

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expositional Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew** 9- The Ministry of the Baptist- Part 4

Church April 24, 2022

Matthew 3:7-

1 Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying,

2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

3 For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"

4 Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey.

5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan;

6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

8 "Therefore bear 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 from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan coming to John, to be baptized by him.

14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You,

and do You come to me?"

15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.

16 After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him,

17 and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

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

Now last time I told you that in the “*sister Passage*” to this one here in Matthew that is over in **Luke 1:15**, we find that the angel Gabriel told Zacharias this about his promised son, who would become John the Baptist:

... he will be great in the sight of the Lord...

... and we were investigating just what made John to be “great”.

Now I want to remind you that the angel did NOT say that John would simply be “great”- but that he would be “great” in the sight of the Lord. So, while God saw John as being “great”- Man did not.

Now we first examined certain Characteristics about John and his Ministry that were unusual- like his dress; and the way he lived his life; and what he ate. You see, John wore a garment of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey; and he lived out in the wilderness.

Now I don’t believe that we should get from that- that living in houses is bad; or that eating a balanced diet is bad; or that having more than one garment is sinful. It isn’t. But John was the very *epitome* of genuine “Holiness” which is being separated from Sin and Worldliness so he could be used by God. And O how John was used by God!

So, if being weird and eating weird and living weird made you great- then yes, John was great. Yet when discussing John and his “greatness”- Jesus never mentioned any of this. Not one word. So, we are forced to look further. And so, we come to his Message.

Now what is interesting is that John basically had only one Sermon:
Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand

... and he preached this single Sermon often and he preached it loudly.

You see, John was utterly fearless in commanding *everyone* to turn from Sin and prepare themselves for the Kingdom of God. And that tells us at least four things:

1. Preaching the Gospel includes preaching against Sin
2. Sin causes us to be *unprepared* for the Kingdom
3. The Kingdom of God came to the earth 2,000 years ago
4. John taught that the Reign of the Levitical Priests and the other Leaders of the Jews was coming to an end

So, let's look at these three things quickly:

1. Preaching the Gospel includes preaching against Sin

The Old Testament Prophet said this in **Isaiah 59:2b**:

... your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

... and that means that God is distant from us because there is a barrier between us and God called, "Sin". And that means that Sin is the single greatest Problem that human beings have. And nothing else comes close. And so, if the Christian Church overlooks or ignores the most important Problem that people have- then how are we helping anyone? So, if we love God and if we love people- the Church **MUST** deal with Sin.

But it also means that God **MUST** come to us *first*. Why? Because we **CANNOT** go to God. Isaiah also said that, because of our Sins, God does not hear us. So, if anyone is going to be saved- God **MUST** *initiate* their Salvation.

So, John called people to Repentance. Jesus called people to Repentance. And the Apostles called people to Repentance. And that should be our pattern and our philosophy of Ministry as well. And if you think about it- that only makes sense. Because if the Gospel is the "*Good News*" that Jesus lived and died and rose again to save His people from their Sins- by what He alone does for them- then that *presupposes* that there must be some really "*Bad News*" out there. And it is the "*Bad*" of the "*Bad News*" that makes the "*Good*" of the "*Good News*" to be very "*Good*" indeed.

And part of the "*Bad News*" is that those who *refuse* to turn from their Sins and trust in Jesus- will spend all of Eternity in a lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone in horrific Agony. And that Agony is so horrific that human language fails in being able to describe it.

But the other part of the “*Bad News*” is that people are ALREADY heading into Hell right now. Every single Lost person is sliding down into Hell right now- by virtue of the fact that you were conceived in your Mother’s womb as a God-hating sinner- who loves the Darkness rather than the Light. In fact, as a lost sinner- they love ANYTHING other than Jesus; and they find Joy and Pleasure in ANYTHING besides Him.

