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*'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'*

28 *"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."*  
29 *And when all the people and the tax-gatherers heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. 30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John. 31 "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? 32 "They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another; and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.' 33 "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon!'*  
34 *"The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man, and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!'* 35 *"Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."*

Last week we took a week off from Luke while we fellowshiped and picniced together and we marveled at God's sovereign care of us, even when we can't figure out the what or the why of things. We know that He is good to us.

Do we believe the verse where Paul tells us in Ro. 8: *28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are (the) called according to His purpose.*

That leads us back to a question we posed 2 weeks ago at the beginning of our session.

Expectations. Is your experience with Christ and the church that is His body in this world what you expect?

We'll see in just a few weeks, and even in this lesson today that it's common for people to come to Christ with a set of hopes and expectations and wants that do not align with the Kingdom of God.

We want what we want, to spend it on ourselves. He is in an eons long battle with the ruler of this world. He is bringing His kingdom and His authority to reign as opposed to Satan's. People come to Jesus looking for a better life in Satan's world, not really interested in Jesus, only interested in their own desires, and that's not what Jesus is doing.

The people of Israel were going to take Him by force and make Him be king right after He fed them. Welfare. Ease. Security. Comfort. Jesus was going to give them all that. He proved He could feed 20,000 of them more or less by simply creating food.

And then when He tells them that isn't how it's going to happen, they go away dis-illusioned, and dis-illusionment turns into hatred and murder. They came with a pre-conceived political dream of wealth and security and ease and Jesus didn't fit their expectations.

We're right on the cusp of that this morning with the event surrounding the query of the disciples of John the Baptist. *Are you the expected One?*

John sends his disciples to ask the question on everybody's mind. Are you the expected One? Because you're not doing the things we expect. You don't look anything like our pre-conceived vision of what Messiah will be like and what He will do. To Rome. And for us.

We want a political messiah that will crush Rome and put Israel on top. We want to be top dogs in the current world. But the current world is Satan's realm. Jesus came to bring in His authority to reign as opposed to Satan. And Jesus came to purchase a people who were sold under sin to Satan and death.

Jesus came to die in our place, to take our punishment, to pay the debt of non-holiness that we owe God because of our sins, and give us His righteousness. He rose from the dead and is at the right hand of God, but He will return, soon we believe, to depose Satan and judge the evil of this world.

He didn't just come to do the limited things that the people of Israel had as expectations. Their picture of Messiah was far too small, far too limited.

And as I look around evangelicalism what I see is exactly what was most prominent in Israel when Jesus was mid-way in His 3 year ministry. Crowds of people who are surrounding Jesus, and what they want is limited to the very shallow desire of a good and quiet life . . . in Satan's world.

All they want is their best life now. Ease. Comfort. Security. Prosperity. Thriving. We don't care if Satan owns it, we'll settle for those things.

Modern evangelicalism is offering this model of green manicured grass in a good neighborhood with an SUV and a pickup in the driveway and maybe a boat, and a camper. Respectable, upper middle class, conservative (or not). It's the good life now. Jesus will give you the good life now.

But we're at the point in Jesus ministry where dis-illusionment is just

starting to come to the surface. How is this going to work Jesus? We thought Messiah would be the supreme head of the existing religious establishment and that He would effectively crush the Roman occupation and restore Israel to the glory it knew under David's rule.

Clearly, Jesus isn't doing that. Jesus didn't come to give anybody a life of ease and security and calm inside Satan's kingdom. Jesus came to call people OUT of Satan's kingdom and UNDER His authority to reign and rule. He is Lord. Either way. He is Lord to all those who remain contented in Satan's kingdom. In that case He is Lord and they are rebels.

And for those who recognize Who He is and come out of Satan's authority to reign and into Jesus Lordship over them, we are united with the King of Kings in a cataclysmic battle against this current world.

But for those He owns, He supplies the Joy and the Wellness of soul, the release of the burden of sins, and we are restored to our Creator God. This world becomes our temporary home, until we see Him, face to face.

Let's approach these verses with some of those ideas in mind. Hopefully you'll see the bigger picture of what Jesus is saying as He speaks to the massive crowd surrounding Him in the immediate backdrop of answering the disciples of John.

