

John the Baptist's Ministry

MATTHEW 3:1-17

¹In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.'"

⁴Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him ⁶and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" ⁸Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, ⁹and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ¹⁰And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

¹²His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

MARK 1:1-11

¹The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ²As it is written in the Prophets:

"Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You."³"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"

⁴John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. ⁵Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

⁶Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. ⁸I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. ¹¹Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

LUKE 3:1-22

¹Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ²while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. ³And he went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,

⁴as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight.

⁵Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways smooth;

⁶And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

⁷Then he said to the multitudes that came out to be baptized by him, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

⁸Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. ⁹And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

¹⁰So the people asked him, saying, "What shall we do?"

¹¹He answered and said to them, "He who has two tunics, let him give to him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise."

JOHN 1:19-34

¹⁹Now this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

²⁰He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

²¹And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

And he answered, "No."

²²Then they said to him, "Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?"

²³He said: "I am

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'"

as the prophet Isaiah said."

²⁴Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. ²⁵And they asked him, saying, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

²⁶John answered them, saying, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. ²⁷It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose."

²⁸These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

John the Baptist's Ministry

MATTHEW 3:1-17 cont.

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ And John *tried to prevent Him*, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

¹⁵ But Jesus answered and said to him, "**Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**" Then he allowed Him.

¹⁶ When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

LUKE 3:1-22 cont.

¹² Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?"

¹³ And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you."

¹⁴ Likewise the soldiers asked him, saying, "And what shall we do?"

So he said to them, "Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely, and be content with your wages."

¹⁵ Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John,

whether he was the Christ *or not*, ¹⁶ John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

¹⁷ His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."

¹⁸ And with many other exhortations he preached to the people. ¹⁹ But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him concerning Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, ²⁰ also added this, above all, that he shut John up in prison.

²¹ When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. ²² And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

JOHN 1:19-34 cont.

³⁰ This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' ³¹ I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water."

³² And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. ³³ I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'

³⁴ And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: "John the Baptist's Baptizes Jesus"

Who was John the Baptist?

(This is not in the student's guide) John the Baptist was the son of Zacharias (Luke 3:2) and Elizabeth (Luke 1:57-58) who lived in Judah (Luke 1:39-45). (Question #16) John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins (Luke 1:36).

1. John the Baptist preached in the wilderness. (Read the verses outlined in red: Matthew 3:1-2, Mark 1:4, and Luke 3:3) **What did John the Baptist mean in Matthew 3:2, when he said "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"?** John the Baptist implores the Jews to repent their past sins they have committed against God. They should feel sorrow, regret, and have a "change of mind" from their wicked and corrupt ways. Most importantly it is to have a change in the way of life. The kingdom of heaven is at hand, refers to the beginning of Jesus' reign on Earth. This is the beginning of Christ setting up his dominion on Earth.
2. Prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight: (Read the verses outlined in gray: Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:2-3, Luke 3:4-5, and John 1:23) **In what passage(s) did Isaiah prophesize "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight"?** Isaiah 40:3-5.
3. John the Baptist clothing and diet. (Read the verses outlined in green: Matthew 3:4, and Mark 1:6) **Why did John the Baptist wear clothes made in camel's hair, only a leather belt and eat locust with wild honey?** John the Baptist did not self-indulge in luxurious clothing or eat lavishly. He lived a simple life. His food, clothing and lifestyle was common among prophets. The camel's hair John the Baptist wore was long and shaggy and made into a coarse cheap cloth. Not the elegant cloth called camlet which is made from the fine hair of the camel. Rarely is clothing of one's garments mentioned. This is similar clothing that the prophet Elijah wore. Both set themselves apart from everyone else. His leather belt or girdle as some have called it probably came from sheep or goatskin. His meat was locust. Locusts are a common flying insect 2-3 inches in length. They were one of the plagues of Egypt. Locust would swarm and devour almost all living green plants within hours. They were commonly salted, dried and cooked in various ways. Honey was commonly found in the rocks and in the hollows of trees in the wilderness. Palestine was frequently called "the land of milk and honey".
4. **What is the difference between Matthew 3:1-2, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3; and (Read the verses outlined in blue: Matthew 3:5-6, and Mark 1:5) Matthew 3:5-6, Mark 1:5 of John the Baptist preaching the good news?** Both expressions talk about John the Baptist preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sin. But you look closely the first expression is John the

