




Day 1

-  Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.
-  Nearly, three decades have passed. Jesus is now about thirty-years of age. John the Baptist is performing a God-ordained ministry inviting people to repentance and baptism, and . . . as a herald for the soon-to-be-announced Messiah, the Son of God.
-  For more detail on the pregnancy prophecy, birth, and upbringing of John the Baptist, please read Luke's Gospel, chapter 1 (↓). While relevant passages are below, the entire chapter is a joy to read. Additionally, the student may want to continue reading because some questions in this StudySheet reference chapter 2.

Luke 1:5-25, 57-64 [NIV-1984]

[The birth of John the Baptist]

⁵ In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. ⁶ Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. ⁷ But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

⁸ Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. ¹⁰ And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

¹¹ Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. ¹³ But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. ¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. ¹⁶ Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

¹⁸ Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

¹⁹ The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. ²⁰ And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."

²¹ Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. ²² When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. ²³ When his time of service was completed, he returned home.

²⁴ After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. ²⁵ "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people." . . .

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his

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father Zechariah, ⁶⁰ but his mother spoke up and said, "No! He is to be called John."

⁶¹ They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who has that name."

⁶² Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. ⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone's astonishment he wrote, "His name is John."

⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God.

Day 2

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way for the Messiah

¹In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea ²and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Q1. What would compel a Jew to travel into a desert region to listen to a roughly-dressed preacher proclaiming "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near"?

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 The distance from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea is approximately 60-70 miles (95-110 km).



Map depicting the Desert or Wilderness of Judea.

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<https://www.bible-researcher.com/wilderness-map.jpg>




Photo of the Desert Wilderness of Judea.

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<https://ferrelljenkins.blog/2012/01/24/john-was-a-voice-in-the-wilderness/>

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Q2. How would you define the word “Repent”?

 re•pent (ri'pent)

v.i.

1. to feel regretful or contrite for past conduct: *to repent of an act.*
2. to be penitent for one's sins and seek to change one's life for the better.

v.t.

3. to remember with self-reproach or contrition: *to repent one's angry words.*
4. to feel sorry for; regret: *to repent a hasty marriage.*

Source: Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary, © 2010 K Dictionaries Ltd.

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Q3. *For the kingdom of heaven is near:* To what might John the Baptist be referencing?

³This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.' "

⁴John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.


Q4. *This . . . was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:* What is prophecy? Why did God use prophets?

Prophecy defined:

Why . . . prophets?

Isaiah 40:3 [NIV-1984]

A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. . ."

 Prophecy defined:

1. (Theology)

- a. a message of divine truth revealing God's will
- b. the act of uttering such a message

2. a prediction or guess

3. (Theology) the function, activity, or charismatic endowment of a prophet or prophets

[Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged, 12th Edition 2014,

© HarperCollins Publishers 1991, 1994, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2014]

 The commentators at www.BibleRef.com made the following observation:

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“Matthew has introduced John the Baptist as a man preaching a simple message in the wilderness: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 3:1–2). Now Matthew directly connects John to the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3, “A voice cries: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”

“To Isaiah's original audience, this text was about preparing the literal roadway for the Israelite exiles to return to Judah from captivity in Babylon.


“Matthew, like the writers of the other Gospels, shows this verse is also about John the Baptist preparing the way of Jesus and those who would follow Him. John's role was to symbolically “clear the path” for Jesus by calling Israel to repent of sin and turn back to the way of God. If they did so, they would be ready to follow God's Son. As it was with the proportion of those who returned to Judah from Babylon, only a small percentage of Israelites would turn and follow Christ.” [© Copyright 2002-2025 Got Questions Ministries, accessed 11/22/2025. All rights reserved. <https://www.bibleref.com/Matthew/3/Matthew-3-3.html>]

Q5. (Verse 4) John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey: Please describe: how might John the Baptist have looked?

2 Kings 1:8 [NIV-1984]

They replied, “He was a man with a garment of hair and with a leather belt around his waist.” The king said, “That was Elijah the Tishbite.”

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⁵People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan.

Q6. Was it an easy journey for seekers to find John the Baptist?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

 To repeat: the distance from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea is approximately 60-70 miles (95-110 km).

