

# **PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND THE LEAST IN THE KINGDOM LUKE 7:18-50**

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## **Introduction**

What is your estimation of yourself? I'm not speaking in terms of estimating your financial worth or estimating your value to others in this world. What is your estimation of yourself before God? How does a person go about summing themselves up properly or getting at a right estimate of one's condition before a Holy God?

We should remember that the Law of God has been given to us to reveal God's character and holy purposes for his people. Only through the Law of God, with its demands for holiness, can we find out a right estimate of our sinful condition. The Law of God is a revelation of God's holy character and will. Before the Law that reveal his character and commands, we should learn to estimate ourselves rightly.

In our passage today from Luke 7:18-50, Jesus compares the "least" in the Kingdom who rightly estimate their sinfulness before God, with the pride and prejudice of the Pharisees who in their high estimation of themselves, cannot truly see and acknowledge their own sinfulness—even in the presence of God.

Jesus affirms that John the Baptist is the greatest of the Old Covenant prophets; in fact he is the greatest of those born of women, but Jesus says the one who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John!

When we rightly estimate ourselves before God's holy tribunal, we come to the end of ourselves, our own works for God, and through repentance and faith depend upon and trust in the forgiveness of sins that is offered in the Person of Jesus Christ!

In other words, when we rightly estimate ourselves before the Law of God, we should understand ourselves as the "least" in the Kingdom of God and worship and serve Christ with gratitude and thankfulness for our many sins are forgiven!

## **I. John the Baptist's Person and Ministry: A Comparison between John and Jesus' Ministries**

- a. John needed reassurance in his faith as he faced death (7:18-23).

As we learned in last week's sermon, John the Baptist is close to death and he needed reassurance from Jesus that he was indeed Messiah. John doubts, and Jesus reassures him that his hope is found in His Person and Work. We shouldn't be surprised or shocked that a prophet of God doubted. The greatest

of saints are still mere mortal men and women, and although they may be saved by grace and exercise great faith, they do too stumble sometimes! When we experience doubt and disappointment, even though we may struggle, we still find our hope in Jesus Christ. In fact, Philip Yancey wrote in *Disappointment with God* (1992): “***Disappointment often calls us to a deeper, less self-focused walk with God.***”

b. John the Baptist’s Ministry and “Greatness” According to Jesus (7:24-28).

i. Three Questions put to the people about John the Baptist:

1. “What did you go out in the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?” (v. 24). “An insignificant and weak instrument?”
2. “[Did you go out to see] a man dressed in soft clothing?” (v. 25). “An important or wealthy man?”
3. “What then did you go out to see? A prophet? (v. 26)

ii. Jesus says you did indeed go out to see a prophet, but not merely any old prophet, but the one spoken about in Isaiah and Malachi as he who precedes the Coming of Messiah and the Messianic Kingdom!

<sup>ESV</sup> **Malachi 3:1-3:** “Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

iii. Jesus says: “I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he” (v. 28).

John was the greatest of those born of women in the Old Testament economy or era; because his appearance meant that the Messianic Kingdom Age had dawned.

Commentator T. W. Manson wrote: ‘These words ‘among those born of women none is greater than John’ presuppose on Jesus’ part not merely the highest estimate of John- - but a consciousness of the *finality* of his own mission to Israel.’”

1. Jesus is teaching the people that John the Baptist and his ministry belonged to the Old Covenant era of promise and

type; his ministry was the last and greatest of the Old Covenant prophetic ministries.

2. Jesus is saying that now that the Messiah and the Messianic Kingdom have arrived, those who are part of this time of fulfillment in the Person and Work of Christ **are greater than John**, as great as he may have been within his era of ministry; what is most important is not merely to be a follower of John (although that was an eschatological start!), but **to enter the Kingdom of God by faith in Jesus** (cf. Acts 19).

John the Baptist's ministry was to fulfill the Prophecy of Malachi to prepare the way for Jesus; the One who would refine, purify and make his people righteous!

**Malachi 3:2-3:**

<sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. <sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.

