John the Baptist's Life

KEY TEXT

Luke 1:17

Lesson Overview (TEACHER)

TRANSITION Year 2, Lesson 1 began with the angelic announcements and miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. Lesson 2 introduces Jesus' forerunner: John the Baptist. God prepared the way through John's miraculous birth, bold ministry of repentance, testimony about Jesus, and the pivotal events of Jesus' baptism and temptation.

CENTRAL TRUTH God prepared the way for the Savior.

KEY TEXTS Luke 1:5–25, 57–80; 3:1–22; 4:1–13; Matthew 3:1–4:11; 14:1–12; Mark 1:1–13; John 1:15–34; 3:22–36

SPOTLIGHT ON THE GOSPEL All people are sinners who need to repent and be forgiven. John prepared the way by calling for repentance and pointing to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Trust in Jesus alone as your Savior from sin.

Family Devotional (PARENT)

This section explains what the Family Devotional covers for parents to use with their children each day of the week. Each devotional reinforces the lesson taught in Sunday School.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

Day 1 **John the Baptist's Life** (Sunday School review)
Luke 1:5–25, 57–80; 3:1–22; 4:1–13; *Matthew 3:1–4:11; 14:1–12; Mark 1:1–13; John 1:15–34; 3:22–36*

Day 2 **John the Baptist's Birth**
Luke 1:5–25, 57–80

Day 3 **John the Baptist's Ministry and Message**
Matthew 3:1–12; *Mark 1:1–8; Luke 3:1–14*

Day 4 **John the Baptist's Testimony of Jesus**
Luke 3:15–18; *John 1:15–34; 3:22–36*

Day 5 **John the Baptist's Death**
Matthew 14:1–12; *Luke 3:19–20*

Day 6 **Jesus' Baptism**
Matthew 3:13–17; *Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22*

Day 7 **Jesus' Temptation**
Matthew 4:1–11; *Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13*

LAST WEEK

NEXT WEEK

John the Baptist's Life

NOTE: Do not read this commentary aloud to the children. The commentary is designed to help educate and prepare the teacher for the lesson. The teacher's goal in studying the commentary is to better understand the lesson.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Jesus' birth was not the only birth announced in the Gospels. Six months (see Luke 1:36) before the angel came to tell Mary she was the "favored one" (v28), an angel appeared to a godly priest as he was serving in the temple (vv8–10). The angel told Zechariah (vv5a,6) that he and his wife Elizabeth (v5b) would have a son (vv11–13a). The angel informed Zechariah of this child's future ministry (vv14–17) and instructed him on what to name the child (v13b). Zechariah was surprised because he and Elizabeth were childless, and they were "advanced in years" (vv7;18b). He was skeptical (v18a), so the angel told him that he would be "unable to speak" until the prophecy was fulfilled (vv19–20). When Zechariah left the temple, all the people understood that he had seen a vision, but he could not explain it (vv21–22). Zechariah went home to his wife (v23), and Elizabeth conceived (vv24–25). Six months later, she was visited by her relative Mary (vv36a,39–40), and Elizabeth realized who Mary's child was and pronounced a blessing upon her and the child (vv42–45). When her child was born, and the ceremony of circumcision and naming the child occurred, Elizabeth affirmed that the child's name was "John" (vv57–63). Immediately, Zechariah was able to speak, and he began "blessing God" (v64) and proclaimed a song of praise to "the Lord God of Israel" (v68; vv67–79). ***Zechariah praised God because he knew that this child's birth heralded the fulfillment of God's promises to David (v69) and Abraham (v73).*** He also acknowledged the important ministry that this child would perform for the "salvation of his people" (v77) and all "who sit in darkness" (v79).