Q7. (Verse 4) John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey: What drew people to this man?

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Q8. John was prophesied to embody an Old Testament prophet. What was that prophet's name?

E I J H

Malachi 4:5-6 [NIV-1984]

⁵ "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. ⁶ He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Matthew 17:1-4 [NIV-1984]

[The Transfiguration: Moses and Elijah appear together with the transfigured Jesus.]

¹ After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves.

² There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

⁴ Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

Revelation 11:3-12 [NIV-1984]

[One of the possibilities identifies Moses and Elijah as the "two witnesses" in this prophecy from Revelation, due in part to the miracles they performed during their earthly lives, and their presence at the Transfiguration of our Lord. Examples: Moses: Exodus 4:1-9 and other miracles throughout Exodus; Elijah: 2 Kings 1:10, 12 and 2:8, 11]

³ And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sack-cloth."

⁴ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. ⁵ If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. ⁶ These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

⁷ Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. ⁸ Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

⁹ For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language, and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. ¹⁰ The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

¹¹ But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. ¹² Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

⁶Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Q9. **Confessing their sins:** Was confession of sins important to the Jewish people?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

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Leviticus 5:5-6 [The Message (MSG)]

“When you are guilty, immediately confess the sin that you’ve committed and bring as your penalty to God for the sin you have committed a female lamb or goat from the flock for an Absolution-Offering.

“In this way, the priest will make atonement for your sin.

Q10. ***Confessing their sins***: Is confession important to Believers, we who believe in the saving grace of Christ Jesus?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

1 John 1:9 [New American Standard Bible (NASB)]

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Hebrews 7:27 [International Children’s Bible (ICB)]

He [Christ Jesus] is not like the other priests. They had to offer sacrifices every day, first for their own sins, and then for the sins of the people. But Christ does not need to do that. He offered his sacrifice only once and for all time. Christ offered himself!

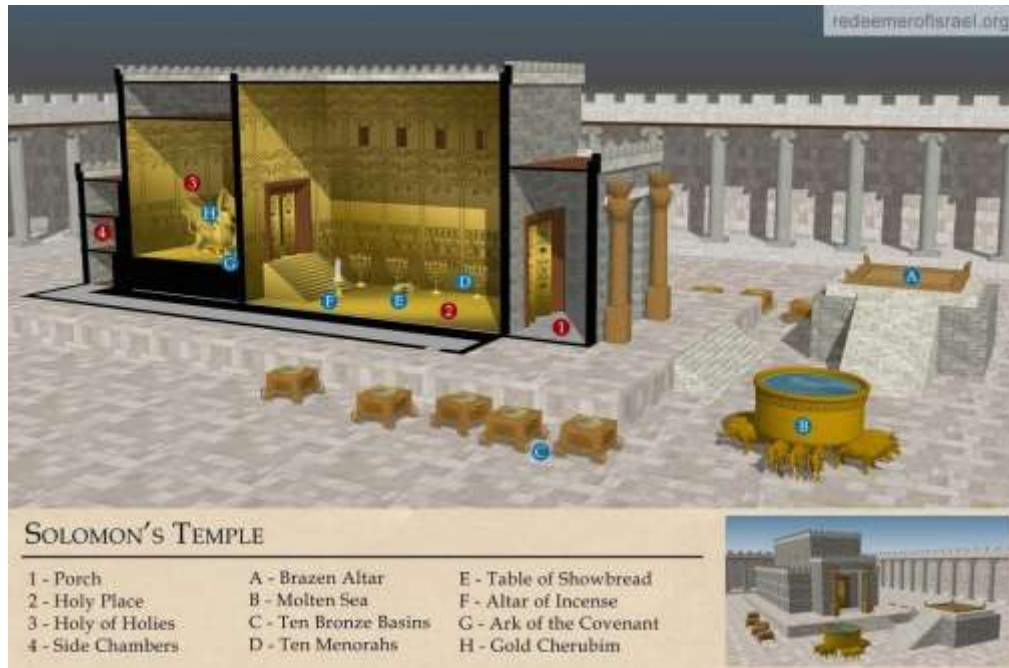
Mark 15:38 [International Children’s Bible (ICB)]

When Jesus died, the curtain in the Temple [that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place] split into two pieces. The tear started at the top and tore all the way to the bottom.

