

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expositional
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

132- Jesus and John the Baptist- Part 3
Wisdom is Vindicated by Her Deeds- Part 2

Church July 06, 2025

Matthew 11:7-19

7 As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

8 But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces!

9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.

10 This is the one about whom it is written, '**BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.**'

11 Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.

13 For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

14 And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.

15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

16 "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children,

17 and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.'

18 For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!'

19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;

and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

How do you describe a Prophet? How do you find the correct Label to describe a man, who is chosen by God to receive the Revelation of God and His Will, and then deliver that to God's people? How do you talk about a man, who, was, personally, an undeserving Sinner, yet when he delivered that Revelation to God's people- he NEVER said ANYTHING that was wrong? How should we think about a man, who NEEDED the Grace of God in order to go to Heaven- and yet spoke the Revelation of God- "*Infallibly*"?

In these 13 verses- Jesus is describing the "greatest" Prophet, who ever lived- John, the one who baptized. And yet, unlike many other Prophets, John NEVER wrote a Book. What John actually spoke would be hard pressed to fill a single page. Now John was NOT the only one who received and then spoke the Revelation of God and His Will to other people. Isaiah filled 66 whole Chapters of Divine Revelation; Jeremiah 52; and Ezekiel 48. And then there is lots of Divine Revelation from Hosea through Malachi. And yet, Jesus said John was greater than all of them.

But Jesus also said that John was greater than ANY other godly man, who came before him- not merely the Prophets. And that means that John was greater than Abraham and Moses and Joseph and Samuel and even King David! Yet John was NOT the "Father of Faith." And he did NOT conquer the pagan Empires or raise up Jerusalem!

But wait! Jesus actually said that John was greater than "ANYONE who was born of Woman"! And that means that John the Baptist was greater than Alexander the Great; Herod the Great; Caesar Augustus; Xerxes; and even Sennacherib! Yet John NEVER invaded another Country; nor did he fight in a single Battle! John NEVER ruled over another people; nor did he build cities and monuments to exalt his Reputation! So, how could Jesus say this about John,

... among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!

But as you struggle to figure that out- the next Question is even more amazing. Because right after Jesus said that about John, He also said,

... Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

... this Sermon Series on “Jesus and John the Baptist” seeks to answer the Question about what true “Greatness” really is. And to answer that Question requires us to get into the Ministry of John the Baptist as well as his Character.

But to get into John’s Ministry requires that we understand that Christianity is a “revealed Religion”. Everything we know about God and His Will, that is true, had to be sovereignly “revealed” to us by God Himself. NOTHING about Christianity is Man-made. EVERYTHING about Christianity came directly from God to Man. And throughout the 6,000- year History of Man’s Redemption- God has been faithful to reveal four things to us- in various Ways and in various Amounts:

1. Who God is
2. Who we are
3. How we may love and worship Him
4. How we may have the Fullness of Joy

So, while it is true that God Himself NEVER changes and is the SAME as He has always been- the Method and Manner and Amount of His Revelation to Man HAS *radically* changed over the Centuries.

God *began* the Process of revealing Himself and His Will to Man by verbally speaking it. For example, we read in **Genesis 1** that God created the Universe by “speaking” it into Existence. God the Holy Spirit took the “Word” that God the Father spoke (which was God the Son) (**John 1:1**); and created Reality from it. So, in **Genesis 1:3b**, we read,

... God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.

... but nobody heard that Voice except the three Persons of the Trinity.
Then, God made His Will known to Adam, when He said,

... Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth... Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird

of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food (Genesis 1:28b, 29b&30)

Somehow, God made it clear to Adam that he was to teach, protect, and to provide for His Wife, Eve. And then, God personally confronted Adam when he failed in this Command and judged him- along with the entire human Race (**Genesis 3:9-12; 17-19**). God then spoke directly to Eve and the serpent- bringing Judgment on both of them.