3. So the "least" in the Kingdom of God; the "least" of this time of Messianic fulfillment are greater than John because of the period of revelation in which they live.
4. We expect for John's ministry to be subordinated to Jesus, but what is surprising here is that John the Baptist's ministry is subordinated to anyone who belongs to the Kingdom now that Jesus has arrived. We get a glimpse of this break with the oldness of the Old Covenant in Luke 16:16, and the newness of the New (cf. Bock, NIVAC, pg. 214):

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 16:16** "The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.

**Summary:** As great as John the Baptist is, the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he because they witness and experience the Person and Work of Messiah in a way that John was unable to fully experience because of the time of his work as forerunner to Messiah.

As commentator Geldenhuys pointed out: "...Although he [John the Baptist], as last envoy of the Old Covenant, is nearest to Christ and thus the most important of all, he takes a lower place than even *the most insignificant member of the New Covenant*. He belonged to a period of preparation and had not yet learned to know Jesus as the Crucified One, as the Risen Redeemer, and as the One who through His Spirit makes His habitation in the believer's heart and life" (Geldenhuys, Luke, pgs. 227-28).

This was the obvious reason why John needed further assistance from Jesus as to whether he was indeed the "One who was to come"! (cf. Luke 7:19ff).

c. The "Least" in the Kingdom, and the Pride and Prejudice of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law (7:29-30).

i. Who are the "Least"?

1. The "Least" were those who were humbled by the Law of God and who showed forth true repentance by submitting to John's baptism (v. 29)- - even the tax collectors (mentioned specifically as a group of heinous sinners!).
2. The "Least" realized that God could raise up children from Abraham from stones and would not rely upon their own ethnic heritage or good works for salvation (cf. Luke 3:7-14).

The "Least" had ears to hear when John the Baptist preached his preparatory message of repentance:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 3:7-14:** He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" <sup>8</sup> Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup> Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." <sup>10</sup> And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" <sup>11</sup> And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." <sup>12</sup> Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" <sup>13</sup> And he said to them,

"Collect no more than you are authorized to do." <sup>14</sup> Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

3. The "Least" were prepared for the Kingdom by John the Baptist and because of God's grace received it by faith in Christ.
  4. ***The "Least" declared God just*** (v. 29, or "justified God") in admitting their sins and repenting before him, and undergoing John's Baptism as a sign and seal of that repentance. God was fully justified in demanding through John the Baptist the confession of sins and true repentance.
  5. ***The "Least" are children of wisdom*** (v. 35), realizing that God's wisdom is shown in John's preaching of repentance and ultimately the salvation found in Jesus Christ.
- ii. What is the Pride and Prejudice of the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law? (7:31-35).
1. Although the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law (or "Lawyers" v. 30) knew intimately every detail of God's Law, they could not understand its purpose for showing them their condemnation before a Holy God (as the Apostle Paul says in Galatians 3:19ff, the Law was given so that the people might be under a tutor of schoolmaster until the coming of Christ, and the fullness of the times, so that righteousness would be received by faith!
  2. Although the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law gave their entire lives to the study of God, they could not understand the purposes of God found in repentance before God, and specifically they did not understand John the Baptist's ministry and baptism, and ***rejected it for themselves*** (v.30: "But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by [John]).
  3. The pride of the Pharisees and lawyers prevent them from seeing the Kingdom of God present in the Person and Work of Jesus of Nazareth because of their high estimation of themselves and their own supposed righteousness.
  4. The prejudice of the Pharisees and lawyers is that they have formed their opinion, and made up their minds concerning

John the Baptist and Jesus. They will not listen and do not have ears to hear what God is saying to them, and they are blind, and cannot see plainly what Jesus is doing before them in his power and authority.

As commentator-theologian Leon Morris wrote: “Where simpler people had heard and responded to God’s call to repent, these men in their complacency and smug self-satisfaction ***found nothing to repent of***. They rejected God’s way. They refused John’s baptism. They put themselves outside the way of blessings and would not give Jesus an open hearing when he came. The closed minds lead to mistake on mistake” (Morris, Luke, pg. 159).

