

When Jesus is Not Whom You Expected (Luke 7:18-35)

1. The Confusion of John the Baptist (v.18-20)

- News is spreading of Jesus' miracles and healings, and He is gaining popularity in Judea and all the surrounding country (7:17).
- John the Baptist was previously arrested by Herod Antipas when he denounced the immoral liaison between Herod Antipas and Herodias, the former wife of his half-brother Philip (Matt. 11:2; Lk. 3:30).
- As he is in prison, John's disciples report what they heard (and presumably witnessed) regarding Jesus' mission and ministry, thus perplexing him (7:18).
- John is vexed at the timing of the judgment of the nations (3:9, 17):
 - John's ministry in the wilderness was one of repentance to all who came to hear him. He warned them that "the axe is laid to the root of the trees (even now), and every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown in the fire" (3:9) and concerning the wrath to come and approaching judgment, as "His (the Messiah's) winnowing fork 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" (3:17).
- From John's vantage point, too much time has transpired between his prophecy, warning, and Jesus' continued popularity in ministry. What about the judgment? What about the Roman establishment? What about paganism and wickedness? John anticipates a more militant and aggressive timetable, expecting Christ to destroy the powers of darkness and the unrighteous, establishing His physical reign and kingdom afterward.
- John, in response, sends two (Deut. 19:15) of his disciples (v.19-20) to find Jesus and inquire whether He is the One that John was expecting.

Point of Application:

2. The Clarification from Jesus (v.21-23)

- Once both of John's disciples find Jesus and forward John's question ("Are you the One?"), Jesus performs many miracles. In that hour (v.21), Jesus heals many by demonstrating power and authority.
- Jesus commands John's disciples to update and inform John of the miracles He has just performed. Jesus mentions six miracles, and they parallel Isaiah well:
 - The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor hear the good news (v.22).
 - Jesus' response to John was a collage of texts (Isa. 26:19-20; 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:18; 61:1-2) that were prophetic in nature. John would have known these texts, and cutting down evildoers was not part of His mission.
- The Gentiles have always been included in the plan of God. While Jesus has come to judge the world (Jn. 9:39-41) in one sense, He did not come to judge the world (Jn. 12:47). John, along with many others, had misinterpreted the Old Testament Scripture. His problem was hermeneutical, and as a result, he reached a false conclusion.
- Jesus sent John's messengers back to him with overwhelming empirical and Scriptural evidence that messianic power was flowing through Him. However, Jesus did not explain why the fiery judgment was withheld or any encouragement of whether John would be released from prison.
- Jesus' exhortation to John is timely: "Blessed is the one who is not offended by me" (v.23).

Point of Application:

3. The Confirmation of John's Ministry (v.24-28)

As John's disciples return, Jesus addresses the crowds and places John in the purview of redemptive history with three rhetorical questions (v.24-25) and an answer given to clarify misunderstandings about John's ministry (v.26):

- A. "Did you go into the wilderness to see a reed shaken by the wind?" The opinions of others do not easily sway John. His ministry was one of confrontation and exhortation. Those who came out to see him were not "watching grass grow." John has a spine.
- B. "Did you go to see a man dressed in soft clothing?" John was not living in plush quarters with fine clothing. He wore camel skin and a leather strap, eating locusts and honey. He was not "pampered."
- C. "What then did you go out to see?" A prophet (but more)! John's father, Zechariah, prophesied that he (John) would be "the prophet of the Most High" (1:76). John is like Moses and Elijah, calling the nation to repentance, yet greater than any Old Testament prophet because of his office, not character. (Ex. 23:20; Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; 4:5)

While John prepares the way for the "sunrise from on high, giving light to those who sit in darkness" (1:78-79), he does not participate fully in the age he prophesied of. No one in the old covenant was greater than John because of his office as a prophet, as two "ages" overlapped. While John possessed the greatest office under the Old Covenant, those in the New Covenant will be greater than him in the enjoyment and expression of that kingdom procured by Jesus' life, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and accompanying Holy Spirit.

Point of Application:

4. The Characteristics of Wisdom and Her Children (v.29-35)

- Jesus has four categories in the crowd: (A) Those baptized by John (repentance, Lk. 3:3) who do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah (yet, Acts 19:1-7). (B) Those who had received the baptism of John (repentance, Lk. 3:3) and do believe that Jesus is the Messiah, declaring God just (v.29, 35). (C) Those not baptized by John (repentance, Lk. 3:3) will subsequently reject Jesus. (D) Those whom John had not baptized yet will believe that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus tells a "parable" to describe the people of "this generation" (v.31):

- "This generation" is like children trying to play with one another: one group wants to play the flute (representing a wedding), yet the others refuse. In response, the tune changes to a "dirge" (representing a funeral). Still, they don't want to play.
- This is the "Parable of the Brats," as they are stubborn and refuse to participate.
- Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and lawyers as the "children of this generation" who will not participate, as stubborn and hard-hearted. John plays a "dirge" as he lives an ascetic lifestyle and supposedly has a demon. Jesus plays the "flute" (Lk. 5:34-35) yet is judged as a drunkard for eating with tax collectors and sinners (5:29-30; 7:36-39; 10:38-42; 11:37; 13:26; 14:1; 19:5-7). He is also a rebellious son (alluding to Deut. 21:20; Prov. 23:20-21).
- Regardless of what "tune" John or Jesus plays, the "people of this generation" will find some excuse not to participate: John is too "gloomy," and Jesus is too "loose."
- The Pharisees and lawyers are like the wilderness generation whom God punished during the Exodus for being stiff-necked (Deut. 1:35; 10: 16; 32:5).
- Both John and Jesus preached a message of repentance (3:3, 8; 5:32; 13:3-5), and both preached to outcasts (3:12-14; 4:18; 5:27-32; 7:22). However, the "people of this generation" only wanted a God big enough to make them feel religious.

Point of Application: