

Session 3: John the Baptist, his disciples, and Jesus with the Multitudes
In this session we will take a deeper look into the Gospel of Matthew and focus in on what it is that Jesus said about John the Baptist. Thus also being the Forerunner.

I. SET UP FOR ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS: JOHN'S EXAMPLE

“Now it came to pass, when Jesus finished commanding His twelve disciples, that He departed from there to teach and to preach in their cities. And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The Blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” (Matthew 11:1-6)

The account that Matthew gives, gives an amazing insight into the reality of the Forerunner. Specifically in this account, John the Baptist. But remember, John was in the power of the spirit of Elijah and it was prophesied in Malachi 4 that this would happen. We can biblically draw a conclusion based off of John's life and what Jesus says about Him and apply it to the reality of the Forerunner in Jesus Return. (Isaiah 40)

A. We need to look at the reality of John's Leadership

1. We must first note that he had disciples. The Lord probably supernaturally sent these men to John. After all, John was in the desert for about 20 years.
 - a. If they were John's disciples then they were most definitely in relationship with him
 - (1) Though John was in the wilderness, he still had community
 - b. Also, if they were his disciples, they too were forerunners to Jesus. They learned from John what it meant when he said, “I am a voice crying in the wilderness. Prepare the way of the Lord.”
2. John set his disciples up for encounter with Jesus.

“And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, “Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?” (vs2-3)

Many believe that John had lost hope in prison and was sending his disciples to Jesus so that he himself could be encouraged. I think this is a horrific mistake and oversight. Though yes, John was a human and prone to weakness, I do not believe John was a man of selfishness. But rather a servant leader, truly preparing the way for the Lord.

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is HE of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me. I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with

water. ***And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” (John 3:29-34)***

(1) We see in this passage that John saw Jesus coming, and proclaimed, “BEHOLD! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World!”

(a) John knew in that moment who Jesus was.

(2) John had a proper understanding of identity. He knew who he himself was and what he was called to do.

(a) “After me comes a man who is preferred before me”

(b) “therefore I came baptizing, that He might be revealed”

(3) John didn’t come to just preach, ‘Repent’ and then baptize. There was a greater reality in John’s Ministry. It would be the very ministry, the ‘Baptizing’ that would truly reveal the Messiah!

(a) The Ministry of a Forerunner, whatever it is you are called to, should reveal Jesus.

“For John had not yet been thrown into prison... “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:24,28-30)

(1) Again, John’s message was ‘I have been sent before Him.’

(2) John Calls Himself the friend of the bridegroom(Jesus)

(a) This is a proclamation of identity

(b) As a part of his identity he is called to stand, hear, and rejoice

(3) Most importantly because John knew his place, he could say

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” (vs30)

3. Jesus then proceeds to not just say, but do. He does not just tell John’s disciples ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ but rather gives them an experience.

- a. Jesus heals a blind man, makes a lame man walk, cleanses a leper, made a deaf person hear, raised the dead, and preached the gospel to the poor.

(1) Jesus basically says, “Here let my works and fruit testify of who I am. Oh and here let me add to my resume of ‘Being God’.

- 4. Jesus then throws in a seemingly random statement

“Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” (vs 6)

- a. Jesus points John’s disciples and others back to John.

(1) John was in prison, Jesus knew he was going to be killed. John probably knew that Jesus knew. And Jesus didn’t save him.

(a) Because of John’s understanding of who he was in comparison to who Jesus was, offense did not rise up in John.

(i) Jesus points back to this mans example and says, “when everything that seems to be going wrong and not what you expected begins to happen, remember this man. He is blessed because he was not offended because of me. Be like him.”

II. WHAT DOES JESUS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT JOHN: MATTHEW 11:7-19

“As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: ‘What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings’ houses. But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send my messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.’ Assuredly I say to you, among those born of a woman 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 were willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him Hear!...For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they said, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by her children.” (Matthew 11: 7-15,18-19)

In this section of scripture, Matthew mentions that Jesus is speaking to the multitudes. Jesus has already started to draw a crowd and it was in this context that John’s two disciples came to Jesus. Its highly likely they asked this question ‘*Are you the Coming One, or should we look for another,*’ in front of a very large crowd. So in this context Jesus responds to the two disciples, then turns to the crowd that just witnessed this conversation with Jesus and begins to converse with them about John.

A. What did you go out into the wilderness to see?

1. Jesus asked this question 3 times. Jesus doesn't just repeat things because He feels like it. Anytime something is repeated, it is God's way of saying, "DON'T MISS THIS!"

"A reed shaken by the wind?" (vs 7)

1. I believe Jesus was addressing the reality of, in the face of challenge, warfare, gossip, and threats would John change his message or simply take it back a notch

- a. Would John be moved by the words and culture?

- (1) The Forerunner Ministry cannot and will not be swayed by the winds of change, challenge, warfare, gossip, or threats.

- b. The Forerunner Ministry is like an Oak Tree, not a wimpy reed.

A. ***"A man clothed in soft garments?" (vs 8)***

1. Jesus is totally taking a shot at the Religious Leaders.

"Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waste; and his food was locust and wild honey." (Matthew 3:4)

- a. Its as if Jesus was asking, "Where you expecting John to look like you?"

