People (Amos 3:2). In designating the time of God’s future punishment, he was the first to call it יום יהוה (*the Day of the Lord*), a concept that was taken up with further developments by many later prophets.⁶³ The origin of the concept is unclear, for at first it may have had a military nuance, “the day of the Lord’s victory over the enemies of His people”.⁶⁴ In any case, at the time of Amos the common people conceived it to designate the time when God would bring them complete victory over their enemies and thus lead them into the light of lasting peace and prosperity. The prophet turned this expectation directly against them: “Woe to you that desire the day of the Lord....” (Amos 5:18, 20; 8:9–10).⁶⁵

⁶¹ W.H. Schmidt, *Old Testament Introduction*, 227.

⁶² M. McKenna, *Prophets*, 69.

⁶³ Von Rad. *The message of the Prophets*, 95.

⁶⁴ Like “the day of Midian” in Isa. 9:3 is an example, where it refers to Israel’s victory over the Midianites

⁶⁵ Leon - Dufour, *Judgment* in the Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 241

Apparently a post-Exilic editor added the last verses of the book (Amos 9:11–15), concerning the restoration of Israel in order that the Book of Amos might end on a more positive note of hope. The later origin of this passage seems probable because it presupposes that the Davidic dynasty has come to an end and that the walls of Jerusalem are no longer secure and the city is in ruins (Amos 9:11).⁶⁶

II) The prophet Hosea

It is generally agreed that Hosea, the only “writing” prophet and native of the Northern Kingdom was a contemporary of Amos, although apparently younger. Some of his oracles were probably delivered shortly before the fall of Samaria (722 B.C.E.). The national background of Hosea’s ministry was the political instability and the moral and religious corruption of the closing years of the northern kingdom.⁶⁷ He prophesied during a time when foreign affairs impinged upon the administration of the Israelite state and dictated her domestic policy imposing an economic agenda upon her agrarian population. This policy escalated the production of “grain, wine and oil”, not only to satisfy export demands for these commodities but also to modify foreign aggression through tributes thus creating disastrous effects upon the nation. It increased risk of crop failure and distributed profits, primarily to the ruling elite (Hosea 12:1,7-8) impoverishing both higher villagers and lowland peasants. As foreign nations levied heavier tributes upon the Israelite ruling elite, this elite shifted the burden upon the farmers already labouring under financially reduced and agriculturally precarious conditions.⁶⁸

Like Amos, he criticized vigorously the moral evils in Israel, though his passionate threats of terrible punishments⁶⁹ mingled with generous promises of forgiveness and future happiness (Hosea 2:16–23, 6:1–3, 11:8–9, 12:6, 14:2–9). Discerning from the reflection on the Lord’s part in his own experience with his faithless wife, he realizes that “God’s beloved whom he called by name, had forgotten all they learned from Him

⁶⁶ Von Rad. *The Message of the Prophets*, 109.

⁶⁷ G.W. Anderson, *The Religion of Israel* in Peake’s Commentary on the Bible ed by Black-Rowley, 165

⁶⁸ A.Y. Gale, *She is not my Wife and I am not her Husband*, 362.

⁶⁹ P.R. Ackroyd. *Hosea* in Peake’s Commentary on the Bible ed by Black - Rowley, 603

in the desert; the knowledge of Justice and memory that they belong to God. They forgot that God is their only defense and power and that His *Hesed* cannot find a crack through which to enter their lives or their relations with one another”.⁷⁰ His discernment of renewal of God’s love for Israel and covenant with her like the days following the Exodus from Egypt (Hosea 2:14–15, 11:1) can be noticed as an influential feature of this new covenant which consequentially gives integral assurance that Israel will never again give grounds for its dissolution as it did with the original covenant and will receive a new nature, which will render her incapable of breaking it (Hosea 2:21–22).

B) Judah

In the Southern Kingdom, Isaiah and Micah were active in this pre-exilic time and some of their oracles are worth considering. At this time both kingdoms of Israel and Judah were prosperous and thriving lands, with few very rich people and many poor masses.

D) The Prophet Isaiah

The authentic prophecies of Isaiah, who was active as a prophet from around 740 BCE to at least 701 BCE, are found in the long book (66 chapters) that is attributed to him. He lived at a time of national crisis for Judah when the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 BCE) ravaged and annexed most parts of the northern kingdom of Israel, and under Shalmaneser V (727–722 BCE) and Sargon (722–705 BCE) subdued the rest of Israel and most of the Philistine plain.⁷¹ Meanwhile the wicked Ahaz (735–715 BCE) and even the pious Hezekiah (715–687 BCE), kings of Judah played the game of international politics rather than depend on help from God. Filled with a deep sense of God’s utter holiness by his call to prophesy, Isaiah castigated idolatry and general wickedness in Israel and Judah. For him, “when men follow God, righteousness is said to dwell in the city (Isa 1:21), but when sin rules, the city becomes a harlot”.⁷² Like Amos, he pronounced “the Day of the Lord” where the arrogance of man shall be

⁷⁰ M. McKenna, *Prophets*, 90

⁷¹ G.W. Anderson, *The Religion of Israel* in Peake’s Commentary on the Bible ed by Black – Rowley, 165

⁷² Gilchrist, P.R. *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament vol.2* ed by Harris, R. –al , 375.

humbled, and the pride of men shall be brought low and the Lord alone will be exalted on that day (2:12, 17).

A new theme in Isaiah is the prospect of a future ideal king of Judah⁷³ occurring in the Immanuel passages. In explaining the nature of this ideal king, Isaiah spoke;

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder; and his name will be called;

(פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ אֵל גִּבּוֹר אָבִיעֶד שֵׁר-שְׁלוֹם) *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this (9:5-6).*

Connected with this prophecy is that of shoot from the stump of Jesse (11:1-5).

“That the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord where he shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist and faithfulness the girdle of his loins”.

II) The Prophet Micah

Micah a native of Moresheth in Judah was a contemporary with Isaiah.⁷⁴ Though he had a much shorter prophetic ministry, he looked forward like Isaiah to an ideal ruler who would be of the Davidic dynasty, coming from David's native town of בֵּית-לֵחֶם

⁷³ Von Rad. *The Message of the Prophets*, 121.

⁷⁴ G.W. Anderson. *The Religion of Israel* in Peake's Commentary of the Bible ed by Black -Rowley, 165

(*Beth-Lehem*) 5:1–3. His call came when the rulers were at the height of their temporal power, when they had forgotten that Yahweh should be the only king of Israel.⁷⁵

Mount Zion, which had become the religious center of all mankind, was first announced by Micah (4:1–4) and in almost identical words with Isaiah (2:2–4). Unlike Isaiah who foresaw its downfall because of the sins of the people, Micah prophesied its total destruction due to its corrupt leadership.⁷⁶ Her leaders according to Micah judge for bribe, her priests prophesied for money and yet they rely on Yahweh and claiming Yahweh to be on their side. For this reason, he prophesied that “Zion would become a field; Jerusalem will be a heap of ruins and the temple mount a forest with sacred stones” (Mic 3:1-6,9–12). To him, Justice defines God’s order in the world, being a covenant word for living in the community and memory of God’s words and deeds past and present and the people response in gratitude towards one another.⁷⁷ One can look at Micah’s legacy as built on the understanding of peace based on Justice, mercy and walking humbly with God (Mic 6:8).

2.2.4 Justice in Post-Exilic Prophecy.

The Prophet Joel

It is also very important to consider the understanding of the message of justice according to the prophets after the exile. Prophet Joel prophesied between 400 and 350 B.C.E.⁷⁸ He developed the concept of “the day of the Lord” (2; 1–17), when Yahweh would be victorious over His enemies (4:1–16) and bring salvation and blessings to His chosen people (2:18–3:5). In Joel’s prophecy, God said to His people: “I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of my people and my heritage Israel . . .” (4:2). The phrase “valley of Jehoshaphat” may not have a geographic significance but simply means “*the place where the Lord judges*”.

⁷⁵ M. McKenna, *Prophets*, 127

⁷⁶ J. Holman, Micah in *the International Bible Commentary* ed by Farmer, R.W - al, 1156.

⁷⁷ M. McKenna, *Prophets*, 129

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 231

2.3.0 THE CONCEPT OF JUSTICE IN THE ORAL TEACHINGS OF THE RABBIS

2.3.1 The Rabbi

The title Rabbi is derived from the noun רַב (rab), literary meaning “great or much” but also means, “Captain, chief, Lord or Master” and does not occur in the Old Testament. The person, רַבִּי “Rabbi” (“my master”) was in the Talmudic period⁷⁹ an interpreter and expounder of the Bible and the Oral Law,⁸⁰ and almost invariably had an occupation where he derived his livelihood. This makes the Rabbi of the Talmud period completely different from the present-day holder of the title. In later Judaism, the Rabbi was in addition to the interpreter and expounder of the law, the teacher, preacher, and spiritual head of the Jewish congregation or community. Only during the Tannaitic period, in the generation after Hillel, was the title employed for the sages, creating it an exclusive title for those scholars who received official appointment or ordination.⁸¹

2.3.2 Justice in Rabbinical Judaism

Rabbinic Judaism is seen as a religion of a twofold canon constituted by written and oral Torah whereby the structure of Jewish interpretation has been grounded on the presumption that their revelation was simultaneous. According to rabbinic tradition, מִשְׁנָה (Mishnah), teaching by repetition was compiled by Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, based on the oral traditions of his predecessors who were called *Tannaim* (תַּנַּיִם)⁸² (“tanna” means one who studies). From the perspective of the history of rabbinical

⁷⁹ Talmud (תַּלְמוּד) literary means learning or what is to be learned; from לָמַד (lamad). The Talmud was edited between 200 and 500 C.E and became the primary text for Jewish religious life and praxis in Judaism and was composed together with Tosefta, Halakha, and the Homiletic Midrashim ruling out the Talmud as the source material for the Lukan presentation of John the Baptist. Possible materials of the time were Dead Sea scrolls, Philo, Josephus and Apocrypha. But it is interesting to note that Targumim (Aramaic translation of the Bible, some parts that date up to the first century) should be reckoned as part of the rabbinical literature and from them much evidence can be gleaned about early rabbinic and pharisaic attitudes (Strak, L.H., Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, 8-25)

⁸⁰ A.C. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 898.

⁸¹ A. Steisaltz, *The Essential Talmud*, 25

⁸² A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, XXII

Judaism, the Mishnah was an influential document for all later interpretations of Scripture regarding religious practice thereby encompassing all scriptural concerns from the creation of the world to the hope for the coming of the messiah and the vindication of the people Israel indicating emphatically the centrality of Scripture in religious practice. With it was the Pentateuch that since antiquity was understood as the most sacred writing by the Rabbis who regarded Moses as the ideal of strict unbending justice.⁸³ The Passages from the Prophets and the Writings were always interpreted to harmonize with the Pentateuch.⁸⁴ The Jews had also high regards for the Talmud, which was a collection of rabbinic law and wisdom written in Israel and Babylonia.⁸⁵

In practice, a preacher in rabbinical Judaism contrasted the situation in “this world” with the “world to come,” allowing the prophetic words to illuminate the bright and glorious future for the Jewish people. It encouraged the continuing dialogue between the Jewish people and their past as rooted in the biblical texts, permitting the past to be eternally present when Jews gathered, as a covenant people and thus making the scriptures become a world onto itself.

2.3.3 The Relationship between Justice and Mercy in Rabbinical Judaism.

In the rabbinic literature, an eternal conflict was presented as being waged between God’s Justice and Mercy. There is scarcely a passage, which refers to His capacity as judge, which does not also allude to His attribute of compassion.⁸⁶ The divine title אֱלֹהִים (*Elohim*) translates “God” and was understood to denote his aspect of judgment and יהוה (*Yahweh*) translated “Lord”, which was as well believed to denote His aspect of mercy.⁸⁷ It is against this backdrop that one should be able to understand the Combination of “Lord” and “God”, which portrayed both the divine Mercy and Judgment.

⁸³ A. Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, 123

⁸⁴ H. Kung, *Judaism*, 88

⁸⁵ A.C. Evans, *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 898.

⁸⁶ Leon – Dufour, *Judgment* in the Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 247

⁸⁷ A. Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud*, 17

The Rabbis taught that it was through mercy that human race was allowed to be (Gen 8:4) while at the same time based on this truth, the world still exists and continues in the face of wickedness. Nonetheless the attribute of the mercy God was taught as exceeding that of punishment by hundredfold. This conclusion was deduced from the fact that in connection with punishment, God described himself as “visiting the iniquity of fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation” (Ex.20: 5) but in connection with mercy, “showing unto a thousand generations”(Exo.20: 6). Retribution therefore extends four generations whereas mercy extends to at least two thousand generations. The Rabbi Ishmael b. Elisha once said, “when I entered the holy of holies to offer incense in the innermost part of the sanctuary and I saw Okteriel,⁸⁸ I blessed Him that may it be your will that your mercy may subdue your wrath and may your mercy prevail over your attributes of justice, so that you may deal with your children in quality of mercy and enter on their behalf within the line of strict justice” he confirms this in the declaration, “during three hours of each day, God sits and judges the whole world. When he sees that the world is deserving of being destroyed because of the prevalent evil, He arises from the throne of justice and sits upon the throne of mercy”.⁸⁹

It becomes therefore difficult to reconcile how the first Hebrew patriarchs’ and the Talmudic view of the deity as “the Judge of the whole earth”, regarding His judgment as always just holding that with him there was no unrighteousness, nor forgetfulness, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes vis-à-vis His attribute of mercy that we have explained above. This could have been the quagmire that Jochanan B. Zakkai found himself so as to conclude on his deathbed to his disciples that “ I am about to be judged by one whom I cannot appease with flattering words nor bribe with money”.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Okteriel is a divine name usually explained as combination of Keter ‘throne’ and El ‘God’.

⁸⁹ A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud*, 18.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 16

2.4.0 THE “SECTS” OF JUDAISM IN JOHN THE BAPTIST’S TIME.

The religious sets of Judaism had a lot of influence to the people of Israel. People’s faith and morality depended so much on the nature of the presentation of the theology that one was confronted with. Among the notable sects were the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Essenes. The Scribes had a lot of influence in John the Baptist’s time that their consideration would shed more light onto the life of the great charismatic leader – John the Baptist.

a) The Sadducees (*Zedukim*)

In the days of David (II Sam. 8; 17 and 15; 24) and Solomon (I Kings 1; 34ff. and I Chr. 12; 29), the family of Zadok was selected as worthy of being entrusted with the control of the Temple⁹¹ and their descendants constituted the Temple hierarchy down to the second century B.C.E., though not all priests were Sadducees. The Sadducees as a sect was formed at the latter half of the Second Temple period (about 200 B.C.E). According to a Talmudic tradition, their name was derived from Zadok, who misunderstanding his teacher’s maxim, denied afterlife and resurrection hence formed a sect in accordance with his views. The sect later included anyone who was from the priestly descent of Zadok as well as their sympathizers.

Composed largely of the wealthier elements of the population like the priests, merchants and aristocrats,⁹² the Sadducees were active in political and economic life of the Jewish community. They dominated the Temple worship and its rites and many of them were members of the Sanhedrin. Known for their very conservative stand that held to the older doctrines and cherished the highest regard for the sacrificial cult of the Temple, they differed with the Pharisees who assigned to the Oral Torah a place of authority side by side with the written Torah.⁹³

⁹¹J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, 884.

⁹²M. Mc Kenzie, *New Testament Reading guide; Introduction to New Testament*, 11.

⁹³J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, 778

According to the Sadducees, God was not concerned with man's affairs, taking away fate and holding that all our actions are in our own power, so that we ourselves are the cause of what is good and receive what is evil from our own folly. By this, one could therefore see a lax and worldly-minded aristocratic movement, primarily interested in maintaining their own privileged position, and favoring Greco-Roman culture.

b) The Pharisees (*Perushim*).

The name Pharisee is derived from *parash* "to be separated" hence "*Pharisee*" would mean "*the separated ones or the separatists*". In reality we do not have direct sources on the Pharisees except that they were a Jewish religious and political party or sect during the Second Temple period, which emerged as a distinct group shortly after the Hasmonean revolt (165–160 B.C.E). They were probably successors of the Hasidim, an earlier Jewish sect that promoted the observance of Jewish ritual and the study of the Torah.⁹⁴ They considered themselves the traditional followers of Ezra, whom they cherished, after Moses as the founder of Judaism, maintaining the validity of the Oral Law as well as of the Torah as the source of their religion. They attempted to instill the masses with a spirit of holiness, based on a scrupulous observance of the Torah, by spreading traditional religious teaching. In contrast to the Zealots, their religious values prevailed over the political ones and were willing to submit to foreign domination so long as it did not interfere with their inner way of life rather than support an impious government of their own.

