

# Background on John the Baptist

## John the Baptist/ Immerger



was of the priestly race by both parents, for his father, Zacharias, was himself a priest of the course of Abia or Abijah, 1 Chron. 24:10, and Elisabeth was of the daughters of Aaron. Luke 1:5. His birth was foretold by an angel sent from God, and is related at length in Luke 1. The birth of John preceded by six months that of our Lord. John was ordained to be a Nazarite from his birth. Luke 1:15. Dwelling by himself in the wild and thinly-peopled region westward of the Dead Sea, he prepared himself for the wonderful office to which he had been divinely called. His dress was that of the old prophets—a garment woven of camel's hair, 2 Kings 1:8, attached to the body by a leathern girdle. His food was such as the desert afforded—locusts, Lev. 11:22, and wild honey. Ps. 81:16. And now the long-secluded hermit came forth to the discharge of his office.

His supernatural birth, his life, and the general expectation that some great one was about to appear, were sufficient to attract to him a great multitude from "every quarter." Matt. 3:5. Many of every class pressed forward to confess their sins and to be baptized. Jesus himself came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized of John. [Jesus.] From incidental notices we learn that John and his disciples continued to baptize some time after our Lord entered upon his ministry. See John 3:23; 4:1; Acts 19:3. We gather also that John instructed his disciples in certain moral and religious duties, as fasting, Matt. 9:14; Luke 5:33, and prayer. Luke 11:1. But shortly after he had given his testimony to the Messiah, John's public ministry was brought to a close. In daring disregard of the divine laws, Herod Antipas had taken to himself Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip; and when John reproved him for this, as well as for other sins, Luke 3:19, Herod cast him into prison. (March, A.D. 28.) The place of his confinement was the castle of Machaerus, a fortress on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea. It was here that reports reached him of the miracles which our Lord was working in Judea. Nothing but the death of the Baptist would satisfy the resentment of Herodias. A court festival was kept at Machaerus in honor of the king's birthday. After supper the daughter of Herodias came in and danced before the company, and so charmed was the king by her grace that he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she should ask. Salome, prompted by her abandoned mother, demanded the head of John the Baptist. Herod gave instructions to an officer of his guard, who went and executed John in the prison, and his head was brought to feast the eyes of the adulteress whose sins he had denounced. His death is supposed to have occurred just before the third passover, in the course of the Lord's ministry. (March, A.D. 29.)

**In Mark**-The Gospel of Mark introduces John as a fulfillment of a prophecy from the Book of Isaiah in fact, a conflation of texts from Isaiah, Malachi and Exodus about a messenger being sent ahead, and a voice crying out in the wilderness

**In Matthew** -The Gospel of Matthew account begins with the same modified quotation from Isaiah, moving the Malachi and Exodus material to later in the text, where it is quoted by Jesus

**In Luke and Acts**-The Gospel of Luke adds an account of John's infancy, introducing him as the miraculous son of Zechariah, an old priest, and his wife Elizabeth, who was past menopause and therefore unable to have children [see the full on-  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_the\\_Baptist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Baptist)