5. The truth is that these Teachers of Israel have already made up their closed minds about John and Jesus. Jesus goes on to illustrate for them that the people of this generation (v. 31) are like immature children playing games (v. 32). The point that Jesus is making in verses 31-35 is that no matter what he and John did in their ministries (John was an ascetic and Jesus was social), they would be rejected by them without any consideration - John and Jesus could not please them.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 7:33-35:** For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.'  
<sup>34</sup> The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' <sup>35</sup> Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."

**Summary:** Jesus is criticizing the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law (or lawyers) of Israel for priding themselves for understanding the Old Covenant better than John and Jesus. He is saying that they show themselves fools rather than the followers of wisdom (v. 35) because although they cannot deny that John was a prophet, they nevertheless would not submit to his baptism and line themselves up with the purposes of God (v. 30).

In fact, they are hypocritical in pride and prejudice before God because they summarize John’s ministry as “demonic” and Jesus’ fulfillment of the Old Covenant Kingdom ministry as one characterized by gluttony and drunkenness (just because Jesus eats and drinks with tax collectors and “sinners”).

Even though the Pharisees reject John and Jesus, it was a fact that many of the people recognized John as a prophet of God and they recognized Jesus' authority; as Matthew wrote in his Gospel:

**Matthew 21:23-27:** And when he [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" <sup>24</sup> Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. <sup>25</sup> *The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?"* And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' <sup>26</sup> *But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet."* <sup>27</sup> So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

## II. Simon and the Sinful Woman: A Comparison between the "Greatest" and the "Least" in the Kingdom

Although there are similar stories in the other gospels, this one is unique and should not be confused with the others. This is not a variant on other similar stories, but a specific event taken from many possible events like this one, that Dr. Luke places here to instruct us about the forgiveness of sins and *to show us an example of the least in the Kingdom.*

### a. An Invitation from a Pharisee (7:36)

Jesus accepts an invitation to go to a Pharisees' house to point out their pride and prejudice. We see here that Jesus is one who pursues sinners and seeks out the lost. As we will see as we progress in the text, the Pharisee invites Jesus for selfish, self-righteous purposes that he is not fully disclosing; perhaps to watch Jesus, interview him, etc.

Dr. Luke has already shown to us Jesus' special interest in dining with sinners; he went to the home of Levi ("Matthew") the tax collector prior to this and inclined at table with many tax collector-sinners (cf. Luke 5:29).

### b. The Sinful Woman's Love toward Jesus (7:37-39)

One of the “least in the Kingdom”, a notoriously sinful woman (probably a prostitute) came into the Pharisees home and making her humble submission to Jesus, showed forth her faith and love for him in her actions.

A meal such as this one at Simon’s home would have been open to many who passed by on the street; apparently the woman heard that Jesus was “in the neighborhood” (v. 37) and realizes that in him she can find forgiveness and a new start.

The sinful woman probably had heard Jesus’ preaching as one person in the multitude, and had come to realize that she was forgiven by faith; and so she comes to show her gratitude, and to be assured of this forgiveness found in Jesus alone.

The sinful woman’s faith is quite brave and bold. She enters a home knowing that she will probably be judged by others (particularly since she knew it was a Pharisees home, v. 37), yet this pales in importance in comparison to being near to Jesus!

The sinful woman boldly enters during the meal; then she shows love:

- 1) She brings an alabaster flask of ointment (expensive perfumed oil used for festive occasions).
- 2) She weeps over her sins wetting Jesus’ feet, she uses her hair to wipe them.
- 3) She kisses Jesus’ feet and anoints them with the ointment.

The Pharisee Simon, with pride and prejudice, criticizes Jesus in his mind for not being a good prophet (v. 39) because he thinks Jesus is unaware of her sinful position and actions in the world. ***But the point of this picture of the least that Jesus is showing is that that is precisely the point- -her “many sins” will be forgiven by him because she recognized her sinfulness and came to him for forgiveness.***

Instead of being rightfully condemned by the Law, as summarized in Jesus’ sermon on the Plain in Luke 6, the Pharisees think of themselves as “greater” and believe they have fulfilled the Law, not seeing themselves rightly as needy sinners just like the sinful woman who is “least”.

c. A Story of the “Greatest” and the “Least” (7:40-43)

Jesus tells a story of two debtors in verses 40-43. One owed five hundred denarii and the other only fifty (a two-month’s debt versus a twenty-month



debt for a basic wage earner in the ancient Near East). Neither of the debtors could pay, but the lender cancelled the debts of both.

