

Who Do You Say That I Am?
Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expositional
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**
130- Jesus and John the Baptist- Part 1
Blessed is He Who Does NOT Take Offense at Me

Church June 15, 2025

Matthew 11:2-6

2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples

3 and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"

4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see:

5 the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT 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.

6 And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

All over the Mississippi Gulf Coast- there is a literal "Sea" of people, who lay claim to be saved- but who never darken the door of any Church. And the most popular Reasons they give as to why they no longer see the Need to obey the Bible in **Hebrews 10:23-25** that says,

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

... is that, somewhere along the Line- they became offended at Jesus.

Now most people are far too Self-righteous to admit that Jesus could offend them. But nevertheless, they rebel against the clear Commands and Expectations and Demands of Scripture because Jesus either did NOT do what they thought He

would (or should) do; or Jesus did something that they really did NOT want Him to do. And that is simply another Way of saying that those people became offended at Jesus.

Now they are certainly NOT the *first* ones to act this Way. In **John 6:56-65**, we read:

56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me.

58 This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."

59 These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.

60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"

61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?

62 What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?

63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

64 But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."

Now what Jesus said here in this Passage is fundamental Christianity. It really is NOT that shattering of a Statement. God is absolutely Sovereign over everything – all the Time. And that does NOT simply refer to Creation. It also includes Salvation as well. And in addition to God being absolutely Sovereign over everything- all the Time- Man is totally depraved and radically ruined by the Fall of Adam in the Garden. And that “*Fallenness*” is so prevalent; so all-consuming; so total and complete and absolute- that unless and until God sovereignly draws lost Sinners to Jesus- without their Permission- NOBODY will become Convicted; NOBODY will Repent; and NOBODY will be saved. And so, two primary things:

1. God is *absolutely* Sovereign
2. Man is *radically* Ruined

... MUST be understood or else what the Bible actually teaches about Salvation will either be overlooked; by-passed; neglected; or outright ignored.

So, those two things: “*WHO God is*” and “*WHO Man is*” MUST be a *primary* and *constant* Teaching in the Church or else people will remain confused about a whole Host of Issues. Case in point were the people who actually heard Jesus speak those words from **John 6** on that day. Look what God the Holy Spirit “moved” on the Apostle John to write what the Re-action was from what Jesus said- in the very next verse:

John 6:66

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

Those people who stood there and heard the incarnate God say those words on that Day- became Offended. And instead of repenting at the Arrogance of being offended at something that God in human Flesh spoke- the Bible says they just walked off and left Jesus standing in the middle of the Road! I mean, they never even said, “*Good-bye*”!

And this is what I call, the “*Offense of Jesus*”. It is something Jesus either says or does; or something He *doesn't* say or *doesn't* do- that just grates on the soul of people. It sounds or seems to be so “out-of-place”; it appears to be so different from what is generally understood about the Lamb of God; and it is very offensive to many, many people- even though it is true.

So, Jesus says or does something; and it literally shocks their Sensibilities; it slams right into their face; it confronts them with some “secret Sin” they have been trying so hard to hide; or it startles them to the max. And they just don't think that Jesus should “say” things like that. Or they just don't think Jesus should “do” things like that. Or they just think Jesus would be more godly or more loving if only He would do or would say certain things that meet their Approval.

Now what is supposed to happen when Scripture declares something we don't like or that we would just rather skip over- is that we should repent. You see, it is just as much a Sin to *believe* something that isn't true; or to *think* in a Way that is contrary to Scripture- as it is to actually “DO” something that is wrong. Remember, God has instructed us to love Him with ALL our “MINDS” as well as all our Hearts. And so, our Thoughts; our Beliefs; and our Desires must all align with Scripture- or we are in Sin; and we are NOT glorifying God!