If you missed 2 weeks ago, we took a long-ish look at how Jesus answered John's question. Are you the expected One? I encourage you to read through Jesus response in what we said two weeks ago on line if you missed that. It's fascinating.

Jesus cherry picks portions of prophecy that He is clearly fulfilling, but the very selectivity of the portions of otherwise incomplete prophecy are like a hidden message to John.

This part is happening John. But the part you wanted . . . isn't. God is working out His sovereign plan in His sovereign way, John, and the part you're wishing for isn't on the current agenda. Do Not Stumble over God's sovereign plan is the message Jesus sends back to John.

But that opens up a teaching opportunity for Jesus with the crowd who have witnessed this event.

Let me preface our teaching in Luke by visiting something Jesus said perhaps a year or more later. This is from Matthew 21;

*23 And when He had come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?" 24 And Jesus answered and said to them, "I will ask you one thing too, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 "**The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?**" And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' 26 "But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude; for they all hold John to be a prophet." 27 And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." He also said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.*

The weight of the significance of the announcement of Messiah by God's pre-runner, the messenger, the prophet John the baptist is immense. Was John the baptist the one of whom Isaiah spoke, one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord.

Was John that prophet. Did the baptism where heaven opened up and the Spirit descended and God spoke in the heavens in an audible voice that all heard, was that real?

Did John then say, Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of

the world?

God had outlined how the Messiah would be revealed clearly in the Old Testament. It happened. And Jesus is going to argue, just as He did later with the pharisee's, the witness of John, and the witness of the audible Voice of God at the baptism of John, and the witness of the Spirit of God descending on Him from the opened heavens all witness together with the Old testament prophets that this is indeed Messiah. It has to be.

And this day, immediately upon the event of John's disciples coming with the question, are you the expected One, Jesus is going to rebuild in his hearers the confidence that John is indeed God's prophet who announces the Messiah.

Yeah, but the leaders of Israel don't recognize John as that prophet. Jesus will answer that too. This is fascinating.

*24 And when the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the multitudes about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?"*

A reed shaken by the wind is a synonym for a politician. This is the jewish equivalent of a vascillating person who changes their story with the direction that the wind is blowing. A reed swaying in the direction the wind blows. Is that John?

That's what our politicians do. They change with the currents. They say one thing to one group and another thing to another group depending on what is most expedient. Two faced. Multi-faced liars.

But modern evangelicalism is doing the same thing. If I want to open a church, do a church plant in West Las Vegas, I first canvas the neighborhoods for a few miles in all directions and do surveys on the

perceived wants and needs of the respondents.

What would you like to see in a new church? How could a new church plant meet your needs? What should the music be like? How easy to listen to should the pastor be. What brand of hip is most prevalent in this neighborhood? How should he dress to put you at ease? How long of sermon would you tolerate? No sermon at all? What topics are forbidden? Where do you stand on this issue? That issue? How soft should the seats be?

OK, so then collating all the respondents if we build a church that looks exactly like the market segment we've canvased, with a hipster pastor that fits in this particular culture and music like this and mini sermonettes that never broach any hot topics, only feel good stuff, we predict we should build a building that can accomodate 3500 people in this neighborhood.

You think I'm making this stuff up? Evangelicalism is a reed swaying with the wind. Whatever direction necessary to fill up the concrete structure and pay the bills and keep a profit.

And Jesus says; *“What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?”*

Listen to a snippet from one of John's little TED talks. Mt. 3: *he said to them, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 “Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father’; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 “And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*

Definitely NOT a swaying reed. He spoke that way to people of

influence, and it ultimately got him thrown in prison . . . and beheaded.

John was a prophet, and he was fearless. And that, in spite of market survey's, was his draw. Men like that are magnetic in a world of swaying reeds. We'll buy plane tickets to go where they're at and hear men like that. Fearless conviction! Spiritual power from God on High.

That's Jesus first point about John. Why did you walk 80 miles to see and hear John? Well, it wasn't because he was a chameleon lizard that changes color to match whatever the current environment dictates. You walked 80 miles to see and hear John because he was one in a million.