"Indeed, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses." (vs 8)

- b. Jesus makes a very provoking statement. He is saying that John was not trained, brought up in, or from any kingly line. His wisdom is not of man's but of heavens.

- (1) Jesus takes another shot at them and is basically saying, "What you couldn't see in scriptures, has been revealed to John with no 'learning'."

- c. The forerunner ministry does not come because of the way you dress or the certificate of training from the best institute or the 'right' school.

- (1) It looks different, nothing of what you expect. It doesn't fully make sense.

- (a) How could John have this knowledge!? He is un-learned

B. ***"A prophet?"(vs 9)***

1. Jesus starts to press the heart of the matter. Do you thing John is a prophet? The general consensus was yes.

"For Herod had laid hold of John and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Because John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." And although he wanted to put hi to death, he feared the multitudes, because they counted him as a prophet." (Matthew 14:1-5)

- a. The people believed John was a prophet. It is interesting, even in Islam John is a prophet.
2. Jesus agrees with the people and then takes it a step farther
“Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face. Who will prepare Your way before You.’ Assuredly I say to you, among those born of a woman there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” (Matthew 11:9-11)
- a. Jesus basically says, “John is so much more than you can imagine!” He is the very one whom My Father has sent to prepare the way for me.
- b. Jesus really is going for it. He take it yet another step higher and deeper. He is about to blow their way of thinking even more.
 - (1) No one born before John, has not come close or risen above John.
 - (a) Not King David, Abraham, Moses...no one
 - (2) BUT: whoever is even the least in the kingdom of heaven IS greater than John.
 - (a) What a CRAZY invitation!

Here is this crazy man. He is wearing Camel’s hair, long crazy beard, probably not the prettiest sight. And he is so Radical that they say later that he has a demon. On top of it, we have an account in John 3 that John was intimately connected to the Father in relationship.

Not only in ministry are the least in the kingdom greater than John, but the access to the Father and the level of intimacy is far beyond what John experienced. If this history in God that John had, was able to keep him strengthened in ministry and even prison. How much more Boldness will and should we walk in?
- c. The Forerunner Ministry will far exceed the ministry of John the Baptist. Jesus says it even a better way.
“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do. Because I go to my father.” (John 14:12)
- C. ***“Since the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force.” (vs 12)***
 1. The spiritual violence that was exhibited by John the Baptist is simply the starting place for all believers. There is a heavenly reality that if the kingdom suffers violence, and the violent take it. Then there are things of heaven that only the violent can have.

- a. There is a reality of warfare that one must not just ask, but fight for
 - (1) This is not merely a physical violence, but a spiritual violence that is manifested in outward things in our lives.
 2. The reality of Spiritual Violence is along the same lines as the ‘Nazarite Vow’ in Numbers 6.
 - a. The reality is ‘Others can, but I cannot.’
 - b. It comes out of a place of identity where we begin to understand that spiritual violence is not simply a tool or a lifestyle, but it is Life or Death.
 - (1) For John it was Life or Death. It ended in Death, however if John would not have made that resolution that no matter what the cost, he would fight for his destiny and the things of heaven, He may have never stepped into his ministry.
 - (2) John had a very specific and very anointed word spoken over his life multiple times. But it did not just happen. John had to do his part.
- D. ***“And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (vs 14-15)***
1. Jesus leaves no room for lies or misunderstanding. Jesus clearly speaks that John is Elijah who is to come. Jesus was implying that, “this is only a taste”. But rather Elijah will come again. Not only will HE come, but also His spirit. That is the Forerunner Ministry.
 2. Jesus also puts out a clarion call of invitation. Only if you have ears to hear, will you truly hear.
 - a. Only if you truly want to know, will you find out
 - (1) This is a reason why Jesus spoke in Parables
“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search it out.” (Proverbs 25:2)
- E. ***“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.” (vs 18-19)***
1. These accusations are very real. They said of John, the forerunner to Jesus, ‘He has a demon.’
 - a. People assumed that because John didn’t fit the status quo that he couldn’t be anointed, filled, or led by the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) They attributed the work of God as the work of Satan

- (2) They also misunderstood fasting
- b. The Forerunner Ministry was misunderstood when it first came on the scene. No one believed Noah either.
- 2. Not only did they accuse John of being possessed by a demon and not the Holy Spirit, but they accused the Son of God, the Messiah, the Chosen One of being a glutton and winebibber. And even worse, a friend of sinners!
 - a. Those who do not have ears to hear, and hard hearts will never be satisfied. Especially if it is something they don't agree with.
 - (1) It is important to note, that these same ones who accused John and Jesus, Jesus died on the cross for.
- 3. Jesus then throws a curve ball. FAITH.
 - a. ***“Wisdom is justified by her children.”***
 - (1) They could not see the full fruit of John's ministry, nor could they see the fruit of Jesus' ministry.
 - (a) Jesus was healing people and they accused Him of having a demon!
 - (2) Jesus is basically saying, “The future will testify of who I am, and who John is.”
 - (a) He called everyone into faith, saying Wisdom can only be made known after the fact.

We choose now to ‘waste’ our lives on prayer. We choose now to ‘waste’ our lives in preparation for the Coming of Jesus. Those who do not understand the prayer movement will tell you to get a real Job. Those who do not understand the context of Jesus' Return and the Forerunner ministry will accuse you of having demons and have the, “I am worried about you...” talk. **Wisdom IS justified by her children.**