

BASIC LIFE OF CHRIST



Self-Pac[®]
of Basic Education

Name _____

STUDENT'S GOAL

- Target test date _____
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- Pages per day _____
- Date Self-Pac completed _____



Sanhedrin. The highest council of the Jews in the time of Christ. It operated, of course, under Roman oversight, but during most of the time, it had wide powers.

Sign. One of the words used in the New Testament to denote a miracle. The name, sign, shows that the miracles of Jesus pointed out that God was at work in His world. They were signs of that fact.

I. JOHN THE BAPTIST

The Announcement of His Birth

The man whom God chose to publicly introduce Jesus to Israel was a man named John. We call him John the Baptist, that is, John who baptizes, because baptizing was an important part of John's ministry. Because John's ministry was so important, his birth, like the birth of Jesus, was announced to his parents by the angel, Gabriel.

Read Luke 1:5-25.

The announcement to John's father, Zacharias, was made sometime earlier than the announcement to Mary. The interval was probably six months. John's mother, Elisabeth, had been carrying John six months when Mary learned that she was to be the mother of Jesus.

Read Luke 1:24-26 and compare it to Luke 1:5-25.

Zacharias was a priest. He and his wife, Elisabeth, were godly people. But in the providence of God, they grew old without having any children. Zacharias' turn came one day to enter the temple and to burn incense in the Holy Place. It was the greatest moment of his life. There were so many priests in Israel that each group came to the temple only two weeks out of the year to serve. The privilege to offer incense in the Holy Place was granted by the casting of lots. Because of the great number of priests, a man might offer incense only once in his lifetime. Never again would he be eligible. For many priests the opportunity never came, but this day, the lot fell on Zacharias-- a memorable day indeed.

However, something greater was to happen. While Zacharias offered incense and the people stood outside praying the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias. The angel calmed his fears. Then, Gabriel told the old man that his prayer for a child had been granted by the Lord. In fact, Zacharias and Elisabeth would have a son. "And," said the angel, "thou shalt call his name John" (verse 13). Zacharias' own joy at John's birth would be echoed in the hearts of devout Israelites as they realized that after hundreds of years God had once again sent a prophet among them.

Gabriel gave a brief description of John. He would be great in the Lord's eyes (the only true measure of greatness). He would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth. And throughout life, he would drink neither wine nor strong drink. (Would this last fact make John a Nazarite? Some have thought so. See Numbers 6:1-8.) Then Gabriel spoke of the effect John's ministry would have. First, John would turn many Israelites to God. Second, he would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. John would bind up the wounds in families that had been divided in their service to God, reconciling fathers and children. Even those ancient fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would have reason to smile on John's generation after John had preached. Third, John's turning men to God, and to one another would make them ready for the coming of the Lord Jesus.

That was the highest purpose of his work.

As good as this announcement was, Zacharias hardly could believe it. "Whereby shall I know this?" he questioned, "for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." Mary, also, would later question Gabriel.

Compare verses 34 and 38.

But, something in Zacharias' tone or motive displayed unbelief in God's messenger. Gabriel had a short answer: "Thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words." And that is the way it was. Zacharias left the temple unable to speak. He went home unable to speak. He stayed that way until after the birth of his son!

Having studied carefully the preceding material, answer the following questions.

- (1) Why is John called "the Baptist?" _____

- (2) John's father and mother were (a) _____ and (b) _____.
- (3) How was the priest chosen who was to offer incense, and how often could he do this? _____
- (4) Gabriel said that John would be filled with the _____ from the time of his birth.
- (5) Three effects of John's ministry would be: (a) _____, (b) _____, (c) _____.
- (6) Zacharias' question to Gabriel betrayed _____.

The Messenger and His Message

After John comes into young manhood, the Gospel writers call our attention to him again.

Read Matthew 3:1-6.

Both his message and his appearance are striking. His message has two parts: first, repentance for the forgiveness of sins; second, an announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. (Note that our Lord Jesus later began His public ministry with the same message. See Matthew 4:17) If you had seen John, you might have been reminded of the Old Testament prophet Elijah. (See 2 Kings 1:8). John wore a leather girdle and clothing woven of camel's hair. He ate the food that came to hand in the wilderness, things like locusts and wild honey.

The repentance that John called for was a hatred of sin as an offense against God.

Read Luke 3:7-14.

place in the production of this wine, expressed surprise that the best wine had been left until the last. The important reaction, however, was among Jesus' followers. Jesus "manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him" (verse 11). The miracle was a sign, a sign showing that Jesus was someone unusual. It did not reveal all about the Lord Jesus as they would come to know Him. But it led these followers a little way into the mystery of His person. They saw the sign, and believed in Him more deeply.

- (6) Jesus' first miracle was performed at a (a) _____ in the town of (b) _____ in Galilee.
- (7) Jesus had to show His new relationship to _____ before He could perform this miracle.
- (8) How did the following react to this miracle?
 - (a) The Governor of the feast _____.
 - (b) Jesus disciples _____.

His First Cleansing of the Temple

(Read the story in John 2:13-22.) Near the beginning of Jesus' public ministry He went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. All devout Jewish men went to Jerusalem at this time each year. We may be sure that to the Lord Jesus this was not a mere form. He no doubt entered wholeheartedly into this celebration of God's goodness to ancient Israel. But His trip was marred by the sight of the commercialism in the temple area.



Without warning Jesus made a whip of cords and drove out the men who sold oxen, sheep, and doves. He overturned the tables where men sat and exchanged foreign currencies that could not be used in the temple into one of the currencies that were acceptable. How could the Lord Jesus do this? There is no hint that a miracle was used. Rather, the element of surprise, along with the dead seriousness of the One Who had a whip and used it, sent these "businessmen" scurrying in every direction. This was righteous indignation in action--godly action! Jesus' disciples immediately thought of Psalm 69:9, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up."

The Jewish authorities, of course, could not let this simply pass. They saw in this act of Jesus a claim to be Someone important, perhaps the Messiah Himself. They demanded His credentials. If He were the Messiah He would be able to produce a sign, that is a miracle. But Jesus did not produce miracles on demand. Instead He pointed forward to the miracle of His resurrection from the dead.

"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," He said. The "temple" He spoke of was His body, but they thought He was speaking of the temple of Jerusalem. His saying seemed incredible and they said so. (Nevertheless, this saying stuck in their minds. We see it brought up at the trial of Christ. Read Mark 14:56-59. It was also thrown in His face at the cross. Read Mark 15:29,30.) His disciples evidently did not understand it at this time. But later, after His resurrection, they recalled it. Then it became one more link in the chain of faith that bound them to the Lord Jesus forever.

- (1) Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the (a) _____, but was upset by the commercialism in the (b) _____ area.
- (2) What was it that the money changers were doing? They were _____.
- (3) Why is a miracle called "a sign?" _____.

Answer these questions to test your understanding of this section. If you score below 90%, restudy the section. If you score above 90%, you should restudy any areas you did not understand.

CHECKUP

Complete these statements (each answer, 5 points):

- (1) Two disciples of (a) _____ saw him point to Jesus and say, (b) "_____."
- (2) (a) _____ and (b) _____ were two brothers who early followed Christ.
- (3) The Lord Jesus changed (a) _____ name to (b) _____, which means (c) "_____."
- (4) Instead of arguing with Nathaniel about Jesus, Philip said, "_____."
- (5) Running out of wine at the wedding was no trivial matter because _____.
- (6) The conversation at the wedding between the Lord Jesus and _____ showed that a new relationship had developed between them.