

Episode 1: Promises

Unfortunately, this season doesn't start out very happy. The first episode is all about John the Baptist, his life and untimely death. We get to see glimpses of him in his mother's womb, as a baby and then the very sad ending of his beheading. Let's dive into John the Baptist's life and see what scripture tell us.

The episode opens with Mary visiting Elizabeth, who is pregnant with John. Read the passage below and circle what happened when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting.

- **Luke 1:39-45 (ESV)** - ³⁹ *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, ⁴⁰ and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, ⁴² and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! ⁴³ And why is this granted to me that the month of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord."*

As Mary is talking to Elizabeth, we find out what happened to Zechariah. Read the scripture below and circle what happened to him.

- **Luke 1:18-20 (ESV)** – ¹⁸ *And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am in old man, and my wife is advanced in years." ¹⁹ And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰ And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time."*

A big birthday banquet is brewing, and you can tell Herodias is scheming something big. We see her daughter

Bible Reference

John accomplished all that was prophesized about him. Read through the Old Testament verses below.

Isaiah 40:3-5 (ESV) - ³ *A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵ And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."*

Malachi 3:1 (ESV) - *"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts."*

DID YOU KNOW??

There are verses all over the Old Testament that point to Jesus. Even though he may not be specifically named, the prophets and many of the writings point to Jesus coming as our savior.

practicing a dance for Herod and Herodias wants it to be perfect.

Joanna is also approached about the banquet by her husband Chuza who asks her to be on her best behavior. Joanna knows something is up and tries to visit John. Unfortunately, she cannot see him as he is being prepared to go to the lower deck either to be freed or killed. Joanna has a feeling it is not going to lead to his freedom.

John was referred to as a messenger, the one who was to prepare the way for Jesus. He was the forerunner, the hype-guy before the main act (Jesus) takes the stage. He told everyone the Messiah was coming and he baptized the forgiveness of sins. If you think about it, we are all called to prepare the way of Jesus. We are called to tell others about him. To plant seeds that Jesus can use to open the hearts of others. John is the example of what we all should be doing. How well are you preparing the way of Jesus in the hearts of those around you? Are you sharing your faith with loved ones and people you interact with? What is one thing you can do today to be more like John?

There was another flashback, this one was John as a baby at his circumcision. He was named at his circumcision. Circle the name they gave him; then underline what happened after Zechariah wrote his name down.

- **Luke 1: 59-64 (ESV)** - ⁵⁹ And on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child. And they would have called him Zechariah after his father, ⁶⁰ but his mother answered, "No, he shall be called John." ⁶¹ And they said to her, "None of your relatives is called by this name." ⁶² And they made signs to his father, inquiring what he wanted him to be called. ⁶³ And he asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they all wondered. ⁶⁴ And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.

Just as stated in scripture, a big event occurred and Herod witnessed the dance. Circle who performed the dance. Underline what the girl asked for.

- **Matthew 14:6-9 (ESV)** - ⁶ But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, ⁷ so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. ⁸ Prompted by her mother, she said "Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter." ⁹ And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given.

None of us wanted it to happen, but John came to his unfortunate death. Circle what his head was put on from the scripture below.

- **Matthew 14:10-11 (ESV)** - ¹⁰ He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, ¹¹ and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.

Although the end of the episode is so sad, no one wanted to see John die, you do see a glimmer of joy and hope in his eyes as he looks out the window at the sun. He admires God's beautiful creation before his unfortunate death. He knows that he is not staying on the earth any longer, he will soon be with his father. The mission that he was put on earth to accomplish was completed and now he gets to spend eternity in heaven, with God where there is no more sin, no more pain, no more suffering, shackles or chains. He is no longer bound and in a jail cell, he is free and with our Father.

What gets you excited about heaven? What are you looking forward to the most?

John the Baptist fulfilled his mission to prepare the way for Jesus. And how highly and lovingly, Jesus speaks about John. Read from Matthew below and circle how Jesus describes John.

- **John 5:33 & 35 (ESV)** – ³³ *You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth...* ³⁵ *He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light.*

Read what Jesus says about himself below and circle how he describes himself.

- **John 8:12 (ESV)** – *Again Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

Jesus is the light of the world. John shined that light on others as he prepared the way for Jesus. We all have Jesus' light inside of us through the Holy Spirit. Let your light shine! Be like Jesus and John. What can you do this week to shine your light on others?

*Jesus quotes Job when talking with Little James. **Job 1:21 (ESV)** – And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."*
