People of the Bible
John the Baptist

John the Baptizer, son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, was born into priestly family. His birth was miraculously announced to his father by an angel of the Lord (Luke 1:5-23).

On occasion of his birth, his aged father proclaimed a hymn of praise (Luke 1:5-23). This hymn is entitled the Benedictus and serves as the traditional Gospel Canticle in the Church's Service of Morning Prayer.

Events of John's life and his teaching are known from all four of the Gospels. In the wilderness of Judea, near the Jordan River, John began to preach a call to repentance and a baptismal washing and he told the crowds "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

John denounced the immoral life of the Herodian rulers, with the result that Herod Antipas the tetrarch (ruler over small territory) of Galilee, had him arrested and imprisoned in the huge fortress of Machaerus near the Dead Sea. There Herod had him beheaded (Mark 6:17-29).

John is remembered and honored as the one who with his preaching pointed to "Lamb of God" and "prepared the way" for the coming of the Messiah.