

24 And when the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the multitudes about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? 25 "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces. 26 "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. 27 "This is the one about whom it is written,
**'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER BEFORE YOUR FACE,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.'**

28 "I say to you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

29 And when all the people and the tax-gatherers heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John. 30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John. 31 "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? 32 "They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another; and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.' 33 "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon!' 34 "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man, and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!' 35 "Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

R. C. Sproul was one of my hero's. He died in December 2017. I never got to hear him in person. The first time I attended one of the Together 4 the Gospel conferences in Louisville, KY. he was to be one of the speakers but his health had deteriorated enough that the elders of the church that he pastored in Florida said, no. You're too frail for us to let you go.

But by that time, I think it was 2008 or 2010 but computer links were

good enough that they actually piped him in live to speak to the conference in Louisville from Florida.

He is most famous for a book he wrote called The Holiness of God. He could break down a subject that is almost too lofty to grasp in 6 words that would stop you in your tracks and make you think about the unthinkable.

He would say; He is holy, we are not. He is holy, we are not.

It turns out that God's holiness is what the whole Bible is about. The fall in the garden that separated Holy Holy Holy God from sinful man. And after Genesis 3 the rest of the book is about redemption. Restoration back to holiness.

Mostly we don't think about God or His Holiness. It's like we're in a slumber or something. But then, every once in a while, an earthquake or some other event, an awesome electric storm or a fire or flood or something that shakes us out of our slumber and the realization suddenly comes over us.

We are tiny, He is Almighty, and then we remember, He is holy, we are not. We were created to bring glory to God, and we don't. We have offended our creator. We have rebelled against Him, and He is Almighty and we are small. He is holy, we are not. We are ruined. We are of no value. This planet, this earth in all the heavens is condemned.

I'm setting up the scenario for verse 29 to make sense. Because in our slumber we don't live in the tension of coming judgement.

The people alive when Noah was sealed in the ark, after preaching for 120 years while it was being built, weren't thinking about judgement. It was business as usual. They were in the same exact slumber in their rebellion against God as the people on this planet are now. They put

God out of their minds. And then the flood came like a tidal wave and lifted the ark up off of the earth.

The justice of God demands payment for the sins of rebellious men. That's not a popular thing to teach in 2019. The justice of God demands payment for the sins of rebellious men.

Proverbs 9:10 says; *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

Do you see in that verse that fear is the response of wisdom to holiness. He is holy, we are not.

I remember Sunday school teachers telling me Oh, it isn't that kind of fear. God loves you, so fear like being afraid isn't what that means. That's true if you're redeemed. If your sins have been forgiven.

But we forget the magnitude of the cost of the furious judgement of God that was the payment required for the magnitude of our sin. God poured out His wrath on His own son.

We have a low view of God's holiness and a high view of ourselves. We mis-value His holiness and the depth, the magnitude of His judgement the fury of the wrath that God has for sinners. Holiness demands righteousness. Sin demands wrath and judgement. Only a remnant is saved. Safe in Jesus who bore that wrath in our place.

29 And when all the people and the tax-gatherers heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.

John came preaching exactly what I have been talking about this morning. John was preaching about the coming judgement of a Holy God. John's message was that the judgement of God is at hand. The

kingdom is at hand. The authority to reign of God is at hand.

His preaching didn't see or account for the mystery of the church age. He didn't see an age of grace where God would gather in His remnant, His elect over centuries. He was preaching turn or burn.

Mt. 3:1 *Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, 2 "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 3 For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT!'"*

4 Now John himself had a garment of camel's hair, and a leather belt about his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; 6 and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their sins. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 "Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance; 9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 10 "And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 "As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 "And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clear His threshing floor; and He will gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

John's message was, judgement is coming. The King is coming and He's coming with the fires of judgement. Fear God. Repent. And they did.

Messiah will come and set up His Kingdom. He will gather His wheat into His barn. His winnowing fork is in His hand. The chaff will be burned up with unquenchable fire. A baptism of fire is coming for sinful men.

That illustration of wheat and chaff was common to them and needed no explanation to understand the imagery. A threshing floor with a constant breeze and you would beat the wheat by tossing it over and over with a winnowing fork which separated the usable wheat kernels from the stalks which was the chaff. Then you burn up the unusable portion and keep the wheat kernels.

The value of the usable portion of the wheat as opposed to the utter worthlessness of the remaining stalks which are good for nothing at all and are burned up to eliminate them.

