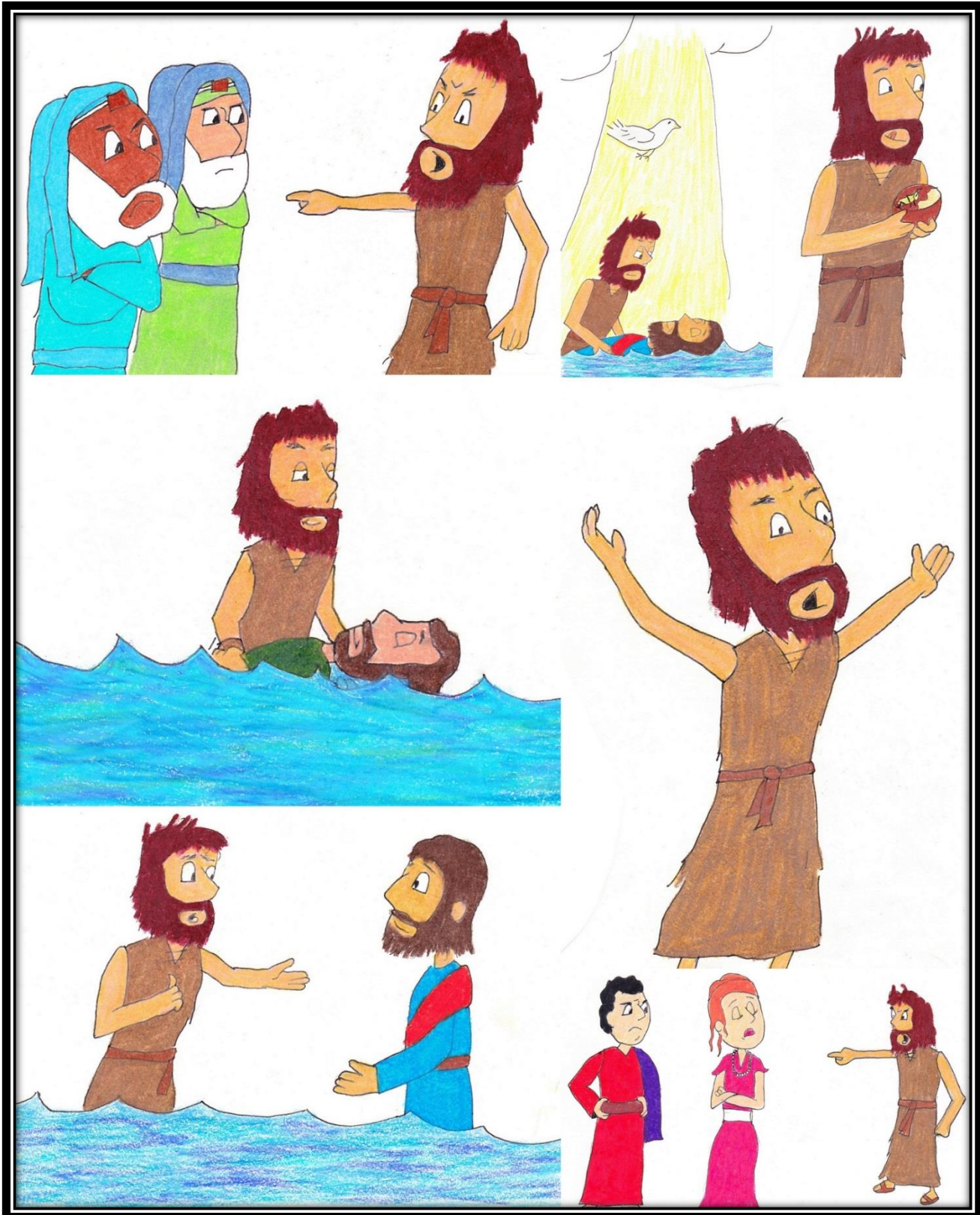


John the Baptist





Before John was born God told his parents, John would do great things. But that didn't mean he was going to be rich.

John didn't have the money to buy nice linen clothes, so he had camel hair robes. They were itchy, and uncomfortable to wear. It couldn't take dye, so it was always brown.

Because he was poor, John lived out in the desert. He ate locusts and honey. It was cheap and there was lots of it available.



