

Kids' Chronicle

The Bible Times

A voice in the wilderness

The chief priest from the Temple in Jerusalem had sent three of his most trusted elders to what used to be a lonely, desolate spot in the desert along the Jordan River. The spot was not so lonely today. Ever since the one people called the Baptizer had started preaching here, the river's banks were always brimming with people.

"We're lucky if we even get a chance to speak to him," Benjamin, one of the elders, said when they arrived. "He certainly does have a wild appearance."

The man called Simon chuckled. "What would you look like if you had spent most of your life living alone in the desert among the wild beasts? They say that this John the Baptist eats only locusts and honey."

"Why would he choose such a life for himself?" Eli asked. "His parents died years ago and left him well off. As the story goes, he was born to a priest and his elderly wife when they should have been grandparents. One day while Zechariah, his father, was serving at the temple an angel appeared to him and foretold the birth of John."

"We'd better be careful with our investigation," Simon advised. "I know we've had plenty of false prophets before. And it's been hundreds of years since we've seen a true prophet. But John the Baptist has a considerable following."

"Some are claiming that John is the prophet, Elijah, come back to life," Eli said. "He certainly fits the lifestyle."

"There has been even more seri-

ous talk than that concerning the Baptist," Simon continued.

Their conversation was temporarily halted by the booming voice of John the Baptist, who stood waist-deep in the middle of the Jordan River. "The kingdom of God is coming soon! Get ready! Be sorry for your sins. Begin a new life by sharing your food and clothing with the poor!"

As the three elders looked on, people lined up and waded into the river where John baptized them. He seemed to be tireless. It was several hours before the crowds thinned down and he stepped out of the Jordan River.

"We have been sent here by the chief priest from Jerusalem," Simon asked him abruptly. "Who are you?"

"It does not matter who I am," John replied. "I am merely a voice in the wilderness making the way for he who comes after me."

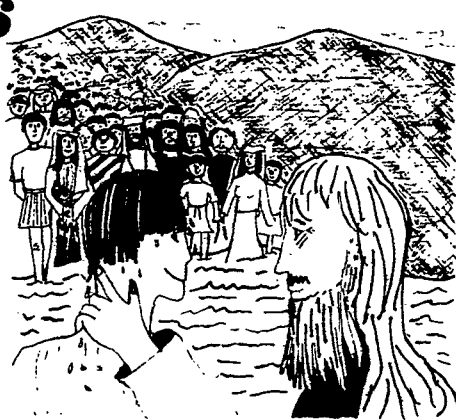
"Who is coming after you?" Eli queried.

"I am just his witness," John continued. "The one coming soon is much greater. I am not worthy even to untie his shoes."

Simon was not able to hide his annoyance. "Speak plainly! What shall we tell the chief priest?"

"You are not interested in the truth," John said. "If you were, you would be willing to do what is necessary to change your lives!"

John's words hung sharply in the hot, desert air as the three elders turned away from his insult. Nothing more was said until they were well down the road toward Jeru-



Illustrations by Kathy Welsh

salem.

"So what will we say about John the Baptist to the chief priest?" Simon finally asked, breaking the uneasy silence.

"He is a madman! The Baptizer's senses have been scorched by the desert sun," Eli said, laughing heartily. "By the way, Simon, what did you mean about even more serious talk concerning him?"

"There are many who insist that John the Baptist is the long-awaited Messiah," Simon replied.

"Impossible!" Benjamin said. "If the Messiah were here, we would certainly know."

Read More About It: Matthew 3; Mark 1:1-12; Luke 3:1-22; John 1:6-34.

Q & A

1. What was John the Baptist's message?

2. Would people be able to tell that you are a follower of Jesus Christ?

Life of John the Baptist

John the Baptist was a faithful witness for Jesus Christ. Even though he was mocked, he never stopped telling people about Christ. Use the Bible references below to help you answer the questions. Answer key on 2.

- Name of the Old Testament prophet who predicted that John the Baptist would prepare people for Jesus Christ. (Matthew 3)
- What name did John call Jesus when he saw him passing by near the Jordan River? (John 1)
- John's father's name was Zechariah. What was his mother's name? (Luke 1)
- Name the angel who appeared to Zechariah and promised him a son. (Luke 1)
- Who were the two high priests who lived during the time of John the Baptist? (Luke 3)
- John baptized people with the water from the Jordan River. What did he say Jesus would baptize with? (Mark 1)
- Name the king who imprisoned and beheaded John. (Matthew 14)

Bible Trivia

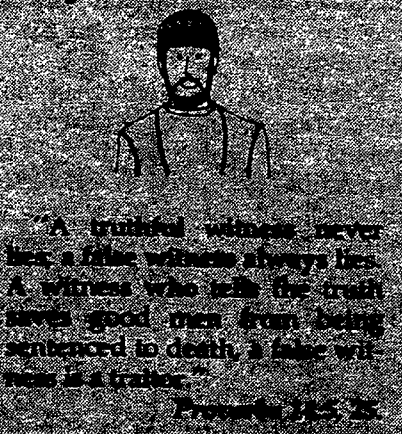
February Trivia Question:

What was the name of Herod's stepdaughter who requested the head of John the Baptist on a platter as her reward for dancing?

Send answers to *Catholic Courier Bible Trivia*, 1150 Buffalo Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14624. Please include your name and address with your entry. All entries must be received by March 11, 1993. A winner will be selected at random from all the correct entries submitted. The winner will receive a gift, courtesy of TRANTS.

Last month's winner was Joy Liberi, who correctly named Ebed-melech as the man who saved Jeremiah.

King Solomon's Wisdom



A truthful witness never lies. A false witness always lies. A witness who tells the truth saves good men from being sentenced to death; a false witness is a traitor.

Proverbs 14:5, 25

Talking to God

Dear Jesus,
Let my actions always show that I am one of your faithful followers. Help me to be a good witness for you.

"I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

Psalm 40:8.

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