Jesus uses this story to show that all sinners are debtors to God, and if one truly understands their condemnation under God's holy law, that is ***if they have a right estimation of themselves before God***, then they will be humbled and realize their great debt to God that they cannot pay back.

Simon understands that the woman is showing great love for her debt being forgiven, but does not seem to understand his own debt to God as a Law-breaker- -that ***he too, is a debtor with a large debt***. Because of his pride and prejudice against Jesus and his teaching, Simon doesn't understand his debt to God, nor that debts are only cancelled in Christ Jesus!

***It is important to note in Jesus' story that it is not the love in action that brings the forgiveness, but it is the cancellation of the debt or the forgiveness that brings forth love and gratitude.***

***Jesus is not teaching that we are saved and forgiven by our love, but that our love shows that we have truly been forgiven!***

d. The "Least" Receives the Forgiveness of Her Sins (7:44-49)

i. An Inhospitable Host?

Jesus criticizes Simon rightly because the custom of the day if any Rabbi were to come into his home, they were not only given an opportunity to teach, but humility was shown through washing and even kissing of the feet, and anointing with oil especially if they were to realize the significance of this special Rabbi who was visiting.

It was a common practice of hospitality in the ancient world to at least provide water for the guests' feet (cf. Gen. 18:4; Judges 19:21), and a proper welcome and show of kindness (Gen. 29:13; 45:15; Psalm 23:5; 141:5); this shows what Simon thinks of Jesus in his heart.

Simon's lack of common courtesy before Jesus shows that he has ***begrudgingly invited him*** to his home for a meal. Simon's arrogance also shows in his response to Jesus' story about forgiveness, when he answers Jesus' question with an indifferent "I suppose" (v. 43).

Jesus points out to Simon his sin of inhospitality, but even then, he does not have ears to hear what Jesus says to him:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 7:44-46:** Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

Jesus is telling Simon and the other Pharisees at his house that they do not understand that they should have done the same as the sinful woman had done- -especially if they had understood who their unique Rabbinical Guest was- -the very Son of God and Son of Man!

- ii. The Forgiveness of the Sinful Woman's 'Many' Sins and Her Love for Christ (vv. 47-48).

***The woman does not merit her forgiveness through her loving actions toward Jesus. Rather, she shows that she has been forgiven and because of the forgiveness she has already received by God's grace through faith in Christ, she shows forth this forgiveness in true love.***

Jesus says:

"Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven- for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." – v. 47.

**Application:** If we remembered how much we have been forgiven by God for our many sins, we would be more loving, more worshipful before God, more humble, more serving, more forgiving, less proud, less critical of others, less judgmental.

It is important to ask yourself if you are more like Simon than the sinful woman here in this passage. Do you separate yourself from sinners as one who believes he is righteous, not understanding the forgiveness that you have received from God? Or do you worship and serve Christ like the sinful woman, and being like Christ, you extend a hand of forgiveness to even the most wretched sinner whose sins are many?

Roman Catholic exegetes use Luke 7:47 to articulate their doctrine of *contrition caritate formata* that teaches that acts of love or tributes of love deserve forgiveness. The Catholic Encyclopedia states in the section on "The Process of Justification": "Only such faith as is active in charity and good works (*fides caritate formata*)

can justify man, and this even before the actual reception of baptism or penance, although not without a desire of the sacrament (cf. Trent, Sess. VI, cap. iv, xiv).”

This doctrine is an incorrect perversion of Rome as we compare scripture with scripture, but also consider what Jesus is saying immediately in this context.

**Application:** Jesus does not say: “For he who has loved little, has only received little forgiveness.” He says: ***“For he who is forgiven little, loves little,”*** implying that we must have a right estimation of ourselves before God and understand our great debt, realizing the wickedness of our own sins before we truly show forth genuine Christian charity in our lives for God and our neighbor.

