

“The Least in God’s Kingdom is the Greatest of All”

Luke 7:28b

Last week in **Luke 7:28a**, we studied Jesus’ declaration concerning John the Baptizer that, *“among those born of women there is no one greater than him.”* That is indeed perplexing, especially when you consider **Galatians 4:4**, *“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.”*

So, both John and Jesus were born of women, and yet Jesus says no one has been born of women who is greater than John. How can that be? Both John and Jesus had mothers, however, Jesus had no earthly father for He was the Son of the Most High God; where as John was the son of Zacharias.

How can John be greater than God’s Son? He can’t, so let’s try to sort this out. First, every person who has been born, and all those who are yet to be born, are born via the sexual union between a human male and a human female, bringing about conception, pregnancy, and birth. That is the normal process for all human beings, all except for One; Jesus [*God’s Salvation*], Immanuel [*God with us*] was both God and man; and although He was born of a woman, there was no human male involved with the conception of Jesus in the womb of Mary (cf. **Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-35**).

Jesus was indeed born of a woman, but there was absolutely no human participation in His conception. In **Matthew 1:20**, Gabriel said to Joseph in a dream, *“the Child who has been conceived in [Mary] is of the Holy Spirit.”*

In **Luke 1:30-35**, Gabriel said to Mary, *“You have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High... ..Mary asked, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ Gabriel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.”*

The terminology in **Galatians 4:4**, used of Jesus, *“born of a woman,”* is similar to that in **Luke 7:28**, used of John, *“born of women.”*

John the Baptizer is said to be greater than anyone who is born of a woman; but Jesus was also born of a woman, and there can be no comparison in greatness between John the Baptizer and Jesus Christ: God’s Son, Creator, Sustainer, Lord, Savior, and Judge over all.

Let’s see if we can’t come to an understanding of not just what Jesus said, but what He meant (**Philippians 2:5-11**), *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant [*slave*], and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in*

February 12th, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

“The Least in God’s Kingdom is the Greatest of All”

Luke 7:28b

appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The humiliation of Christ, the willful emptying of the glory and majesty that belongs to Him as God the Son, is not fully illustrated by His taking on humanity (while remaining to be God), but by His submitting to death on a cross for our sins.

The phrase Son of God signifies that Jesus was the Son of the Most High God, and yet He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped; but instead He emptied Himself of all glory and majesty, in order to take on the role of a slave.

The phrase Son of Man signifies that Jesus was indeed born of a woman, born under the law, but there is one very important distinction between Jesus who was born of Mary, and every other person who is born of a woman, including John the Baptizer.

See **Hebrews 4:14-15**, Jesus the Son of God, is our great and heavenly high priest who sympathizes with our weaknesses, as *“One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet [being] without sin.”*

Hebrews 7:23-28, “The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing [*they were just mortal men*], but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He [Jesus] is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, *holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens*; who does not need daily, like those [former] high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the Law appoints men as high priests who are weak, but the word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints *a Son, made perfect forever*” [*Jesus is that Son, the once for all sacrifice, for all sin, for all people, for all time; being not only the Perfect Priest, but also the Perfect Sacrifice*].

Hebrews 9:26-28, “now once at the consummation [*fulfillment, perfection*] of the ages [*Christ*] has been *manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*. And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so *Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.*”

February 12th, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

“The Least in God’s Kingdom is the Greatest of All”

Luke 7:28b

At the end of the day when the Lord was crucified, before He gave up His spirit and died, He said, “It is Finished!” What was finished? The enmity between the Holy and Righteous God of Creation and all of sinful humanity, was mercifully and eternally resolved, concluded, finalized, terminated, over and done with, because. **Hebrews 10:16**, “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, **17**, ‘And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more. **18** Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.”

2Corinthians 5:21, “ He [God the Father] made Him [God the Son] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf [*He took our sins upon Himself*], so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

John the Baptizer, in comparison to all other humans, was the greatest, and if Jesus had merely been the biological son of Mary and Joseph, not God’s Son, then John the Baptizer would have been greater than Jesus, because John’s mission and purpose was to prepare the hearts of the people for God’s Son, the only One who could save them from an eternal condemnation in hell, as John proclaimed (**John 1:29**), “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

John 3:25-26, “Some of John’s disciples came to him and said, ‘Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan [speaking of Jesus], to whom you have testified, behold, He is baptizing and all are coming to Him.’” John answered saying **28**, ‘ A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, I am not the Christ, but, I have been sent ahead of Him.’” **30-31**, ‘ He must increase, but I must decrease [*i.e., Jesus must become greater, I must become less*]. He [*Jesus*] who comes from above is above all [*first in position and priority, preeminent*], he who is of the earth [*John*] is from the earth and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all ‘[*Jesus came from heaven, therefore, He is greater than all*].

