

# St John the Baptist



St John the Baptist was a Jewish prophet who preached of the imminent coming of the Messiah, had a following of disciples and baptised people as a sign of them renouncing their sins and turning back to a God.

John was born in Judea to elderly parents, Elizabeth (who was Mary's cousin) and Zechariah. Scripture records Elizabeth as saying the child within her womb jumped for joy when Mary, who was with child (Jesus) greeted Elizabeth on hearing of her miraculous pregnancy. It was recorded that John lived and preached in the desert. He led a simple life in the desert, eating locusts and wild honey and dressing in camel skins. His message was one telling of 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand' and a 'coming judgment, and he called for people to amend their ways. He used the waters of the Jordan to baptise people whose souls had already been purified by their change to righteousness, as a physical sign of them purifying their bodies as well.

Many were drawn to hear what John had to say and many followed him. Jesus came and John immediately recognized him as the Messiah, the one who will baptise with the Holy Spirit. Jesus asked John to baptise him and though John replied that it should be Jesus who should be baptising him, John did baptise Jesus. John directed his followers that they should be following Jesus, as he was the one they had been waiting for.

Herod, the King at the time, who feared the influence that John had over the large number of followers he had to incite a rebellion, ordered the arrest of John. John had previously condemned Herod's marriage to his niece. Herod's stepdaughter is granted a favour by Herod for dancing for him, and at the request of her mother, she asks for the head of John the Baptist, which is subsequently delivered on a plate.

John was the last great prophet before Jesus started his ministry.