And that is the Purpose of Bible Study. You see, everybody on earth ALREADY HAS their own, personal Theology. We ALREADY *believe* certain things and we ALREADY *disbelieve* or *reject* other things. We take what we have read; what we sing; what we have watched; what Momma taught us; what others have taught us; and what we reason in our own Minds; and we put all that together to formulate our own personal Theology. And so, nobody comes to God as being

neutral. We have ALREADY formulated what we believe and what we DON'T believe.

And so, as we read and study the Bible- our own personal Theology comes into contact with the Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible Word of the living God. And sometimes what we already believe is confirmed. And that's great! But there are times when, what we already believe, is completely *contrary* to what God the Holy Spirit "moved" on 40 men over a 1500 year time -frame to write down in the 66 Books of the Holy Bible. And it is in those times that, once we see that what we already believe is False and is in Rebellion to the Word of God- we must then engage in four things:

1. We MUST *repent* (turn away from) for believing things that are NOT true
2. We MUST *embrace; accept; and love* what God HAS spoken about that Issue
3. We MUST then begin to find out how we may come into "*joyful and humble Obedience*" to the Authority of Scripture about that Issue
4. We MUST *defend* that Truth against all Detractors

... and we MUST do all four of these things to the Glory of God ALONE!

That's what people SHOULD do. But far too often, the Response is: they are now offended at Jesus. And normally, when people get offended at Jesus; they *withhold* their Worship- all because they are now offended at Jesus.

Now we have just finished 10 Chapters of our verse-by-verse "*Journey*" through the Gospel Record that God the Holy Spirit "moved" on the Apostle Matthew (Levi) to write. And as I have told you- Matthew had been a wicked Sinner before Jesus told him,

"Follow Me!" (Matthew 9:9)

Before then- Matthew had betrayed his own people (the Jews) and had purchased a "Tax-license" from the Roman Government which allowed him to impose *confiscatory* taxes on his fellow-Jews so he could help to finance the Roman Occupation of Israel. And he would also hire thugs and other criminals to help collect what the Jewish people owed to him- by force. So, there was nobody more despised in 1st Century Israel than a Tax-collector.

So, when Jesus sovereignly CAUSED Matthew to be born again; justified; and adopted- he had a Heart to reach the Jewish people with the Truth about Jesus through His Birth; Life; Ministry; Death; Resurrection; and Accension. And Matthew was determined to write this Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible Record- in

such a Way- that would resemble the first five Books of the Hebrew Bible- the “Torah” or the Books of Moses.

So, every single Word in this Book; even including the physical style that Matthew used to write this Book- everything he did- was to reach the Jewish people. Because Matthew wanted the Jews to see Jesus as:

- God Almighty in human Flesh
- The long-awaited Messiah
- Immanuel (God with us)
- The 2nd Moses
- The “Messenger of the New Covenant”

... and now, here in Chapter 11- Jesus is going to spend the *majority* of this entire Chapter teaching them and us- who John the Baptist was and the importance of his Ministry. And so, Jesus will teach us that John was,

... A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.' Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! (Matthew 11:9b-11)

... and

For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. (Matthew 11:13&14)

... but Jesus will begin to teach us about this amazing Prophet by *first* showing us that John was a very normal, ordinary human being, a wicked Sinner, whose Faith was wavering while he was in Prison. And while Jesus is teaching us about John- He will also be teaching us about ourselves- and how fragile our Faith really is. So, unless God sovereignly keeps us- NOBODY would remain saved; and how easy it is for all of us to become offended at Jesus. So, let's get into the Passage for today:

Matthew 11:2&3

2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples

3 and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"

Now the Context of these two verses is that this great and anointed Prophet is sitting in Jail- probably in or near to Jerusalem. If you will remember, John's Ministry began as he was sent by God the Father to baptize repentant Jews in the River Jordan. And **John 3:23** says,

John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people were coming and were being baptized—

Now the ancient area called, "*Aenon*" is modern Day "*Beit-Shean*" and is identified with a mound called, "*Shalem*"- which probably corresponds to the "*Salim*" in **John 3**. And this was called, the "*Wilderness of Judea*" which was south of Jerusalem near the Dead Sea and close to the village of "Bethany" where Lazarus and his two sisters (Martha and Mary) lived.