Conflict between the lay and priestly factions of the Sanhedrin regarding the interpretation of the Torah when decisions were required on questions arising in daily life, gave the Pharisees the opportunity to incorporate popular customs and traditions into the Temple cult and the religious life of the people "for its members were recruited from all strata of society but chiefly from some of the humbler classes".⁹⁵ Under John

⁹⁴ J.L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 668.

⁹⁵ Hugo Echegaray, *The Practice of Jesus*, 51

Hyrchanus they were expelled from membership in the Sanhedrin and branded with the name *Perushim*, “the separated ones”.⁹⁶

By the time of the Hasmonean revolt, it had become evident that the Pharisaic theological doctrines were giving utterance to the hopes of the oppressed masses and affecting the entire life of the Jews.⁹⁷ This hope was especially seen in doctrines that included belief in the resurrection of the dead that consequently make possible the belief in divine justice in the face of apparent injustices on earth, the Judgment, reward and retribution in the life after death, the coming of the Messiah, and the existence of angels, and also divine foreknowledge along with man’s free choice and therefore responsibility for his deeds. They conceived of God as all just and all merciful basing on the sayings of the prophets. The Pharisees considered the ideas of immortality and resurrection as genuine Jewish belief based on passages in the Torah.⁹⁸ Unlike the Sadducees, they held that God ordained everything in the world but that humanity has in their power the choice between good and evil which would lead to their reward or punishment in the next life.

People’s criticism to the Pharisees was that “they took extreme precautions in order not to violate the Law even paying tithes on the produce that grew wild in their gardens but neglected the very heart of the law; Justice and love of God”.⁹⁹

c) The Essenes

Essenes were a religious communist Jewish sect or brotherhood in the latter half of the Second Temple period (2 BCE -1 CE) that had its headquarters on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea.¹⁰⁰ Their first appearance in Palestine is generally associated with the end of the Hasmonean revolt. “Their settlement was burned down during the cause of the struggle for the throne between the Hasmonean Antigonus and Herod the great (40 – 37 B.C.E); Antigonus had the support of the Patheans whereas Herod was

⁹⁶ J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, 779

⁹⁷ Hugo Echegaray, *The Practice of Jesus*, 54

⁹⁸ J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, 779

⁹⁹ Hugo Echegaray, *The Practice of Jesus*, 56

¹⁰⁰ Fitzmyer, A.J. *Luke the theologian, Aspects of his teaching*, 94

supported by the Romans”.¹⁰¹ As a result of the fire, the site was abandoned for some decades but was later resettled shortly after the end of the reign of Herod the great. By the end of the first century BCE their main group was organized as a quasi-monastic order. The members of the Brotherhood lived in monastic communities from which, with few exceptions, women were excluded. They lived by an exact observance of the various precepts of the Torah,¹⁰² particularly those concerning ritual purity, so that this would hasten the coming Day of the Lord and at the same time, make the members of the community ready to stand at God’s grand tribunal on that day. The members of the community held their possessions in common, practiced celibacy,¹⁰³ and avoided clericalism, a ministry they had completely separated themselves from.

They lived in the barren desert of Judah, not merely because they had fled from Jerusalem and its temple on account of what they considered the illegitimacy of the Hasmonean high priests and their successors who were appointed by the conquering Romans,¹⁰⁴ but more particularly because they sought to carry out literally the command originally intended through prophet of Isaiah (40:3): “*A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!*”

They were convinced that they were living at the end of the era of wickedness, which was soon to be followed by the era of God’s favour, the last days foretold long ago by the ancient prophets. They lived strict lives, supporting themselves by manual labour, generally agricultural, and holding everything in common ownership.¹⁰⁵ They abhorred slavery as their religious outlook was closer to that of the Pharisees than of the Sadducees but they also had their own specific beliefs and observances. One of the most important aspects of their communal life was the study of the Torah in its details, a task to which they devoted their entire lives. This caused them to withdraw from the defilements of everyday life into their own “purified” monastic centers, where emphasis

¹⁰¹ M.A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community*, 5

¹⁰² Ibid, 105

¹⁰³ P.J. Achtemeier, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 280

¹⁰⁴ M.A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community*, 5

¹⁰⁵ J.D. Douglas, *The New International Dictionary of the Bible*, 325

lay on meticulous ritual purity such as communal baptism and communal meals,¹⁰⁶ rather than religious and philosophical speculation of the day. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has cast new light on the nature of the beliefs of the Essenes or some Essene-like sect closely associated with them. According to these scrolls, the Essenes apparently did not break away from official Judaism as a separate sect for little can be said about them that does not fall within the Pharisaic category thus giving reason for the numerous instances among the Pharisees, who singly or collectively lived the Essene life.

The Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Essenes that lived at Qumran community from approximately 150 B.C.E. to 68 C.E. were associated with the composition of the writings generally called “the Dead Sea Scrolls,” which from a just chronological viewpoint can be classified with the intertestamental literature.¹⁰⁷ From the Dead Sea scrolls, we learn of their rules of discipline and an administrator who was responsible for the life of members. The “administrator” a designation that may have been derived from biblical passages¹⁰⁸ was translated “teacher of righteousness” (מִרְיָהוּ צַדִּיק) and who was never indicated by his personal name. As far as can be told from surviving records, it has been suggested that his name was Zadok,¹⁰⁹ and that gave reason for his followers to be called Zadokites but this is uncertain.

Knowledge of him is derived from two principal sources, the Zadokite Fragments and various Qumran commentaries on books or sections of the scriptures. According to the Zadokite fragments, God remembering the covenant of the forefathers caused a remnant for Israel at the beginning of the Zadokite admonition in a time of apostasy. This remnant looked for a way like blind men for twenty years, before God took note of deeds of those who sought Him with perfect hearts and He raised up for them a teacher of righteousness to direct them in the way of His heart, that He might make known to

¹⁰⁶ J.L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 714.

¹⁰⁷ J. Murphy - O'Connor, *Essenes*, in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol.2. ed. by Freedman, D.N. 340

¹⁰⁸ Hos 10:12, יְרֵה צַדִּיק or Joe 2:23, אֶת־הַמּוֹרֶה לְצַדִּיקָה,

¹⁰⁹ M.A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community*, 104

the last generations what He was about to do. The Teacher of Righteousness was thought to be the effective founder of the Qumran community though the community had a distinct existence of 20 years already, but they appear to have had no leader before him. According to Knibb, "it is unfortunately not clear when exactly the 20 years period began or whether the 20 years provided an exact figure or primarily had a symbolic figure".¹¹⁰

One thing remained clear nevertheless, that to the community, which he organized, his voice was as a reward of ultimate deliverance and victory held out to those who listen to the voice of God.

d) The scribes (*soferim*)

The Hebrew term for "scribe" is *sofer*, meaning, "to count". The profession of scribe was indispensable to the Jewish community, and according to the Talmud, a scholar could not dwell in a town where there was no scribe. In the Talmudic period, scribes were poorly paid lest they become rich and deserted their vocations leaving the community without their services.¹¹¹ They were recording clerks and court secretaries of the *bet din*, writing legal documents such as bills of divorce and contracts. They were attached to all government and temple offices¹¹² because city governments required lists of prominent landowners for purposes of taxation and army service (Jud. 8; 14). In reality, they assisted the governors (Ezra 4:8,9,17,23), the public to draw up documents of legal (Deut. 24:1, Isa. 50:1, Jer. 3:8, 32:11) or religious character (Deut. 6:9, 11:20), the priests (I Chr. 24:6, II Chr. 34:13) and the chief of staff (II Chr. 26:11, II Kings 29:19, Jer. 52:25). Their functions were also associated with food rationing (Num. 11:16, Josh 1:10, Pro. 6:7), raising the levy (Ex. 5:6, Deut. 20:5; II Chr. 26:11), and the law courts (Deut. 1:15; 16:18). Apparently there were also independent scribes who either served the public or were employed by rich men.

¹¹⁰ M.A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community*, 5.

¹¹¹ A.J. Saldarini, *Scribes in the Anchor Bible Dictionary* ed by D.N. Freedman, 1012

¹¹² J.M. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 780

2.5 Conclusion.

In conclusion, the truth remains that John the Baptist concocted no strategies and made no situational plans for his preaching but simply presented the word he received. Such a man cannot be left behind and forgotten. His audience knew that discomfort with him is discomfort with that which he signifies: repentance, self-denial, ascetic struggle and humility. It is precisely these virtues which contemporary Kalenjin society ignores.

The expediency of this chapter has been the preparation and the setting of a background so that when we will critically consider the charismatic preaching of John the Baptist (Lk 3:7-18) in its ethical, messianic and eschatological messages, one can truly confirm that it was always true that treatment of the powerless in Jewish society historically characterized and designed justice and John the Baptist knew this very well. The way a Jew responded to the needs of the poor always remained the litmus test of his understanding of justice.

The Jewish community like any well-structured human civilization ordered civic policies and as a keystone, the principle that every human being is a person endowed by nature with complete and unchallengeable rights and obligation flowing directly and simultaneously from their individuality, that could not be surrendered. The conviction that, humanity created in the image and likeness of God (Gen.1: 27), was gifted with an undeserved and fathomless value and dignity remained the axis and basis of justice in Israel.

Based on this understanding of Justice by the Jewish people, it should then be understood that the challenge of John the Baptist on their understanding and conception of Justice touched the very core of their being. By extension, any discomfort, rejection or refusal by the Kalenjin people to accept the exegesis of the message of repentance John the Baptist would not be a bolt from the blue.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ETHICAL TEACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

3.0 Introduction

The Ethical preaching of John the Baptist in the Gospel of Luke (Lk 3:10–14) is a documentation so peculiar only to Luke and gives the first clear instance in the Synoptic Gospels that Luke had a source and a wealth of tradition beyond Mark and Mathew. It is evident that Luke had other sayings that he collected and combined with the Q sayings, giving us the most complete ethical account of John the Baptist's preaching in the New Testament. This text shows how well John the Baptist's instruction reflected an authentically Jewish ethic with its point of reference within the commandments of God and works of mercy. Through simple practical ethical instructions of John the Baptist, the evangelist Luke answered the questions asked by the crowds, tax collectors and the soldiers.

The intention of this chapter is to open and make clear hermeneutics of the ethical teachings of John the Baptist in view of using the interpretation to illumine the minds and hearts of the so many Kalenjin men and women of diverse professions, in an attempt to answer their distinctive and veiled question, *Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς*; (“*And what is it that we should do?*”) at this precarious moment of transition in Kenya. This is with the hope that the message of John the Baptist who called the Israelites of his time back to repentance as regards social justice especially to the poor and outcast, may also call to repentance the rulers in an unjust regime, challenge them about their responsibility to their society.

The words of John the Baptist are so strong that one is left wondering about the consequences of John the Baptist preaching to his audience. To be able to achieve this goal, we will consider the text within the three diverse sections,

- a) Preaching to the crowds (Lk 3:10 – 11).
- b) Preaching to the publicans (Lk 3:12 –13).
- c) Preaching to the Soldiers (Lk 3:14).

3.1.0 The Preaching to the crowds.

3.1.1 The Text (Lk 3:10-11).

10 Καὶ ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ ὄχλοι λέγοντες, Τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν; 11 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς, Ὁ ἔχων δύο χιτῶνας μεταδώτω τῷ μὴ ἔχοντι, καὶ ὁ ἔχων βρώματα ὁμοίως ποιείτω.

Translation.

10 And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" 11 He answered to them in reply, "Whoever possesses two clothes should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise."

3.1.2 The Setting

Background to the Crowds in the Pericope.

According to the presentation of Luke, there seems to have been a major public impact from John the Baptist's ministry to the people around him. Such conclusion can be reached on the discernment and interpretation of verses seven and ten. Luke presents John the Baptist's harsh address to the crowds (ὄχλοις) whom he identifies as a mixed group of people. This can be interpreted in comparison to λαόν (*People*) which may signify a particular unit of people. However, it is interesting to note how Luke mentions and interplays ὄχλοις and λαού, as compared with the separate mention of the coming of tax collectors into the scene in v 12. After the ὄχλοις "crowds," of v 7 and ὄχλοι in v10, he changes in v 15 to λαού "*People*," which suggests that Luke's concern may have rather been to characterize a more extensive ministry of John the Baptist.¹¹³ Compared to Mathew (Mat 3:7) who specifies that the group were Pharisees and Sadducees, Luke is silent as to their identities as he is to their place of origin compared to Mark who presents Jerusalem (Mar 1:5) as the origin of some of this people. Perhaps he does this purposely because of his presentation of John the Baptist as coming before

¹¹³ A.J. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 467

“a greater One”, to whom he wants to leave the first narration of a specific confrontation with the Pharisees on a later date (Lk 5:17).

3.1.3 Explanation of the Text

Through the ethical reflections of John the Baptist, Luke's informs more on his own theology and the situation that was at his time. He uses John the Baptist's reflections to bring him out more clearly as a precursor to Jesus' ministry, confirming his earlier introduction quoting prophet Isaiah: “*A voice of one crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth*” (Lk 3:4,5). It is interesting that according to the presentation of Luke, the ordinary Jewish people, those who were on the periphery of Jewish society responded positively to John the Baptist's preaching and were willing to repent¹¹⁴ and not the elites of the community.

The characteristic question in v 10, *Τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν;* which should be noted as being in the subjunctive case and as well compared to *τί ποιήσωμεν;* (v 12) and *Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς;* (v14), is intended by the author to bring out the inner spirit within the audience of John the Baptist, a yearning for a change of heart and the readiness to repent.¹¹⁵ According to John the Baptist, true repentance requires a total change of heart, which will yield fruit. This fruit will depend on the life that one lives in the last hours before the blade of the axe strikes, having in mind the understanding of Eschatology in the time of John the Baptist, which we will consider later in this Thesis.

In verse 11, Luke uses the word “*μεταδότης*” (*imperative of “μεταδίδωμι”*) to imperatively invite the crowds, which is diverse in contrast to the groups of tax collectors (v12) and soldiers (v 14) to share with the needy members of the community what one has, or part of what one possesses as in terms of clothing and food. The theme of sharing is not a new nuance to the Jewish community of John the Baptist's time, but

¹¹⁴ R.J. Karris, *The Gospel According to Luke* in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary ed. by R.E Brown – al., 686

¹¹⁵ Fitzmyer, J.A. *The Gospel According to Luke (I-LX). The Anchor Bible*, 469

is a development from the Old Testament history when the Israelites were invited to show mercy to the foreigners and the poor.¹¹⁶ In the Torah, God through Moses had already made considerate provisions of the law for the poor giving them the right of collecting the grain left by the reapers; *"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not be so thorough that you reap the field to its very edge, nor shall you glean the stray ears of grain. Likewise, you shall not pick your vineyard bare, nor gather up the grapes that have fallen. These things you shall leave for the poor and the alien. I, the Lord, am your God"* (Lev. 19:9,10). God as well exhorted the Israelites to deal Justly with the poor and the aliens while reminding them *"you shall not act dishonestly in rendering judgment. Show neither partiality to the weak nor deference to the mighty, but judge fellow men justly"* (Lev 19:15).

In the book of Deuteronomy at the approach of jubilee release, God directed through Moses to the Children of Israel that: *"If one of your kinsmen in any community is in need in the land, which the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand to him in his need. Instead, you shall open your hand to him and freely lend him enough to meet his need. Be on your guard lest, entertaining the mean thought that the seventh year, the year of relaxation, is near, you grudge help to your needy kinsman and give him nothing; else he will cry to the Lord against you and you will be held guilty. When you give to him, give freely and not with ill will; for the Lord, your God, will bless you for this in all your works and undertakings. The needy will never be lacking in the land; that is why I command you to open your hand to your poor and needy kinsman in your country."* (Deut. 15:7-11) Prophet Isaiah went further by practically making a clarion calling to the people *"to share bread with the hungry, offer hospitality to the homeless and give clothes to the naked"* (Isa 58:7). Prophet Amos condemned those who *"trample the heads of the weak into the dust of the earth, and force the lowly out of the way"* (Amos 2:7), those who thirst after prostrating the poor by oppression, so as to lay their heads in the dust. There are other prophets

¹¹⁶ M. Burrow, *The Social Institution of Israel* in Peake's Commentary on the Bible ed by Black - Rowley, 139

especially who vindicate the claims of the poor (compare Ezek. 18:12,16,17; 22:29; Jer. 22:13,16).

