

## 28.12 John the Baptizer (Matthew 3:1–10; Mark 1:2–6; Luke 3:1–14; John 1:6–18)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows  
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

### Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visuals found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check “Activities” and “Handwork” found below for additional materials.
- A puppet (or a teacher) dressed like John the Baptizer. Make 4 copies of the dialog found at the end of this lesson. Use older students to read/act the characters to whom John speaks. The teacher should be the speaker for John or his puppet representative.
- Locust tree bean pods
- Sandal

**Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:** Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *sandal strap*: washing the feet (first, untying the shoe or sandal strap) was a job for the very least of servants; saying a person was unworthy even to unloose someone else’s sandal strap was to put oneself below the very least of servants
- *wilderness*: wild place, not in the cities, where few people live
- *priests and Levites*: men from the tribe of Levi who were supposed to know and teach God's Word better than most men
- *Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees*: religious men who tended to think themselves to be better—more holy—than other people
- *Isaiah*: an Old Testament prophet who prophesied about Jesus
- *baptism*: to dip someone completely under water in order to show, in John's time, that the person had repented of sinful ways and wanted to follow God; baptizing with fire would be judgment, like hell fire
- *repentance*: to be sorry for one's sin and to change—stop sinning
- *Children of Abraham*: Jews; Jews sometimes thought that because Abraham was their ancestor, they were already special and saved from sin with no need to repent.
- *fruits worthy of repentance*: a repenting person does not act the same as he did before he repented; instead, his works are like fruits worthy of repentance
- *winnowing fan*: a fan used to get the chaff away from the good grain
- *Publicans*: tax collectors; often dishonest and hated by others

### Scripture (ESV):

Matthew 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” 3 For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’”

4 Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, 6 and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You

brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. 10 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

Mark 1:2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, 3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Luke 3:1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, 6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

7 He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. 9 Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" 11 And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." 12 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 you are authorized to do." 14 Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

John 1:6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") 16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

### **Introduction/Review:**

We learned about a baby named John. What was the name of his elderly father? [Zacharias.] What was the occupation of Zacharias? [Priest.] What was the name of John's elderly mother? [Elisabeth.] Remember that

the angel Gabriel came to Zacharias while he was offering incense in the Temple and told him John would be born? Because Zacharias didn't believe Gabriel, what happened to him? [He was unable to speak until after John was born.]

Mary came to visit her cousin, Elisabeth, soon after she was pregnant with Jesus. What happened to Elisabeth when Mary entered Elisabeth's house? [John jumped in her womb.] Why did John leap? [Because he recognized Jesus, the Son of God, in Mary's womb.]

Since Mary and Elisabeth were cousins, what relationship did Jesus and John also have? [They, too, were cousins.] John was older than Jesus, having been born six months before Him.

### Story:

When John grew up, he knew he had a special job, for the angel had told his father Zacharias exactly what he would do. In fact, the book of Malachi in the Old Testament had told what John would do: "I send my messenger" (Malachi 3:1). He was to prepare the way for Jesus Christ, the Son of God who had been prophesied all throughout the entire Old Testament. John would need to preach, sort of like a king's messenger, saying, "Get ready for the king! The king is coming!"

John, however, would say, "Get ready, for the kingdom of heaven is near. The everlasting King was born after I was born, but He is greater than I am. Repent in order to prepare yourselves for the coming of the Son of God Himself! Oh, this kingdom's King was and is more important than any earthly king, for His kingdom is of heaven, the kingdom of God! In order to receive this King, we must repent of our sins."

Do you suppose John preached in the synagogues? No. At the Temple in Jerusalem? No. How about in the city streets? No. John preached in the wilderness on the eastern side of the Jordan River between Jericho and the Dead Sea (John 1:28). [Locate on map.]

There is something interesting about the way John looked and the way he acted. First, he wore a camel's hair garment with a leather belt. That's what the prophet Elijah had worn when he preached to Ahab in the Old Testament. In fact, the angel had told Zacharias, "[John] shall go before [the Lord] in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17).

The second interesting fact is that John ate locusts and wild honey. We aren't quite sure just what *locusts* are, but locusts are likely either grasshopper-like insects, which some people say are very nutritious [show picture found below of a man eating a locust if you dare], or *locusts* means the beans found in pods on locust trees. I prefer to think it was the locust plant rather than the animal, don't you?

Even though John preached where not many people lived, he preached to large crowds of people. How could that be? They came out of the cities into the wilderness just to listen to him. He had a message that rang with truth. He quoted the Old Testament, showing that he was the messenger of God. Many, many people came to hear him—scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, Levites, priests, common people.

Because John baptized people he became known John the Baptist or John the Baptizer.

Now we will let a puppet [Teacher, if not using a puppet, say, "I will . . ."] pretend to be John the Baptizer, proclaiming John's message. [Read the dialogue that follows, using older students to speak/act the other parts. The various characters' lines are highlighted.]

