



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. Luke

Chapter 7

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Introduction

Chapter Outline

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Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant 7:1-10



- *when He concluded all His sayings*, Namely, those contained in the preceding chapter
- A centurion is a Roman officer who was the commander of a hundred men
- Roman soldiers were stationed throughout Judea, Samaria and the Galilee to maintain order
- This centurion appears as a devout, kind, humble man – yet, he was a *centurion* – not only a Gentile, but a Roman soldier, and an instrument of Israel's oppression

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant 7:1-10



- Such a person could not be admitted beyond the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple, but he could attend Sabbath services in a local Synagogue
- This Gentile Roman officer had even financed the building of the Synagogue in Capernaum (verse 5)
- The centurion had an unusual attitude towards his slave
- Under Roman law, a master had the right to kill his slave, and it was expected that he would do so if the slave became ill or injured to the point where he could not work

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant 7:1-10



- Jesus fame as a good Physician and a Teacher had now travelled far and wide
- The Centurion saw himself a Gentile very unworthy and unfit to go himself to ask a favor of so great a person as Christ was
- Such was his modesty and humility
- *he sent elders*, These were either judges and officials in the place, or the elders of the synagogue which the centurion had built, Luke 7:5
- Clearly, the centurion had remained at home, Luke 7:6, and the Jewish elders, actually, bore the request to Jesus

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant 7:1-10



- Here the narrative of St. Luke is much more detailed than that of St. Matthew, who represents the conversation as taking place between our Lord and the centurion himself
- We see from St. Luke that he had been prevented from coming in person by deep humility, and the belief that the elders would be more likely to win His blessing
- Meanwhile, he probably stayed by the bedside of his dying slave
- He had sent *elders, pleading*, now he employs *friends* to deliver a second message

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant 7:1-10



- Augustine's comment on these remarkable words, by saying that "he was feeling unworthy, but he showed himself worthy of Christ's entering, not within his walls, but within his heart."
- The humility of the centurion appears even stronger; he did not only expect Christ to come to his house but had not dared even to approach Him
- He won the high opinion of others and yet he held a little opinion of himself
- The centurion showed great faith in Jesus' *word* and knew Jesus had true authority

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant 7:1-10



- He understood that Jesus could heal with His word just as easily as with a touch
- The centurion also knew about the military chain of command, and how the orders of one in authority were whole-heartedly obeyed
- He saw that Jesus had *at least* that much authority

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant 7:1-10



- The centurion's understanding of Jesus' spiritual authority made Jesus marvel
- Jesus marveled at the faith of the centurion, and also at the unbelief of His own people
- Jesus both answered the centurion's unselfish request and proved that He really did have the authority the centurion trusted Him to have
- Without even seeing the sick person, without touch of hand, or look of eye, our Lord restored health to a dying man; He spoke and the sick was cured

Jesus Raises the Son of the Widow of Nain 7:11-17



- The narrative that follows is peculiar to St. Luke
- *Nain*, Is a town situated about a mile or two south of Tabor, and near Endor
- His disciples were accompanying Him in considerable numbers and a large multitude
- *a dead man was being carried out*, Out of the city; for they used not to bury in cities
- Any funeral is a tragedy, but this was a special loss
- The deceased was *the only son of his mother* and that the mother herself was a *widow*

Jesus Raises the Son of the Widow of Nain 7:11-17



- The loss she sustained in him was very great
- Hence the sympathy which she received from her relatives, friends, and a crowd of people, was much greater than was usual on such occasions
- *He had compassion on her*, In this instance, as in so many others, our Lord's miracles were worked, not from a distinct purpose to offer credentials of His mission, but proceeded rather from His intense compassion with and His Divine pity for human sufferings

Jesus Raises the Son of the Widow of Nain 7:11-17



- The immediate effect of the touch was that they who bore the coffin *stood still*
- They must have marveled that One who was known as a Teacher should touch that which most Rabbis would have avoided as bringing impurity
- Their stopping implied, perhaps, both awe, and faith that the touch could not be meaningless
- *Young man, I say to you, arise,* Jesus spoke to the dead as if they were alive

Jesus Raises the Son of the Widow of Nain 7:11-17



- All the people present were seized with a religious awe and reverence because Jesus showed, in this instance, not only the greatness of His power, but the truth of His mission from God
- So they praised God, and gave thanks to Him, ascribing this amazing action to divine power
- *throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region*, It is inclusive of the entire domain of the Herods and thus having reference to the whole of what is today called Palestine
- This miracle was wrought within a very few miles of Nazareth, whose citizens refused to believe in Jesus
- This miracle was close enough that they could not have avoided knowing it happened; and thus Jesus gave his home village another chance to believe in Him whom they had despised