25 *“But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing?”*

There is a greek word Jesus uses here that is translated as soft clothing; that is fascinating. *Malakos*. This will get me in trouble. As usual. It literally means soft and effeminate. It's the word to describe a catamite.

You say, what's a catamite. A catamite was a pre-pubescent boy who was kept for the purpose of sexual pleasure for his master. A soft, girly boy. Are you starting to get the picture? Is isn't a pretty one, precisely because it describes a pretty boy.

Jesus says, Did you walk 80 miles to see John because he's a girly boy? Sorry, that's exactly what Jesus said. Spank me if you must, but it wasn't me that said it; It was Jesus. Did you go out to see John because he was effeminate? Did you go to hear him because he sounds like all the pretty boy newscasters on KNPR?

*Behold, those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces*

If you walked 80 miles it wasn't to see a girly boy. You took a wrong turn. You should have gone to Michael Jackson's house if you wanted to

see girly boys.

In this case, Jesus says, if you wanted to see catamite boys you should take a short trip from the prison at Machaerus up stairs to the palace at Machaerus.

You say, did He really need to go there? Did I need to go there? Jesus question is rhetorical. John is polar opposite of a girly boy. He is as far from that as anyone who ever lived could be. John is about as toxically masculine as a man can be.

Toxic to our effeminate culture, but Jesus is clearly saying, you walked 80 miles to see John because he's a man who is head and shoulders above any other man. And masculinity is obviously part of that equation or Jesus wouldn't have asked this rhetorical question. Emasculating men is Satanic business. Every form of effeminism in men is satanic. It's evil. I give you Jesus question about John as exhibit A.

*26 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet.*

Again, rhetorical. Taken out of the question form and put into statement of fact, Jesus says; You didn't walk 80 miles to listen to a lying politician, and you didn't walk 80 miles to see a girly boy, you walked 80 miles to see something amazing.

Something that had not been seen in Israel in a long and painful 400+ years. A prophet. A man with a message from God who delivers it with such power it just about knocks you over like a bowling pin.

I'd walk 80 miles to see that. I'd die on the way, I'm so out of shape, but that would be worth walking 80 miles to see. A man with a direct connection with God who preaches with such power that the hair on your neck bristles. Yeah, I'd walk 80 miles to experience that. We

haven't had one of those in 400+ years.

More than a prophet. We'd walk 3 days to hear a real prophet. But Jesus says this guy, this John, surpasses even that. He is more than a prophet. In what way? How is he more of a prophet than the prophets who preceded him?

Here's why. Out of the mouth of Jesus;

27 *“This is the one about whom it is written,*

*‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE,  
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’*

All of the other prophets said, Messiah is coming. This prophet is the one who said; Messiah is here.

When your job is to stack a thousand bricks on a pallet, you're looking for one brick, right? The last one. When you're cutting and stacking 3 cords of firewood, you're looking for one piece, right? yup.

Jesus says John is more than all the other prophets because of one thing. He is THE prophet who brings in the Messiah. He announces the Messiah.

John is the final and greatest capstone on the Old Covenant. The covenant of prophets who look for Messiah, look for messiah, look for messiah until finally the one comes who says; He is here.

John is the final prophet in the old. Jesus is the beginning of the new. Hold that thought, because the next verse confuses people.

28 *“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.”*

John is the pinnacle of men. None greater. But Jesus is comparing Old

Covenant to New Covenant in this verse. That is the sense of what Jesus is saying.

John is the greatest man who ever lived in the old economy. But in the new economy that Jesus is bringing in by His death and resurrection, the least person in that new economy is greater than the greatest man who ever lived.

Consider what Jesus is saying, and let me try to explain. I'm going to use a big word and then do my best to explain what I'm saying.

Hypostatic union. What does that mean. It means when Christians are purchased by the blood of Jesus, our sins are forgiven and removed far as the east is from the west, and we are given a righteousness not our own. The very righteousness of Jesus is imputed to me.

