

## John the Forerunner

[John] 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.—Matthew 3:3

**L**ovely young Mary had her baby, Jesus, the most wonderful baby in all the world. Six months before this her cousin Elizabeth also had a child, John, and he was also used by God. He became known as John the Baptist.

The overruling providences of God brought about the birth of John. Luke 1:5-25 tells us about it. He was the one who would tell the people that the Messiah was coming.

Luke 1:80 says that John grew and became strong in spirit. He lived a simple life in the desert, a life that would help him in his work of ministering to the nation of Israel. Desert life would call for much courage and strength of character.

John was the last of the prophets of the Jewish age. Jesus began a new age, called the Gospel age, when the church class would be developed.

John believed God's promise that he would send someone to deliver Israel. He realized that the Messiah would come and sinners would not be able to receive his blessings. So John preached to the people, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And when some did repent and were sorry for their sins against the law, John baptized them. Baptism was a picture of washing their sins away.

John's baptism was not intended for Gentiles for they were not under the Law of Moses and therefore could not sin against it.

John's baptism was not for faithful Jews, those who were striving to follow the law, but for those Jews who cared nothing for the law and constantly sinned against it.

John's baptism is not for Christians. Their baptism is for a different purpose, not to wash away their sins against the law. Instead Christian baptism shows a new life devoted to God.

When the nation of Israel left Egypt to follow Moses, it was a picture of baptism in the Gospel age. The Israelites agreed to do God's will and follow Moses when they marched after him into the sea which separated so they could pass over it. So when they are baptized, Christians agree to do God's will and follow Jesus, leaving worldly pleasures behind.



*Original Photo-Drama slide*

Jesus was six months younger than his cousin, John the Baptist.