



NEW TESTAMENT • LESSON 4

THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

John announced the ministry of Jesus with a call to repent.



MONDAY

THE STORY: MATTHEW 3:1-3

Isaiah foretold John's ministry. In Isaiah 40:3 we read, "A voice cries in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord." Isaiah was speaking of a day when a voice would cry out in the wilderness to the people. John the Baptist was that voice. John ministered outside of the city, and his voice cried out to a people hopelessly lost apart from the grace of God through Jesus. John spoke of the coming of the kingdom of God - the very theme of Jesus' ministry. Soon the King was revealed. Jesus once spoke to the crowd about John the Baptist. He said that John was a prophet, but more than a prophet. Jesus said that among those born of women there was no one greater than John. He also said that from the days of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven is forcefully advancing (see Matthew 11:7-12).

TALK ABOUT IT:

Who was the King of the kingdom spoken of by John? (Jesus is the King of God's kingdom.)

The people who live in the kingdom of a king are called to obey the king's laws. What are we commanded to do as people who are ruled by King Jesus? (We are commanded to love God and each other. This is only possible if God causes us to be born again and places His Spirit in our hearts.)

PRAY:

Ask God to help you love Him and one another by pouring out His grace on your life.



T U E S D A Y

THE STORY: MATTHEW 3:4-11

John's baptism was one of repentance. John called the Jews to repent of their sins and be baptized. John brought them a prophetic message of repentance. The fact that they could trace their lineage back to Abraham was no guarantee of faith or obedience in their hearts. John told the religious leaders that God could raise up children of Abraham from the rocks. No one can receive salvation simply by virtue of being born a Jew or by being born into a Christian family. Salvation comes to each person by God's grace, through individual faith and repentance.

Malachi 4:5, 6 had prophesied the return of Elijah, who would turn the hearts of the fathers and children back to one another. This was first attributed to John by the angel who visited John's father Zechariah (see Luke 1:17). Jesus confirmed that John the Baptist was the return of Elijah (Matthew 11:14), for he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. Finally, after about 400 years without a prophet (from the days of Malachi), God had sent another prophet to Israel.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What did John tell the people they must do? (John told the people to repent of their sins.)

What does it mean to repent? (Repent means to turn back. In the case of sin, repentance is to turn away from sin and back to the Lord. We are also called to repent and turn away from our sin and idols to worship and serve the Lord.)

PRAY:

Have each of the children ask God to help them repent. You may want to invite them to mention specific ways they have sinned against God. Remind them of the gospel, which promises we can receive forgiveness for our sins.



WEDNESDAY
WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

THE STORY: LUKE 3:1-6

John the Baptist was very clear to indicate that men were sinful, in need of a Savior. In the Gospel of Luke we learn that John the Baptist quoted a larger portion of Isaiah than is indicated in Matthew. Luke 3:6 includes Isaiah 40:5b: “And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” John was not merely introducing a great prophet; he was introducing the Lord Himself, who would bring salvation to all people. This would come through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What does Luke 3:6 mean when it says all flesh (mankind) shall see the salvation of God? (This is an announcement of the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that all the different peoples of the earth would be blessed through him. There will be people from every language, tribe and nation in heaven.)

People look different on the outside. What is the one thing they all have in common? (All men, no matter their skin color, are made in the image of God and reflect the glory of God in spite of their sin. And all men need God’s salvation.)

PRAY:

Thank God for bringing people from every nation to salvation.



THURSDAY

THE STORY: LUKE 3:10-18

John prophesied that Jesus would also baptize. John's teaching came with authority. Many thought he might be the Messiah himself. John was quick to correct them, saying he was unfit to even untie the sandal of the Messiah soon to come. John said that he baptized in water, but the Messiah to come would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus did indeed pour out the Holy Spirit upon men. John's baptism could not change hearts. When Jesus pours out the Holy Spirit on a person's heart, that person is made alive again, transformed and changed. And God's law is written upon the person's heart.

TALK ABOUT IT:

What is different about Jesus' baptism? (Jesus would not just baptize with water, he would baptize with the Holy Spirit.)

Are people baptized in God's Spirit today? (Yes, Jesus fills us with the Holy Spirit when we repent and place our trust in Jesus. For many people, this experience of the Spirit is quite overwhelming and dramatic. Then we also experience fresh infillings of the Spirit, punctuating the Christian life. The filling of the Spirit is something the Bible tells us to pursue continually [see Acts 2:4 and 4:31, and Ephesians 5:18]. The Holy Spirit is to be an experienced reality in the life of the believer from conversion on.)

PRAY:

Pray that God would pour out His Spirit on you that you might be filled with His presence and power to spread the gospel message.



FRIDAY
ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

THE STORY: ISAIAH 40:1-5

Matthew attributes this section of Isaiah 40 to the ministry of John the Baptist. John was the one whose voice called out in the wilderness to announce the coming of the Lord. When you make a road, you need to level the ground, cutting the high hills and filling in the valleys. John's message was designed to announce Jesus, figuratively making a road on which Jesus would travel. John did so by introducing Jesus as the one who would pour out His Spirit and gather up His people to Himself.

TAKE IT HOME:

What does it mean that the glory of the Lord will be revealed? (Because of Jesus, a day is coming when the full glory of the Lord will be revealed. God's glory is His marvelous splendor, purity and unapproachable light. This glory will be unveiled at the second coming of Christ. With new bodies in heaven, all believers will see God's glory.)

How should this prophecy encourage us? (The prophecy shows God's amazing control over all things and His careful unfolding of a detailed plan. We are all a part of God's plan.)

PRAY:

Thank God for His amazing control over all things. Ask God to pour out His Spirit on your family.