

John the Baptist

Matthew 3

by Don Falkos

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The prophet Isaiah said, "A voice is calling in the desert, 'Get ready for the coming of the Lord.' "

John the Baptist was that voice. In the Judean desert he proclaimed, "Turn away from your sins. Turn back to God. The Kingdom of Heaven is near."

John's clothing was made of camel hair and he had a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. Large numbers of people went out to John; they confessed their sins; and he baptized them in the Jordan River.

John denounced the Pharisees and the Sadducees who came to be baptized. "You bunch of snakes! Who warned you to run from the coming wrath? Prove by your behavior that you have given up your pride and your arrogance. And don't think you're safe just because you're descendants of Abraham. The ax of God's judgment is poised and ready to chop down the unproductive trees and throw them into the fire. So produce good fruit or prepare yourselves to burn."

To the crowd John said, "I baptize with water. But someone is coming after me who is far more powerful than I am. I'm not even worthy to be his slave or carry his sandals. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He will bring both mercy and judgment."

Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized by John in the Jordan River. John protested, "I'm the one who needs to be baptized by you!"

Jesus replied, "This is the way it needs to be."

As Jesus was coming up out of the water, the sky opened and he saw the Spirit of God coming down to him in the form of a dove. Then a voice came from heaven. "This is my Son, whom I love. I am very pleased with him."