***Jesus is not saying that some people merely need to be forgiven little, but he is saying that anyone who truly understands the Law of Moses and Jesus’ interpretation of it, would realize that they had been forgiven much - - and this would rightly lead to a demonstration of great love!***

New Testament exegete Plummer wrote: “The love and gratitude of those who have had debts remitted to them depends upon *their estimate* of the amount which has been remitted to them rather than upon the actual amount.”

The Pharisee in his own presumptuous self-righteousness considered before God that he only needed forgiveness for a few sins in his estimation, and for that reason his love for God was so slight in demonstration and action.

**Application:** What is your estimate of your own sins? Do you truly realize how desperately wicked the sinful heart is before God (cf. Jeremiah 17:9-10)? Do you consider yourself to be a “pretty good person” and not comparatively as bad as others? Have you truly considered yourself before God’s Holy Law?

***Compare not yourself with others, but look at yourself in comparison to God’s Law! There you will find the right estimate of your forgiveness- -and this by God’s grace will lead you to greater love!***

iii. A Rejection of Christ’s Forgiveness (v. 49).

Because of pride and prejudice against Jesus, they cannot see him as the One whom God has sent to forgive sins; the least in the Kingdom however, the sinful woman goes in peace because she has demonstrated faith in the only Person who can forgive, and who can release from bondage to sin, and give peace and reconciliation with God.

- iv. A Forgiven Sinner Goes in peace (v. 50).

Jesus says to her with authority and power:

***“Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”***

### **III. Are you the least in God’s Kingdom?**

- i. A Realization of our condition before God’s Holy Law
- ii. A Realization of our only hope of forgiveness in Jesus Christ
- iii. Peace with God through our reconciliation in Christ: “Your faith has saved you- -go in peace!”
- iv. A heightening of our understanding of what it means to give thanks to God at our celebration of Thanksgiving!

### **Scripture Lesson**

**Matthew 11:11-30:** Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. <sup>12</sup> From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. <sup>13</sup> For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, <sup>14</sup> and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. <sup>15</sup> He who has ears to hear, let him hear. <sup>16</sup> "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates, <sup>17</sup> "'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.' <sup>18</sup> For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' <sup>19</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds." <sup>20</sup> Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. <sup>21</sup> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup> But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. <sup>23</sup> And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. <sup>24</sup> But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you." <sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; <sup>26</sup> yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. <sup>27</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. <sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

**Ephesians 3:1-10:** This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 13:30** And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 19:30** But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:9** For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

### Exegetical Notes

The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, <sup>19</sup> calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" <sup>20</sup> And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" <sup>21</sup> In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. <sup>22</sup> And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. <sup>23</sup> And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." [As we learned in last week's sermon, John the Baptist is close to death and he needed reassurance from Jesus that he was indeed Messiah. John doubts, and Jesus reassures him that his hope is found in His Person and Work.]

<sup>24</sup> When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? [Did you go out to see a weak reed?]

<sup>25</sup> What then did you go out to see? [Implication of the point of the question: "No, John the Baptist was certainly not a weak vessel of God!"]

A man dressed in soft clothing? [Question: Was John a man of wealth and luxury? Was he like a king in authority and power?]

Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. [Implication of the point of the question: "No you did not see a man dressed in splendor, living in luxury."]

<sup>26</sup> What then did you go out to see? A prophet? [Point of question: "You know that you saw a prophet because that is what he is – he is undeniably a prophet of God!"]

Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. [But he is much more than that!]

<sup>27</sup> This is he of whom it is written, "' Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' [John was a great prophet spoken of by Malachi's prophecy many years prior- -he was the fulfillment of specific Messianic prophecy found in the Old Covenant Scriptures!]

<sup>28</sup> I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. [John was the greatest of those born of women in the Old Testament economy or era; because his appearance meant that the Messianic Kingdom Age had dawned.]

Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." [As great as John the Baptist is, the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he because they witness and experience the Person and Work of Messiah in a way that John was unable to fully experience because of the time of his work as forerunner to Messiah.]