So, you DON’T have to be a mass murderer or a pedophile to spend Eternity in Hell. All you have to do to enter into Hell forever- is to *continue* to do what is right in your own eyes; and *continue* to live your life by the dictates of your own heart; and *continue* to think that you are a “Good” person; and *continue* to “set your Affections”¹ on other things besides Jesus. Do that- and you are *guaranteed* to bust Hell wide open! Now why is that? Because Salvation *requires* you to confess and genuinely believe that you are Lost; and a Sinner, who deserves Hell. But the Self-righteousness and inherent Arrogance of the Lost person simply won’t allow him to do that. And so, he *remains* Lost and headed for certain Damnation.

Now the biblical Ratio for this is about 5 to 1. For every minute that you tell others about the “*Good News*” of Jesus loving them and being willing to forgive and save ALL who call on His Name- you should spend 5 minutes telling them the “*Bad News*” about their Lost Condition; and how God is white hot in His Anger against ALL Sin and ALL unrepentant sinners- who *deserve* to perish forever in those flames. And until you preach like that- you really haven’t preached the biblical Gospel at all.

But another, almost forgotten, part of the Gospel that MUST be preached and taught- is that those who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth- will love Jesus. And it is this “*Gift of Love for God*” (1John 4:19) that God graciously gives to every believer in the New Birth- that *produces* godly fruit; and *compels* them to follow after Jesus; and *empowers* them to walk with Him; and to strive to obey what He said. And that means that EVERYTHING done in the Church- that is done to the Glory of God- is carried out in Love.

And this is the great dividing Line- because Lost people CANNOT love God. At all. No Lost person has any love for God or for Jesus- at all. And they Do NOT love God- because they DON’T want to. So, loving God- loving Jesus to the degree that He becomes the Treasure of the Universe to you- is part and parcel of what it means to be forgiven and made Righteous and born again and justified. And that Love will ALWAYS change the way you live your life. And it will ALWAYS change the Affections of your heart- so that you now love the “*Things of the Spirit of God*”² (1Corinthians2:14). And it is this Gift of Love that *empowers* you to also love all those who love the Christ (1John 5:2).

¹ “*Setting our Affections*” on something is to purposefully and continually yield yourself to love something.

² The “*Things of the Spirit of God*” include Prayer; Bible Study; Godly Fellowship; Service; Fasting; Giving; and Obedience

God has set Salvation up in such a way that nobody is saved- until they *hear* the Gospel; *believe* the Gospel; repent and trust in Jesus. So, preaching the Gospel is *paramount* for anyone to be saved.

But there have been literally tens of millions of faithful men of God, who have heralded that glorious and complete Gospel since the Days of John the Baptist- so this is NOT what made John to be “great” in God’s Sight.

2. Sin causes us to be unprepared for the Kingdom

The Apostle Matthew wrote this in verse 3 about John:

For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet when he said, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"

.. and that tells us that Repenting of Sin IS what “*making ready the Way of the Lord and making His Paths straight*” looks like. So, continuing on in unrepentant Sin is NOT making the “Way of the Lord” “*Ready*” and it is NOT making the “Paths of the Lord”- “*Straight*.”

So, there is a “*Readiness*” about the “Way of the Lord” that can only become Reality through genuine and ongoing Repentance. And there is a “*Straightness*” about the “Paths of the Lord” that can only become a Reality through this continual turning away from Sin.

Now I would suggest to you that the “*Way of the Lord*” and the “*Paths of the Lord*” are the SAME thing. These two phrases have to do with the Way believers live their normal daily lives. 1,000 years before John was born- King David wrote this in **Psalms 23:3**:

He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.

... which tells us that there is a “Path” of Righteousness- that *already* exists; that God created; that God expects us to find; and walk on; and cherish. And we are to walk on that righteous Path for the “Sake” of the “Name” of God; or in other words- FOR GOD’S Glory! And David said by walking on that Path- our soul is restored!

So, when we put all this together- we see that those who are Lost; which are those who are NOT walking on this Path of Righteousness- those who are NOT making the Way of the Lord “*Ready*” and those who are NOT making the “Paths of the Lord *Straight*”- are NOT prepared to meet God.

