

# John the Baptizer: Birth to Early Ministry

Luke 1:5-25,57-80



New Testament 1  
Part 1: Early Life of Christ

## SUNDAY MORNING

New Testament 1 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

### SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Luke 1:5-25,57-80; Luke 3:1-20; Mark 1:1-8; Matthew 3:1-12; Acts 19:1-5; Isaiah 40:3-5

### MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: "Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there..." (John 3:23a).

OLDER CHILDREN: "Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized" (John 3:23).

### SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- "[John the Baptizer](#)"
- "[Plan of Salvation](#)"
- "[John 3:23a](#)"

### LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

- See [AP's Pinterest page](#) for ideas on bulletin boards, visuals, crafts, etc. [DISCLAIMER: Pins may sometimes need to be adjusted to be Scriptural.]
- [Jesus' Birth & Sermon](#) Bible fact cards (provided under "N.T. 1 Bible Facts" on curriculum Web site)
- Apologetics Press' [Bible Timeline](#)
- "Summary of the Bible" from "[Kids Prep](#)" CD by Jeff Miller
- "Matthew Chapter Summary" from "[Kids Prep](#)" CD by Jeff Miller
- Betty Lukens' felt pieces
- A suitcase (or a box that looks like one) with clothes cut-outs inside (shirt, socks, pants, etc.). Label the clothes cut-outs with things we should be prepared to do, such as invite friends to church, bake cookies for the sick, send cards to the sick and elderly, help mom around the house, etc. Could also add: hear, believe, repent, confess, be baptized, live faithfully. (For preschoolers, use pictures on clothes cut-outs instead of words.)



- **Have incense for children to smell. This can be perfume, spices, or incense sticks to burn.**

## PERSONAL APPLICATION:

God wants me to be ready to do good things for others and to be ready to teach others. He wants me to be prepared!

## LESSON STARTS HERE

### TEACHING ALERTS:



- Note that calling John a “Baptist” can leave the impression that John was a member of the modern “Baptist” denomination. John was a man known for baptizing (or immersing)—thus, he was John the baptizer (or John the immerser) which are better translations than the John the Baptist (see Hugo McCord’s *McCord’s New Testament Translation of the Everlasting Gospel*, Matthew 3:1).

## INTRODUCTION: (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

A priest named Zacharias (or Zechariah) and his wife Elizabeth were an older couple who had faithfully served God all their lives. But they were sad because they had no children. They prayed many years for a son.

## INTRODUCTION: (OLDER CHILDREN)

Jesus spent His growing up years preparing for what God sent Him to Earth to do. There was a man who was sent to prepare the people for what Jesus was going to teach them. A priest named Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were an older couple who had faithfully served God all their lives. But they were sad because they had no children. They prayed many years for a son.

## POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. As a priest, Zacharias was expected to serve at the Temple in Jerusalem (possibly twice a year, one week at a time). A priest was allowed to offer **incense** in the Temple only once in his life, and Luke chapter one tells us about Zacharias’ opportunity to do that. He must have been very excited and nervous to be in charge of this important part of the Temple worship.
2. The incense had to be carried into the Holy Place twice a day (“the hour of incense”—Luke 1:10), at 9:00 in the morning and 3:30 in the afternoon, by one priest. When Zacharias took the incense into the Holy Place, an angel appeared and spoke to him. The angel Gabriel told him that Elizabeth and he would have a son, even though they were old. The angel also told Zacharias that their son would be a special teacher who would help people prepare themselves for the coming **Messiah**. The angel said the baby boy’s name would be John, which means “Jehovah has been gracious.” [Note prophecies in Malachi 3:1, 4:5-6.]

**Incense:** Something made of perfumes or spices that smells sweet when burned. Frankincense is a type of incense.

**Messiah:** The anointed One—specially chosen by God. The term is used to refer to Jesus. It is the Hebrew word for “Christ,” which is Greek.



3. Zacharias was afraid and asked for proof (a sign). “How can this be since my wife and I are old?” Because he questioned this message from God and showed a lack of faith, the angel told Zacharias that he would not be able to say another word until after his son was born. Meanwhile many people were outside waiting for him and couldn’t understand why he was inside so long. They were all very surprised when he came out unable to speak.
4. Zacharias and Elizabeth returned to their home in the hill country of Judea and waited for their son to be born as the angel promised. On the day John was born, their neighbors and friends gathered to celebrate with them. When he was 8 days old (according to the Old Law, the time of circumcision), they were all eager to see what name had been chosen for the baby. They assumed he would be named after his father. But Zacharias used a tablet (possibly wood covered with wax) to write them a note saying, “His name is John.” At that very moment, Zacharias was able to talk again.
5. His first words were a long praise to God and a prophecy about the great teacher his son John would become. Neighbors and friends were amazed and wondered, “What kind of child will this be?” Zacharias and Elizabeth were prepared to be godly parents. They were ready and willing to follow God’s instructions about raising their son.



