

Lesson 106: John prepares the way

Scripture: Matthew 2; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:1-22; John 1: 19-34

Memory verse: When they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. Matt. 3:6

As the time drew near for Jesus' ministry to begin, God sent Jesus' cousin, John the baptizer, to prepare the way. This happened as Isaiah foretold many years before:

"He is a voice shouting in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord's coming!

Clear the road for him! The valleys will be filled, and the mountains and hills made level.

The curves will be straightened, and the rough places made smooth. And then all people will see
the **salvation sent from God.**"

So John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had **repented** of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven.

John's clothes were woven from coarse camel hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food he ate locusts and wild honey. People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley went out to see and hear John. And when they confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the religious rulers and teachers coming to watch him baptize, he opposed them. "You brood of snakes!" he exclaimed. "Who warned you to flee the coming wrath? **Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.** Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, for we are children of Abraham.' That means nothing, because God can create children of Abraham from these very stones.

Many others, like tax collectors and soldiers came to ask John how they could repent from their sins. John told them to be generous and fair with others, and to be satisfied with what they had.

Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. John answered their questions by saying, "I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I'm not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire." John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people. As is God's common practice, He sent Good News coupled with a warning for anyone who would ignore or reject His Word!