Now when we first see John the Baptist (or John, the one who baptizes)- we see him standing in the water of the River Jordan crying out,

"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2)

... and as I have taught you- one of the Reasons the Apostle Matthew emphasizes the "*Kingdom of Heaven*" rather than the "*Kingdom of God*" is NOT because there are two different Kingdoms. Matthew is simply drawing attention to the Fact that Jesus is NOT interested in *rebuilding* the "*Kingdom of Israel*" to its former Glory that it had under King Solomon. Jesus is interested solely in building His Church!

We have to understand that many Jews during that Time equated the phrase, the "*Kingdom of God*" with the physical Nation of Israel since Israel was the "*Promised Land*"- given to them by God. And so, Matthew is drawing attention to the Reality that the Kingdom that Jesus is building is NOT an earthly Kingdom governed by an earthly, sinful King- that was a haven for the Jews- but a heavenly and spiritual Kingdom that will be comprised of both Jews AND Gentiles. So, by using the phrase, "*Kingdom of Heaven*" Matthew was drawing attention to the Fact that the Kingdom that Jesus is building is NOT of this world.

So, John was calling people to repent because the Coming of the Messiah was near. And when the Messiah came- He would *establish* His Kingdom that would NEVER be occupied by pagans and would last forever!

And one day as John was baptizing people- he saw Jesus standing on the shore. And the Baptist said,

... Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He on behalf of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than

I, for He existed before me.' I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water. (John 1:29b-31)

... then the Apostle John quoted John the Baptist and wrote this in **John 1:32-34:**

32 John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him.

33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

34 I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

Now there is a lot going on here. Firstly, John the Baptist identified Jesus as being, the "*Lamb of God who takes away the Sins of the world!*" But *why* did he call Jesus, the "*Lamb of God*"? Why not call Him, the "*Messiah, who takes away the Sins of the world*"? Or, "*Immanuel, who takes away the Sins of the world*"? Why did John equate Jesus as being the "*Lamb of God*"?

John the Baptist understood some, if not all, of what Jesus was going to do through His Ministry and Life- as well as His Death. I'm not sure if John knew about the Resurrection- but he certainly understood that the Old Covenant- that God instituted through Moses about 1400 years earlier- was coming to a decisive End. And *part* of that First Covenant being forever replaced with the infinitely superior New Covenant was the complete *abolishment* of animal Sacrifices.

Now we don't think twice about this in our Day- because none of us have ever sacrificed a single animal. We have lived every day of our Lives underneath the superior New Covenant that was made real and in effect by the "once for all Sacrifice" of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

But we must remember that animal Sacrifices were COMMANDED by God in the Old Covenant! The devil did NOT institute animals Sacrifices- God did. So, they were NOT Optional. A believing Jew, who had been genuinely saved by Grace and through Faith¹- HAD to sacrifice animals! If he didn't- he would be sinning. So, in order to worship the one, true, and living God- under the auspices of the Old Covenant- a Jew, who had already been saved by God's amazing Grace and through the Gift of saving Faith- HAD to sacrifice many animals during his Lifetime.

Yet the Sacrifice of animals (even though required) under the Old Covenant- did NOT forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul. Jews, who lived under the Old Covenant and were truly saved, sacrificed animals in humble

¹ Everyone who has ever been truly saved- has been saved in the SAME WAY: BY God's Grace and through the Gift of saving Faith. What the New Covenant added to that Equation was now a person had to believe *specifically* in "Jesus" and not merely in "God".