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Hebrews 9:12 [International Children's Bible (ICB)]

Christ entered the Most Holy Place only once — and for all time. He did not take with him the blood of goats and calves. His sacrifice was his own blood. He entered the Most Holy Place and set us free from sin forever.



Cross-section of Solomon's Temple, which was later destroyed (~587 BC).

The most recent Temple referenced in Mark 15:38 (↑) was rebuilt in ~516 BC, and then upgraded by the Roman 'Herod the Great' in ~18 BC.

The 'Holy of Holies' (#3) is also called the 'Most Holy Place'. B - Molten Sea: see 1 Kings 7:23–26 and 2 Chronicles 4:2–5.

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Hebrews 10:10 [International Children's Bible (ICB)]

Jesus Christ did what God wanted him to do. And because of this, we are made holy through the sacrifice of his body. Christ made this sacrifice only once, and for all time.

Q11. *They were baptized:* These pilgrims were Jews. Why did they seek baptism?

✍ In Jewish time — before Christ Jesus' ministry — teachings and tradition prescribed 'baptism', although it was not formally called 'baptism'.

"Baptism finds its earliest roots in the ancient Hebrew practices of ritual washing. These ceremonial cleansings were commands given to the nation of Israel, emphasizing purity and consecration. Individuals who had become ritually unclean - whether through contact with certain objects, diseases, or bodily fluids - were commanded to wash to restore ceremonial purity (Leviticus 15:13). Archeological findings in and around Jerusalem have revealed multiple mikva'ot (ritual immersion pools) dating back to the Second Temple period. These pools in places like Qumran demonstrate a Jewish tradition of immersion as a symbol of repentance and readiness to enter God's presence.

"Within the Hebrew Scriptures, ritual washing was also integral to the priestly function. Priests were required to wash before performing tabernacle or temple duties (Exodus 30:20). This concept set the stage for a later development of public and private immersions as signs of religious devotion and cleansing. . . .

"Beyond the general practice of ritual washing, deep symbolic foreshadowing of baptism is seen in the Old Testament. Noah's deliverance through the waters of the flood served as a type of cleansing and salvation from

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judgment (1 Peter 3:20-21). The Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea also prefigured passing from slavery into freedom (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). Both events connect water with divine deliverance, pointing ultimately to salvation fulfilled in Christ.

"These narratives demonstrate that the concept of a water-born rebirth and passage from the old to the new has long been woven into God's unfolding story. Baptism fulfills and expands these themes by rooting them in the Messiah's atoning work and the believer's identification with His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4)." [\[https://biblehub.com/q/what_is_the_origin_of_baptism.htm\]](https://biblehub.com/q/what_is_the_origin_of_baptism.htm)

Jesus also asked someone, who was to be healed, to wash. The Apostle John recorded in John 9:7 "and [Jesus] said to [the blind man], 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). So, he went and washed and came back seeing."

Exodus 30:17-21 [NIV-1984]

¹⁷ Then the Lord said to Moses, ¹⁸ "Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. ¹⁹ Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. ²⁰ Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to the Lord by fire, ²¹ they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come."

Leviticus 8:6 [NIV-1984]

Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward and washed them with water.

Leviticus 16:2, 4, 23-24 [NIV-1984]


² The Lord said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover. . . .

⁴ "He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so, he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. . . .

²³ "Then Aaron is to go into the Tent of Meeting and take off the linen garments he put on before he entered the Most Holy Place, and he is to leave them there. ²⁴ He shall bathe himself with water in a holy place and put on his regular garments. Then he shall come out and sacrifice the burnt offering for himself and the burnt offering for the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people."

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Day 4

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.


⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"

Q12. *The Pharisees and Sadducees:* Briefly, who were the Pharisees and Sadducees?


Pharisees?


Sadducees?

Conclusion?

