A person with long hair, seen from behind, is standing in a river and placing their hands on the head of another person who is partially submerged in the water. The scene is set at sunset, with a bright, golden sun low on the horizon, creating a strong lens flare and reflecting off the water. The background is filled with dense, dark trees. The overall mood is peaceful and spiritual.

# JOHN

## THE BAPTIST

— A MAN ON A MISSION —



# JOHN

## THE BAPTIST

— A MAN ON A MISSION —

## PRAY BEFORE YOU DO YOUR LESSON

1. Pray God would help you understand His Word.
2. Pray God would do heart transformation as you read His Word.
3. Pray that you would love God more.
4. Pray that God helps you apply His Word to your life.
5. Pray that God helps you desire to study His Word & spend time with Him daily.
6. Pray that the lesson would be heart work and not homework.

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# STUDY NOTES

## INTRODUCTION

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### Why Four Gospels?

**The gospel message spread by word of mouth until about 50-58 AD. It then became clear that there was a need to get the gospel into writing.** Matthew or Mark was the first gospel written with just a difference of a year or two between them.

Paul had already begun writing letters back to the churches he had established. Then, Luke's gospel and the other epistles were written, and last of all, the Apostle John's gospel and his apocalyptic Revelation of Jesus Christ. The entire New Testament was completed by the end of the first century.

**Throughout the pages of the Old Testament, we read about Jesus Christ in the form of shadows, types, symbols and prophecies.** Then, as we turn to the four gospel accounts that begin our New Testament, we meet Jesus in the flesh. All of the symbols, types and prophecies are satisfied and fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

#### Why do we need four gospels instead of just one? Why couldn't the apostles have gotten together and written one book?

Think about the multifaceted personality of our Lord Jesus Christ. God planned that the gospel writers would present different facets of our Lord's life and ministry.

Perhaps the best way to look at it is that the gospels contain four portraits of Christ. Each portrait presents a different pose or angle of one unique personality. Like a building, you cannot see all four sides from one angle. The Lord Jesus Christ could not possibly be contained by the single view of one writer.

The word "gospel" means good news, and each gospel writer presents the good news of salvation through the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel writers not only knew the man, Christ Jesus, but they believed in Him as Lord and Savior.

The four portraits present Jesus as Lord and Savior, and rather than describing everything that He did in precise chronological order, they focus on the Person of Jesus Christ, the unique Son of God. **The gospels are portraits rather than biographies.** There are many details about the earthly life of Jesus that are not given in any of the Gospels - for example, we are not told anything about His physical appearance.

**The Gospel according to Matthew** is placed first, because it serves as a bridge from the Old Testament to the New. The key phrase in Matthew's gospel is "fulfill what was spoken through the prophet." Matthew focuses on Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies as Israel's promised Messiah and righteous King.

Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus to prove that He is the Son of David, Israel's greatest King. The wise men came looking for the one born king of the Jews, and even on the cross, the title, "The King of the Jews," was affixed. The final claim is: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Matthew was one of the Apostles, but Mark was not one of the original Twelve. Mark was a close associate of Peter, and one of the early church fathers wrote that Mark got much of his gospel account from the lips of Peter. The Holy Spirit moved in Mark just as He had in Matthew to write the authentic and accurate gospel that bears his name.

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**Mark's gospel** is very different in style, and much shorter. It is full of action and moves chronologically rather than categorically through the life of Jesus. This gospel is a little like reading a diary or journal, fast-paced, very descriptive and vivid. Mark's key word is "immediately," and he presents Jesus as the Obedient Servant.

Much of Mark's gospel is similar to Matthew's and Luke's which is why these three gospels are called the similar gospels or "synoptic gospels."

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**Luke, the last of the synoptic gospel writers**, was a physician and an historian. He dedicated his gospel to a man named Theophilus, and later wrote the sequel, the Acts of the Apostles, to the same man. Luke was also a Gentile, and his gospel is written especially to Gentiles.

Luke was a close friend of the Apostle Paul and accompanied Paul on many of his missionary journeys. Near the end of his life, Paul wrote to another dear friend, Timothy, and said: "Only Luke is with me."

Some people call Luke's gospel, the Pauline gospel or Paul's gospel, because they were such close friends. Luke is also called the women's gospel since he gives a tremendous focus on women.

Luke presents the Lord Jesus as the ideal Son of Man, and everything in Luke's gospel is carefully documented. He evidently interviewed Mary, the mother of Jesus, to get such intimate details surrounding Jesus' birth.

Though Luke's gospel is similar to Matthew and Mark, Luke emphasizes the compassion of Christ. He gives us details like Jesus weeping over Jerusalem, sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane, promising paradise to the penitent thief on the cross as well as some of our favorite parables of Jesus - the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.

**Many years after these three gospels were written and circulated, the Apostle John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, took up the task of writing a fourth and final gospel account. By this time the fall of Jerusalem had occurred and the Jewish nation had been dispersed into the Roman Empire.**

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**John's gospel** is called the supplementary gospel as it is totally unlike the others in format, style and even content. John alone gives us the great discourse in the Upper Room. This gospel contains no parables. The format of John's gospel is a series of sevens—seven “signs” beginning with Jesus turning water into wine at Cana and culminating with the raising of Lazarus from the grave.

The focus and theme of John is to present the Lord Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God. John's emphasis is on the divine nature of Christ.

John's gospel includes the seven “I am” statements of Jesus to give us a beautiful portrait of the character of Christ. He is the Bread of Life, the True Vine, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Light of the World and the Way, the Truth and the Life.

**Each author wrote to present specific aspects of the life of our Lord and His ministry.** Studying the gospels is fascinating because they are eyewitness accounts of the life of the most important person who ever walked this earth. The differences in the gospels are contrasts and portraits, not contradictions.

#### **John 20:30-31**

“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

#### **John 21:24-25**

“This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true. Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.”



## INTRO: MESSAGE NOTES

[illegible]

## INTRO: MESSAGE NOTES

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across its entire width, typical of notebook or primary school writing paper. The background is white, and there are no margins, text, or other markings present.

# LESSON I

## JOHN THE BAPTIST'S BIRTH FORETOLD

### Read Luke 1:5-45

1. We are told that both Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were descendants of Aaron. What do you know about Aaron (**skim Exodus 28-30**)?
2. Zechariah and Elizabeth were childless. Can you think of other couples in the Bible who were childless? How was God setting the stage for a miracle?
3. What was Zechariah's reaction when he saw an angel of the Lord? What do you think your reaction would be if you saw an angel of the Lord?
4. How many other angelic encounters in the Bible can you find? Do you see any similarities in these encounters? (**See study notes.**)

5. What message did the angel Gabriel bring to Zechariah? What was Zechariah's response to this news? What were the consequences for his unbelief? Have you ever suffered for failing to believe God's promises?
6. When Gabriel describes the son Elizabeth will bear, what special instructions does he give for the raising of this child (see **Nazarite vow in Numbers 6**)? What other child was called to a Nazarite vow from birth (hint: **Judges 13**)?
7. Gabriel also visited a young virgin girl in Nazareth. What was his message to her? How did she receive the message (**Luke 1:26-38**)?
8. What was Elizabeth's response to God's glorious work in her life?

## Challenge Questions

9. The writer of Hebrews quotes Psalm 110 and tells us that Jesus is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek (**Hebrews 5:6**). Describe the differences between the priesthood of Aaron and the priesthood of Jesus. How is Jesus your High Priest?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. In the Prologue of John's Gospel (**1:1-18**), the Apostle John speaks of John (the Baptizer) being sent. What was John (the Baptizer) sent to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

### **Memory Verse - Hebrews 1:14 NIV**

“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?”