The next time the Bible records God revealing Himself to Man, *verbally*, was with Cain in **Genesis 4**- after he offered God a sinful Offering. Now even though He may have- there is no Record of God revealing Himself to anyone again until hundreds of years later when God again revealed Himself and His Will to Noah in **Genesis 6**. And then after the “Great Deluge”- in **Genesis 9**- God again revealed Himself and His Will directly to Noah and his sons.

Now it is possible that God spoke to others- but the Bible is silent about it- so we really don’t know. But in **Genesis 12**- God revealed Himself and His Will- *verbally*- to a pagan idol worshipper named, “Abram”- who God sovereignly CAUSED to become the “*Father of Faith*”.

Then in **Genesis 18**- Moses infallibly wrote that God “**appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre**”, in the form of three men, who physically walked up, sat down, ate, and conversed with Abraham. In **Genesis 20**- God appeared to Abimelech, the king of Gerar. And then **Genesis** records that over hundreds of years- God revealed Himself and His Will directly to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and, finally, to Joseph.

Now throughout all of the Times God revealed Himself and His Will in the **Book of Genesis**- we see that this Revelation was very vague and general. There was *some* level of Understanding of WHO God is and WHAT God’s Will was- but that Understanding was mysterious and cloudy and limited.

This Reality of the “*Genesis Narrative*” teaches us that the Revelation of God and His Will to Man was “*Progressive*”- in that, as Time went on- that Revelation got *less* mysterious; *less* cloudy; and *more* precise.

For example, in **Exodus 3**- we read that God appeared to Moses in a burning bush. And in that “*Direct Appearing*”- God revealed MORE about Himself and His Will to this sinful Murderer than He ever did

with anyone else up to this point.

And God *continued* to reveal Himself to Moses as God directed him to lead the Jewish people out from Egypt and into the Desert. And in **Exodus 33:11**- God said this about Moses,

Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.

... but nobody- until Moses- had that kind of Relationship with Almighty God.

But during the 40- year “*Wandering*” in the Desert- the Manner or the Way in which God revealed Himself and His Will to Man- *radically* changed. For example, in **Exodus 28:30**, in addition to God revealing Himself and His Will- *verbally*- we are introduced to another very Mysterious Way in which God “revealed Himself and His Will” to Man called, the “*Urim and Thummim*”. Now, while there is a lot of Speculation about this- not much Truth is known about it- because not much was written down for us in the Old Testament. But this was, perhaps two rocks worn by the “High Priest” in his “Breastplate” which, somehow, gave *some* indication of God’s Will concerning certain Situations. But this was very Primitive; and very vague; and, probably consisted in indicating either a “Yes” or a “No”- perhaps by illuminating a particular color.

But the most *radical* Change in the Way or the Manner in which God revealed Himself and His Will to Man occurred when God chose Moses to be the *first* Man to write down Words that were both “*Inerrant*” and “*Infallible*”- utilizing another miraculous and mysterious Process called, “*Inspiration*”. You see, until Moses- the Revelation of God and His Will was passed down from one Generation to the other by “Word of Mouth”.¹ So, Fathers taught it to their Families for hundreds of years until Moses.

Now Moses was NOT the first man on earth to write down or formerly “*codify*” a Religion. Satan used “*Nimrod*” (**Genesis 10:8&9**) many hundreds of years *before* Moses was born to be the very *first* man on earth to *formalize* a false and Man-made religion so it could be read and studied and taught to future Generations². But Moses was the *first* man

¹ Until the Production of the Scriptures, God the Holy Spirit *superintended* the “*Word of Mouth*” Process of transferring the Revelation of God and His Word to future Generations so that it was also Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible.

² The “*Babylonian Mystery Religions*” which morphed over the Centuries into various cults and false Religions including Hinduism.

to codify the one, true Religion of the one, true, and living God.