Yet these people will meet Face to face with a God, Who has been horrible insulted by their Sin; and a God, Whose fierce Wrath is white hot against them!

But those who have repented and who have trusted in Jesus and in His finished Work are walking on this Path of Righteousness; they are making the Way of the Lord Ready; they are making the Paths of the Lord Straight; and they are prepared to meet God.

And these people will meet Face to face with a God of Mercy and Grace; Who has forgiven all of their Sins; and who has imputed perfect Righteousness to them; and a God Whose deep and abiding Love awaits them!

In other words, the things we make a conscious effort to do; and the things that we make a conscious Effort NOT to do- precisely because we have already experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; and we are ongoingly reading and studying the Bible; and we desire to please God with the way we live our lives; and we expect to stand before God at any moment and give an account of why we did and did not do all things.

And that means that it matters to God how we live our daily lives. So, doing what is right in our own eyes is NOT making the Way of the Ready and it is NOT making the Paths of the Lord Straight. There MUST be a conscious effort to struggle against the lusts of our flesh (by the Power of the Holy Spirit) to be joyfully submissive to the Authority of Scripture (in our daily lives) all to the Glory of God- or we will be caught sleeping when the Lord returns.

But once again, there have been so many, who have preached the Truth about Sin and who have NOT compromised. So, this is NOT what made John to be “great” in God’s eyes.

3. The Kingdom of God came to this earth 2,000 years ago

John was preaching that everyone MUST repent. Why?

... for [because] the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

... so, John believed and taught that the Kingdom of God was soon to appear- 2,000 years ago!

Now there are many today, who are waiting for Jesus to come back- so He can set up His Kingdom on the earth. And they teach that there has to be Tribulations and Raptures and all sorts of other things BEFORE Jesus can set up His Kingdom that will last 1,000 years.

But the Bible says that Jesus established His Kingdom on this earth when He was here in His earthly Ministry- 2,000 years ago. And the following Scriptures are just a small sampling of proof of this:

Luke 11:19&20

19 "And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges.

20 "But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 10:7

And as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Matthew 11:12-13

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.

Matthew 16:18-19

18 ... upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."

Mark 1:15

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.

The Acts 28:30-31

30 ... And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him,

31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

So, if we are going to be honest- we must say that John the Baptist and Jesus and the Apostles all preached that the Kingdom of God was soon to appear. They ALL believed that.

And that tells us that, at least in *some* sense- the Kingdom of God has already come. So, when would that have been? It came when Jesus walked right into satan's kingdom and *forcefully* and *violently* took the keys from him and restored the Kingdom to God in His first Advent.

And this is *why* some teach that Jesus is ruling and reigning in His Kingdom right now- in Heaven. And He is waiting until all the enemies of God have been made a footstool for His Feet by the Church before He comes back in Victory and Triumph. And I think there is merit to that Belief.

But however things will work out- we have to admit that when Jesus is here- the Kingdom is here with Him. So, at least to *some* degree- the Kingdom of God was established on this earth 2,000 years ago.

4. John taught that the Reign of the Levitical Priests and the other Leaders of the Jews was coming to an end

John preached that everybody should repent. But when he saw the religious leaders of that day come out to him- he had a *special* Message for them that he did NOT preach to the others:

7 ..."You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 "Therefore bear 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 from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham.

10 "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

12 "His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Now however you want to slice this or dice it- this is a Damnation that John is preaching to these religious Leaders. And we need to ask why John was so hard on them- when every single person who came to him for Baptism was also a sinner.

Now it is fairly easy to see that there was great Wickedness in these men. And we can stop there and say that John, and later on, Jesus was simply rebuking

them for their abject Hypocrisy. And that is fine- because they were the very epitome of Hypocrisy.