Jesus Raises the Son of the Widow of Nain 7:11-17



- St. Augustine has a beautiful comment on the three miracles of raising the dead related in the Gospels
- He has been saying that all our Lord's works of mercy to the body have a spiritual reference to the soul
- He then proceeds to consider them "as illustrations of Christ's Divine power and love in raising the soul, dead in trespasses and sins, from every kind of spiritual death, whether the soul be dead, but not yet carried out, like the daughter of Jairus; or dead and carried out, but not buried, like the widow's son; or dead, carried, and buried, like Lazarus. He who raised himself from the dead can raise all from the death of sin. Therefore let no one despair"

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- The next three teachings (18-23, 24-30 and 31-35) explain the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist
- The fact, mentioned by St. Luke only, that the *disciples of John reported* these things, suggests some interesting facts
- 1) It implies that they had been present at our Lord's miracles, and had heard His teaching, and we have seen them as present in Matthew 9:14, Mark 2:18
- 2) It shows that though John was in prison, his disciples were allowed free access to him

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- 3) The fulness of St. Luke's narrative in Luke 7:21 suggests the thought that St. Luke may have heard what he records from one of those disciples
- John 1:29-36 and other passages indicate that before this, John clearly recognized Jesus as the Messiah
- Some commentators think that his question was out of doubt
- However, many Church Fathers believe that he sent his disciples not that he doubted that Jesus was the Messiah; nor was it for his own satisfaction, but for his disciples; and to remove all doubt and hesitation from them about Christ

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- Jesus' answer to John was twofold, including:
 - 1) a demonstration of His Messianic power
 - 2) a verbal reiteration of it in the next two verse
- St. Luke makes Jesus reply not merely by word, as in, Matthew 11:5, but first of all by deeds displaying His miraculous power
- *that very hour*, "He knew as God what John's design was in sending to him, and he put it into his heart to send at that very time when He Himself was working many miracles which were the true answer to the question" St. Cyril
- His miracles involves an obvious reference to Isaiah 29:18, 35:4-6, 60:1-3

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- *blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.* To those who do not let their preconceived ideas prevent them from hearing and accepting Jesus' message
- Those who do not take offense at Jesus for what they think He should be, but who recognize Jesus' true identity and accept His miracles as signs of His authority and believe in His mission to announce the Kingdom
- The Jews, as was before remarked, expected a temporal deliverer
- Many might be tempted to reject Christ, because of His humble appearance, and so lose the benefit of salvation through Him

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- To instruct and caution such people, our blessed Lord spoke these words
- By His poverty and humility He condemns the pride of this world
- He who will not humble himself, and become base, and poor, and humble in his own eyes, cannot enter into the kingdom of God
- It is the poor, in general, who hear the Gospel; the rich and the great are either too busy, or too much gratified with temporal things, to pay any attention to the voice of God

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- Jesus waited until John's messengers departed to praise him not caring to say any thing about him to the messengers, or whilst they were present, lest He should be charged with flattery or hypocrisy
- Jesus explained that John was a great man of God, one who did not live for his own comfort or the approval of others
- John was steady, not shaken easily like a reed and he was firm in his message of repentance
- He was not a reed swayed by the wind of secular society
- John was ascetic, in that he lived a disciplined life, not in love with the luxuries and comforts of this world
- John wore coarse camel's hair for his garment

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- John was a prophet, and was known to be one; and the fame of him, as such, drew vast numbers to see and hear him, there not having been a prophet among the Jews, for some hundreds of years
- He was a true great one - a prophet in the deepest truest sense of the word and much more than a prophet
- He was Jesus forerunner, he saw Him and baptized Him, and so was greater than any of the prophets that went before him
- Jesus quoted from Malachi
- Centuries ago the mission of this John was foretold, and exactly described by the prophet Malachi

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- These striking words close the Master's splendid testimony to the great John the Baptist
- The usual explanation adopted by most theologians is, that, John is the greatest of the Old Testament/Old Covenant prophets because he was chosen by God to prepare the way for the Messiah and to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom
- However, since the coming of the Kingdom has not yet been fulfilled, he is still in the era of those not yet glorified by the Passion and Resurrection of the Christ