When he was grown, John started preparing everyone for the Messiah, that was his job given to him by God.

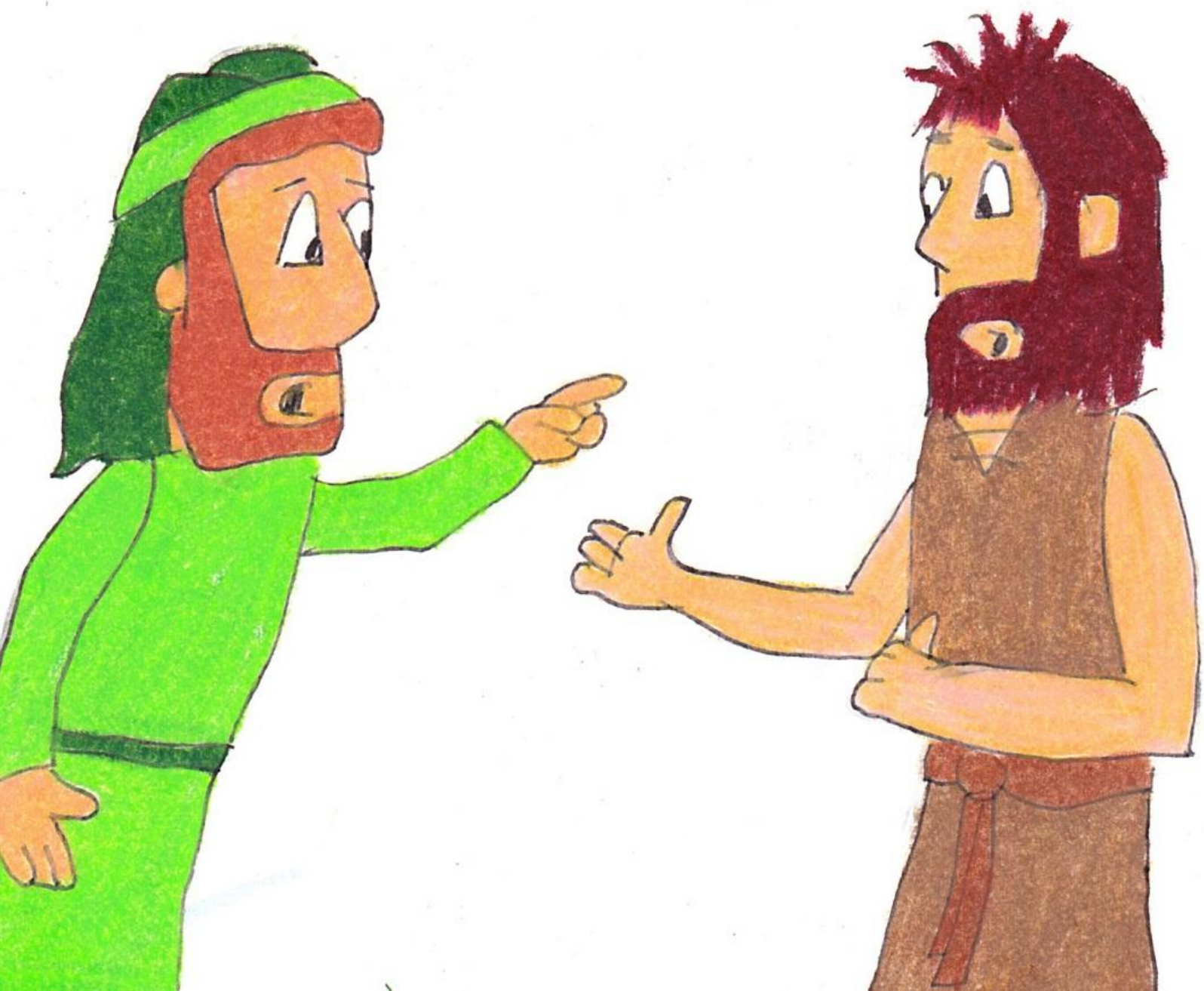
He taught them in the Jordan River by Bethany. John stood by the river and warned them of the coming judgment. “Repent for God’s chosen one is coming. Remember who you are and what God has done for you.”

