



Scripture Story: Matthew 3:1-17; Luke 1:5-23.

Commentary: *The Desire of Ages*, chapters 10, 11.

one of a kind



Photo by Luis Guerra, Jr.

flashlight

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.’ Before the birth of John, the angel had said, ‘He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.’ God had called the son of Zacharias to a great work, the greatest ever committed to men” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 100).

keytext

“I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

(Matthew 11:11, NIV)

what do you think?

Describe below the weirdest person you have ever seen.

How did they look (face, facial expression, etc.)? _____

How were they dressed? _____

How did they speak? _____

How did the way that the person looked, dressed, and spoke affect your perception of them? _____

did you know?

John the Baptist took a lifetime vow never to drink any strong drinks, such as alcoholic beverages (Luke 1:15). There are other people in the Bible who also took a similar vow, most notably Samson (Judges 13:3-7). The foods John the Baptist ate and the clothes he wore were also specially chosen by God to maximize the special message he was to give (Matthew 3:4).

INTO THE STORY

“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, “Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.”’

“John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: ‘You

brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

“I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?’

“Jesus replied, ‘Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then John consented.

“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”

(Matthew 3, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Who are the main players or characters in this biblical narrative? *Circle* their names.

What parts of this story are new to you? Have you ever read it before?

What is the central message that John the Baptist is communicating?

To whom is John the Baptist talking?

Underline the verses in which you see a significant shift in the story.

How do you see God in this passage?

How did John the Baptist know that the man walking to him was the Messiah?

What lesson(s) will you take away from this passage?

If you could share one point from this story with a friend, which one would it be? *Checkmark* that spot in the story and write the name of a friend whom you plan to share it with.

punch lines

“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1 Corinthians 1:27, NIV).

“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20, NIV).

“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (Proverbs 28:13, NIV).

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46, NIV).

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8, NIV).

other eyes

“In character, in manner, in style, in all things, the supreme excellence is simplicity.”—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 19th-century American poet.

“Repentance is a grace of God’s Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed.”—Thomas J. Watson, Sr., founder of IBM.

Sabbath

By any measure, John the Baptist was one of the most interesting figures in the entire Bible. He looked weird, dressed differently, and preached a unique message. Read Matthew 3:4 again.

Wouldn't it have made more sense for God to dress him up like everyone else so that he could blend in with the local people and share his message? Why did God set him apart in the way that he looked, and even in what he ate?

What does this tell you about how much God cares about how you look and what you eat?

Sunday

Read the *Into the Story* section, then complete the *Out of the Story* questions. What sins did John the Baptist rebuke the Pharisees for committing?

Why did John's message focus so much on confessing one's sins and repenting of them?

Why did John aim such harsh words at the Pharisees?

Monday

Read this week's *Key Text*. As compliments go, this is one of the best ones in the Bible. Jesus recognized the special role that John the Baptist played in preparing the way for His ministry.

Write down something that you would like Jesus to say about the way that you live

your life for Him. _____

Tuesday

In today's *Flashlight* quotation, Ellen White notes that John the Baptist grew up far away from the city—actually, in the desert. He was a country boy.

Why do you think God chose to raise John the Baptist in this way?

How did John's simple upbringing help him recognize sin?

Wednesday

Read the *Punch Lines* for this week. Focus on 1 Corinthians 1:27. What do you think are some of the foolish things that God uses to confound or confuse the wise?

Explain how the meaning of this verse relates to the life and ministry of John the Baptist.

What was it about John the Baptist that made people travel long distances to go see and hear him?

God can use anyone who is willing to be His vessel. God has called you to ministry for Him, perhaps not in the same public way as John the Baptist. Even if you are ridiculed for this, know that God will be with you.

Thursday

This week you have been studying about the life and ministry of John the Baptist, the man chosen by God to prepare the way

for Jesus' public ministry. Why do you think it was necessary for John to baptize Jesus publicly?

Have you been baptized? If you have not, what's stopping you?

Friday

Ellen White wrote of John the Baptist: "John was to go forth as Jehovah's messenger, to bring to men the light of God. He must give a new direction to their thoughts. He must impress them with the holiness of God's requirements, and their need of His perfect righteousness" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 100).

What impression are you leaving on those who know you?

*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages* has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net.



At www.insightmagazine.org you can join the Web forum and help shape the future. Discuss the Sabbath School lessons in a virtual community.

Insight has stories of people today from which you can learn practical ideas for reality living.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages, chapters 10, 11.

*By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.