# STUDY NOTES

## LESSON 1

---

### The Truth About Angels

#### DO ANGELS REALLY EXIST?

Both the Old and New Testament declare that angels exist. This means that there is a world of intelligent, powerful, invisible creatures about us and above us. The writer of Hebrews tells us that “angels are ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation.” They are awe-inspiring messengers of God.

Jesus Christ Himself gave more than sufficient testimony to the reality of angels. At His arrest, the Lord Jesus said that He could, if He desired, call on twelve legions of angels, which is 72,000 angels (**Matthew 26:53**).

Angels announced Jesus’ birth to the shepherds (**Luke 2**), and angels ministered to Jesus after His temptation (**Matthew 4:11**) and in Gethsemane (**Luke 22:43**). There were angels at the empty tomb to announce to the women, “He has risen.” And at Christ’s return, He will come with the angels (**Matthew 16:27**).

In Christ’s ministry, He cast out demons, testifying to His authority in the realm of the supernatural (**Mark 1:27**). Jesus Christ spoke to the wicked, fallen angels or demons, in intelligent conversation, rebuked them, silenced them and cast them out of men’s bodies which they had entered.

#### WHERE DID ANGELS COME FROM?

Angels are created beings (**Psalms 148:2-5**). Just as the sun, moon, stars and all heavenly expanses were created by God.

**Colossians 1:15-16** says, “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.”

All angels were created good and holy, just as God made and pronounced all of creation as good. The angels enjoyed God’s presence and the environment of heaven. This makes the rebellion of some of the angels even more shocking.



## WHAT DO ANGELS LOOK LIKE?

Angels are spirit beings; they do not have a material body of flesh and blood such as human beings. Angels are described as “ministering spirits” and demons or fallen angels are described as “evil spirits” (Luke 8:2).

God is Spirit (John 4:24), but He is not limited to a particular time and place. God is an infinite Spirit and angels are finite, created beings.

**Takeaway:** *God is omnipresent, without limitations in time and space.*

While angels are usually invisible, they do have the ability to appear on occasion. This freedom to appear is, of course, subject to the will of God.

Angels have also appeared in dreams, as to Joseph in Matthew 1:20 and in visions, as the winged seraphim worshiping and serving before the throne of God in Isaiah 6.

On one occasion God granted to Elisha’s servant the gift of supernatural vision to see the normally invisible angelic army surrounding and protecting them (2 Kings 6:17).

When angels appear on earth to men and women, they appear in the form of men dressed in white (Matthew 28:3, Mark 16:5, Luke 24:4, John 20:12, and Acts 1:10).

## WHEN WE GO TO HEAVEN, WILL WE BECOME ANGELS?

The Psalmist said that man was made a little lower than the angels (Psalm 8) in that man is weaker and subject to death.

However, believers in Christ are positionally above angels since they are “in Christ.” In the glory of the resurrection believers will judge the angels (1 Corinthians 6:3), but men and women will never become angels.

We are told **not** to worship angels (Revelation 22:9).

There is a lot more to know about angels. There are references to angels in 34 books of the Bible - 17 books in the OT and 17 books in the NT.

If you want to know the truth about angels - study the Bible.

## LESSON 1: MESSAGE NOTES

This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across its entire width, typical of notebook or legal stationery. The background is a uniform off-white color, and there are no margins, text, or other markings present.

## LESSON 1: MESSAGE NOTES

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# LESSON 2

## JOHN THE BAPTIST'S BIRTH AND THE BIRTH OF JESUS

### Read Luke 1:57-2:40

1. What happened on the 8th day after John was born? Why did Zechariah's speech return?
2. In Zechariah's Song (Luke 1:67-79) how did he praise God? What would you say in a song of praise to God?
3. What did Zechariah prophesy about his own son? What did he say about the One to come after him?
4. How much do you think Mary and Joseph understood of God's great plan?

5. Compare the events of Jesus' birth to the events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist. What stands out to you?
6. Where was Jesus born? Why was this significant? Share with your group where you were born.
7. Why do you think that the Lord chose to announce the birth of the Savior first to the shepherds? To whom did the risen Lord first appear? (See John 20.)
8. Simeon was a prophet. What did he say to Mary about her child? How was this fulfilled?

## Challenge Questions

9. Zechariah spoke of God raising up a “horn of salvation.” What does this phrase mean and where else do you find this in the Scriptures?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. What privileges did John give up by choosing to live in the wilderness and not serving as a priest in Israel? What have you given up or sacrificed in order to serve the Lord Jesus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

### **Memory Verse - Isaiah 9:2 ESV**

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.”



# STUDY NOTES

## LESSON 2

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### Prophets & Prophecy

#### **The Bible is filled with prophecy from Genesis to Revelation.**

Prophecy is simply a message from God. Whether by vision or dream or a revelation through the Holy Spirit, God spoke to various men and women called prophets in order to bring His message to His people.

**Prophecy can be a revelation of future events - “God recording history in advance” - or it can be any authoritative message from God.**

The very first prophecy in the Bible, referred to by Bible scholars as the “proto-evangelium,” was given by God Himself in the Garden of Eden. After Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord pronounced judgment. But, in the midst of the punishments was a promise - a prophecy that would not be fulfilled until the coming of Jesus Christ.

**Genesis 3:15** says, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”

This promise declared that the offspring of the woman would triumph over sin, crushing Satan’s head by defeating the work of the devil on the cross. God was proclaiming the Gospel message, the promise of the Savior who would come through Eve’s distant offspring, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, was a prophet and recorded the first five books of the Bible - also called the Torah or Pentateuch. In **Deuteronomy 18**, Moses spoke of another “Prophet,” another promise of the Messiah to come, the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is Prophet, Priest and King.

Moses’ sister, Miriam, was a prophet in her day and led the women who had come out of Egypt in praise to God. Deborah, one of Israel’s judges, was also a prophet, and she led Israel into battle against a powerful army (**Judges 4-5**).

From the time of Samuel on there is a concentration of prophetic messages in the Bible. Samuel was both a prophet and a priest and the last of the judges of Israel. Samuel anointed David, Israel’s greatest king. David wrote many Psalms including prophetic Psalms (Messianic Psalms) - **Psalms 2, 22, 69 and 110**.

After Solomon's reign, the nation of Israel was divided. Elijah was a prophet to the northern kingdom of Israel. He warned of impending judgment if the nation refused to repent and turn from idol worship back to worship of the one true God. The prophet Elisha followed in Elijah's footsteps. The prophets that followed Elijah and Elisha were what are called the "writing prophets."

In the Old Testament there are four major "writing" prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel as well as twelve minor prophets. They are called "minor" not because their message is less important, but rather because their message is shorter in length. Each of these books bears the name of the prophet who wrote it. The message remained the same throughout, "repent and seek the Lord."

Often the message of the prophets was not well-received by the people. Jeremiah was thrown into a cistern and threatened with death. He was called the "weeping prophet," because of his deep sorrow and grief over the judgment of God that would lay waste to the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The prophet Ezekiel was given a great vision of God and His glory and years later a vision of a valley of dry bones that came to life. Ezekiel's prophecy ends with a vision of the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem and God's glory returning to the Temple. Ezekiel prophesied for over two decades during Israel's captivity in Babylon.

The prophet Daniel prophesied as a captive in Babylon for 70 years. Like Ezekiel, Daniel had visions of things to come. In addition, Daniel was given the ability to interpret dreams. Daniel was thrown into a lion's den for refusing to stop praying to the one true God. Being a prophet is not for the faint of heart.

Amos and Zechariah saw visions, Joel spoke of judgment, and the prophet Hosea was told to live out God's message to His people.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (**Matthew 5:11-12**).

**John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets.** He came as the forerunner of Israel's Messiah. Like many prophets before him, John was eventually martyred for speaking the truth. But his message lives on, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (**Matthew 3:2**).