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- Or, in other words, the humblest child of the new kingdom is superior to the greatest prophet of the old
- In the old dispensation “the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified,” (John 7:39)
- Of those *born of women* there was no greater prophet than John the Baptist, but the members of Christ’s Church are “born of water and of the Spirit”
- But many of the Fathers of the Church - like St. John Chrysostom and St. Augustine, find difficulty in accepting this explanation

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- They suggest that "the least" is Jesus Himself
- They explain it to mean our Lord Himself as "coming after" the Baptist
- By "lesser" or "little" St. John Chrysostom supposes that the Savior refers to Himself as less than John in age and according to the opinions of many
- The words of verses 29 and 30 seem rather to be the words of Christ, relating the success of John's ministry among different persons
- The meaning of the term, "*justified God*," is that they owned, and publicly declared, and predicated the goodness and justice of God

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- They approved of what God had done, and blessed His name for sending amongst them such a prophet as John was
- They owned and received him, and were baptized by him
- Those who believe the message which God sends, and obeys it, justify God
- Those who had repented in preparation for the Messiah by receiving John's baptism found it easy to receive what Jesus said
- He that does not, accuses and condemns God

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- The will of God was that all the inhabitants of Judea should repent at the preaching of John, be baptized, and believe in Christ Jesus
- Now as they did not repent at John's preaching, so they did not believe his testimony concerning Christ: thus the will, gracious counsel, or design of God, relative to their salvation, was prevented or unfulfilled
- They disbelieved his promises, despised the Messiah, and disobeyed his precepts
- Their hearts were hard towards John, so it was no surprise that they were also hard towards Jesus

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- The Master tried to find an image which would drive home to the listeners' hearts His sad judgment of the conduct of the ruling Jews of this time
- The generation He was then addressing had been exceptionally blessed with two great Divine messages
- The one delivered by that eminent servant of God, John, about whom He had been speaking in such glowing, earnest terms, and the other message was His own
- He chose for His purpose one of those everyday scenes from the people's life, a scene which they had witnessed often

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- Eastern children are fond of playing in groups at games of a very simple kind in the open air
- The point of the comparison is the resentment of the group of children who refuse to take part in, or approve of, any game played by their fellows, whether it be the merry acting of a marriage, or the imitated sadness of a funeral
- The children that imitated the pipers, represent Christ and His disciples, who delivered the joyful sound of the Gospel
- And the children that acted the part of the mourners, signify John the Baptist, and his disciples, who preached the doctrine of repentance

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- And the children that would not join with, nor make any answer to the one, or the other, intend the Scribes and Pharisees, who were not pleased with either of them
- So the men of that generation condemned the Baptist for his asceticism which they attributed to demoniacal possession; and condemned Christ for His warm tenderness by calling Him a man fond of good living
- Jesus did not say about Himself, “*a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners,*
- He told us what the religious leaders said about Him

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- It was wrong
- It was not true that John the Baptist had *a demon*
- It was not true that Jesus was *a glutton and a winebibber*
- It was not true – at least in the sense that they meant it – that Jesus was *a friend of tax collectors and sinners*
- But there was another sense, a glorious sense, in which that last accusation was true
- He *was not a friend of tax collectors and sinners* in the sense that He was like them, or in the sense that He helped them commit their sin

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- This is what the religious leaders meant by their accusation, and it was a false accusation
- He *was a friend of tax collectors and sinners* in the sense that He loved them; He did not despise them or push them away
- He genuinely wanted to help them and rescue them from the guilt, the shame, the power, and the penalty of their sin
- *wisdom is justified by all her children.*, The wise man is proved to be wise by his wise actions, *her children*
- Jesus had especially in mind the wisdom to accept *both* Jesus and John for what they were and what were called to be

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- John led thousands of people into repentance, preparing the way for the Messiah
- The *children of wisdom*, Proverbs 2:1; Proverbs 3:1 are those who obey God, and here are those of that generation who accepted the baptism of John and the ministry of Jesus, without making a stumbling-block of Jesus and John's different methods
- In refusing to accept the example of either John or Jesus, the Jews of the present generation are turning away from both the wisdom of the Messiah and His forerunner whose missions are vindicated in their works

John the Baptist Sends Messengers to Jesus 7:18-35



- The present generation of the Jews who oppose Jesus are not children of the Wisdom of God; instead they are like the contentious children Jesus spoke of in 7:31-32
- Let us study to prove ourselves children of Wisdom, by attending the instructions of God's word, and worshiping those mysteries and glad tidings which infidels and Pharisees mock and blaspheme