Thousands listened to John and believed what he said. Many more were amazed and started asking questions.



When people decided to repent, John would take them down to the Jordan River and baptize them.

“I baptize you with water, but someone is coming who will baptize you with Spirit and fire. I am not worthy to untie his shoes.”



Word spread of John's teaching and people came from all over Judea to hear him teach. Eventually the crowds started to wonder who John was. He knew so much and was able to speak so wisely about God, there had to be something special about him.

“Are you the one God promised? We know God promised a savior. Are you the Messiah?” they asked.

John shook his head in frustration, “I am not.”

“Are you Elijah, or another prophet?” they asked. “Tell us who you are!”

“No,” John said starting to get angry. “I am the one called by God to prepare the way.”



Eventually the Pharisees and Sadducees decided they needed to check out what this “John the Baptist” was saying.

They traveled all the way from Jerusalem to Bethany and demanded to know why he was baptizing these people.

“I am preparing the way. I am the voice crying out in the wilderness as Isaiah said, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight.’”

The Pharisees kept asking questions, not believing what John said. Finally John turned on them, “Snakes! Who warned you to flee the coming judgment? You are so pretty on the outside, but inside you are filthy. You will bring the people down to hell with you, smiling all the way.”

The Pharisees and Sadducees stepped back in shock. How dare he talk to them like that?



One day as John was teaching Jesus walked up to him, “Will you baptize me John?”

“Me baptize you?” John stammered. “Why? Why should I baptize you? You should baptize me. You are God’s lamb who takes away the sins of the world.”

“I do this because My Father in Heaven commanded it,” Jesus answered. “Will you baptize me?”

“Very well,” John answered.