<sup>29</sup> ( When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, <sup>30</sup> but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.) [“The Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves...” The baptism of John was a baptism of repentance, inaugurating a greater Messianic period that would come in Jesus Christ. God was just, or righteous in making it possible to be great in the Kingdom of God even though one is least- -humbled by one’s sins and without any right to be a part of this Holy Kingdom. But because of the pride of the Pharisees and lawyers, they not only rejected John the Baptist, they rejected Jesus the Messiah as well!]

<sup>31</sup> "To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? <sup>32</sup> They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, "' We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.' <sup>33</sup> For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' <sup>34</sup> The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' <sup>35</sup> Yet wisdom is justified by all her children." [Jesus is criticizing the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law (or lawyers) of Israel for priding themselves for understanding the Old Covenant better than John and Jesus. He is saying that they show themselves fools rather than the followers of wisdom (v. 35) because although they cannot deny that John was a prophet, they nevertheless would not submit to his baptism and line themselves up with the purposes of God (v. 30). In fact, they are hypocritical in pride and prejudice before God because they summarize John’s ministry as “demonic” and Jesus’ fulfillment of the Old Covenant Kingdom ministry as one characterized by gluttony and drunkenness (just because Jesus eats and drinks with tax collectors and “sinners”).]

<sup>36</sup> One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. [Jesus accepts an invitation to go to a Pharisees house to point out their pride and prejudice.]

<sup>37</sup> And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, [It is very important to Dr. Luke to make sure we understand that this uninvited woman guest is a sinner!] when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, <sup>38</sup> and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. <sup>39</sup> Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." [One of the “least in the Kingdom”, a sinful woman came into the Pharisees home and making her humble submission to Jesus, and showing forth her faith and love for him, the Pharisees with pride and prejudice criticize Jesus for not being a good prophet (v. 39b) because he seems to be unaware of her sinful position in this world of obedience to Mosaic Law that they think they have made for themselves. Instead of being rightfully condemned by the Law, as summarized in Jesus’ sermon on the Plain in Luke 6, they think of themselves as “greater” and believe

they have fulfilled the Law, not seeing themselves rightly as needy sinners just like the sinful woman.]

<sup>40</sup> And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." [Jesus uses the example of least in the Kingdom of God who is greater than John the Baptist by pointing out to Simon that he should have responded to Jesus' person and ministry in the same way. He tells a story...]

And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." [Simon shows common courtesy to the Rabbi who is a guest, and it was keeping in line with tradition that if a Rabbi came to recline at table, he would have an opportunity to teach if he requested the chance.]

<sup>41</sup> "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" [Jesus uses this story to show that all sinners are debtors to God, and if one truly understands their condemnation under God's holy law, then they will be humbled and realize their great debt to God that they cannot pay back.]

<sup>43</sup> Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." [Simon understands that the woman is showing great love for her debt being forgiven, but does not seem to understand his own debt God as a Law-breaker- -that he too, is a debtor with a large debt. Because of his pride and prejudice against Jesus and his teaching, Simon doesn't understand that debts are only cancelled in Christ Jesus!]

<sup>44</sup> Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. [Jesus criticizes Simon rightly because the custom of the day if any Rabbi were to come into his home, they were not only given an opportunity to teach, but humility was shown through washing feet, kissing, and anointing with oil if they understand the significance of the Rabbi who is visiting. Jesus is telling Simon and the other Pharisees at his house that they do not understand that they should have done the same.]

<sup>47</sup> Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven- for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." [Jesus is not saying that some people merely need to be forgiven little, but he is saying that anyone who truly understands the Law of Moses and Jesus' interpretation of it, would realize that they have been forgiven much - -and this would rightly lead to a demonstration of great love!]

<sup>48</sup> And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." [Because of her faith, Jesus forgives her sins.]



<sup>49</sup> Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" <sup>50</sup> And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." [Because of pride and prejudice against Jesus, they cannot see him as the One whom God has sent to forgive sins; the least in the Kingdom however, the sinful woman goes in peace because she has demonstrated faith in the only Person who can forgive, and who can release from bondage to sin, and give peace and reconciliation with God.]

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