THE BAPTIST'S MINISTRY AND MESSAGE

In time, Zechariah's son John— later known as John the Baptist—began his ministry in the "wilderness" of Judea near the Jordan river (Mark 1:4; Matt 3:1; Luke 3:1–3; see John 1:28). His appearance and lifestyle were strange: "John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey" (Matt 3:4; Mark 1:6). He told the people to "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2; see Luke 3:8a); the kingdom was at hand because the king was arriving. John called people to repent, performed baptisms of repentance (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3,7), and preached "good news to the people" (Luke 3:18). John's ministry drew "crowds" (Luke 3:7,10) from the region of Judea and Jerusalem (Matt 3:5; Mark 1:5a) as many came to John for practical guidance (Luke 3:10–13). But John's preaching also attracted opposition (John 1:19–27). John's ministry fulfilled the prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah that a messenger would precede Christ (see Mal 3:1; Mark 1:2a; see Matt 11:10) and "a voice" would cry in "the wilderness" (Isa 40:3–5; Matt 3:3b; Mark1:3a; see John 1:23). The Jews expected Elijah to come back because of Jewish tradition (based on Mal 4:5; see Matt 17:10) and John the Baptist looked similar to the prophet Elijah (see 2 Kgs 1:8), so the people incorrectly asked John if he was Elijah (John 1:21). Jesus, however, confirmed that John was Elijah (see Matt 17:10–13); Jesus' words meant that John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah (see Luke 1:17). ***As the forerunner of the Messiah, John's ministry was to "bear witness about the light" (John 1:7–8), which is the Messiah, the Word, "the true light" (v9; see 1:1; 8:12).*** When John was asked why he baptized, John explained that he baptized with water (1:26,33a) but the one who would come after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit (v33b; see Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16c). Once when John saw Him, he announced that Jesus was "the Lamb of God"

(John 1:29a,36) and added that it was Jesus "who takes away the sin of the world" (v29b). This hinted toward Jesus' crucifixion. John confessed freely that he was not the Christ (v20). He humbly acknowledged his own unworthiness and said he ranked below Jesus (vv15,30), that Jesus was "mightier" than him (Mark 1:7a Luke 3:16a), and that he was unworthy to untie Jesus' sandals (Mark 1:7b; Luke 3:16b; John 1:27). After Jesus began His public ministry John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). John also testified that when he baptized Jesus, he saw a dove descend on Jesus (1:32); this was the sign that God had told John would reveal the Messiah (v33). John confessed that "this is the Son of God" (v34). After he had baptized Jesus, John continued his ministry of preaching repentance to everyone, including Herod Antipas, the tetrarch (ruler) of Galilee. His reproof and preaching offended the tetrarch and his wife, Herodias. Herod had John imprisoned (Luke 3:19–20; Matt 14:1–5) and eventually had John beheaded, at the request of his stepdaughter and wife (vv6–12). Jesus once said, "among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist" (Matt 11:11a; Luke 7:28a); this greatness was likely a reference to John's place and faithful service in redemptive history.

JESUS' BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION

Jesus came to be baptized by John (Matt 3:13), but John tried to deter Him (v14), which further demonstrated His humility. Jesus explained to him that this was "fitting" (right and necessary) for Him to be baptized to "fulfill all righteousness", and John allowed Him (v15). Jesus was baptized not because He needed to repent from sin, but to identify with the Messianic community around John that expected the one for whom John had prepared the way. Just after Jesus was baptized, the heavens opened and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended and rested on Jesus (Matt 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:21b–22a; John 1:32–33). Then, a voice from heaven—the voice of the Father—was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22b). ***This amazing display of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—demonstrated that each member of the Trinity was active during the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Messiah.***

The baptism of Jesus was necessary to prepare Him for the ministry He was about to begin, but there was yet another step. He was "immediately" driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan (Mark 1:12–13; Matt 4:1; Luke 4:1). After 40 days and 40 nights of fasting (Matt 4:2; Luke 4:2), the devil came to Him with three temptations. The devil first encouraged Him to turn stones into bread to satisfy His hunger (Matt 4:3; Luke 4:3), but Jesus responded that true satisfaction comes from obedience to God's Word (Matt 4:4; Luke 4:4). The devil, then tempted Jesus to perform a miracle and throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple—cynically suggesting God would protect Him (Matt 4:5–6; Luke 4:9–11)—but Jesus responded that true faith is in trusting God, not testing Him (Matt 4:7; Luke 4:12). Finally, the devil offered Him the glory of all the kingdoms of the earth if Jesus would worship Him (Matt 4:8–9; Luke 4:5–7), but Jesus responded that all glory and worship belongs to God (Matt 4:10; Luke 4:8). In each temptation, Jesus resisted the devil by quoting Scripture (see Deut 8:3; 6:16; 6:13).

