

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

**John 1:19-34: John the Baptist**



**Have you ever been embarrassed by making a mistaking a stranger for an acquaintance?  
What happened?**

## Into the Word

- What questions do the priests and Levites ask John? What do these questions reveal about the reason why they were sent?
- Why does John respond so abruptly? What would you have said in his situation?
- What is John's purpose in life (John 1:22-23,26-27; also Isaiah 40:3-5)?
- How does John finally answer their question about his baptism (John 1:30-31)?
- What does he mean by calling Jesus the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29; see Exodus 12:1-13; Isaiah 53:7) and the "Son of God" (John 1:34)? What proof supports these claims (Psalm 2:7)?

## Into the Heart

- Who "made straight the way for the Lord" in your life?
- How could you incorporate the submissive, sacrificial lifestyle of the Lamb of God in your own life? Of the titles for Jesus gives so far (i.e., the Word, the Light, the Christ, the Lamb of God, the Son of God), which one means the most to you? Why?
- What does baptism mean to you?

*What is your greatest takeaway from this passage?*

*Do you need to be baptized into Christ for the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)?*

*What specific life changes do you need to make?*

*How will you hold yourself accountable?*

# JOHN THE BAPTIST (John 1:19-34)

**John's gospel starts in the beginning of Jesus' ministry and Jesus' ministry began at his baptism by John.** John was Jesus' cousin (Luke 1:36). In Luke's gospel we learn the back story. John was born months before Jesus to a priest named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. Due to their advanced age, and Elizabeth's inability to conceive. Consequently, this righteous couple were the perfect pick for a Divine miracle. Zechariah's job was temple work. As a priest he served the people, offering sacrifices on their behalf. He was in the temple when an angel told him that Elizabeth would conceive and bear a son who would "go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children...to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:17)." This was to fulfill a Messianic prophecy...the LAST Messianic prophecy cited in Malachi 4:5-6:

*"See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."*

Luke tells us John will be a "great man." He'll also never taste any alcohol and filled with the Holy Spirit "even before He is born (Luke 1:15)." John will be the "Elijah" that will arrive to announce the Jewish Messiah...or Jesus.

## JOHN'S MINISTRY: REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED

Like Jesus, we know little about John between his birth and adult ministry years. In Matthew 3 we learn that John is called a "Baptist" because of **his ministry to call people to repent and be immersed** (the Greek word translated "baptize" means to plunge, dip, submerge). It was a baptism to show a person wanted to live differently. Such baptisms (immersions) were not uncommon in that day. People got baptized all the time. *You couldn't enter Jerusalem without a baptism. Women were baptized after their monthly period. A healed person would be baptized. Rabbis baptized their disciples "in their name."* And various religious leaders immersed their followers into their message. **John's message was to change their lives because the kingdom of heaven was near (Matthew 3:2).** Those who accepted this message and desired to live differently were immersed by John in water. John used the mighty Jordan river as his baptistry...and he was attracting attention. The Pharisees and Sadducees were traveling to him to hear his preaching.

**Matthew tells us John's fashion was camel hair and his diet was locusts and wild honey.** He lived in the wilderness with a fiery message that angered the religious elite. He called the Pharisees and Sadducees a "brood of vipers" and their religion a "fruitless tree" (Matthew 3:7-10).

One day Jesus arrived at the Jordan seeking to be immersed by John. But that request didn't make sense. Even John protested and stated that he needed Jesus to baptize him. Jesus told him that his baptism was not about repentance but rather "to fulfill all righteousness." **Essentially Jesus was launching his new rabbinical ministry.** When Jesus was baptized, Matthew records that heaven opened and the Spirit of God descended "like a dove" and resting on Jesus. Then a heavenly voice boomed: *"This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased."* This phrase is rabbinical. When a rabbi announced his student was ready to do the work (be a rabbi himself), he said the same thing...after baptizing the student "in his name." Jesus was a rabbi, but not just the rabbi of a human teacher. This is why the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were rabbis too, kept challenging his "authority." They wanted to know *who* He studied under. Who was Jesus' mentor and teacher? Matthew tells us who it was. **Jesus was under GOD's authority.**

## WHAT HAPPENED TO JOHN THE BAPTIST?

John's preaching eventually lands him in prison by Herod the tetrarch. He had angered Herod by speaking against his illicit affair with his brother's wife (Herodias). He actually wanted John dead but feared the people. They loved John. However, on Herod's birthday, Herodias' daughter pleased Herod (with a dance) so much that he granted her a wish: and she asked for **John's head on a platter.** John's body was given to his disciples and buried (Matthew 14:1-12).