Response to ALREADY being saved; and NOT to be saved. The unknown Writer said this in **Hebrews 10:4**:

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

So, it is NOT true that the Old Testament saints were saved by Works and the New Testament saints are saved by Grace and through Faith. The Bible does NOT teach that. Every single human being- Jew or Gentile- who has been truly saved- has been saved the VERY SAME WAY! The ONLY Difference in the Way that an Old Covenant saint and a New Covenant saint are saved- is that it is now a Requirement that everyone who is saved confesses out loud that Jesus is God Almighty in human Flesh and that God raised Him from the Dead! So, EVERYTHING about the New Covenant now runs through Jesus and NOT merely God!

Okay, but then why did God *command* animal Sacrifices? The Sacrifice of animals was instituted to bring about God's Mercy to the Old Covenant Jew. Now God's "Grace" is God sovereignly *giving* to us what we do NOT deserve. But God's "Mercy" is when God keeps what we DO deserve *away* from us. So, animals were slaughtered by the millions so that God's Wrath against the Sins of the people would be held back just long enough to sacrifice the next animal! And that is why they had to sacrifice animals over and over and over again! But now look at what that unknown Writer said in **Hebrews 9:13&14**:

**13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh,
14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**

And the extrapolation of the Fact that the New Covenant replaced forever the ongoing Sacrifice of animals with the "once for all" Sacrifice of the "Lamb of God" Jesus Christ- is that once those animal Sacrifices were abolished- two other things that were *required* under the Old Covenant- were *also* forever abolished:

1. The Levitical Priesthood
2. The Temple in Jerusalem

... because now we have a High Priest- Who is perfectly Sinless; and we have a Temple in Heaven- that CANNOT ever be polluted or destroyed!

So, John the Baptist called Jesus, the “*Lamb of God*” because John knew that Jesus alone would replace the continual Sacrifices of animals through His “Once for all” Sacrifice on the Cross! And the Proof that John absolutely DID understand this- lies in the indisputable Fact that:

- NEITHER John nor his Disciples; nor Jesus nor His Disciples ever sacrificed a single animal from this Moment until their Deaths
- NONE of them ever worshipped God in the Temple in Jerusalem
- NONE of them ever consulted with the Sanhedrin Court
- NONE of them ever were ministered to by a Levitical Priest a single Time!

... Why?

Because both John as well as Jesus understood that as Jesus FULFILLED the Law of Moses by His sinless Life- and as Jesus died on the Cross- those parts of the Old Covenant were being forever abolished and the superior New Covenant (that was promised by the Old) was being established! So, that’s why John called Jesus, the “*Lamb of God*”!

And we know that after this- John baptized Jesus after which the Apostle John wrote,

John 1:33

I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

The Apostle John infallibly wrote here that John the Baptist said,

... He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.'

So, the Testimony of John the Baptist is that God Almighty sent John to baptize repentant Jews. And God told John that he would *physically see with his eyes* the Spirit of God *descend* on the true Messiah. The great Difference would be that- this time- the Spirit of God would REMAIN on Jesus! You see, under the inferior Old Covenant- the Spirit of God fell on many genuine saints. But even though He fell; even though He “came down” on them- He did NOT remain! Always, under the Old Covenant, the Spirit of God would lift off them and NOT constantly dwell inside them!

The ongoing and continual dwelling of the third Person of the Trinity *inside* the genuine Believer is strictly a New Covenant Blessing. NOBODY, who lived under the Old Covenant, enjoyed that wonderful Power and Anointing on an ongoing and continual Basis. So, Jesus Himself is the very FIRST Person who was able to enjoy God the Holy Spirit coming down on Him and REMAINING! And John saw that! And THAT was the Sign that this Man really is Immanuel and the Messiah!

Now it seems that this would have settled the Issue forever. It seems as though there would NEVER be another time of Confusion or Wondering or Doubt about WHO Jesus was. And yet, we read this in **Matthew 11:2&3:**

2 Now when John, while imprisoned, heard of the works of Christ, he sent word by his disciples

3 and said to Him, "Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?"

So, at some point after John had identified Jesus as being the long-awaited Messiah and the Savior of the world- he said this in **John 3:30:**

He must increase, but I must decrease.

