

John the Baptist

Introduction

In earlier times the coming of royalty to an area was preceded by a herald (from the Greek word keryt, crier), announcing the soon-to-be appearance. Paul made use of this practice when he called himself a herald and an apostle.

John the Baptist is also called a herald; in this case, a witness to Christ's coming. We have condensed much of the scripture given in this study. If you have a Bible, it would be a good idea to read the references in their entirety.

Our Study

The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, prophesied about John's coming many years earlier.

The Scripture: Isaiah 40:3-5

"A voice of one calling: In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low, the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all mankind together will see it for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

1. How is John described? _____
2. What is John to proclaim? _____

3. What will be revealed? _____

If the guest were royalty or someone very important, the host might literally bankrupt himself making preparations for his coming. The preparations for the coming of the heavenly king were very different in nature.

John was specific in telling those who came to be baptized by him what they must do.

The Scripture: Luke 3:10-13

"'What should we do then,' the crowd asked. John answered, 'The man with two tunics should share with him who has none and the one who has food should do the same.' The tax collectors also came to be baptized. 'Teacher,' they asked, 'what should we do?' 'Don't collect any more than you are required to,' He told them. Then some soldiers asked Him, 'And what should we do?' 'Don't accuse people falsely--be content with your pay.'"

4. What was John's answer to the crowd? _____

5. His answer to the tax collectors? _____

6. His answer to the soldiers? _____

The Scripture: John 1:23

“When asked who he was, John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘I am the voice of one calling in the desert. Make straight the way for the Lord.’”

7. Who did John say he was? _____

8. What were his instructions? _____

The Scripture: Luke 1:5-7

“In the time of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendent of Aaron. Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commandments and regulations blamelessly. But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well along in years.”

9. Who was Zechariah? _____

The Scripture: Luke 1:8-11

“Once when Zechariah’s division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen...to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense....Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him.”

10. What happened while he was on priestly duty? _____

The Scripture: Luke 1:13

“The angel said to him,... ‘Your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear a son, and you are to give him the name John.’”

11. What did the angel tell him? _____

12. What was the child to be called? _____

The Scripture: Luke 1:15

“He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.”

13. What else did the angel tell Zechariah? _____

The Scripture: Luke 1:17

“He will go on before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

14. How did the angel describe John? _____

After the angel Gabriel’s appearance to Mary, telling her she would bear the Messiah, Mary went to visit her cousin, Elizabeth.

The Scripture: Luke 1:39-41

“Mary got ready and hurried to a town in...Judea where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in the womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”

15. Who did Mary visit? _____

16. What happened when the two women met? _____

The Scripture: Luke 1:42

“In a loud voice she exclaimed, ‘...Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear.’”

17. What did Elizabeth say? _____

The Scripture: Luke 1:67, 76-77

(At John’s birth) “His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied... And you, my child will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for Him, to give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.”

18. What did Zechariah prophesy over John? _____

John grew up, living in the wilderness.

The Scripture: Matthew 3:4-6

“John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.”

19. Describe John. _____

Some authorities don't believe John's diet was as harsh as it sounds. They say there was an edible plant at that time that was called a locust and this plant is what is referred to in this verse.

The Scripture: Matthew 3:7, 11

“You brood of vipers....produce fruit in keeping with repentance...! I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come One who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

20. What did John call those who came to him to be baptized? _____

21. What did he say about Jesus? _____

22. What did he say Jesus would do? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 3:13

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.”

23. Why did Jesus come to John? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 3:14-15

“John tried to deter Him saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?’ Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John consented.”

24. What was John's initial reaction? _____

25. How did Jesus respond? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 3:16-17

“At that moment, heaven was opened and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.’”

As Jesus' popularity grew, John's disciples became jealous for John.

The Scripture: John 3:25-26

“An argument developed....[John's disciples] came to John and said, ‘Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan--the one you testified about--well, He is baptizing and everyone is going to Him.’”

26. What did John's disciples complain about? _____

In a time of discouragement, John even sent his disciples to question Jesus.

The Scripture: Matthew 11:3

They asked Jesus: “Are you the One who was to come or should we expect someone else?”

27. What did they ask Jesus? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 11:5-6

Jesus’ response: “The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”

28. What was Jesus’ response? _____

When John heard Jesus’ response, he told his disciples:

The Scripture: John 3:27-30

“A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.....I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of Him....He must become greater; I must become less.”

29. What did John tell his disciples? _____

King Herod arrested John because John had criticized him for marrying his brother Philip’s wife.

The Scripture: Matthew 14:6-8

On Herod’s birthday, the daughter of Herodias (Herod’s wife) danced for them and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Prompted by her mother, she said, ‘Give me...the head of John the Baptist.’”

30. What did Herod promise his stepdaughter? _____

31. What did she ask for? _____

The Scripture: Matthew 14:10

“He [Herod] had John beheaded in the prison.”

32. What did Herod do? _____

John the Baptist! A man who lived in the wilderness and severely criticized sinners, a man who was virtually unknown outside the area where he preached, and one who died an ignoble death. Yet, this is the one of whom Jesus said, “I tell you the truth: Among those born of women, there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.” (Matt 11: 10-11)

The Answers

1. As a voice of one calling
2. Prepare the way of the Lord. Make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.
3. The glory of the Lord
4. The man with two tunics should share with him who has none and the one who has food should do the same.
5. Don't collect any more than you are required to.
6. Don't accuse people--be satisfied with your pay.
7. The voice of one calling in the desert
8. Make straight the way for the Lord.
9. A righteous, elderly priest. He and his wife Elizabeth had no children.
10. An angel appeared.
11. That his prayers had been heard and Elizabeth would bear a child
12. John
13. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth
14. He would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make a people prepared for the Lord.
15. Elizabeth
16. The baby leaped in Elizabeth's womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit
17. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear.
18. That he would be called a prophet of the Most High, for he would go on before the Lord to prepare the way for Him, to give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins
19. His clothes were made of camel's hair and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.
20. A brood of vipers
21. That after him would come One who was more powerful than he, whose sandals he was not fit to carry
22. Baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire
23. To be baptized
24. He tried to deter Jesus saying, I need to be baptized by You.
25. He said, "It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."
26. That so many people were going to Jesus
27. Whether He was the one to come or should they expect someone else
28. Jesus' response was that the blind received their sight, the lame walked, those who had leprosy were cured, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, and the good news was preached to the poor.
29. That Jesus must become greater and he must become less
30. That he would give her anything she asked.
31. The head of John the Baptist
32. He had John the Baptist beheaded.

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