



5 MINUTE LESSONS ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD

John the Baptizer

Preparing People for the Messiah

¹*This is the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. It began
²just as the prophet Isaiah had written:*

*'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
and he will prepare your way.*

³*He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,
"Prepare the way for the Lord's coming!
Clear the road for him!"*

⁴*This messenger was John the Baptist...* (Mark 1:1-4 NLT)

⁵*People from Jerusalem and from all of Judea and all over the Jordan Valley
went out to see and hear John. ⁶And when they confessed their sins, he
baptized them in the Jordan River.* (Matthew 3:5-6 NLT)

¹⁰*The crowds asked, 'What should we do?'*

¹¹*John replied, 'If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food,
share it with those who are hungry.'*

¹²*Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, 'Teacher, what
should we do?'*

¹³*He replied, 'Collect no more taxes than the government requires.'*

¹⁴*'What should we do?' asked some soldiers.*

*John replied, 'Don't extort money or make false accusations. And be content
with your pay.'*

¹⁵*Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to
know whether John might be the Messiah.* (Luke 3:10-15 NLT)

¹⁹*This was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders sent priests and Temple
assistants from Jerusalem to ask John, 'Who are you?' ²⁰He came right out
and said, 'I am not the Messiah.'* (John 1:19-20 NLT)

“²⁶John told them, ‘I baptize with water, but right here in the crowd is someone you do not recognize. ²⁷Though his ministry follows mine, I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandal.’” (John 1:26-27 NLT)

The ministry of John the Baptist was so influential that the authorities in Jerusalem decided to investigate him (John 1:19). He did not want to talk about himself, for his function was to point to Another (Jesus the Messiah, the Christ). John had an Elijah-type ministry. He appeared on the scene suddenly and even dressed like Elijah. He sought to turn people back to God as Elijah did in his day. And Malachi had predicted that Elijah would return before the Messiah’s coming.

“⁵‘Look, I am sending you the prophet Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord arrives. ⁶His preaching will turn the hearts of fathers to their children, and the hearts of children to their fathers...’” (Malachi 4:5-6 NLT)

Therefore many speculated that John was Elijah. Some thought John was “the Prophet,” the Messiah referred to in Deuteronomy 18:15.

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;”
(Deuteronomy 18:15 KJV)

But John said, “I am not the Christ” (the Messiah) (John 1:20 KJV).

John’s ministry was conducted in the desert of Judea, a barren and rugged land, west of the Dead Sea. His message was direct:

“...‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’” (Matthew 3:2 NKJV)

John’s preaching announced a coming kingdom, which simply means “a coming rule.” This rule was to be heaven’s rule: “the kingdom of heaven.” John meant that God’s heavenly rule was about to be extended directly to earthly spheres. No one hearing John preach, asked him what he was talking about, for the concept of the Messiah’s rule over the kingdom of earth was a common thread in Old Testament prophecy. The requirement was that people repent.

John’s message was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 40:3-10 and Malachi 3:1-7.

*“³Listen! It’s the voice of someone shouting,
‘Clear the way through the wilderness
for the Lord!
Make a straight highway through the wasteland
for our God!
⁴Fill in the valleys,
and level the mountains and hills.
Straighten the curves,
and smooth out the rough places.
⁵Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed,*

and all people will see it together.

The Lord has spoken!

...‘Your God is coming!’

¹⁰*Yes, the Sovereign Lord is coming in power.*

He will rule with a powerful arm...” (Isaiah 40:3-5, 9-10 NLT)

“‘Look! I am sending my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. Then the Lord you are seeking will suddenly come to his Temple. The messenger of the covenant, whom you look for so eagerly, is surely coming,’ says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

⁵At that time I will put you on trial. I am eager to witness against all sorcerers and adulterers and liars. I will speak against those who cheat employees of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, or who deprive the foreigners living among you of justice, for these people do not fear me,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

⁷‘...Now return to me, and I will return to you,’ says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies...” (Malachi 3:1, 5, 7 NLT)

John the Baptist was in the desert preparing the way for the Lord and His kingdom by calling on people to return to Him. John was thus a voice of one calling in the desert to prepare a remnant to receive the Messiah. Some accepted his message, confessed their sins, and submitted to water baptism. This signified confession of sin and commitment to a holy life. However, not all believed.

Questions

1 What will you do with Jesus?

We want to hear from you!

We would love to hear your feedback on these lessons and how you use them in your own study or in discipling others. If you have any thoughts, stories, testimonies, comments, or questions we would love to hear them!

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Answer Key

1 What will you do with Jesus?

“³¹And they answered, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ [give yourself up to Him, take yourself out of your own keeping and entrust yourself into His keeping] and you will be saved, [and this applies both to] you and your household as well.” (Acts 16:31 Amplified Bible)