The unique and important point to be noted about Luke who is the author of both the Gospel and Act of the Apostles is that, he pays particular attention to the first Jewish believers as people who sold their possession and gave their wealth to be distributed to the needy¹¹⁷ though his description of the poor ones is so strong, bordering on nostalgia.¹¹⁸ Sharing on this instance of the preaching of John the Baptist should be well understood against the background that at this time, many people were so poor that they could hardly afford two tunics. The 'tunic' (χιτών) which was used by John the Baptist as an example was an essential short garment generally worn next to the skin, and which in this case symbolized the clothing of the humanity. It could be worn alone or covered under the longer robe ἱμάτιον. Some able Jews might have had an extra tunic, for warmth or a change of clothes as would appear later in Luke that it was perhaps common for people to have a spare tunic (Lk 9:3; *Take ... no extra tunic*).

According to Luke, John the Baptist who as we mentioned above as possibly brought up in the desert discipline of the Qumran community, did not instruct his audience onto a strict communal life of sharing like that at Qumran but sharing to him remained a fruit in keeping with repentance (v. 8). According to John the Baptist, those who had broken the biblical law of love needed to demonstrate their repentance in this kind of sharing. John the Baptist's call therefore according to Luke is the prophetic demand for abundant goodness (חֶסֶד *hesed*), as explained in Micah 6; 8, Hosea 4; 1 and the Rabbinic requirement of acts of charity. The injunction therefore of John the Baptist according to Luke was very radical and according to him, sharing surpassed the offering of sacrifices and the performance of ascetical practices. In his instruction, formal repentance must issue in away of life that goes beyond perfunctory alms giving, prayer and fasting.¹¹⁹

In history, acts of mercy and keeping of the commandments were the two fundamental issues for rabbinical ethics and John the Baptist had probably learned and known this in

¹¹⁷ Acts 2: 43-47; 4: 32-37

¹¹⁸ R. Brown, *The Annunciation to Zechariah, the Birth of the Baptist, and Benedictus*, 491

¹¹⁹ Bowie, W.R. Luke in *the Interpreter's Bible Commentary vol. 8 ed by Buttrick, G.U*, 73

his early life as mentioned above. For the rabbis, works of mercy supplemented the fundamental duty of keeping the commandments. The conclusion therefore that John the Baptist as the intertestamental figure exemplified the love of neighbour, giving it a fundamental place and clarifying the meaning and application of the commandments would be accurate. His message encouraged a self-less concern for one's disadvantaged brother and sister as a prerequisite to the attainment of righteousness and justice before God. Here the evangelist Luke once again creates a harmony into his theme of the proper use of material possessions to which he creates John the Baptist as a proper precursor to Jesus' preaching. Luke presented John the Baptist not standing over and against normal life in society despite his own detachment from society stemming possibly from his background as presented in chapter two.

Unlike the classical Old Testament prophets, who addressed the society as such, questioning the fundamentals of the structures of society, exposing the unjust class behaviour and calling for community action, the evangelist Luke presented John the Baptist calling individuals in society to repentance; a repentance that bears its fruit in relationships between individuals in society. The finger pointing that this calling was only for the rich is terribly misplaced because John the Baptist's called for a radical generosity in which everything beyond subsistent necessities was vulnerable to the claim of need. His clarion call that if anyone has two tunics, that person should give one to someone who has none does not call for the crowds to withdraw from society (like the Essenes at Qumran) or to seek a military solution (like the Zealot groups).

3.2.0 Preaching to the tax collectors or publicans.

3.2.1 The Text (Lk. 3:12 –13).

12 ἦλθον δὲ καὶ τελῶναι βαπτισθῆναι καὶ εἶπαν πρὸς αὐτόν, Διδάσκαλε, τί ποιήσωμεν; 13 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς, Μηδὲν πλέον παρὰ τὸ διατεταγμένον ὑμῖν πράσσετε.

Translation.

12 Even tax collectors came likewise to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" 13 He then answered to them saying, " collect no more than what is approved."

3.2.2 The Setting

Background to the Tax Collectors

When the Romans occupied Palestine, they imposed taxes and collected tolls, tariffs, and customs fees from the people of the land. Tax collectors were people employed by the Romans to collect direct tax (poll tax, land tax) while tolls, tariffs, and customs fees were collected at toll houses by toll collectors,¹²⁰ the group that appears frequently in the Gospels and is not entirely accurately identified as tax collectors. In the period of Roman rule, one could identify two categories of tax collectors; *Mokhesim*, who were connected with riding horses, and *gabba'im*, who were agents, employed in collecting the taxes, and were sometimes also called "Publicans". Δημόσιονες, a Greek title (from Δημός *people, populace or crowd*) for the publicans¹²¹ was never used in the New Testament. At these times, the collected tolls, tariffs, imports, and customs taxes were auctioned off to the highest bidder, who became the ἀρχιτελώνης (*chief toll-collector*) and had agents τελῶναι, usually employed in toll-houses; τελώνιον. The noun τελῶναι etymologically coming from τέλη (*tribute*) and ὄνεομοι (*to buy*) was a title for those who bought or demanded revenues, thus τελώνης became the official title for the toll-collectors.¹²²

Historically, Pompey began the first Roman organization of taxes in Syria and Palestine (about 65 B.C.E.). Under Gabinius' administration there was almost no place for the *publicans* in Judea, as Gabinius was their strong antagonist and tried in every way to eliminate them from the tax gathering in his province. Julius Caesar in 47 B.C.E,

¹²⁰ R.J. Karris, *The Gospel According to Luke in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary* ed. by R.E Brown - al., 686

¹²¹ W.F. Arndt - F.W. Gingrich, *The Greek-English Lexicon*, 178

¹²² W. Bauer, *A Greek - English Lexicon*, 812

officially and legally ended the Publican system of tax-collection entirely so that publicans ceased to function in Palestine.

Because of Herod Antipas lengthy financial administration of his tetrarchy, Galilee had the Galilean Jews engaged in the collection of both direct and indirect taxes.¹²³ They were directly employed by Roman occupiers and were used as tax-farmers in the taxes that were paid as an amount added to price of goods and services and not paid direct to the Government. The chief Tax collector (ἀρχιτελώνης) usually paid the expected revenue to the Romans in advance and then sought to recoup the amount, plus expenses and profits, by assessing and collecting the tolls, making the system of toll-collection obviously open to abuse and dishonesty.¹²⁴ The story of the chief toll collector Zacchaeus (19:1-10), who admitted to having been corrupt in the New Testament, sheds more light about this. They would bid money for their position with their profit coming from collecting more than they paid the Romans. With business proving so profitable, they hired other tax collectors to work for them thus creating jobs for others whom we identified above as the publicans. With this kind of practice, the process of tax collection became so much burdensome to the peasant populace.

As the burdens of taxation became ever more intolerable, so did the tax collector become a more hateful and dreaded personality due to the kind of brutality that they fixed to extract payments.¹²⁵ They were heartily disliked and despised by their countrymen, partly because the Roman taxes were regarded as unwarranted imposition by foreign overload to a people who looked at themselves as a chosen people of God and partly because the method of collecting the levies lent itself to extortion all down the line.¹²⁶ Being so unpopular, the collector's job was not easy and indeed at times they ran into great personal risk, as an enraged people was quite likely to lynch them. They formed themselves into companies, each member taking a share of the collection and its profits, according to the capital invested.

¹²³ Fitzmyer, J.A. *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX). The Anchor Bible*, 470

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 470

¹²⁵ C. Stuhlmueller, *The Gospel according to Luke* in the JBC ed by R. Brown – al., 128

¹²⁶ Bowie W.R. *Luke* in the *Interpreters Bible Commentary* vol. 8. ed. by Buttrick, G.U, 75

3.2.3 Explanation of the text

Of the three groups Luke would mentioned present as audience of John the Baptist (crowds, tax-collectors and Soldiers), the Jews would consider the tax collectors who traditionally are believed to be a very serious group of sinners and whose hope of salvation was minimal most in need of repentance. To the Jews, the tax gatherers, both *Mokhesim* and *gabba'im* were classed with “robbers”, and Talmudic law disqualified them from acting as witnesses and their money was not accepted for charity. This explains why Luke in his Gospel has encapsulated and created “an inclusion” on the question of the tax collectors between the questions of the crowds and the soldiers.

- The Crowds' question to John the Baptist – v 10
- The Tax collector's question to John the Baptist –v 12
- The Soldiers' question to John the Baptist – v 14

There were various teachings to demonstrate this in the rabbinical teachings. A passage from Mishnah held that; “*if tax gatherers entered a house all that is within it is rendered unclean. If thieves entered a house, only that part that was trodden by the feet of the thieves is rendered unclean*”.¹²⁷ The explanation was that, the entrance of the tax collector into the house was seen suspect for on many occasions his view of things was in terms of value and taxation and so would wish to touch all as in to asses their value in order to extort taxes from them. It was as well understood that thieves would only touch what they would steal. It was also understood that due to the nature of their work and their associations, the tax collectors were rendered ceremonially unclean¹²⁸ and because they regularly extorted money for the Roman occupying the Jewish land using torture, they were alienated from Jewish society and linked with sinners.

While understanding the complexity of the vocation and life of the tax collectors who apart from being rendered impure like anybody else, were also rendered unclean by the nature of their job, it is worth noting that the Jewish concept of repentance regarded restitution as the essential element where mere emotional remorse was not enough if one's victims have not been recompensed for the losses they have suffered. One would

¹²⁷ H. Maccoby, *How unclean were the tax collectors?* 60

¹²⁸ W.F. Arndt – F.W. Gingrich, *The Greek- English Lexicon*, 820

easily agree with the writing of the Tosefta that; “it was difficult for them to repent because it was so difficult for them to make restitution for their victims”.¹²⁹

The Evangelist Luke does not present a picture of the tax collectors stepping forward from the crowds but rather coming just as the crowds had, and putting the same question “*Teacher, what should we do?*” The maverick leader John the Baptist can be seen as “a teacher” who instructs in the way of righteousness by the way he clearly articulates his teachings. He called the tax collectors to repentance because the remedy for sin in Judaism was repentance. Even though tax collectors could be rendered impure like anybody else thus making them more open than any other group to the double tragedy of sin and impurity, he did not extend his calling for them to purify themselves. The sources of impurity are clearly stated in the book Leviticus and they are the same for every member of the Jewish society from high priest down to the humblest labourer.¹³⁰ It is against this backdrop that the call to the tax collectors is repentance rather than purification.

Although John the Baptist shows social concern to the populace vis-à-vis the tax collectors, in concrete terms, he did not advocate overthrow of the system but rather advocated a reform of the structure’s abuses. Since these abuses arose out of individual greed, a radical change in the practice of the tax collectors themselves was required.

The evangelist Luke employed the verb πράσσετε from πράσσειν, which normally translates “*to do or accomplish,*” and which in this case has a technical usage of “*to extort money*”¹³¹ in connection with the collecting of taxes and tolls for the Romans, to warn them against collecting more than the prescribed amount. According to Luke, John the Baptist warned the tax collectors that they must be contented with their pay and refrain from using their office to extort money from the people.¹³² John the Baptist counsels the Jews in the service of the tax collection to the Romans occupying Palestine in his exhortation for justice to take only their legitimate tolls and commissions and to resist the temptation to greed and extortion.

¹²⁹ H. Maccoby, *How unclean were the tax collectors?* 63

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 61

¹³¹ W.F. Arndt – F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek- English Lexicon*, 705

¹³² L. Sabourin, *The Gospel According to St. Luke*, 118

In fighting the kind of taxation system where the taxing right of the control in taxes collected from the sales and movement of goods was auctioned to the highest bidder who had considerable room. Their maneuver guaranteed the profitability of the enterprise for personal interest; John the Baptist demonstrated his clear vision of social Justice. There is considerable evidence that the taxing system was jam-packed with graft and corruption and the Lukan illustration of the tax collector is consistently negative.

3.3.0 Preaching to the Soldiers.

3.3.1 The Text (Lk 3:14)

14 ἐπηρώτων δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ στρατευόμενοι λέγοντες, Τί ποιήσωμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς; καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Μηδένα διασεῖσητε μηδὲ συκοφαντήσητε καὶ ἀρκείσθε τοῖς ὄψωνίοις ὑμῶν.

Translation.

14 *Soldiers also asked him in the same manner saying, "And what is it that we should do?" And He said to them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages."*

3.3.2 The Setting

The Background to the Soldiers.

In Palestine during the Roman occupation, there were people who performed military service, serving as soldiers in defense against external enemies of the Romans in the Roman colonies or "helping to enforce Rome's will in a subject country".¹³³ Those serving in Roman occupation could be Jewish mercenaries, or Jewish men enlisted in the service of Herod Antipas. The Lukan use of the technical word *στρατευόμενοι* which literary signifies "people who are engaged in certain military service, men of military duty" does not necessary indicate them to belong to the army. It is indeed difficult to

¹³³ J.K. Karris, *The Gospel According to Luke in the New Jerome Biblical Commentary* ed by R.Brown - al, 686.

determine what Luke meant by this term because on one hand, an opinion could be formed that; στρατευόμενοι (*the soldiers*) seemed to have been Jewish men in the service of Herod Antipas¹³⁴ as held by Karris. On the other hand, guided by their association with the tax collectors, one can agree with the hypothesis that στρατευόμενοι (*the soldiers*) “did not belong to the regular troops of Herod Antipas or the Roman procurator”, and as Lagrange, Plummer and de la Potterie would hold, “provided armed support for the tax collectors”.¹³⁵ This is built from the premise of their presence and the association with the tax collectors as the audience of John the Baptist in this pericope.

The nature and the position of a soldier held in ancient Palestine apparently enabled them to intimidate people and secure money in that they could threaten vengeance so as to extort money from the people. These police therefore would then belong in the same corrupt social context as the tax collectors. Among them was στρατηγός who was a civic commander, a governor and a highest magistrate in the colony who had the power of administering justice in the less important cases of civil magistrates¹³⁶. He was also captain of the temple and the commander of the Levites who kept guard in and around the temple.

3.3.3 Explanation of the text

The evangelist Luke extended John the Baptist's exhortation to the soldiers by using a technical word διασείσητε which literary means “shake someone down or threaten to dilate and extort money by violence”.¹³⁷ In relations to διασείσητε, is the word συκοφαντήσητε from συκοφαντέω which literary means, “to take money from someone by false charges, defraud or cheat”¹³⁸ like in the Zacheus' case (19:8). Both verbs διασείσητε and συκοφαντήσητε involve extortion where διασείσητε is the more violent and brutal if a distinction is to be drawn, but they often occur together as synonyms and no clear separation can be made. The inclination to suppose illegitimate attachment is

¹³⁴ J.K. Karris, *The Gospel According to Luke* in *the New Jerome Biblical Commentary* ed by R. Brown - al., 686

¹³⁵ C. Stuhlmueller, *The Gospel according to Luke* in the JBC ed by R. Brown - al., 128

¹³⁶ Fitzmyer, J.A. *The Gospel According to Luke (I-LX)*. *The Anchor Bible*, 470

¹³⁷ W. Bauer, *A Greek - English Lexicon*, 188

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, 776

likely the cause of the difficulty of implementing John the Baptist's directive compounded by levels of the pay.

It is also important to note that with time, the term ὄψωνίους, which originally referred to the cooked rations for the soldiers developed to be understood as denoting the money given for the purchase of such rations.¹³⁹ This allowance was minimal, and in the wake of their meek income and due to their intention of satisfying themselves, the soldiers perceived extortion as a possible supplement as they needed more wage. The verb used here for "to take money falsely" (συκοφαντήσητε) implied a link up by the soldiers to acquire more money than is required though the verb could also mean, "to accuse falsely" or literally "to make figs visible"¹⁴⁰.

When all is brought into consideration, their question "What about us?" undoubtedly suggests the seriousness of their moral need, and by means of the added words, καὶ ἡμεῖς (*even we*), an allusion to a reflection of a comparison with another group is brought across where their communitarian need is set over against their individualism. In his practical ethical example, John the Baptist in keeping with his illustration to the "fruits worthy of repentance", called the soldiers to an ethical reform. Like the Tax collectors whom he had counseled to take only their legitimate tolls and commissions and resist temptation to greed and extortion and the crowds whom he had challenged to demonstrate their concern for the well being of others by sharing whatever they do not need for their own survival, he called the soldiers to refrain from exploiting their positions for personal gain at the expense of others. He warned them against playing the sycophants by being "fig-shower", being legendary in intimidation and extortion.¹⁴¹

3.3.4 Conclusion

As a conclusion, the eloquent ethical preaching of John the Baptist as presented by the evangelist Luke creates a climactic expression about the great man of all ages. One cannot miss to acknowledge the great synthesis of the concept of justice as understood

¹³⁹ Fitzmyer, J.A. *The Gospel According to Luke (I-LX). The Anchor Bible*, 471

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 471.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 470

both in the Judaism and in the prophecy as regard the consideration of the poor found in the society.

