
a *Grace Notes* course

Life of Christ 200

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Lesson 209

Life of Christ 209

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The Raising of the Widow's Son

Luke 7:11-17: "(11) And it came about soon afterward, He came into a city called Nain and His disciples and many crowds came with Him. (12) Now as He drew near the gate of the city, and behold! An only born son, having died, was being carried out for burial by his mother, and she herself was a widow, and a fair-sized crowd from the city was with her. (13) And seeing her, the Lord was deeply moved for her, and He said to her, 'Do not cry.' (14) And coming forward He touched the bier, and those bearing it stood still, and He said, 'Young man, I say to you, be risen!' (15) And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and He gave him to his mother. (16) But fear seized everyone and they glorified God saying 'A great prophet is raised among us.' and, 'God cared for His people.' (17) And this word about Him went out in the whole of Judea and the surrounding countryside."

Exposition:

A. HEXES is an adverb which indicates the passage of a short amount of time. So this occurred right after the healing of the centurion's servant.

B. Nain is from the Hebrew NA'IM, which means pleasant. It was on the top of a local hill about 1500 feet high, where the views all around were very nice. This town was located about 25 miles from Capernaum - two or three days journey. Although Luke is less exact, they would have arrived about the morning of the third day.

C. Christ was near to entering the gates of the town with His disciples and many crowds. So these crowds have followed from the great events at Capernaum and formed quite an entourage.

D. The way the Greek says it, the events that transpired came all of a sudden. KAI IDOU is 'and behold.' So there they are, innocently walking through the gates of the town, and wham! This event happens.

E. The particulars are real important.

1. A young man has died.
2. He was the only-born son of a widow. MONOGENES is only-born.

3. A fair-sized crowd was following - The Greek word is HIKANOS, or 'sufficient.'

4. They are carrying him out for burial; he is dead indeed.

F. Today's Handbook of Bible Times and Customs says this about the funeral bier and procession on pages 245-246: "Funeral processions were common among the Jews. The body was carried on a wooden bier often consisting of little more than flat boards... ..A bier carried a symbol to indicate the deceased's occupation or social status... ..A funeral march was hardly quiet, for the typical Jew believed in venting his emotions by loud wailing, beating on his chest and even tearing his clothes. Friends, mourners, and even professional mourners joined in expressing a bitter farewell. Even the poorest family was expected to hire at least one mourner. Singer and musical instruments, especially flutes, were also a part of this procession."

G. Christ had an emotional reaction to the situation - most likely because He was thinking of His own mother and the death that He would have to undergo.

1. ESPLAGCHNISTHE describes an emotion that comes from the depths of being - at the very center of the soul.

2. This situation really hit Him hard, and so He says to the widow ME KLAIE, 'Do not cry.'

3. In Christ's mind looms His own death, and His own mother's reaction.

4. This implies that Christ's mother was a widow at this time.

H. And then Christ comes forward and touches the bier (SOROU) and the bearers stood still.

1. What a moment of great drama. With the bearers you can feel the crowd stand still - a hushed silence prevails.

2. And these words are heard by all: "Young man, I say to you, be risen."

a. But wait. The soul of this young man has departed. He is not there except in body, and it has capability to hear.

b. But Christ addresses the young man directly, and gives a command to him.

c. The guy was not faking it! The narration clearly defines him as dead with a capital 'D.' (Actually theta)

d. But His command may have been one of two things:

(1) A command into the spiritual realm, which the young man could hear, even in Hades.

(2) A command which was only for the benefit of those present (which would have been deceptive).

(3) It should really be a combination of the two. There was a reason that Christ made His voice audible, and there was communication heard even in Hades.

I. And at the command the dead man sits up and begins to speak, and Christ presents him to his mother.

1. So immediately the soul has permission to return to the body, and he does.

2. And this animates the body so that the young man sits up and begins to speak.

3. But there must have been some rectification of the body as well, since by that time rigor mortis had certainly set in, and the body was swiftly decomposing. This was a healing as well as a resuscitation.

4. And more than that, the body had been wrapped tightly with spices, which is likely why the young man's words are not recorded. He sat up and said: "Mmhlmph."

5. But very touching here is the presentation. It says literally that Christ 'gave' the young man to his mother.

6. Touching indeed - 'Woman, here is your son.' What a fantastic gift.

7. And here is something more: John 19:23-26, "(23) Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. (24) So they said to one another, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be'; this was to fulfill the Scripture: 'They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.' (25) Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus

were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. (26) When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold, you son!'

a. Christ's greatest gift to his mother occurred in this hour; He died for her sins.

b. And in His mind - the gift of a son to his mother some time before.

a. J. Then comes the response of the crowd. "(16) But fear seized everyone and they glorified God saying 'A great prophet is raised among us.' and, 'God cared for His people.' (17) And this word about Him went out in the whole of Judea and the surrounding countryside."

1. This is no kidding around now. A healing is nice and certainly miracles are fun. But raising someone from the dead - some putrefied, rigor-mortised corpse from the dead - that is serious indeed.

2. Now there is more than entertainment; there is respect. And finally with that respect is glorification of God. But is it? Listen closely to their worship...

3. Christ is a great prophet; He is that, but he is indeed more than a prophet. Jesus Christ is the Son of God! And it seems that if one is going to worship God, there must be an accuracy of that worship for God's good pleasure toward it.

4. The statement 'God cared for His people' is one related to the consolation of Israel, and it concentrates on the verb EPESKEPSATO. This is in the same family as EPISKOPOS; it is the verbal form that same noun. So God is the overseer or shepherd of Israel.

a. But there is arrogance to be found here as well. Doesn't this imply that God has not been Israel's shepherd for some time? Doesn't that call into question God's ability to provide for Israel, if there was a time that He did not?

b. So God cared for His people by sending this prophet who raised a widow's son. What about John the Baptist? What did they say then? And what about the Sermon on the Mount? What did they say then?

Christ on John the Baptist

Matthew 11:2-19

Luke 7:18-35

The report and the response.

The report: "And his disciples reported to John in prison about all these things."

John had been imprisoned for about a year; he had been imprisoned the previous summer by Herod the Tetrarch, Antipas.

Herod the Tetrarch had thrown John in prison because John had criticized him for marrying his brother's wife Herodias.

(1) Herod the Great was his father, and he in many ways personified the trouble in Israel at the time of Christ.

(2) For a long time, hundreds of years, the Jews had lived under the control of one nation or another, and they longed to be truly autonomous.

(3) It seemed like whatever empire had the upper hand in history would rule them.

(a) If it wasn't the Babylonians, then it was the Persians, when the Persians took over.

(b) If it wasn't the Persians, it was the Greeks, when Alexander came rumbling through the ancient near east.

(c) If it wasn't Alexander, it was the Romans, after the death of Alexander and the disintegration of his empire.

(4) They still understood that they were a holy people, set apart for God.

(a) They always remembered that, if nothing else.

(b) They rankled under the rule of Rome, and it especially rubbed them wrong that Herod, the so-called Herod the Great had power over them.

(5) He was worse than a Gentile; he was a half-Jewish Idumaeon, a descendant of Esau, a wild desert-dwelling type. The Jews considered them with no small amount of prejudice.

(6) To make matters worse, Herod was hardly a model human being. He has been called a monster - one who was crafty and cruel, jealous and vain and always quick to seek revenge when wronged.

(a) He came to the throne over the Roman province of Judea through cunning and manipulation of Marc Antony.

(b) He had nine or ten wives. Even the historians lost count after a while.

(c) On the smallest of suspicion he had even his favorite wife, Mariamne, put to death, along with her sons Alexander and Aristobulus.

(d) Even while on his own deathbed, just days before he died he had his own son, his flesh and blood Antipater put to death.

(e) Caesar Augustus was heard to say, "It is better to be Herod's hog than his own son!"

(f) Again at his deathbed he ordered all the principle men in Israel to be rounded up and placed in the local stadium, where they could be surrounded by his soldiers and then slain when he died. The reason: so that there would be great mourning at his death. His sister relented and refused the execution.

(g) To be ruled by someone who was so obviously inferior! Who was so immoral and cruel!

(7) It must have been difficult to read the Scriptures, and to know that their destiny was so great, and yet have the reality so different.

(a) Understand, however, that this was Divine Judgement on the nation of Israel; that they had neglected their relationship with God, and that the situation was appropriate to their spiritual state.

(b) In this case the outward circumstances reflected accurately the inward condition: slavery.

(c) It is no wonder, then, there was a great fascination in the nation of Israel with the prophecies about the Messiah.

· The one who would come and re-establish the greatness of their kingdom and their people.

· A man who would rise up and smite their enemies and make them a free people once again.

· From time to time a fairly great and famous man would rise up, and there would be some excitement about the possibility of his being the Messiah.

· Of course, things would quiet down when he turned out to be quite human, and the slavery of Israel droned on and on.

- After a time there was even a certain amount of cynicism about the whole deal.
 - The same phenomenon exists today with the fascination about the end times and the return of Christ.
- (8) Herod tried bribing the Jews, so that they would like him, and he could view himself as a successful ruler.
- (a) Julius Caesar had given Herod a fantastic and truly royal inaugural celebration back in 37 BC, when Herod took the throne.
- (b) He always longed for that past glory, when in fact the traditional Roman warning of "sic transit gloria mundi" applied to him more than any other.
- (c) The bribes came in the form of a building program that was the very rival of Solomon's.
- He built monuments and buildings in the Holy Land, and even rebuilt their temple in magnificent fashion, topping it with a golden dome.
 - The rebuilding of the Temple was much like the building of the Winchester Mystery House in San Jose, California.
 - More was added every year. A higher roof here, an annex there - all very magnificent.
 - When Herod died, his relatives took over the folly and the never-ending program continued until it was finally finished in 66 AD, some 87 years after it was begun.
 - It is one of the great ironies of history that it was burned down just four years later when Jerusalem was destroyed.
 - Other buildings and monuments were undertaken.
 - A temple, a forum, and a theatre at Samaria.
 - A great Greco-Roman capital, a temple, and port at Caesarea.
 - The port was an engineering marvel that even today is remarked upon by the archaeologists who work at the site.
 - Luxurious palaces and fortified retreats were built at Masada, Jerusalem, Jericho, and Herodium, which was near Bethlehem.
 - In Jerusalem he had baths, a theatre, and a Hippodrome constructed.

- He also promoted Greek and Roman games so that the people might be entertained.
- (d) All of these things struck a sour note - as any bribe to a slave will.
- The people really did not want these things. They wanted to be autonomous and free.
 - But in order to be truly free, any people must know God, and that was exactly the problem in Israel.
- Herod had ten wives and seven sons. Four of those seven would play a role in the New Testament. All of the wives wanted their sons to be Herod's successor. This was a complication.
- (1) His first son Antipater was through his first wife Doris.
- (2) Herod repudiated her and Antipater when he married Mariamne I, the granddaughter of the famous Hyrcanus. This was in 37 BC Alexander and Aristobulus were born by her.
- (3) In 24 BC Herod married Mariamne II, by whom he had Herod Philip.
- (4) Just a year later, he married his fourth wife, Malthace, a Samaritan by whom he had Archelaus and Antipas.
- (5) And another two years after that, he married wife #5, Cleopatra of Jerusalem, by whom he had Philip the Tetrarch.
- (6) The other five wives bore him no sons, and only three are mentioned by name, Pallas, Phaedra, and Elpis. He also had daughters.
- Herod's two favorite sons were those by Mariamne I, Alexander and Aristobulus.
- (1) Make note: Aristobulus married his cousin, Bernice.
- (2) Make note: This union produced a daughter, Herodias.
- Herod had a sister, Salome, who hated these two favorite sons, even though her daughter Bernice was married to Aristobulus.
- (1) She had designs for her own son, a certain Antipater, to ascend to the throne of Herod. He is not to be confused with Antipater, Herod's first son by Doris.

(2) Salome maligned Mariamne I before Herod, and Herod believed her and had Mariamne I killed.

(3) The two sons were naturally indignant, and threatened to bring charges before Caesar that would cause him to lose his throne.

(4) And as a consequence Herod changed his will so that Antipater by Doris was named the sole heir to the throne. He then sent Antipater to the emperor to have the will ratified.

(5) Realizing that being gone from Herod's presence was a dangerous thing, Antipater wrote slanderous letter against Alexander and Aristobulus from Rome.

(6) As a result of this slander, Herod had these two tried before Caesar Augustus in 12 BC Amazingly, the court system worked, and they were found not guilty on all counts, and more than that, they were reconciled to their father, and to Antipater as well.

(7) Herod changed his will to name all three sons equally.

(8) But Salome, Herod's sister, was not finished yet. Together with brother Pheroras and son Antipater, the slander began again against the two sons of Mariamne I.

(a) This time they obtained the testimony of one friend of Alexander's, and on the basis of a single eyewitness they convinced Herod that the two were plotting Herod's death and planning to lay claim to the throne before Rome.

(b) Alexander was cast into prison, but thanks to Alexander's father-in-law, he was set free and reconciled to Herod.

In the next round, Antipater convinced his friend Eurycles from Sparta to play Alexander and Aristobulus against Herod. They fell for it, and were caught in the plotting phase.

(1) Herod became so suspicious that he once again imprisoned the brothers, and accused them of treason.

(2) Herod sent to Rome seeking the Emperor's advice regarding his sons, and Augustus gave Herod full authority to deal with his sons as he wished, but advised to him to conduct a Roman trial outside of his own territory. He feared that

without a change of venue there would be a rebellion.

(3) The trial was conducted in Berytus (Beirut), and a guilty verdict was passed. The two sons Alexander and Aristobulus were executed by strangulation in 7 BC

(4) Herod's fourth will now named Antipater by Doris his sole successor.

But Antipater was an impatient man...

(1) He held secret conferences with Herod's brother Pheroras. They intended to kill the old man.

(2) Salome, Herod's sister, got wind of these meetings and spilled the beans to Herod.

(3) Thus Herod's relationship with his sole named heir became somewhat strained.

(4) Antipater then arranged to have emperor Augustus summon him to Rome, with the excuse that the new will needed ratification. He was then conveniently out of town.

(5) Pheroras, Herod's brother and Antipater's uncle died. Herod conducted an investigation, and discovered that not only did Pheroras die of poison, but also that same poison had been intended for him.

(6) Herod recalled Antipater under false pretenses, and he thus returned without suspicion. He was thrown into prison, tried the next day and found guilty. It took some time, however to gain permission to execute Antipater, but eventually it was done.

(7) And so Herod had another will drawn up. Since his two oldest living sons had been turned against him by Antipater, that is, Herod Philip by Mariamne II and Archelaus by Malthace, he excluded them from will #6. Everything now went to Antipas by Malthace.

Herod was by now old and feeble and full of disease. Nothing could ease his discomfort, soul and body.

It was around this time that Christ was born, and everyone was talking about the new-born true king of the Jews. Herod's paranoia was at an all-time high, and so he was motivated to kill all those children in Bethlehem.

And at the same time, two rabbis incited the people to tear down the Roman eagle from the temple gate. The offenders were seized and burned alive.

And just then he made his final will, naming Archelaus of Malthace as king, Antipas of Malthace as Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and their half-brother Philip of Cleopatra of Jerusalem as the Tetrarch of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Paneas.

k. But of course the last will was disputed, because it was made just five days before Herod's death, and it needed the emperor's ratification.

(1) Archelaus was the de facto ruler during this time. During the next Passover, a crowd gathered before Archelaus and began to demand retribution for the deaths of those killed by his father during the eagle incident.

(2) The crowd turned ugly when Archelaus refused this retribution, and so he ordered the troops in. Three thousand people were killed. Not a good start.

(3) Immediately after this, Archelaus and Antipas went to Rome together, each to claim before the emperor the will which benefited himself. Archelaus said the last will always counts, while Antipas said the last will was not made by a mentally well Herod. It must have been an interesting boat ride. Philip was left behind to manage matters.

(4) While these were in Rome, another riot broke out during Pentecost, and this went on for about two months and many more deaths.

(5) The Jews therefore sent a delegation to Rome, pleading for their lives and their autonomy.

(6) Philip got nervous about everyone being in Rome, so he went too.

(7) Augustus, thoroughly tired by the whole mess by now, issued a compromise.

(a) Archelaus was made ruler over Idumea, Judea, and Samaria with the special title of Ethnarch. He was promised kingship if he ruled well.

(b) Antipas was made tetrarch over Galilee and Perea.

(c) And Philip was given Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, and Paneas as tetrarch. (See map)

1. Archelaus reign as ethnarch was characterized by brutality and tyranny, even though like his father he tried to bribe the people by building things.

(1) In AD 6 the Jews and Samaritans joined together in a delegation to Rome, where they complained to the emperor. Antipas and Philip the Tetrarch also went because they felt Archelaus had neglected their territories.

(2) Archelaus was then deposed and exiled to the south of France.

(3) Archelaus territory then became an imperial province under direct Roman rule.

m. Antipas was the ruler over Galilee, the central area of most of Christ's ministry.

(1) He first undertook a rebuilding program to fix the destruction of the revolt of 4 BC Sepphoris was the largest city of Galilee. It was rebuilt, and since it was just 4 miles from Nazareth it is likely that Joseph, a carpenter, worked on the project.

(2) Tiberias was a new city founded under his building program. But while they were building, the builders struck on the site of an old cemetery, and thus the whole area became unclean to the Jews. He therefore enticed people there by offering free homes and lands and tax exemption for the first few years.

(3) Antipas married the daughter of the Nabatean king Aretas IV, an Arab. This added to Antipas' realm, and to Caesar Augustus' tax base.

(4) In AD 28 or 29, Antipas decided to go to Rome, and on the way to visit his half-brother Herod Philip, who lived down on the seacoast.

(5) Now Herod Philip had married his brother Aristobulus' daughter, whose name was Herodias. You remember her. Well... Herodias was a very beautiful woman, and Antipas fell in love with her; his own niece and sister-in-law.

(6) Now Herodias was a typical scheming member of the Herod family, and she secretly agreed to divorce Herod Philip and marry Antipas, provided that he divorce the daughter of Aretas IV.

(7) Somehow, Antipas' first wife discovered the plan, and fled to her father. Aretas took the whole deal as an insult, and a few years later attacked and defeated Antipas in a battle.

n. But John the Baptist took offence at this incestual marriage, and let off steam about it. This is why he was thrown into prison - Matthew 14:3.

o. Later Herodias would connive to have John killed as retribution for stirring up the people against her behavior - Matthew 14:1-12.

p. Antipas was greatly fascinated with the ministry of Christ, and longed to see His miracles.

(1) And when Pilate had custody of Christ and understood our Lord to be a citizen of Galilee, he sent him to Antipas, for it was under his jurisdiction. Herod Antipas was there for the feast of the Passover.

(2) Luke 23:8-12 records what happened. "(8) Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. (9) And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. (10) And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. (11) And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate. (12) Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other."

(3) Antipas identified himself with the Jews by treating their enemy as his enemy also. He may also have been outraged that Christ gave him no show.

2. But John's disciples kept him informed with all the happenings on the outside, and especially the happenings in the life of Jesus.

B. John's response is cold: "And summoning some two of his disciples John sent to the Lord, saying, 'Are you the coming one or do we expect another?'"

1. It is cold because he hears all these great things about Christ, and yet he does not see Christ as the Messiah.

2. And why is that? How could you deny Christ as the Messiah when you hear all of these things about him?

3. It had to do with personal circumstances. John was in prison, put there by his enemy and the enemy of Israel. That in John's mind Christ had done nothing to free him (which was the law of volitional responsibility), nor to free his people from the Herodian tyranny was enough to deny Jesus as the Messiah.

4. This is the classic cosmic rationale.

a. John was suffering because of his own stubborn efforts in clinging too long to his ministry, and his shift of focus from the Pharisees to the Herodians.

b. But John refused to see that in his state of spiritual blindness, and so he shifted the blame to Jesus.

c. He concluded that Jesus could not be the Messiah, because He had not freed him, when that was so obviously what any Messiah should do.

d. Suddenly God was not God because John had not gotten his way. And because of his spiritual malfunction, John had become like his worst enemies, the Pharisees.

5. John must indeed have been suffering from spiritual blindness.

II. Christ's Reply to John. "And after they appeared beside Him the men said, 'John the Baptist sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the coming one or do we expect another?' In that hour He healed many from illness and disease and evil spirits and to many blind He freely gave to see. And after formulating an answer, He said to them, 'After you arrive proclaim to John what you saw and heard; blind men see again, lame men walk, lepers are cleansed and deaf men hear, dead men are raised, poor men are evangelized. And blessed is anyone who does not stumble over Me.'"

A. Now John had heard of the miracles, but not seen them.

1. Remember, John has never seen the miracles of Jesus Christ, other than the approving proclamation and the dove at Christ's baptism.

2. And that incident did not contain a miracle under Christ's initiative, but came direct from the Father.

B. And Christ performed many of the miracles right before John's disciples, so that they could validate the occurrences back to John personally. They had witnessed the entire thing, and the eyewitness is by far the most effective witness of all.

1. By seeing it with their own eyes, the disciples of John could move away from the self-testimony of Christ to their testimony.

2. This harkens back to the testimony of Andrew for Peter. John 1:35ff: "Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!' And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned, and beheld them following, and said to them, 'What do you seek?' And they said to Him, 'Rabbi [which translated means Teacher], where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come, and you will see.' They came therefore and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' [which translated means Christ]. He brought him to Jesus."

3. But now this places a requirement on your own witnessing life within this principle. You have the requirement to be an eyewitness to the gospel from your own life.

a. The gospel is never going to sound genuine if you do not have direct experience with the source.

b. Your communication of the plan of God will not hit home without your experience in its execution.

4. As a result, Christ does John a great favor here; He gives to him the best possible chance of recovery through these acts.

5. Christ gives an indication that this is a grace ministry with the phrase, "and to many blind He freely gave to see." (Luke 7:21).

a. The verb ECHARISATO is in the aorist indicative. It summarizes a simple past action.

b. It describes giving within the grace framework.

c. This verb extends over all the activities described herein. All of these things were freely given.

6. The messengers are commanded by Christ to give proclamation to John. This is not simply passing along a message; it is APAGGEILATE. This is a command from Christ, to be carried out when these messengers arrive at John's prison cell. A proclamation is stronger than a message, and concentrates with a stronger claim of integrity toward truth.

7. The final phrase is intriguing. "And blessed is anyone who does not stumble over Me."

a. The aorist passive subjunctive of SKANDALIZO does the following:

(1) It describes an action without reference to time. That is, the action could occur at any time; it is open-ended.

(2) It describes potential action, performed by any human being alive at the time of Christ.

(3) It describes action that acts on the subject 'anyone'. It is more literally 'stumbled'. The idea is that someone is stumbled by something outside of Christ - that there is no reason to stumble over Christ, but because of the words of others there is a choice to stumble

b. People only chose to stumble over Christ because of what others were saying, and this remains true today. This is the purpose of the propaganda branch of the cosmic system.

c. The Propaganda Branch

(1) Introduction.

(a) The purpose of the propaganda branch is to promote the cosmic counterfeits and lies, and to attack the word of God.

(b) The propaganda branch integrates and cooperates with both the individual and the world branches of the cosmic system.

(c) The propaganda branch is an expression of Satanic genius and the demonic organization.

- (d) Human beings are an important element in the propaganda branch.
- (2) The Promotion of the Cosmic Counterfeits and Lies.
- (a) The cosmic system has an elaborate scheme of counterfeits and lies.
- (b) These counterfeits and lies are designed to supplant the truth.
- (c) The counterfeits and lies match up with every category of truth possible.
- The Gospel.
 - The plan of God.
 - The power of God.
 - The person and work of God.
 - The person and work of Christ.
 - The person and work of the Holy Spirit.
 - And many more...
- (d) These counterfeits and lies are promoted by every means possible.
- There is a great emphasis today on the media, and especially television.
 - Those who are heavily involved in the cosmic system inevitably become cosmic propagandists.
- (3) The Attack against the Word.
- (a) In order to make the promotion of the cosmic counterfeits and lies fully effective, the cosmic system attacks the Word.
- (b) The attacks against the Word come in two basic categories.
- Attacks to destroy the Word outright. There have been many attempts throughout history to destroy the manuscripts of the Bible.
 - Attacks to undermine the credibility of the Word. These are usually attacks on the supernatural nature of the Divine inspiration of the Word. Liberal theologians are mainly responsible for this branch of the attack on the Word.
- d. There is blessing for everyone who is not stumbled.
- (1) Category one is the salvation blessing, for all those who believe in Jesus Christ.

- (2) Category two is blessings in time from the advance to spiritual maturity.
- (3) Category three is blessings in the millennium for mature church age believers only.
- (4) Category four is blessings in the eternal state, for mature believers of all dispensations.

Christ's Teaching to the Crowd on the Baptist.

“And after the messengers of John left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, ‘What did you go out into the desert to witness? A reed stirred by the wind? Really, what did you go out to see? A man wearing white clothes? Behold those in glorious clothing and possessing luxury are in the palace.’”

So now Christ has the opportunity to really set the record straight about John the Baptist, and to let the world know that the great one has failed. And he does not.

Christ's response is to the crowd. Many of them had no doubt shaken their heads in wonder at the demise of such a great man. For if this is obvious to us, it would have been obvious to them.

And Christ wants to make very sure that the crowds do not enter into judgment, knowing what they know about John.

(1) Because judgment is this:

(a) Judgment is the mental conclusion that someone is guilty before the evidence and witnesses are gathered. This can occur in or out of the courtroom, and applies even if you are an eyewitness to the act.

- Ultimately, the right to judge is reserved for our Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge all church age believers at the judgement seat of Christ.

- Many times, people will judge because they fear they will not be vindicated. When you have confidence in the justice of God, then this fear will be removed.

- Jesus Christ will be perfectly fair at the judgment seat. No detail will escape His attention.

- Jesus Christ is the only person who is perfectly qualified to judge the human race.

- He died for those sins.

- He too lived a human life, and was tempted far beyond what we will ever encounter.

· When we overstep the boundaries of our legitimate right to judge, then we presume to take the place of Jesus Christ. James 4:12, "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbor?"

(b) Grudge judgement is the failure to forgive the perpetrator of a sin, when that sin has been judged on the cross. This category of judgment also comes into play when someone assumes that God cannot forgive a sin or complex of sins.

(c) Lifestyle judgment is when one considers his lifestyle as superior to another, when sin is not an issue.

(d) Gossip is the verbalization of any category of judgment to parties that are not fundamental to the case. The intent is to damage the reputation of one who may be guilty, but whose guilt has not been established by proper evidentiary procedures. This applies to ANY sin.

And so Christ asks them a series of rhetorical questions.

(1) The base question is this: 'What did you go out into the desert to witness?'

(a) With the language of this question, Christ paints a graphic picture of people rushing out to the wilderness to eyewitness something spectacular.

(b) In other words, He says this: 'For a bunch of people who are scowling right now at John the Baptist, you sure were in a big hurry to go see him during the prime of his ministry.'

(c) The verb THEASASTHAI means to 'behold' or 'witness' something spectacular or completely out of the ordinary.

(d) The fact that so many people left their everyday lives and went clear out to the desert to see John shows how very earnest they were about the whole deal.

(e) The desert was a journey of several days, and would have been the equivalent of a drive of a thousand miles or even more.

(2) Christ then employs a facetious proposition with this question: 'A reed being shaken by the wind?'

(a) In the desert there are millions of these reeds - and the wind is always blowing.

(b) So it's kind of like: did you go out into the desert to witness something completely commonplace? I don't think so.

(c) But right now you are acting like John is completely commonplace.

(3) And a second proposition follows with a repetition of the base question: 'Really, what did you go out to witness?'

(a) The adversative conjunction ALLA works as a focusing element here, placing the attention of the crowd on the second statement. It should be translated 'really.'

(b) And the facetious question is: 'a man dressed in white?'

· Christ actually answers this one for the crowd. 'Behold those in glorious clothing and possessing luxury are in the palace.'

· Because there is no chance in the world that someone would find someone dressed in such a fine way out in the wilderness. The notion is utterly ridiculous. In fact, John was dressed in rough clothing, fit for his life there, as they all would remember - Matthew 3:4.

(c) So Christ employs strong and biting rhetoric to point out that their original motive for going to all that trouble to see John.

(4) Because they had gone out to see something really great, something that had not been seen in Israel in hundreds of years.

"But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes I say to you, and more than a prophet. He is the one about whom it has been written, 'Behold I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' Truly I say to you, among those born of women, no one is greater."

In fact, the crowds went out to see a prophet. They went out to see the first prophet in Israel in more than 450 years. The first prophet since Malachi's ministry around 435 BC

And not only this, but he was the greatest prophet of Israel, because he was the one to introduce the Messiah personally to the world.

Christ quotes Malachi 3:1 for two reasons. First to make a connection between the last two prophets of Israel; second to identify John's ministry clearly before this crowd.

And by doing this, Christ makes His own identity even more clear.

John had the most sacred duty of all the prophets of Israel, and it is clear that he performed his duty in a most excellent manner.

Well, let's see; among those prophets born of women - let's see - that would be ALL PROPHETS! John is the greatest.

John is the greatest prophet of his time, and really the greatest man of his time.

He is not to be scowled at; and certainly not to be judged, for Christ has rendered all the judgment that is going to happen before the judgment seat occurs.

A comparison of John with those in the coming dispensation: "But the least in the kingdom of God is greater than him. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of the heavens suffers violence and violent men capture it. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John; and if you want to listen, he himself is Elijah, the one who is about to arrive."

*** The dispensational change brings about changes in the angelic conflict, in grace assets, and in rewards. That accounts for the disparity between the dispensation of Israel past and the dispensation of Israel future.

(1) The tribulation is a much tougher dispensation, because of the evil ruling the earth unswayed by good.

(2) Therefore God compensates believers in that dispensation with greater grace.

(3) And because of the difficulty of their mission, there is also greater reward.

Christ transitions to His own dispensation now, so that the crowd might know their own spiritual standing, and live up to it.

For maligning a great figure, even a fallen great figure, is not living up to the standards of the kingdom.

(1) Matthew 5:21-24, "21 You heard that it was said to the ancients, 'You will not commit murder'; and, 'whoever murders, will be guilty before the court.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'Raka' will be guilty before the Sanhedrin; and whoever says, 'Fool' will be guilty unto the Gehenna of the Fire. 23 Therefore if you are presenting your gift upon the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then after coming back present your gift."

(2) Christ set this standard during the Sermon on the Mount, and it is the extension of the Law in His dispensation.

(3) The extension of the Law was because of the greatness of Christ's rule.

(4) Principle: Strictness should always be a measure of the people's true capacity to live up to the standard.

(5) Application: People in the millennium will have a fantastically high standard of behavior, but this is only because through Christ's direct rule they will have the capacity to live up to it.

(6) Remember that this is a standard of purity that extends to the mouth and the soul.

(7) In this dispensation we have standards that mainly apply to overt action; the soul remains unregulated by the establishment.

(8) In the millennium, divine establishment will extend to matters of the soul.

Principle: when anyone falls from the grace status of the plan of God, when anyone does this in any dispensation, it is best to teach the principle of doctrine related to the point of his fall.

(1) We have done a study on the fall of John the Baptist, and we have seen in some detail why this man fell from grace. Scripture has done this so that we might see the full picture.

(2) But Christ teaches the doctrine without applying it directly to John the Baptist, displaying

an absence of judgment in His procedure while among men.

(3) Even Christ would refrain from judgment until His proper time at the judgment seat. This was a part of His kenosis, the limiting of His divine nature during the incarnation.

(4) So you teach or tell the point of doctrine related to the point of a man's fall without applying it to him directly.

(5) To illustrate this, examine closely what Christ has done with John.

(a) He is the greatest man of his dispensation.

(b) The least in Christ's dispensation is greater than him.

(6) Now apply this to John's downfall:

(a) The nature of Christ's teaching would apply to anyone who acted like John and wanted to cling to the dispensation of Israel.

(b) But it would only apply if it was true to John, and Christ refuses to make that judgment.

(7) There are instances where establishment authority must have its say.

(a) Each establishment realm of authority must have its say if it is proper.

(b) The criminal realm must have its say if a crime has been committed.

(c) The church realm must have its say if one of its leaders has violated the provisions of 1 Timothy 3.

(d) In all other legitimate realms there may be reason for discipline.

(8) In all such cases, there must exist a proper system of jurisprudence, based on biblical principles.

Then Christ summarizes the time of His ministry and even a little before:

(1) That from the days of John the Baptist until the present time just after the sermon on the mount the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and violent men capture it.

(2) The verb BIAZETAI is the present passive indicative. It describes the subject (the kingdom of heaven) as receiving the action, and it means to receive or suffer violence.

(3) So this is Christ's mid-term grading of the people of Israel. The kingdom that He has offered is suffering violence.

(4) We need only remember John 5:17-18, "But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

(a) The two verbs translated "working" are both the same, ERGAZOMAI. They are the present middle indicatives, indicating ongoing, non-stop work to the indefinite future.

(b) The purpose of these verbs is to answer the assertion that we rest because God rested. The essence of the Sabbath is not the cessation of work, but concentration on God.

(c) But Christ's works and God's works should be the objects of concentration, and they certainly are not a violation of the Moses' Sabbath.

(d) Christ uses the personal pronoun EGO in order to emphasize His own work - not in contrast to that of the Father's, but in concert.

(e) So two things here would get the attention of the Pharisees:

- That Christ called God His Father.

- That Christ considered His work equivalent with that of the Father's.

(f) As a result, the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him.

- The more bold Christ became, the more the Jews wanted to kill Him; the more that Christ revealed about the plan of God in Him, the more the Jews wanted to kill Him; the more that Christ set Himself up as a substituted for them, the more the Jews wanted to kill Him.

- So this was not only persecution, but deadly persecution.

(g) Even two years before the death of Christ, the conspiracy to kill Him gained great strength.

(h) Christ spoke the truth - He is a part of the trinity. God is three persons in one Godhead.

- The first person of the Trinity is God the Father. The second person of the Trinity is God the Son.

The third person of the Trinity is God the Holy Spirit.

- The three persons of the trinity possess identical essence in one being.

- This divine being has three distinct persons which are autonomous from one another in soul function.

- This distinction in persons is more than just one God showing different facets or modes of His one person.

And violent men try to capture this kingdom.

(1) Now here is a worthy axiom: that every institution of God is under assault from the enemy.

(2) That every good thing of God is constantly under attempt to capture by those who wish to turn it for their own ends.

(3) BIASTAI is violent men; the plural noun form of BIAZO.

(4) And these violent men engage themselves in HARPAZOUSIN. This verb means to seize or capture something by force. But it describes this action as having a purpose. It is robbery or kidnapping, but never to destroy the person or object taken!

(5) So there are those who are trying to take the kingdom of heaven by force, to turn it to their own ends.

(6) There are therefore two categories of attacks against the kingdom of heaven, and these tend to transfer to every dispensation.

(a) The attempt to destroy divine institutions by violence.

- Jewish dispensation illustration: Esther (see doctrine).

- Church dispensation illustration: the persecution of Nero (F.F. Bruce).

- Modern illustration: reader's digest "The War on Christians."

(b) The attempt to capture divine institutions by force.

- Jewish dispensation illustration: the Pharisees (see doctrine).

- Church dispensation illustration: the Judaizers.

- Modern illustration: the downfall of Christian colleges and seminaries - captured by means of money.

- Modern illustration #2: the downfall of local churches. Compromised by emphasis on numbers, or money.

(7) Each of these attacks depend upon the individual and propaganda branches of the cosmic system. They interlock so as to cause a trapping influence on individual lives.

(8) This attack also functions toward your own life through the individual branch of the cosmic system.

Now comes what appears to be an enigma. "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John; and if you want to listen, he himself is Elijah, the one who is about to arrive." Let's gather the facts.

(1) The Greek adverb of time is EOS, which is translated 'until.' But this until also indicates stoppage. That is, the action continued until a certain point in time, and then ceased. This cumulative effect may also emphasize a crescendo.

(2) The act of prophesying is simply the communication of truth about a subject. Here the unstated subject is Jesus Christ. The act of prediction is in view, so that the prophets and the Law prophesied about Christ until John.

(a) So that Christ indicates a culmination for the Law and the Prophets with John's ministry.

(b) This also properly includes the ministry of John as a part of that dispensation.

(3) The aorist verb from PROPHETEUSO summarizes the many past actions of the law and the prophets into one moment of time. And it concentrates on the culmination that action in John the Baptist.

(4) EI THELETE DEXASTHAI is an idiom. Literally it is: 'if you want to receive.' But receive is not a good English word for the phenomenon - listen is much better according to our idiom.

(5) So Christ says that we all have a choice to listen and receive the truth of what He is about to say. He is warning us with this idiom that what He is going to say may be hard to accept.

(6) It is hard to accept because it means the end of their times as they know it.

(7) Recall the parables of the dispensational change: (see the doctrine of wineskins)

(8) Christ makes Elijah a metaphor or type for John; there is a direct comparison between the two.

(9) And an explanation is attached: HO MELLON ERCHETHAI. This translates literally, 'the one who is about to arrive.'

(a) Matthew 17:9-13 (also Mark 9:9-13), "(9) As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the son of Man has risen from the dead.'

(10) And his disciples asked Him, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' (11) And He answered and said, 'Elijah is coming and will restore all things; (12) but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.'

(13) Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist."

- The three disciples of the inner circle, Peter, James, and John, have just witnessed the transfiguration of Christ and seen Moses and Elijah in their interim state.

- There are two appearances of Elijah that come to bear on this incident.

- The first is the coming of John the Baptist, a type of Elijah.

- The second is the coming of Moses and Elijah in the tribulation, a precursor to the second advent, as revealed in Revelation 11:1-12.

- When Christ says Elijah is coming and will restore all things, it refers to the tribulational appearance of Elijah in his interim body.

- Christ then compares His future sufferings with the past sufferings of John the Baptist; they are both persecutions.

(b) John the Baptist was the one who was 'about to arrive' for a long time. In fact for more than 450 years he held this status. Malachi 4:5 was a favorite verse of the scholarly class of Israel: "Behold I am going to send you Elijah the prophet

before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord."

- The day of the Lord entails all of eschatology, and from the Old Testament point of view, both advents.

- The scholars loved to talk about the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah, because his arrival would mark the beginning of the end.

- This is not unlike the fascination today with the rapture, and even the tendency to place certain prophecies within the church age when they are not.

(10) John evoked a memory of Elijah by his clothes, his asceticism, his ministry in the wilderness, and his bold rebuke of the powerful.

(a) There is no true reincarnation of Elijah's soul in John the Baptist's body; rather, the one man is a type of the other.

(b) In the tribulation, there is a resurrection of Elijah to prepare the way for the second coming. But neither is this a reincarnation.

John is the dividing element for volition in Israel. "And after all the people and tax-gatherers heard they declared God as righteous, having been baptized by John; But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not being baptized by him."

A general rule is now given: those who were positive to John responded positively to what Christ had taught; those who were negative to John's ministry also rejected Christ's teaching.

Of course it is the usual suspects here, the Pharisees.

Being baptized by John is the place of division because it was the command of the day.

A simple principle comes to mind: if you are positive to Bible teaching, it will not matter at all who is teaching it. It could be John or Christ; it could be anyone with any personality.

This is because the truth always wins through the personality of its teacher.

And this is also a matter of irony, that the teaching of Christ has to do with the downfall of John. This is why the dividing line is mentioned.

So the condition goes like this: if you liked the ministry of John, then you will have an appreciation for what Christ has said on the downfall of John. Why? Because they are both the truth.

Christ concludes with an assessment of the response of Israel to His ministry and John's. 'Therefore to whom will I compare the men of this generation and to whom are they like? They are like children who are sitting in the market-place and calling out to one another who say, 'We played the flute for you and you did not dance, we sang a dirge and you did not weep.'

So imagine children playing instruments in a marketplace; really poor music coming from them in flute and voice.

There is no funeral there, nor any celebration, so the demands of the children are inappropriate.

The music is bad and the occasion inappropriate. And then they become indignant over the situation because there is no response from the crowd.

He goes on to explain His illustration: For John the Baptist came not eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners. And wisdom is justified by all her children.'"

(1) This points out the utter hypocrisy of those who were negative to the truth.

(2) And a principle: that hypocrites are negative to any form of behavior on the part of those who have true freedom.

(3) Obedience to the law of God creates individual liberty. People who are negative to the law of God are haters of freedom.

(4) So when John the Baptist lived an ascetic life in the wilderness, the hypocrites slandered him, saying that he had a demon.

(5) And when Christ does just the opposite, eating and drinking (alcohol), criticism comes His way. The slanderers go to work, and call him a glutton, drunk, and friend of evil men.

(6) The final statement is about the fruit of wisdom. Wisdom is justified by what it produces. The opposite is also true: folly is condemned by all her children.

(a) A man is condemned by his children, if they are wrong.

(b) 1 Timothy 3:4-5, "(4) He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (5) (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how ill he take care of the church of God?)"

(c) And Christ is saying here that if you wonder about those who are negative to doctrine, then simply examine their fruit.

(d) Is irrational hypocrisy the fruit of wisdom?