**Unfortunately, not all prophets speak the truth.** Throughout the Bible there are warnings about false prophets. Moses said that the signs of a true prophet would be if what they said about the future came to pass and if they directed the people to worship God alone (**Deuteronomy 13**).

Jesus warned, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them" (**Matthew 7:15-16**).

## LESSON 2: MESSAGE NOTES

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## LESSON 2: MESSAGE NOTES

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# LESSON 3

## JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

### Read Luke 3:1-6

1. How many years before John's birth did Isaiah the prophet speak about the one coming to prepare the way for the Lord? (You may need a commentary to help you.) What does this say about God's Word?
2. What did Isaiah say about the "voice" who was coming? What is the significance of **Isaiah 40:3-5** being quoted in each of the 4 Gospels?
3. What does it mean to "prepare the way for the Lord?" How has the Lord used other believers to do this in your life?
4. What does John (quoting Isaiah) mean when he says that his calling is to smooth the rough roads? What is there in your life that needs straightening or smoothing?

5. Why do you think that Luke lists all of the powers of the day just before he introduces John's ministry? (Luke 3:1-2). Which names are familiar to you?
6. What do you know about the reign of Tiberius Caesar or Pontius Pilate as governor of Judea? What kinds of leaders were they?
7. What are the most well-known features of John's appearance and diet? Why do you think John chose this austere lifestyle? (Matthew 3:4)
8. John's calling was clear even before he was born. What about you? What has God called you to do for Him? How have you responded to His call?



## Challenge Questions

9. Read through all of **Isaiah 40** and list as many attributes of God as you can. What stands out to you in this great chapter?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. John was filled with the Spirit from birth. What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? Find verses to support your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

### **Memory Verse - Isaiah 40:3 NIV**

“A voice of one calling: ‘In the wilderness  
prepare the way for the LORD; make straight  
in the desert a highway for our God.’”

# STUDY NOTES

## LESSON 3

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### The Holy Spirit

#### WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

**The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead, the Triune God** - God *the Father*, God *the Son*, and God *the Holy Spirit*.

The Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son. Never refer to the Holy Spirit as an “it” or an influence. The Holy Spirit is God, distinct from the Father and the Son, as we see at creation. The Holy Spirit is seen actively engaged in the work of creation along with the Father and the Son, “hovering over the waters” (**Gen 1:2**).

The Holy Spirit functions with mind, emotion and will. He can be grieved, quenched, lied to, tested, resisted and blasphemed. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent who uniquely came upon God’s servants and inspired God’s sovereignly-chosen men to record God’s Word (**2 Peter 1:20-21**).

Scripture reveals that the Holy Spirit has been with believers to enable and empower them even before Pentecost.

- David (**1 Samuel 16:12-13**) - at his anointing, the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him.
- John the Baptist (**Luke 1:15**) - filled with the Holy Spirit even before he was born.
- Mary (**Luke 1:35**) - the Holy Spirit came upon her to conceive the Christ child.

When John the Baptist spoke of Jesus, he said that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. At Jesus’ baptism, “the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form like a dove” (**Luke 3:22**).

#### WHAT IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

- Convicts the world of sin (**John 16:9**)
- Regenerates the believer (**John 3:5 & Titus 3:5**)
- Indwells the believer (**1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20**)
- Seals the believer (**Ephesians 1:13-14**)
- Infills the believer (**Ephesians 5:18**)
- Empowers the believer (**Acts 1:8; 4:31**)

- Guides the believer into all truth (**John 16:13**)
- Gives spiritual gifts to the believer (**1 Corinthians 12:1-11**)
- Enables the believer to bear spiritual fruit (**Galatians 5:16-23**)

The Holy Spirit is the believer's comforter, advocate, helper, teacher, counselor and guide.

The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost and will remain with the Church until it is complete and presented to the Lord Jesus at His coming. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ finished the work He came to do in the flesh, so the Holy Spirit will finish the work He came to do in the Church.

## HOW CAN WE BETTER UNDERSTAND THE POWER AND THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The writers of the Bible used certain emblems when unfolding the mysteries of the Holy Spirit.

The first emblem is found at the baptism of Jesus (**Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22**) - the dove. The dove speaks of Christ's gentle, tender and peaceful nature. He came that we might know the "peace of God, which transcends all understanding" (**Philippians 4:7**). He is "gentle and humble in heart" (**Matt. 11:29**).

The second emblem is fire (**Luke 3:17**) as the purifying power in the life of the believer. We see this same emblem at Pentecost with the tongues of fire.

The third emblem is wind. In the Greek, the word for spirit is the same as the word for wind. Jesus speaks of the Spirit giving birth to spirit...like the wind blowing wherever it pleases. "You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going..." (**John 3:5-8**). The wind speaks of the hidden depth and mighty regenerating power of the Holy Spirit.

The fourth emblem we see in the Scriptures is water. Jesus compares the Holy Spirit to water in **John 7:37-39**. Water speaks of His power to fill the believer to overflowing with spiritual life.

The fifth emblem is oil. In **Acts 10:38**, Peter speaks of Jesus being anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. In the Old Testament oil was used to anoint kings, priests and prophets. It was a symbol of endowment with the Spirit of God for the duties of the office to which the person was being consecrated.

The writer of Hebrews quotes from **Psalms 45** which speaks of being anointed with the oil of joy referring to the Lord Jesus (**Hebrews 1:9**). Christ means "the Anointed One."

When Jesus spoke to His disciples in the Upper Room, He promised that the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth, would live with them and in them and in this way, He would never leave them. In **John 15:11**, He told them that His joy would be in them, "that your joy may be complete."

## LESSON 3: MESSAGE NOTES

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## LESSON 3: MESSAGE NOTES

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# LESSON 4

## JOHN THE BAPTIST PREACHES REPENTANCE

### Read Luke 3:7-14

1. Where was John preaching and baptizing? How far was this from Jerusalem (Mark 1:4-5)?
2. What different groups of people went out to hear John preach? What were the different responses to John's preaching?
3. What did you think about John starting his sermon by calling the religious leaders a "brood of vipers?" Where else do you find this phrase? What did John mean by "Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?"
4. John called them to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance." How would you define spiritual fruit (John 15:1-8; Galatians 5:22-23). What would you say that you need to change in order to produce more fruit to the glory of God?

5. What is the meaning of “repentance?” What did John mean when he said, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near?” (**Matthew 3:2**) Compare this to Jesus’ words in **Matthew 4:17**.
6. As descendants of Abraham, the religious leaders thought that was all they needed to be right with God. How did John speak to this false assurance in **Luke 3:8-9**?
7. What were the two types of baptism John spoke about?
8. In Luke’s gospel, John addressed specific groups of people. What advice did he give each group?

## Challenge Questions

9. What does it mean to have assurance of salvation? Do you have this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. As you review all of the reading for this lesson, what did you appreciate most about John's preaching?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

### **Memory Verse - Matthew 4:17 ESV**

“From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,  
‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”



# STUDY NOTES

## LESSON 4

---

### Assurance of Salvation

This doctrine is one of God's greatest blessings to the Church. To know with certainty that you belong to Jesus Christ, that your identity and destiny are secure in Him, is beyond wonderful.

There are many people who go to church or some kind of religious service each week, but they still lack the assurance of salvation. Some are taught that you can never be certain that your sins are forgiven, and that heaven is your eternal destiny. With no assurance, these people have no peace, and with no peace, many experience overwhelming anxiety.

Others have a false assurance based on their works, what they have done "for God" (**Matthew 7:22**). Still others are convinced that since they are a "good person," they will enter heaven's gates when they die.

For the true believer in Jesus Christ, we can enjoy peace knowing that our salvation is secure.

#### **The foundation for our assurance of salvation comes from the Word of God.**

Believers are truly "Standing on the promises of God."