Through the ethical teaching of John the Baptist which is so peculiar to Luke and unfolded in three parts symbolically depicting an integral and complete ethical reform of the Jewish people, justice remains the still point of the pendulum around which reform of the Jewish people can be seen. Through concrete examples, John the Baptist called for an end to a life-style based on greed and the accumulation of material possessions. He invited his audience to be concerned with their neighbour's welfare thus illustrate the "fruits worthy of repentance". It is important to note that John the Baptist did not ask of his audience a high mysticism or change of occupation but only a practical spirituality, reforming their ways if they were morally defective. By recommending to them the practice of charity with particular notes to the sins the groups can be muddied and sullied in, he by extension invited them to avoid these offences to which they are exposed to by their profession.

For him, although putting on sackcloth and ashes or offering sacrifices has traditionally been an expression of repentance in Judaism, repentance should take the form of a radicalizing of the commandment of love to one's neighbour and a commitment to works of abundant goodness, addressing to individual needs rather than societal problems, for to him, the answer begins with the individual. He did not preach that if one had more than is needed to sustain life, one who does not have such abundance should lay claim to it. In practice he did not say that one who does not have food or clothing should take from one who has more than needed.

As presented by the evangelist Luke and interpreted in this chapter, John the Baptist would be mistakenly understood if one perceives him as a revolutionary leader because his interest was in repentance and ethical reform rather than revolution. For him the first step towards a redeemed community was for those who had to share with those who had not. This is what I consider so central to the preaching of John the Baptist and reason for the centrality of this chapter in this thesis. I consider the perception and consideration of justice in the Kalenjin society eventually depends on how the community considers the poor in their midst.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL AND MESSIANIC TEACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

4.0 Introduction

The Lukan presentation of both the Eschatological and Messianic teachings of John the Baptist is more thorough than those of both the Gospels of Mark and Mathew. According to Luke, the life of John the Baptist expressed what he taught and what he stood for as he exhorted his audience to sincere life before the judgment of God is laid upon them. Theophilus which means "*beloved of God*" and who is the addressee of the Gospel of Luke (1:3) could be read to mean a Christian convert bearing that name or a generic name for any Christian who is the "beloved of God". The evangelist Luke could have also meant no more by it than the Christian reader and by extension create an inclusion today of the Kalenjin Man and Woman of the 21st century in his promise of the realization of the eschatological hope and all that it entails.

As a scientific research of information about the past Jewish and Early Christian communities, Biblical theology introduces in essence new possibilities for the future. In this chapter, the study of the eschatological (Lk 3:7-9) and messianic (Lk 3:15-18) teachings of John the Baptist is not meant to remain just as a study thus making it only an eschatological and messianic endeavour but an eschatological and messianic process. Its end is more of a pursuit of transformation than a project on digging facts, writing theories and then leaving them on paper. It is only then that this thesis will rewrite the meaning of theology, making it the discovery of God's face in the face of the people.

4.1.0 The Eschatological Preaching of John the Baptist.

4.1.1 The Text (Lk 3:7 – 9).

7 Ἐλεγεν οὖν τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ὄχλοις βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, Γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς; 8 ποιήσατε οὖν καρποὺς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας καὶ μὴ ἄρξησθε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, Πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. 9 ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται.

Translation.

7 He said to the crowds who came out to be baptized by him, "You offspring of vipers. Who warned you to escape from the coming wrath? 8 give some evidence that you mean to repent; and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 9 Even now the axe lies at the root of the tree. Therefore every tree that does not produce fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

4.1.2 The Setting

Eschatology at the time of John the Baptist.

"Eschatology" by John the Baptist's time was interpreted as belief in the ultimate destiny of mankind in general and the destiny of each individual person in particular. It was also understood to include the end of a certain period in the history of mankind or nation that is followed by another, entirely different historical period.¹⁴² The Intertestamental literature,¹⁴³ which helps in the understanding of John the Baptist's perception of eschatology, speak of certain important person who would precede the coming of the Messiah. Based on Deut 18; 15, they predicted that a special prophet, or even Moses

¹⁴² Jenni, E. Eschatology in *the Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 2. ed by Buttrick – al, 126

¹⁴³ Jewish writings that were composed after the completion of the latest book of the Hebrew Bible probably Daniel, c. 165 B.C.E. and before the completion of the books of the New Testament

himself would come to prepare the way for the Messiah. The oracle of Malachi (3:23–24) put to the fore the office of the precursor of the Messiah, having the chief candidate as prophet Elijah whose miracles and preaching would reform the people and make them ready to receive the Messiah.¹⁴⁴ It should be no wonder therefore when Mathew depicts John the Baptist as having the garment of camel hair and the leather belt (Matt 3:4) for this was meant to evoke the figure of Elijah. Prophet Elijah had been considered by the Jews as a prophet with extra ordinary powers in his earthly life and he was expected to return before God's definitive coming.¹⁴⁵

The literature depicted the period preceding the coming of the Messiah as one of terrible distress, accompanied by cosmic disturbances which was meant to encourage the faithful in Israel to bear their afflictions patiently as God's will for them, for only when the cup of evil was filled to the brim would the Messiah come to bring salvation. The sufferings, were commonly called "the pangs of the Messiah" meaning that Israel, like a mother, was to bring forth the Messiah in the pangs of childbirth.¹⁴⁶ By then, Israelites had firm faith in the Lord's justice, in His rewarding the good and punishing the wicked though with a definite development of this concept in two important points;¹⁴⁷

- The collective responsibility and reckoning to individual responsibility and justice, and
- The full reprisal in man's mortal life to its equivalent retribution only in the world to come. (Dan 12)

Before "the end" there will be a great eschatological war waged not only against the powers of evil but also against all wicked men, not excluding the wicked of Israel. This eschatology, which was always theocentric, was concerned basically on the ultimate triumph of God and His justice.

¹⁴⁴ Fitzmyer, A.J. *Luke the theologian, Aspects of his teaching*, 99

¹⁴⁵ A. La Vadier, *Herod and John the Baptizer*, 208

¹⁴⁶ M.A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community*, 172

¹⁴⁷ Leon – Dufour, *Judgment in the Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 242

4.1.3 The Explanation of the text.

The eschatological preaching of John the Baptist in Luke (vv. 7-9) has a synopsis both in touch and in morphology with Matthew 3:7-10. Although Luke does emphasize “the kingdom of God” as he introduces John the Baptist, he reserves its introduction for “the mightier than John the Baptist” who is to come; Jesus (4:43). For Luke, the baptizing activity of John the Baptist never gets to occupy centre stage for his interest is in John the Baptist as a preacher. What he adds here is a list of specific instances in which his audience ought to exhibit behavioural changes consistent with repentance.

Luke’s allusion to the plural form; worthy fruits (“καρπὸς ἀξίους”) in v.8 is so important in preparing his readers towards the message of repentance that John the Baptist intended to pass across. This allusion as well creates a literary connection with the proceeding one, remaining a pointer about those who rushed to John so as to be baptized, whose origin could have been either the region around the Jordan or further but needed to come out to see John for his reputation had extended further than his preaching.

Unlike Matthew and Mark, the evangelist Luke does not specify the origin of the crowds, but the imagery of the verb ἐκπορευομένους (*come out*)¹⁴⁸ creates in my view something like a contrast with the wilderness society, though there is no clear indications. If John the Baptist’s preaching is part of the preparation for Jesus’ ministry, Luke could hardly have found a more upsetting introduction than John’s address to the crowds: “*You brood of vipers*”. To the readers whose hopes for the blessings of God’s salvation of Israel had been stirred by the oracles of the birth narratives (Lk 1:77, 2:30-32), the announcement of judgment is as alarming as it is unexpected. By itself, John the Baptist’s address shook the very root of his audience and as Basarab noted, “no modern pastor would likely greet visitors to his church by addressing them as ‘broods of vipers’ or asking them how they hoped to flee the coming wrath”¹⁴⁹ for such an action could cost him/her much in relations to his/her audience.

It is worth highlighting here the fact that John the Baptist preached to the average people, telling them the truth as he saw it and would not soften or change that truth even when

¹⁴⁸ W.F. Arndt – F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek- English Lexicon*, 243

¹⁴⁹ L. Goodall, *None greater born of a woman; the theology figure of John the Baptist*, 560

formidable elements appear in his congregation. By his not asking favours from or giving any preference to the tax collectors and other rich and influential folk,¹⁵⁰ he gained strength to make the unique address “You brood of vipers”, a phrase that has no clear parallels in the Old Testament.¹⁵¹ While John the Baptist’s question “Who warned you?” introduced the theme of the coming judgment and evoked an image of crowds hurrying to be baptized in order to escape that judgment, it is interesting how he likened the crowds to snakes slithering in flight, as they might run to escape the danger of a fire. It should be clear that if John the Baptist was brought up in the Essene community as explained in chapter two, the idea of fire was so clear to him having in mind the fire that was used to destroy the Essene settlement.¹⁵²

One thing was clear to the Jews of the land where John the Baptist was brought up, that vipers (ἐχιδνῶν) were poisonous snakes that were an evil threat to people. It was believed that “their offspring” ate their way out of their mother’s womb. In this case, John the Baptist’s calling the crowds “offspring of Vipers” was even nastier than calling them vipers.¹⁵³ The imagery therefore of Γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν (“offspring of vipers”), was inconsiderate and unexpected especially to the Scribes and the Pharisees who when they came out from Jerusalem, the ordinary crowd would make room for them.¹⁵⁴ By the address, he signals the image of malicious evildoers as “poisonous snakes”¹⁵⁵ similar to the imagery of “offspring of vipers” that can be traced in prophet Isaiah (Isa 11:8, 14:29, 30:6, 59:5).

John the Baptist’s questioning therefore “Who warned you to escape from the coming wrath?” suggests that while their “coming out to be baptized by him” was the appropriate thing to achieve, their motives were in a masquerade. The expression of the evangelist Luke here is tempting one to think in terms of a ministry of John the Baptist, which at the start seemed to have been restricted to those living in the wilderness and were already alert

¹⁵⁰ Bamperger, B.J, *Tax Collectors* in the Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 4. ed by Buttrick – al, 521

¹⁵¹ Fitzmyer, J.A. *The Gospel According to Luke (I-LX). The Anchor Bible*, 467

¹⁵² M.A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community*, 5

¹⁵³ S.C. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background commentary, New Testament*, 196

¹⁵⁴ Bamperger, B.J, *Tax Collectors* in the Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible. Vol.4. ed by Buttrick,- al. 521

¹⁵⁵ Fitzmyer, J.A. *The Gospel According to Luke (I-LX). The Anchor Bible*, 467

to the need for renewal.¹⁵⁶ John the Baptist at least, at first seemed flabbergasted and skeptical, about the force of his preaching and thereby tended to treat the response as hypocritical. It is worth noting that the most important thing for Luke is the universal need for repentance that leads to baptism and that this baptismal repentance is confirmed by subsequent faithful and just life. Furthermore, the question “who warned you?” suggests that according to the evangelist Luke, the intelligence of John’s baptism may not come to these people from the lips of John the Baptist himself but here they are seeking baptism.

The evangelist Luke seems to have used ὀργῆς (*wrath*) which is found in v 7 to link up John the Baptist with the Old Testament prophetic threat of the day of the Lord as a day of great wrath as presented in chapter two of this thesis. John the Baptist’s strong language, like that of Old Testament prophets who preceded him were meant to alert his audience that this day was about to break thus identifying himself as a prophet of judgment under the direction of God’s Spirit. The evangelist proceeded to indicate something of what true repentance would mean for these crowds if they indeed wish to flee from the coming wrath by the introduction of what is apparently negative “Οὐν”. He sandwiched the word Οὐν between “ποιήσατε ” and “καρπούς”, which created a new dimension in John the Baptist’s preaching.

Bearing fruit in Old Testament usage is a blessing flowing from a relationship with God (2 Kin 19:30, Psa 1:3, Jer 17:8). According to evangelist Luke, bearing fruits is an obligation, rendering visible the change of heart involved in true repentance where the idiomatic use of ποιήσατε καρπούς “*make fruits*” is probably Hebraic in nuance . In Luke 3:8 just like 23:41 and Acts 26:30, the word ἀξίους “*worthy*,” is used to express fittingness with respect to something already existing. His choice of the use of the plural form “καρπούς” (*fruits*) suits very well the interest of vv 10 –14 in particular responses unlike the evangelist Mathew who uses the singular form καρπὸν.¹⁵⁷ According to John the Baptist as presented by the evangelist Luke, baptismal forgiveness is only a shelter for those who live out a readiness for the day of wrath.

¹⁵⁶ C. Stuhlmueller, *The Gospel according to Luke* in the Jerome Biblical Commentary ed by R. Brown - al, 127

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 127

The evangelist Luke in this pericope presents the point that neither baptism nor appeal to the merits of Abraham will substitute for the personal need of a right orientation to God and his will. His use of the phrase “μὴ ἄρξησθε λέγειν” (*Do not begin to say...*) which is similar in meaning to Matthean phrase “μὴ δόξετε λέγειν”, (*Do not think to say...*) is aimed to counter the bane of complacency due to Abrahamic descent, a lineage to a man with whom God had confirmed his covenant, which was believed to confer automatic racial superiority and inalienable birthright as clearly indicated in the Gospel of John (Jn 8:33–39). By this the Israelites considered their relationship to God secure. According to John the Baptist, the contrast between their attitude and that of Abraham was proof that they falsely claimed him as their spiritual ancestor. He reminded them that unlike Abraham, they would not receive the fulfillment of the Promise due to their sinful intentions and resistance to revelation for Satan himself had misled them. John the Baptist according to the evangelist Luke insisted that contrary to their claim, their refusal to listen to truth and lack of simple faith belied their belief. He made it plain to them that though this covenant was unwavering, they needed to employ individual faith so as to partake in it, for the heirs of Abraham are not simply those who descended from him by blood but those who evidently exercise his faith.

Reading between the lines, one can be able to see here that the preaching is addressed to the descendants of Abraham whom John the Baptist challenges to come for baptism; to “bear fruits worthy of repentance” and to show by their actions and conduct that an inner revitalization has taken place¹³¹. The metaphor of reformed or repentant living as “good works” and, therefore, “fruits” (v. 8) or “good fruit” (v. 9) is common in antique moral teachings and in Jewish wisdom materials (Lk 6:43-44, 13:6-9) where a good tree is assumed to produce good fruits. In effect, John the Baptist essentially said to his audience, “never mind telling me about your roots, what about your fruits? the axe has been laid on the roots of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruits will be cut and thrown into the fire”.¹⁵⁸

¹³¹ J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX). The Anchor Bible*, 468

¹⁵⁸ W.R. Bowie, *Luke in the Interpreter's Bible Commentary of the Bible, Vol. 8*, ed by Butrick – al, 74

To keep his theme intact, it is worth noting that Luke later presents Jesus when challenged for eating with tax collectors and sinners, He responds, “I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Lk 5:32). The questions that readily arise are “who is the righteous, and who are the sinners?” It is very clear in Lukan theology that the righteous persons need no repentance (Lk 15:7) while the sinners should readily come for it. The striking point in the Gospel of Luke is that Jesus blesses the poor and appears to consider them righteous, while the rich appear as sinners (Lk 6:20-21,24-25). In the context of John the Baptist’s keynote to Jesus’ ministry, the challenge is that all whose lives do not exemplify the righteousness of God as described by the prophets are in danger of judgment and need to repent whereby eventually the call for repentance will extend beyond Israel to all peoples (Lk 24:47). It is no wonder therefore that in his baptismal catechesis, Luke reminded his churches that they should be as open to finding goodness outside the acceptable ways of life as John the Baptist and Jesus were.¹⁵⁹ In John the Baptist’s teachings to his audience, neither the ritual of baptism¹⁶⁰ nor the rights of birth will substitute for repentance and ethical reform.

