



Chapter 3: John the Baptist

The Work of John the Baptist (3:1-12)

John the Baptist had an important job to do: he was to announce and prepare the people for the coming of Jesus.

John called on people to "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*". The word 'repent' means 'to have a change of mind'. People who understand that they are sinners must repent. They must have a change of mind and seek to turn:

- **away** from their life of selfishness and sin
- **to** God and obey Him.

The work of John the Baptist had been foretold by the prophet Isaiah many years earlier. John quotes Isaiah's prophecy applying it to his own work.

"For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight".
(Isaiah 40:3)

John's mother, Elizabeth, had been unable to have children and was past the age of child bearing when John was born. As Luke 1:13 records, John's birth was a miracle.

John baptized people who had confessed their sins showing that they had truly repented. God then forgave their sins through this repentance and their baptism. This is why Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3 call John's baptism a "*baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*".

Baptism is both the end of an old, sinful life and the beginning of a new life in which we must try to follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. John taught and baptized people to prepare them for the coming of Jesus. Jesus is at the centre of God's purpose and he is much more important than John the Baptist. John understood this and told them that he was not worthy to carry the shoes of the one who would come after him (Jesus).

The Baptism of Jesus by John (3:13-17)

Verse 13 records Jesus coming to John for baptism. John was unwilling to baptize him at first, because he knew that Jesus was far greater than he. John described Jesus as "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). Jesus did not need to repent, as he had done no sin, but when John asked him why he had come to be baptized Jesus said that it was to "*fulfil all righteousness*". Jesus' baptism was an act

of obedience. He did everything his Father asked him to do.



Baptism is a symbol of dying with Christ. This was the start of Jesus' public ministry and, by being baptized, he was publicly showing that he was willing to go forward and die on the cross for the sins of those he came to save.

Baptism must be a positive commitment to serve the Lord, it marks a new beginning. It must be the start of a new way of life. This is why John told the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to be baptized to "*Bear fruit in keeping with repentance*". They thought they had a right to God's blessings just because they were

descended from Abraham. But they had to obey God as Abraham did, and needed to show a humble repentant spirit.

Jesus was baptized by complete immersion in water and not by sprinkling because:



- the baptism took place in the River Jordan
- verse 16 says that “*when Jesus was baptized, immediately **he went up from the water***”.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, God sent His Spirit, like a dove, upon Jesus. There was also a voice from heaven. This showed that God was pleased with Jesus and that he really is the Son of God.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Notice the expression ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ (it is used only in Matthew’s Gospel). This means the kingdom that belongs to heaven, or belongs to God who is in heaven. It means exactly the same as ‘the Kingdom of God’ which is how the other Gospel writers describe it. The Bible never refers to a kingdom in heaven where people go when they die. God’s kingdom will be here on the earth.



Name	
Address	
Reference Number	
Tutor	

Answers to most questions can be found in the lessons or Bible passages given. Please write your answers on this question paper and return them in the envelope provided:

Questions on Chapter 1

- 1a Who was the mother of Jesus?
- 1b Who was the father of Jesus?
- 1c What does *she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit* mean (Matthew 1:18)?
- 2 What does the name Jesus mean? (Look at Matthew 1:21.)
- 3 What does this chapter tell us about Joseph and his character?
- 4a Which of the promises God made to Abraham do you think is the most important? Explain why.
- 4b What promise was made to King David about the Lord Jesus? (See 2 Samuel 7; Luke 1:32-35 and Lesson 15 of the 40 Lesson course).
- 4c When will the promise made to David finally come true?

Questions on Chapter 2

- 1 The Old Testament is quoted often in this chapter, what does this teach us about the Old Testament?
- 2 Over which nation was Jesus born to be king (verse 2)?
- 3 What did Micah prophesy hundreds of years before Jesus was born (Micah 5:2)?
- 4 Why do verses 20 and 22 say *the child and his mother* and not *your child* ?

Questions on Chapter 3

- 1 What must a person do before being baptized?
- 2 Where did John baptize people?
- 3 Why was John not willing at first to baptize Jesus?

What two signs followed the baptism of Jesus?