Now, contrary to what some teach today- the “*Process of Inspiration*” was NOT “*Dictation*”. And neither was it that God took control of Moses’ mind and hand and *over-powered* him to write. Moses used his *own* Logic; his *own* Wisdom; his *own* Language; his *own* manner of speech; and his *own* phrases; and SOMEHOW- and we simply don’t know *how*- but SOMEHOW- God the Holy Spirit so *superintended* the “*Production of Scripture*” that what Moses wrote down was the Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible Word of the living God! So, the *written* Revelation of God to Man- what is called, “*Scripture*”- not only contains NO Error in either part of whole (Inerrant)- but does NOT possess the Ability to be in Error (Infallible)!

So, Scripture is the “*Product*” of God the Holy Spirit. And, at this point, Scripture was becoming the “*Final Authority*”³ of both the Revelation of God Himself and His Will. And God used Moses to write down five Books (**Genesis; Exodus; Leviticus; Numbers; and Deuteronomy**). And over the next 1,400 years, God the Holy Spirit “moved” on a number of different people to write several additional Books (that eventually became 34 additional Books) to complete what is referred to as, the “*Hebrew Bible*” or the “*Canon of the Old Covenant*” or the “*Old Testament Scriptures*”. And these Books were completed and published and were in wide circulation 200 years before Jesus was born.

Now, during the Production of the Old Testament Scriptures, in addition to God the Holy Spirit “moving” on certain people to write down the Revelation of God and His Will- God also “moved” on several other men to give them bits and pieces of His Revelation who did NOT always write that Revelation down. Many times, other people wrote down what God gave those men. And in **1Samuel 9:9** those men were *first* called, “*Seers*”; and later on, they were called, “*Prophets*”.

So, the 39 Old Testament Books are divided into two main Groups:

1. The Law (the written *didactic* Revelation)
2. The Prophets (the written *predictive* Revelation)

The “*didactic Revelation*” is the *part* of the written Revelation of God

³ “*Final Authority*” means that Scripture ALONE has the Ability to “*bind the Conscience*” of the Individual (Conviction) and to determine “*Right and “Wrong*”.

and His Will concerning how people are to worship and please God. So, this part of the Revelation of God teaches people how there are to live their daily Lives- so that God alone is glorified and their Joy can be made Full. And this was given to Man by God so that we could accomplish two things,

1. Love the Lord our God with ALL our Hearts; ALL our Souls; ALL our Minds; and ALL our Strength
2. Love our Neighbors as ourselves

... and while the *First* or the *Old* Covenant was in force- the Worship of the one, true, and living God- in accord with the written, didactic Revelation of God and His Will- consisted of things like:

- Dietary Restrictions
- Physical Circumcision of Men
- Commandments; Ordinances; Statutes
- Keeping Feast Days
- Various Offerings
- The Sacrifice of animals
- The Levitical Priesthood
- The Sanhedrin Court
- The Temple in Jerusalem
- Keeping Sabbath
- Paying Tithes

... and, in order for anyone to please God and worship Him- people were REQUIRED to engage in these things. So, the written didactic Revelation of God defined what “*Obedience*” to God looked like and what it took for people to be “*Holy*”.

The written “*predictive Revelation*” of God and His Will consisted of those men uttering Inspired and Infallible Predictions of future Events and how and why they *coincided* with the written “didactic Revelation”.

Now there are a few Principles concerning the Revelation of God and His Will that is contained in the written Record of the 39 Books of the Old Testament that we *always* need to keep in mind:

- EVERYTHING in the Old Testament is about Jesus

- MUCH of the Old Testament are Symbols; Types; and Shadows that pertain to the Reality of Jesus in the New Testament and are no longer in force
- The Law (the written *didactic* Revelation) has been totally *fulfilled* by the written, didactic Revelation of the 21 New Testament Epistles
- The Prophets (the written *predictive* Revelation) MUST be interpreted by the Revelation of the New Testament

So, EVERYTHING in the Old Testament is true, Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible. But the part of the Old Testament called, the “Law” (the written didactic Revelation) is also INCOMPLETE. And the part of the Old Testament called, the “Prophets” CANNOT be Understood correctly or fully unless seen in the Light of the Revelation of God and His Will contained in the 27 Books of the New Testament.