In v 8, the evangelist Luke presents John the Baptist introducing to his audience the theme of stones (λίθος). Every Israelite knew stones for there was no shortage of stones in the wilderness and so the “stone motif” that God could produce children from lifeless stones and which Luke will develop further later (Lk 19:40 and 20:18) must have been very striking to his audience. The comparison is made with stones because (i) they are a feature of the wilderness landscape, (ii) In their lifelessness and uselessness to man, they dramatically illustrate the range of God’s options; and (iii) the Aramaic word for stones (*abnayya*) allows a wordplay, since behind the τέκνα, (*children*) of the text probably stands the Aramaic *benayya* which translates children.¹⁶¹

The last saying in this section (v 9) returns to the warning of prophetic warning imagery of imminent judgment when Isaiah, Daniel and Malachi alluded to the burning of rotten or

¹⁵⁹ R.J. Karris, *The Gospel According to Luke* in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* ed by R. Brown - al, 686

¹⁶⁰ M.A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community*, 92

¹⁶¹ C. Stuhlmüller, *The Gospel according to Luke* in the *Jerome Biblical Commentary* ed by R. Brown - al, 127

unproductive trees.¹⁶² One should remember that the image of Israel as a vine or a tree was common, and God expected good fruit from it (Isa 5:1-7). Fire was a universal image of judgment and it is used to complete the imagery of disposal of the unwanted trees. The imagery of the axe and fire, which invites a response, first from the crowd in general, then from the unpopular and greedy tax collectors, and finally from the soldiers are imageries of judgment through which John the Baptist warns his audience.

In relation to the former theme of descent from Abraham, John the Baptist taught his audience that God is not bound to the generational processes in remaining true to his promises, and physical descent does not guarantee one a place in their fulfillment. Mere physical descent from Abraham is not important; God can create his own children out of stones just as he can cause inanimate stones to praise his Son, if humans remain silent (Lk 19:40). Addressing his fellow Jews, John the Baptist implies that God can even create a new Israel.¹⁶³ “John the Baptist, like Paul many years later (Rom 4:13-17) clearly states that no human works, but only God’s act of infusing faith produces life within the chosen people and membership in their ranks”.¹⁶⁴ He heightened the threat of judgment through the imagery of fire, a theme reintroduced in the reference to Jesus’ ministry (vv. 16-17). The adverb *καί* brought into play in v 9 would best translate “*it is even the case that,*” as in the Gospel of Luke (4:41). It should be understood that the employment of the imagery of *δένδρον* “*tree*” is a prophetic image of judgment as in Isa 6:13, 10:33–34, 32:19, Ezek 31:12, Dan 4:14 and Lk 13:6–9. Here the immediately pressing threat of judgment is best introduced with *ἤδη* (*already*) and best captured by picturing the blade of the axe as placed against the lowest point of the exposed trunk (*the root*) symbolizing an impending radical action, the destruction of the whole tree in order rightly judge the first swing of the felling operation. A single axe at the root of many trees does not make for good visual imagery, but suits the eschatological temper of John the Baptist’s warning whereby the axe “*ἀξίονη*” is employed as symbol of judgment (Isa 10:15).

¹⁶² Isa 6:13, 10:33-34, Dan 4:14, Mal 4:1

¹⁶³ J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-LX). The Anchor Bible*, 468

¹⁶⁴ C. StuhlmueLLer, *The Gospel According to Luke* in the Jerome Biblical Commentary ed. by R.E. Brown - al, 127

Alluding to the prophets, cultivated grapes good for winemaking are expected to bear “good fruit” (6:43). We have here the presentation of a tree that does not produce fruit, which should be chopped down and removed to make way for one that will. The imagery may be intended to call to mind the figure of Israel as a fig tree or vine (Isa 5; *the vineyard song*). This warning of the coming eschatological judgment places John the Baptist in the tradition of the prophets of Israel who issued warnings of the “day of the Lord” or “the day of the Lord’s wrath”.¹⁶⁵ Luke’s employment of the verb; ἔλεγεν (*in the imperfect tense*) to reiterate, “he would say” aims here at showing some sense of a repeated action and by this he intended to highlight the importance of John the Baptist’s preaching before his audience that his was not only to say but by his saying an implication was to follow.

4.2.0 The Messianic preaching of John.

4.2.1 The Text (Lk 3:15 –17).

15 Προσδοκῶντος δὲ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ διαλογιζομένων πάντων ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν περὶ τοῦ Ἰωάννου, μήποτε αὐτὸς εἶη ὁ Χριστός, 16 ἀπεκρίνατο λέγων πᾶσιν ὁ Ἰωάννης, Ἐγὼ μὲν ὕδατι βαπτίζω ὑμᾶς· ἔρχεται δὲ ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου, οὗ οὐκ εἰμὶ ἰκανὸς λύσαι τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ· αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ· 17 οὗ τὸ πτύον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ διακαθᾶραι τὴν ἄλωνα αὐτοῦ καὶ συναγαγεῖν τὸν σίτον εἰς τὴν ἀποθήκην αὐτοῦ, τὸ δὲ ἄχυρον κατακαύσει πυρὶ ἀσβέστῳ.

Translation.

15 Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Messiah. 16 John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

¹⁶⁵ B.J. Bamperger, Eschatology of the Old Testament in *the Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* ed by Buttrick – al, 127

4.2.2 · The Setting

Messianism by the time of John the Baptist.

Messianism is derived from the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ . The Greeks have the term Μεσσίας, though both מָשִׁיחַ and Μεσσίας have the same meaning “the Anointed”.¹⁶⁶ Messianism in the Jewish land was a belief on the coming of a charismatically endowed descendant of David whom the Jews of the Roman period believed would be raised up by God to break the yoke of the heathen and to be in power over a restored kingdom of Israel to which all the Jews of the Exile would return.¹⁶⁷

The title “Messiah” (מָשִׁיחַ) as a designation of the eschatological personality does not exist in the ancient Judaism but only occurs from the time of the Second Temple after the Old Testament period. However for ancient Judaism, the idea of eschatological salvation was more important than the concept of “Messiah” who was considered as an agent of deliverance in the future.¹⁶⁸

Prophecies had already been made about the messiah to come. In Isaiah for example, the foundation of the Messiah’s throne is justice, and he will be distinguished by his zeal for justice.¹⁶⁹ According to the prophet, the Messiah will finally be charismatically endowed and will sense “rights and wrongs” of a case in executing justice.¹⁷⁰ This idea developed more in the rabbinical literature where the priest of righteousness (*Kohen zedek*) was sometimes mentioned together with the Davidic king Messiah. These two figures, the priest and the king, are important for the eschatology of the Dead Sea Sect where the third figure occurring in the Dead Sea Scrolls with the two messiahs is the prophet of the Last Days.¹⁷¹ Thus in the Dead Sea Scrolls there are three messianic figures which correspond to the three main functions of the ideal Jewish state, in which kingdom, priesthood, and prophecy shall exist. Thus the quotation from the book of Maccabees would be appropriate

¹⁶⁶ W. Bauer, *The Greek – English Lexicon*, 508

¹⁶⁷ R.J. Karris, *The Gospel According to Luke* in *the New Jerome Biblical Commentary* ed. by R.E Brown -al., 686

¹⁶⁸ T.L. Johnson, “Book of Luke – Acts,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary vol.4* ed by Freedman N. D. - al., 779

¹⁶⁹ M.A. Knibb. *The Qumran Community*. 101

¹⁷⁰ T.L. Johnson, “Book of Luke – Acts,” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary vol.4* ed by Freedman N. D. - al., 780

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 781

about the people of Israel on this period; “*the Jewish people and their priest have, therefore, made the following decisions. Simon shall be their permanent leader and high priest until a true prophet arises*” (I Mac. 14:41).

The other component of the political messianic hope in Judaism was caused by the Roman occupation of Israel, a land that her inhabitants have always believed as the inheritance from their God. In this case the Messiah was to be the king who would redeem and rule Israel at the climax of human history and the instrument by which the kingdom of God would be established.¹⁷² He was here expected to attain for Israel the tranquil blessings of the prophets, defeating the enemies of Israel, restoring the people to the land, reconciling them with God, and introducing a period of spiritual and physical paradise. He was to be prophet, warrior, judge, king and teacher of the Torah.

4.2.3 Explanation of the text

In words exclusive to himself, the evangelist Luke gives the emotional setting depicting the audience of John the Baptist treading slowly in expectation. By Luke’s words and comments, one can identify the Palestinian Jews who awaited the coming of a messiah, an “anointed” that would be the mediator of Yahweh sent for the restoration of Israel and the triumph of God’s power and dominion.¹⁷³ No doubt therefore that “John the Baptist’s activity gave rise to speculation about the Messiah having in mind the expectation that had been high for decades. Several false-prophets and false-messiahs had already appeared (Acts 5:26-37), leaving not only disappointment but also adding expectancy”.¹⁷⁴

According to Luke, John the Baptist’s preaching stirred the expectancy (Προσδοκῶντος) of the people about the imminent eschatological judgment¹⁷⁵ that the question naturally came to their minds whether such a radical prophet as John the Baptist might be the Messiah (vv 15). John the Baptist answers the unexpressed question as to indicate that the Messiah is more powerful than he is (v. 16) and is worthy of such reverence that even the task of tying his sandals is more than what John the Baptist feels worthy of. Already the scriptures

¹⁷² T.L. Johnson, “*Book of Luke – Acts,*” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary vol.4* ed by Freedman N. D. - al., 782

¹⁷³ J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX). The Anchor Bible*, 471

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 471

¹⁷⁵ W.F. Arndt – F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek- English Lexicon*, 719

suggest their own contrast, which is heightened by John the Baptist's insistence on his own inferiority to the coming baptizer. To John the Baptist, what was too demeaning for a Hebrew slave to do for his master, "*Loosening the thongs of his sandals*" (λύων τὸν ἱμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ) was for John in relation to the coming one, a privilege quite beyond reach. Untying sandals was such a menial duty that was expected only of slaves. Disciples were not expected to untie their master's sandals so that in comparison with the Messiah, John the Baptist considers himself lower than the lowest slave understanding that only a non-Jewish slave could be required to loosen his master's sandal strap, and John will not even venture that.¹⁷⁶

One is bound to wonder about the confusion by people like Herod who on hearing about Jesus thought He was John the baptizer raised from the dead (Mk 6:14,16). The confusion and puzzle about the identity of Jesus by Herod could have been caused by the fact that the historical John the Baptist claimed inadequate to explain the true identity of Jesus, even when his audience knew very well that Jesus had been his disciple and baptized by him thus leading many to think of Jesus in terms of hypothetically risen John the Baptist.¹⁷⁷

A sense that the end-time judgment was already (ἤδη) being unleashed according to John the Baptist and that the eschatological forgiveness dispensed through baptism raised the question of John the Baptist's own role in this eschatological process. So as to understand this, one should remember that the introduction of τοῦ λαοῦ, (*the People*) as mentioned above should not merely be understood as an alternative means of designating the crowds which streamed out to John so as to be baptized. The most important reality to be perceived is that Israel as a community was always God's people and recipients of His promise. The Messiah's baptism according to John is not with water as this has only been preparatory, but with the Holy Spirit and with fire (v. 16). In contrasts, his baptism with water was a preparation to the people of Israel before they meet the unquenchable fire of the Day of Judgment, which would purge the body of God's people and consume the sinners.¹⁷⁸ In this theme again Luke brings out a parallelism between Jesus and John the

¹⁷⁶ W.R. Bowie, Luke in *the Interpreters Bible Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 8.ed by Buttrick - al, 76

¹⁷⁷ A. La Vadier, *Herod and John the Baptizer*, 208

¹⁷⁸ W.R. Bowie, Luke in *the Interpreters Bible Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 8.ed by Buttrick - al, 76

Baptist. This being not the first time that Luke presents a parallelism, one would ask, why? Evidently the Baptist preceding Jesus was fixed in Christian tradition indeed so irreducibly that like in two of the three Gospels that begins with the story before the public ministry with Jesus first appearance on earth, the Baptist is brought back to precede that appearance as well.¹⁷⁹ John's Gospel has it though that "*the man called John was sent before him. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him*" (Jn 1:6 – 7). Therefore one should not construe two separate categories of baptism but the single entity as the word ἐν (*with*) combines the two.

Winnowing was familiar to the Palestinian Jews especially the farmers where they would throw harvested wheat into the air and the wind would separate heavier grain from the lighter chaff.¹⁸⁰ The chaff was useless for consumption and was normally burned while the grain is stored in the barn. The winnowing (τὸ πύον) which makes it possible to gather up separately the grain (τὸν σῖτον) and the chaff (ἄχυρον) has already been done. It was common to use the winnowing-fork in picking up the grain to be taken off to the granary. The interest here is not however, in a whole harvesting process, but rather, the concern is with an immediately impending final separation that is likened to be the final phase of the gathering of the harvest. The urgency is the same as that of v 9, but here the emphasis is much more positive. Nevertheless, it was understood that he who gathers the grain would also burn the chaff which having no further use is burnt on the spot. Luke's employment of the term ἀσβέστω "*inextinguishable*," underlines the finality and irreversibility of what is to happen. The word protrudes from the imagery as an allegorical element the image of the eternal fire of punishment shines through that of the inextinguishable fire.¹⁸¹ The saying, therefore, warns of the imminence of the judgment as already provisioned in v. 9 above with the added detail that the fire is "unquenchable" burning so ferociously that it cannot be extinguished.

¹⁷⁹ R. Brown, *The Annunciation to Zechariah, the Birth of the Baptist, and Benedictus*, 482

¹⁸⁰ W.R. Bowie, *Luke in the Interpreters Bible Commentary on the Bible, Vol 8*. ed by Buttrick - al, 76

¹⁸¹ Isa 34; 10, 66; 24, Jdt 16; 17, Matt 18; 8, 25; 41, Mark 9; 43, 48, Rev 14; 10–11

Some writers have described the Day of Judgment as the harvest¹⁸² with some Interpreters concluding that the fiery work of the Spirit is judgment and purification. With this, it is at times difficult to understand how the concepts of the Spirit baptism (*usually associated with water*), and fire relate to one another. The biblical backgrounds show that the concept of washing and refreshing was associated with the Spirit (Isa 44:3, Ezek 36:25-27, Joel 2:28-29) while Fire was an ancient symbol of judgment, refinement, and purification. We may conclude that John and his contemporaries were already acquainted with all these nuances. The Holy Spirit was understood as being active in saving, purifying, and judging even though not frequently associated with the Messiah (Isa 11:12), whose coming would mean also the availability of the Spirit's ministry.

Luke establishes the fundamental importance of what is to follow by describing it as an answer given to "all" (πᾶσιν), what can be read to imply all Israel and not simply all the people present on that particular occasion.¹⁸³ When John the Baptist compares the water baptism he administered to his audience with the Spirit-and-fire baptism of the one who is coming, the statement of v 15 acts as a contrast upon where we can place John the Baptist's description of the role of the coming one. The presence of the question of v 15 focuses attention on the contrast and especially upon the limited significance of John the Baptist who locates himself preceding the apocalyptic crisis point putting forward the final stage and true apocalyptic transcendence belonging to another.

John the Baptist's baptism, while involving being mandatory to face up to hard realities and while providing no cheap option to moral authenticity, is fundamentally a gracious activity. The contrast between the two baptisms, however radical one could be cannot be read as a disparity of antagonism but within the scope of judgment as a rite that symbolizes submissive releases of one from the admittedly deserved judgment of fiery destruction to come.

Certainly a case may be made for the use of the language of baptism in connection with the undergoing of an ordeal of being overwhelmed in what John the Baptist brings in with symbols while the mightier one brings in fiery reality. What, then, did John the Baptist

¹⁸² S.C. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary, New Testament*, 197

¹⁸³ J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX). The Anchor Bible*, 472

anticipate when he announced a coming baptism in Spirit and fire? The main options canvassed have been;

- To identify fire and Spirit and to present an inflaming, purifying work of the Holy Spirit.
- To find here alternative baptisms that has fiery destruction for the impenitent and the gift of the Spirit to those who repent.
- To view the Spirit not in Christian terms, but as a strong wind of judgment (“wind,” “breath,” and “spirit” are all possible translations for πνεῦμα /רוּחַ, *ruah*.¹⁸⁴

By using the infinitives διακαθᾶραι “to clean out,” Luke improves the syntax and συναγαγεῖν “to gather together”.¹⁸⁵

4.3.0 The Conclusion of the Text.

4.3.1 (Lk 3:18).

V.18 Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἕτερα παρακαλῶν εὐηγγελίζετο τὸν λαόν.

Translation.

