

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

F. Crucial Events Leading up to the 2nd Tour of Galilee

4. Jesus Praises John the Immerser

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #084

Base Text: MT 11.7-19 (Parallel Text: LK 7.24-35)

7 As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John:

"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, you will find those who wear fine, expensive clothes and indulge in luxury in kings' palaces.

9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it stands written:

'I WILL SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE THE WAY BEFORE YOU.' (Mal. 3.1)

11 "Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Immerser; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

12 "From the days of John the Immerser until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. 15 Whoever has ears, take care to keep on listening carefully.

16 "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

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

18 "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' 19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'

"But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."

¹All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been immersed by John. But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been immersed by John.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *the words of Jesus are italicized in red*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	Somewhere in Galilee
Timeline	May, 31 AD (Month Sixteen)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage IV: The Great Galilean Ministry
	F. Crucial Events Leading Up to the 2 nd Tour of Galilee

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Title	4. Jesus Praises John the Immerser
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COMMENT:

In today's reading Jesus continued giving his encouragement to John the Immerser, who was languishing in Herod Antipas' prison at far away Macherus, in the rugged wilderness to the East of the Dead Sea. Jesus gave John more Scriptural consolation, this time applying the fulfillment of Scripture to John himself.

The timing of Jesus' words to John show us Jesus' grace and sensitivity. John's two disciples (emissaries) had witnessed many messianic miracles performed by Jesus. As they were starting to leave Jesus noticed it, and took the time to add something critical for John to hear. He would not let the two men leave without his final word for John. It was huge.

It has been John's God-given calling to identify Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and introduce him to the world as the Messiah. This was his work of preparing the people for Jesus' ministry. Now Jesus did the same for John, by identifying him for all time as the prophet promised in the Old Testament to precede the coming of the Messiah. Due to the authority of Jesus' word as God in human flesh, this was the greatest affirmation of the truth of Scripture regarding John that it was possible to give.

Jesus said two ultra-encouraging things to John through what he said to the crowd, knowing that the two disciples of John would faithfully relay Jesus' words to the struggling prophet. The first was that John was the prophet Malachi spoke about in Mal. 3.1. This affirmation had the added effect of identifying Jesus as the Messiah that Malachi spoke about as well. Once again, we see that Jesus used Scripture to encourage John.

Jesus then said that John was **“more than a prophet.”** Jesus said that there was no greater man under the old covenant than John. This was high praise, ranking the Immerser with Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Jeremiah and all the rest. John was more than just a prophet because he was the greatest of the prophets; he knew Jesus in the flesh, prepared the way for him, ministered at the same time with him, and saw the fulfillment of much of what the other prophets had written concerning Jesus.

Don't forget that Jesus spoke these things concerning John at the very time the prophet was confused and asking if Jesus was really the Messiah. Look at Jesus' grace here! He knew that John's questions were the product of his suffering, not a real change in his beliefs. Jesus judged John to be utterly faithful in his prophetic ministry, and therefore among the greatest of all the old covenant prophets. And he told him so, by publicly praising him.

Instead of berating John for a lapse of faith, Jesus affirmed and encouraged him in the greatest way possible, at his greatest time of need. Jesus said this because he knew John's heart, and the prophet was beyond reproach. He needed encouragement, not blame, and Jesus gave it to him as only the Trinity can do.

Jesus then said an amazing thing about new covenant disciples in this text. While John was as great as a person could get under the old covenant, Jesus said that even the least of all disciples in the new covenant would be greater than John! This means that all new covenant believers enjoy the fulness of God in Jesus in ways and depths that the old covenant faithful never could. The least of us have so much more than the greatest in the old covenant.

Take just one aspect of that fulness--the Holy Spirit--as an example. As John had prophesied, Jesus brought the full measure of the Holy Spirit that he had experienced as a member of the Trinity to abide within and upon every believer. No old covenant prophet, priest or king experienced that much grace and spiritual fulness. Yet every lowly believer in Jesus receives the Spirit without limit or measure from Jesus!

Finally, in pointing to the faithfulness and greatness of John the Immerser, Jesus was reminded again of the faithlessness and fickleness of his own generation of Jews in contrast. As we have seen, John was a man of strict spiritual discipline, even to the point of following Nazarite vows. The people said he was too extreme in this--to the point of being crazy, even though they highly respected him. Jesus, on the other hand, was not a Nazarite, and

Stage IV. The Great Galilean Ministry

drank wine and ate the rich food offered at parties he was invited to. People criticized him for being too open and lenient! The people were like spoiled children who could not be satisfied, no matter what Jesus tried to do.

APPLICATION:

Just like John, Jesus sees his best in us, not our worst. He forgives and forgets our sins and failures forever. He knows the power and reality of his own work within us, even when we can no longer see it ourselves. Our identity as his brother or sister is totally secure with him. Jesus sees the eternal person conformed to his image that is our true identity--and he never sees anyone else.

Yes, we get confused, and we take our eyes off of Jesus at times. We still have a sinful nature, so we fall short. However, our future glory in perfect likeness to Jesus--forever--is so certain that Paul could speak of it as already complete. This is how Jesus sees us. He uses the Scripture to encourage our faith more than anything else, just as he used the Scripture to comfort and build up John in prison.

How do you tend to forget your new covenant identity in Jesus?

What is the most effective way for you to remember and renew the truths of the person HE has made you to be?

How does seeing Jesus in the Scriptures equip you to see yourself in him?