Now the Reason this is important to grasp is because this explains *why* the Office and Ministry of the “Prophet” is no longer in Existence. God used men- while the *inferior* Revelation of the Old Covenant was in force. But once the infinitely *superior* Revelation of the New Covenant came into place- the NEED for human Prophets *ceased to exist*! And this is *why* the writer infallibly said this in **Hebrews 1:1&2:**

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

Here the writer was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to teach that under the Old Covenant- God spoke to Mankind...

... IN (through/by) **the Prophets...**

... and God spoke through the Prophets...

“... **in many portions** [Amounts] **and in many ways** [Methods]

... but now that Jesus has come and lived and died and has risen again...

in these last days [since the Resurrection- God] **has spoken to us in His Son**

And so, NOW- the one, single WAY or METHOD God speaks to ALL of Mankind- IN Jesus- is, primarily, through the written didactic Revelation of God and His Will contained in the 21 New Testament Epistles.

Before Jesus came and lived and died and rose again- Mankind NEEDED the Symbols, Types, and Signs in the Old Testament. Before Jesus- Mankind NEEDED the Ministry of the Prophet. And before Jesus, Mankind NEEDED the written didactic Revelation of God in the Old Testament Law. But AFTER Jesus came and lived a sinless Life; died a vicarious Death; and physically rose from the Dead three Days later- we have NO Need for Symbols; NO Need for the written didactic Revelation of God in the Law; and NO Need for Prophets.

Why would *anyone* in their right mind seek to hear from a Prophet (who is himself a flawed Sinner) when they can hear directly from the sinless Son of God IN, BY, and THROUGH the Inspired; Inerrant; and Infallible Scriptures? Why would *anyone* in their right mind seek to maintain Allegiance to the inferior Revelation of God in the Old Covenant Law- which was, at best- Signs, Symbols, and Types- when they can embrace the infinitely superior Revelation of God in the Reality of Jesus in the New?

The fact that Prophets were active during the Production of the 39 Books of the Old Testament proves that while that Revelation was absolutely from God- a much BETTER Revelation was coming (the New Testament) that would facilitate the End of the Ministry of the Prophet.

Now what adds some Confusion to all of this is the Fact that the End of the Old Covenant and the Entrance of the New was NOT neat and tidy. There was NO bell that sounded to say, “*Now the Old Covenant Law is fulfilled by Jesus in the New!*” So, there was “*Overlap*”. Some Portions of the New Covenant began to operate BEFORE the Old Covenant was fully ended. And some functions of the Old Covenant continued even AFTER Jesus rose from the Dead.

For Example, while John the Baptist was one of the last of the Prophets, who operated while the Old Covenant was still in force⁴- another Prophet, named “*Agabus*” was still operating in that same

⁴ John probably never heard Jesus preach or perform a Miracle. And John was martyred BEFORE Jesus’ Death and Resurrection. So, even though John identified Jesus as being the “**Lamb of God who takes away the Sins of the World**” (John 1:29), his entire Ministry was conducted under the auspices of the Old Covenant. Yet because John understood, at least to some extent, that Jesus was going to fulfill the Old Covenant- there is NO Record of John ever sacrificing an animal; worshipping in the Temple in Jerusalem; or keeping the Sabbath in accord with the Teaching of the Pharisees- things that would have qualified as being Sin under the Old Covenant.

capacity- many years AFTER Jesus rose from the Dead (**The Acts 11:28; 21:10**).

