

## Luke Chapter 7 – John Karmelich

1. I call this lesson, "Applying Chapter 6" to our lives. To explain that, recall that in the last lesson, the focus was on Jesus ruling over that lives and what that means. The question remaining after we finished that chapter was in effect, "We get the idea Jesus is God and He wants to rule over all aspects of our lives, so how do we do that practically?" Great question, which is why Chapter 7 is full of examples of how that works practically. All that means is if we desire Jesus to be in charge of our lives and we aren't sure how to do that on a practical basis, the stories in Chapter 7 give us some wonderful examples of how to practice the lifestyle that Jesus wants us to live. To explain, indulge me as describe the stories that take place here in this chapter and hopefully in a moment as I tie these stories together, as I'll show you how Jesus wants us to apply "Chapter 6":
  - a) The first story takes place right after Jesus' sermon in the second half of the Chapter 6. As I love to state, there are no chapter breaks in the original text so the sermon from the last part of Chapter 6 ties to the events here in Chapter 7. This chapter opens up describing a Roman centurion (an army sergeant) working in Israel. To be a centurion literally means that he was in charge of 100 men. He'd be a man to be reckoned with in that community. He wants Jesus to heal his sick servant. In that Roman world, the normal attitude would be to kill a slave who was no longer valuable to him. However, this centurion had enough respect for the Jewish religion that he helped build a synagogue where all this took place.
    - i) Anyway, when he wanted Jesus to heal his servant, he had town officials approach Jesus with the request. Since this foreign centurion was respected for building this synagogue, they went along with the request. All of that background leads to the key point: The centurion (through others) asked Jesus to heal his servant and he trusted in Jesus to fulfill that request without actually going to see Jesus himself.
    - ii) OK John, cute story. Why should we care? If you recall, the last lesson discussed the idea of humbling ourselves before God and accepting His will for our lives. In effect that is what the centurion did. Yes Jesus healed the servant, but what's more significant is Jesus said this centurion had more faith than any Israelite. The point is the Israelites had expectations of what the Messiah should do, and this man did not have any expectations. He just came as humbly as possible to Jesus to beg for help without having any expectations of what Jesus can or will do.
  - b) Believe it or not, that ties to the next story: Jesus was in another town, where He saw a dead boy being carried away in an open casket. This was the only son of a widow. Jesus did raise the boy from the dead and that's the first recorded miracle in the New Testament of anyone raising someone from the dead. The reason this story is here is far more than to show that Jesus can raise someone from the dead. It shows us that we can approach Him on anything as nothing is beyond His grasp. So why doesn't Jesus bring back to life those we love and care about? He does daily when people do realize Jesus is in charge of their lives, they effectively get new life with a new purpose for living. The connection of these two stories is that the centurion humbly asks Jesus for his servant's life and in the second story we get someone desperate for help and Jesus is willing to help those who are "out" of options. Again the point is Jesus helping without any expectations of any results.
  - c) The third story is about John the Baptist, who is wrongly put in prison at this time as he called out King Herod for the sins he committed. The point here is if John could have his own moment of doubts about whom Jesus claims to be, so could we. Jesus doesn't go talk to John directly about his doubts, but responds to John's disciples who were sent to verify whether Jesus is who He claims to be. In this lesson I'll talk about how we deal with our own doubts that I suspect all of us face at times. With that said, now let me describe the final chapter story and then I'll tie all of these stories together.

- d) The final story is about Jesus having dinner with a Pharisee. He was part of a group who lived a strict religious life. I suspect he was probably looking for way to trap Jesus in his own words. The fact that Jesus was willing to dine with this man is evidence that He is always willing to reach out to anyone willing to find out more about Him.
  - i) A key plot point in this story is that the man who invited Jesus to dinner didn't do the normal things one would do for an invited guest. In today's culture, we'd offer to take someone's coat when they came in the house. Back then one would offer to wash one's feet as people walked in sandals in a hot and dry climate. At the same time a woman who was probably notorious nonreligious (to put it nicely) had the guts to enter this man's house out of desperation for Jesus to forgive her sins. The point is what the Pharisee refused to do, she did with her tears and perfume using them to wash the feet of Jesus with her hair.
  - ii) The main point of this story is Jesus told this woman her sins were forgiven, even though she never asked for forgiveness. The Pharisee who invited Jesus to dinner told Jesus that only God alone can forgive sins. Jesus responded with a parable of God forgiving one person much more than another. While the Pharisee examined Jesus with questions, this woman snuck in seeking help. The key point is Jesus did forgive her of her sins because she humbled herself before Him.
- 2. With all that said, let me put all these stories together and show you something interesting:
  - a) Jesus showed compassion for a Roman soldier who refused to see Jesus by himself out of humility for who that soldier realized Jesus was.
  - b) Next we read of Jesus traveling elsewhere to have compassion for a destitute woman who lost her only son. Jesus helped that woman when no one could.