 Pharisees: "A very numerous sect among the Jews, who, in their origin, were, very probably, a pure and holy people. It is likely that they got the name of Pharisees, i.e. Separatists, (from פָּרַשׁ pharash, to separate), from their separating themselves from the pollution of the Jewish national worship; and hence, the word in the Anglo-Saxon version is, holy persons who stand apart, or by themselves: but, in process of time, like all religious sects and parties, they degenerated: they lost the spirit of their institution, they ceased to recur to first principles, and had only the form of godliness, when Jesus Christ preached in Judea; for he bore witness, that they did make the outside of the cup and platter clean - they observed the rules of their institution, but the spirit was gone.

Sadducees: "A sect who denied the existence of angels and spirits, consequently all Divine influence and inspiration, and also the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees of that time were the Materialists and Deists of the Jewish nation. When the sect of the Pharisees arose cannot be distinctly ascertained; but it is supposed to have been some time after the Babylonish captivity. The sect of the Sadducees were the followers of one Sadok, a disciple of Antigonus Sochaus, who flourished about three centuries before Christ." [©Public Domain, Commentary on the Bible by Adam Clarke (b. 1760 or 1762, d. 1832). Published in 6 volumes during the period 1810-1826 in Liverpool. <https://sacred-texts.com/bib/cmt/clarke/mat003.htm>]

 Essenes: "are [a third group and are] not mentioned in the New Testament. They differed from both the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They were Jewish monks or hermits, passing their time little in society, but mostly in places of obscurity and retirement. It is not probable, therefore, that our Saviour often, if ever, encountered them; and this, it is supposed, is the reason why they are not mentioned in the New Testament. They were a contemplative sect, having little to do with the common business of life. The property which they possessed they held in common. They denied themselves, in a great measure, the usual comforts of life, and were exceedingly strict in the observance of the duties of religion. They were generally more pure than the rest of the Jews, and appear to have been an unambitious, a modest, and retiring sort of people. The two sexes were not in company except on the Sabbath, when they partook of their coarse fare (only bread and salt) together. They practiced dancing in their worship. Few of them were married; they were opposed to oaths, and they asserted that slavery was repugnant to nature. In regard to doctrine, they did not differ materially from the Pharisees, except that they objected to the sacrifices of slain animals, and of course did not visit the temple, and were not, therefore, likely to come into public contact with the Saviour. They perpetuated their sect by proselytes, and by taking orphan children to train up." [©1834, Notes on the Bible by Albert Barnes. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/3-7.htm>]

 Another commentator offered these thoughts: "The Pharisees and Sadducees did not like each other very much. Pharisees were religious leaders and teachers more closely connected to the common people at the local level of the synagogues. They set the tone for everyday religious life in Israel. Highly respected and even feared, they held themselves — and others — to very strict standards when it came to following the law. They also developed a system of rules that went beyond the inspired law of Moses.

"The Sadducees were a much smaller group of wealthier priests and religious aristocrats. They held different

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views than the Pharisees on key spiritual issues. Sadducees were committed to protecting their power. They were known for their cooperation with Rome's occupation and were resented by the people.

“John the Baptist clearly did not fear or admire either group. He calls them a brood of vipers, the same term Jesus will later use when talking to the Pharisees (Matthew 12:34). This name connects them to the deceiving serpent in the garden of Eden.

flee from the coming wrath: “John asks them who warned them to flee from God's impending wrath? John saw in his prophecy of the coming of the kingdom of heaven as good news for those who lead holy lives but terrible news for those who continued in sin. His words show that he saw Israel's religious leaders as sinful and unrepentant.”

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Q13. *The Pharisees and Sadducees:* Did the Pharisees and Sadducees believe in the resurrection of the body?

Pharisees? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Sadducees? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Conclusion?

Matthew 22:23 [NIV-1984]

That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question.

Acts 22:30 & 23:6-9 [The Message (MSG)]

[Paul before the Sanhedrin]

^{22:30} The next day, determined to get to the root of the trouble and know for sure what was behind the Jewish accusation, the [Roman] captain released Paul and ordered a meeting of the high priests and the High Council to see what they could make of it. Paul was led in and took his place before them. . . .

^{23:6} Paul, knowing some of the council was made up of Sadducees and others of Pharisees and how they hated each other, decided to exploit their antagonism: “Friends, I am a stalwart Pharisee from a long line of Pharisees. It’s because of my Pharisee convictions — the hope and resurrection of the dead — that I’ve been hauled into this court.”