LESSON SUMMARY

Luke 1:5–25 and 57–80 record the angelic announcement and birth of John the Baptist to his aged parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth. Zechariah's prophecy foretold John's role in preparing for the Messiah. His wilderness ministry fulfilled prophecy, as he preached repentance and baptized while testifying that Jesus is the Lamb and Son of God. Jesus' baptism reveals the Trinity, and His victory over Satan's temptations in the wilderness demonstrates His perfect obedience.

Personal Preparation

The following section is provided for you to use as a devotional. This will help you prepare for your upcoming Generations of Grace lesson time. *Check off your progress as you go.*

- ☐ **PRAY** for wisdom to understand what you are about to read and to effectively teach the lesson.
- ☐ **REVIEW** last week's lesson and the central truth.
- ☐ **IDENTIFY** this week's central truth along with the transition, key texts, and key verse(s) from this lesson's title page.
- ☐ **READ** this week's key texts from Scripture and choose which passages you want to read aloud to the children during your lesson time. Record on the right hand page under **READ**.
- ☐ **STUDY** the commentary and identify the italicized sentences to summarize the lesson and central truth below.

- ☐ **SUMMARIZE** your notes from above into the **LESSON OUTLINE** on the right hand page. Add any additional questions that you want to reference while teaching your lesson (one question provided per point).
- ☐ **PREPARE** your activity, craft, or coloring page for this week's lesson by visiting our website's additional resources page. Select the introduction, illustration, or application that you would like to use in your classroom along with any visual aid you may decide to use while teaching.
- ☐ **PLAN** your music time by choosing songs that pertain to this week's narrative theme. Check the additional resources on our website for recommendations.
- ☐ **RE-WRITE** this week's spotlight on the gospel in your own words on the teaching outline under **CONCLUDE** on the right hand page.
- ☐ **PRAY** about how you can apply this lesson to your life and that you would communicate the central truth and spotlight on the gospel clearly in your lesson.

Additional Resources
gracecurriculum.org

Teaching Outline

This section is designed to be used as a clean copy of your notes for teaching the lesson. Follow the teaching outline below as a step-by-step guide during your Sunday School lesson.

☐ **PRAY** with your class that the children would understand the central truth and gospel message, and that you would teach the children effectively.

☐ **REVIEW** last week's lesson and the central truth to begin your lesson.

☐ **INTRODUCE** this week's lesson and the central truth using the selected introduction, illustration, or application from our additional resources page.

☐ **READ** the key texts from Scripture you selected that connect to the central truth.

☐ **TEACH** your class using your summarized notes and questions from the **LESSON OUTLINE**. The points provided are the main headers from the commentary. Use the visual aid you selected and always connect your lesson back to the central truth.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. **THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (LUKE 1:5–25, 57–80)**
   - What happened to Zechariah when he didn't believe the angel?

2. **THE BAPTIST'S MINISTRY AND MESSAGE (MATTHEW 3:1–12; 14:1–12; MARK 1:1–8; LUKE 3:1–18; JOHN 1:15–34; 3:22–36)**
   - What important message did John the Baptist tell people?

3. **JESUS' BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION (MATTHEW 3:13–4:11; MARK 1:9–13; LUKE 3:21–22; 4:1–13)**
   - What happened when Jesus was baptized?

☐ **CONCLUDE** this week's lesson with the spotlight on the gospel and tie it into the central truth and the lesson you just taught.

☐ **PRAY** for the children hearing this lesson that they would be saved and follow the LORD.