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: "John the Baptist's Baptizes Jesus"

Baptist went into the region or came preaching in the wilderness. The second expression states "Then Judea and those around Jerusalem went out to him." There was probably a period of time from when he went out to the Jewish people in the region or wilderness to preach, then when they came to seek him out. The word spread. Curiosity to hear what was being spread for themselves.

5. Brood Vipers. (Read the verses outlined in purple: Matthew 3:7 and Luke 3:7) **Why did John the Baptist refer to the Pharisees and Sadducees as "Brood of vipers!"?** The original King James text refers the Pharisees and Sadducees as "generation of vipers." However, over time, it has changed to "brood of vipers." Vipers are venomous serpents from 2 to 5 feet in length. Its venom is poisonous and deadly. Someone who is bitten by a viper swells up almost immediately and if not treated quickly will die a painful and agonizing death. The term "generation" used, is not explained as if this is just the current generation or several of Pharisees and Sadducees. John the Baptist is specifically calling out the Pharisees and Sadducees as "vipers." He was pointing out their deceitful, and wicked ways. What's important here is John the Baptist is using "vipers" as a metaphor telling the people how dangerous they have become. And to end the verse, he states "who warned you to flee from the wrath to come." John is astonished that these sinners and hypocrites have not fled from the coming wrath.
6. Trees that don't bear good fruit are cut down and thrown into the fire. (Read the verses outlined in black: Matthew 3:8-10 and Luke 3:8-9) **What does it mean, "the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."** The ax is laid at the root of the tree indicates the tree is to be cut down. The words here are chosen carefully. The tree is not to be merely trimmed. The survival of the tree is at stake. The roots are the foundation and lifeblood of the tree. Without them, the tree will not survive. When an ax impacts the very foundation of the tree, the whole tree will shake, and the roots will feel the blow of the impact. The metaphor here is, everyone will be on trial for their lives. A person's profession, or job, or how high up in status is not what is on trial. But how the person's beliefs and actions throughout their life are what is evaluated. Those that are found not to pass the test will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Those who are worthy of passing the test, repenting their sins, helping their fellow man without an expectation of reward, leading by His example, will keep their roots.
7. Sandals not worthy to carry. (Read the verses outlined in dark red: Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:7, Luke 3:16 and John 1:27) **Why is John the Baptist not worthy enough to carry the sandals of the One who is to come?** John expresses great humility to be a servant of Him. He also mentions "whose

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: "John the Baptist's Baptizes Jesus"

straps he is not worthy to loosen." To loosen sandals was the business of the lowest servants. John reinforces his own unworthiness in comparison.