⁷⁻⁹ The moment he said this, the council split right down the middle, Pharisees and Sadducees going at each other in heated argument. Sadducees have nothing to do with a resurrection or angels or even a spirit. If they can’t see it, they don’t believe it. Pharisees believe it all. And so, a huge and noisy quarrel broke out. Then some of the religion scholars on the Pharisee side shouted down the others: “We don’t find anything wrong with this man! And what if a spirit has spoken to him? Or maybe an angel? What if it turns out we’re fighting against God?”

Matthew 22:29-32 [NIV-1984]

²⁹ Jesus replied [to the Sadducees], “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. ³⁰ At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ³¹ But about the resurrection of the dead — have you not read what God said to you, ³² ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.” [Jesus said that Scripture is important, grammar is important! Verse 32: all references are current tense, not past tense.]

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Q14. *[John] said to them: "You brood of vipers:* Did John have insight into their hearts, into their motivation for seeking baptism? If yes, what was the motivation of the Pharisees and Sadducees? (See Matthew 3:7 MSG ↓)

Yes? No? (If yes, what was their motivation? Any additional thoughts?)

Matthew 3:7-10 [The Message (MSG)]

When John realized that a lot of Pharisees and Sadducees were showing up for a baptismal experience because it was becoming the popular thing to do, he exploded: “Brood of snakes! [See Genesis 3:1, 14&15] What do you think you’re doing slithering down here to the river? Do you think a little water on your snakeskins is going to make any difference? It’s your life that must change, not your skin! And don’t think you can pull rank by claiming Abraham as father. Being a descendant of Abraham is neither here nor there. Descendants of Abraham are a dime a dozen. What counts is your life. Is it green and flourishing? Because if it’s deadwood, it goes on the fire.

⁸Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Q15. *Produce fruit:* Generally, what is “fruit”?


Galatians 5:22-23 [New American Standard Bible (NASB)]

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Genesis 4:2b-5a [The Message (MSG)]

^{2b} Abel was a herdsman and Cain a farmer. [Abel and Cain were the sons of Adam and Eve.]

^{3-5a} Time passed. Cain brought an offering [fruit] to God from the produce of his farm. Abel also brought an offering, but from the firstborn animals of his herd, choice cuts of meat. God liked Abel and his offering, but Cain and his offering didn’t get his approval.

 Cain did not offer the firstfruits (the best) of his produce. In contrast, Abel offered to God the firstfruits (the firstborn) — “choice cuts of meat”. God looks at the heart. Cain’s offering, based on the text of Genesis 4:3, seemed to be one of reluctant obligation. Abel’s offering was one of “choice cuts” from his firstborn animals — Abel gave the best and trusted God for bounty-to-come in subsequent births.

Genesis 9:6-7 [The Message (MSG)]

Whoever sheds human blood, by humans let his blood be shed, Because God made humans in his image reflecting God’s very nature. You’re here to bear fruit, reproduce, lavish life on the Earth, live bountifully!”

Matthew 3:10 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

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Matthew 7:15-23 [NIV-1984]


[Jesus proclaimed,] ¹⁵ "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn-bushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

John 15:1-6 [NIV-1984]

¹ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire, and burned.

 The Biblical quotes immediately above all imply 'a changed heart'. The BibleRef commentators made this statement: "John tells the Pharisees and Sadducees that their repentance must bear fruit. In other words, it will not be enough to be seen publicly agreeing with John and being baptized by him in the Jordan River. Repentance means to change your mind and turn around, to head in a new direction. They must change their teaching and practice in leading the religious lives of the people of Israel. If the change is genuine, it will produce measurable results. It will bear fruit." [© Copyright 2002-2025 Got Questions Ministries, accessed 11/27/2025. All rights reserved. <https://www.bibleref.com/Matthew/3/Matthew-3-8.html>]

Q16. *Repentance*: Generally, what is "repentance"?