  - c) Next we read of John the Baptist going through his doubts about Jesus being the Messiah. Jesus responds to those doubts by doing miracles in front of John's disciples and for those who believed in Jesus but were having their own doubts at the moment.
  - d) Finally, we read of Jesus having compassion on a woman who crashed a dinner party out of the guilt she felt for her sinful life. Jesus didn't scold her for what she did, but He had compassion as Jesus saw her for her potential as a believer.
  - e) In summary, we have Jesus showing compassion to different people who are in need and look to Jesus for help.
  - f) That's why these stories are picked: To show Jesus as compassionate. The reason I titled this lesson "applying Chapter 6" is because Jesus taught us in those verses how to have the proper perspective about dealing with others. Here Jesus is giving us examples of how to apply that compassion to others around us. With the idea of having compassion, let's get started on the details:
- 3. Chapter 7, Verse 1: When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup> There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup> The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup> When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this," <sup>5</sup> because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." <sup>6</sup> So Jesus went with them.
  - a) Let's start with the word "finished" in Verse 1. That word tells us Jesus was still wherever He was at the end of Chapter 6. This was a city at the north end of the Sea of Galilee called Capernaum. That's where we got Jesus giving the "Sermon on the Plain" as I described in the last lesson. I believe the key point of that sermon is about forgiving others and having compassion for other people. We're about to read of a Roman Centurion who applied that sermon better than anyone who did listen to Jesus give it.
  - b) To begin, I should give a little background on Roman Centurion's. To reach that rank, one had to earn it through victories in combat. Whoever this unnamed Centurion was, get the idea he wasn't a rookie. Despite his rank and authority, he approached Jesus humbly.

- i) As I said in the introduction the word "Centurion" means leader of 100 just as the word "century" means 100 years. Technically they often had more than 100 men, but the word conveys the idea of a leader of a group of soldiers.
    - ii) Understand that for a Roman Centurion, his servant was probably a slave. In that culture, a soldier had a legal right to kill their slave if they were no longer useful to them. However, this Centurion cared about his servant's life. The centurion also knew he couldn't save his servant so he asked Jesus to help him.
    - iii) With that said, remember why centurions were on the scene. The basic rule of the Roman's was in effect, "Pay your taxes, don't rebel against Rome and then you can go do whatever you want". Roman soldiers were there to enforce that concept.
  - c) With that said, notice the centurion didn't approach Jesus himself. Maybe the centurion realized that because he wasn't Jewish, he shouldn't approach Jesus personally to ask for a favor. Given the fact that he was a soldier, he could burst through the crowd, to approach Jesus. However, he had the wisdom to ask others to approach Jesus and not "pull rank".
  - d) By the way, this same story is also told in Matthew and Mark's Gospel. Luke's account is the only gospel that makes the point that the centurion never talked directly to Jesus. The way the centurion approached Jesus is through the town officials.
    - i) I should also point out here that Romans encouraged people to worship their own gods and in effect "be religious". That's because the Romans figured out that those who worship most gods are less likely to rebel against them. Religious people are less likely to steal or murder, and that kept the Romans safer from rebellion. With that said, this centurion had the money and the incentive to build a synagogue for the local residents as such an act was probably encouraged by his commanders.
    - ii) Next notice the Jewish leaders in Capernaum approached Jesus to say effectively, "Help this man as he built us our synagogue." Remember that in that culture one was judged based on their works. The centurion's reputation was good as he built (probably paid for) that synagogue.
  - e) The point of all of this is that it worked. Jesus agreed to go with the town elders to go to the house of the centurion. The application of all of this is coming up in a few verses:
4. Verse 6 (cont.): He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. <sup>7</sup> That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup> For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."
- a) As I said, Luke is the only gospel to emphasize the fact that the centurion never spoke face to face to Jesus. This whole conversation took place through others. The only reason that is significant is these verses show the humility of this centurion, who let's be honest, could pull rank and just see Jesus based on who that centurion was.
  - b) With that said, let me paraphrase the centurion, "I'm in the army. I know what it's like to obey commanding officers and people who are required to obey my orders as well." I get the idea based on the miracles that You've done that You are much greater in rank than I can ever hope to be. Therefore, I humbly beg You (Jesus) to help my servant not because I'm a centurion, but just because I need the help and I'm all out of other options."
  - c) If there is one thing I've learned from living the Christian life, is that God does His best work when we realize we're all out of options. That way God and God alone gets credit for whatever happens. Does that guarantee God will work a miracle that way? Of course not. It does guarantee that if we're willing to fully submit ourselves to God with our lives that our salvation is secure. What God chooses to do over and above that to help us is in effect His business as we accept the idea of Jesus being in charge of our lives. I have seen some wonderful things happen to lots of people when we are willing to humble ourselves that way and let go of any options outside of letting God work in our lives.