So, in what Way was John the Baptist “**greater**” than any other human being born of Woman? The clear Answer is that John was the **ONLY** human being, who was called; chosen; and empowered by God to identify Jesus as being the “**Lamb of God who takes away the Sins of the world**” (**John 1:29**). Nobody else did that. And that Identification was the “*Line of Demarcation*” which separated the Old from the New Covenants.

So, even as the Coming of Jesus in His 1st Advent brought about the Fulfillment of the Old Covenant Law- that same Coming also brought about the Fulfillment of John’s Ministry as well. The Highlight of the Baptist’s Ministry was when he was compelled by God the Holy Spirit to identify the very “*Fullness of the Glory of God*”- which is Who Jesus is.

But what was it that allowed for John to make that Identification? It was NOT some Miracle that Jesus performed. It was NOT a Sermon that Jesus preached. It was NOT that Jesus cast out demons; raised the Dead; healed sick bodies; or even that He confronted and condemned the hypocritical Pharisees.

No, the one single thing that caused John to KNOW that Jesus was the Fulfillment of hundreds of Old Testament Prophecies and that allowed him to cry out Who Jesus is was what the Apostle John wrote about in **John 1:29-34**:

29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

30 "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.'

31 I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."

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."

John knew that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah; the Son of God; “**Immanuel**” (**Isaiah 7:14**); the “**Messenger of the [new] Covenant**”

(**Malachi 3:1**); and the “blazing Center” of the Glory of God because, with his own natural eyes- John the Baptist saw something that had NEVER happened to ANYONE before:

John testified saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 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.' (John 1:32&33)

So, God the Father told John the Baptist that when he saw the true Messiah- he would see (with his natural eyes) God the Holy Spirit *descend* on Him. But unlike what would happen under the Old Covenant- when the Messiah appeared- John would see the Spirit REMAIN on Him!

You see, under the Old Covenant- God the Holy Spirit would fall on individuals to empower and anoint them to carry out God's Will. But the Spirit NEVER remained on anyone. He fell- but then He lifted. He came- but then He went. Abraham; Noah; Moses; David; Isaiah and the rest NEVER had the Spirit to dwell continually *inside* of them- not even for a single Day. That internal and continuous Dwelling of the 3rd Person of the Trinity inside ever genuine believer- is strictly a New Covenant Blessing! And it started with Jesus as He came to John to be baptized! Yet, at the Time John the Baptist saw the Spirit remain on Jesus- John himself had NOT personally experienced it himself- and may NEVER have experienced it!

And that is one of the most important Distinctions between what David and the other Old Testament heroes had and what we have today. And that began with Jesus and his Time with John the Baptist.

So, the Reality that ALL genuine Believers are now the “**Temple of the living God**” (**2Corinthians 6:16**) illustrates how having one physical Temple in one physical City (Jerusalem) is so vastly *inferior* to each Believer actually “being” that Temple. And that is why Jesus NEVER spoke about rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. Jesus spoke about tearing the Temple down (**Matthew 24:2**)! Because the ONLY thing Jesus is interested in building is His world-wide Church- by adding one soul at a time into what the Apostle called, a “**Holy Temple**”. Please read **Ephesians 2:19-22**:

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,
20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,
21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,
22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

Now this explains why Jesus said that John the Baptist was the “greatest man born of woman” because he was the one chosen to identify Jesus as being the **“Lamb of God who takes away the Sins of the world”**. But this also explains why Jesus said,

... Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

... because EVERY genuine Believer now has the 3rd Person of the Trinity dwelling inside of him- *continually*!

And so, in Jesus- the one single Place in all the Universe where the Holy Spirit now dwells continually is NOT in Jerusalem- but in the Heart of ALL genuine Believers!

Now if you can receive what I have just taught- the rest of this Passage in **Matthew 11** will very quickly fall into place and make sense. But if you can't- then it won't. So, look again at **Matthew 11:7-11**:

7 As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

8 But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces!

9 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and one who is more than a prophet.

