

*1Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. 3For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, 4so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Rom 8:1-4*

We looked last week at the confluence of the two great Covenants of Almighty God with man, the Old and the New Testaments. Both of these agreements had as their purpose restoring the relationship between God and man, Sin, the fall of man, caused a great chasm to develop between man, the creature, and our Creator. In the OT God dealt with sin by the Law given to the Jewish nation by Moses and the offering of blood sacrifices by priests. But the Jewish nation was not able to keep the Law because of the weakness of their sinful flesh, *what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh. Rom 8:3* Here in chapter three of Luke's gospel we have the last great prophet of the Old Covenant preparing the way for the Lamb of God, God's sacrifice for sin under the New Covenant, God's *own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin.*

John the Baptist saw *Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! John 1:29* John knew at this point who Jesus was, He was *The Lamb of God.* But we need to realize John was walking by faith, he was preparing the way for the Lord but he was dependent on God revealing the Messiah to him.

*29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me (Jesus told His disciples, I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. John 16:28).' 31 I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." John 1:29-31*

John didn't know who Jesus was when he started out baptizing but he knew that he was preparing the way and that the Messiah *would be revealed to Israel*, following the truth he knew he *came baptizing with water.* John knew he was sent to prepare the way of the Lord. He was fulfilling what Malachi, the last prophet in the OT, had proclaimed, God was to send *Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.*

*5"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. 6He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and strike the land with complete destruction." Mal 4:5,6*

John knew the prophecy his father Zacharias had received from the angel. He knew that it lined up with Malachi's prophecy. This was the time but he (like us) was a man who had to receive the mantle God had placed on him by faith. He didn't know all God had prepared for him. His life was not his own, he was called of God, he was a man on a mission to *turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, to prepared the way for the Lord. .*

*15For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. 16And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to*

*make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Luke 1:15-17*

I am certain John prayed hard that God would show him just what this ministry he was called to was to look like and for the power to walk faithfully. When was it to begin? What was he to do and say? Who was this One he was to prepare the way for? God had sent him to baptize with water for the forgiveness of sin, *he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; Luke 3:3* This was a simple call for repentance like many prophets before him. Hosea cried, *Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for your sin has been your downfall! 2 Return to the Lord and repent! Hosea 14:1,2*

But announcing the Messiah was dependent on God revealing the Chosen One to him. How was he to know? God promised he would give him a sign, *Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.* John’s baptism was for repentance but the Messiah was to *baptize with the Holy Spirit.* This was a new work, a new wineskin, God was to bring a power beyond man’s will to turn from sin. John was to see the Spirit descending on the Messiah. With this knowledge John was able to faithfully declare, *As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. Luke 3:16* Later John said, I saw the Spirit descend on Him like a dove which was the sign from God.

*32And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” John 1:32-34*

John was an amazing man because he was not proud, he was not caught up in his own importance. He was willing to just prepare the way and accept that Jesus’ ministry was to surpass his. Sometime after Jesus had been baptized by John his disciples and some Jews came and told him, *He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!” John 3:25* John wasn’t in competition or threatened but said simply, *He must increase, but I must decrease.*

*27John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. 28You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ 29He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. 30He must increase, but I must decrease. 31He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. 32And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. 33He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true. 34For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. 35The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. 36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” John 3:27-36*

He understood his place, *He who comes from heaven is above all.* John’s sense of God’s control of the affairs of life were similar to that of Paul when he considered the ministry of Apollos. Paul stated, *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 1 Cor 3:6,7*

John realized that his ministry was a gift from God, his place was to prepare the way, his ministry was to decrease while Jesus ministry was to advance. He accepted *Jesus who came from heaven*. Paul explained the fact of God's giftings to the Corinthians when he wrote, *that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other*. He told them, *And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?* 1 Cor 4:7

But we must remember John was a man. Jesus was the Son of God but John was a messenger sent to prepare the way, to help people to be ready for the Word of the Lord. John at some point sent his followers to ask Jesus if He was the Christ or should they look for another? John was a prophet, he had a mission but he wasn't all knowing. He was sent to bear witness to the light. He understood his role, *'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'*

John was a prophet, he was filled with the Holy Spirit before his birth. The angel declared, *For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.* Luke 1:15 He was moved by the Spirit as OT prophets. Peter declared, *20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture becomes a matter of someone's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.* 2 Pet 1:20,21 But we must remember he birth under the Old Covenant. He was a man chosen by God to declare the coming of the Lord. God uses men to prophecy, *men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.*

*11 "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 He who has ears to hear, let him hear! Mat 11:11-15*

Jesus gives us a wonderful insight into our position as believers, *he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he*. We as believers are to be born of the Spirit and more than that we are to be filled with the Spirit. Luke wrote in Acts that even in adversity, *the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.* Acts 13

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking unto Jesus, the [a]author and [b]finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Heb 12:1,2*

Since we have such a great hope may we walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of sinful flesh. May we walk with faith, *not justified by the works of the law (the Old Covenant), but by faith in Jesus Christ.* Gal 2:16 We have a greater call than even John the Baptist to be witnesses of the great Messiah, Jesus Christ.

*6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. John 1:6-9*