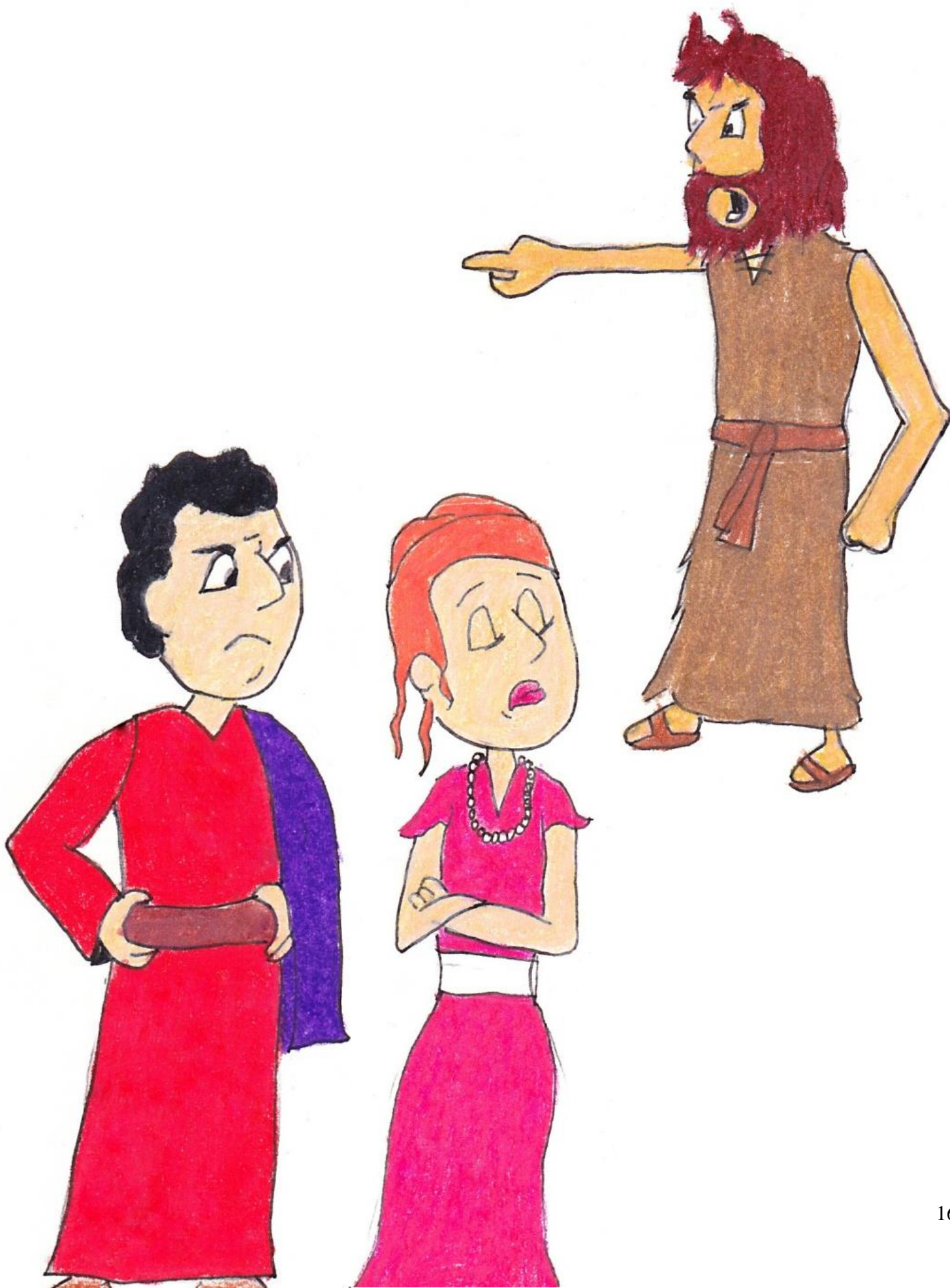


John took Jesus and baptized Him in the Jordan River. As Jesus went under the water a hole opened in the heavens and a light shone down.

A bird came down from heaven, and a voice declared in a loud voice. “This is my beloved son, and I am proud of Him.”

The crowd watched in silence as Jesus came out of the water. “Who was this man?” they wondered. “Is he greater than John?”

Jesus walked out of the river and through the crowd back into the wilderness.



John continued to teach after baptizing Jesus. He taught even when he knew others didn't like what he had to say.

One of those people was Herod. John kept telling Herod to stop sinning. In front of large crowds John told Herod and his wife they were sinners and they should repent.

The more Herod heard this the more angry he got, but Herod was afraid of what the people would do if he killed John.

One day while entertaining guests, Herod's daughter danced so well, that he promised her whatever she wanted. Her mother said, "Ask for John's head." She did, and so John died.

Questions

Younger Kids

1. What did John tell the people of Israel to do?
2. Why did Jesus say He wanted John to baptize Him?
3. Did John stop saying what was right when it made Herod angry? Have you ever been scared to say what was right?

Middle Kids

1. Why do you think the Pharisees came out to talk to John? Read John 1:22 and 24. Do you think the Pharisees believed John? Do you think some did believe John?
2. Did John's baptism save people? Read John 1:26. Does baptism now save you? Why do you think Jesus was baptized?
3. Read Mark 1:10. What do we learn about Jesus from this passage?
4. Read Mark 6:23-26. What mistake do you see Herod making here? Is it wise to make a promise if you don't know what the promise is? Is there ever a time to break a promise?