Acts 2:38 [International Children's Bible (ICB)]

Peter said to them, "[Repent!] Change your hearts and lives and be baptized, each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

1 Kings 8:48a [English Standard Version (ESV)]

if they repent with all their heart and with all their soul

1 Kings 21:28-29 [The Message (MSG)]

Then God spoke to Elijah the Tishbite: "Do you see how penitently submissive Ahab has become to me? Because of his repentance I'll not bring the doom during his lifetime; Ahab's son, though, will get it."

2 Corinthians 7:10 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

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2 Corinthians 12:21 [New American Standard Bible (NASB)]

I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and indecent behavior which they have practiced.

Q17. *Produce fruit in keeping with repentance*: What are 3-4 examples of this kind of “fruit”?

①

②

③

④

⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

Q18. *We have Abraham as our father*: Who is Abraham to the Jews? Be brief.

Hebrews 2:16 [NIV-1984]

For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.



The story of Abram/Abraham begins in Genesis 11:26 and ends with his burial in Genesis 25:10. Genesis is the first book in our Holy Bible, just as it is the first book in the Jewish Torah. The Torah consists of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, which comprise the first five books of our Holy Bible.

The Jews consider Abraham their father through his son Isaac; Muslims consider Abraham their father through his son Ishmael.

Isaac's mother Sarah was Abraham's true wife; whereas, Ishmael's mother Hagar was Sarah's handmaiden (servant). Ishmael was born because Abraham and Sarah were impatient and used human wisdom to “help” God (yes, there is a lesson in there for us, too). Despite human “help”, God was faithful in His promises to Abraham and Sarah. At God's chosen time — Abraham was 100-years old and Sarah was 90-years old (Genesis 17:17) — Sarah gave birth to Abraham's true heir Isaac.

Hebrews 6:13-15 [NIV-1984]

¹³ When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." ¹⁵ And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

Hebrews 11:8-19 [NIV-1984]

[Abraham lived in Ur of Chaldea (present-day Iraq), traveled northwest to Haran in Paddan-Aram (present-day Turkey), and then southwest to the Promised Land (present-day Israel).]


⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

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¹¹ By faith Abraham, even though he was past age — and Sarah herself was barren — was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. ¹² And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

¹³ All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. ¹⁴ People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. ¹⁵ If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, ¹⁸ even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." ¹⁹ Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Q19. ***We have Abraham as our father:*** Since the Jews consider Abraham their father who had a unique bond with God, did the relationship between God and Abraham then convey a special permanent, redemptive reconciliation between the Pharisees and Sadducees to God? (Did they believe they were assured of a place in Heaven — like an “easy”  button, regardless of their behavior in this world?)

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Q20. (Speculation) ***I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham:*** What was John’s motive in declaring “[from] these stones God can raise up children for Abraham”?



“John’s warning, though, goes beyond that simple truth. He tells the Pharisees and Sadducees not to presume that the arrival of the kingdom of heaven means they will not be judged. While it is true that God will save a remnant of Abraham’s seed, John adds a curious statement: God is able to raise up new children of Abraham even from these stones. He may have been pointing to the stones in the Jordan River. This is wordplay. In both Greek and Aramaic, the word for stones is very close to the word for children.

“John’s statement goes beyond suggesting that God will spare a remnant of the biological children of Abraham from His judgment as He sets up His kingdom. In truth, through the coming of Jesus as King, God will add those who trust in Christ to Abraham’s line even though they are not directly descended from him. This parallels Jesus’ statement in a later argument with the Pharisees (John 8:31–38 ↓).” [© Copyright 2002-2025 Got Questions Ministries, accessed 11/28/2025. All rights reserved. <https://www.bibleref.com/Matthew/3/Matthew-3-9.html>]

Luke 19:39-40 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.”

⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

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John 8:31-38 [International Children's Bible (ICB)]


³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, "If you continue to obey my teaching, you are truly my followers. ³² Then you will know the truth. And the truth will make you free."

³³ They answered, "We are Abraham's children. And we have never been slaves. So why do you say that we will be free?"

³⁴ Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth. Everyone who lives in sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ A slave does not stay with a family forever, but a son belongs to the family forever. ³⁶ So if the Son makes you free, then you will be truly free. ³⁷ I know you are Abraham's children. But you want to kill me because you don't accept my teaching.

