

### **Jesus Said the People Rejected Both John and Jesus**

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that the ministry of John the Baptist was to prepare the way and introduce Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. In this topic, we see that Jesus went on to explain more about the ministry of John the Baptist.

Jesus continued speaking about John the Baptist. We read in Matthew 11:11-15, “‘Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive *it*, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!’” In these verses, we see that Jesus explained that John was a great prophet.

Jesus said that among those who had been born to women, there had not arisen one greater than John the Baptist. John actually had a greater privilege than any of the Old Testament prophets. Many Old Testament people had great lives and impacts. Some even gave prophecies about the coming Messiah. However, none of them had the privilege of seeing Jesus and hearing about His ministry. None of them had the opportunity to see how God was going to provide salvation. 1 Peter 1:10-11 says, “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.” The Old Testament prophets could only write about the coming Messiah but they did not see or know Him.

After talking about the greatness of John the Baptist, Jesus went on to make an even more amazing statement. Jesus said, “But he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” John the Baptist died before the death and resurrection of Jesus. As a result, 1 Peter 1:12 went on to say, “To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.” The coming of the Holy Spirit to live in each Christian as the down payment and guarantee of our salvation means that even the least known and weakest Christian has an even greater privilege than John the Baptist as well as all who lived in the time of the Old Testament.

However, something happened that began with John the Baptist that has affected the kingdom of heaven ever since. We read that the kingdom suffers violence. Just a short time later, Herod killed John the Baptist to please Herodias. Matthew 14:7-10 says, “Therefore he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. So she, having been prompted by her mother, said, ‘Give me John the Baptist’s head here on a platter.’ And the king was sorry; nevertheless, because of the

oaths and because of those who sat with him, he commanded *it* to be given to *her*. So he sent and had John beheaded in prison.” The violence against followers of Jesus that began with the death of John the Baptist has continued until today.

The whole Old Testament and even John prophesied about the coming of the Messiah. Jesus said that if the people of that day as a whole would have received John the Baptist and his message that He would carry out the ministry of Elijah which is to come. The last two verses of the Old Testament, Malachi 4:5-6 says, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” In these verses, we see that Elijah will come before the coming of the great and dreadful Day of the Lord (the tribulation period described in Revelation 4-19). That event is still future and will happen after we as Christians are taken to heaven. Jesus said John the Baptist could have fulfilled that ministry if the people would have received him. Instead, John prepared the way for the first coming of Christ and Elijah will prepare the way for the second coming of Christ.

Jesus then made a very important statement when He said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” Matthew repeats this statement of Jesus three times, Mark one time and Luke two times. John made a very similar statement to each of the seven churches in Revelation. The seventh of those statements is found in Revelation 3:22 where we read, ““He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”” As a result, these two statements together are given thirteen times in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 2:12-14 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” These verses show that the only ones who can truly hear are those who are given understanding by the Holy Spirit.

Then, Jesus went on to explain what that generation was like. Matthew 11:16-17 says, “But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you, and you did not lament.”” This quote is also given in Luke 7:32. Luke 7:29-30 says, “And when all the people heard *Him*, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.” In these verses, we see that the tax collectors responded to the message of John the Baptist while the Pharisees and lawyers rejected that message and by doing that rejected the will of God for them. That is why Jesus compared them to children in the marketplace. Jesus was saying that the Pharisees and lawyers were like children who got very upset because the other children would not obey them. By this statement, Jesus made it clear that the Pharisees and lawyers were very childish in their ways.

Jesus went on to explain these childish attitudes in Matthew 11:18-19. Those verses say, “For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He has a demon.” The Son of Man came

eating and drinking, and they say, “Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” But wisdom is justified by her children.” In these verses, we see that because the Pharisees and lawyers had rejected God, they would not accept anyone who came from God. Instead, they always found some way to complain about those who came from God and were like the children in the marketplace.

Then, Jesus explained the complaint of the Pharisees about John the Baptist. Luke 7:33 says, ““For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, “He has a demon.””” John was out in the wilderness and had an unusual appearance and ate different food than most of the people. Matthew 3:4 says, “Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.” Locusts are large grasshoppers so John ate what he could find for food in the wilderness and that happened to be locusts and wild honey. Instead of listening to the message of John, the Pharisees just used the unusual diet of John to condemn him. As a result, they accused John of having a demon.

In contrast, Jesus lived and ate very differently than John. Luke 7:34 says, ““The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, “Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!””” One of the many places where the Pharisees complained about Jesus was at the home of Matthew. Luke 5:29-30 says, “Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, ‘Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’” Here, we see that Jesus was enjoying a great feast with the tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees used that feast as an excuse to complain and condemn Jesus because He was eating with tax collectors and sinners.

We see the answer of Jesus about the accusations of the Pharisees. Luke 7:35 says, “But wisdom is justified by all her children.” Here, we see that wisdom is shown by what it produces. The lack of wisdom had been shown by the fact that the Pharisees were acting like a group of little children in the marketplace. In contrast, Jesus made it clear that the ministry of John the Baptist and His ministry would be seen by the results that their ministries produced in the lives of others. The religious leaders were forced to recognize the fact that Jesus had transformed lives. Acts 4:13 says, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” Then, Acts 5:28-29 adds, “Saying, ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!’ But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’” The religious leaders had to admit Jesus transformed the lives of others.

In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children have their lives transformed so that they are equipped to speak boldly for the Lord as they depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to work through their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to yield to Christ so that their lives are transformed.