Jesus promised: "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day" (**John 6:40**).

"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (**John 10:27-29**).

Paul declared: "...because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day" (**2 Timothy 1:12**).

The Apostle John testified: "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (**1 John 5:13**).

#### **The second reason for our assurance is Christ's finished work on the Cross.**

From the cross, Jesus Christ declared, “It is finished” (**John 19:30**). There is no need for anything to be added to Christ’s sacrifice - no religious ritual, no personal merit, and no works, regardless of how “good” they are. Jesus Christ has made atonement for sin “once for all” for those who will come to Him by faith.

Jesus Christ has satisfied God’s holy demands for justice. He is holy and He cannot tolerate sin. On the Cross, Jesus Christ became sin for us, suffering the fullness of God’s wrath against sin. He did this in our place, and if we have received Christ’s offer of forgiveness, then we are forgiven and no longer under God’s wrath, with no fear of God’s judgment on sin (**Romans 8:1**).

“Jesus paid it all; all to Him I owe.” The huge debt of sin we have accrued has been paid. He has bought us, redeemed us, saved us, forgiven us, and delivered us from the penalty of sin and secured our place in heaven with Him forever.

God wants you to rest on the finished work of Christ knowing that it is sufficient for your salvation.

## **The capstone of our assurance of salvation is the seal of the Holy Spirit.**

“And you were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession - to the praise of his glory” (**Ephesians 1:13-14**).

This is the inner confirmation that you are a child of God.

“And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us” (**1 John 3:24**). The Holy Spirit confirms in our heart what we already believe to be true.

Assurance of salvation is not based on feelings, but on the promises of God. What God has done to save you can never be undone. Our justification is a transaction before the Almighty Judge, and He has declared us, “not guilty.” There is no higher court. God has done it and no one can undo it.

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (**Romans 8:38-39**).

## LESSON 4: MESSAGE NOTES

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## LESSON 4: MESSAGE NOTES

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# LESSON 5

## JOHN THE BAPTIST BAPTIZES JESUS

### Read Luke 3:15-22

1. Compare the four gospel accounts of Jesus' baptism. How are they the same, and how do they differ? (**Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1**)
2. What did John say to try to deter Jesus from being baptized?
3. Why was Jesus baptized? What did it mean when Jesus said, "to fulfill all righteousness"? (**Matthew 3:15**)
4. What is the reason for baptism today? Have you been baptized? If not, why not? (**See memory verse.**)

5. The Father spoke from heaven at Jesus' baptism. What did He say? Compare it to His words at the transfiguration in **Matthew 17**.

6. What symbol appeared at Jesus' baptism? What is the significance of this symbol? **(See Lesson 3 study notes.)**

7. How did John the Baptist give testimony to Jesus' baptism in the Gospel of John? How did John know that Jesus was God's Chosen One **(John 1:1-18)**?

8. What happened immediately after Jesus was baptized according to **Mark 1:12**? Why do you think this was the order of events?

## Challenge Questions

9. Why did the religious leaders refuse to be baptized by John and what kind of baptism did John tell them to expect?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. What is the difference between water baptism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Give Scripture references for your answer.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

### **Memory Verse - Acts 2:38 ESV**

“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized, every 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.’”

# STUDY NOTES

## LESSON 5

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### The Transfiguration of Jesus

**It's hard to even imagine how glorious heaven is going to be and what it will be like to behold the Lord Jesus Christ in all of His glory. But in the transfiguration of Jesus Christ we get a brief preview.**

In his second epistle, Peter recounts the event.

**2 Peter 1:16-18** says, "For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain."

Each of the synoptic gospels record Jesus' transfiguration on the mountaintop. It took place shortly after Jesus had told His disciples about His impending death and resurrection.

Luke tells us that Jesus went up to the mountaintop to pray and He took three of His disciples with Him - Peter, James and John. These three men were those closest to Jesus - called the inner circle. These three men had also been with Jesus in the home of Jairus when Jesus raised his daughter from the dead and they would go with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane.

These men were to serve as eye witnesses. The Old Testament declared that matters were confirmed on the testimony of two or three witnesses (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). Peter included details of this event in his second epistle and John summed it up with the words, "we beheld His glory." James was the first of the apostles to be martyred and the first to see the fullness of His glory.

The location was probably Mount Hermon which was near to Caesarea Philippi.

**The Greek word translated "transfigured" gives us our English word "metamorphosis."** This means a change on the outside that comes from the inside. The change in Jesus' appearance came from within, not a reflected glory as with the face of Moses after he had been in the presence of God (**Exodus 34:29-35**). **Jesus is God and the glory that shone forth was His own.**



Each of the Gospel writers seem to have difficulty finding adequate words to describe the brilliance, the brightness and the beauty of Jesus' face and clothes. Mark says, "His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them" **(Mark 9:3)**. Like the whiteness of snow, we cannot duplicate it.

In addition to the miraculous transfiguration of Jesus there appeared with Him, Moses and Elijah. Moses was the great lawgiver of Israel who uniquely brought God's law to the people. Elijah was the great reformer of Israel who boldly defended God's law to the people. Together they represented the Law and the Prophets.

Moses and Elijah had both had great mountaintop experiences with God. Moses received the Law from God on Mount Sinai and witnessed the glory of the Lord from a cleft in a rock. Elijah experienced God's power on Mount Carmel as he opposed the prophets of Baal and also in the still, small voice on Mount Horeb.

Both Moses and Elijah performed great miracles by the power of God, and there is a mystery surrounding the deaths of both men. In **Deuteronomy 34**, we read that God buried Moses, and in **2 Kings 2**, Elijah is taken up to heaven in a whirlwind.

What were they talking about with Jesus? Luke tells us that they spoke of "the departure," a word that means "exodus." As the exodus out of Egypt under Moses led God's people out of the bondage of slavery, the "exodus" of Jesus out of the grave would lead believers out of the bondage of sin.

These two Old Testament saints gave confirmation of not only Jesus' divine glory, but of His divine plan. This unforgettable experience on the mountaintop would enable the disciples to see the glory through the shame of the Cross.

Peter spoke up, a man of action and boldness, and offered to build three shelters - for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. His idea was to stay up on the mountaintop and Jesus might not have to die after all.

However, Peter's "brilliant" plan was interrupted by a bright cloud, representing the Shekinah glory, the very presence of God. It was this brilliant cloud that led the children of Israel through the wilderness and enveloped the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and later the Temple at its dedication.

Then, God Almighty spoke out of the cloud confirming Jesus as His beloved Son as He did at Jesus' baptism. He declared that He was "well-pleased" with His beloved Son. Then, directing His words to the three disciples, God the Father said, "Listen to Him!"

This is a good reminder to us throughout Scripture that we are to "Be still and know that I am God" **(Psalm 46:10)**.

## LESSON 5: MESSAGE NOTES

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## LESSON 5: MESSAGE NOTES

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# LESSON 6

## JOHN THE BAPTIST DENIES BEING THE MESSIAH

### Read John 1:1-39

1. Look up the words “witness” and “testimony” and share what you find with your group.
2. Why do you think the religious leaders were sent to question John? Who were these Jewish leaders? (see study notes)
3. Where did this questioning take place? Look it up on a Bible map.
4. What did John the Apostle say about John the Baptist’s call in John 1:6-8?

5. First, the religious leaders asked John if he was the Messiah. Why were they expecting the Messiah? (You may need a commentary to help you.)
6. Second, the religious leaders asked John if he was Elijah. Why were they expecting Elijah?
7. Third, the religious leaders asked John if he was the Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15). Who was the Prophet?
8. How was it that John knew so clearly who he was and who he was not? What can you learn from John's example?

## Challenge Questions

9. How did John describe the One who would come after him? How would you describe the Lord Jesus to an unbeliever?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. We have seen that John was a bold witness for the Lord. How have you been challenged to be bold in your witness?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

### **Memory Verse - John 1:29b ESV**

“The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,  
‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’”

# STUDY NOTES

## LESSON 6

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### Scribes, Pharisees, & Sadducees

**These three are the most prominent Jewish sects of Jesus' day. Each group held a different opinion or interpretation of the Law which led to divisions and the development of these sects.**

**THE SCRIBES**, also called the Teachers of the Law, believed that unless the nation returned to the Lord, and to the faithful observance of the statutes of Moses and the prophets, the glory and grandeur of the Jewish race could not reach its destiny.

Ezra was a Scribe in his day returning with the Babylonian exiles to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and restore worship for God's people. In **Nehemiah 8**, it is recorded that Ezra brought the Law before the people and read aloud from daybreak until noon. The response of the people was: "they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground."

For the Scribes, their mission was to preserve the Scriptures. These men translated and copied the Bible meticulously, preserving what we now call the Old Testament. These men were learned in the law and capable of interpreting it, and so this sect was formed. They became experts in the Mosaic Law.

But even among the Teachers of the Law there were differences of interpretation and opinion, relative to the observance of the Sabbath and various ceremonies and ordinances as well as the traditions. As time went on they began adding man-made traditions to what God had said. They spelled out the letter of the law but lost the spirit of the law behind it.

Jesus declared in **Matthew 5:20**, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

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**THE PHARISEES** are probably the most well-known sect among Bible readers. They appear over and over again in the Gospel accounts.

This sect sprang into existence as a result of a conflict of opinion over matters of the Law. Their name is derived from the Hebrew word which means "separatists." One Bible scholar said they believed in "salvation by separation."

These pious reformers resolutely opposed all Greek and Gentile influences. They believed in the rigorous observance of the Law as well as separating themselves from the common people and anyone who was ceremonially impure.

To become a member of this sect, a candidate had to pledge to tithe on all produce on his land, to avoid ceremonial uncleanness and to rigidly observe all the laws relating to purity. He must not be the guest of a non-Pharisee or receive him as a guest, and he must have no dealing with Gentiles.

The Pharisees were especially fastidious regarding the observance of the Sabbath (meals, journeys and sacrifices). For many generations they were highly respected by the Jewish people, but their doctrine ultimately degenerated into a cold and selfish formalism, abounding in minute and often absurd observances and regulations. Their superior attitude and harsh judgment of others caused them to be unpopular among the common people.

Jesus pointed out their hypocrisy in **Matthew 23** as he pronounced seven woes on both the Pharisees and the teachers of the law (Scribes).

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The third sect is **THE SADDUCEES**. This party represented the aristocratic priestly families, who clung to their ancient privilege and position.

Unlike the Pharisees, they attached little importance to oral or traditional law, but exalted the Torah, the written Law of Moses (the first five books of the Bible). They denied the authority of all subsequent revelation or tradition. They considered the resurrection unprovable from the law, which is why they were “SAD-YOU-SEE.”

Their affiliation with the priesthood gave them greater influence in the affairs of the Temple than the Pharisees enjoyed, but they were even less popular with the Jewish people. They ran the “market” at the Temple where the moneychangers overcharged the people and animals were sold at exorbitant prices. Jesus declared it to be a “den of thieves.”

The Sadducees held offices, both political and religious. They were not exclusive as the Pharisees were, but had no scruples about dealing with the Gentiles. They divided the Chief Council (Sanhedrin) equally with the Pharisees.

The Sadducees were a proud and arrogant sect, and they labeled Jesus as a fanatic. Caiaphas, one of their number, and high priest that year, spoke up against Jesus after the raising of Lazarus, gathering momentum for the plot to take His life (**John 11**).

At His religious trial, Caiaphas led the Council in establishing a verdict, declaring Jesus guilty of blasphemy and taking Him to Pilate.

When Rome destroyed Jerusalem, the sect of the Sadducees fell forever.



## LESSON 6: MESSAGE NOTES

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## LESSON 6: MESSAGE NOTES

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# LESSON 7

## JOHN THE BAPTIST TESTIFIES ABOUT JESUS

### Read John 1 and 3

1. What character traits in John the Baptist do you see in these verses?
2. What does it mean that Jesus is the Lamb of God?  
(See also Genesis 22 and Exodus 12.)
3. How did Jesus “take away the sin of the world?” How would you explain this truth to someone who has never studied the Bible?
4. Why do you think that John said he did not know Jesus even though they were related? (Read Luke 1; you may need a commentary to help you.)

5. How did God reveal to John that Jesus was the Messiah? How has God revealed to you that Jesus is the Messiah?
6. How did John the Baptist describe himself in **John 3**? What imagery did he use to show that Jesus Christ was preeminent?
7. What was it that caused an argument between some of John's disciples?
8. What does it mean to have eternal life (**John 3:36**)? What does it mean for unbelievers that "God's wrath remains on them"?

## Challenge Questions

9. **John 3:34** says that He (Jesus) speaks the words of God and to Him God gives the Spirit without limit. What does it mean to have the Spirit without limit?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. The prophet Isaiah speaks of the Lord as the bridegroom (**Isaiah 62:5**), and this theme is prominent in the Old Testament. Find as many references as you can with this imagery. Is Jesus your bridegroom?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

**Memory Verse - John 3:30 NIV**

“He must become greater; I must become less.”

# STUDY NOTES

## LESSON 7

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### Jewish Weddings in the First Century

**The first of Jesus' miracles was to turn water into wine at a wedding in Cana.**

When the wine ran out, Jesus' mother informed Him about the problem, and Jesus provided an abundance of the best wine. Wine symbolized joy and running out of wine at their wedding would have been a great embarrassment for the couple and their families. Jesus' abundant provision gave this young couple a wedding day they would never forget.

Weddings were an extremely important aspect of Jewish life, and there are many references in the Bible to marriage and weddings. When John the Baptist was testifying about Jesus, he said that he was the friend of the bridegroom. The Lord Jesus Himself was the Bridegroom.

In the book of Revelation, there is great rejoicing that the "wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready" (**Revelation 19**). "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"

Jewish marriages were usually arranged marriages, arranged by the fathers of the bride and groom. It would begin with a betrothal (engagement) as we read that Mary and Joseph were betrothed to be married.

Sometimes the bride and groom would have grown up in the same small village and knew each other well, but in other cases, the bride and groom may have never met before. **In Jewish culture the groom's father would pay a negotiated "bride price" to the bride's family, unlike other cultures where the bride's father was required to provide a dowry.**

A betrothal was as binding as marriage itself. This is why the Scripture says that when Joseph found out that Mary was pregnant, "he had in mind to divorce her quietly." However, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and explained that the child Mary was carrying was conceived by the Holy Spirit. "When Joseph woke up...he took Mary home as his wife" (**Matthew 1:24**).

It was common for the bridegroom to add a room (bridal chamber) to his parent's home and bring his bride to live with his family. When the place was complete, the groom would return and fetch his bride. Just as in the parable of the ten virgins, the bride would not know the day or the hour when her bridegroom would come for her. The groom's arrival was usually announced with a trumpet call or a shout.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven...”  
(Matthew 24:36).

“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God...” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

Jesus often used Jewish marriage customs as a beautiful allegory of God’s relationship with the church, His “bride.”

**Jesus paid the “bride price.” He purchased believers with His blood shed on the cross for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 20:28 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).** He is currently preparing a place for His bride (John 14:3).

In the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22, Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a wedding feast for the king’s son. In the first scene of the parable, the king sent his servants out to summon the invited guests to come, because the banquet was ready.

But they ignored the king’s invitation, went on with their work and some even seized the servants and mistreated them and killed them. The king sent his army to destroy those murderers and burn their city. So the king sent his servants out to invite anyone they could find.