**NOTE:** After reporting this event, Luke records that Mary visited Elizabeth while both Jesus and John were in their wombs. When Mary entered the house of Zacharias and Elizabeth, John leaped in Elizabeth’s womb. Elizabeth was then filled with the Holy Spirit, and exclaimed to Mary, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” (Luke 1:42). Elizabeth was a “relative” of Mary, although we do not know how close they were in kinship (Luke 1:36).

6. John “continued to grow, and to become strong in spirit.” When he was grown, he lived in deserted areas away from towns and people. He wore a leather belt and very rough clothes made of camel’s hair. He ate honey and locusts. He looked different, he lived differently, and he preached differently than other men the people had heard.
7. John started preaching to the Jews near the Jordan River when he was about 30 years old, as the angel had said he would (Luke 1:16-17), telling them to **repent** of their sins and be **baptized**. John was prepared to do anything that God expected of him, and he wanted the Jews to be prepared to do what God expected of them when the Messiah (Jesus) came.



**Repent:** To change your mind, or the way you think about the things God says are wrong and choose not to do those things anymore. Repentance is turning around your life and going in another direction.

**Baptism:** To be completely immersed or put under water.

8. The Bible teaches the importance of being prepared to teach and defend the truth (1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 4:2; Ezra 7:10). We should always be ready to do what God asks us to do, whether it is helping others or obeying certain commands, like how to become a Christian or how to worship.



**RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS:** See the article “[\*\*Did John the Baptizer Know Jesus or Not?\*\*](#)” by Eric Lyons on the Apologetics Press Web site for a response to an alleged discrepancy in the Bible regarding John the Baptizer.



## NOTE:

### John's baptism:

1. was for the remission of sins committed under the Old Law. Promoted change in thinking (i.e., repentance—Acts 19:4), and, therefore, a change in lifestyle. Those baptized confessed their sins (Matthew 3:6).
2. prepared believers to obey the coming Messiah (Acts 19:4).
3. was not to become a Christian, since it preceded the baptism of the Christian era.

See Matthew 3:1-11; Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:1-7,16; John 1:25-33; Acts 13:24; 18:26-19:7

John was called “the Baptist” or “the Baptizer” because of what he did, just like Joseph the carpenter or Simon the tanner. He did not start a church of his own, nor should we be part of a religious group identified by his name.

**“Filled with the Spirit”:** both Zacharias and John were said to be “filled with the Spirit,” i.e., to be guided by (or controlled by) the Spirit to do and say things that God wanted done and said.

## PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—**BEFORE** CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- Click here for complete [Activity Book](#) and [Answer Key](#).

### Ages 2-5

- “[John the Baptizer Coloring Sheet](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- “[Matching Game](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- At least a day before class, cut cardboard pieces (12”x12” or 10”x12”) for every child in your class. Cover one side of each piece with melted wax. At class time, give each child a Popsicle stick or short skewer (as is age appropriate). Show them how to write on the “tablet” as Zacharias did.
- Have rough cloth or faux fur, with leather “belt” for kids to touch. Have “locusts” (pretzels) or something crunchy for kids to dip in honey.

### 1st-2nd Grade

- “[John the Baptizer Word Search](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- “[John the Baptizer Fill in the Blank](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- Play Tic-Tac-Toe ([Questions](#), [Instructions](#), and [Board](#) provided in activity sheets)

### 3rd-4th Grade

- “[John the Baptizer Word Search](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- Play Tic-Tac-Toe ([Questions](#), [Instructions](#), and [Board](#) provided in activity sheets)
- Have the children read Luke 3, Mark 1, and Matthew 3.
- Have the children read the following:
  - *Discovery* articles (NOTE: [Advanced Bible Reader](#) quizzes exist for many issues of *Discovery* magazine): “Why did Jesus refer to John the Baptizer as Elijah?” ([February, 2006](#)); “John the Prophet—Preparing the Way for Jesus” ([December, 2019](#))

- *John the Baptist*, Arch books, Ronald Klug (DISCLAIMER: The Bible does not say John slept in an underground cave)

## SONGS

### “JOHN 3:23A”

Author: Jeff Miller

(Tune: See “[Hidden In My Heart II](#)” CD)

### “JOHN THE BAPTIZER” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown\*

(Tune : “Oh, Where, Oh, Where Has My Little Dog Gone?”)

Oh, where, oh, where is John the Baptizer?  
 Oh, where, oh, where can he be?  
 In the wilderness beyond the Jordan, saying “A Savior follows me.”

Oh, what, oh, what did John preach?  
 Oh, what, oh, what did he say?  
 “Repent and then be baptized, the kingdom of heaven is near.”