10 This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'

11 Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist! Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Now in the 1st Century, the unsaved and ungodly Pharisees had united with the pagan Romans to rule over the Jewish people. So, while the Romans controlled the Government of Israel- the Pharisees controlled the *religious* Life of the average Jew.

Now, of course there always was; there is today; and there will always be a “Remnant” of faithful Believers- who are truly saved; who genuinely love Jesus. And, in the case of those who lived under the Old Covenant- they were faithful to what God had revealed in the Old Covenant. But as the four Evangelists wrote in their Gospel Records- in EVERY case- those who were part of that faithful Remnant- ALWAYS came to Jesus in Faith and they NEVER rebelled or fought against Him.

And Example of this is found with “Simeon”- who met Mary and Joseph in the Temple in Jerusalem as they were about to circumcise the baby Jesus. Simeon SOMEHOW knew that this eight-day old baby was the Messiah as well as the Fulfillment of the “written predictive Revelation” from the Prophets that was in the Old Testament.

And so, without ever hearing a single Sermon by Jesus; without watching Jesus perform a single Miracle; based on NOTHING but what God the Holy Spirit had burned on his soul from him reading the scrolls of the Old Testament Scriptures- Dr. Luke infallibly recorded that in **Luke 2:29-32**- this old man grabbed the baby Jesus out of Mary’s arms; lifted Him up into the air; and cried out,

**Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace,
According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation, Which You
have prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION
TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel.**

So, what did Simeon know about Jesus? That Jesus was:

- God’s Salvation
- A Light of Revelation to the Gentiles
- The Glory of Israel

... which NONE of the Pharisees and very few of the Jews of the 1st Century knew. And Dr. Luke put this Event (and others like it) into his Gospel Record to show us that THIS is how the “chosen Remnant”

responded to Jesus- even BEFORE He was crucified and raised from the Dead!

Now, according to Alfred Edersheim and his Research into 1st Century Israel⁵- the Pharisees had entered into an ungodly Alliance with the Romans. And because they were more than willing to betray their fellow-Jews to the Roman Authorities- they were always invited to Events and Dinners that were put on by the pagan Authorities that ruled over 1st Century Israel. And to identify who was in league with Rome- those Leaders who had entered into this ungodly Alliance- were given special clothing to wear at those Events. And at that time- that clothing was very expensive.

But the Romans were actually *insulting* the Pharisees by giving them this special clothing- because it was frilly and very effeminate. So, by making the Pharisees wear this silly costume- the Roman Authorities were showing their disdain and disgust with those men.

And so, even though the Pharisees SHOULD have been humiliated and convicted at being catered to by the pagans and even though they SHOULD have repented- instead they were actually complimented at the Attention the Gentile Authorities were giving them. And so, they wore that special feminine clothing with Pride.

But the average Jew saw this as a total “sell-out”. And they mocked the obvious Hypocrisy of those religious Frauds. And they referred to their special clothing as “*soft raiment*”. And they referred to the Pharisees themselves as “*pillow-Prophets*” because as they lounged at the Table- at those Dinners- they were given very nice, frilly pillows on which to rest their soft elbows.

And that is what Jesus was talking about as He drew an obvious Distinctions between those religious bigots, who were acting as women and a real Man and a real Prophet, John the Baptist. And so, Jesus said,

... What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who wear soft clothing are in kings' palaces!

So, here, Jesus was contrasting the Manliness and godly Boldness of John the Baptist with the soft, effeminate, and sinful Compromise of

⁵ Alfred Edersheim; *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah; The Temple; and Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*

the Pharisees. So, John was demonstrating true “Greatness”. And it was much different from what the world sees as “Greatness”.

John didn’t care about the things the World raises high. He cared about God; his own Character; and his Calling. And so, while the sinful and fallen world would have thought little or nothing about John- Jesus said he was the “Greatest man born of woman!” And Lord willing, we will look more deeply into this, next week.

Amen. Let’s pray.

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