But that completely ignores the Reality that John the Baptist is on the front end of a climatic Transformation- that the world had never seen before. John the Baptist's Ministry is the beginning of the fulfillment of the "*Great Shaking*" that the Prophet Haggai foretold (**Haggai 2:6-9**)- when God is not only going to shake the earth but also Heaven.

The Truth is that almost all of the High Priests and Levites and Pharisees and Sadducees and Essenes and the Zealots were wrong about what was happening. They were wrong about what they believed and they were wrong about how they were going to accomplish what they believed. And except for the few people mentioned in Luke's Gospel Record- all of these supposed Old Testament scholars were banking on the Old Covenant lasting forever. So, when these men called people to repent- they meant for people to drop their worldliness and pagan philosophies that they had picked up from the other nations of the world; and they should return to the Law of Moses and the tenets of the Old Covenant.

But John was not doing that at all. He is telling these religious leaders that their time to rule over the people was coming to an end- precisely because an infinitely better Covenant was coming. And that is why John said to them several pointed things,

- There is a Wrath coming to you leaders and to unbelieving Israel that will be unlike anything else they have heard about
- The ax is laid to their roots- so that their Ministries will all soon be abolished
- "*Children of Abraham*" are NOT those who are related by blood. They are those who repent and believe in Jesus
- Jesus is coming and will bring an end to everything you have loved and been a part of
- If you don't repent and believe- you will be burned with unquenchable Fire- even though you are the natural sons of Abraham.

These religious bigots did NOT see or realize that it was in their lifetime- in the days of John the Baptist- that God was going to transform the entire world; and He was going to usher in the glorious New Covenant that the Old Covenant predicted and that would forever bring to an end the Old one.

And as God brought about this amazing Transformation- EVERYTHING these men loved and were apart of- would radically change as the Old Covenant gave way to the New.

But there are scores of people, who have consistently maintained what John believed about the *timing* of the Kingdom of God- all through the Centuries. So, this is NOT what made John to be great in God's Sight.

Okay, if it wasn't what John preached; and if it wasn't what John believed that made him to be "great" in God's Sight- then what was it that fulfilled what the angel said to Zacharias about John the Baptist in **Luke 1:15,**

... he will be great in the sight of the Lord

In finding out- we also need to keep in mind what Jesus said about John in **Matthew 11:11a:**

Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!...

Here Jesus said that no one who had ever lived was greater than John the Baptist. So, does that include Noah; Abraham; Moses; David; Isaiah; and Daniel? Yes, it does. They were all "great" in God's Eyes. But they were NOT greater than John. So, how should we understand this? Because to add further to this Mystery, we need to also remember what Jesus said next. Immediately after He says that there had risen no one that was greater than John- God incarnate also said this in **Matthew 11:11b:**

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

So, how could this be? What are we to think about all of this? Well, to find out- we need to discover just what John did *besides* teach, preach, and baptize. But what could be greater than heralding the Truth about the Gospel and the Kingdom of God? And the key is for us to find out what John did- that nobody else before or since has done. And to find out, let's look at what the Apostle John wrote in **John 1:29-36:**

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."

35 Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples,

36 and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"

Now here in this Passage, I want you to notice several things that John did- that nobody else before or after him has done. And we should also find out things that John the Baptist said- that he was the very *first* one to say:

- God the Father *personally* sent John to baptize and told him what would happen and what to say (verse 33)
- John publicly proclaims Jesus as, **“the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”** (verse 29)
- John saw God the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus and remain (verse 33)
- John called Jesus, **“the Son of God”** (verse 34)
- John baptizes Jesus (**Matthew 3:15**)

Now we have no biblical Record of this- other than what John himself says here. But evidently, God the Father *personally* chose John to baptize repentant sinners. And in the process of sending him- God told John some very specific things:

- When he sees (with his natural eyes) God the Holy Spirit descending on an individual in a certain way (the way a dove descends) and remaining on that person- then John is to know himself that this person is the *“Son of God”* and *“the Lamb of God, Who takes away the Sins of the world.”*
- John is to publicly identify and announce this person as both *“the Son of God”* and *“the Lamb of God, Who takes away the Sins of the world”*
- John is to worship this person
- John’s Ministry will be finished and his disciples must then leave him and become this person’s disciples

