

A CHARACTER STUDY OF  
JOHN THE BAPTIST

Lesson 6

JESUS SPEAKS OF JOHN

Matthew 11:2-19

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Gethsemane Baptist Church

Adult Sunday school Class

## JESUS SPEAKS OF JOHN

*“This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”*

Luke 7:27-28

Luke chapter seven finds the Lord Jesus doing great works in Capernaum. He healed a centurion's servant and raised a widow's dead son back to life. The people all over the area were talking about the wonderful things He was doing. Even John the Baptist heard about it even though he had been imprisoned by Herod. When Jesus raised the man from the dead, “The rumor of this miracle at Nain must have been widely discussed if it penetrated the fortress of Machaerus ... in the wilderness east of the Dead Sea, where John was a captive” (Wycliffe. P. 1040) John was in a difficult spot. He had preached that Jesus was the Christ, the chosen one of God, the Messiah,

who was to come and establish the kingdom of God in Israel. Now, John finds himself in prison under a death sentence and he sees no evidence of a coming kingdom. He begins to wonder if he had been right. Maybe his cousin, Jesus, was just another prophet or powerful preacher. He felt that he must know for sure. He sent two of his disciples to Jesus to answer a very specific question. The disciples of John *“said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another?”* (Luke 7:20) Jesus understood perfectly what John was asking and answered him perfectly. He did not give a positive or a negative answer but instead listed for John what was being done through His ministry. “His answer amounts To this: that they must tell John that He is busy performing divine works of power, of love and mercy and not of judgment and destruction. He makes the blind to see again, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the lepers clean, and He even raises the dead. In addition, He uses the opportunities when multitudes had collected around Him to preach the glad tidings to them. By mentioning all of this Jesus want to remind

John of Isaiah 35:5-6 and 61:1 and following, where all of the works He is constantly doing are mentioned as the blessings to be given to the people in the Messianic time. Thus, by His acts Jesus proves that He is indeed the Promised one.” (Geldenhuys. P. 226) Jesus then promises a blessing to any who are not “*offended in me.*” The word “To ‘Offend’ has the meaning of ‘to cause to go astray,’ or ‘cause to err’ rather than to ‘displease’” (Wycliffe. P1040) He did not want John to despair but to remain faithful even though the Father wills that he should suffer and die in prison and not see the fulfillment of his own preaching. The lesson is that we should remain faithful in good works and not be offended when we do not see the Lord do for us what we had hoped to see.

Jesus then turns to the crowd around Him. They also had hoped to see Jesus bring the kingdom in. They hoped that He would make Israel great. Jesus knew that one day He would set up His kingdom but it was not the time to do that yet. He then asks a leading question of the people around him. He asks three separate times, “What went ye out into the wilderness to see? (Vss.

24,25,26). He tells them that John was not a “reed shaken by the wind”. He was a strong man of conviction who did not change with ever change of the wind of popular opinion. He stood firm on biblical truth. He did not dress in fine clothing but was a rugged man who could endure hardships to identify with the common people. He was a prophet but even greater than The Old Testament prophets because he was ordained by God to preach righteousness to the people in preparation for Messiah. “Because John was His immediate precursor, he is the greatest of all the prophets; while the Old Testament prophets could only see and proclaim a shadowy likeness of Christ, John saw Him himself and personally pointed Him out as the Messiah of God.” (Geldenhuys. P.227) However, while, “John knew only that redemption and the work of the Holy Spirit would be introduced by Jesus (Jn 1:29-34); he did not live to see the work of Christ perfected. Those who live in the era of the kingdom of God have greater privileges and powers than John. The people who heard Jesus speak in such a wonderful way about John along with, “*the publicans, justified* [or

honored] *God, being baptized with the baptism of John.*" (Vs. 29) Jesus contrasts these people to those who rejected the righteousness of God and the ministry of John in their lives. They rebelled against whatever Jesus or John encouraged them to do. Jesus used a short parable to illustrate their contrariness.

Jesus wanted the people to see how strong and special a person John was. He stood strong even though he was facing death for his preaching and still he did not waver. Jesus said of John that, "*Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.*" (Vs 28.) In that, John is an example to Christians down through history. Often God calls us to remain faithful even though we face situations that seem to contradict what we think should be the will of God. We must trust God. We must find our strength in the Scripture and in the character of God. He will work all things out to His wise will.

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