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- The invitation of this Pharisee seems to show that relations between Jesus and the religious leaders were not yet totally hostile
- We may also reasonably suppose that this was one of the good Pharisees who had a certain measure of respect for our Lord's teaching, and was somewhat leaning to acknowledge Him as a prophet
- Jesus did not seek such feasts, but neither would He refuse them, for there too there might be an opening for doing His Father's work

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- He never refused any opportunity offered Him to do good
- *sat down*, Literally, *He lay down* This was the usual position in the East and in this case we have to remember it in order to understand the narrative
- We learn from Luke 7:49 that there were other guests present
- The Pharisee had probably invited his friends and rich neighbors, and thought that he gave an honor on the Prophet of Nazareth by asking Him to meet them

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- *who was a sinner*, The word is clearly used as pointing to the special sin of unchastity
- The woman was known in the city
- The question who she was must be left unanswered
- Two answers have, however, been given
- 1) The widespread belief that she was Mary Magdalene, has absolutely no evidence in Scripture
- Nor can there be said to be anything like even a tradition in its favor
- The earliest Fathers of the Church are silent

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- Origen discusses and rejects it
- Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine are doubtful
- It first gained general acceptance through the authority of Gregory the Great
- 2) The belief adopted by some that the woman was Mary the sister of Lazarus which is even more baseless and with no any evidence
- She also anointed Jesus' feet with oil, but this was a separate incident, John 12:3

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- *she knew that Jesus*, The woman through the influence of Jesus (it is unknown *how*; perhaps only by hearing His preaching and by observation of His entire ministry) had attained to repentance and faith, and thereby to moral renewal
- It was a bold step for one like her to press uninvited, in broad daylight, into the house of a rigid Pharisee
- But the knowledge that Jesus was there, gave her courage; she felt no one would dare to push her out of the presence of the loving Master

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- *alabaster flask of fragrant oil*, Passages like Proverbs 7:17 suggest the thought that then the lavish and luxurious use of perfumes characterized the class to which the woman belonged
- This was doubtless one of the tools of her guilty condition and her willingness to sacrifice it was a sign of her sincere repentance, Song of Solomon 4:10
- Now the most fervent love and reverence of gratitude to her deliverer urge her to show Him outward tokens of these sentiments

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- *stood at His feet behind Him*, They reclined, at their meals, on their left side, and their feet, therefore, were extended from the table, so that persons could easily approach them
- She does not speak, but her tears are more eloquent than speech, and they are understood by Jesus
- A woman who is filled with the desire to repent her sins takes this opportunity to approach Jesus and express her sorrow and repentance in an act of humility
- The Jews wore sandals and usually they were taken off when they entered a house
- It was an act of hospitality and kindness to wash the feet of a guest

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- She, therefore, began to show her love for the Savior, and at the same time her humility and penitence, by pouring forth a flood of tears which were quite involuntary, and washing His feet in the manner of a servant
- The kiss was an emblem of love and affection
- In this manner she testified her love for the Lord Jesus, and at the same time her humility and sense of sin by kissing His feet
- Normally, the oil is poured over the head and not the feet
- To have her hair flowing would be deemed immodest
- We can only imagine how awkward this scene was, and how everyone silently watched the woman and her emotional display

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- It is clear that it was no mere curiosity which prompted the Pharisee to ask the Master to be his Guest
- He was only concerned about what the Pharisee order to which he belonged would think of his conduct
- He inviting Jesus publicly, but then only receiving Him with the coldest formality
- He seems half-glad of this incident, for it seemed in some measure to excuse his haughty unfriendly reception of Jesus
- *This Man*, The word in the original expresses the arrogant scorn which is obvious in his attitude

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- Simon the Pharisee doubted that Jesus was a prophet because he thought that Jesus was unable to see this woman's heart
- Simon makes a double assumption—first that a prophet would have known the character of the woman, and next that he would certainly have avoided her
- Jesus will show that He can read the heart of man by exposing Simon's heart
- *For she is a sinner*, Yes, in Simon's mind, and in the world's estimation, but before the throne of God she was differently viewed

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- St. Augustine on *Jesus answered, says*, “He heard the Pharisee thinking. The emphasis is on these words, You have been thinking evil of Me: I have something to say *to you.*”
- Christ being God omniscient, knew not only the character and conversation of this woman, which were publicly known by all, that knew any thing of her, but also the secret thoughts and reasonings of the Pharisee, and makes answer to them; which shows, that He was a prophet, in the sense of this man; and more than a prophet

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- The illustration of *a creditor ...two debtors* was from the everyday life of the people
- This lending and borrowing was ever a prominent feature in the common life of the Jews
- In this parable our Lord means, by the creditor, God, and, by the two debtors, Simon and the woman who was present
- In this illustration the two debtors were of the common people, and the sums in question are comparatively small
- But in both cases the debtors could never hope to pay their creditors