18 *Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.*¹⁸⁶

Explanation of the Text

The closing verse of this section (v. 18) concludes the summary of John the Baptist’s preaching and characterizes his work as “exhorting,” or in this context calling for repentance, while preaching “good news” to the people of Israel. The integrity and evidence of the repentance of the repentant are seen in their way of life, their priorities, commitments, personal relationships, passion for peace and justice, and their spontaneous acts of empathy all give. While it is true that we have been given only a characterization of John the Baptist’s ministry through exemplary fragments, v 18 is a generalizing statement

¹⁸⁴ G.W. Lampe, *Luke in Peake’s Commentary on the Bible* ed by Black – Rowley, 827

¹⁸⁵ W.F. Arndt – F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek- English Lexicon*, 182

¹⁸⁶ It is an attempt on personal translation

put by Luke so as to make nice knitting and make the end in the process of his presentation.¹⁸⁷ The stern challenge of John the Baptist's address is indicated by the use of παρακαλῶν, (verb participle present active nominative masculine singular of παρακαλέω) which literary be translated as *beg, urge; encourage; request, ask, appeal to; console, comfort, cheer up; invite or summon.*¹⁸⁸ The gospel content, although it appears ahead of time, is caught by the use of εὐηγγελίζετο from εὐαγγελίζω which literary means "to evangelize or proclaim good news".

4.4.0 Conclusion

The précis of this chapter exposes John the Baptist's ministry in concrete terms through the eschatological and messianic fragments. As the evangelist Luke presents the reputation of John the Baptist's, which extended far beyond his preaching where uninvited crowds, tax collectors and the soldiers came out to participate in his baptism so as to witness the Eschatological and Messianic promises, by extension the Kalenjin men and women of the 21st century would not also wish to be left out of such a fruitful promise.

According to Luke, John the Baptist spoke so severely to his audience questioned their sincerity in their mass movement for Baptism. His address with strongest terms possible; comparing them to offspring of vipers in his message about the coming wrath targeted these crowds whom he remained skeptical about their readiness for repentance. Though he had doubts about their coming, he would not however exclude them from baptism, but rather called them to bear fruits that will make visible the change of heart. The raison d'être of these two chapters (three and four) of this thesis is in their capacity to allow the hermeneutics of John the Baptist's message eventually reach the Kalenjin people. We will critical consider the parallelism that exists between the Jewish communities of John the Baptist time and the Kalenjin community in the next last chapter.

¹⁸⁷ G.W. Lampe, *Luke in Peake's Commentary on the Bible* ed by Black – Rowley, 826

¹⁸⁸ W.F. Arndt – F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek- English Lexicon*, 622

CHAPTER FIVE

The Message of John the Baptist to the Kalenjin People of Kenya Today.

5.0 Introduction

Like the kiln ready to bake bricks, this last chapter aims at structuring a strong and protective truly Kalenjin and truly Christian community that enshrine respect for justice in society. The parallelism between John the Baptist's world and the Kalenjin world as regards justice is aimed at inviting the Kalenjin people to retrospectively make a study of justice in her diverse forms, nature and practice in their community. From the onset, it is very important to remember that as mentioned in the general introduction, not much has been written about the Kalenjin people.

The Kalenjin are a homogeneous people composed of nine sub-tribes,¹⁸⁹ who are traditionally pastoralists with little agriculture. Their Nomen cluster "Kalenjin" is a late term introduced in the 1960 by the elites of the community who wanted to say something about these homogeneous people.¹⁹⁰ Their Nomen cluster comes from the term "Kalenjin" (literary "*I say to you*"), a term common to all with same meaning. They have been intensely conservative since their migration and sojourn in the 9th century from the present-day Sudan,¹⁹¹ devoting themselves to cattle and nomadism,¹⁹² while regarding the rest of the World with scorn, a condition from which even now some of them are slowly coming out from. The traditional Kalenjin community for long have been trying to remain unequivocal as regards social justice in such an environment of modern cultures and religious heritage, guarding their religiosity so as not to be eroded by the globalisation and secularism sweeping the world of their religious roots.

¹⁸⁹ The Dorobo (Okiek), Pokot, Marakwet, Nandi, Kipsigis, Terik, Keiyo, Tugen and the Sapiny, which includes Kony, Sepei and the Sabaot and are distributed through the Highlands of the Rift Valley

¹⁹⁰ B.E. Kipkorir, *The Marakwet of Kenya*, 72

¹⁹¹ T. Spear – R. Waller, *Being Maasai*, 25

¹⁹² T. Taaita, *Oral Traditional history of Kipsigis*, 8

5.1.0 Brief Exposure to the Pre-Colonial, Colonial and Postcolonial Political influence as regards Justice in the Kenyan Kalenjin People.

When the traditional Kalenjin communities met with the colonialist, their spiritual, social – economic, political and religious situations were greatly influenced and for long this influence has acted as the background to the whole structural composition of the community's being, standing as kingpost directly shaping the future life of the community. Like any dynamic community who by nature receive, invent, and integrate, copies and most of all transforms the acquired knowledge and habits to new and greater heights while on the other hand remaining somehow controlled by the background acquired in the past, their exposure to the colonialist's view of Justice influenced their conception of Justice.

5.1.1 The Definition of Justice in Pre-Colonial Kalenjin Society

In the traditional Kalenjin community, Justice was an attitude and way of life that was such that all were to be given their dues as human beings, whether Kalenjin or non-Kalenjin, insider or outsider.¹⁹³ The term "*Iman*" which can be translated as Justice or righteousness can as well be translated as truth or what one could depend on and it was always a reality preferred by the people as a term of great reference. Justice's description was always in the light of the awareness of people of their humanity that constituted their personal very identity as human. The Kalenjins were not ashamed of whom they were with their history and a culture distinct from the history and culture of other people and did not let themselves be determined or judged by other people's values. To them, "a Kalenjin" was one who did what ought to be done as human, giving way to a clear critique of and a force for fundamental systems and patterns in society, which do not oppress or give rise to the oppression of humanity.

¹⁹³ Interviewed Josphat Chepkurui of Marakwet district on 2nd August, 2002

5.1.2 Coming of the Colonialist to Kalenjin Land

Several Kalenjin prophets had long foretold the coming of the colonialists.¹⁹⁴ Kimnyolei, a Nandi prophet is well renowned for this prophecy. Matson disputes this claim, holding that Kimnyolei did it seven years after the first European passed through the Kalenjin land.¹⁹⁵ He proves this by evidence that the first caravan under the leadership of Joseph Thompson scrambled up the western wall of Kerio valley on 16th November 1883.

The encounter between the Colonialists and the Kalenjin was so convivial that by 13th October 1889, they had made blood brotherhood at Buret (Kipsigis land) through Dr. Mackinnon, James Martin and Jackson while Menya Kisaria led the Kipsigis (Kalenjin). It was only later when the European visitors became so aggressive capturing 170 heads of cattle, 2000 sheep and goats and killing 40 warriors that in turn created the first historic tension between the Kalenjin and the colonialists. After then the Europeans fought sporadically with the Kalenjin warriors, who did not realise in time that the Europeans had been signing treaties with their neighbours around them and when the final war came, the Europeans who had already been interested in creating Uasin Gishu plateau as cattle ranching area easily defeated them¹⁹⁶ and eventually established colonial rule in Kalenjin land.

5.1.3 Understanding of Justice during Colonial time.

After the creation of a colonial rule in Kalenjin land, the colonialist destroyed the indigenous institutions,¹⁹⁷ which helped in balancing justice in the society. Though they did not dismantle the structure per se, they introduced other new structures that ran side by side with the traditional structure and made them more powerful than the traditional ones. Although Politically the Kalenjin did not have a centralized form of government under a chief or a king,¹⁹⁸ the colonialist's conquest of the Kalenjin was hard,

¹⁹⁴ Mon'go and Kimnyolei are more remembered of these prophecies.

¹⁹⁵ A.T. Matson, *The Nandi Resistance to British Rule*, 56

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 72

¹⁹⁷ G.C. Mutiso, *Kenya: Politics, Policy and society*, 6

¹⁹⁸ Chesaina, *The Oral Literature of the Kalenjin*, 4

occupation proved rather simpler but the ongoing administration remained always a challenge. To impose law and order, collect taxes, introduce public improvements and recruit labour, all required officials in a society where none had existed conventionally and where appointed bureaucrats were politically meaningless and personally frustrating. The personnel in these new structures had to be of big physique with enough strength to force and to terrorize the native Kalenjin people. Only the sanctions of British authority backed by the District commissioners decree gave legitimacy to these “administration-selected chiefs” who continued to be an alien, although increasingly efficient institution to the European rule.¹⁹⁹

Due to the laxity of the colonial law, the Kalenjins who did not belong to the aristocratic group and ambitious to belong to the ruling class, preferred being sellout to the colonialists, taking the powers given to them by their colonial masters and enjoying being carried shoulder high as their masters by their subjects while giving orders to them even on the roadside, for their word was instant law to their subjects. These chiefs who earned legitimacy fraudulently in the new structure and who were later adapted as local administrations by the postcolonial regimes changed the retribution system so that even the serious offenders whose punishment was either compensation for the sin committed or banishment from the society (in this case homicide or other serious crimes) were made to remain.²⁰⁰

It is sad to note also that with colonialists came missionaries of diverse faith; Catholic and Protestants who broke without reverence the solitary faith²⁰¹ of the Kalenjin people, ushering in a democratic and liberal faith in “God” who was neither known nor called for help by Kalenjins. This “God” in the mind of a Kalenjin traditionalist, hated the Kalenjin culture and belief system thus by extension confirmed them as belonging to a minor race as the colonialist had stated. Again those who did not have strong root in faith and statutes of the Kalenjin religion were first to jump into this boat leading

¹⁹⁹ G.W.B. Huntingford, *The Southern Nilo-Hamites*, 36

²⁰⁰ I.Q. Orchardson, *The Kipsigis*, 113

²⁰¹ K. Shillington, *History of Africa*, 342

converts into mass actions with the example of the 1922²⁰² revolution against the Kalenjin culture in a manner that has remained incomprehensible to date among the local people.

5.1.4 The Kalenjin Community in the Post-Colonial Kenya

From this deposit of the colonial reality, one can preconceive how the next generation of the Kalenjin elites bought into the logic of programming the ruling elite into how to define visions based on the experience of the colonialist. “The master’s paradigm; the master’s journals and the master’s forums on pertinent issues defined the agenda of the day in the Kalenjin communities”. What does the master feel here? What is his/her comment? The community’s elites who inherited the colonial chief’s powers did not take time to check whether the masters comprehended the basic reality, that of respecting humanity in justice and building principles that embrace it. Unlike the traditional Kalenjin people of Kenya who accommodated the poor as dependants in their classless social structure, even when poverty that resulted from rapid loss of livestock holding in the wake of draught and famine or as consequence of raiding or warfare made its toll, the new society perceives the poor as burden.

This elitism caused a change of patterns in acquisition and accumulation of wealth that a situation was created where one family gradually prospered while their neighbours increasingly struggle.

5.1.5 The Structural Injustices in Post-Colonial Kalenjin Community.

The last forty years of Postcolonial Kenya have been crucial decades for the Kalenjin people who had in history pegged social responsibility in the religious, political and economic power. The whole pattern of culture, religion, politics and economy changed so that freedom that throughout history had been the privilege of the masses became the acknowledged birthright for few who “matter” in society. The community’s decisive place on socio-economic and spiritual growth was confronted by the challenge of the

²⁰² In Kobujoi – Nandi, the African Inland Missionaries led girls howl like hyenas so as to reject female initiation

creation of a larger room for social justice that could combat the wide inequalities found throughout the Kalenjin land since independence. To some extent these inequalities were the legacy of the more recent and more distant past, and particularly of structures inherited from colonial cronies and preserved by the demagogues against changes long overdue.²⁰³ As a British colony, the extension of political and religious patronage was seen to thrive and by extension a creation of political polarization so that the Protestants and especially adherents of African Inland Mission (presently *African Inland Church*) were seen as political “sacred cows” in the Kalenjin Community.

With this glitch, the poor masses remained ignored because of the social structures in place. Based on this uneven and biased playground without equilibrium, the poor Kalenjin people learnt to identify development with large scale, mainly urban-based projects using technology, skills, institutions and cultural values imported from the western world. This gave rise to emergence of a small wealthy elite and to a relatively well-off minority of wage earners who barely contributed much in improving the living standards of the masses in the rural areas.

a) Fanning Tribal Animosity and Tribal clashes.

With this situation at hand, these elites took advantage of the nature of their people to catapult them into a tribal cocoons where they were sure of the perpetuation of their unjust regimes.²⁰⁴ After domesticating the concept of justice, these leaders created an ideology among the people that tribalism is the only security. This kind of ideology formed and founded on fear, suspicion and poverty of ideas, consequently turned the people back to their home ground for protection, easily proclaiming their tribal identity. It was easy to do so having in mind the process by which their colonial masters had already used; the formula of, “emphasizing difference in dialects and redefining them as total separate languages. By maintaining these, they created competition and conflict between the African communities and through that gained and maintained political power and economic advantage over the Africans who found it hard to achieve unity in

²⁰³ G.C. Mutiso, *Kenya: Politics, Policy and Society*, 129

²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 89

opposition”²⁰⁵. This tribal attitude became so clear to the Commissioners, who investigating the origins and nature of the tribal clashes acknowledged that, “ We must not deceive ourselves, the ordinary Mwananchi (*Swahili word for citizen*) even now, regards himself, firstly, as a member of his tribe and only secondly, as a national of a country”²⁰⁶.

The common Kalenjins men and women who were caught up in this disillusion and who had not truly embraced multi party politics, in the run to the elections in Kenya (1992 and 1997), saw as if their son who had been the president of Kenya²⁰⁷ would be fraudulently removed from power. They in turn took the responsibility of defending him and further seized the opportunity to articulate other issues they have wanted addressed like “land policy”. This situation opened way for the indiscriminate and episodic tribal violence that occurred at random and affected people at a neighbourhood level even when this violence was centrally premeditated. The collaboration of the paramilitary with military units produced acts of violence and cruelty that were designed not only to kill, but also terrorize and destroy the basis of the target community. The Warring tribes always targeted civilian population, the major casualties being particularly women and children who could not defend themselves. During these ethnic clashes, the Kalenjins like the other tribes participated in torture or killing, looting abandoned homes or seizing the property of those who fled. Others fled with their properties and claimed that their property was looted so as to flare up more clashes, still others limited their participation to taunting or firing from the jobs those from different ethnicities or forcing neighbours to commit degrading acts.

Unfortunately the leaders in Kenya, whether political or religious, at this time always invited the Kalenjins to be a good neighbours to other communities, without questioning whether the Kalenjins are starved of the same indispensable human value; without the more expression of the preaching, “there is more happiness in giving than receiving” (Act. 20:35) which limited the Kalenjins into the receiving end. This flared

²⁰⁵ K. Shillington, *History of Africa*, 356

²⁰⁶ Report of judicial commission appointed to inquire into the tribal clashes chaired by Hon. Mr. Justice A.M. Akiwumi, 31st July, 1999. P 23.

²⁰⁷ Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi is a Kalenjin from Tugen Community

more the clashes because the Kalenjins felt betrayed by those they hoped would address their plight and cry.

Today in Kenya, the legal paradigm practically is limited to punishing only individuals who carried out the worst acts or ordered their followers to do so. The conclusion of this thesis is to call all the Kalenjin people who participated in any manner back to repentance, which is greater than the legal process that has been explained above

5.1.6 The Structural Injustices in post colonial Government

a) Taxation system

The Taxation system since independence has systematically impoverished the masses while the rich, who doubles as employed citizens, remain untouched by these taxing policies. The colonial powers introduced head tax in the Kalenjin land where the police were used to collect these levies. "The purpose of the head tax in the colonial times was two fold: to pay for colonial administration and to force all adult men into cash economy, in particular to work for low wages for the European colonist. It was a deliberate attempt to break African rural self-sufficiency"²⁰⁸. The postcolonial governments kept this tradition that impoverished more the citizen, as they gained more income to keep the state moving. As a net result, it is sad today to note that more than fifty percent of Kenyans live on less than Ksh 60 per day and a substantial proportion of the people do not have access to employment, clean water, medical services, adequate food or decent shelter.²⁰⁹

Even when these post colonial governments introduced Harambees (*pulling together the resources*) as a means of assisting many in need and was done in the neighbourhood by people who knew each other on "a willing heart basis", the poor still remained impoverished by the system. *Harambee* soon changed its face so that it was done under the auspices of the provincial administration, force was exerted by the authority of the chiefs to make the poor people contribute, and like the tax collectors of John the Baptist's time cared for the collection to the detriment of the languishing poor. They

²⁰⁸ K. Shillington, *History of Africa*, 352.