In the second scene of the parable, a man comes in without the proper wedding garment and his punishment is severe.

The Lord Jesus is preparing a wedding feast and all are invited to come, but you must be wearing the righteousness of Christ - represented by the wedding garment in the parable. Improper clothing is a rejection of the garment the Lord Jesus has provided, a rejection of Christ, and for those who refuse Christ’s invitation, only judgment awaits. This is a sobering truth.

**But, for those who respond to the King’s invitation and come to the wedding feast robed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, there will be great rejoicing.**

“I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in robes of righteousness...” (Isaiah 61:10).

“As a young man marries a young woman, so will your Builder marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you” (Isaiah 62:5).

## LESSON 7: MESSAGE NOTES

[illegible]



## LESSON 7: MESSAGE NOTES

[illegible]

# LESSON 8

## JOHN THE BAPTIST IMPRISONED

### Read Luke 7:18-35

1. What do you think it was like for a man like John to be imprisoned?
2. Who put John in prison? What did John do or say that put him in prison?  
(See Mark 6 to help you.)
3. Did it surprise you that John sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?” Why do you think he asked this question?
4. What was Jesus doing when John’s disciples came to Him? How did this serve to answer John’s question?

5. How did Jesus defend John the Baptist and his ministry?
6. Explain **Luke 7:38** in your own words. How do you enter the kingdom of God?
7. What comparisons did Jesus make between His ministry and John's?
8. What do you think Jesus meant in **Luke 7:31-34**? How would you compare the people of Jesus' day to the people of our day?

## Challenge Questions

9. **Luke 7:30** tells us that the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves. What is your main goal in life? How does it align with God's purpose for your life?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Jesus asked the crowd if they went out in the wilderness to see "a reed swayed by the wind." What does this phrase mean?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

### **Memory Verse - Luke 7:28 ESV**

"I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

# STUDY NOTES

## LESSON 8

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### Imprisonment in the Scriptures

**How many times do we read in the Scriptures about someone, usually a faithful servant of God, being arrested and imprisoned?**

The first person we read about being put in prison is **Joseph**. He was unjustly accused and put in the king's prison. It was there in prison that God continued to refine Joseph to prepare him for what would come next. While in prison Joseph interpreted the dreams of the cupbearer and baker and eventually was taken from the prison to the palace where he was exalted to Prime Minister.

In addition to confinement in a prison, there were other innocents in the Scriptures who were held captive in other ways. **Esther** was taken captive when King Xerxes sent out an edict to gather all of the beautiful women in the kingdom in order to find a replacement for Queen Vashti. Esther was not free to come and go any more than if she had been in a prison cell.

The same was true for **Daniel** who was captured and carried off to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar's army. He was placed in a training program for three years after which time he would enter the king's service. We know that he was a prisoner because the chief official was appointed to guard Daniel and his friends.

Throughout the Bible we read of godly men imprisoned for various reasons. **Jeremiah** was a political prisoner, because he spoke out against nation's leaders and their policies. They refused to listen to the Prophet Jeremiah and attempted to silence him by putting him in prison, but Jeremiah continued to speak for God even while incarcerated. King Zedekiah failed to heed God's warnings through His faithful prophet, so when the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, Zedekiah was captured, blinded, and taken to Babylon where he was imprisoned until his death.

**King Manasseh** was one of the most wicked kings to ever reign over the southern kingdom of Judah. Manasseh, like Zedekiah, refused to listen to the warnings through God's prophets, and eventually, he was captured and imprisoned in Babylon by the Assyrians. They put a ring through his nose, bound him in bronze chains and led him away.

The amazing grace of God was at work in King Manasseh's life, and while he was in prison, Manasseh repented, and God not only orchestrated his release from prison but restored him to his throne and his kingdom.

Another example of God's chastening work through incarceration was Israel's most famous judge, **Samson**. Samson was one of the strongest men that ever lived, but he had a great weakness for beautiful women. Samson was a Nazarite from birth; he was never to cut his hair. When Delilah set out to find the secret of his great strength, she wore him down. Eventually, he gave in and told her the truth. So, while Samson was asleep in her lap, the Philistines came in and shaved his head and immediately his strength was gone.

"The Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and took him down to Gaza. Binding him with bronze shackles, they set him to grinding grain in the prison. But the hair on his head began to grow again..." When Samson was brought out at a great feast to the Philistine's god, he prayed to the LORD, and was given divine strength for one final judgment on the Philistines. Bracing against the two central pillars of their temple, he pushed with all his might and the temple came down, killing everyone in it, including Samson.

As we look at the New Testament, we read that **John the Baptist** was put in prison by King Herod and eventually beheaded. During John's imprisonment, he sent his disciples to Jesus to learn whether or not He was the One who was to come. John suffered with honest doubts, and the Lord Jesus sent word back through John's disciples to encourage him.

In **Acts 12**, we read the story of **Peter's** miraculous escape from prison, and over and over in the Book of Acts we read of **Paul** being put in prison. One of the most well-known of Paul's imprisonments is found in Acts 16 when Paul and Silas were put in prison after being stripped and beaten with rods. At midnight when they were singing and praising God, the Lord sent a great earthquake that opened the prison doors. But the greatest miracle that happened that night was the salvation of the jailer and his family.

During one of Paul's incarcerations, the Apostle Paul wrote what are called the prison epistles - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. In each of these letters Paul mentions his imprisonment. Paul's time in captivity was actually a great blessing for all who have ever read these epistles and Paul continued to spread the Gospel despite his confinement.

**Throughout the Scriptures, we can see that God used even imprisonment for His great purposes.** Sometimes it was for refinement, at other times for chastisement, and in the case of Peter, it was to demonstrate God's great power. With Paul, imprisonment was an opportunity for him to write and encourage the churches of his day as well as to be a blessing for future generations.

According to the 2025 World Watch List, **nearly 5000 Christians** are in prison today because of their faith.

## LESSON 8: MESSAGE NOTES

[illegible]

## LESSON 8: MESSAGE NOTES

[illegible]



# LESSON 9

## JOHN THE BAPTIST BEHEADED

### Read Mark 6:14-29

1. Who was King Herod and who was his father and his brother? (see study notes)
2. What were the people saying about Jesus? What was Herod's concern when he heard these rumors?
3. How would you describe the character traits of Herodias? Have you ever "nursed a grudge" against someone? (Mark 6:19)
4. What was Herod's response to John the Baptist's preaching? Do you think that some people today have the same response when they hear the truth?

5. How did Herodias orchestrate events to get what she wanted? Who did she use (or abuse) to get her way?
6. Who else in Scripture waited for an “opportune time” to plot evil?  
(hint: **Luke 4:13**, **Luke 22:6**)
7. What did you think of Herod’s oath in **Mark 6:22-23**? Have you ever made a foolish promise and later regretted it? What did Jesus say about oaths in **Matthew 5**?
8. Why do you think Herod went through with this vile plan when he had the power to change his mind? How is this like Pilate at Jesus’ trial? (**Matthew 27**)

## Challenge Questions

9. List the highlights of Jesus' trial before Herod from **Luke 23**. How did Herod reveal his true character?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Read **Acts 12**. What did another King Herod (Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great) do to try to stop the growth of the church? Was he successful? How did King Herod Agrippa die?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

### Memory Verse - Acts 12:24 ESV

“But the word of God increased and multiplied.”

# STUDY NOTES

## LESSON 9

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### The Herodian Family

It may be that when you think of Herod, you immediately think of the King Herod who ordered the murder of the innocents in Bethlehem. **But, as you dig into the Herodian family history, you find that this entire family was filled with cruel, evil and murderous men.** Several of them were also called Herod.