- d) With all that said, the centurion had that type of attitude. He sent servants to approach Jesus to say something like, "You (Jesus) are in charge of my life. If it's your will, You can cure what is ailing my servant. Therefore, I (the centurion), come to You as humbly as I can and I realize I'm not even worthy of seeing You face to face as You are far greater in authority that I can ever hope to be."
  - e) One final thing to catch before I move on. The name of this centurion is never given. I am convinced he's saved and I'd like to meet him one day in heaven. I admire his attitude of how we should approach Jesus to begin with.
5. Verse 9: When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." <sup>10</sup> Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.
- a) Consider that the man the centurion asked Jesus to heal recovered without any form of physical contact. The centurion found out his servant was better as the men who spoke to Jesus came back to the house and found the sick servant well. I suspect that the name of this servant wasn't even told to Jesus. My point is He didn't put on a big show to heal the servant, it was just done.
  - b) That leads me back to Verse 9. Jesus proclaimed to the crowd who probably came for the show to see another miracle, "I have not found such great faith even in Israel." Imagine if one says to a religious Jewish crowd, "This Roman, gentile soldier has more faith than any Jewish person I've met here in Israel." That is a powerful insult.
  - c) What this comes down to is the idea that religious people often trust in the fact that they are religious as a means to be pleasing to God as opposed to just trusting Him to guide our lives to begin with. The "faith" of the Jewish crowd is that they believe they're chosen nationally to serve God and they're saved based on being good people. Jesus is rebuking that concept of approaching God based on how good we are as people. That's why Jesus says the faith of this Roman centurion who humbled himself to the point where he would not even see Jesus face to face has greater faith than someone trying to prove to God how good they are based on whatever religious things they do with their lives.
  - d) Before I move on, let's all remember why we do good things to begin with: Not so we can earn any points with God, but only because that's the best way to live out our lives. God doesn't judge us based on those works, but in our humility before Him and trust that He and He alone paid the price for our sins. That leads me back to this centurion. He didn't approach Jesus based on his authority as a commander or the fact that he paid for a new synagogue in town. He came to Jesus as humbly as he could and that is why Jesus said that his faith was greater than any Israelites he had met to this point. Because this man did humble himself this way, Jesus granted his request to help his servant not to prove who He was, but to show that God rewards those who approach Him with all humility.
  - e) Since everyone lived "happily ever after" in that story, time to move on.
6. Verse 11: Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. <sup>12</sup> As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out-- the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. <sup>13</sup> When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."
- a) Verse 11 opens with "Soon afterwards". That's there so we tie this story together with the story from previous set of verses. As Jesus was traveling to this town, notice that besides his own disciples a large crowd also followed Him. Notice that this crowd didn't make it into the town itself. They were met by another large crowd walking out of town in order to go bury someone. In other words, we have one large crowd who probably wanted to see another miracle meeting another crowd performing a funeral march. Since Jesus was leading the crowd approaching the funeral, He focused on the woman who was probably leading the procession out to the cemetery, the mother of the boy who had died here in these verses. With that said, let me give a little more background before the miracle here.

- b) The text says this woman was a widow and the dead person was her only son. In the Old Testament there are only a few miracles recorded by prophets bring dead people back to life. The first of which is the prophet Elisha in a very similar situation. Elisha in 1st Kings Chapter 17 brought back to life a son of a widow who Elisha was helping. My point here is that this Jewish crowd would know their Old Testament and be familiar with that story.
  - c) Coming back to the verses, notice the compassion Jesus had for this woman he never met. The first thing Jesus says to her is "Don't cry". I'm willing to bet the grieving woman most likely didn't know who He was and she didn't ask for a miracle. Also remember that the crowd who came with Jesus had never seen Him raise anyone from the dead. The crowd was probably familiar with the Elijah story and probably wondered what Jesus would do.
  - d) My whole point here is we often don't think of Jesus as being compassionate to those who are not actively seeking Him at that moment. Yet it shows that God is always willing to reach out to those who are hurting and wants to be there to comfort us through that time.
    - i) By the way, this verse does not mean Jesus will raise up someone who died for us the way the text describes it here. It just means Jesus saw this as an opportunity to show the crowd that was following Him let alone the crowd that was following a widow to the cemetery that Jesus is who He claims to be. Therefore, as we'll read in the next verse, Jesus will do a miracle similar to the one that Elisha did roughly a 1,000 years earlier.
7. Verse 14: Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" <sup>15</sup> The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.
- a) When Elijah brought a boy back to life in 1st Kings 17, he prayed over that boy three times and then God decided to bring that boy back to life. Here in Luke 7, Jesus simply told the boy to get up. Remember that this is "God" talking. I don't know how long the boy has been dead but my guess because of the hot weather is that it was probably the same day. I don't know if rigor mortis had set in, but that usually occurs 2-4 hours after death based on one computer dictionary I checked. The point is I don't know how the mechanics did work of this boy coming back to life, but if Jesus is God, anything is possible.
