

Who baptized John the Baptist?

The Bible contains no record of who baptized John the Baptist, nor does it say whether John was baptized at all.

Scripture indicates that John the Baptist was specially commissioned as a forerunner of Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:1-12; 11:10; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:1-18; 7:27; John 1:19-34). The prophets Isaiah and Malachi foretold that a preparatory “voice” would precede the Messiah (Isaiah 40:1-11; Malachi 3:1-4). Their prophecies were fulfilled in John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was sent by God as a messenger to prepare the way in the hearts and minds of the people of Israel for the coming of their Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: “There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light” (John 1:6-8, CSB). John used baptism as the means by which people showed their repentance of sin; they needed to recognize their sin and need for a Savior in order to be receptive to Him when He came. It is possible that in his role as baptizer John did not need to be baptized himself.

John lived in the wilderness in the time leading up to his public ministry to Israel (Luke 1:80). John wore rough clothing of camel skins and ate locusts and wild honey (Mark 1:6). The people of Jerusalem flocked in great multitudes to hear this curious man preach a message of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Those who responded to his call to repentance were baptized by him in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:4-5; Luke 3:1-22; John 3:23). The Sadducees and Pharisees, who saw no need for repentance themselves, refused to be baptized by John, and he unapologetically called them out for

their religious hypocrisy. He also warned tax collectors against extortion and boldly rebuked King Herod for his ungodly and unlawful marriage to his niece (and sister-in-law) Herodias.

While the Bible does not say who baptized John the Baptist, we know that he baptized Jesus. When the Lord came to him to be baptized, John tried to talk Him out of it, saying, “I am the one who needs to be baptized by you” (Matthew 3:14, NLT). This statement seems to suggest that John had not been baptized. Jesus insisted that John baptize Him “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15). For a short time after the Lord’s baptism, John continued to point people to the Savior, and his ministry was successful: the crowds following him faded away as Jesus took center stage (John 3:22-36). Soon John was imprisoned and beheaded by Herod.

In his short but brilliant life, John the Baptist fulfilled his destiny and then died a martyr’s death. Jesus paid him tribute as “a lamp that burned and gave light” (John 5:35) and “of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John” (Luke 7:28, NLT).