

## That The World May Know: The Path to the Cross – Session 2: The Way of John the Baptist

### Why Did John Live in the Desert?

The Judea Wilderness, close to the well-watered, fertile fields and populated cities of the Judea Mountains, had long been a place of sanctuary for God's people. In the big picture, God's people have gone into the desert to learn to hear the words of God and to become his holy people who are equipped to fulfill the mission God has given them.

1. Scripture tells us that as John the Baptist grew up in the desert, he became "strong in spirit." In contrast, the Hebrew word that describes the heart and spirit of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt (discouragement) literally means "weakness of spirit" or "crushed spirit." Where did God lead his people when he had set free from bondage in Egypt?

Exodus 15:22 – 24

Exodus 16:1 – 3

Exodus 17:1 – 2

Exodus 24:1 – 7

What was essential to God's training in the desert during the time of Moses?

Deuteronomy 4:1 – 10

Deuteronomy 11:16 – 25

Acts 7:37 – 38

What did God give John in the desert to strengthen and prepare him for his mission?

Luke 3:1 – 6

2. The Judea Wilderness was God's provision and refuge. How did God provide for David when he was hiding there from Saul? What did he learn about God's provision, his ways, and his word?
- Psalm 18:1 - 19

### John's Divine Mission

The stage was set for "preparing the way for the LORD." The era of Roman peace brought roads throughout the Roman Empire, enabling the good news of the gospel to be spread across the entire region. Then the righteous and ordinary priest Zechariah made his way toward the Holy Place of the temple for the first and only time in his life. As other priests prepared for the morning sacrifice, Zechariah entered the marble temple. Soon there would be news of "Elijah's" coming to prepare the way.

1. How did Luke describe Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth? Why did Luke emphasize that Zechariah was a "righteous" priest?
- Luke 1:1 – 7

Were Zechariah and Elizabeth the kind of people God chooses as "partners" in fulfilling his plan of redemption?

Did they think God would use them in a great and miraculous way?

2. What amazing thing occurred when Zechariah was alone in the Holy Place? How did he respond?
- Luke 1:8 – 22
3. When God allowed Zechariah to speak again, how did he respond?
- Luke 1:57 – 80

How did Zechariah's neighbors respond?

What did they recognize when these things happened?

### John and Jesus

John the Baptist and Jesus shared a divinely ordained bond: one was the preparer of the way, the other the glory of the Lord. As they lived in obedience to God's words and fulfilled his purpose for their lives, their paths crossed. Their interaction and statements indicate great respect and honor for each other, and an even greater respect for obeying and fulfilling God's words. Their mothers were relatives who each became pregnant by God's design and power.

1. What indication of the unborn sons' future relationship did these women experience? What did it mean to them?
- Luke 1:26 – 56
2. The Bible reveals little about the lives of John and Jesus during their growing-up years. From what common place did they begin to proclaim God's message?
- Matthew 3:1 – 3  
Matthew 3:13 – 4:1  
Luke 1:80  
Mark 1:9 – 15
3. What message did John and Jesus preach?
- Matthew 3:2  
Matthew 9:35 – 38  
Mark 1:14 – 15  
Luke 3:1 – 6

## John's Message of Repentance

When the time was right, God gave John a message to proclaim. In true biblical fashion, John came out of the desert proclaiming a message that resonated from one end of the land to the other. The message itself was simple: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

1. Both John and Jesus proclaimed a powerful message of repentance. What was the emphasis of Jesus' message?  
Matthew 7:15 – 20  
Mark 1:14 – 15  
Luke 13:1 – 9

What was the emphasis of John's message?  
Matthew 3:1 – 12  
Luke 3:1 – 9

2. How does the Hebrew Bible describe a righteous life?  
Exodus 22:21 – 31  
Exodus 23:1 – 9  
Leviticus 19:32 – 37  
Leviticus 23:22

Why does God demand such a life?  
Deuteronomy 10:17 – 18

3. Through John's passionate repentance proclamation, the way for the coming of the Lord was prepared. How did John answer the crowd when they asked what they needed to do to produce the fruit of repentance?  
Luke 3:7 – 20

What is significant about tax collectors and soldiers asking John what they needed to do to produce the fruit of repentance?

## John Lived and Died the Text

Moses and Elijah, great prophets of God who spent significant time in the desert, never saw the completion of the God-given work they had pursued. Moses died before the Hebrews entered the Promised Land. Elijah was taken up to heaven before that hope was fulfilled. And John was imprisoned and martyred before he saw the fruit of his preaching.

1. During the exodus, God gave his words to his people so they would obey his commands and learn how to live righteous lives. Why would Antipas' Jewish subjects have rejected his legitimacy as king if he violated Torah?  
Exodus 20:1 – 17  
Leviticus 18:16  
Deuteronomy 17:14 – 20  
Luke 3:19 – 20

Why would John rebuke Herod Antipas for his divorce and subsequent marriage to Herodias, as well as for other evil actions?

To what extent would John's personal commitment to a life of obedience to God's words compel him to speak out?

2. What picture to the Gospel writers paint of Herod Antipas?  
Matthew 14:1 – 12  
Mark 6:14 – 29  
Luke 3:19 – 20  
Luke 9:1 – 9

Although Herod was the ruler, who had the real power in this story?

In what ways was that power evident?

Why was Herod so intrigued by John and his message?

## References

Genesis 25	Exodus 6
Exodus 14	Exodus 15
Exodus 16	Exodus 17
Exodus 20	Exodus 22
Exodus 23	Exodus 24
Numbers 6	Numbers 24
Leviticus 16	Leviticus 18
Leviticus 19	Leviticus 23
Deuteronomy 4	Deuteronomy 8
Deuteronomy 10	Deuteronomy 11
Deuteronomy 15	Deuteronomy 17
Deuteronomy 24	Deuteronomy 34
1 Chronicles 24	1 Kings 16
1 Kings 17	1 Kings 18
1 Kings 19	2 Kings 1
2 Kings 2	Isaiah 40
Isaiah 41	Jeremiah 31
Psalms 18	Psalms 103
Psalms 121	Isaiah 13
Isaiah 57	Ezekiel 47
Amos 1	Amos 9
Obadiah 1	Micah 2
Zechariah 9	Malachi 3
Malachi 4	Matthew 2
Matthew 3	Matthew 4
Matthew 7	Matthew 11
Matthew 14	Matthew 16
Matthew 17	Matthew 21
Matthew 25	Mark 1
Mark 2	Mark 6
Mark 9	Luke 1
Luke 3	Luke 7
Luke 9	Luke 11
Luke 13	Luke 18
John 1	John 3
John 5	John 10
John 14	Acts 2
Acts 7	Acts 18
Hebrews 11	Hebrews 12
1 John 2	