

Imagine the public amazement if a leading politician dared to use such grand terms of their own prime minister today! Such praise would be utterly inappropriate and transparent flattery.

Again Yahya exclaims about the One he anticipates, “This is He of whom I said, after me cometh a man which is preferred before me: For He was before me.” How so, since Messiah was born after Yahya? But Yahya’s keen eye pierces into past eternity; he sees that Messiah ever lived even before He assumed humanity through His earthly mother.

Behold the Lamb of God!

Most extraordinary of all, Yahya proclaims Messiah to be the climax and centre of God’s greatest plan. He is the only means of His mercy and pardon. His death on the cross is the exact fulfillment of the offerings made by Abraham, foreshadowed by all the sacrifices for sin commanded under Moses by God. The very essence of these offerings is in Messiah’s death, the only means of our escape from death and cursing in Hell.

“Behold the Lamb of God”, he cries to all who hear. The One who alone can actually bear away sin, and alone is worthy to act as a substitute to carry the indignation and judgement that belongs to us. The One whose blood, by faith in that blood, can purify even the filthiest of hearts from all guilt.

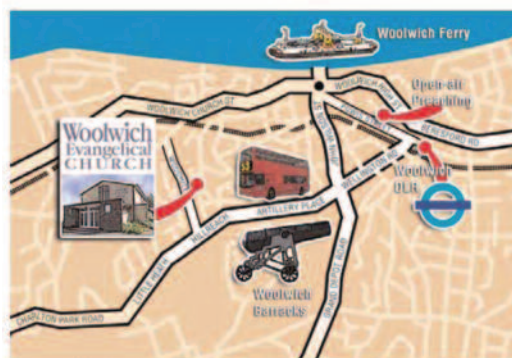
Have you received forgiveness from God?
Do you hope to meet God’s approval with an unwashed life and an unclean heart?

Are you safe from His coming wrath?

It can only be so, if you hear and obey His command to consider the Lamb. One whom Yahya also describes later as the Son of God — One born from eternity, who lived before His birth and is the Word and revelation of God. Eternal life is found through Him alone.

As the Gospel solemnly warns us, “He that has the Son has life; He that has not the Son has not life.” Turn from a life of sin, go to Him and discover God’s own unspeakable gift!

Woolwich Evangelical Church
Evening Service 6.30 pm
Morning Service 11.00 am
All welcome!



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Yahya’s Crucial Testimony

الحق اقول لكم لم يقم بين المولودين
من النساء اعظم من يحيى (يوحنا)

متى 11:11

Messiah spoke of Yahya, or Yochanan, the son of Zechariah, as one of the greatest of the prophets, “a blazing and shining light”. He was described by Isaiah, the Hebrew prophet 800 years before, as the “voice . . . that cries in the wilderness”. Yet it is unusual in most Jewish, Muslim, or Christian circles to hear much detail spoken about him.

Who was this phenomenal witness? What makes his message so significant and why is it dangerous to neglect his call today?

His miraculous birth

Like the Messiah, Yahya’s arrival into the world was heralded by a wonderful miracle. Whilst the elderly priest, Zacharias, served in the temple, Gabriel the angel appeared to him, announcing that he and his aged wife would have their first child. He appointed his name, Yochanan (Yahya). Zacharias was so astonished by the promise of a first born son at such an old age that at first he would not believe it.

Consequently his power of speech was removed until the child's birth. He could only signify with gestures the magnitude of what he had seen and heard. As his wife, Elizabeth, bore the child, another remarkable event took place when her second cousin the virgin Miriam came to greet her. Yahya, as yet unborn, leapt within her for delight. Yahya was the first to recognise the as yet unrecognised Messiah, just beginning to grow in Miriam's womb.

Elizabeth sensing by God's Spirit what had happened shouted with delight and rejoiced, prompting Miriam to also break into singing a most famous hymn of praise to God.

His pure and simple way of life

As he grew older, Yahya withdrew to a life of strict self-denial and simplicity. He dwelt in desert parts, strictly abstaining from worldly society and fleshly habits. His diet was one of wild honey and locusts, in strict obedience to the divine dietary requirements of that time. His clothing of camel hair bound with a leather belt was simple and modest.



How unlike so many self-pampering preachers today! He lived the simplest, strictest life. It was said of him, "What went you out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? ... A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

But what went you out for to see? A prophet?
Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet."

His unflinching message

What burden did God entrust this messenger, this "more than a prophet"? Yahya spoke with unflinching fearlessness about the sins of the people who came to him. He insisted on a thorough renunciation and hatred of all breaches of God's law.

Words of regret and remorse were insufficient. "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance", he demanded. He required soldiers and tax collectors to maintain their authority, not to abuse their powers, and to be content with their wages. He required all to be generous to the poor. He spoke bluntly of the wrath of God, as a violent hurricane, and that we all have to account for our sins at life's end. He warned of the judgement of God, in the bluntest terms. The axe is already laid at the root of the tree of your life. How can we dare to treat God and His warnings lightly?

To those confident of safety by virtue of a religious upbringing, he blazed out the truth of the strict impartiality of God's weighing of our inner hearts. We will inherit nothing but anger, if our inward life and thoughts fall below God's standards.

But he saved his fiercest denunciations of all for the religious leaders of his day (those who should have been leading and helping people to find God). "You offspring of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

They were men with the darkest hearts of all, who in spite of their lives of religious flattery and pretence, were wilfully blind to the truth and set on blinding others. What would Yahya say of our preachers today? To those who fail to challenge people to prepare themselves for judgement; who make peace with sin, preferring favour to faithfulness, consent to conscience; who walk in worldliness and do not proclaim boldly and clearly where to fly from God's anger and how to find pardon.

His crucial testimony

But the heat and burden of his burning message was one of tremendous expectation. Expectation of the all exceeding glory and dignity of the One whose coming he was appointed to announce.

"I immerse you with water unto repentance, but One comes after me who will immerse with the Holy Ghost and fire", he said to those who questioned his authority.

Yahya declares Messiah to be God's sole agent of mercy and judgement. "He will gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

The greatest of prophets genuinely regarded his successor as utterly superior to himself, using terms never spoken of another man in scripture. "He that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear."