

Lesson 8

Jesus' Marvelous Miracles and His Comments Regarding John

Luke 7

Healing of Centurion's Servant (7:1-10)

After concluding the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus returned to Capernaum.

Jesus went with the elders toward the centurion's house. When the centurion heard that Jesus was coming, he sent friends to Jesus



The synagogue at Capernaum was erected at the expense of a centurion in the Roman army. This photo shows remains of a fourth century synagogue which was built on the same grounds as the first century synagogue where Jesus worshipped.

naum. A centurion, a Gentile officer in the Roman army, had a servant who was sick. He was a friend of the Jewish people, having built them a synagogue (7:5); perhaps he was a "proselyte of the gate." He sent some of the Jewish elders to Jesus, beseeching Him to come and heal his servant.

saying, "Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go,

and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it" (7:6-8). Jesus said, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel" (7:9). When the friends returned to the house, they found the servant well who had been sick.

Raising the Widow of Nain's Son (7:11-18)

The day following, Jesus went into the city of Nain. As He entered the city, He met a funeral procession. A widow was burying her only son. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her. He went to the dead body and said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Immediately, he sat up and began to speak. The report of this marvelous miracle was spread abroad.

John's Doubts (7:19-23)

While John the baptist was in prison, he began to doubt whether or not Jesus was the Christ. He sent his disciples to Jesus asking, "Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?" (7:19). That same hour, Jesus performed many miracles of healing. Then, He told the disciples to report to John what they had seen and heard: "the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached" (7:22). Jesus' answer directed the people to the prophecy of Isaiah 35:5-6.

Like many others, John probably expected the Messiah to be a conquering monarch who would rule on an earthly throne in Jerusalem. When Jesus did not act like such a monarch, John had doubts. Consequently, Jesus directed John to the prophecies which explained the nature of the Messiah's work. He closed by saying, "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me" (7:23). Some would never accept that kind of Messiah.

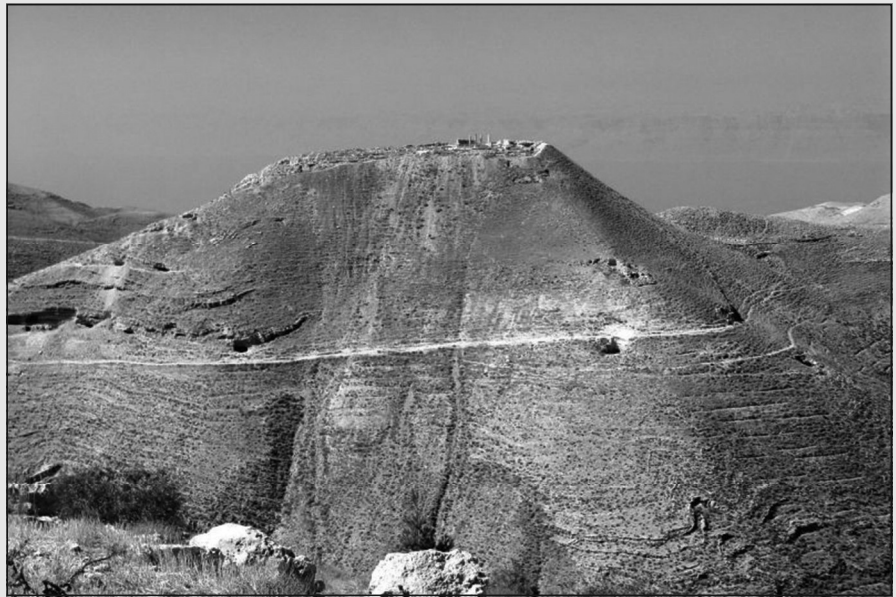
Jesus' Comments Regarding John (7:24-30)

When John's disciples had departed, Jesus spoke to the people concerning John. He emphasized that John was not a "reed shaken in the wind," a man easily swayed by public opinion. He was not a man who catered his preaching to please the rich. Rather, John was a servant of God who stood for truth and righteousness even though his stand eventually cost him his life.

Jesus said that John was not only a prophet, but much more also. He was the fulfillment of prophecy. The prophets had announced beforehand the coming of the harbinger of the Lord (Mal. 3:1).

He then said, "Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (7:28). Those in the kingdom are greater because they have the privilege of being citizens in the kingdom which John could only predict was soon to come. They have no greater degree of personal faith; they are not more pleasing to God. However, the least in the kingdom of God has a better understanding of God's work in redeeming the world through Jesus Christ than John had.

Many of those who heard the preaching of John obeyed his teaching. Those who obeyed "justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John" (7:29). "But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (7:30).



View looking west at the east slope of the fortress of Machaerus. The palace fortress was located on the top of the hill. On the left (south) side of the image is a spur that connects Machaerus with a hill to the south of the palace. An aqueduct system, running from left to right, brought water to cisterns along the side of the hill and to its top. Photo and caption courtesy of HolylandPhotos.org.

Jesus' Comments on That Generation (7:31-35)

The people of that generation rejected both John and Jesus. Jesus compared them to children playing in the marketplace. One group wanted to play a merry game, pretending to pipe and dance; the children would not play. Another wanted to play "funeral," and the children would not mourn. Nothing would please the children.

In a similar way, John came in the wilderness, wearing a girdle made out of camel's hair, eating locust and wild honey. The people rejected him saying, "He hath a devil." The Lord Jesus came mingling with society. The people rejected Him saying, "Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" (7:34) Neither John nor Jesus pleased the people of that generation.¹

A Sinful Woman Anointed Jesus at Simon's House (7:36-50)

One of the Pharisees named Simon who heard Jesus teaching invited Him to a feast in his home. He did not receive Jesus warmly, as an honored guest; perhaps he hoped to find some fault in Him while He was in his house. Nevertheless, during the feast, a woman whose sins were well-known entered the room where they were eating, anointed Jesus with oil, washed His feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair.

As Simon watched this scene, he reasoned, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner" (7:39). He reasoned: (a) a prophet would know what kind of woman

¹ Neither the charges against John nor those against Jesus were true. The allegations that Jesus was a gluttonous man and a winebibber were no more true than the charge that John had a devil.

What Each Owed

To understand the significance of the parable, one has to have some concept of the value of money in the first century. A common day laborer worked for one denarius a day (Matt. 20:2). If we assume that a day worker today earns \$100, consider the debt that each person owed. One man owed 500 denarii—\$50,000; the other owed 50 denarii—\$5000. Both owed considerable sums, but obviously one owed ten times what the other owed and, by any standard, a sizeable debt was forgiven each man.

this was; (b) he would not associate with her; (c) Jesus cannot be a prophet because He obviously does not know what kind of person she is.

Jesus demonstrated His ability to know what was in a man by responding to Simon's thoughts. He told the parable of the two debtors (7:41-43). A certain man had two debtors—one who owed

him 500 pence and the other who owed him fifty pence. He forgave both debtors their debt. Jesus asked, "Which of them will love him most?" (7:42) Simon replied, "He to whom he forgave most." Jesus replied that he had answered correctly.

Then, He made application of the parable. Jesus contrasted the

conduct of Simon and the conduct of the woman. When Jesus entered Simon's house, Simon did not provide water for Him to wash His feet (the common courtesy shown to any guest), greet Him with a kiss (the treatment of a friend), or anoint His head with oil (the treatment reserved for honored guests). In contrast, the woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears, kissed His feet, and anointed His feet with ointment. Jesus said, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little" (7:47).

The people who heard Jesus forgive the woman of her sins were critical of Jesus saying, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" (7:49). But Jesus simply replied to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace" (7:50).

Questions

1. The centurion was a (a) Jew, (b) Gentile, (c) Samaritan.
2. He showed his love for the nation of Israel by (a) building a synagogue, (b) following the traditions of the Pharisees, (c) being lenient with the Jews as a Roman officer.
3. His statement, "I am not worthy," manifests (a) his humility, (b) his appraisal of Jesus, (c) his appraisal of himself, (d) all of the above.
4. His comparison of his authority over his servants to Jesus' authority shows that he believed (a) Jesus had authority over diseases, (b) Jesus could heal the servant by His spoken word, (c) both.
5. Jesus healed the servant (a) from a distance, (b) through the laying on of hands.

Thought Questions

1. Using the book of Ruth to see Naomi's plight as a widow without children, explain the widow of Nain's plight. _____

2. Define "compassion" and how it manifests itself as a character trait. _____

3. What conclusion should the people have reached about Jesus from His raising the widow of Nain's son? _____

4. What caused John to question if Jesus was the Christ? _____

5. What proofs were given to John to reassure him? _____

6. Who are some modern people who are “offended” by Jesus, and what about Jesus offends them (7:23)? _____

7. What moral attributes of John the Baptist are described by Jesus in verses 24-25 which should be attributes of every gospel preacher? _____

8. Why is John “more than a prophet”? _____
9. In what sense is the “least in the kingdom” greater than John? _____
10. What had those who refused John’s baptism done (vv. 29-30)? _____
11. What attitude did that generation have of:
 - a. John: _____
 - b. Jesus: _____

Discussion

1. How did Simon reach the conclusion that Jesus was not a prophet (v. 39)? _____

2. What did Jesus do to convince Simon that He was a prophet (v. 40)? _____

3. What difference in spirit is seen in Simon and the sinful woman? _____

4. Were this woman’s sins forgiven by faith only? Defend your answer. _____

5. What does Jesus’ forgiving sins indicate (v. 48)? _____

6. What does this parable teach about hospitality? _____

Answering Denominational Error

1. Faith healers assert that faith is a condition for healing. How much faith did the widow of Nain’s son have? _____

2. How much faith did the centurion’s servant have? _____

3. Compare the common Jewish expectation of the Messiah with that of the modern premillennialist. _____

4. Study Luke 7:29-30. What do modern people who reject water baptism do? _____

5. What religious significance is given to footwashing in Luke 7:36-50? _____