Now the word that was translated here in verse 33 as **“see”** comes from a Greek word (*eidoo*; Strong’s #1492) that literally means: *looking at something with the natural eye*. So, this is NOT a *spiritual* “seeing” (like a dream or a vision) or a

figurative “seeing” (like John “*saw*” this in his mind). This is John *actually* and *literally* seeing God the Holy Spirit- with his natural eyes- descend on Jesus. And God told John that the Holy Spirit will descend on this person IN THE SAME WAY as a dove descends to the earth after flying.

So, John did NOT see a dove. The Holy Spirit did NOT take on the form of a dove. That isn’t what that phrase means. This phrase, in the original Greek, means that John literally saw the third Person of the Trinity descend on Jesus- *in the same way* a dove descends to the ground.

Now John says that God told him these things. So, John’s Authority was NOT the Old Testament Scriptures. And neither was it that he thought all of this would be a great idea. No, John’s Authority to baptize; and see these things; and to say these things- came directly to him from God the Father.

Now what was the one single Sign that John saw- that enabled him to know that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah? It was NOT Jesus’ sinless Life; nor His Miracles. It also was NOT Jesus’ Crucifixion nor His Resurrection. It also was NOT Jesus’ fulfillment of Old Testament Scriptures. The one Sign that enabled John to know that Jesus was the Son of God and the Lamb of God, Who takes away the Sins of the world- was the Relationship that Jesus had with God the Holy Spirit. God had told John:

... He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.

Now keep in mind that, under the Old Covenant- the Holy Spirit came to people- just like He does now. But unlike now- He didn’t stay with them. The Spirit fell on them- but then He lifted right back off them. He came- yes. Because if God the Spirit had not come- nobody would have been saved. But then He also went right back up into Heaven. So, the Holy Spirit didn’t remain on anyone. Under the reign of the Old Covenant- God the Spirit came to Man- but He NEVER remained. Not a single person who lived under the auspices of the First or the Old Covenant knew what it was like to have the Holy Spirit remain in them.

And this is *primarily* what makes the New Covenant to be infinitely *superior* to the Old. So, it is the Ministry of God the Holy Spirit to Man that was dramatically *enlarged* in the New Covenant- as opposed to the Old.

So, the *primary* Sign that God gave to John- so that he could identify the Messiah was the “remaining” aspect of God the Holy Spirit. So, as John baptized Jesus- He “came up out of the water” (indicating that Jesus was baptized by full emersion)- and at that moment, John saw the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus in the same way that a dove descends to the ground. And so, John then watched with

eager anticipation- to see if God the Spirit would *remain* or lift off Him. And when John saw that the Spirit *remained* in Jesus- He knew. And so, He proclaimed:

Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

So, John was the very *first* person in the History of Man that was given the Honor and Privilege of *identifying* Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. Nobody else was given that Ministry except John. So, it was John- alone- who identified just Who the Messiah was- to the whole world!

Now literally hundreds of millions of people all through the 2,000-year history of the Church have agreed with John; and they too have called Jesus, the “*Lamb of God, Who takes away the Sins of the world.*” Today, the world-wide Church of Jesus sings and teaches and preaches and testifies to the entire world in nearly every language on earth- that Jesus alone is, the “*Lamb of God, Who takes away the Sins of the world.*” But John was the *first*. And no one except John was given this Honor. God had told John what to look for- and John saw those Signs with his own natural eyes and then he could easily say,

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

... and this is *part* of what made John the Baptist to be the greatest Man born of Woman.

But there is another Aspect of what made John to be the greatest Man born of Woman that is very often overlooked. And like every other aspect- NOBODY before or after John has had the privilege to do. And that is that by identifying Jesus as the Messiah- John was also saying that the Old Covenant had run its course and would soon be replaced by another Covenant that was superior to the Old in every way.

