

**I. Introduction.**

**A. How successful would you expect a preacher to be if:**

1. He chooses an inconvenient location for his meetings. v. 1
2. His personal appearance is way out of step with current fashion. v. 4
3. His preaching style is threatening and abrasive. v. 2,8-9
4. He completely fails to win over influential trend-setters and opinion-makers. v. 7
5. He lacks sensitivity to the cultural values of his hearers. v. 9
6. His message focuses upon God's wrath and says little about love. v. 10,12
7. His sermon is weighed down with heavy theological words and concepts. v. 2
8. He neither tells stories nor uses humor in his messages.
9. He fails to establish his authority to give leadership and vision to the work. v. 14
10. He does not emphasize children's programs or music.

**B. John the Baptist is the forerunner of Jesus the Messianic King. v. 1-4**

1. He is the herald prophesied through Isaiah. v. 3 11:10 Isa. 40:3-4 John 1:23  
Luke 1:76
2. John is the anticipated prophet like Elijah. v. 4 11:8-9 17:10-13 Mal. 4:5 2 Ki. 1:8
3. John points not to himself, but to Jesus as the Christ. v. 11 John 1:19ff 3:30

**II. Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near. v. 2,5-12**

**A. John's message addresses two major issues.**

**B. Repent! v. 2a,5-12**

1. What does this have to do with the coming of the Messiah? 1:21 John 1:29
2. What is repentance? Luke 15:7 Acts 17:30 2 Co. 7:10-11
  - a. Repentance is more than just feeling sorry or admitting guilt. 27:3 Heb. 12:17
  - b. Repentance involves an inward turning from sin. 2 Co. 7:10-11
  - c. True repentance produces fruit. v. 8 7:16ff Lu. 3:10ff 19:8 John 15:2ff 8:39
3. Faith accompanies repentance – you turn from your sin to God. Mark 1:15
4. The greatest need of many is to turn (repent) from their self-righteous morality and religion. v. 7 21:25-27 Gal. 2:16 Luke 15:28-30 18:9-14 John 1:19,24 8:44
5. John hints at the inclusion of the Gentiles as Abraham's children. 8:11 Ga. 3:7ff  
Luke 19:9,40 1Pet. 2:5,9-10 Eph. 2:11ff Ezek. 36:26

**C. The kingdom of heaven is near. v. 2b,10-12 4:17 10:7 Acts 20:25 Dan. 2:44 7:13-14  
2 Sam. 7:13-14 Isa. 1:24ff 9:6-7 11:1-10**

1. Repentance is urgent because judgment is imminent.
2. What is the kingdom of heaven? 12:28 5:3 Luke 6:20 Mark 4:11
3. The kingdom of God is already present through the coming of Christ. Joel 2:28ff  
Acts 2:16ff Col. 1:13
4. The kingdom of God is future (the "not yet") as we anticipate the return of  
Christ. 26:29 Heb. 6:5 Acts 1:11 Rev. 1:7
5. The kingdom's impact is separation of the wheat from the chaff – judgment.  
v. 10-12 7:19 13:30,42 Rev. 10:20 Ps. 1:4

**D. Jesus begins His public ministry by proclaiming the same message. 4:17**

**E. Are you ready for the kingdom of God? Acts 2:37-41**

### III. Be baptized as an expression of your repentance and your readiness. v. 6

#### A. What does John's baptism signify?

1. People were baptized as an outward expression of their inward repentance in light of the coming of the kingdom of heaven.
2. Is there any difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism? 28:18-20 Rom. 6:3ff Acts 2:38ff 19:3-5 13:24 22:16 Gal. 3:27
3. What is the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire which Jesus was to bring? v. 11 Mal. 3:1-6 Acts 1:5 2:17ff Isa. 4:3 Ezek. 36:26-27 Joel 2:28-29

#### B. What do we learn about Christian baptism through John's baptism?

1. Baptism is accompanied by a confession of personal sin. v. 6 Pr. 28:13 1 Jo. 1:8-10 Acts 19:18 Rom. 14:11
2. Mere physical descent does not qualify one for baptism (but it did qualify people for circumcision under the Old Covenant). v. 9 John 1:11-13
3. Those who personally repent and believe are the only true sons of Abraham and the only proper candidates for baptism. Gal. 3:6-7,29
4. The outward sign alone does not convey grace or forgiveness. v. 7-9 Eph. 2:8-9 1 Pet. 3:21 Heb. 9:9-10 1 Co. 1:17
5. Where you are baptized or by whom you are baptized isn't important. 1 Co. 1:14
6. The mode of baptism is immersion in water. 3:6 John 3:23
7. Baptism is important. Acts 22:16 8:36 16:23

### IV. Through baptism Jesus identifies with you as you are identified with Him. v. 13-17

#### A. Jesus commences His public ministry through baptism. v. 13

#### B. John objects. v. 14,11-12 Luke 1:15

#### C. Why was it fitting for Jesus to be baptized? v. 15

1. Though He was without personal sin, He came to represent sinners. 20:28 2 Co. 5:21 Heb. 2:10ff 4:15 7:27 Phil. 2:18 John 1:29 Mark 10:38 Isa. 53:6,11
2. He demonstrates His willingness to complete His work in obedience to the Father.

#### D. The Father and the Holy Spirit testify to Jesus. v. 16-17

1. The Spirit visibly descends upon Him. v. 17 12:17-21 Is. 11:2 42:1 61:1 Jo. 1:32
2. The Father speaks His affirmation. v. 17 17:5 12:18ff John 3:16 17:23

### V. Concluding applications.

#### Discussion questions

1. Summarize John's message.
2. How does John's approach to ministry differ from that of many popular preachers today?
3. What is repentance?
4. In what sense has the kingdom of heaven arrived?
5. What is the difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism?
6. What condition must be met before one can undergo baptism?
7. What is wrong with the argument made by some that an infant should be baptized based upon the faith of his or her parents?
8. What would you tell a Christian who has not been baptized?
9. Why was Jesus baptized?