Now many of us use this phrase today as indicating how much we desire for Jesus to increase His Influence in our Lives and how much we desire to die to our own Desires. And that is a wonderful Desire to have. But when John the Baptist said it- 2,000 years ago- he meant that now that Jesus has been formally and officially identified- John's Ministry was over! In other words, the main Purpose for John's entire Ministry was so that he could publicly identify the Jewish Messiah! That's what God called him to do! So, by obeying God and identifying Jesus as the "Lamb of God who takes away the Sins of the world" and baptizing Him- John's Ministry was finished! And John understood that, because in **John 1:19-27**, the Apostle infallibly wrote,

19 This is the testimony of John [the Baptist], when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

20 And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

21 They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No."

22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

23 He said, "I am A VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY OF THE LORD,' as Isaiah the prophet said."

24 Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

25 They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

26 John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know.

27 It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."

... so, we can see that John the Baptist had amazing Insight into WHO Jesus was and what all was going to happen.

Now we also have to realize that after this Moment- John the Baptist encouraged his Disciples to leave him and join themselves to Jesus. So, by obeying God- John was causing his own Ministry to become obsolete and unnecessary.

Okay, but if all this is true- then WHY did John send two of his remaining Disciples to ask Jesus,

Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?

Didn't John just prove to us that he absolutely understood WHO Jesus was and what Jesus was going to do? So, what happened that he is now questioning if Jesus is the "**Expected One**" (the Messiah)?

But *why* was John so Confident and so Certain before- and yet now he is "*craw- fishing*"; *wavering*; and *doubting*? What happened to shake the Faith of the "*greatest Prophet born of Woman*" in WHO Jesus was- *especially* after he literally saw the Spirit of God come down on Jesus and remain? And the two-word Answer is: "*Bad Eschatology*".

Now we know that John was put into Prison in the first place because he would NOT compromise with the wicked pagan King concerning the Sanctity of Marriage. God the Holy Spirit "moved" on the Apostle Matthew to write this in **Matthew 14:3-12:**

3 For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip.

4 For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

5 Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet.

6 But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before them and pleased Herod,

7 so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.

8 Having been prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."

9 Although he was grieved, the king commanded it to be given because of his oaths, and because of his dinner guests.

10 He sent and had John beheaded in the prison.

11 And his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.

12 His disciples came and took away the body and buried it; and they went and reported to Jesus.

So, King Herod, who was a slithering Coward as well as a man, who killed his own Wife and Children to maintain Power, lusted after a dancing girl. And he was so caught up in his sinful Lust- he foolishly promised to give her whatever she wanted. Her Mother, who had already been rebuked by John for her planned Adultery in marrying a man, who already had a Wife, saw an Opportunity to get the man, who refused to bless her Marriage, out of the Way. So, she talked her daughter into asking Herod for the Head of the Baptist- the greatest Prophet born of Woman.

So, that's why John is in Prison. He is awaiting Execution because he echoed the Words of Jesus about Divorce and Remarriage from **Luke 16:18**:

Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.

... which is one of the Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible Statements by Jesus that is *routinely* by-passed; minimized; or outright ignored today by the people of the modern Church.

Now we need to understand that during the "400 years of Silence" that began immediately after the "Burden of Malachi" and extended until the Angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias- a period of over 4 Centuries, the Heavens were silent. For 400 years, God didn't speak to anyone; there was no Angel that appeared; No Voice; No Sign or Wonder; NO Prophet; No Seer; and No Miracle. Just deafening Silence.

And many Jews thought God had either died or had forever abandoned them. And it was during this Time that many, many ungodly and unbiblical Teachings arose and entire Offices that God had established through Moses were abandoned. For example, as you read the four New Testament Gospel Records, you will NOT see any Reference to a Levitical Priest operating in any major Way. What you see instead are four unbiblical Ministries that basically *overruled* the Levitical Priests called,

1. The Pharisees
2. The Sadducees
3. The Essenes
4. The Zealots

... of which the Pharisees were the *largest* of the four Groups by far.