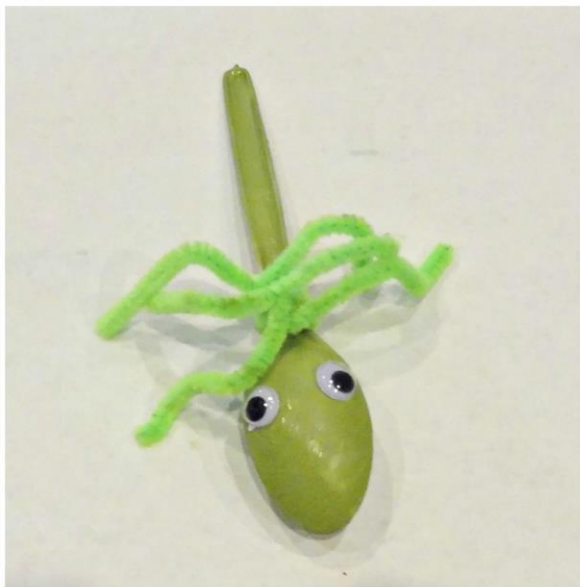
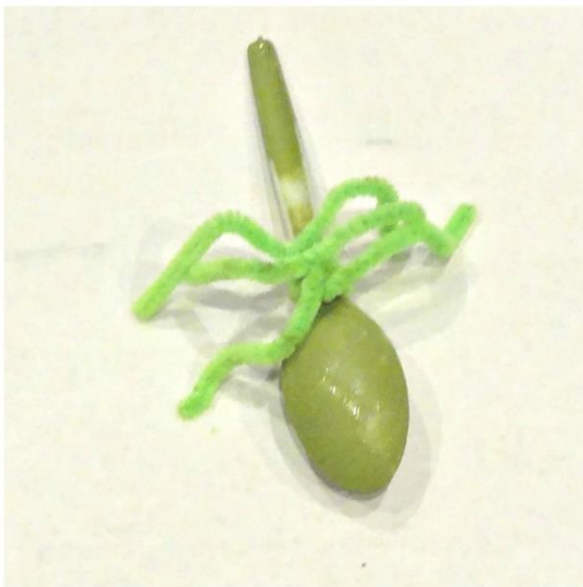
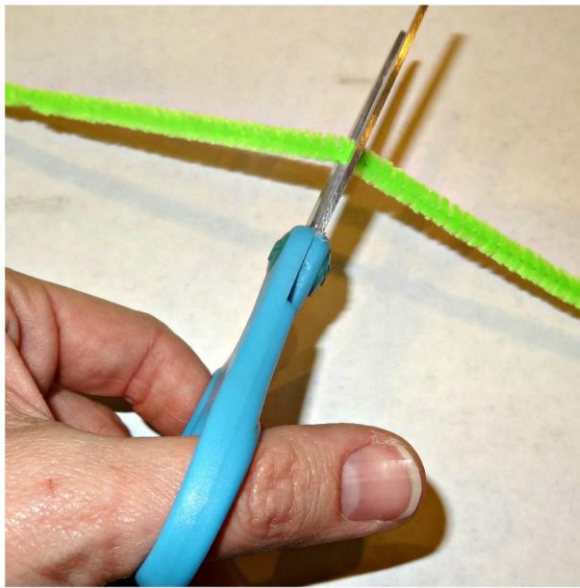
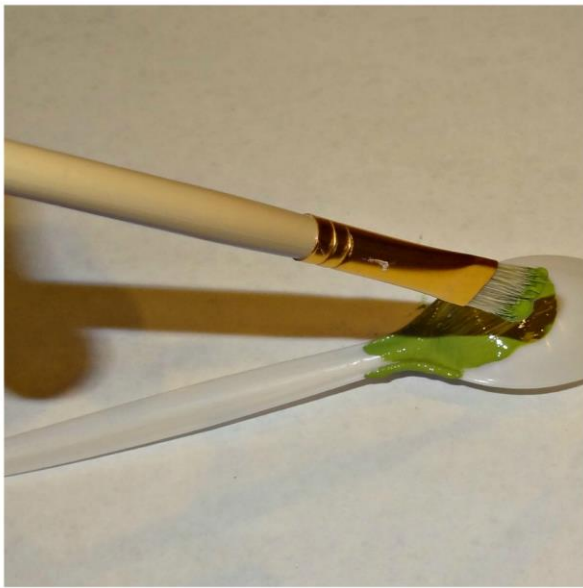
Older Guys

1. Read John 1:21 and Deuteronomy 18:15,18. Who do they think John is? Who is “The Prophet?”
2. Did John know ahead of time who he was looking for? Read John 1:29-34.
3. Read Matthew 3:8. Does John think they truly believe? Read James 2:18. Is it possible to have faith without works? By the same token, do good works save?
4. Why did Herod throw John in prison? Read Mark 6:17-18. Have you ever had to stand up to your boss or another person in charge and tell them their actions are wrong? Were you afraid? Did you back down?

Activities

1. Read Luke 3:1-3. Some people argue the gospels were written a century or so after Jesus lived. Luke is very specific in his information. It's not just giving us one person in charge or one place or time, but several. Take the time to look up these people and see how much this narrows down when this event happened.

2. Have a snack “like” John’s. Find some “graham bug bites” and dip them in honey. If you can’t find those enjoy some apple slices with honey on them.
3. Make a locust craft. You need a plastic spoon, green paint, pipe cleaners and wiggly eyes





JOHN THE BAPTIST