

## John the Baptist (1)

Luke 1 records the unusual events preceding the birth of John, but for now, focus on his adulthood. He began to preach when *the word of God came to John . . . in the wilderness* telling him to *prepare the way of the LORD* by declaring *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, indicating that the words of the prophets were soon to be seen (Lk. 3:2-3; Dan. 2:44). This meant reminding the people of their sin and baptizing all who repented, *for the remission of sins* (Lk. 3:3). Sin was not a popular topic so many people hated his controversial preaching, which Jesus praised (Mt. 11:11ff).

John was arrested, and later murdered, for opposing sinful marriage (Mk. 6:14-29). In prison, he became discouraged and began to wonder whether Jesus really was the One the prophets said was coming (Mt. 11:2-3). Jesus reassured John of the reality and certainty of His power and message.

As John predicted, Jesus was more prominent than he. Later, people who sincerely preached or practiced John's message were shown *the way of God more accurately* (Acts 18:24-28). Even John's baptism was replaced by the baptism of Jesus (Acts 19:1-5).

## John the Baptist (2)

These are just a few lessons we learn from the life of John.

*God is seeking lives centered on His goals* John believed God's goals were worth dying for. Whose goals most motivate you in job, home, and leisure decisions?

*Hard times bring tough questions* It is no coincidence that John became discouraged when in prison. Often, we begin to doubt truths we know when life is hard. Like John, learn that truth does not change just because our circumstances do.

*What kingdom was he talking about?* Jesus and John preached that the kingdom was near. Paul tells us about this kingdom in Colossians 1:13-14. God moves us into this kingdom, when He removes our sin through Jesus blood. The kingdom John preached is the church that belongs to Christ. There is no future earthly kingdom—Christ is king today!

*John's work* I once asked someone why they were in the Baptist Church since there is no such church in the Bible. I was told that John started the Baptist Church. Does the Bible say so? John was a "preparer" not a founder. John's death ended his work, but the death of Jesus purchased the church of Jesus. What other church can you learn of in the Bible?