Herod the Great is the one we read about in **Matthew 2** when the Magi came seeking the One who was born king. The thought of sharing his throne with anyone infuriated King Herod to the point that he put all of Jerusalem in an uproar. Rather than returning to Jerusalem and reporting back to Herod, God directed the Magi to return home another way. When Herod realized this, he gave orders to kill all of the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under.

There is very little to his credit except his great building projects. Although he was only half Jewish and half Idumean (descended from Esau), he oversaw the great expansion project of the Temple in Jerusalem which was even called Herod's Temple. He claimed to be a true worshiper but continued to take part in pagan religious rites.

One of his greatest characters flaws was that he was almost insanely suspicious. The older he became, the more suspicious he grew. If he suspected anyone as a rival to his power, that person was promptly eliminated. He murdered his wife Marianne and her mother Alexandra as well as his eldest son, Antimatter and two other sons.

As he came to the end of his life, he retired to Jericho and gave orders that a collection of the most distinguished citizens of Jerusalem should be arrested on trumped-up charges and imprisoned. He ordered that the moment he died, they should all be killed. He was aware that no one would mourn over his death, and he was determined that some tears be shed when he died.

**Herod the Great goes down in history as the man who tried to kill the Christ child.**

Herod was afraid that this little child was going to interfere with his life, his power, his influence, and therefore, his first instinct was to destroy Him. There are still those today who have the same instinct. They don't want Christ to interfere in their lives, so they abuse, persecute, and even destroy those who belong to Him.

When Herod the Great died, the entire kingdom over which he had ruled was split up. In his will he left a part of his kingdom to three of his sons. He left Judea to Archelaus, Galilee to Herod Antipas, and the region to the northeast and beyond Jordan to Philip. Archelaus was a bad king, and he did not reign for long. He began his reign with an attempt to outdo his father with the deliberate slaughter of 3,000 of the most influential people in the country.

Even with the death of Herod the Great, with Archelaus on the throne, it was still unsafe for Joseph and his family to return to Judea, so God guided him to take his family to Nazareth in Galilee where Herod Antipas reigned.

Years later, Herod Antipas arrested John the Baptist and put him in prison because of what John had said about his marriage to his brother Philip's wife, Herodias. "Although he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet" (**Matthew 14**).

**It is always dangerous to rebuke a tyrant and that is precisely what John did.** Herod imprisoned John because he was a man who told the truth. Herod Antipas had seduced his brother's wife, Herodias, and persuaded her to leave his brother Philip and marry him. In order to do that, he had to put away his own wife. In doing so, Herod broke two laws, divorcing his own wife without cause and marrying his sister-in-law, which was a relationship prohibited under Jewish law. For this reason, John rebuked him.

By his rebuke John signed his own death warrant. Herodias nursed a grudge against John for confronting her with her sin. She finally got her opportunity to take vengeance on this man of God at Herod's birthday party. She was a woman who didn't hesitate to use her own daughter for her own vindictive purposes. Herod kept an oath but broke a great law, condemning an innocent man.

In Luke's gospel, we read of Jesus' trial before this same Herod, Herod Antipas. As Jesus stood trial before this weak and sinful man, He refused to give an answer. Herod had been given ample opportunity to hear the truth from John, and when someone continually refuses to listen to God's truth, eventually there is only silence.

In **Acts 12**, we find yet another Herod reigning as king, Herod Agrippa I. He was the grandson of Herod the Great. The apostle Paul would one day stand trial before his son, Herod Agrippa II.

Agrippa thought that the way to win favor with the Jews in power was to persecute the hated Christians. He put Peter in prison and had James, the brother of John, put to death with a sword. Herod Agrippa's gruesome death is recorded at the end of **Acts 12**. He died because he failed to give glory to God. This is a strong warning for all of us.

## LESSON 9: MESSAGE NOTES

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## LESSON 9: MESSAGE NOTES

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# LESSON 10

## JOHN THE BAPTIST & ELIJAH

### Read 1 Kings 17-19

1. When Zechariah had the angelic visit to tell of John's birth, he was told that his son would go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah. How was this fulfilled in John's life? (**Luke 1:17**)
2. What did Jesus say about Elijah's coming in **Matthew 17** and how did this relate to John the Baptist?
3. Who was the king of Israel in Elijah's day? What did he think of Elijah?
4. What was the cause of the great drought in Israel? How did the Lord care for Elijah during the great drought? How are you trusting the Lord to care for you especially in difficult times? (**James 5:16-18**)



5. What happened on Mount Carmel? (1 Kings 18) What did the Lord do to prove His supremacy over Baal? What attributes of God do you see in this chapter?
6. After the victory on Mount Carmel, what did Elijah do? How did the Lord minister to Elijah? Have you ever had a very low point after a victory? How has the Lord met you in the valley?
7. Describe the appearance of the Lord to Elijah in 1 Kings 19. What did the Lord say to encourage his tired prophet?
8. How did Elijah's life on earth end (2 Kings 2)? What prophet asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit?

## Challenge Questions

9. What are the very last words in the Old Testament? How do these words relate to John the Baptist (**Malachi 4:5-6**)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. As you look back on this study of John the Baptist, what stands out to you about John's character? What will you try to emulate?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. What did you discover about God in this lesson?

### **Memory Verse - Matthew 17:5 ESV**

“This is my beloved Son, with whom I  
am well pleased; listen to him.”

# STUDY NOTES

## LESSON 10

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### The Second Coming of Christ

**In order to understand the Second Coming of Christ, it is important to understand what was accomplished at His first coming.**

John the Apostle describes Jesus' first coming, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." This is the incarnation.

At His first coming, He came as the Suffering Servant of **Isaiah 53**, and at His Second Coming, He will come as the Conquering King of **Revelation 19**.

"Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (**Philippians 2:7-8**).

Matthew tells us the purpose of His first coming was to "save his people from their sins" (**Matthew 1:21**).

Jesus came to die. By His death on the Cross, Jesus provided salvation from the penalty of sin for all who will come to Him by faith.

When the Lord Jesus walked this earth, He promised His followers that He would return. The day and the hour are unknown, but the promise is sure. Jesus said: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne" (**Matthew 25:31**).

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus told His apostles that He would return (**John 14:3**). When He ascended into heaven, two angels appeared to His followers and declared that Jesus would return in the same manner as they had seen Him go (**Acts 1:11**).

The New Testament is filled with verses about Christ's return. In fact, there are over 300 verses that speak of His return.

**The purpose of the Second Coming will be to bring judgment on all those who have refused God's gracious offer of salvation through His Son and the consummation of salvation for those who have believed.**

**1 Thessalonians 1:7-9** says, "...This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with

everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might...”

**Hebrews 9:28** says, “so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”

**2 Thessalonians 1:10** says, “on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.”

**1 John 3:2** says, “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

**In the Old Testament, the prophets spoke of the “Day of the Lord.”** The prophet Joel calls it the “great and dreadful day of the Lord.” **Zechariah 14** declares that on that day the Lord will stand on the Mount of Olives.

That day will be accompanied by cosmic events.

Quoting Isaiah, Jesus said: “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken” (**Matthew 24:29**).

Paul tells us that we are to live upright and godly lives “while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (**Titus 2:13**).

**The Lord Jesus tells us to watch for and be ready for His return because we do not know what day He will come (Matthew 24:42-44).**

Do you long for His return? Can you say with the saints: “Come, Lord Jesus”?

