

JOHN the BAPTIST

Power of a Bold Witness

Scripture: Read Luke chapter one (his birth)

Family: Born to Zechariah and Elizabeth in their old age (Luke 1:7, 13) They were from a Levite family, descended from Aaron. John's birth was foretold to Zechariah by the angel Gabriel while he was on active priestly duties. John was to be great in the sight of the Lord and would be a Nazirite from birth. Mary, the mother of Jesus was related to Elizabeth. His name meant "Jehovah is gracious".

Scripture: Read Matthew chapter 3 (or show Matthew 3 DVD)

Ministry: John the Baptist preached repentance and baptized those who did. He also boldly challenged the tax collectors, soldiers, Pharisees and Saducees to "flee from the wrath to come" and repent of their sins (Matthew 3, Luke 3). He preached boldly that Jesus was coming after him who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

WORD EXPLANATION: BAPTISM

The Greek word "baptizo" means "to dip" or "to immerse". The people were coming to John and being immersed in the Jordan River. The Jews were familiar with the baptism of Gentile proselytes to Judaism; but this kind of baptism for Jews was new. John called upon them to be baptized as a way of showing that they wanted to renounce their old way of life and prepare their hearts for the coming of the Messiah. Paul used baptism to speak about the believers' identification with Christ. Just as a cloth dipped in dye absorbs the color of the dye, so a person immersed in Christ should take on His nature. (NKJV Study Bible, Nelson Publishers).

Scripture: Read Matthew 14:1-14 (or show Matthew DVD 14:1-14)

His Death: John knew he had a specific role to play – announcing the coming of the Savior and he put all his energies into this task. Although he had no position in the Jewish political system, he spoke with authority. People were moved by his words because he spoke the truth. The words of truth that moved many to repentance goaded others to resistance. John even challenged Herod Antipas to admit his sin. Herodias, the woman Herod had illegally married, decided to get rid of this desert preacher. She was successful in having him killed by beheading but she was not able to stop his message. (NIV Life Application Study Bible, Zondervan)

Discussion:

What are some of the character traits of John the Baptist that you admire?

List: _____

How can we emulate these in our current circumstances?

Explain: _____