### “PLAN OF SALVATION” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Unknown\*

(Tune: “Here We Go ‘Round the Mulberry Bush”)

Hear, believe, repent, confess,  
 Be baptized in the water.  
 Rise up again to walk with Christ,  
 And live like you ought too.

(Sing song twice)

\*Author Unknown: Please contact us through the feedback button for this lesson if you are aware of any copyright information for this song.

\*\*\* IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE “SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE CURRICULUM WEB SITE.





# John the Baptizer: Birth to Early Ministry

Matthew 14:1-13



New Testament 1  
Part 1: Early Life of Christ

## WEDNESDAY EVENING

New Testament 1 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

### SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Matthew 14:1-13; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 3:19-20

### MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: "Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there..." (John 3:23a).

OLDER CHILDREN: "Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized" (John 3:23).

### SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF SUNDAY'S LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- "[John the Baptizer](#)"
- "[Plan of Salvation](#)"
- "[John 3:23a](#)"

### LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS:

- See Sunday morning's lesson.

### PERSONAL APPLICATION:

God wants me to be ready to do good things for others and to be ready to teach others. He wants me to be prepared!

### INTRODUCTION:

Review Sunday's lesson (see [N.T. 1 Review Questions](#) for example questions).

[N.T. 1 Bible Facts Flashcards](#) (provided under "N.T. 1 Bible Facts" on curriculum Web site)



## POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. John was a powerful preacher who knew others needed to know what God wanted them to do. He was not afraid to tell others when they were doing wrong—not even the leaders of the Jews and Herod.



**HISTORICAL NOTES:** This Herod Antipas was a son of Herod the Great. He was in power at the time of Jesus' birth and throughout His ministry (4 B.C. to A.D. 39). Herod Antipas' first wife was the daughter of the King of Arabia. He angered his Jewish supporters by marrying Herodias. The granddaughter of Herod the Great, Herodias, was first married to another of Herod the Great's sons, Philip (not the Tetrarch; mentioned only in Matthew 14:3 and Mark 6:17). Salome later married Philip the Tetrarch or governor (Luke 3:1)—her uncle (brother of Herod Antipas).

2. Herod (Antipas) was married to a woman whom he had no scriptural right to marry (Leviticus 20:21; Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12). He divorced his wife to marry his sister-in-law (his half-brother's wife), Herodias. Herod did not like to be told he was doing wrong; after all, he was the ruler of Palestine. Herodias did not like to be told she was doing wrong either. So, to make John stop preaching publicly, Herod put him in prison.
3. One night at his birthday party, Herodias' daughter, Salome, danced for the huge crowd of people there. Herod and his guests enjoyed her dancing so much that he foolishly promised her anything she wanted. There was undoubtedly a lot of drinking at the party; even Herod probably wouldn't have made such a promise if he had been thinking clearly. Salome asked, at her mother's suggestion, for John's head to be cut off and brought to her on a platter (large plate). (Teachers of younger children may want to say that she wanted John killed.)
4. Though shocked by her request, Herod gave her what she asked for. He didn't want to take back his promise in front of so many guests. Mark 6:26 even says he "was sorry." Herod had wanted to kill John earlier (Matthew 14:6), but after hearing him teach, he was afraid to harm John. On the other hand, Herodias had been waiting for "an opportune day" (Mark 6:21, NKJV) when she could take advantage of her husband's weak character.
5. The men who had followed John (his disciples) came and took his body from the prison and buried it. When Jesus heard what had happened, He was very sad and went to a quiet place to think and pray. His good friend/relative was dead because he had dared to preach the Truth.
6. John spent his life telling others to be prepared. He was prepared to do whatever God wanted him to do, and he was prepared to die for what was right. Herod didn't care about doing what was right; he just didn't want to be embarrassed in front of his guests. We may never have to face death because we follow God's Word, but we will have people make fun of us or try to make our lives harder (e.g., through ridicule or peer pressure). We must be prepared to do what we know is right, no matter what.
7. What would you need to go on a picnic or camping trip? What do you need to be prepared for the first day of school? Being prepared makes the trip/experience much more enjoyable. It's good to feel like "I'm ready." Bible study and prayer help us to be prepared for times when the Devil tries to get us to make wrong choices.

**PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—BEFORE CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):**

- See Sunday morning’s lesson.
- Bible Verse Scramble: Cut strips of construction paper. Using the memory verse, write one word on each strip and mix them up. Have students put them in the correct order to make the verse.
- Give different scenarios of when we need to be prepared, and have students tell you how to be prepared (e.g., If someone wants you to lie: tell them “I cannot do that. Lying is wrong.”).

**\*\*\* IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE “SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE CURRICULUM WEB SITE.**

