

**I. Introduction.**

- A. God speaks to humanity in various ways. Ro. 1:20,32 2:14-15 Ps. 19:1ff Heb. 1:1ff
- B. People respond to God's revelation in various ways. Ro. 1:16-18,21ff, 32b

**II. God made John the Baptist great. v. 24-28**

- A. John is great because of what he is not. v. 24-25
  - 1. What is the secret to success in ministry?
  - 2. Why did so many go out to the wilderness to see John? 4:32 16:14 Mt. 7:28f
  - 3. John's message was not shaken or shaped by the opinions of men. 3:7-10 4:32 6:48 Mark 6:17-20
  - 4. John was not a soft man who indulged in earthly luxuries. 1:80 16:14 Mt. 3:4 Mark 1:6 1 Ki. 1:8
  - 5. We too have plenty of preachers whose message is influenced by the opinions of men and who flaunt their earthly wealth. 20:47 Eph. 4:14 2 Tim. 3:6 Js. 5:1-2
  - 6. God continues to use men like John – whose message can't be shaken and whose character is not shaped by worldly values. 2 Tim. 4:1ff 1 Tim. 3:3 Titus 1:9
- B. John is a great prophet. v. 26-28a 1:15 John 5:35
  - 1. He is a prophet. v. 26a Deut. 18:18 2 Pe. 1:20-21
  - 2. He is more than an ordinary prophet – he is the forerunner of the Messiah. v. 26b-27 1:13-17,76 Mt. 11:14 John 1:19-37 3:22-30 Mal. 3:1 4:5-6 Isa. 40:3
  - 3. In what sense is John greater than those who came before him? v. 28a John 1:29 1 Pe. 1:10-12 John 8:56
  - 4. John is great in spite of his imprisonment and his doubts. 7:19 Phil. 1:17 Jo. 9:2
  - 5. John remained faithful to the end of his course. John 3:30 Mark 6:21-29
- C. In what sense is the least in the kingdom of heaven be greater than John? 10:23-24
  - 1. Just as John surpassed the other prophets because of his nearness to the Messiah, those in the kingdom surpass John because we live in the age of fulfillment. 16:16
  - 2. We see and experience things which John never saw in his lifetime. Eph. 3:4f Mt. 13:17 1 Pe. 1:10-12 Heb. 11:39-40,13-16 John 14:12
  - 3. Do you appreciate how blessed you are? Eph. 2:11ff Gal. 3:27-29
- D. Jesus is infinitely greater than John. 3:15-16

**III. Your character is revealed by your response to God's messenger. v. 29-35**

- A. John's baptism divides humanity. v. 29-30 20:1-8 Mt. 21:31-32
  - 1. Those who were ordinary, downtrodden and outcast embrace John's baptism. v. 29 7:22b 4:18 5:31-32 1 Co. 1:25,27
  - 2. In what sense do those who are baptized justify God? v. 29b Ps. 51:4
  - 3. Those who were mighty and self-righteous rejected John's baptism. v. 30 11:45ff
  - 4. In what sense can anyone reject God's purpose for himself/herself? v. 30b 10:16 Mt. 22:14 Pr. 1:20ff
    - a. God's sovereign will works all things according to His purpose and cannot be resisted. Eph. 1:11 Ro. 8:28 Ps. 115:3 Isa. 46:8ff Acts 2:23 4:28 Heb. 6:17
    - b. God's moral will calls all people to the obedience of faith and can be resisted. Acts 7:51 17:30 20:27 3:19 2:37-38 Jo. 6:29 12:48 Jude 1:8 2 Pe. 3:9 Is. 1:18ff
    - c. Those who reject God's message are not true children of Abraham. 3:7 Ga. 3:7

5. Have you acknowledged God's justice by repenting and being baptized?
  6. Or do you continue to resist God's purpose? 10:16
  7. Who should be baptized? 3:3 Mark 1:4-5
  8. Faithful preaching will call upon sinners to repent.
- B. This generation is determined to reject God's message regardless of the manner in which it comes to them. v. 31-34 17:25 Jo. 1:11 Dt. 32:5**
1. What is the point of the parable of the flute and the dirge? v. 31-32 Ro. 12:15
  2. When John came leading a lifestyle of radical asceticism He was accused of having a demon. v. 33 1:15,80 16:14 Mt. 3:4 Mark 1:6 1 Ki. 1:8
  3. When Jesus came eating and drinking he was accused of being too close to sinners and their lifestyle. v. 34 5:29-32,34 7:36ff 18:14 15:2 19:7 Jo. 2:1ff Dt. 21:20
  4. You can never please some people – because their problem is not with the messenger, but with the message. 1 Sam. 8:7
  5. God uses different kinds of men and ministries to convey His message.
  6. Good men and their message may be rejected by the majority.
  7. Jesus is still a friend of sinners. v. 34b 5:30-32
- C. True wisdom is vindicated (justified) by its outcome. v. 35 Mt. 11:19**
1. Jesus and John are vindicated in spite of the rejection of the Jewish leaders. 2:40
  2. Wisdom's children heed God's purpose as conveyed through John and Jesus.
  3. There is no-one else for whom we should look. v. 19

#### IV. Concluding applications.

##### Discussion questions

1. What made John the Baptist great?
2. How did John surpass the other prophets?
3. In what sense are those who are least in the kingdom of God greater than John?
4. What is the response God expected to John's baptism?
5. What is the meaning of baptism? Who should be baptized?
6. In what sense did the Pharisees and lawyers reject God's purpose?  
Is there a purpose of God which cannot be resisted?
7. What is the meaning of Jesus' comparison of this generation with children in the market place?
8. Why did the Jews reject John and Jesus?
9. How does God continue to use men with different gifts and styles?