

## 20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 7 (February 8-14, 2015)

We will conclude our study on the life and ministry of John the Baptist in this week's devotions.

**Sunday**, February 8 (read Matthew 11:7-10)

*"What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind?" (Matthew 11:7b)*

In yesterday's devotion, we saw that Jesus sent the disciples of John the Baptist back to tell their leader what the Lord was **saying** and **doing**. He did this to reassure John that his ministry had not been in vain. Now He turns to His disciples to ask a few questions of His own. Two of those are written in today's printed passage above. Would **you** travel many miles to listen to a preacher who is "blown here and there by every wind of teaching?" (Ephesians 4:14) I certainly hope that you wouldn't, even if that preacher is very entertaining and makes you feel great about yourself. Wouldn't you rather hear the rock-solid, unchanging Word of God? Your life can never be permanently changed by a New Year's resolution unless your promise is anchored in God's Word. How are you doing so far in 2015?

**Monday**, February 9 (reread Matthew 11:7-10)

*If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? (Matthew 11:8a)*

The personal wealth of the preacher seems to impress many of today's worshippers. They tell others about his car, his house (or houses), and his clothes. Jesus is asking His disciples if they traveled out into the desert to be impressed by John's camelhair clothing. The obvious answer is **no**. The people who went out to hear John the Baptist did so because of his uncompromising stand on the Word of God. He never tried to impress others; his only job was to prepare his listeners for the arrival of Jesus. I have committed the rest of my days on earth to accomplishing the same goal. If you are prepared for the rapture of the Church, I have done my job! John was the last prophet who predicted the arrival of the Messiah (v. 13). I join today's prophets in proclaiming the written Word of God.

**Tuesday**, February 10 (read Matthew 11:11-15)

*"I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is **least** in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matthew 11:11, emphasis mine)*

In the printed verse above, Jesus elevates John above all earthly prophets and teachers, but He is quick to say that these accomplishments cannot compare to life in the kingdom of heaven. Wow! Can you even imagine what your heavenly role will be? Don't miss the fact that our status in the kingdom will vary due to our obedience to the smaller tasks assigned to us down here. Not everyone can be trusted with the same responsibilities (v. 11). The kingdom of heaven is no place for wimps; therefore, those who are bold enough to live under the standards of the Word of God on earth, are moving toward the greater kingdom of eternity (v. 12). Jesus declares His cousin John to be one like Elijah, just as the Old Testament prophecies (see Isaiah 40:1-8; Malachi 4:5-6). I pray that you have eyes to see and ears to hear what God has in store for His children (v. 15).

**Wednesday**, February 11 (read Matthew 11:16-19)

*"The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."' But wisdom is proved right by her actions." (Matthew 11:19)*

Jesus rebukes the critics who have been exposed to His words and His miracles, but who have not responded to Him or to John the Baptist. The Lord compares these folks to children who challenge each other to **dance** or to **mourn**, one or the other (v. 16-17; see also Ecclesiastes 3:4). John was called to be a Nazirite (see Numbers 6:1-8), so he was not allowed to drink fermented wine or even to eat a grape or a raisin. The people looked at his lifestyle and came to the conclusion that “He has a demon” (v. 18). John lived as a loner in the desert and, most probably, was never invited to their social events. Jesus, on the other hand, was a friend of all the people. He was right at home with tax collectors and sinners (v. 19). The same men concluded that He was “a glutton and a drunkard.” The point of the passage is this: Jesus “came to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). Don’t judge those in your fellowship who enjoy a glass of wine! “Wisdom is proved right by her actions” (v. 19).

**Thursday**, February 12 (Romans 14:1-4)

*Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment of **disputable matters**. (Romans 14:1, emphasis mine)*

We are commanded in 1 Corinthians 4:6b: “Do not go beyond what is written. Then you will not take pride in one man over against another.” With this command in mind, Paul uses the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans to expand on yesterday’s devotion. Christians may be in many different stages of understanding the Word of God, so be sure that you don’t throw them under the bus for eating or drinking something of which God has forbidden you to partake. The Lord has accepted the person who has given his/her heart to Him (v. 3-4); now He is in the process of growing the new believer into the image of His Son (see Romans 8:29-30). I grew up in a home where alcohol ruined my childhood so it would be easy for me to “go beyond what is written.” Guard against legalism in any form as you extend **grace** to the lost world!

**Friday**, February 13 (read Romans 14:5-12)

*So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. (Romans 14:12)*

Today’s text could be called “same song; different verse.” Personally, I am not a fan of special days, but my wife loves celebrations of all kinds. We both love and serve the same God, so we are well aware of the meaning of v. 5-6. However, “None of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone” (v. 7). This means that, in order for the two of us to become one, we must compromise because God’s love in both of us trumps the way we were raised. The bottom line is in today’s printed verse above! We will each bow our knees before Him (v.11) and “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11). So do not judge your brother (v. 10)! “Wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts” (1 Corinthians 4:5b).

**Saturday**, February 14 (read Romans 14:13-18)

*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men (Romans 14:17-18)*

I have run out of week before I have run out of wonderful verses, so I will continue the teaching on eating and drinking in next week’s devotions. In order to fulfill the printed verses above, we are called to examine our actions in the light of the needs of others. For example, if you are dining with a recovering alcoholic and you order a glass of wine with your meal, you are not being considerate of the person who is addicted to it (v. 13). Also if you are dining with someone who thinks that consuming alcohol in any form is wrong, you are not being considerate if you order a drink. After all, if anyone considers it to be wrong, “then **for him**, it is (wrong)” (v. 14, emphasis mine). The kingdom of God is greater than our individual convictions. “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (v. 19). That thought will lead us into next week!