That happens by a union. Jesus indwells me. I am in Christ. He is in me. The Holy Spirit comes into me and dwells with me. That's why Paul can say; but we have the mind of Christ in 1 Cor. 2:16

*For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.*

Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:26 *the mystery that was hidden for ages and generations but is now revealed to His saints. 27 to whom God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. Romans 8:9, the verse that I owe my salvation to; 9 *However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

Those verses and many more define what theologians have called the

hypostatic union. Jesus dwells in me, and I dwell in Him. That is true of every christian . . . or you aren't a christian.

And Jesus says to his hearers, the least person who has experienced the new covenant, the union of our quickened previously dead spirits with the Spirit of Jesus, the smallest and least person in the new covenant, the Kingdom of God, the authority to reign of God, surpasses the greatest man who ever dwelt in the old covenant.

He is not saying we won't be seeing John in heaven. He's comparing the greatest of the old to the least in the new, and the smallest most insignificant person in the new covenant surpasses the pinnacle in the old.

I think that's as far as I want to go this morning. Last time I tried to say too much and I felt like I spoke too long. And this is such a fabulous passage, there is so much rich treasure to mine out of what Jesus is saying here that I want to finish what he says about John next week.

I don't want to lose you by dragging out what the reaction to Jesus words are for too long this morning. Because the reaction to His words is very telling.

Let me finish this morning by returning to the message of both Jesus and John. They both said the same thing. And we live in an era of christianity that what John taught and what Jesus taught is so foreign to anyone's ears there is a whole school of theology that says, it doesn't mean anything.

In Matthew 3:2 says; *In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."*

And Matthew 4:17 says; *From that time on Jesus began to preach,*

*“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

I grew up in a time when the prevailing thought about what was being said, according to no less than C. I. Schofield meant nothing. Schofield and the school of belief that came from him said, Jesus came offering the kingdom, but when the jews crucified Him, God retracted the offer.

No kingdom. The kingdom will be delayed. What Jesus and John said is forfeited for now, because israel rejected her king. Israel murdered the King and God therefore set the kingdom aside and we went into 2000 years of the church age instead.

I reject that teaching. I'm not a greek scholar, but I can read. The word that is translated "kingdom" means an authority to reign. Authority to reign.

Now if Satan is the ruler of this world, and John and Jesus both came preaching, the authority to reign of heaven is at hand, does it necessarily have to be an eschatological 1000 year reign of Jesus on earth and nothing else?

OR

Does it mean that in the old economy, the old covenant, sin reigned and God was saving His elect based on what Jesus would accomplish in the future, and in the new economy, God is saving His elect based on the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

I'm saying that what Jesus and John both declared is this. The time has come for the ruler of this world to be displaced. Satan has authority to reign over this world. He is the ruler of this world in the sense that men, since the fall in the garden, have universally been enslaved by the sin that seperates them from the creator.

John and Jesus both came preaching that the authority to reign of Satan has been put on notice. There's a new sheriff in town, as they say. And one who has the authority to pluck men out of the old enslavement of sin and place them in a new blessed slavery where Jesus is their King.

Sin prevented that, although God had his elect even in the old economy. But now God has made a way for anyone who hears and believes to come out from the authority to reign of the slavery of sin in this world, and to belong to Christ. To have a new nature, to be born again, and to be a subject, to belong to the Kingdom of God.

We come out of this world and we transfer into the kingdom of God by forgiveness of sin, purchased for us by Jesus who paid the penalty, and we come out from under Satan's rule, and we enter into God's rule.

The kingdom of heaven as Matthew said, or the kingdom of God as the other authors said, those are interchangeable, is not just the 1000 year reign of Jesus on earth. That will happen. But now it is comprised of Spirit indwelt believers who dwell for now, waiting for His coming, in this world where Satan is still ruler. He just isn't ruler of us.

See how that fits. Satan may be ruler in every other house on my street, and that's a great sadness, but at 2014 Sierra Vista Dr. there are people who have come out of Satan's kingdom and who are living under the authority to reign of God.

I pray that every one of you in the hearing of my voice is also under the ownership and authority to rule of the Jesus that John announced. If you think you aren't, I'd be happy to visit with you.

That's the gospel as clearly as I can state it.