

John the Baptist

MEMORY VERSE:

"I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh..."

Luke 3:16

John was born about six months before Jesus and for a long time he lived in desert places. He wore a garment of camel's hair and his food was locusts and wild honey. When he was about 30 years old, he started travelling around the country of Israel, telling people to get ready for a very important person who was coming. Did you guess that this was Jesus?

Now the special job that John had to do was to get people ready to listen to Jesus. He had to tell people that they must be sorry for any wrong things they had done. When they were truly sorry, then John baptised them by dipping them right under the water of the River Jordan. This showed everybody that the people were sorry and intended to do better.

Sometimes people came to be baptised that just wanted to make a big show of being good. But John could tell that they were not really sorry for the wrong things they had done. John wanted people to show that they were ready to change their ways by doing things that would please God like looking after the poor and being honest.

One day while John was down at the river, calling on people to repent and be baptised, he looked up and saw Jesus coming toward him. Jesus asked John to baptise him. John was surprised and said to Jesus, "I need to be baptised by you, and yet you come to me?" But Jesus said that He must be baptised by John because it was the right thing to do to please God.

So John baptised Jesus in the River Jordan, just as he had baptised other people. But this time it was different because Jesus was special, he was the Son of God.

As soon as Jesus came up out of the water, there was a voice from Heaven which said, "This is my beloved Son, I am very pleased with him!" It was God speaking. And from heaven came the spirit of God looking like a dove and settled on him. This was the Power of God. Now Jesus had the power to do wonderful things. He could make sick people well, he could make blind people see and deaf people hear.

But this was such a wonderful and great Power that Jesus had to have time to get used to it. As soon as he was baptised he went away from everybody into the desert to think out what He would do with this Power. He spent nearly six weeks in the desert alone and decided that he would never use the Power of God to help himself. This wonderful Power must only be used to help other people.

At last he was ready to go and teach people about the Kingdom of God.

Things to Remember

- John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus.
- He taught the need for repentance and baptism.

- Jesus himself was baptised by John.

Discussion

God gave John the Baptist a message to tell the people. The message was the importance of repentance and baptism. Repentance means to change our ways, to be sorry for doing wrong. When John baptised people, it was to wash away their old way of life, and raise them out of the water to a new way of life.

1. Who was John preparing the way for?
2. Where was Jesus baptised?
3. What did the voice from heaven say?

Activity Suggestions

Draw a picture of John baptising at the Jordan River. Perhaps you could use blue cellophane for the river and cut out a person separately to slide behind the cellophane.

Did you know that the word baptise is the same as the word the Greeks would use for dyeing cloth?

Temporary Tie-Dye Shirt

1 pkg (2 T) unsweetened drink mix
1/4 cup white vinegar
2 cups cold water
rubber bands
T-shirt
rubber gloves

Ask an adult to help you with this one. Mix drink mix, vinegar and water in a pot. Bring to a boil. Remove from heat and cool. Scrunch up T-shirt into a ball and wrap several rubber bands around it. Put on gloves. Dip T-shirt in solution several times. Squeeze out and let sit overnight until fairly dry. Remove rubber bands.