

Luke 7:24-30 – Jesus speaks about John the Baptist

Last week, we heard John's question – was Jesus really the Messiah? John did not understand everything that Jesus was doing. Jesus showed John his power but also his grace and mercy and kindness to the suffering. He showed him that the kingdom would come in a surprising way. The messengers from John left. Now Jesus spoke about John – to honour him; but also to challenge us. We will study the words, using four questions:

1. Why did people go to listen to John? (v24-26)

Many people went to hear John preach, out in the desert (Luke 3). Many had been baptised. Why? A couple of years had now passed. Jesus wanted them to remember John's preaching and ministry. They had not gone to hear a wavering reed. John was not being blown one way then another. He preached firm truth from God, whether people liked it or not. A true preacher speaks God's truth, and does not change if people disagree – he must deliver God's message always. John was not a man of luxury. He lived a severe, hard life; wearing rough clothes and eating wild food in the desert. He was totally serious. His words were hard-hitting. Repent or perish! The time is short! The people had gone to hear a true prophet; the mouth of God. Why do you come to hear preaching? Jesus was asking the people: had they really followed John's teaching? Have you?

2. Who was John – why was he important? (v27-28)

John was no ordinary prophet – he was much more. In fact, other prophets spoke of him. e.g. Malachi 3:1 said he was the one to come before the Messiah and prepare the way. In fact, Malachi said he would go before Jehovah – the LORD himself. John introduced Jesus. He told the people to be ready for their king – and then introduced him to them. He was the greatest of all because he actually saw his face and knew his name. The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 19:10). True prophets preached the glory, death and resurrection of Jesus; false teachers lead us away from him. John stood the closest to Jesus, and so was greatest. Have you seen Jesus as he really is? That is the greatest privilege of all.

3. Who is the person who is greater than John? (v28)

There is someone greater than John. Who? The person who is least in the kingdom – and therefore every person in the kingdom! The “kingdom of God” is found wherever people submit to God and obey him from their hearts. This was promised to come one day. It came with Jesus. Jesus is the King. He died on the cross to release us from our sins. He rose to heaven to rule and send his Spirit to call us to himself. Those who bow to him as Lord are part of his kingdom. They have privileges John never had. He only saw the glory of Calvary and the resurrection from a distance. He died before they arrived. We live in their full light. It is better to live today than to have even seen Jesus face-to-face like John did. This is the climax of the ages: Jesus is on his throne and winning the nations to himself. Are you living now in the light? Do you see, by faith, his glory? Do you rejoice to live now? You should realise what amazing privileges we have!

4. Did the people accept what Jesus told them? (v29-30)

Many of the people rejoiced. They had been waiting for the king. When John preached, they had repented. Perhaps they had doubted too – but now Jesus told them that the kingdom was near. Great news – even for the worst sinners! The Pharisees, though, had not wanted to repent. And so they rejected Jesus now too. They were too proud to admit that they were wrong and turn. By rejecting Jesus, they rejected God. Jesus is the centre. He divides between heaven and hell. Where are you?