³⁸ I am telling you what my Father [The Almighty God] has shown me. But you do what your father [Satan] has told you."

Day 5

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today's study.

¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Q21. The ax is already at the root of the trees: Who wields the "axe"?

.....
 See Jesus' Words in John 15:1-6 (↑), page 11.

Q22. *The ax is already at the root of the trees:* What or who do the "trees" represent?

Real trees? Believers? Nonbelievers? Other?

Q23. Every tree that does not produce good fruit: What does "good fruit" represent?

Q24. Will be cut down and thrown into the fire: What does this phrase represent?

 J D G T

Revelation 20:11-15 [NIV-1984]

[The Great White Throne Judgment]

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.

¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as

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recorded in the books. ¹³ The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

¹¹ "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Q25. What does "baptism" represent?

<u>D</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u>D</u>	TO	SIN	[Immersion baptism: the person's face goes under water, representing death]				
<u>C</u>	<u>L</u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>	<u> </u>	<u>D</u>	OF	SIN	[Immersion baptism: the person is raised from the water, representing life – resurrection, cleansing]

Q26. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I: To Whom is John referring?

Q27. ***Whose sandals I am not fit to carry:*** Why would John say that he is not worthy to carry this person's sandals?

Exodus 3:1-6 [NIV-1984]

¹ Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

² There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight — why the bush does not burn up."

⁴ When the Lord saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

⁵ "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

⁶ Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Q28. ***He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire:*** Is John the Baptist prophesying a future event?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Lesson 3: Matthew 3:1-17

Acts 1:4-5 & 2:1-4 [NIV-1984]

⁴ On one occasion, while he [Jesus] was eating with them [His disciples], he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

...
^{2:1} When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Q29. *His winnowing fork is in his hand:* What might the "winnowing fork" represent?

Hebrews 4:12 [NIV-1984]

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Q30. *Gathering his wheat into the barn:* (This is similar to verse 10.) What group is the "wheat"?

Group: Believers? Nonbelievers? Other?

Matthew 13:3-8 [NIV-1984]

³ Then he [Jesus] told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop — a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.

Matthew 13:24-30 [NIV-1984]

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

²⁸ " 'An enemy did this,' he replied.

"The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

²⁹ " 'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.' "

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Q31. *Gathering his wheat into the barn*: What might the “barn” represent?

Luke 23:42-43 [NIV-1984]

⁴² Then he [one of the criminals crucified with Jesus] said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

⁴³ Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Revelation 21:1-3 [NIV-1984]

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

Q32. *Burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire*: (This is similar to verse 10.) What group is the “chaff”? And why would this group be “burn[ed] up . . . with unquenchable fire”?

Group: Believers? Nonbelievers? Other?

Why would the chaff be “burn[ed] up . . . with unquenchable fire”?

Job 21:18 [NIV-1984]

How often are they like straw before the wind, like chaff swept away by a gale?

Psalms 1:4 [NIV-1984]

Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.



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Illustration of winnowing forks used on a Threshing Floor.

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“Winnowing is an agricultural method developed by ancient cultures for separating grain from chaff. It can also

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be used to remove pests from stored grain. Winnowing usually follows threshing in grain preparation.

“In its simplest form, it involves throwing the mixture into the air so that the wind blows away the lighter chaff, while the heavier grains fall back down for recovery. Techniques included using a winnowing fan (a shaped basket shaken to raise the chaff) or using a tool (a winnowing fork or shovel) on a pile of harvested grain.” [© Farlex, Inc. <https://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/winnowing>]

Day 6

 Please pray for holy guidance and insight before you begin today’s study.


Jesus is Baptized

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

Q33. *Jesus came . . . to be baptized by John*: Why did the perfect, sinless Jesus need to be baptized?



https://www.conformingtojesus.com/images/webpages/israel_at_the_time_of_jesus_christ_1.png. All rights reserved.