## LESSON 10: MESSAGE NOTES

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## LESSON 10: MESSAGE NOTES

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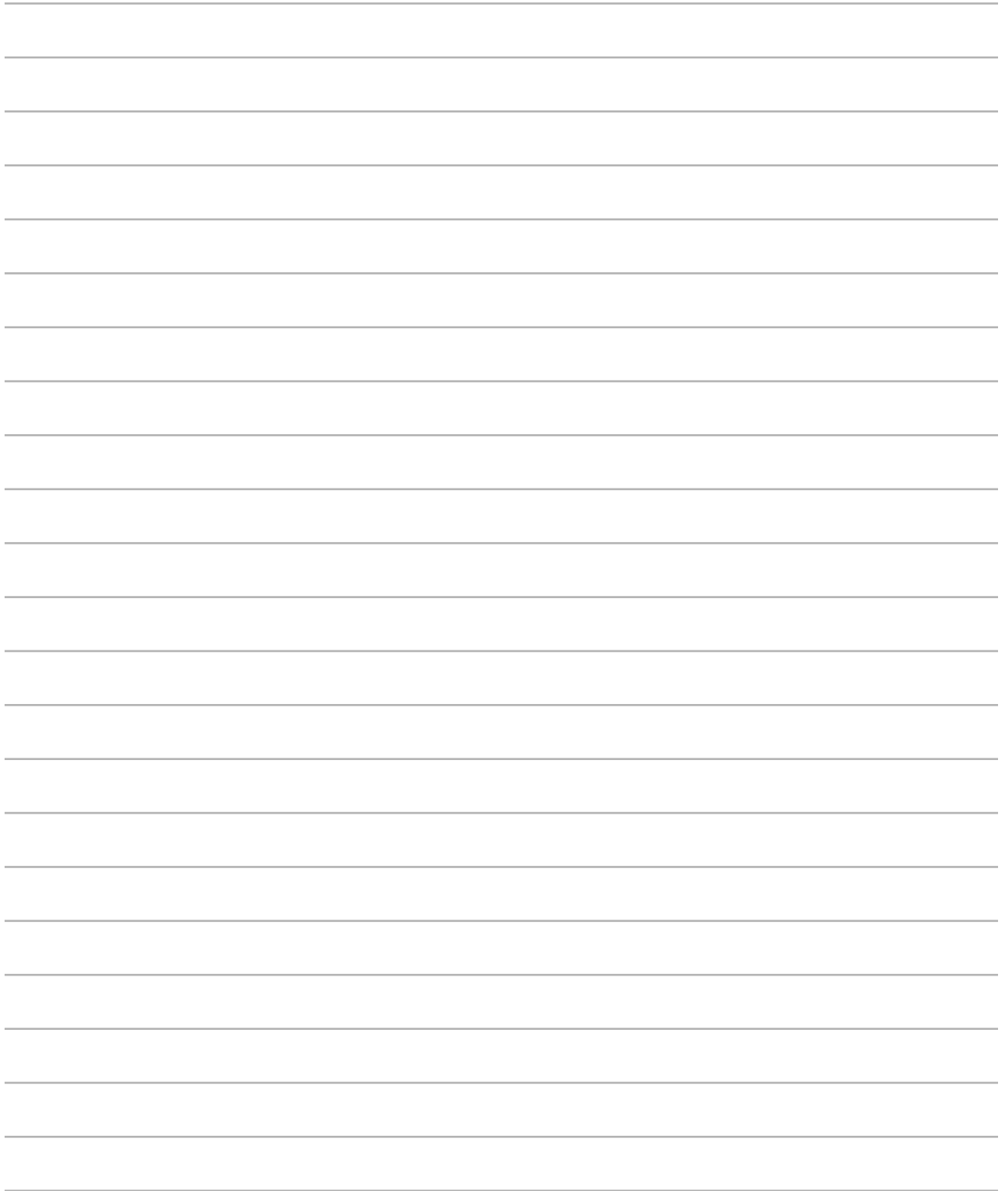
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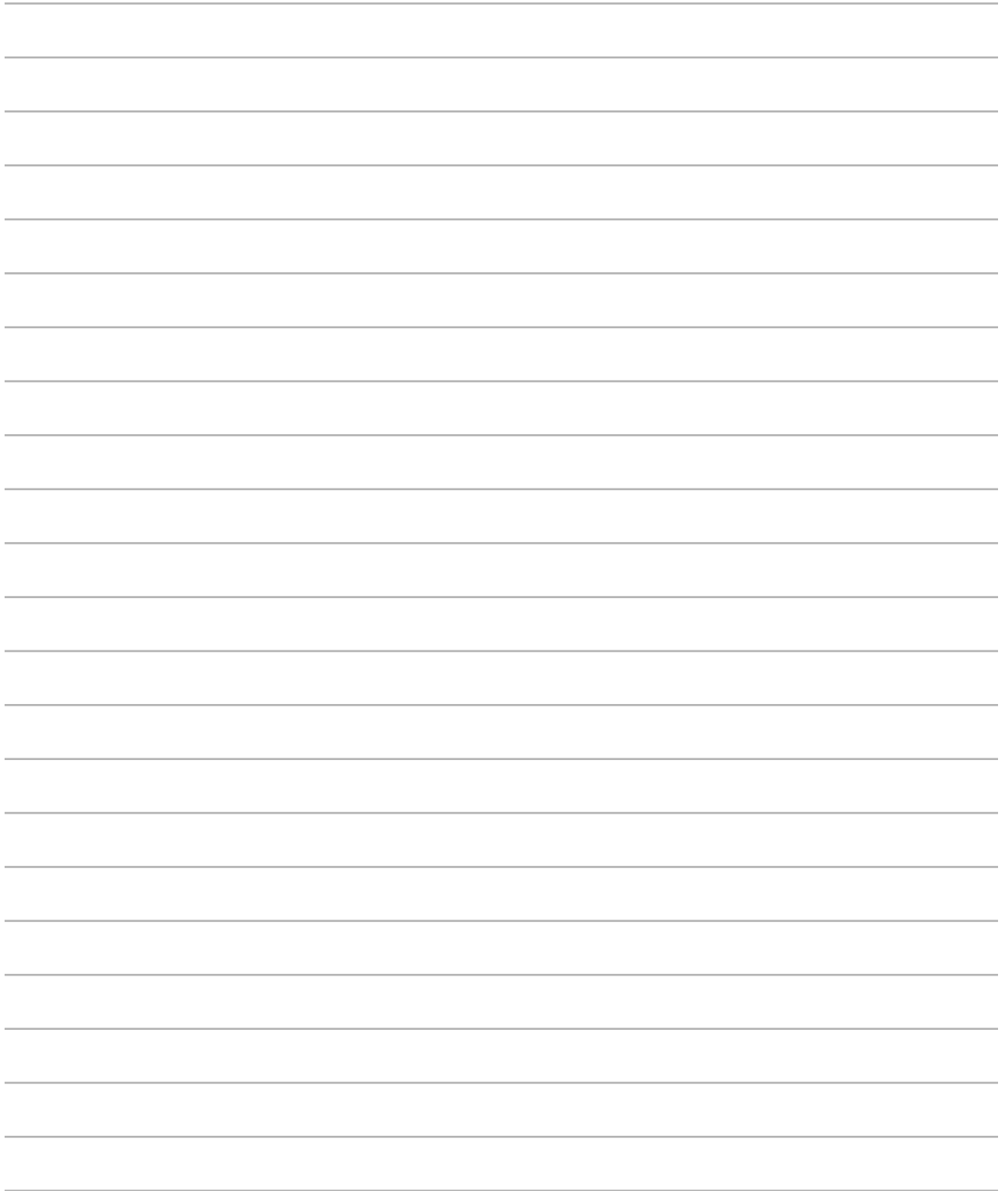




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# JOHN THE BAPTIST

STUDY GUIDE AUTHOR

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## MARY JOHNSON

Mary Johnson has been a Bible teacher for over 35 years and is part of the Core Team for Women's Ministry at CHCC. Mary leads a Life Group in Women's Ministry and a CHCC Life Group for empty nesters with her husband. She has been married to her high school sweetheart for 50 years and has two grown daughters and four granddaughters.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

**The One Who is Worthy of All Praise!**







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