  - b) OK cute miracle and most of us are familiar with this story. Why should we care? Again we are back to the idea of compassion. It shows us that Jesus cared about this widow who lost her only son. He also cared about the crowd that followed Him and the crowd going to the funeral. They all saw proof that at the least Jesus is a great prophet. My point is if Jesus cares that much about these people, how do you think He feels about anyone willing to trust in Him with their lives? He won't return the lives of our friends to earth, but He'll bring new life to us as we trust in Him and give us a great purpose for living. Jesus is also teaching us to "apply Chapter 6" as He cares about others so we should also care about the lives of others. That great purpose of living is to make a difference in the lives not only of people we know, but even of strangers as we live to make a difference for God's kingdom.
  - c) With that positive that stated, let's return to this story:
8. Verse 16: They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." <sup>17</sup> This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.
- a) While I was explaining how this passage applies to us today, the news about this miracle of Jesus bringing back someone from the dead has spread throughout the greater area. If Jesus couldn't get a moment's peace before, consider how popular He must have been at this point. Still, because He never fulfilled the expectation of overthrowing the Roman Government, these same nation would reject Him in a fairly short time period.
  - b) The problem comes back to our expectations of God. We expect Him to act our way or do a miracle because we say so. We too easily forget that we serve Him and not vice-versa. Once we accept that it's His world to do with as He pleases, then we appreciate life more.

- c) My point is Jesus came to bring us peace. That peace doesn't come by demanding that He do things our way. That peace comes by making requests but also remembering that He's in charge, not us. When we accept that, I find that not only that life gets easier to handle, but we can appreciate the limited time we have, once we learn to use our time to make a difference for Him with it. How we make that difference is a question between each of us and God. It's always a matter of asking Him how He wants to guide us today. Then we do what is logical and biblically sound and let Him guide us accordingly. Then I find that the miracles do come once we learn to recognize that the life we have is the miracle itself.
- d) Meanwhile, it's time to switch stories and see how it ties to Jesus' compassion as well:
- 9. Verse 18: John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, <sup>19</sup> he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"
  - a) All of a sudden, the topic switches to John the Baptist. To make it brief, at this period in John's life, he was in prison for daring to criticize the local king because he illegally took the wife of his brother as his own. John doesn't know it yet, but he's going to be killed before the resurrection happens. Remember that John knew who Jesus was. When he baptized Jesus back in Chapter 3, John realized that his cousin (via his mother) was the Messiah. I wonder if growing up as boys, they saw each other on holidays.
  - b) Now here is John stuck in prison and he's wondering if Jesus is the Messiah or not? What I suspect is happening is John is getting reports about the miracles that Jesus did. One of the predictions of the Messiah is He will set the prisoner's free. That's from Isaiah 61, that Jesus himself quoted back in Luke 4:18. In other words, John is saying "Jesus, I'm stuck in prison. Am I going to be set free or what?" Remember my little lecture about accepting Jesus as being in charge and not making demands of Him? That is John's problem here at this moment.
  - c) Before I get to Jesus' response to John's request, let me discuss the idea of doubts. Let's be honest, it's real easy to think, "Other religious non-Christians are very nice people, why should Jesus be the only way to heaven?" Another thing that's easy to think is if all these stories about Jesus are true, why can't Jesus just be someone with great power, why does He have to be God Himself? Another common complaint is the universe is a huge place and it's possible to make up a story like this to give us hope in a universe where we are only an insignificant dot compared to the vast size of space. Finally, there is the issue of how do we know the bible is true anyway? How do we know these stories are true?
    - i) I bring all this up here, because if John the Baptist could have his own moments of doubt, I guarantee that we each will have our own moments for one of the reasons stated above or maybe we have suffered too much to trust in God, or don't want to give up some aspect that the bible considers immoral. Bottom line, having doubts are both easy and common. If John the Baptist has his doubts, so could we.
    - ii) I can't answer all the doubts in one sentence. The shortest version is the bible as a whole is designed to alleviate doubts as it lays out proof after proof that Jesus is who He claims to be. Think about Jesus this way: If He really did do all of these things including being resurrected, why should we doubt Him when He claims to be God Himself? As to bible accuracy, remember the acronym MAPS. That's what one finds in the back of the bible. In this case it stands for Manuscripts, Accuracy, Prophecy and Statistics. If one studies any of those disciplines on the topic of bible accuracy it will amaze you how accurate it is.
    - iii) As to the vastness of the universe, if one accepts the idea that it was created with a purpose in mind, then one has to ask, what is that purpose? It's only by accepting the idea that the universe has a purpose can we accept the idea that we were made with a purpose to begin with. That purpose is to serve Him and make a difference for Him with our lives.