Everything Jesus did was divine (see **John 3:34-36**), ‘For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God... The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand [*making Him the greatest of all*]. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.’”

Jesus is from heaven, not from the earth [*He is God the Son, the Eternal Word of God, see **John 1:1-4, 14-15, 18***].

“The Least in God’s Kingdom is the Greatest of All”

Luke 7:28b

All people on the earth are born the naturally way, being the product of a human male and human female conceiving a child, no one is greater than John the Baptizer.

Look again at **Luke 7:28**, and this time let's read the whole verse, "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

Oh boy, yet another one of God's great conundrums for us to try and make sense of, "he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John." The kingdom of God is made up of all those who belong to God the Father, by faith in God the Son, having been born-again into God's family, by God's Spirit.

John 1:11-13, "[Jesus] came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

John 3:1-3, "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him. 'Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God,'" **6-8**, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again. 'The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

All humanity is born through a natural biological physical birth. But you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven through human birth or human flesh.

John 3:13-18, "No one has ascended into heaven, [except] He [Jesus] who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

But if no one born of women is greater than John, how can the least person in the kingdom of God be greater John? John's ministry, although greater than the

“The Least in God’s Kingdom is the Greatest of All”

Luke 7:28b

ministries of all the prophets, was not on par with the ministry of Jesus, who died as God’s sacrificial Lamb, for the sins of all humanity.

In **Luke 7:24**, John’s disciples left to bring word back to him concerning what Jesus was doing (healing diseases, afflictions, casting out demons, and raising the dead); this would answer John’s concern as to whether or not Jesus was the Messiah. But it would do nothing to save John, for very soon he would be executed, long before Jesus went to the cross to pay for our sins, and rose from the grave to demonstrate eternal life.

John would not see the fulfillment of the kingdom of God, nor would he have an understanding of all that was yet to be revealed concerning what has been promised to those who belong to God by faith in Christ.

John was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and even though he was the greatest among men, he did not fully understand the mysteries hidden in the OT, that would be unveiled and revealed in the NT.

The saints in **Hebrews 11**, the Old Testament heroes of the faith like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and many others who listed there (**Hebrews 11:39-40**), “All these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.”

These men and women of the OT are godly examples, but while they lived on this earth, they didn’t really understand all God had promised, not until they died, or were caught up, like Enoch, to be with God, forever.

The hope that we have is made effectual through the sacrificial death and sovereign resurrection of God’s Son; for you see, the cross, the empty tomb, the post resurrection appearances and ascension of Jesus back into heaven, all mark the point in history when the promises of the OT became fulfilled for those who would live during New Testament times and beyond..

The OT Believers listed in **Hebrews 11**, as well as John the Baptizer, never realized the fulfillment of the NT revelations concerning God’s Son and the completion of the Canon of Scripture that tells of the rapture of the Church when Jesus returns in the air to gather all those still alive, who are His, and His subsequent glorious return to earth at the end of the Great Tribulation; after which, peace, prosperity, and longevity will be experienced by those who live during the millennial kingdom, at the end of which will be the White Throne Judgment; and after that will come the creation of the new heavens and new earth, where all those who belong to God will live forever, with Him.

February 12th, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

“The Least in God’s Kingdom is the Greatest of All”

Luke 7:28b

John preached a baptism of repentance, telling the people that the Messiah had arrived; but John died before Jesus went to the cross, paying for all sins, then rose from the grave to demonstrate eternal life.

As Christians, we believe Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, and as ambassadors for Christ, we are to plead with sinners to be reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of God’s Son.

Jesus told His hearers (**Luke 7:28**) that, “among those born of women there is no one greater than John,” and yet, “he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than [John].” John is the greatest human to ever be born, and yet, he could not proclaim the death and resurrection of the Savior, because it hadn’t happened.

John knew nothing of the great mysteries and revelations of Scripture that were inaugurated and made effectual at the death and resurrection of God’s Son, but we, as believers and followers of Christ have been given all of these things something John didn’t live to see.

But on this side of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, everyone who believes in Him for the forgiveness of sins, is saved and equipped for a mission that is much greater than anything John the Baptizer could ever do. He couldn’t preach the death and resurrection of God’s Son, for it was still yet to come; but we like Paul (**1Corinthians 2:2**), must be “determined to know nothing... ..except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

2Corinthians 5:17-21, “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

What does that look like? For a person to become the righteousness of God in Christ? John the Baptist didn’t experience that until he died; whereas, every believer and follower of Christ who has lived, is living now, or will live in the future, is able to realize the righteousness of God in Christ (being on this side of Jesus’ death and resurrection); and therefore, even he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John, for we can say, along with Paul (**Galatians 2:20**), “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and

February 12th, 2023 – (full sermon notes)

“The Least in God’s Kingdom is the Greatest of All”

Luke 7:28b

the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

And all of God’s people said, Amen!

Pastor Mike

>'(((><