8. He baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Read the verses outlined in dark red: Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16) **What is the difference between being baptized with water and being baptized with the Holy Spirit? And fire?** John's baptism with water was for repentance and the forgiveness of their sins. God's baptism of man with the Holy Spirit is sending His influence to convert, purify and guide the soul. The Holy Ghost is the third part of the Trinity. The Holy Ghost's part is to comfort, uplift, renew and hallow the soul. Being baptized by fire has had various interpretations. Some have identified this that John refers to future afflictions and persecutions which men would be tried under the Gospel. Some have concluded the word "fire" means the judgement or wrath of God. Some have interpreted this as He would baptize the followers of His Word with the Holy Ghost, but the rest of world, the wicked, He would baptize with the judgement and wrath of fire. Others have supposed that the fire is the refinement, and the purifying that comes afterwards to make the heart and soul malleable and worthy for God's work. It is difficult to confirm the precise meaning farther than that of John the Baptist's ministry. One thing is for certain, your tree will be put to the test, and if it is revealed your tree does not bear good fruit, it will be cut down and thrown into the fire.
9. The unquenchable fire. (Read the verses outlined in orange: Matthew 3:12, and Luke 3:17) In Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17, **What is John referring to when he states He will gather up His wheat into the barn and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire?** Separating with wheat from the chaff was practiced in the East by throwing the grain into the air and the chaff was blown away by the wind because it was lighter than the wheat. The term "fan" was the act of cleaning of the grain by this practice. The floor is represented as the Jewish people. The wheat is the righteous or people of God to be stored in the barn. The chaff is the wicked which the fire consumes. The unquenchable fire is fire that is meant for eternal suffering of the wicked.
10. Did Jesus need to be baptized? (Read the verses outlined in gray: Matthew 3:14-15) John the Baptist tries to have Jesus baptize him. However, Jesus states **"It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him. Then John the Baptist, baptizes Jesus."** **Why did Jesus need to be baptized? Jesus had no sin.** This question has long troubled theologians for many years. Baptisms were for sinners. There are several conclusions why Jesus needed to be baptized. (1) Jesus was about to start his great ministry work. This sets the timeline apart from pre-baptism and post-baptism. (2) Jesus did so because he is both God and human. He went through baptism and even death as a human. (3) The baptism by John the

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: "John the Baptist's Baptizes Jesus"

Baptism was another step Jesus could identify with his sinful people. (4) Jesus did this to demonstrate how to be baptized and how to baptize others. The closeness one will have with the Holy Spirit, when one commits themselves to being baptized.

11. John the Baptist announces Jesus as the Lamb of God. (Read verses outlined in pink: John 1:29-31). **What is the significance of Jesus being called "The Lamb of God?"** In the Old Testament, the Israelites sacrificed Lambs and were eaten at the Passover to commemorate their deliverance from bondage in Egypt. The Messiah/Jesus was often referred to as "The Lamb." Jesus was innocent. He was the sacrifice for the sins, not just for Israel but the whole world. John also makes a point that John the Baptist comes to baptize with water, while Jesus will baptize those with the Holy Spirit.
12. Jesus is baptized. (Read the verses outlined in yellow: Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-22) **How was Jesus baptized?** Both Matthew and Luke clearly state Jesus came up immediately from the water. This proves that if Jesus came up from the water, he had to have been below the water. In order to be below the water, one would have to be submerged or immersed in water. Then "the heavens were opened unto him." Many scholars have interpreted this to be appearance of the clouds when it lightens with the rays of the sun.
13. The Holy Spirit descends like a dove on Jesus. **Why did the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove?** Albert Barnes, a theologian said it best in his notes he published in 1832 "This was the third person of the Trinity, descending upon him in the form of a dove. The dove among the Jews, was a symbol of purity of heart, harmlessness and gentleness."
14. **Who was the voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."**? This is unquestionably the voice of God. It was probably heard by all who were present. God uses the term "beloved Son" instead of just, son, to state the closeness and nearness and a relationship God has with his son Jesus. The statement "I am well pleased" is an immense delight with his Son.
15. John the Baptist announce Jesus as the Lamb of God. (Read verses outlined in light green: John 1:32-34). **What is significance of John the Baptist saying Jesus is the Son of God?** John writes that John the Baptist was a witness for Jesus' Baptism. John the Baptist saw the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus and remaining on Him. To visualize seeing the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus serves two purposes: (1) To make the known to John the Baptist and to the rest of the world; (2) this moment marks the official commencement of Jesus' ministry. Finally to John the Baptist is a credible witness of this event and stated the event as such.

LEADER'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: "John the Baptist's Baptizes Jesus"

16. **Bonus Question: Was John the Baptist and Jesus related? If so, how?** John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins. Read Luke 1:34-38. Some translations have lost the word "cousin" however it is in the original King James version. John the Baptist's mother, Elizabeth and Jesus' mother Mary were cousins.

