

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: MATTHEW 3



The baptism of Jesus marks the beginning of His road to the cross.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

Jesus was baptized - Jesus had no need of baptism because He had no sin. He humbled Himself for our sake and was baptized by John. Jesus identified with us. He walked with man, ate with man, and was baptized by a man. At first, John refused to baptize Jesus. He knew that he was the sinner, not Jesus. Jesus, however, insisted that He must be baptized to fulfill all righteousness. Paul tells us that though Jesus had no sin, God made him to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus' baptism was not for His sake but for ours.

God in the Trinity revealed Himself - Each person in the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) made His presence known at the baptism of Jesus. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches what is evident in Scripture: God is three persons with one essence. This is a concept we cannot fully understand. We know that God is one (Malachi 2:10), and yet we know that the Godhead has three persons. All three persons of the Trinity made themselves known at Jesus' baptism.

John the Baptist gave his life for truth - God called John to a ministry of truth. John's words set the stage for men to realize they needed a Savior. His ministry paved the way for Jesus. John spoke against Herod's marriage to Herodias because Herod stole his brother's wife. Though Herod was attracted to the message of John, to please Herodias he threw John in prison. Then, manipulated again by his wife, he had John beheaded.

The prophet who announced the ministry of our Savior paid the ultimate price for proclaiming the truth. John went straight to heaven rejoicing because his ministry was complete. John had introduced a greater prophet, Jesus, who would also be killed for what He proclaimed. But this prophet, the Son of God, would conquer death!

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

John called Jesus the Lamb of God. Given that Mary, Jesus' mother, was related to Elizabeth (John's mother) it is likely John had met Jesus or at least knew about Jesus growing up. John gives us a clue when he says, "I myself did not know Him." At some point when John saw Jesus, he realized that Jesus was the promised Messiah. John proclaims that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the one who will take away the sin of the world. Long before John's ministry, Abraham told his son Isaac that God Himself would provide a lamb for the sacrifice. That day, God did not allow Abraham to sacrifice his son but provided a ram. Here John tells us God has provided a sacrifice for sins--Jesus, the Lamb of God. Abraham's ram was a foreshadowing of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

By His baptism, Jesus instituted a new sacrament for believers. Our baptism is a symbol of Christ's burial in the tomb (when we go under the water) and a symbol of the resurrection (when we come up out of the water).

Paul teaches us in Romans 6:4

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Jesus identified with sinful man when He was baptized. We identify with Jesus, His death and His resurrection when we are baptized.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 11:1-5

Connecting the passage to Christ:

In an amazing display of prophetic accuracy, Isaiah tells us that the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon a descendant of David, a righteous king who will care for the poor and needy and judge the earth. No one can fit that description but Jesus.

Questions for reflection:

- Where do you see similarities to Jesus' baptism in this passage? (Isaiah 11:2 says the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him, and at Jesus' baptism the Spirit of the Lord came upon Him like a dove. Matthew 3:15 says Jesus was baptized to fulfill all righteousness. Isaiah 11:4 says that with righteousness He will judge the needy and Isaiah 11:5 says righteousness will be His belt.)
- What does Isaiah mean when he says that He will "strike the earth with the rod of His mouth"? (The rod is the implement of judgment. Just like parents give their children the rod of correction, so Jesus will one day bring judgment upon the earth.)

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.



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ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

THE TRINITY

Supplies:

- white paper,
- colored pencils
- markers

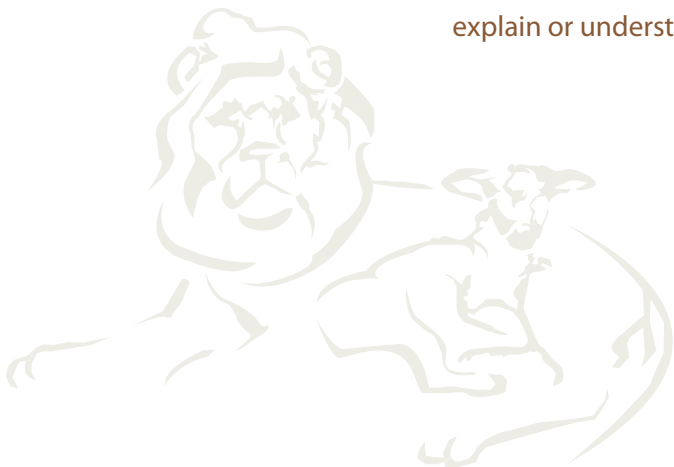
Draw a simple outline of a dove on a piece of paper. Photocopy enough for your class and either have them each cut out a dove or cut them out prior to class.

Tell the class you are going to create a symbol for the Trinity, God in three persons, from this story.

Have the children draw eyes and a beak on one side of the dove indicating the top. Then have them write the words of God the Father on the top across the wings (see Matthew 3:17). Then have them suggest something to write on the underside of the dove from the story. If they can't think of anything you can suggest they copy down John's words when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (see John 1:29).

- What word do we use to describe one God in three persons? (The Trinity.)

- Can we fully understand how God can be one and three at the same time? (No, we cannot fully understand how this is so. We have faith that God says He is one and that God shows Himself as three persons. Each person of the Trinity is fully God. Sometimes we see them together at the same time as we do here at Jesus' baptism so we know that God doesn't simply show up three different ways. There really is one God, in three distinct persons, each one fully God! That is impossible to fully explain or understand given the limits of our minds.)



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REVIEW THE STORY OF THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC (GENESIS 22:1-19)

As you retell the story keep in mind that John announced Jesus as the the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Isaac asked his father, "Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God Himself will provide the lamb." Make the connection to Jesus being our lamb and help the children bridge the gap from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

THE PROPHECIES OF JOHN

Supplies:

- white board
- markers

Have different children look up the account of Jesus' baptism in all four Gospels - Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-13, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:29-34 (divide the class equally). Have them look for ways John the Baptist prophesied about Jesus and list the references. Here are a few to make sure they see:

Jesus would be greater than John who was unfit to even touch His sandal – Matt. 3:11

Jesus was the lamb of God – John 1:29

Jesus would take away the sin of the world – John 1:29

Jesus was before John even though John was older than Jesus – John 1:30

Jesus would baptize people with His Holy Spirit – Matthew 3:11

Jesus will separate the wheat from the chaff – Matthew 3:12

Jesus will judge the wicked and burn them like chaff in a fire (hell) – Matthew 3:12

PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.



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IN CLASS PROJECT

AN ACTIVITY

Supplies:
pencil and paper

Draw a picture of Jesus' baptism illustrating the Trinity in your picture. The children may want to write the words "This is my Son" to indicate God the Father's commendation of Jesus.

FOR THE OLDER GRADES

DISSECT AN EGG

Supplies:
two hard boiled eggs

Biblical scholars have been trying to come up with a way to describe the Trinity for ages but all seem to fall short in one dimension or another. The egg illustration is one such analogy.

Leaving the shell on the egg, break the egg in half. Pass out paper and pencil to each of your students. Have them write why they think the egg is or is not a good illustration of the Trinity, one God in three persons.

(The egg is a good illustration because it has three critical parts but there is only one egg. The egg is a bad illustration because all the parts are not equally egg. If all you had was the shell and you asked someone if it was an egg, they are likely to say that the shell is only part of an egg. If however you ask someone if Jesus was God, they would not say He is only part of God. Jesus is fully God.)

Then ask them if they can think of a better way to illustrate one God in three persons.

Beware of deficiencies in their illustrations such as modalism which states that there is one God who shows Himself in three different modes. This is the ice cube illustration. Water can be liquid, solid, or gas, but only one at a time.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

The Spirit of God coming in the form of a dove is reminiscent of the Spirit's work in the creation of the world. Genesis 1:2 tells us that the Spirit of God "was hovering" over the unformed waters of the deep.