  - d) All of that leads me back to John. Let's read now how Jesus responds to John's doubts:

10. Verse 20: When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?' " <sup>21</sup> At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. <sup>22</sup> So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. <sup>23</sup> Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."
- a) Jesus' response to John was to perform a bunch of miracles in front of those gathered in the area. Then the messengers who John sent were told to go back to him and say, "Look what Jesus is doing". I'm sure John would respond something like, "I'm glad that You are helping others, but about me? I'm still stuck in prison and I'd like to be let out. Over and above that, when are You (Jesus) going to overthrow Rome and start your eternal rule as that is what the Messiah is supposed to do!"
  - b) To sum it all up, John is thinking, "Good for everyone else, where's my miracle?" After all I'm the one who worked hard for you through my ministry. Why aren't you coming here to get me out of prison? That's the type of concept many of us wonder when we hear of others getting miracles. We easily start to think, "I'm a good person, where's my cure of my diseases?" Why is Jesus working over there and not over here?"
  - c) The answer of course is God chooses to work where He chooses to work. Of course we're still saved. In effect Jesus is telling John, be faithful until death. Your reward is coming. That's what Jesus is telling You and Me. Jesus is not setting John free in effect because he already believes in Jesus. What He is choosing to do here is show those who don't believe in Him. My point here is our miracle is our salvation. What God chooses to do over and above that is His business. It comes back to the idea that we serve Him and not the other way around. The idea is to live as if God won't do anything "special" in our lives once we are saved, but then watch Him work without putting that expectation on Him.
  - d) Coming back to John, Jesus response to Him was in effect, "See what I'm doing here, that's the proof that I am who said I am." Jesus response to our doubts is essentially, study the evidence that is presented in the bible. You and I don't get a bunch of miracles in order to prove Jesus is God. We get something better: A book with hundreds of predictions about every thing Jesus will do before He came to earth. Four accounts (Gospels) explaining in great detail what He did. We get epistles (letters) written by eyewitnesses to Jesus to tell us what God expects of us and predictions about how the future will play out.
    - i) If we can see all of the evidence written about Jesus centuries before He was born, then we can also trust all of the predictions made about our eternal future as well as the future of this world.
    - ii) Want a few examples: Consider in the creation story where it says, "Let us make man in our image". Who was God talking to when He said "us"? It can't refer to the angels as they don't have the power to create the world. When Abraham was going to offer his son as a sacrifice, it was at the same spot as the crucifixion many centuries later. Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son" (Genesis 22:8). I'm convinced that line is why Jesus was called "The lamb of God" by John the Baptist himself. (See John 1:29).
    - iii) My point is I can go through the entire Old Testament and show lots of proofs that tie to Jesus as the Messiah. John the Baptist had his doubts and as a reward for his faithful service, Jesus performed some amazing miracles there on the spot as John didn't have the advantage of the complete bible picture as proof of who Jesus is.
    - iv) The last point on this topic is that John wanted Jesus to "get the show on the road". I think John wanted Jesus to overthrow Rome and do the things the Jewish people did associate with the Messiah, which is to rule forever. Jesus' response is in effect I am working My way on My timing. Wait on that and you'll be rewarded.

- e) With all that said, the messenger's John sent then left to report back to him all the miracles that just occurred. It's Jesus saying, "You want proof, there's your proof". John would not be let out of prison as in effect that is not God's will for John at that time.
  - f) Jesus final words to John the Baptist were Verse 23: "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." Let me explain it this way: Do people fall away from God due to Jesus? All the time. There are many who get the Gospel message but because God isn't doing a miracle on their timing or because people want to prove their worth to God or in some cases, can't deal with the persecution of being a Christian. For those reasons, many do turn away from Jesus. That's different from doubts: John the Baptist was having his doubts as he was in prison and Jesus wasn't doing what he expected Him to do.
    - i) The good news here is the word "Blessed". That can mean happy or as I prefer, the word "joyful". The idea is we can have eternal and internal joy no matter we are dealing with (even prison) knowing that God is in charge, on the throne and that He has a plan for our eternal life, no matter what the circumstances at the moment.
    - ii) This is Jesus saying, going through a tough time right now? Welcome to the club. We may or may not end the suffering we are dealing with in this lifetime, but we can have internal joy through that suffering as well as eternal rewards if we're just willing to trust Jesus through all of this. Again, I find that God does His best work in us when we're truly willing to let go of our worries and trust Him to guide us in whatever situation we are dealing with. That's Jesus' final message to John.
  - g) In the meantime, Jesus still wanted to say things about John to the crowd that's still there gawking with their mouths wide open (as I picture it) over the miracles Jesus just did.
11. Verse 24: After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? <sup>25</sup> If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. <sup>26</sup> But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>27</sup> This is the one about whom it is written: " 'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' <sup>28</sup> I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."