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- They were alike hopelessly and helplessly broke
- *he freely forgave them both*, Without regard to any merits of theirs, which they could not have
- Which is under the greater obligation and should love him most?
- They were both sinners before God, both equally broke in His eyes; whether the debt was much or little was to the almighty Creditor a matter of unimportance comparative
- His forgiveness is purely out of His sovereign will, free grace, and rich mercy

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- *“I suppose the,* It seems to carry with it a tone partly of insignificance, partly of uneasiness and perplexity as to what the meaning of the parable might be
- *You have rightly judged.”* By thus saying, therefore, he condemned himself, and prepared the way for our Lord's rebuke

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- Jesus in these verses places the affectionate services rendered by the woman in contrast with the cold unrespectable demeanor of the Pharisee, who had not observed towards Him at all the *customs* of courtesy
- It was also the custom to greet each guest with a kiss, to offer a basin for the guests to wash their feet, and, especially in the case of an honored guest, to anoint his head with oil
- Jesus looks at the woman now for the first time, and asks His host to look at her, the despised one, that he may learn a lesson from her, by a contrast to be drawn between her behavior and his own in application of the parable

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- *Do you see this woman?*, As if Jesus is telling him, “Simon, do you see her love, her repentance, her devotion? That’s what I see.”
- *I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet*, Simon the Pharisee denied Jesus the common courtesies from a host to a guest – washing the feet, a kiss for a greeting, and anointing the head with oil
- Yet, he criticized the woman for giving these courtesies to Jesus
- Simon did not even *anoint My head*, pouring oil upon the head while she used ointment that was a mixture of various aromatics, and was therefore far more costly and precious than the oil

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- The woman faith in Jesus expressed by her loving action has saved her, but the implication can be made that perhaps Simon's self-righteousness and lack of faith will condemn him
- *her sins, which are many*, Though she was like the largest debtor in the parable, which owed five hundred *denarii*, yet the whole thing was cleared
- Though her sins were numerous, yet they were all fully and freely forgiven
- Her great love was not the cause of the remission of her sins

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- But the full and free remission of her many sins, which had been, manifested to her, was the cause of her great love, and of her showing it in the manner she had done
- *to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little*, Simon, had only received a little forgiveness, and therefore only a little love was the result
- Though the Lord implies that the little forgiveness which he had received was Simon's own fault, for he did not think, in his self-righteousness, that he had any need to be forgiven
- This story is a powerful lesson that illustrates the relationship between forgiveness and love

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- Jesus knew the secrets of her soul, and could therefore affirm in the fulness of His knowledge that she fulfilled the conditions of forgiveness
- He formally and publicly renews to her the assurance of that forgiveness
- *began to say to themselves*, Either thought and reasoned in their own minds, or whispered among themselves
- Jesus enters not into explanation in answer to these thoughts, but closes the whole scene by *dismissing* the woman with a final word, intended to confirm her faith by pointing out the *ground* of her spiritual deliverance

A Sinful Woman Forgiven

7:36-50



- The woman came to Jesus in complete humility, with the attitude that she was not worthy to even be in His presence
- That was a good way for her to come to Jesus, but He did not want her to *stay* there
- He raised her up, acknowledged her love, forgave her sin, and sent her in peace
- The sinful woman has manifested to God greater gratitude in her love than the self-righteous Pharisee
- Her repentance for the sins of her life has made her more open to God's mercy than the Pharisee who withholds the customary courtesies a host owes toward his guest

Discussion



- What reputation did the Centurion have and why?
- Why did he say Jesus should not come to his house?
- What question did messengers from John the Baptist ask?
- Describe different reactions of people to John the Baptist



Discussion

- How did Jesus illustrate people of His day?
- Did John have a demon? Was Jesus a glutton and winebibber? Explain the difference between John and Jesus regarding eating and drinking. (Think: What can we learn about people's criticisms of God's servants?)
- How had the sinner woman showed greater honor for Jesus than Simon had? What did this show about them both? (Think: Of the 3 actions Jesus described, which were required by law? What is Jesus' point?)



Discussion

- Why didn't Simon offer Jesus water for His feet, oil for His head, etc.? What does this tell us about Simon?
- What statement can you make concerning love and God's forgiveness from Jesus' teaching in this episode and what impact does this have on your journey of faith?
- During the years of His ministry, how many times was Jesus anointed by women?