 **Then Jesus came:** “The Saviour is now introduced as about to enter on his work, or as about to be solemnly set apart to his great office of Messiah and Redeemer. The expression “[came]” implies that the act was voluntary on

Lesson 3: Matthew 3:1-17

his part; that he went for that purpose and for no other. He left the part of Galilee - Nazareth - where he had lived for nearly 30 years, and went to the vicinity of the Jordan, where John was baptizing the people in great numbers, that he might be set apart to his work. The occasion was doubtless chosen in order that it might be as public and solemn as possible. It is to be remembered, also, that it was the main purpose of John's appointment to introduce the Messiah to the world, Matthew 3:3 (↓).

to be baptized by John: "Baptism was not in his case a symbol of personal reformation and repentance, for he was sinless; but it was a solemn rite by which he was set apart to his great office. It is true, also, that although he was personally holy . . . the baptism in his case had a different [significance] . . . for it was a symbol of holiness or purity in that great system of religion which he was about to set up in the world." [©1834, *Notes on the Bible* by Albert Barnes. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/3-13.htm>]

Matthew 3:3 [NIV-1984]

[John the Baptist was the herald to the King of Kings!]

This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.' "

¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

¹⁵ Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

Q34. **But John tried to deter him:** Did John recognize the divinity of his cousin standing before him?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Q35. As a young boy, did John receive training/instructions from his parents (Zachariah & Elizabeth) about the Jewish Faith? Who were John's parents?

Faith training? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Zachariah's profession (Luke 1:8)?

Was Elizabeth related to Mary (Luke 1:36)? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Proverbs 22:6 [English Standard Version (ESV)]

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Q36. Did Zachariah share any of God's prophecy (Luke 1:14-17, see page 1 of this StudySheet) with his son John?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

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Q37. As a young boy, did John hear any stories from John's parents about his miraculous birth (Luke 1)? Or about Elizabeth's relative Mary (Luke 1) and the birth of her Son (Luke 2)?

John's miraculous birth? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Mary and the birth of her Son? Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)

Q38. Did Zachariah share stories with his family about the prophetic utterances and blessings of Simeon (Luke 2:25-35) and Anna (Luke 2:36-38) when Mary and Joseph presented Jesus at the Temple for the purification rites?

Yes? No? (Why did you circle that answer?)



John was born to devout Jews. His father was a priest whose duties included the performance of specific rituals in the Holy Place in the Jewish Temple (see illustration on page 6 of this StudySheet); this was truly an honored priestly assignment. Additionally, it was critical that Zachariah's wife Elizabeth have the appropriate Jewish lineage and be well-versed in Jewish customs and traditions, so that she could support her husband in his priestly role.

As parents they would have obeyed the parental requirement to "train up a child" as referenced in Proverbs 22:6 (↑). Family history, family stories, and Jewish traditions would have been critical to John's training. So, it is reasonable, logical, that John had heard the story about his own miraculous, prophetic birth and the angel's words spoken to his father in the Holy Place — more than once as he grew-up — as well as the family stories about Mary's pregnancy, his mother Elizabeth's blessing upon her, and the birth of Jesus. John would also have to know why he was set apart from his friends and couldn't drink "wine or other fermented drink" (Luke 1:15, see page 1 of this StudySheet) and why he was different — filled with the Holy Spirit.

It is human nature to share stories about one another (gossip). It is quite possible that Zachariah witnessed his relative's arrival at the Temple for their purification rites and Simeon's and Anna's prophecies and blessings given to Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. (Even if Zachariah did not witness these events, he would have heard about it from his peers — other priests — and then shared the stories with Elizabeth and John.) We can speculate much based on typical family dynamics, typical human nature, and the exquisite uniqueness of the events that occurred leading up to the births of John and Jesus and, in the case of Jesus, the events surrounding His purification rites, His family's urgent flight to Egypt, His family's return to Nazareth, and His twelve-year old Temple 'teaching' event.

While our speculations are not Scriptural, they can help us understand the events that helped shape the attitudes and experiences of Elizabeth, Zachariah, Mary, and Joseph, and consequently the upbringing of John and Jesus.

¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Q39. (Verse 17) *And a voice from heaven said:* Why did God reveal Himself?

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A depiction of Jesus' baptism

[©https://www.nationalshrine.org/blog/5-things-you-should-know-about-john-the-baptist/](https://www.nationalshrine.org/blog/5-things-you-should-know-about-john-the-baptist/)

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