- a) To understand these verses, know that before John was put in prison, he was popular in that nation. Back in Chapter 1, Luke stated that all (lots of people) traveled out to where John was baptizing to go watch his show. Jesus is correctly assuming that most of those who are there with Him at that moment saw John preach in the wilderness.
  - b) For Jesus to say, "A reed swaying in the wind" in Verse 24 is an expression that can mean, "Did you go hear a bunch of empty words that had no meaning?" Of course not. John did speak of me (Jesus) and the miracles are your own proof. The next bit of proof is that fact that John was dressed like a "wild man living in the wilderness", not a fancy king living in a palace. Jesus whole point here is that John did his work as the Old Testament predicted:
  - c) Remember it was a well-known Old Testament prophecy that Elijah who lived roughly a 1,000 years earlier would return prior to the Messiah coming, (See Micah 4:5.)
    - i) Jesus is stating in effect John is that appearance of Elijah. Everything that John did was predicted in the bible. Jesus is saying, John wasn't saying meaningless words out in the desert. He was preaching about Jesus' appearing and now here I (Jesus) am, the Messiah right in front of you!
  - d) OK, you're preaching to the choir again. We know and accept all of this. Why should we care? Again, I'm back to "applying Chapter 6". That just means that if we are trusting that Jesus is the Messiah, we should be living our lives accordingly. John the Baptist had his doubts dealt with by Jesus miracles a few verses back. We get our own doubts dealt with by continually studying His word and trusting in His guidance for our lives. We don't get a "get out jail free card" by trusting in Jesus, but we do get Him to guide our lives through whatever we are dealing with at the moment and that's the underlying point of this text.



- e) With all that said, I now want to come to my favorite verse in this chapter. Verse 28 says that "Who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist". OK what does that mean and how does that affect us?
    - i) To explain, first we have to understand what is the "kingdom of God". Think of it as a "subset" of everyone who is saved throughout history. Are there people in the Old Testament who are saved for eternity? Of course. Are there babies who die who get a free ticket into heaven? I'd say so, but that's God's business to sort out. Are there naïve people about Jesus who trust in a God ruling over the world who get saved? Again, I'd say yes, but again that's God's business to sort out. With all that said, there is a "subset" of people in heaven, who do understand the idea that Jesus died, paid the full price for our sins and is in charge of our lives. Those who believe all of that are called "Christians" and that's called "kingdom of God".
    - ii) What all that means is those who have the privilege of understanding who Jesus is get a special eternal role that John the Baptist didn't get. John didn't get to live to the point where Jesus was resurrected. In effect, John was an Old Testament type of prophet because he didn't get to be part of the church as he wasn't there when the resurrection happened. To explain all of this another way, if you're ever feeling insignificant as a Christian, know that your status in heaven is greater than John the Baptist as he wasn't part of the Christian church. I don't know how all of that plays out in heaven, but I'm looking forward to finding out one day.
  - f) Also notice that Jesus said that John was greater than anyone in the Old Testament. That would include Abraham, Moses and David. The point is because John got the privilege of introducing the Messiah to the world, that privilege is greater than all the other characters in the Old Testament as John's privilege is greater than all of theirs.
    - i) With that said, the text has two more verses about John's ministry here:
12. Verse 29: (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John.<sup>30</sup> But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)
- a) Luke mentions here that those in Israel who were already very religious (the Pharisee's and the legal experts in God's law) refused to submit themselves to John's baptism. They wrongly thought that they didn't need forgiving as they already knew God's law well. It's the false idea of trusting in our own goodness to approach God versus trusting in Jesus complete payment for our sins.
  - b) Does this mean that being baptized was necessary in order for them to be saved? No. It means that they're willing to acknowledge that they are imperfect people and in need of a savior to begin with. A Christian baptism is a proof to those around us that we're trusting in Jesus for our salvation. John's baptism was something different: It was proof that one needed forgiving of their sins. The Pharisees and Jewish bible experts believed they were saved because they kept the Old Testament commandments. Luke adds this point here to show that most of the Jews did want a Messiah to forgive their sins.
  - c) Now we return to Jesus, who has more to say to this crowd who was wondering about John being in jail and what Jesus was going to do about John.
13. Verse 31: "To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? <sup>32</sup> They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other: "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry."
- a) Jesus is comparing those who didn't believe in him to children who want other children to play with them. Children loved to be noticed. If they play a musical instrument, they like when others react positively to it. If they play a sad song, they want people to be sad as a reaction to their sad song. Jesus point with this simple illustration as just as children are disappointed when others don't react to them, so I'm disappointed at your reaction here.

- b) The point of this whole discussion with the crowd is many people there still didn't believe Jesus was the Messiah despite John's testimony about Jesus and despite the miracles done. It comes back to the idea that many people can accept Jesus as a great miracle worker or as someone giving great power by God, but can't accept the idea that Jesus is God or that He alone pays the price for our sins. People still want to prove themselves to God.