²⁰⁹ Yash Pal Ghai, *A Guide to the Constitution*, 56

collected much but remitted little for much to remain to themselves so as to subsidise for his/her salary.²¹⁰ They kept no records of the money collected, making the practice open to abuse.

b) Corruption and Crime

An apparent symbiosis between corruption and crime in Kalenjin land shows that activities of corruption which cannot do without measure of crime was kept afloat evidently by a measure of institutional corruption. It is not in bad taste here to point a finger on the Kalenjin community over the corruption in Kenya. The Kalenjins who have been recipients of the looted money knowing it is looted money acted like the western operations that offer bribes to selfish African leaders. Who give these leaders space not to act on public interest, providing them Banks willing to hide away their loot, in my view, they are more culpable than the recipients. Would a person steal if there were no market for their stolen loot? Is acceptance of stolen materials not a promotion of stealing itself? Acts of corruption, which can be enumerated without end, have sadly been witnessed due to the lapse of the law enforcers like the police and the judiciary.

The police force that was meant to serve all ("*Watumishi kwa wote*")²¹¹ has like in history either been used to keep the status quo or even worsen. As it were from their history, when the first formal police structure was founded in 1896 in Mombasa, the police force was a weapon for punishment and pacification of the communities that resisted the British rule like the Kipsigis (1905) and the Nandi (1905-1906) though "the bulk of the personnel were initially made up of the Nubians, the Baganda, the Kamba and the Kalenjin themselves".²¹²

The Judiciary as well in the process of dispensing Justice always worked under pressure looking at the crime rate in the country and her politicisation. The Judiciary's equivocal judgements connived with the ruling class, masquerading themselves in the process of justice and as they procrastinate justice, impoverished more the poor in the Kalenjin

²¹⁰ Chiefs earn 6,000 kshs while their assistants have a starting earning of 4,000 kshs

²¹¹ "*Watumishi kwa wote*" is the Logo for the Police force in Kenya.

²¹² Kenya Human Rights Commission, *Mission to Repress*, 10

land. What would one expect of a Chief Justice or a Judiciary that is appointed by the powers of the day? Like the Police who have very poor remuneration²¹³ and set as to be in a socially set “caste system”, their salary notwithstanding created within them a justification for their corrupt deals.

5.1.7 The Unjust Government Policy Implementation

a) Land policy

Bad Governance and Poor land policies conspired with the rapid advance in the commoditization of the rangelands to hit hard the herding Kalenjin people. They significantly weakened the economic positions of a majority Kalenjin while strengthening that of a minority. This process saw large acreage of pastureland fall under the plough of the rich especially in the better-watered areas thereby denying the poor valued subsistence, hence inciting the underlying socio-economic trends, which tended to accentuate the gap between wealthy and poor Kalenjins.²¹⁴

Land grabbing or the illegal allocation of public land became a vibrant sector in the Kalenjin communities of the Rift Valley. In this economy, allocation of government land like the forests, public utility land both in urban and rural areas to private individuals or institutions that already enjoyed thousands of acres in the rangelands of the Rift Valley but qualify because they happened to be politically correct became so rampant. In some allocations, lands that were meant to be for the poor like the Turbo settlement scheme, ended up in custody of the rich themselves²¹⁵ as the allocation of the land of the Duke of Manchester, the issue remained “who is who” in Keiyo, Marakwet and Nandi communities while the poor whom the land was destined to remained where they were.²¹⁶

²¹³ District Magistrates have a starting salary of 12,000 kshs; the Judges earn about 400,000 kshs while a chief justice earns 900,000 kshs. A police constable initial salary has for long been Ksh 3,400, thanks to the Narc Government that rules Kenya now for they have set to review their terms of service

²¹⁴ G.C. Mutiso, *Kenya: Politics, Policy and Society*, 121

²¹⁵ Interviewed Ernest Kirui living the Turbo Scheme, Uasin Gishu district on 15th May 2002

²¹⁶ Interviewed Gabriel Chemweno, residing in Kamendi, Trans Nzoia district on 16th June 2002

b) Security Policy

While the Kalenjins were faced by abject poverty like other Kenyans, one other serious problem they daily encountered was cattle rustling. The activity being a most lucrative venture given that each cow had a conservative market value of Ksh 20,000, one went through all pains even and up to killing innocent children like in Tot - Marakwet (in *May, 2000*) and delivering mothers like in Mogil (*in September, 1996*) to secure this amount even when they know that “women and girls were never taken prisoner nor were they killed in a raid”.²¹⁷ It shocks to note that 132 people were killed while another 21 were maimed in Marakwet district alone between 1990 and 2001²¹⁸.

While these went on unabated, all Kalenjins affected knew that no amount of preaching and peace meetings would tame livestock rustling violence, except a full commitment by the government and the civil society who were perfectly capable of ending this horrendous mayhem.²¹⁹ It was established that almost all the stolen cattle ended up in the Kenyan market mostly to feed the meat market of Kenya due the collapse of Kenya meat commission, save a few siphoned to Uganda. It was also commonly believed that well-connected people supplied the weapons in their project of small arms proliferation in the name of community security as well as providing markets to the stolen cattle. These made the target communities with the assistance of their own political leadership acquire equally sophisticated weapons thus explaining the rise of armed crime in Kalenjin land. How can one explain the invasion of the cattle rustlers who raided Mogil on the first week of June of the year 2000, killing a boy and taking his heart and liver from the body?²²⁰ How can one explain the attacks on all the Catholic parishes of Marakwet deanery between June and July 2000? The motives of such killings and attacks are yet to be understood by right thinking Kalenjin who knows what cattle raiding meant save for maybe serving to scare to the communities in question.

²¹⁷ I.Q. Orchardson, *The Kipsigis*, 7

²¹⁸ Data indicated in the Unpublished report on cattle rustling by Justice and peace commission of the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret. P 2

²¹⁹ Unpublished report on cattle rustling by Justice and peace commission of the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret. P 2

²²⁰ Interview with Elias Komen of Cheptongei village, Marakwet District on 12th July 2002

The list of evils committed in Kalenjin land would be longer than that of John the Baptist in that medical, teaching, engineering and any other professions have been tainted by these malpractices. While this goes on unabated the consequences lie squarely on the poor who remain with nowhere to run except God.

5.2.0 The *Sitz Im Leben* in the Kalenjin land today.

The *Sitz Im Leben* in Kalenjin land is tricky because the leaders who were the authors of the above mentioned crimes want to be seen as champions of democratic transition in Kenya. For the past forty years, they did not believe that the first and major challenge confronting them and their subjects was to build a just society based on diversity and distinctive character of the people in order to make a more concrete reality of the principle of human dignity on which the struggle for freedom was based. Now that they know with deep intuition that their subjects are seriously fighting to eradicate the ingrained prejudices they created, which have influenced people's attitudes for generations, "thanks be to God" that some Kalenjin people have now realized that the Kalenjin position in life is not simply their lot for which they have to thank or blame God for, these leaders are slithering away like snakes, which either run when they notice bushfire or after "biting and leaving venom on their victims".

Their trouble remains how they can remold the rigid social structure that they built for many years and which have now kept their subjects in an inferior position while assigning them a role and status in society that is so high and no longer correspond to the role they want to usurp. With this new turn of events where these leaders are now slithering away in the name of conversion, like those who came to be baptized by John the Baptist, they want to make good names for themselves.

Joined with them are some Kalenjin "liberal minds" that would never want to articulate some sensitive issues in Kalenjin land, like the land policy. For them the question whether the Kalenjin can do something to identify with and accommodate other communities in their land is not so sensitive for they generally assume that other communities have a right to live in the Kalenjin land. But the question whether the Non-Kalenjins are willing to identify with the Kalenjins in the process of seeking identity in

the Kalenjin homeland remains the most sensitive question. They have always been tempted to feel that anyone and by extension a theologian questioning this has nothing at all to do with the witness for Christ and justice but has rather support for the unrighteous deeds against the innocent Non Kalenjin. These “liberal minds” always refuse to acknowledge the fact that as it is an absolute imperative for them to crush this question, it is equally an absolute imperative to the Kalenjin men and women to crush those who hold the contrary “making no one innocent”.

As they slither off, they refuse to address the quagmire that has created a puzzle on how the Kalenjin community can blend with others in her unique social, religious, political and economic wealth. They refuse to lead the Kalenjin community in integrating with the heterogeneous population of Kenya in building up dynamic economic and social structures necessary for development and social progress, not using violent and revolutionary means but seeking reconciliation by peaceful means and repentance. They shy from stepping forward from the crowds or even coming just as the crowds and putting up the same question *“Teacher, what should we do?”*

The challenge that still remains to the Kalenjin theologian today is “how can the community fight this kind of system that committed both the socio-economic and human crimes while on the other hand continuing to demonstrate a clear vision of social Justice like the maverick “teacher”; John the Baptist.

Cry for the Transitional Justice in Kenya

While the Cry for the Transitional Justice in Kenya like anywhere else where sins as mentioned above occurred, Justice in the form of criminal trials remains the rallying cry of many who seek to repair the injury individuals and communities sustained as a result of these heinous acts. With the understanding that the Concept of transitional justice involves the process by which the state seeks to redress the violation of the prior regime, the situation becomes complex when this redress is done when those leaders who ordered and directed such atrocities have relinquished the power.

The process becomes even more difficult in situations where on one hand a sense of guilt has been inculcated into the minds of a people in question, thus making them not

able to relay facts of what happened accurately and consequently making them greatest allies of the perpetrators of the atrocities or on the other hand when sycophancy take precedence and witch hunting becomes the order of the day. In the process of sycophancy to the government of the day, the law is bent to state, a person is guilty until proved not guilty from a person is not guilty until proved guilty. Transitional justice in this case, which is a necessary foundation for healing of a society that has experienced mass violence, enabling them to learn the truth about what happened.²²¹ By clearly and openly rendering the once top secret and officially denied events by government or aggressive parties through a judicial process becomes a process in itself of repression. This process that ought to have several curative properties and constructive effects that include countering and condemning a fore mentioned denials or partial disclosure of abuses should create a new authoritative and impartial record about the past that can serve as a basis of a new community consensus.

The importance of this mechanism that is state-sponsored (where others would call Truth and Reconciliation commission like the South African), is based upon an assumption that the ongoing suffering of individual victims and their families is caused by not knowing the facts that led to their loss and suffering, and the acquisition and publication of knowledge by the state liberates these victims from being trapped in the past unable to rebuild their lives.

While looking at the sins committed in Kalenjin land, I totally believe in the independence of people as regards collective and individual responsibilities. A people cannot be a criminal, and cannot act morally or immorally; only its individuals can do so. Therefore the categorical judgment of a people is always unjust. It presupposes a false substantialization and results in the debasement of a human being as an individual. I understand also that focus on individual autonomy leaves no room for the social processes that people can collectively be influenced in thinking and behaviour. Failure to acknowledge these, results in many people claiming collective innocence by focusing on individual sins in periods of collective sins. While the legal system in Kenya focuses

²²¹ Interviewed Barasa who is a lawyer working in Kibungo-Rwanda investigating on Rwandan Genocide On 27th July 2002

on individual behaviour and addresses issues of motivation or criminal intent, it lacks the capacity to address the consequences of many individuals. In the characteristic of tribal animosities and tribal clashes where participants were swept up in phenomenon of mass atrocities, the Kalenjin community as their neighbours committed violent criminal acts.

It is against this background that I feel that John the Baptist offers to the Kalenjin community an option especially now that Justice to the poor cries aloud. It would be very difficult to understand the message of John the Baptist in the Kalenjin community if the Community does not have a parallelism with that of the maverick teacher who called his community to repentance as they prepare for a messiah

5.3.0 A Parallelism of the Kalenjin World with John the Baptist's World.

In reading Luke 3: 7-18, the Kalenjins discover many similarities in their worldview and culture to the Jewish worldview and culture in John the Baptist's time. The Jewish experience which includes the painful experience under oppressive rule of the Romans, the reality of poverty and hunger, deliverance of the oppressed and prophetic hope, admonitions, conversion and Baptism by water have all a parallelism in the Kalenjin worldview today. An inquiry on the parallelism between the two communities is so important in the process of removing the structures of sin that have long been inculcated in the minds of the Kalenjin people especially in this era of transition in Kenya as regards social justice. The living context of the Kalenjin people like the Jewish community has always been shaped by their spiritual heritage. For the Kalenjin, "Asis" (God) in addition to being the source of all power is believed to be the sole arbiter of justice and upholder of tribal sanctity.²²²

With its awareness of the divine in the universe as well as in human hearts, the plurality of religious experience in Kalenjin community has made them understand themselves as co-pilgrims in quest of the mystery of the divine that transcends all names and forms and their diversity in cultural sensitivities as they interacted in daily life peacefully and spontaneously. Consequently, the Kalenjin religion not only emphasizes prayer and

²²² G.S. Snell, *The Nandi Customary Law*, 3

asceticism but also considers seriously the politico-socio-economic situation of the people, and thus makes an option for the poor.

Kalenjin leaders and elders frequently developed myths about the Kalenjin distant past when they were in a better situation or were the dominant group. The community's elites took advantage of these myths that eulogized their own so-called superiority and justified the exploitation of others to fabulous images of subordinated people. They found it functional to create elaborate legends of Kalenjin people, patterning it on ethnocentrism and tragically moving from generating group pride and solidarity to becoming anti others with an intention of fanning tribal hatred and animosity to gain popularity. Essential to the manufacturing of these stereotypes, myths and prejudices about other is the language that is used to label them like *lemek* or *Kamasut* for Luhya (which means one who cannot hear or wash the calabash) or *Kimariok* for Kikuyu (that who cannot come out in danger); so derogatory, terrible, unfair and quite inaccurate terms to refer to the bordering neighbours.

It is on similar grounds that John the Baptist attacked the bane of complacency due to Abrahamic descent that the Jews believed to confer automatic racial superiority and inalienable birthright. The palaver therefore that the Kalenjins have gone through to justify their innocence over the atrocities that have befallen the poor in Kalenjin land has always been unnecessary considering the reality of innocence according to Allan Boesak. By his definition "innocence" can be understood to mean, "to be free from guilt or sin, guiltless" whereby in action it means "without evil influence or effect, not rising from evil intention".²²³

Yes, on their part the Kalenjin elites found it necessary to claim innocence, insisting that they just happen to have placed by God in position of leadership over other people by nature so as to maintain the status quo. They always used the Bible (Romans 13:1) to justify this position, with interpretation of a calling on respect to authority by citizens. This respect implied subservience and served well to avoid friction that was perceived as sin, and instead built Love. They always avoided acknowledging the fact that in essence Love created room for Justice and always sought to do what is right for the

²²³ A.A. Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, 3

other, seeking not to fulfill self-interest but serve the other selflessly. This elitist forced love became the root of oppression and in many ways contradicted the true essence of Justice, setting a dichotomy between Love and Justice that always confused the Kalenjin people.

They indeed managed through it to create a sort of idealization of the present bad situation of the poor and replacing it with escapism into the beautiful and prosperous world other than the present. They concocted this ideal to blind people so that they no longer saw the atrocities of the present. By creating new paradigms for the people that had already been blinded and paralyzed, they cunningly inculcate into their minds a cover up of guilt and sin so that their new minds blocked off all awareness. Their sense of responsibility that was necessary so as to confront others as human beings was lost. As a consequence, many Kalenjin people became unable to repent, thus making genuine reconciliation impossible. The address now remains to the Kalenjin elite who defects from one political party to the next, to read between the lines in their claim of conversion and “bear fruits worthy of repentance” thus show by their actions and conduct that an inner revitalization has taken place.

The baptism of John by water has a parallelism in the Kalenjin waters of initiation. The symbolism is so clear in the Kalenjin initiation setting, where one becomes a member of the Kalenjin community only through initiation. To be truly Kalenjin, one needs to be initiated in the Kalenjin rite where water remains the most important and last symbol of birth to the community.²²⁴ Before initiation, one is considered a child of a member of the Kalenjin community and has rights and obligations only as a child of a member of the community. It is only after this rite that a son of a family can lay claim to his inheritance for before this, all is in the custody of the parents since he is only a child. A person even though not naturally born into the community, becomes a member of the community by virtue of the initiation. Prior to the immersion into the waters of initiation, the initiates are invited to make a solemn contrition of all the sins they committed in all their childhood. It is only after this confession and repentance that the

²²⁴ I.Q. Orchardson, *The Kipsigis*, 63

initiate enters into this water of initiation and is consequently born into the Kalenjin community thus acquiring a new name; “Arap” for a son and “Tap” for a daughter. By extension anybody who wishes to inherit both the Messianic and Eschatological promises as presented by John the Baptist and appreciated by the Kalenjin traditional community must surrender the childhood of sin and embrace adulthood that is free from sin; must repent and show action that appertains to that change.