So, two very important things happened when John saw that God the Holy Spirit remained on Jesus:

1. The Sign of the Messiah was fulfilled; and John could publicly identify Jesus as the Messiah
2. The Old Covenant began to diminish; and the New Covenant began to come into its fullness

So, it is *incomplete* to talk about the first Coming of Jesus and not also talk about the bringing in of the New Covenant. And when talking about the advent of the New Covenant- we must also talk about the fact that the New Covenant completely *replaced* the Old. And when the New Covenant replaced the Old-

everything changed! What was mere Shadow and Type under the Old Covenant- became Reality in the New! And what was Earthly and Visible within the Old Covenant- became Heavenly and Invisible in the New!

The Old Covenant was a “*Come and See*” Covenant- where the entire world had to travel to Jerusalem to see the Glory of God in the Temple. But the New Covenant is a “*Go and Tell*” Covenant where the Glory of God is seen in the Face of Jesus Christ- as the Gospel is preached to every creature!

The Old Covenant was a “*You do this and I’ll do that*” Covenant- where we had to do certain things so that God would do other things. But the New Covenant is a “*I will do this and I will also do that*” Covenant- where God does all His part and He does all my part too!

And the three things that identified the Old Covenant the best also became obsolete:

1. The Sabbath
2. The Temple in Jerusalem
3. The ethnic Nature of the Old Covenant (Israel/Jews)

These three Aspects represented the very “Heart and Soul” of the Old Covenant. But the three Aspects that are the “Heart and Soul” of the New Covenant and that represent it the best are:

1. Grace
2. Faith
3. Ethnicity; Nationality; and Bloodline are now irrelevant (the world)

Now also please notice just *how* John identified Jesus as the Messiah. He did NOT say that Jesus would raise up an army of followers, who would go through the Land and remove all pagan influences. He did NOT say that Jesus would restore the Kingdom to Israel that they enjoyed under the reign of King Solomon. He also did NOT say that the pagan Romans would be removed from the Promised Land. He did NOT say that the Law of Moses would now reign supreme in the people. And John did NOT say that the world would now recognize that Israel was the Promised Land; and the Jews were God’s people.

Instead, John said that Jesus would “take away” Sins. And the Sins that Jesus would “take away” would be the Sins of the world and NOT merely the Sins of the Jews. And by calling Jesus the “Lamb of God”- John was indicating by what Means Jesus would remove those Sins: by Sacrifice. By killing the Lamb. By murdering Jesus.

In **1Corinthians 11:25**, Jesus was the first one to link His shed Blood to the bringing in of the New Covenant when He said:

This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.

Now even though the Apostle Paul is the one who wrote down these words- he was quoting what Jesus said in the Upper Room on the night He ate the Last Supper with His brethren- the night BEFORE He was crucified. So, even though the Apostle Paul wrote this verse down around 55AD (26 years after the Resurrection)- the statement that he attributes to Jesus was originally spoken around 29AD.

So, it was Jesus Himself Who said that His shed Blood brought in the New Covenant- the Kingdom of God that John the Baptist said would come to those who were penitent. And that is the key to what Jesus meant about those who are least in the Kingdom are greater than John. Because true Greatness does NOT belong to those who are strong in their own strength. True Greatness belongs to the Humble. Why? Because God gives His Grace to those who are Humble- or better put- those who have received the Gift of Humility from God. And all who will be in the Kingdom- will be those who have been made humble. And that makes them greater than John.

Because those people; the Humble- those who have been made Humble because of God's Grace upon them- they will be saved. They will inherit the Kingdom. They are Abraham's seed and God's chosen people. In fact, Jesus said they will inherit the whole earth.

The world measures "Greatness" by those who seemingly need nothing. The Self-sufficient; and those who seemingly have it all together. But God measures Greatness by those who need Him the most- those who have been gifted with Humility- those who can admit they are sinners; and who know they deserve God's Damnation. And Jesus said the Kingdom belongs to these.

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.