Yet NONE of these religious Groups were given to the Jews by God. ALL of them were the invention of Man- during the 400 years of Silence- because the Jewish people thought it was Good to either by-pass; overrule; or completely ignore what God had given to Moses.

And to add Insult to Injury, these wicked people also created the Concept of “*Synagogues*” during this Time. And again, NOTHING is mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament concerning Synagogues. It is an entirely unbiblical Concept.

But as the Pharisees gained Influence over the Jewish people- what they primarily taught was NOT the 39 Books of the Old Testament- but their own wayward and incorrect Interpretation of those Inspired Books.

So, by the Time Jesus walked the earth- what was being taught by the Pharisees didn’t even resemble what God had given in the Old Testament. And Judaism then as well as today- is NOT a faithful Exposition of the 39 Books of the Old Testament but a completely Man-made and fabricated religion that CANNOT forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul!

So, when Jesus was in His Ministry- He NEVER violated a single tenet of what God the Holy Spirit had “moved” on those writers to pen down in the Old Testament Scriptures. What Jesus violated- and He violated them openly; publicly; and continually- was the false and sinful Rendition of those Books by the religious Hypocrites called, “Pharisees”. And that is why when you read the four Gospel Records, you can sense the abject Hatred that the Pharisees had for Jesus and why Jesus NEVER said anything Good about the Pharisees.

But before Jesus entered His Ministry- those unsaved religious bigots were in charge. And EVERYBODY was terrified to cross them; while NOBODY had the Courage to rebuke them. They were the unquestioned religious Rulers in all of 1st Century Israel. And even though the Pharisees were NOT saved; and even though they engaged in multiple Marriages; and even though they manipulated the people into thinking they were the very Power of God on earth- the Pharisees were the ones who had taught John the Baptist and ALL his Disciples as well as ALL the Disciples of Jesus!

So, John the Baptist’s understanding of WHAT the Messiah was going to do when He got here- was fashioned by what the Pharisees had taught him. And their

Primary teaching involved WHO the Messiah would be; and WHAT he would do when he got here.

The Pharisees were convinced that because of their Efforts to earn Righteousness- that the Messiah would praise them for all their Works. Yet when Jesus came- He rebuked them to their face. The Pharisees taught that the Messiah was NOT going to be a *spiritual* Leader, who would forgive their Sins and make them fit for Heaven. No, they taught that the Messiah would be a *political* and *military* Leader, who would raise up a literal Army of Jews; who would vanquish the Roman Occupiers and forcefully drive them out of Israel. Then they would receive all the Jews, who had been dispersed throughout the world, by the Assyrians; the Babylonians; the Persians; the Egyptians; the Greeks; and the Romans. The Borders of the newly established "*Kingdom of Israel*" would be extended north all the Way to the Euphrates River and south all the Way to Egypt. Then the Jews would wage war against all the Gentile nations of the world- defeat them *militarily*- and everybody would be governed by the Messiah, who would rule with a "rod of iron" from the Throne of King David in Jerusalem!

That is what the average Jew in 1st Century Israel believed; what they were working toward; and what they prayed for. And this is *exactly* what John the Baptist believed. His ONLY Difference with the Pharisees was John knew that Jesus *was* the Messiah.

So, as John sat in Prison- day after day- watching the Time of his Execution drawing closer and closer- He became more and more Confused. "*Where is Jesus? Why hasn't Jesus come to the Prison with the Army and bring me out? I mean He hasn't even visited me. What's the Delay? I believe that Jesus is the Messiah- but He certainly is NOT acting like I have been taught the Messiah was supposed to act! This is just NOT working out like I thought it would! So, what's going on?*"

So, John got very *disillusioned* at his Situation; and how NOTHING seemed to be working in the Way he had been taught it would. So, he sent two of his remaining Disciples to ask Jesus,

Are You the Expected One, or shall we look for someone else?