And thousands repented of their sins and were baptised by John. Yes, we have sinned against a Holy God. Yes we deserve judgement. They repented and acknowledged what? The justice of a Holy God that must respond against sinful rebellion.

Vs. 29 again; *And when all the people and the tax-gatherers heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.*

That was the right reaction. Acknowledgment of our sin and His holiness demands God's justice. Many repented and acknowledged God's justice by being baptised.

But not all. Not all of Israel responded to John with repentance.

30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

Jesus says, John split the nation down the middle. One group believed John and the other group, who thought they were perfectly righteous enough already rejected John, and in that rejection, they also rejected God.

The pharisees and the lawyers. These are the adherents of a self made religion where they took God's law, and instead of it being a mirror of our hopelessness and sin, these folks said, this is do-able. We can do this. We can keep this law.

And that requires what. Lawyers. What do the words mean. And then for centuries the dumbing down of the lawyers and the phony righteousness of the pharisees produced a generation of people who thought God was in His heaven and His delight was to look down below on them.

And John comes along and tells them they are a brood of vipers. Poisonous snakes. What do they do with that??! Well what they did was reject John and in rejecting John, the baby goes out with the bathwater. If you reject John you reject that he was the forerunner to who, Messiah.

So if you're going to reject John you're forced if you're going to be consistent, you're also forced to reject Jesus.

And Jesus has a message for the crowd of listeners. John was indeed the Voice crying in the wilderness, and I am indeed the Messiah. How can the religious leaders of Israel reject the greatest prophet and the Messiah? How is that even possible?

“To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?”

That was a hebraism. *“To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?”* That was how the Rabbi's taught. What can I use to compare this generation to in order to explain how it is that they have landed in unbelief. How could that happen. Let me think of a parable. What would be a parallel truth?

By the way, *this generation* is also a hebraism. It means the same as what we would mean today if we said, culture. How can I explain what our current culture is like. How could anyone reject John? In fact many many people did NOT reject John. There's a division. A split. It's like our current nation that has a rift that in my lifetime has gotten impossible to span. There's no middle ground any more. Two opposing tribes.

And the split in Israel is totally illogical. God made it more than obvious that John was a great prophet. Living out in isolation wearing camel skins and eating locusts and honey. He lived and looked like Elijah. And he spoke with overwhelming spiritual power. After 400 years of silence God was speaking again through a great prophet. Hard to discount that.

Then Jesus comes along and the prophet baptized Him and the heavens open and God speaks and the Spirit descends on Him. John announces that Jesus is messiah. That's hard to discount. How do you dismiss that??!

Then Jesus is doing miracles all over the place, things that only God can do, even raising dead people back to life. Disease obeys Him. Death obeys Him. The wind obeys Him. He creates food for thousands out of nothing. How do you dismiss that!! It's illogical.

Somehow you have to by-pass logic. And we do it all the time. We begin with the sin and the idols we've made up our mind we'll be keeping no matter what logic demands, and we devise a reasoning that is illogical.

Jesus is going to explain the dichotomy of how it is that the religious leaders have rejected Him which is confoundingly against logic.

And Jesus says, there's the tribe that believed John and understood that God was coming in judgement and repented of their sin, seeking mercy and forgiveness by coming to God in the humility of baptism.

You have to understand that baptism for the jews was for non-jews who wanted to convert to judaism. It was an entry ceremony. John was requiring those who were repenting to come to God as foreigners outside the nation would approach God. It was a humbling. Repentance in humility.

The pharisee's would not humble themselves and would not admit that they were sinners. So they were a tribe in opposition to the provision of God. John the baptist was not acceptable. Jesus was also not acceptable. They didn't need either one. They had already arrived.

What will Jesus compare them to? What will he use to illustrate the rejection of the pharisee's? Brats. MacArthur calls this the parable of the brats. Bratty kids.

32 "They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another; and they say,

Let me set the scene. Towns in Israel at this time, and indeed even now, we have something like a "farmer's market". The market place was probably busy every day except the Sabbath. It was where you took your goods to sell, and it was where you also bought the necessary items of life.

So we can picture a family that takes their goods to the market place. The farmers market and they set up a booth and they engage in their

trade.

What do the children do. Kids need to be in the company of parents. So the kids would go along. Not that they wanted to. It's just how it was. A family would go and the kids would get drug along also.

And while the adults are engaged in business, for hours, the kids would find something to do. They would play. And like kids do to this day, they would imitate what their parents do.

