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**Luke 7:31** “To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like?

**Luke 7:32** They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, “‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.’”

**Luke 7:33** For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’

**Luke 7:34** The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’

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Jesus' speaking concerning John the Baptist very much touched many people. They realized that it was righteous for God to ask people to repent, to confess their sins and to be baptized, so their sins could be washed away and they could become believers. This shows that Jesus' speaking, which was the gospel, was full of words of life and **did not have any criticism of John the Baptist.** In the church life, we would try to diligently grow and supply the words of life with all our heart and avoid any criticism at all of any brothers and/or sisters.

**Therefore, we need to preach the gospel using the words of life to bring people to Christ, no matter in season or out of season, and practice to confess our sins to the Lord and to the serving ones (if there is no privacy issue).** Many saints devote nearly all their time to study, work and family members... over a long period of time, and then occasionally come back to the church gatherings. This is a kind of repentance. As mentioned above, the other saints should not say anything negative at all about the saints who return, but if the latter do not confess (and this should be our private teaching to them) that they made a mistake by leaving the church life for that period of time, this may cause them to feel numb about leaving the church life again. It also means that to confess our sins is more effective than just to repent.

**1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9** If **we confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

“And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.

But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.”

-Luke 7:29-30

**“If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.”**

-Matthew 5:29-30

# The Baptism of John

- What is the baptism of John?

It is written: “John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the **baptism of repentance** for the remission of sins.” -Mark 1:4

- Repentance is an essential component in our salvation

It is written: “I tell you, Nay: but, **except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.**” -Luke 13:3

- If we refuse to repent, we’re rejecting the counsel of God

- Of which areas in my life am I refusing to repent?

- If the Holy Spirit brings something to our mind, we must not ignore it

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What John preached was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3). Many people (Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, Matthew 3:5) and the tax collectors were baptized by John, indicating they realized that they had done many things against God and wanted their sins to be forgiven. Interestingly, the tax collectors, who should be Jewish, were separated from the people in Luke 7:29. Why?

The tax collectors worked for the Roman government, and most of them used crafty means to collect extra money from their people for the Roman government, and also for themselves. All the people were aware of these tax collectors' evil methods of collecting taxes, but when these tax collectors decided to be baptized by John, it signified that they wanted to stop their evil doing even though their income would be reduced. This might be the reason why the tax collectors were specifically pointed out.

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What are the people of this generation like? Jesus said that the people of this generation lacked spiritual feelings, understanding and reactions (**Phil. 2:15; 1<sup>st</sup> John 5:19** ).

How is our current and next generation? We need to pray, accompany, support and shepherd our next generation with much burden .

**Phil. 2:15** that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of **a crooked and twisted generation**, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

**1<sup>st</sup> John 5:19** We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

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In Jesus' parable in v.32, the children playing the flute and singing a dirge (a funeral song) may be taken as two analogies, one of Jesus Himself (playing the flute) and the other of John the Baptist singing a dirge. Neither musical performance elicited the desired reaction. The children listening did not dance to the flute nor weep to the dirge.

**What is our response? When we hear the word of God through the servants of God (John the Baptist, representing the greatest of prophets, and Jesus, God Himself), do we have opinions or criticism? Many times, we look at servants of God according to our own preferences and style. We may feel some are too strict or straight or too demanding (John the Baptist). Or we may feel that some are too light or too inclusive (Jesus). The result is that we do not weep (repent) because of the word. We may hear the word week after week, but there is no change in our person. Or we do not dance (that is, we are not joyful and we do not consider every aspect of the church life as a grace) The word of God may have little effect on us.**

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Wisdom in v.35 is personified in Jesus and John the Baptist in v.32, who, like little children, preached the gospel to that generation. The Pharisees and lawyers rejected the purpose of God (v.30), but the people and the tax collectors received it. The ones who received are the children, or the fruit in v.35.

**Do we preach the gospel?** Often, when we preach the gospel, we are rejected, or people do not want to listen to us, just as not many listened to John the Baptist or Jesus. If we do not preach the gospel because people do not listen to us, or criticize us, we are not wise. What may appear to be foolish to others is wise before God. **What is wisdom?** Christ Himself, not our wisdom. If we continue to preach the gospel, one person here, or one person there, may be attracted to believe in the Lord. Christ in us, as wisdom, will bear fruit. To bear spiritual children is not up to us or our natural, human wisdom. Rather, like little children, we call out to the people around us. We play the flute (announce the joyful news of the gospel), and we sing a dirge (urge people to repent, to turn their hearts to God). But the result is not up to us. If one more saint is raised up in the church life, the wisdom of Christ is justified by that one spiritual child.

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At that time, there were two works on the earth: that of John the Baptist and that of Jesus. The successful operation of John the Baptist's work had become a hindrance to that of Jesus, so much so that John was now in prison, and his work about to be terminated. Yet, in vv.33-34, Jesus places John's ministry on par with His own. In Jesus' speaking, there is no belittlement or minimizing of John's work, but a recognition of John's ministry and His own ministry working together and complementing each other in the preaching of the gospel.

How do we view servants of God? Are we grand, or are we narrow? Do we honor every servant of God, and receive from them? This does not necessarily mean that we embrace every burden of every servant of God. God has given us His commitment and burden through certain servants, in whose teaching and fellowship we abide, and we must be faithful to that commitment and burden. At the same time, we must recognize every genuine ministry and believe that every God-given ministry is for the building up of the body of Christ.

Eventually, the fruit of ministry is the spiritual children produced (v.35). Do we have spiritual children? We may like to boast in different ministries, but if we have no fruit, our ministry has little meaning.

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- The Pharisees meant “friend” here as something negative but today, Christians and even general culture refer to Jesus’ heart towards sinners as a great thing! It is double-sided. What is my friendship with non-believers like? Am I the friend that the Pharisees accuse Jesus of? Am I just like them? Am I even someone who enables their sin? Someone who does not encourage them to know the Lord? Or am I like Jesus, a friend who cares and loves (who did not reject or despise or avoid) with the heart to lead them to repentance, unto salvation, unto the Lord Himself? This is true for friendships within the church as well. What kind of friendship do we have with one another? What kind of companionship?
- May the Lord give me wisdom! May the Lord bless us with fruitfulness. Both John and Jesus were fruitful in their relationships with sinners and people. In the same way, we must evaluate the results and fruit of how we live, how we relate to people and those around us. This is hard to face. But it is how we check ourselves and how the Lord can expose and convict us.

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John the Baptist did not eat and drink like ordinary people in the wilderness. His food was "locusts and wild honey." The Lord Jesus' diet was no different from ordinary people. From the perspective of the Pharisees, as long as others' life style did not conform to their preconceptions, no matter what others did was wrong to them (the Pharisees).

Thus, we should not judge things using our eyes to care about the outward appearances and practices; instead, we should "see" things using our inner eyes (our spirit). We need to live as the "sons of wisdom"; whatever Christ says "is", we take "as is", and this is the true wisdom, since Christ is our wisdom (**1 Cor. 1:30**).

**For example, how do we view the Christians who celebrate Christmas, Easter, Halloween, etc (these holidays are not mentioned in the Bible)? In fact, we need to honor every Christian because Christ lives in them, and speak words of life void of criticism, and produce more sons of wisdom.**

**1 Cor. 1:30** And because of **Him** you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us **wisdom from God**, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,