

John The Baptist

Making The Bible Come Alive

The Proclaimer

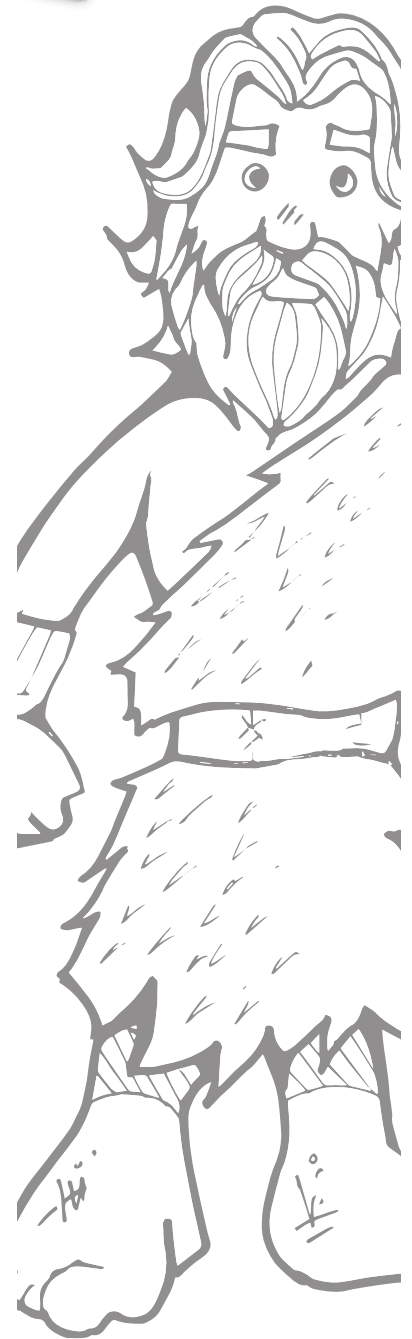
Who was this person?

- John the Baptist was an Israelite, and was a distant relative of Jesus. His father was Zechariah, a priest in the temple and his mother was Elizabeth who was Mary's older cousin.
- John the Baptist was a prophet — a messenger appointed by God who was sent to 'prepare' the way of the Messiah (Jesus).
- John was the one who baptized Jesus.
- All four of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) share details about the life of John the Baptist.



What is this person known for?

- The details of John's birth are very carefully recorded in Scripture. (Luke 1:5-25). Like his younger cousin, Jesus, John's entrance into the world was marked by a visit from an angel (Luke 1:57-80). The angel declared to Zechariah, "He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord... and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth" (v. 14-15).
- The Bible doesn't give many details surrounding John the Baptist's younger years. Scripture tells us that he lived out in the wilderness (Luke 1:80) wearing clothes made of camel skins, with a leather belt around his waist. And he was different from most others in his eating habits as he was known to have a diet of locusts (short-horned grasshoppers) and wild honey (Matthew 3:4; Mark 1:6).
- When John began his public ministry it ended almost four hundred years of prophetic silence. The prophet Isaiah foretold (prophesied) about John's ministry. He described him as a voice of one calling in the desert to prepare the way for the Lord (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:3-6).
- John the Baptist was a preacher who had many followers and disciples. Although people followed him, he always shared that he was NOT the Messiah. He spoke the truth, to whoever would listen, challenging people to turn from sin. He was committed to God's plan and the calling that was on his life from the very beginning.





- He is referred to as "The Baptist" because his practice was to baptize those who responded to the message he proclaimed and sincerely repented of their sins (Matthew 11:11, Mark 6:14; Luke 7:20). John the Baptist baptized Jesus and many other people in the Jordan River.

WHY DO YOU THINK THIS PERSON HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN GOD'S STORY?

- **To let us know that God keeps His promises.** In Isaiah 40:3, Isaiah the prophet tells of a person in the desert who will prepare the way for the Lord. Jesus was born shortly after John the Baptist, about 2000 years ago. The people of God had to wait almost 400 years after the prophets. In the book of Malachi, which is a bridge between the Old and New Testaments, Malachi records God's words about Him sending a messenger who will prepare the way (Malachi 3:1). Imagine waiting 400 years for a promise to come to pass. However, at just the right time God sent John and Jesus to radically change the world!
- **To show us that God wants to use us!** God will use us if we are available and obedient. We don't have to be wealthy or popular to be used by God. John's lifestyle was very different and so was his message: "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is near" (Matthew 3:2). God had a specific purpose for John and his ministry, even despite his unique eating habits and how he dressed.
- **The gospel is meant to be shared.** The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 tells us to go into all the world and preach the good news to every creature. We are to share the true gospel message with everyone around us. When we believe in Jesus and tell others about God's plan for Jesus to be our Saviour and Lord, we will make others uncomfortable. We will "ruffle their feathers". John was no "crowd pleaser". He often confronted the hypocrisy of the religious leaders (the Sadducees and Pharisees). (Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7)
- **We don't have to be "in charge".** John the Baptist knew that his role was to tell people about the coming Messiah. So when Jesus began His ministry John was okay to step aside and allow Jesus to take His rightful place (John 1:19-23; John 3:27-30).
- **Be humble and submit to those in leadership over you.** We should live a life of humility and submit to authority. John told people that there is One coming and I am not

even worthy to wear His sandals. John stated that Jesus was greater and more powerful than he would ever be. Many of John's followers/disciples left his ministry to follow Jesus (Mark 1:7-8, Luke 3:16, John 1:26-17;35-39).

- **Stay away from sin, and help others to do so too!** Don't be afraid to confront sin. King Herod made some immoral (sinful choices) and John told the king that he was wrong. Because of the strong stand he took, it ultimately cost him his life. The king ordered to have him beheaded, even before Jesus was crucified. John, however, was willing to die a martyr's death rather than to compromise the ways of God (Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-29).

LIFE APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

Pose the following two questions to your children, one at a time. Allow for interaction and discussion, letting them share their thoughts while you guide the conversation.

- What life lessons can I learn from this Bible character about how I should and should not live?
- Based on what I have learned from this Bible character, how can I live in a way that is pleasing to God.

MORE IN GOD'S WORD

Think about the life of John the Baptist. Who follows you because they have seen how you follow God? Is it obvious to people that you live every day in the way God would want you to live?

Have you considered being baptized? Read the account of Jesus being baptized by John in each of the four gospels:

- Matthew 3:1-17
- Mark 1:1-11
- Luke 3:21-24
- John 1:30-34

Once you become a follower of Jesus, and repent of your sins, the Bible tells us that we should be baptized. (Acts 2:38) It is a sign to others of our decision to follow Jesus. Talk with your parents about being baptized in water, and/or with your church leaders/pastors. Do not put off until later in life what God may be wanting you to do even when you are young.