So we have 2 games here that the groups of kids are playing and they're trying to get the other bratty kids to play their game, and the other kids are refusing. They don't want to play the game the other kids are playing.

They were playing Wedding and Funeral. Let's play wedding. It's probably girls playing one game and boys playing the other. The girls always want to play wedding. The boys were playing funeral.

It's as old as time. The girls are playing a flute trying to get the boys to play wedding. Come and dance with us in our wedding. And the boys are like, that's stupid. We've got a funeral procession line going and we're singing dirges. We're wailing and bemoaning the dead. If you want to play, quit your stupid wedding and get in the funeral line and sing a dirge.

'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.'

Jesus says, what can we compare the culture of the lawyers and the pharisees who rejected John and rejected Jesus to.

They're like bratty kids. No matter what the other kids are playing they don't want to do it that way. They insist on owning the game and

making the rules. If they can't do that, they won't play. They have to own the game, or they won't play.

Clearly, the religion that John was preaching and the religion that Jesus was preaching is not the same game that the scribes and pharisee's are playing so they make up excuses and refuse to play. The parable of the brats.

'33 "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, 'He has a demon!'" 34 "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man, and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!'

John is too austere. Jesus is too joyful. We don't want to play.

Really? Because all Judea was going out to John. It was a big deal. He's a real prophet. The first real prophet in 400 years. And you discount that how?

Too austere. Doesn't eat bread. Doesn't drink wine. He's obviously a madman. He's a lunatic. He has a demon. That explains John.

OK, then what do you do with Jesus. He does drink wine and He does eat bread. How do you discount Him?

Oh, well He drinks too much wine and eats too much bread. He goes to parties with tax gatherers and sinners. All the religious outcasts are dining with Him. He's a glutton and a drunk and He is dis-qualified because He keeps company with losers. He's friends with people that we locked out of the temple.

No matter who it is, they've got a reason to excommunicate them. He has a demon. He's a drunk and a glutton who hangs with outcast people we have removed ourselves from. He's unclean by association.

We own the game and we make the rules. They've been in charge of the require them to abdicate their throne. They begin their logic with the answer and then bend the truth to make it fit their illogical answer. Reason? They must keep their sin and idols at any cost.

How did that work out for them? 35 *“Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”*

Know any pharisee's? Know any scribes of the Hebrew religion of works righteousness? 40 years after Jesus was gone from the earth, so were the scribes and the pharisee's.

Their nation and their religion were obliterated by the Romans. Temple destroyed. Literally dismantled block by block in order to retrieve the gold. Not one block left upon another. Just as Jesus predicted. It was all dismantled in 70AD, and all the records were destroyed. Everything was gone. The jews were dispersed. Scattered among the nations.

“Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”

What is this wisdom that Jesus speaks of here? It is acknowledgement of our sin and repenting of sin before a Holy God. It is the peace of God who restores us to Himself and forgives our sins. It is the joy of the weightlessness of having sin forgiven and removed. It is the joy of knowing God.

We are the children that Jesus spoke of here. 2000 years later, we have the book intact and we can trace christianity back to the generation that was listening to Jesus on that day. No hebrew scribes. No temple. No pharisee's. But there are christians.

God judged the Jews. God preserved the christians. To this day. Therefore, choose the religion of John the baptist and the religion of

Jesus who died and rose again.

Wisdom is vindicated by all her children is prophetic and 2000 years after it was said, it's still true. God is still quickening spiritually dead people and making them alive together with Christ who died for their sins.

The religion of human achievement, self righteousness, does not restore any lost spiritually dead heart to the creator. The religion of divine accomplishment, Jesus paid it all, restores us to our heavenly father, clothes us in His righteousness, and delivers us safely through the judgement to come upon this world.

John the baptist prophesied that the axe was already laid at the root of the tree. Within 40 years the false religion of works righteousness that revolved around the judaism of the pharisee's was gone. The nation of Israel was gone. Scattered to the winds.

Yet God preserved the jewish people. The false religion was over, but the people miraculously remained, dispersed, but separated from the nations they were dispersed into. Persecuted and hated but preserved, miraculously.

God has a place for His people Israel in the coming kingdom when Jesus returns. A remnant will look on Him who they pierced and mourn for Him as for an only Son. The whole nation, the remnant that remains at the end of the tribulation will come to faith on a single day.

God will fulfil every promise that He made to them. We believe it will be soon. Perhaps in our generation. Wisdom will be vindicated by the jews who at last come to faith in Jesus. What a story!