Now Jesus knew that John was hurting and confused- and He loved him. So, how did Jesus reply to this Question that came from the nagging Doubt in the mind of the greatest Prophet who ever lived?

4 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you hear and see:

5 the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT 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.

You see, even though Jesus knew that John was getting more and more confused as to why things were NOT working out the Way John had been taught his entire Life- He also knew that John knew and believed the Bible- which at that Time was the Old Testament Scriptures. And so, Jesus quoted here from **Isaiah 35:1-10** that says:

1 The wilderness and the desert will be glad, And the Arabah² will rejoice and blossom; Like the crocus³

2 It will blossom profusely And rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, The majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the Lord, The majesty of our God.

3 Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble.

4 Say to those with anxious heart, “Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.”

5 Then the eyes of the blind will be opened And the ears of the deaf will be unstopped.

6 Then the lame will leap like a deer, And the tongue of the mute will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness And streams in the Arabah.

7 The scorched land will become a pool And the thirsty ground springs of water; In the haunt of jackals, its resting place, Grass becomes reeds and rushes.

8 A highway will be there, a roadway, And it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, But it will be for him who walks that way, And fools will not wander on it.

9 No lion will be there, Nor will any vicious beast go up on it; These will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there,

10 And the ransomed of the Lord will return And come with joyful shouting to Zion, With everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

² The Arabah (also spelled Araba, Aravah, or Arava) is a geographic region encompassing a long, deep depression or rift valley that forms part of the border between Israel and Jordan. It extends south from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea. The term can refer to the entire valley or specifically to the southern section below the Dead Sea.

³ A crocus is a small, flowering plant in the iris family, known for its bright, cup-shaped blooms that appear in early spring or fall. They grow from corms, which are bulb-like structures, and are popular in gardens for their showy flowers. One notable species, *Crocus sativus* (saffron crocus), is cultivated for its stigmas, which are used to make the spice saffron.

... and by quoting from the Old Testament Prophet, Jesus knew that this would calm John's Fears and settle his Doubts- because the Prophet is describing here what the Messiah would do when He got here- which is EXACTLY what Jesus was doing.

But then Jesus said something to John that has governed my entire Life since the Day I first read this:

And blessed is he who does not take offense at Me

Now the Application for us today from this verse is that whatever you do- DO NOT EVER get offended at ANYTHING Jesus says or does; or that He sovereignly allows or causes! Because we are wicked Sinners and Jesus is Right! Jesus is Correct! Jesus is Pure! Jesus is Sinless! Jesus is God! So, WHATEVER Jesus says; WHATEVER He does; WHATEVER He causes; or WHATEVER He allows is also Right and Correct and Pure and Sinless and IS from God! So, take offense at me; take offense at somebody else- but please, please, please, DO NOT EVER take Offense at ANYTHING Jesus says or does!

But in the Context of what was going on- on that Day with John the Baptist- Jesus was telling John:

"I love you, John! But I'm NOT coming to get you! And you're going to die! Your Understanding about 'Last Things' is wrong. And those wicked and evil men are going to cut your head off! And even though I'm God and even though I have ALL Authority in both Heaven and Earth- I'm NOT going to stop them. It is My Will that you die a martyr's Death! And when you die- you will immediately lift up your eyes in Paradise! I have proven to you that I am the Messiah and now you know My Will. So, is that alright with you? Will you delight yourself in My Will or will my perfect Will cause you to be offended in Me?" John. DO NOT allow the Confusion you are in right now to keep you from the Blessing of trusting in Me- no matter what! Look to Me and you will Live forever!"

... and those evil people cut off the head of the greatest Prophet born of Woman. And from that Moment to right now- John has enjoyed the unspeakable Joys and Blessings of eternal Life with Jesus!

And so, dear friends, I pray that you and I may also delight in yielding ourselves to God's Will- no matter what. And that we will be "Blessed" by NEVER being offended at Jesus!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your Pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God ALONE!