  - i) Ok John, once again, you're preaching to the choir. We know and accept that Jesus did pay the complete price for our sins and is in charge of our lives. The lesson for us is about constantly letting go of our fears and trusting in God working through us. Yes we still have to go through life making the best decisions possible. Living the Christian life is about trusting that God is guiding us through those decisions and working out our lives for His glory. So what does that have to do with these verses? The point is about trusting Jesus through all situations. Just as children want us to react to what they are doing, so Jesus wants us to trust Him through whatever we are going through in our own life.
  - ii) Meanwhile, back to Jesus' discussion of John the Baptist:
- 14. Verse 33: For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.'<sup>34</sup> The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."'<sup>35</sup> But wisdom is proved right by all her children."
  - a) Here Jesus makes a comparison of the reputation (key word) of both John and himself. When the crowds listened to Jesus thought of John the Baptist, they thought of a person who lived an isolated life out in the desert and didn't indulge in fancy meals or drinking any hard liquor. In other words John was associated with religious self-discipline. On the other hand, because Jesus accepted invitations to eat with whoever was interested in what He had to say, Jesus' reputation among some was that he was a glutton (over eater who did not fast often like the Pharisees). Because Jesus spent time with tax collectors (who in those days were associated with the worst of criminals) and "sinners". That last category is about those who deliberately don't care about God and do whatever they want.
  - b) The point is Jesus spent time with the worst of society. The Pharisees thought Jesus must be one of them (non-religious) based on His actions. Jesus said earlier, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:32). The point is Jesus didn't act like those "sinners", but just spent time with non-religious Jews trying to teach people to turn from their sin and follow God.
  - c) That leads me back to these verses. Just as in the previous set of verses Jesus did describe children who are disappointed because others didn't react to their music, so those who are rejecting Jesus' message won't change because they assume Jesus is just like those who He went to preach to. At the same time this same group said that John the Baptist must have some sort of demon in him based on the way he lived his life. In summary, some people are never happy no matter how you present the message. In other words, some people just don't want to change their lifestyle and no matter what you say or how you present the message, they find an excuse why they won't believe what is obvious. Here is Jesus doing great miracles yet because of who He associated with, some reject that message.
  - d) John, one more time you're preaching to the choir again. Those of us reading this study already accept Jesus as God and get the idea that many people reject the Gospel message no matter how it is presented. A lesson here for us is that we have to accept the idea that a majority of people will reject Jesus no matter how it is presented to them. This will lead well into the parable of the "soils" in the early part of Chapter 8. There we will talk about the idea that some people will get it and grow into believers, which is why it's important to keep preaching the Gospel to others. Despite the fact that some people as we read here in these verses, reject Jesus message, others will get it. Therefore, we as Christians do as Jesus called us to do and be His witnesses to all people knowing that some will get it.

15. Verse 36: Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.<sup>37</sup> When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume,<sup>38</sup> and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.
- a) We now move into the final story in this chapter. Let me give a little background here as it may help to explain this story better. What was a common form of entertainment back then was to invite a guest over for a meal and even let others who are not invited stand in the back and listen to the speaker. I have to admit that I love the fact that one never reads of Jesus turning down a free meal. Given the fact that he and his men roamed from town to town to speak, Jesus had to live off the generosity of others in order to live. The way I picture this dinner as Jesus is the invited guest of someone who didn't believe in what He was preaching. At the same time, people were allowed to stand in the back and listen to the conversation. I don't believe this Pharisee believed in Jesus as the Messiah, but he was hoping he could catch Jesus mess up somehow and show others in the room that mistake.
  - b) A second piece of background is that tables were usually low to the ground. Guests sat at these tables not by sitting in chairs with backs, but by leaning on the table and sitting on a pillow of some sort. Their feet would stick out toward the back as they leaned forward on the table itself. That detail will become important as I describe this story.
  - c) All of that background leads me to discuss this woman who showed up. She was not one of the invited guests but probably one of the townsfolk who stood in the back to listen to the dialogue of the invited guests. Beggars may even be among this group and when the meal was over they were allowed to beg or say, eat what was left over. Also among those in the background may be those whose reputation there wasn't that great and in this case would include this woman who was probably a prostitute. I'm stating all of this so we can understand how she got in the house in the first place.
  - d) That leads me to discuss the alabaster jar of perfume that she brought in Verse 37. Think of this as a deodorant that people carried with them. People didn't bath very often in that culture back then, so carrying this type of perfume in a bottle that hung on strings around one's neck was common. In fact the religious Jews even permitted women to wear this as they went to synagogue. My point is simply that for a woman to be wearing a container of perfume around her neck was a common thing back then.
