

GOSPEL PEARLS

## The forerunner of the Messiah

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*The time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son; and when her neighbours and relations heard that the Lord had shown her so great a kindness, they shared her joy. Now on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother spoke up. 'No,' she said 'he is to be called John.' They said to her, 'But no one in your family has that name', and made signs to his father to find out what he wanted him called. The father asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And they were all astonished. At that instant his power of speech returned and he spoke and praised God. All their neighbours were filled with awe and the whole affair was talked about throughout the hill country of Judaea. All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts. 'What will this child turn out to be?' they wondered. And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him. Meanwhile the child grew up and his spirit matured. And he lived out in the wilderness until the day he appeared openly to Israel. (Luke 1, 57-66.80)*

John the Baptist will be the forerunner of the Messiah. In this way, he fulfils Elijah's prophetic role of converting and preparing hearts for the day of the Lord. Jesus will later confirm this interpretation by saying that John is the realisation of the return of the prophet Elijah who it was thought would return to earth to announce the coming of the Messiah the people were waiting for. How much do you trust what Jesus says in the Gospel? Does God's Word make you feel involved or do you feel it is not addressed to you personally?