

## “The Greatest Man Born of Women”

Luke 7:24-28a

Read **Luke 7:24-28a**... Last week we studied how Jesus demonstrated His Messiahship in the presence of John’s disciples, who had come from John (himself in prison at Herod’s summer palace).

**Luke 3:19-20**, “When Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by [John] because of [his affair and unlawful marriage to] Herodias, his brother [Phillip’s] wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done, Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.”

Read **Luke 7:24**... As soon as John’s disciples left to tell John what they had seen and heard, Jesus began to speak about John, asking a rhetorical question, and by doing so, saying that John was not like some reed being blown back and forth by the wind; he was a man of God, and quite frankly, he didn’t care what popular opinion or majority consensus was in Israel or the rest of the world. John had been born for this sovereign mission.

In **Luke 1:15-17**, the angel Gabriel comes to Zacharias at the temple and says, “He [your son John] will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb. “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

In **Luke 1:67**, we read, “And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying” at John’s birth, (**vv. 76-80**), “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; to give to His people the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, with which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Jesus was the promised Messiah, who would fulfill all the promises and Covenants of God: His blood would be shed and His life would be given to pay for our sins; He would be buried, but He would rise from the dead on the third day to demonstrate eternal life for all who believe in Him; everyone who believes Jesus to be God’s Son, Lord, and Savior, becomes a child of God and is eternally indwelt by God’s Holy Spirit, free from all condemnation for sin, forever!

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**Jeremiah 31:31-34**, “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

**Hebrews 10:14-18**, “For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us; for after saying, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, and on their mind I will write them,’ He then says, ‘And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.”

See **Luke 3:2-18**... Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people traveled 40-80 miles through the wilderness, to the Jordan River, north of Jerusalem, where John the baptizer was calling people to acknowledge their sin before God and repent, to turn away from sin and to turn to Jesus Christ the Savior for the forgiveness of sin.

Read **Luke 7:25**... Jesus poses another rhetorical question to the people in order to tell them something about John, he did not wear clothing that was “soft” from the Greek word “malakos,” which is translated “effeminate” in **1Corinthians 6:9**, “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals.”

When the word malakos is used in reference to clothing, it brings to mind the lacy, frilly, puffy, effeminate clothing of royalty, like the English Kings gone by.

In direct contrast to the soft effeminate look, John was a rough and tough man’s man, not a wimpy male who, at a glance, could be taken for a woman. John was a wilderness man; he didn’t live in luxury like the nobles who lived in “royal palaces.” No doubt, this was a criticism of Herod who had incarcerated John for speaking out against Herod’s adultery, incest, fornication and other evil deeds.

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John didn't wear fine tailored clothes or eat a diet of expensive foods served on silver platters (**Matthew 3:4**), “John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.” John was the last of the Old Testament Prophets, and by Jesus's own commendation, John had the most preeminent duty of any prophet, for although Isaiah, Daniel, and Malachi foretold the coming of the Messiah, John His cousin, witnessed, prepared the way for, talked with, and baptized the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Read **Luke 7:26-27**... Jesus now speaks to the prophetic fulfillment of John's calling and mission, saying to the people, “what did you go out into the wilderness to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send My messenger ahead of You, who will prepare Your way before You.’”

The coming of John was foretold in the Scriptures, for John was God's prophet who would declare that the Messiah was now among men (**Isaiah 40:3**), “A voice is calling, clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God,” (**Isaiah 40:5**), “the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

John was so full of the Holy Spirit that many of the people thought maybe he was the Messiah (**Luke 3:15**), “Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ,” and so they came asking him (**John 1:19-23**), “when the Jews sent to John priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ He confessed and did not deny, but confessed, ‘I am not the Christ.’ They asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ And he said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the Prophet?’ And he answered, ‘No.’ Then they said to him, ‘Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?’ He said, ‘I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.” Malachi had prophesied the words of the Lord saying (**Malachi 3:1**), “Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me,” (**Malachi 4:5**), “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.”

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Was John actually Elijah somehow resurrected and returned before the coming of the Lord? No! Any erroneous confusion about John and Elijah is cleared up by comparing Scripture with Scripture, where it becomes apparent that John is the fulfillment of an Elijah-like prophet. In **Luke 1:17**, Gabriel tells Zacharias that his son John, who is to be born to Elizabeth in her old age, “will go as a forerunner before [the Messiah] in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

John was not a reincarnated Elijah, but a prophet of God who came in the “spirit and power of Elijah.” Jesus declared (**Matthew 11:13-15**), “For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

John is the last Old Testament prophet, meaning that he was the last messenger to come from God before the commencement of the ministry of Jesus Christ, through whom the covenant of God’s Grace would replace the covenant of God’s Law (**Hebrews 10:8-10**), “‘sacrifices for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them’ (which are offered according to the Law), then He said, ‘Behold, I have come to do Your will.’ He takes away the first in order to establish the second. By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

Israel had disobeyed, turned away from, and rejected God’s authority, the priests offered defiled sacrifices, and the people worshipped pagan deities; therefore, God removed His presence and didn’t send a messenger to Israel for 400 years, not until the coming of John the baptizer, who would proclaim that God’s Salvation, the Messiah, had come, and John called all Israel to repentance.

From Genesis to Malachi, the Law and the Prophets tell of God’s plan, purpose, and provision of the Messiah. Up until John came and broke the silence between God and Israel, the prophets had written, “the Messiah is going to come!” But when John came as the forerunner of Christ, He declared, “The Messiah is here!”

John’s mission was foretold by the prophets long before his birth. The last words written by Malachi (**Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6**) tell us that God is going to send Elijah before the great and terrible Day of the Lord; Luke tells us (**Luke 1:15-17**) “that [John] will go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah!”

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John wasn't Elijah, in fact, he himself (cf. **John 1:21**) declared that he was not Elijah, nor was he the Christ. But Jesus tells us that John “came in the spirit and power of Elijah.” And as we read earlier (cf. **Luke 3:18**), it was John the baptizer who first, “preached the gospel to the people.” John was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and yet he is the first preacher in the New Testament to proclaim the Gospel of Christ! No wonder Jesus said to the crowds (**Matthew 11:14**), “if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.” And then Jesus said (**Matthew 11:15**), “He who has ears, let him hear.”

The phrase, “He who has ears, let him hear,” is quoted three times in Matthew, once in Mark, and two times in Luke, and each time, Jesus is testing the spiritual responsiveness and heart understanding of those who are there to hear what He just said, but more than that., too understand the deep meaning of what He said. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. John came to fulfill God's purpose and to display God's presence and power, just as Elijah had done about 1,000 years earlier.

Listen! Jesus is saying that John came preparing the way for the Messiah, calling people to repent of their sins and believe in Him alone for forgiveness, as John declared (**John 1:29-34**), “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water. John testified saying, ‘I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’ I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

John knew his priority was to present the Savior (**John 1:15-18**), John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.”

February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

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It is all about Jesus Christ: Crucified, Resurrected, and Coming again. Have you called upon Him to forgive your sins and save your soul? Do you have the assurance of eternal life (**Romans 3:23**), “all have sinned,” (**Romans 6:23**), “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord,” (**Romans 5:8**), “in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” (**Romans 8:1**), “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,” (**Romans 10:9-10**), “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” **13** “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” [Jesus provides forgiveness for all your sins: past, present, and future].

Don't leave here today without being absolutely sure that you have received forgiveness for your sins and that you spend eternity in heaven with God..

**1John 5:11-13**, “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

*Pastor Mike*

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