  - e) All of that background leads us to the story itself. While Jesus was dining with the host of the meal and His feet were probably sticking out behind Him (away from table), as Jesus sat at this table, that's when this woman started to wash Jesus feet with her hair. I'm sure that act got the attention of all the people present at the party. My whole point is that it's not unusual in that culture to have uninvited guests stand in the background as listening to the conversation was the local form of entertainment. However, having this woman who was probably a locally known prostitute start to wash Jesus feet with her hair and her perfume, was now the center focus of attention there. If that wasn't obvious enough to raise everyone's focus on Jesus, she also started to kiss His feet to worship Him. I don't know if she wanted something or maybe was convicted by her sins, but for whatever the reason, she started doing this act as a sign of worship.
  - f) The positive news here is that Jesus didn't see her as an uninvited prostitute, but saw her based on her potential as a believer in God based on the fact that she submitted herself to Him. Again we have another act in this chapter of someone willing to come to Jesus with no expectations, but just to come to Him humbly based on His goodness not anything we did or can do to earn that love.
  - g) This final story in the chapter teaches us how to approach Jesus. Not to show off anything we do earn His favor, but strictly based on His love for us. With that obvious statement made, let's now read what happens next.

16. Verse 39: When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is--that she is a sinner." <sup>40</sup> Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. <sup>41</sup> "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" <sup>43</sup> Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.
- a) Let me now discuss this story from the perspective of the person who invited Jesus over for the meal. His first thought was in effect, "If Jesus knew what kind of woman this was, He would never let her touch Him." The Pharisee thought of her as "beneath him". The obvious issue is that of compassion for the lost versus thinking that our religious works makes us more respective in God's eye's than someone who doesn't care about Him. As I love to state, living a God fearing life is the best way to live, but it doesn't earn us "points" with God. We live that way as that is how God wants us to live. Our rewards in heaven are based on our faithfulness to Him, and definitely not on acting more holy than others.
  - b) In order for Jesus to try to teach this principal to the host of the meal, Jesus gives a parable about a moneylender who forgives one man of 500 denarii (a denarii is a day's pay) and to another person the moneylender forgave another man of 50 denarii. Jesus then asks the obvious question of "who did the moneylender forgive the most?"
    - i) The host of the meal first thought was that it was a trick question. Therefore, the text implies he hesitated and said, "I suppose the one with the bigger debt".
    - ii) Jesus then responds that it wasn't a trick question. Now in the next few verses we will read how that simple parable applies to that dinner party.
17. Verse 44: Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. <sup>47</sup> Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."
- a) Jesus point is that when He came for the meal, the host didn't offer to wash Jesus' feet. As I said in the lesson introduction, that's like not offering to take someone's coat when they come over for a meal. The host also never offered Jesus any oil for his head, which in that culture was a sign of respect as oil is associated with cooling one on a hot day. While the host didn't do any of that, this woman poured out her perfume on Jesus feet and washed His feet with her hair. The simple point is that she showed much more love to Jesus as an uninvited guest than the host showed Jesus as the invited guest.
  - b) Then Jesus throws the "kicker" and says, her sins, which are many have been forgiven. It is not because she formally asked for forgiveness, as she didn't have to say those words. Her actions indicated that she was sorry for her lifestyle and was begging Jesus to forgive her as she got the idea that either He was God or at the least a holy man who cared about the lives of anyone willing to seek forgiveness.
  - c) Then to drive the point home, we have Verse 48:
18. Verse 48: Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." <sup>49</sup> The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" <sup>50</sup> Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."
- a) Remember that whoever else was invited to this meal were probably looking for a way to accuse Jesus of being a false prophet. That's why they say out loud, "Who does He think He is saying He can forgive sins?" The obvious implication is that Jesus is claiming to be God Himself here in this verse. However, while the invited guests were complaining on the issue of who does Jesus claim to be, Jesus was still focusing on the woman who used her hair to wipe Jesus feet and He said, "Your sins are forgiven, go in peace".

- b) An interesting point here is that in effect Jesus didn't care about those who would never believe in Jesus as God what they thought. His focus was on those who do seek Him out and helping them trust in Him more. That's the great lesson for you and me. When we're willing to come to Jesus humbly, He will forgive us, over and over again, as our salvation is not based on how good we are, but only in our trust in Him to pay the complete price of all our sins, past present and future. In other words, this story here is a great summary of the Gospel message without ever mentioning that fact directly.
- c) That fact leads well into my closing prayer. All the stories in this chapter have to do with Jesus showing compassion to those who asked for His help, those who just need his help, those struggling with who Jesus was (John the Baptist) and those who thought they were beyond help like the woman in our last story. The point for us is about using our time to have compassion for others just as Jesus continues to show compassion in our lives when we use it to make a difference for Him in the world around us. With that said, my closing prayer is that God may continue to be compassionate to use as we use all our lives for His glory. May we use the opportunities God lays in front of us to be a witness for Him. May He fill us with His boldness, His Spirit and His desire as we live for Him. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.