

## **The Life of Christ— John the Baptist**

### **Introduction:**

John, the Baptist, is one of the most unique characters found in the Bible. His birth was prophesied of in Isaiah 40:3. This is the first mention of a man that God would use to proclaim the arrival of the much-sought-after Messiah. An angel foretold his father, Zacharias, of John's coming birth by his aging wife, Elisabeth. Not only did the angel inform him of the baby's birth, but he also told him that God had already named the baby—John. As a sign to Zacharias that the angel was telling the truth, Zacharias would not be able to speak until the child was born. This child, John, even while unborn, announced the arrival of the Messiah from his mother's womb—when Mary came to visit Elisabeth, the baby leaped inside of Elizabeth's womb. Not much is known of the childhood and young teenage years of John, but it is commonly believed that John, being a cousin of Jesus, knew Jesus as he grew up; yet, he apparently did not know that his Playmate was the Messiah Who would save the world. John had a mission in life—that was to do what God had commissioned him to do. John explained his job when he proclaimed, "I am a voice" to the Levites and priests in John 1:23, This proclamation was John's lifelong occupation and purpose. John had many unique ways of life. The Bible tells us in both Matthew 3:4 and Mark 1:6, that his wardrobe consisted of a garment of camel's hair and leather about his loins. Not only was his dress unique, but John, the Baptist, also had an odd diet—he ate locust and wild honey! The question, then, would be, "What made this man so special?" People, in order to even see him, had to go out into the wilderness because that is where his ministry was. Yet, he did not have to look for a crowd—they came looking for him!

### **I. John's ministry prophesied**

Isaiah 40:3 is the first place that John, the Baptist, is mentioned in the Bible. He is the one about whom the prophet is referring in this verse. God's plan for the life of John was already decided before John's birth. Isaiah, the prophet, made this proclamation during his ministry which spanned 760 BC – 698 BC. Nearly 700 years before there was a forerunner to Christ, God's man informed the world that there would be a man who would come to proclaim the coming Messiah.

### **II. John's birth**

As mentioned previously, the birth of John was truly a miraculous event. The announcement of his birth was combined with even more surprising information—God told Zacharias what the name of his son would be. There are only 2 people mentioned in the Bible that God named from birth—John the Baptist and Jesus.

### **III. John fulfilled the prophecy of his ministry**

In Isaiah 40:3-5, John, the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, was given a job to do. In Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:2-3 and Luke 3:4-5, John did exactly what God had instructed him to do. God proves, through John's life, that He is able to give us the ability to do whatever it may be

that God has for us to do. God removes any excuses that we may have. We can stop being afraid! ***God has already given us the ability to do what He wants us to do.*** Therefore, any and every commandment that God gives us to do is in the Bible and He has already given us the wherewithal to do them—***all of them!***

#### **IV. John, the Baptist—the Preacher**

In Luke 3:1-17 and Matthew 3:7-12, God recorded a sermon that John preached. We can see here in this sermon what a preacher's job is. We see this preacher, the one that God had sent to introduce His Son, use language that was harsh for the hearer. He blatantly called sinners “vipers” or *poisonous snakes*. God must want preachers to stand up and call sin what it is—abomination against God! We also see John, in Matthew 3:10 and Luke 3:9, preach on soul-winning. God must want His preachers to inform and encourage Christians to go soul-winning and let them know what happens if they do not go—they will be cut down. Then John, in response to questions from the people, instructed them on how to live the Christian life, in Luke 3:11-14. In Luke 3:16, the people began to wonder if John was the Messiah. John quickly began to uplift Jesus. By exalting Christ, he belittled himself, showing an humble spirit.

#### **V. John introduced Jesus**

The baptism of Jesus is recorded in all four of the Gospels. In this important event in the life of our Saviour, God used His preacher to fulfill this “coming out” of Jesus. John, in John 1:33-34, had been told by God that the One Man that he baptized that came up out of the water with a dove descending on Him and remaining the same was the Son of God. What an event! Imagine as John saw his Cousin coming to be baptized. Little did he know that this Man was the One that he had longed to see! He may have thought that this godly man that he had grown up with did not need insignificant John to baptize Him. In fact, John, in Matthew 3:14, stated that Jesus should baptize him! What awe must have been going through John's mind as he saw the dove and heard the audible voice of God proclaiming the arrival of His Son—**man's Saviour!**

#### **VI. John did his job—he exposed Jesus**

In John 1:29-36, we find that John did exactly what he was commissioned by God to do—He pointed Jesus out to the people. John found out when he baptized Jesus that He was the Messiah, and without question, John proclaimed this news to the world. Though this was his Cousin, he had no fear in proclaiming Jesus to all men. He could have kept this information to himself had he wanted to, but he, like we are today, was commissioned to proclaim that Jesus is the Saviour.

#### **VII. John's imprisonment**

John was imprisoned by Herod, the king. John was very straight forward with the king. Matthew 14:3-4 and Mark 6:17-20 tells us that John informed the king that what he had done, taking the wife of his brother, Philip, to marry, was unlawful. This upset Herod. He, like the rest of us, did not find it comfortable to hear what he was doing wrong. It still is the job of the

preacher to clearly expose sin to protect people. Thank God for preachers who will stand up against sin, even if it causes people discomfort. It must be done!

### **VIII. John was martyred**

The stand that John took against sin upset Herod enough to put him in prison—yet, Herod truly respected John. The problem was that Herodias, the woman Herod had wrongly married, wanted John dead. After her daughter had danced to please Herod so well that he wanted to reward her with anything that she wanted, she, after speaking with her mother, requested the head of John, the Baptist, on a charger. Though this displeased Herod, he kept his word to her and beheaded the great John, the Baptist.

### **Conclusion—**

The life of John, the Baptist, teaches us both how to live our lives—sold out to God—and how to view God’s preachers. If we could only sell out to God as did John, the Baptist, and give God our all, perhaps we could deal better with the preacher that exposes our sin. Then, maybe we would correct our sin problem without taking our frustration out on God’s man. He is, after all, only doing the job for which he has been commissioned, which John, the Baptist, did so faithfully.

### **Questions:**

- 1. Who was the cousin of John, the Baptist?**
- 2. What was the name of John’s mother?**
- 3. What was the name of John’s father?**
- 4. What did John, the Baptist, eat?**
- 5. What came from Heaven and landed on Jesus after John baptized Him?**