### PRIESTS AND LEVITES

Who are you?

JOHN

I am not the Christ.

### PRIESTS AND LEVITES

What then? Are you Elijah?

JOHN

I am not.

## PRIESTS AND LEVITES

Are you the Prophet?

JOHN

No.

## PRIESTS AND LEVITES

Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?

JOHN

I am “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Make straight the way of the LORD,’ as the prophet Isaiah said. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways *shall be* made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

## PRIESTS AND LEVITES

Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?

JOHN

I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!

[Looking at Pharisees and Sadducees]: You Pharisees and Sadducees! Brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and 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.

And 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.

I 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 (or, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose).

This was He of whom I said, “He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.” And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is at the side of the Father, He has declared Him. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His 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.

## PEOPLE

What shall we do then?

JOHN

He who has two coats, give one coat to him who has none, and he who has meat, let him do likewise.

## PUBLICANS

We publicans want to be baptized. Master, what shall we do?

JOHN

Take no more taxes than you're supposed to take.

## SOLDIERS

What should we soldiers do?

## JOHN

Don't be violent, don't accuse *any* falsely; and be content with your wages.

[End of dialogue.] John's message was powerful; his words were strong. Why? Because his message was so very important. He was introducing the God-Man to the world. People needed to be ready for Him. They needed to repent of their sins and look to God's Son.

### Lessons from this lesson:

- Jesus is God: John the Baptizer said, "He was before me," meaning since John was older, Jesus was eternal.
- What does God want you to do with your life? All of us are called to proclaim the name of the Lord—to make Him known
- John was bold to proclaim his message; so should we be.
- John was willing to live under harsh conditions in order to fulfill the will of God for His life? How about you? Will you give your life to serve God even if it means He may lead you to a harsh environment?

### Activities:

- Play dough: grasshoppers, bean pods, sandals
- Eat edamame (immature soybeans in the pod, found in East Asian cuisines; possibly found in frozen food section of a grocery store) or sautéed and cooled green beans and honey.
- Have students follow the path of a wavy rope and of a straight one. Ask which path is easier to walk. Ask them to imagine flat land and hilly land. Which is easier to walk? This demonstrates the clause, "Make straight paths for your feet."
- Rub some wheat in order to get the chaff separated from the grain. Use a fan to cause the chaff to fly away, leaving the good grain. This demonstrates the phrase, "Whose winnowing fan is in his hand."
- Discuss the meaning of the word *baptizo*, which is to dip or immerse, not to sprinkle.
- Students may have wrong impressions of the name, *John the Baptist*, thinking, perhaps, that he belonged to a Baptist church. There was no such thing in those days. A better name is *John the Baptizer*.
- Print and prepare take-home booklets for this story. The online source for ordering or downloading for \$12.99 is <https://www.carsondellosa.com/products/0499--New-Testament-Take-Home-Bible-Stories-Resource-Book-0499#/?book%20media%20type=f389e45b92884d48844baaf09d49e3c5>. The book is less expensive at other sites, but those sites do not offer the ebook.
- Have a Sword drill on prophecies and fulfillment concerning John: Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; Mark 1:1–3; Matthew 3:3; Luke 3:3–6
- Review questions: (Game:
  1. Where did John preach? [In the wilderness.]
  2. Which Old Testament prophet had foretold John's ministry? [Isaiah; Malachi.]
  3. What did John wear and eat? [Camel's hair coat, leather belt.]
  4. What did John eat? [Locusts, wild honey.]
  5. What was the requirement before a person was baptized by John? [Repenting, confessing sins.]
  6. Why did John say the people should repent? [Because the kingdom of heaven is at hand.]
  7. Some of the Jews presumed that because they were children of Abraham, they were right with God. Fill in the blanks. God is able from these \_\_\_\_\_ to raise up children for Abraham. [Stones.]
  8. Fill in the two blanks. John said, "I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the

- \_\_\_\_\_.” [Holy Spirit.]
9. What did John call the Pharisees and Sadducees—a brood of \_\_\_\_\_? [Vipers.]
10. What does it mean to repent? [To besorry for and turn from one’s sins.]

**Memory Verse[s]:**

- John 1:12, 13— To all who did receive him [Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
- John 1:1–14
  - 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
  - 2 He was in the beginning with God.
  - 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.
  - 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
  - 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
  - 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John.
  - 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.
  - 8 He was not that Light, but *was sent* to bear witness of that Light.
  - 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.
  - 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.
  - 11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.
  - 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:
    - 13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
    - 14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

**Handwork:**

- Color the picture of John the Baptist found below. Glue fake fur to his clothes and leather to his belt.



We don't know whether the "locusts" John ate were actual insects or the bean pods from locust trees.