STUDENT'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: "John the Baptist's Baptizes Jesus"

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4. **What is the difference between Matthew 3:1-2, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3; and (Read the verses outlined in blue: Matthew 3:5-6, and Mark 1:5) Matthew 3:5-6, Mark 1:5 of John the Baptist preaching the good news?**

5. Brood Vipers. (Read the verses outlined in purple: Matthew 3:7 and Luke 3:7) **Why did John the Baptist refer to the Pharisees and Sadducees as "Brood of vipers!"?**

6. Trees that don't bear good fruit are cut down and thrown into the fire. (Read the verses outlined in black: Matthew 3:8-10 and Luke 3:8-9) **What does it mean, "the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore, every**

STUDENT'S GUIDE

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tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

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10. Did Jesus need to be baptized? (Read the verses outlined in gray: Matthew 3:14-15) John the Baptist tries to have Jesus baptize him. However, Jesus states "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him. Then John the Baptist, baptizes Jesus." **Why did Jesus need to be baptized? Jesus had no sin.**

STUDENT'S GUIDE

Discussion Questions: "John the Baptist's Baptizes Jesus"

11. John the Baptist announces Jesus as the Lamb of God. (Read verses outlined in pink: John 1:29-31). **What is the significance of Jesus being called "The Lamb of God?"**

12. Jesus is baptized. (Read the verses outlined in yellow: Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 1:9-11 and Luke 3:21-22) **How was Jesus baptized?**

13. The Holy Spirit descends like a dove on Jesus. **Why did the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove?**

14. **Who was the voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."?**

15. John the Baptist announce Jesus as the Lamb of God. (Read verses outlined in light green: John 1:32-34). **What is significance of John the Baptist saying Jesus is the Son of God?**

16. **Bonus Question: Was John the Baptist and Jesus related? If so, how?**

John the Baptist Quiz

1. Why did John the Baptist say Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand?
 - a. Jesus is coming soon so you better say sorry for all your wrongdoings.
 - b. You need to repent so you can get into heaven.
 - c. Ask God for forgiveness of their sins and change their way of life.
 - d. Jesus will only let those into heaven who repent.
2. What was John the Baptist's diet for food?
 - a. Camel and sheep
 - b. Locust and wild honey
 - c. Sheep and goatskin
 - d. Milk and honey
3. Why did John the Baptist refer to the Pharisees and Sadducees as "Brood of vipers"?
 - a. They wore clothing made of snakeskin
 - b. He was pointing out they were deceitful and wicked people
 - c. They strike with deadly force like a venomous snake
 - d. They all belong to the same tribe, the Vipers
4. What happens to the tree that does not bear good fruit?
 - a. The tree is trimmed so new branches will grow and bear fruit
 - b. The tree is cut down to be used as furniture
 - c. It is cut down and thrown into the fire
 - d. Extra water and fertilizer will help the tree grow
5. Where was John the Baptist when the word of God came to him?
 - a. In the temple
 - b. In the wilderness
 - c. On a boat
 - d. At his mother's home
6. What did John the Baptist baptize Jesus with?
 - a. Water from the river Jordon
 - b. The Holy Spirit
 - c. Holy water from the local church
 - d. The dove that descended upon him

7. Who is John referring to when Jesus will gather up His wheat into the barn?
Who represents the wheat?
- The Jewish people
 - The wicked people
 - The righteous or people of God
 - Everyone who follows Him
8. In which wilderness region did John the Baptist preach?
- Judea
 - Shur
 - Negev
 - Zin
9. What was the garment that John the Baptist wore made from?
- Sheep's hair
 - Camel's hair
 - Cow hair
 - Goat hair
10. In what river did John the Baptist baptize?
- Jordan
 - Gihon
 - Nile
 - Euphrates
11. Which important man is John the Baptist recorded as baptizing?
- Phillip
 - Peter
 - Paul
 - Jesus
12. Who was the voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased?"
- Jesus
 - Moses
 - Angels
 - God
13. **Extra Credit:** Who was the father of John the Baptist?
- Zebedee
 - Joseph
 - Zacharias
 - John

John the Baptist Quiz

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 - John