It is interesting to note that “God could produce children from lifeless stones” according to John the Baptist. This must be very striking to the Kalenjin as it was to the audience of John the Baptist who knew stones. For the Kalenjins, stones are used for cursing because of their deadness and by their lifelessness and ‘barrenness’; they create the best symbolism for people who are seen useless before God. With this symbolism, the Kalenjin would read the implication of a God who can create a community of his own even from those that are most unconsidered or are seen as dead. The position where the prophets present Israel as a vine or a tree, from which God expected good fruit, confirms this. John the Baptist immediately according to the evangelist Luke brings forward another imagery of the axe and fire, which elicits a response, first from the crowd in general, then from the unpopular and greedy tax collectors, and finally from the soldiers.

In the Kalenjin community, an axe is a very important instrument for clearing and cutting of the reality in question. At initiation, it is used to signify the breaking of childhood and entrance into adulthood. In every beginning of every rite in the initiation ceremony, there is invocation of an axe (*aiwo*), which calls for an end to the former and a beginning to the next rite. Here according to John the Baptist, judgment is best presented by the symbolism of the blade of the axe as placed on lowest point of the tree thus symbolizing a looming far-reaching action, the obliteration of the whole tree in order to make a fitting judgment. Similar to the tree of judgment, the Kalenjin community gives a judgment of the community’s greatest offender that “may you dry like a white tree” (*ilelitu kou Chepkelel*).

Fire in the Kalenjin community symbolized life, so that a house was not to be left without fire if there were people living in it. By extension fire symbolized progeny and one could freely refer to children as somebody's fire. Burning on the other hand embodied destruction and clearing the unwanted beings like ticks in a grazing field. By allusion, it embodied judgment, refinement, and purification.

The Kalenjin community believed in the ultimate destiny of mankind in general or of each individual person like the Israelites. Her destiny included the end of a certain period in her history, and followed by another entirely different historical period. An example in point is the belief by the Kalenjin people that when they will be seen to migrate to the direction of their origin (the *present day Sudan*) that would be the end of the Kalenjin people. Apart from these far eschatological messages, there were too soon eschatological message that identified the end of an age set through the notice of the reeds (*setyot*).

Both these eschatological messages were temporal while they were preparing for the great life that was to come. A Kalenjin took great improvement in his spiritual growth so as to be able to attain this future life than the concern of present though they knew and believed that it depended on it. They always believed that the future life would be longer than the present hence one should care for that more than the present,²²⁵ *Tendounene nyalil asi koletunnen sobon* (it were better if misfortunes befell you early, then blessing come last).

By his question, "Who warned you?" John the Baptist introduced the theme of eschatology as mentioned above and by his preaching he makes the crowds charge in hurry to be baptized in order to escape that judgment. By Luke's words and comments as mentioned in the earlier chapters, one can identify the Palestinian Jews who awaited the coming of a messiah, who would mediate between Yahweh and His people, restoring Israel to God's power and dominion. This activity gave rise to speculation about the Messiah having in mind the expectation that had been high for decades, like it has been to the Kalenjin who feel that since they killed the "orkoek" (*prophets*) things have never been the same and they are eagerly awaiting a new messiah who would

²²⁵ I.Q. Orchardson, *The Kipsigis*, 22

cleanse them from this sin. Based on this, both communities can in a way be seen as a people treading softly and emotional in expectation. With this quagmire, several false-prophets and false-messiahs appear to take advantage, an example being the false appearance of “Jewish historical Moses” in the hurricane lamp that caused great commotion and confusion in Chepkunyuk²²⁶ – Nandi in 1996. Their appearances and disappearances not only leave disappointment but also add expectancy.

With this stirred expectancy among the Kalenjin people on the imminent eschatology, the question naturally comes to the minds of the people whether some “radical” elites of the community might be the messiahs. Unlike John the Baptist who answers to the unexpressed question as to indicate that the Messiah is more powerful than he, these false prophets may not articulate to the people about the greater one to come for they want to sit on those positions themselves.

While addressing the theme of eschatology, it is worth considering the symbolism of winnowing that is well understood by the farming Palestinian Jews and the Kalenjin farmer today. Like the farmers of Israel, the symbolism of winnowing is crystal clear where the useless chaff was normally burned while the grain was stored in the barn. It was common in both communities to use the winnowing-fork in picking up the grain to be taken off to the granary. The interest here is not however in a whole harvesting process, but rather the concern is with an immediately impending final separation that is likened to be the final phase of the gathering of the harvest. Nevertheless, it was understood that he who gathers the grain would also burn the chaff which having no further use is burnt on the spot.

The existence of the Tax collectors who were employed by the Romans to collect taxes has a parallelism with the police force that used to collect the head tax, “*Kodi*” (Swahili word for head tax) from the colonial era²²⁷ up to the late nineteen seventy nine when the levy was formally abolished by the government. The collection was done in similar

²²⁶ Chepkunyuk is about 20 kilometers to Ketbarak - Nandi Hills, the spot where the Nandi prophet Koitalel arap Somoei was killed in 1905.

²²⁷ K. Shillington, *History of Africa*, 352

system and structure to that of the tax collectors, consequently making the force be seen by the common man as a burden if not a threat. The force to date still remains to many an epitome of corruption; their cruelty in extortion measures none while their manner by which they use to obtain money by threat from people's pockets to subsidise for their little salary has no equal. As mentioned above, with a net average salary of 3,400 kshs, poor housing and poor social services, a police constable is made to struggle much so as to make ends meet for his family²²⁸.

They are hated that they even run risk of their lives when confronted by the citizens. One police officer concluded that, *"people don't have to tell you. You see it in their eyes. You can hear it in the tone of their speech. When the people need your help, they are very kind. After that they run away from you. Sooner or later you have to face the truth; they hate you"*.²²⁹ The vocation and life of policeman like that of the tax collectors remains complicated because apart from being unjust like anybody else, they are also made unjust by the structural imbalances, which they have to guard. With the understanding that the concept of repentance regards restitution as the essential element and that mere emotional remorse is not enough if one's victims have not been recompensed for the losses suffered, it is therefore difficult for the police officer like the tax collector to repent because it is so difficult for them to make restitution for their victims.

5.4.0 Meaning of John the Baptist's Message to the Kalenjin Today.

The reflections on the preaching of John the Baptist, seems to have had a major public impact from to the people around him. His harsh address to his audience articulates clearly one very important point to the Kalenjin people today. That "listening to the poor and participating in their process of liberation is not optional but rather a privileged place for authentic ethical reflection in readiness to repentance. In John the Baptist's call, true repentance required a total change of heart, which will yield fruit. His address was to the ordinary Jewish people, those who at best were on the fringes of Jewish society and were willing to repent. Likewise the political and religious leaders in

²²⁸ Kenya Human Rights commission, *Mission to repress*, 81

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 84

the Kalenjin community may not be ready and willing to repent but the common people may take this message and repent.

Though risky, John the Baptist announced God's judgment using alarming and unexpected statement, "Offspring of vipers" which shakes the very root of his audience's lives. But why did John the Baptist exasperate his audience? The provocation would be understood well as "a taunting technique" that once the community realizes their sins, they would simultaneously move towards repentance. By daring the Kalenjin community to repentance by calling them "broods of vipers", one risks losing his life understanding their perception of snakes. A snake is believed by the Kalenjins to be a very evil creature that can only be good in evil things, though at times it was seen to carry with it the spirit of the dead who was "returning home" for naming²³⁰. Calling somebody "a snake" is the greatest insult one can receive and a Kalenjin would not understand how they can be referred to as "broods of vipers" realizing how they perceive themselves as honest and straightforward community.

Like the Israelites who felt that they are "Children of Abraham", the reference to them as "broods of vipers" should be perceived as the highest provocation possible. The same provocation should be directed to the Kalenjin elites who for long have never positively participated in enabling and sharing with the people they lead the planning and implementation of political, religious and economic development policies. It is only through such taunting that they can be able to repent and share with their languishing brothers and sisters, offer hospitality to the homeless and orphaned.

Sharing in this case should be well understood against the background that the immense majority of the Kalenjin people still live, lives underdeveloped with very little to eat, wretched housing, bad health, little education and lack jobs to give a good wage. It is sad today, with forty years of independence that one can witness thousands of residents in Baringo East starving to death due to "the conspiracy of harsh climatic conditions, poverty and neglect by the government that have consigned them to a life of hopelessness".²³¹

²³⁰ Interviewed Anna Kogo of Lower Moiben, Uasin Gishu on 17th June, 2002.

²³¹ Special report in the *East African Standard Newspaper*, 31st March 2003

In history, some elite Kalenjin capitalized on the inaptness caused by density in rangelands and diminished resources upon an enlarged pastoral community that cooperated with the impacts of external values of land, labour and livestock. Although to the Kalenjin, the ideas of poverty and wealth were conventional, depending on perception of age, gender, past and present social standing of a person, poverty was always measured by the person's experience. Traditionally, poverty was closely associated with stocklessness, where the common understanding of the poor was one who had insufficient stock. With this understanding, for the Kalenjin the true opposite of "poverty" was not conceived as "wealth" but "sufficiency". To a Kalenjin, "a sufficient and viable herd is one large enough to produce itself and to support household members with milk".

It was so important for Kalenjin "sons" to know that to be properly a Kalenjin, one must own or at least secure access to a cow. If by any reason one was incapable, the clan had a duty to provide to members for proper identity.²³² This was true to effect that even Jacobs writing about the Maasai who are cousins to the Kalenjin asserts that: *"in matters of cattle exchange, whether to replace stock lost in the stock epidemic or to build up a residual herd for purpose of securing a wife, a man turns first to his brothers of the same gate-post group for assistance and then to local members of his sub-clan and clan, later calling them by cattle names appropriate to the beast given. The degree of their relationship or their ability to trace genealogical links is unimportant. It is being assumed that since they share the same cattle ear-mark, they are like brothers of the same gate-post"*.²³³

The clan-based system of cattle redistribution to impoverished families was central to the Kalenjin community. Equally important fact was the underlying ideology within the clan that "we are brothers and the children of each of us are our common children". The social obligation within the clan is exemplified by the common belief that "cattle belonging to each of us at the same time belong to all of us" and all cattle of the clan had the same earmark. Sharing cattle in the event of a fellow clansman's misfortune

²³² A.T. Matson, *The Nandi Resistance to British Rule*, 15

²³³ T. Spear – R. Waller, *Being Maasai*, 206

gives substantive social meaning to this loose ideology of gentle property privileges. The ideas of “Brotherhood”, “common responsibility for children” and “common cattle” are the basis for traditional redistribution of cattle to destitute clan members.²³⁴ As a conclusion, it is true to state that “real wealth” according to the Kalenjin resided in the control over people including their labour and reproductive power and “an imbalance of wealth could be adjusted by internal redistribution”.

The definition of the word, *repent*; “feel sorry for having done wrong and seek forgiveness”,²³⁵ remains a pointer to the Kalenjin community who should frankly feel sorry for having abandoned the great virtues that they traditionally held with so high esteem. The message of John the Baptist encourages a self-less concern for one’s disadvantaged brother and sister as a prerequisite to the attainment of righteousness and justice before God. In the example of his message to the police force, he clearly would show evidence of social concern to the people vis-à-vis the police and the judiciary while at the same time not advocate overthrow of the system but rather advocate a reform of the structure’s abuses. Since these abuses have arisen out of individual greed, a radical change in the practice of administration of justice is required. As he censured the tax collectors and the soldiers according to Luke that they must be contented with their pay and refrain from using their office to extort money from the people, so likewise the police force and the judiciary should be called upon to refrain from extortion and repent.

²³⁴ D.M. Anderson, *The poor are Not us, poverty and Pastoralism in East Africa*, 200

²³⁵ E. Thorndike – C. Barnhart, *Scott, Foresman Advanced Dictionary*, 865.

5.5.0 Conclusion

I do not intend to be too narrow in my combat against injustices to the poor among the Kalenjin and seek liberation to the poor alone within the community, but my view of the unjust oppressor is that of a fellow oppressed by colonialism and neo-colonialism. My aim in this Thesis is to liberate these unjust oppressors and the oppressed that have had double tragedy, oppressed by the Colonialists and by their neo colonial successors. When few rich people become selfish and do not consider their brothers and sisters who live in abject poverty, John the Baptist who wishes the Kalenjin community prosperity and good health, rejects the still prevalent subordination and oppression of the people in Kalenjin land.

The situations in the Kalenjin land has become so wanting. Power has become paraquat for destroying the poor while the community's elites have become palisades, fencing off those who seek Justice. To date, many Kalenjin people still dream for good social services that would provide good quality food, housing, health and education within their reach. They are yet to realize the aspiration for greater human dignity, which was the main driving force behind their struggle for independence and still remains the main driving force behind the struggle for freedom and democracy.

It is a fact that unless socio-economic, political, cultural and religious issues are integrated with the Christian faith, the faith will soon become irrelevant in today's Kalenjin community where these issues are the key concerns, interconnected and often influence one another. At least the Kalenjin men and women today have realized that the battle for human dignity did not end with the attainment of independence, but they have to continue confronting the challenge of achieving sustainable levels of economic growth in order to provide a solid material basis for the wider enjoyment of human dignity and social justice.

Without gibbering, it is important in this ever changing and challenging world to remember that first, by being human, we share with all the great gifts of God to Creation. Secondly, by being Tribal, we affect the society we live in by our culture and communications. And thirdly being Christian, we are called from our earthly reality as to be believers of an eschatological nature.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

John the Baptist to date remains a living border, the crest watershed, looking uniquely into both the Jewish world and the contemporary Kalenjin world. In him the Old Testament freely transcends itself handing itself over to the contemporary time. Like all the great persons of salvation history who were not only “sent on a mission”, John the Baptist personified and embodied his mission. His maverick preaching bore an epoch to salvation history in itself and dismissed an epoch from it. Into our own century, John the Baptist addressed the plight of the Kalenjin people in their joys and miseries.

While using interpretative model, which makes use of the Bible in the struggle against any kind of injustice on the presupposition that the message of the Bible is essentially a message of justice in the struggle for the realization of the eschatological and messianic hope, Hermeneutics of Luke 3:7 –18 attempts to make sense from this text vis a vis the social-cultural contexts of the Kalenjin people. Since the system of misrule and discrimination in the Kalenjin land has for long been based on wrong interpretation of certain Biblical texts as mentioned above, it is important that the Bible should be used to refute those interpretations and point out that the message of the Bible is essentially one that seeks social justice and liberation to the poor and oppressed. The bond between the Hermeneutics of Luke 3:7-18 and the reflection on Socio-political and economic issues affecting many Kalenjin people even after the introduction of democracy, dismantles these oppressive regimes with their socially unjust structures.

Taking into account the concrete situation of the Kalenjin communities that despite acknowledged differences between them, have common traits that set them off from others, (*like history of migration, colonization, underdevelopment and social disparities, dehumanizing poverty of the masses, oppressive political regimes and economic dependence on a powerful neighbour checked by long influence of Christianity*) one takes a stand for socio-political change and reform, condemning neo-colonialism, committing oneself to the poor through a preferential option and setting down the norms for a pastoral practice oriented to the people.

By seeking social justice not only as another theology over against Old Testament theology of his time presented through the prophets, John the Baptist showed his

preference to orthopraxis than orthodoxy. To him, first comes historical commitment to social justice then comes theological reflection. He understood himself as an agent in the struggle for social justice that changes the world and in his message to repentance; he sought the creation of a just society in solidarity with its goal.

He sets a challenge to the Kalenjin theologians to address themselves to the community problems in a highly critical way always keeping in mind the integral salvation of the human person. The very important point is that while justice has to be sought, the integral development of the person has to be taken care of so that unlike the politicians whose fate is only perceived justice, the mercy of God must be allowed to flourish. It is true that God did not in history kill a sinner (Lk 7:36-50, 18:9- 14, 23:34, Jn 7:53- 8:11) but instead gave them chances to repent. This thesis therefore is meant to create a dialectical interaction between faith in Christ and the living context of the Kalenjin, both understood in their respective historical evolution and communitarian system and always keeping in mind that to be born "a Kalenjin" is not anybody's choice.

The sooner the creators of the monster which has swallowed Kalenjins into impoverishment are called to repent by John the Baptist, the better for the innocent poor. His caveat in his clarion message to his audience for a just society extends to all Kalenjins to take only their legitimate position in society, resisting the temptation to greed and extortion while remaining contented with their blessings from God and refraining from using their office to repress. For those Kalenjins who have broken this law of love by their unjust deals, they need to demonstrate their repentance in sharing the loot they have acquired unjustly and as well repair the damage caused by their unjust deeds. "*They must repent*".

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