

# Why Some Believe and Others Don't

## Lesson 6

### Luke 7:18-35

#### I. "Are You the Expected One...?" 7:18-23

A. John the Baptist was in prison and would be executed – 3:19-20

1. He had to rely on reports from others about how things were progressing (7:18)
2. He sent two messengers to Jesus (7:19).

B. John's question: "Are you the expected One, or do we look for someone else?" (7:20)

1. It is likely that developments hadn't played out the way John had expected.
2. Uncertainty about his own fate may have also contributed to his impatience and caused lingering doubts. John, after all, already knew very well who Jesus was (cf. John 1:29).
3. There was preaching and healing, but where was the promised kingdom?
4. In the presence of John's disciples, Jesus performs some extraordinary miracles
5. He then ties what He is accomplishing to O.T. prophecy about the coming Messiah (Lk. 7:21-23; cf. Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1)

#### II. In Defense of John – 7:24-30

A. "What did you go out into the wilderness to see?" 7:24-26 (asked 3 times)

1. "A reed shaken by the wind?" Was John spineless? Lk. 3:7
2. "A man dressed in soft clothing?" Did John wear a tuxedo? Mt. 3:4
3. "A prophet?" "Yes... more than a prophet!"

B. The greatness of John – 7:27-28

1. Many disciples of Jesus were former disciples of John.
2. Jesus says John fulfills O.T. prophecy, as the "messenger" sent on ahead to "prepare" the way of the Messiah – Malachi 3:1
3. "Among those born of women there is no one greater than John"
4. "Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." I.e., he will see in retrospect the kingdom and enjoy blessings that John could only prophesy about.

C. The crowd's reaction – 7:29-30

1. Humble people and despised tax collectors "**acknowledged God's justice**" when they heard this. This is a key word: they "*vindicated*" or "*justified*" God and His plan.
2. Why? They had been "baptized with the baptism of John."
3. The "Pharisees and lawyers," on the other hand, had "**rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.**"
4. This statement validates not only the greatness of John (in God's estimation) but also the necessity of his contemporaries *obeying* his teaching – cf. Mark 1:4-5.
5. John was, after all, *God's* prophet with *God's* message. (Luke 20:1-8 will be explored in a future lesson).

### III. "To what then shall I compare the people of this generation...?" 7:31-35

- A. Jesus searches for an appropriate analogy from everyday life: "They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to one another..."
1. One group of children is calling out to another group to join in the game.
  2. The invited group does not want to play, whether the game is joyous or sad ("wedding songs" or "funeral songs," *New Living Translation*)
  3. No matter what game is proposed, they are not going to participate!
- B. The point
1. Some of Jesus' contemporaries (esp. the self-appointed elite) weren't going to comply with God's message, no matter who the messenger was.
  2. They accused John of being *antisocial* and Jesus of being *too social*.
  3. Personality and style (i.e., the outward packaging) made no difference. Some people are just not going to listen.
- C. "Yet wisdom is justified by all her children" – 7:35.
1. The word "justified" is a form of the same word found in 7:29 ("all the people and the tax collectors... *justified* God").
  2. In contrast to the spoiled brats who won't play the game, no matter what (v. 32), the children here are going to justify God and His wisdom.
  3. No matter who rejects Jesus and the will of God, there is a group of people who will vindicate the rightness of everything He teaches us.

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## Teachers' Notes

### Goal of this lesson:

- Introduce the concept of baptism and its necessity, though not necessarily developing the full implications
- Explore the role of each person's condition of heart as a factor in conversion
- Press the issue with each person, to examine whether he has what it takes to be a true disciple
- Begin making the connection between faith and total surrender

### Possible leading questions, to get people talking:

- When it comes to the Bible, why do some people "get it" and others don't?
- Who was John the Baptist, and what role did he have?
- If a Jew in John's audience decided *not* to comply with John's baptism, what was his spiritual condition?
- Could the greatest Teacher who ever lived convert everybody? Why not?