

Unit 20 • Session 1 - Jesus' Baptism

Bible Passage: Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1

Story Point: John baptized Jesus.

Key Passage: John 3:30

Bible Study

Zechariah's son, John, grew up in the wilderness. His ministry began when God's word came to him, and he began preaching near the Jordan River. John worked to get people ready for the coming of Jesus, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy, "A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the LORD in the wilderness" (Isa. 40:3a).

John called people to repent of their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River. John also instructed people on right living. (See Luke 3:10-14.) Some of the people suspected that John might be the Messiah, but John insisted, "One who is more powerful than I am is coming" (Luke 3:16).

Before His ministry began, Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized by John at the Jordan River. But John was calling people to a baptism of repentance. Jesus never sinned (see Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21), so why did Jesus come to be baptized? John recognized this when he said, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?" (Matt. 3:14).

Commentators' ideas vary about why exactly Jesus was baptized. Perhaps He was affirming John's work. Maybe He was identifying with sinners or showing them how they would be saved—through His death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus answered John, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). Jesus completely obeyed God, and God audibly confirmed His sonship.

As you teach, allow time for preschoolers to ask questions about repentance, salvation, and baptism. Emphasize that baptism is not what saves us; baptism is a way we show that we have been saved. Baptism reminds us that when we trust in Jesus, we die to sin and come into a new way of life—a life lived for Him. (See Rom. 6:3-4.)

Welcome activity:

Invite your kids to complete the “Descending Like A ...” activity page. Kids will draw lines connecting the dots in numerical order to reveal a picture of a dove. SAY •In our story today, we will hear about a time the Spirit of God came down onto Jesus. The Bible says He came down like a dove. When do you think this happened, and why? We’ll learn more soon.

Session starter

Paper dove-planes

Provide your kids with a sheet of paper. Challenge them to make paper airplanes that will stand in for doves. The goal for each kid is to make an airplane that takes longest to “float” to the ground. SAY •Great job on those paper doves. They really looked graceful floating to the ground! Today we will hear about a time the Holy Spirit came down from heaven like a dove onto Jesus, and God the Father spoke! We’ll hear the whole story soon.

Big picture question

For the next few weeks, we’ll be looking at a big picture question that will help us better understand the stories we learn. Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father’s plan and rescue sinners. We’ll see in this story that everything Jesus did was to obey and glorify God. Jesus stepped down from His rightful place in heaven in order to live as a human and make the way for humans to live forever with God.

Tell the Bible story

Open your Bible to Matthew 3; Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1.

In those days, baptism was used as a symbol to show that you needed to be cleansed of your old sinful choices so that you could obey God better. John told people to repent, or turn away from, their sin and be baptized. John’s job was to prepare the way for Jesus. John reminded people that the Messiah would come soon. John’s preaching was getting people ready to meet Jesus and hear from Him. He knew that Jesus was the most important, and John wanted people to know that too. When Jesus showed up, John knew who He was. Jesus’ request to be baptized shocked John. Jesus had no sin to repent of. But Jesus knew baptism was part of God’s plan. Jesus obeyed God by being baptized, and Jesus’ baptism led to God’s announcement of Jesus’ identity as His Son. The Holy Spirit rested on Jesus, and God’s rescue plan entered a new phase.

Christ connection

•Jesus never sinned, but He obeyed God and was baptized like sinners are baptized. Baptism reminds us of Jesus' death and resurrection. It reminds us that when we trust in Jesus, we turn from sin and start a new life—a life lived for Jesus. Baptism also shows the world that we are part of Jesus' family. When a person has decided to love and worship Jesus as her Savior and King, she will choose to be baptized to show the world outwardly the change God has done inside her heart. Going into the water and coming back out shows a picture of Jesus' burial and resurrection. The Bible teaches us that believing in Jesus means we "die" to our old lives and are raised to life as new creations.

Bible Story Review: Jesus' Baptism

Supplies: none

Directions: Discuss and ask your kids the questions below.

1. Who was John the Baptist? (the one Isaiah prophesied about, the voice crying out in the wilderness; Matt. 3:3)
2. How did John respond at first to Jesus' request for baptism? (John tried to stop Jesus at first, Matt. 3:14)
3. What happened after Jesus was baptized? (God spoke from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove; Matt. 3:16-17)
4. Does baptism save us? Guide the kids to understand that baptism is important, but it is only a symbol of what Jesus has done for us. A person is baptized because she is saved, not in order to be saved. Suggest an analogy, such as dressing like a doctor versus being a doctor. Dressing the part can suggest you are a doctor but cannot make you a doctor if you are not one.
5. Why is baptism important? Help kids understand that God has commanded believers to be baptized, and Jesus provided an example of baptism for us to follow. We do not obey God to earn our salvation, but we want to obey Him out of love and worship. Baptism is a beautiful picture of our sinful lives dying with Jesus and our new life beginning when we are "raised" from the water. It shows the world we trust Jesus and identify with Him.
6. When should someone be baptized? Remind kids that baptism is a way to show they have trusted Christ; anyone who has not trusted Christ should not be baptized. Direct kids to continue the discussion with their parents to decide if or when they should be baptized.

Memory Verse: John 3:30

Say the key passage multiple times using the hand motions to help kids remember the passage. You may use the suggested motions below.

Suggested motions:

- He [Point up towards heaven.]
- must increase [Move hands apart.]
- I [Point to yourself with both thumbs.]
- must decrease [Move hands together.]

SAY •This key passage is short, but very important. John the Baptist spoke these words about Jesus when many people who were following John began to follow Jesus instead. John knew that his job was to point people to Jesus, not to take glory for himself. That's our job too!

Prayer & Craft:

Supplies: Styrofoam cups, Tape, Scissors, Decorative materials, Construction paper, Popsicle sticks

Directions:

1. Decorate your cup with "river waves" or a sunshine scene.
2. Add verse caption, if desired.
3. Carefully stick popsicle stick through the bottom of the cup.
4. Color a Jesus figure (pre-printed or hand-drawn) and cut out.
5. Attach the "Jesus" onto the popsicle stick.
6. Make another stick with a dove figure, or attach the dove separately.
7. Watch the dove and "Jesus" go down into the cup (water) and come from above.

Bible Story Game: Prepare the Way

Supplies: small obstacles, 1 toy car (hot wheels)

Directions: You will push a small car as hard as you can to try to get it from one side of the room to another. Place small obstacles like paper wads, cotton balls, and so forth on the track. Let kids predict how long the car will take to reach the other side of the room. Then allow a kid to remove the obstacles before sending the car down the track again.

SAY OUT LOUD: The toy car was able to make it across the room much more easily when the obstacles were removed. When we "prepared the way," it rolled better. In a similar way, John's job was to prepare people for Jesus by telling people the Messiah was coming and by preaching about repentance and God's kingdom. When Jesus obeyed God by being baptized, God proclaimed that Jesus was His Son, and the Holy Spirit rested on Jesus like a dove. The people could remember what John had said and see that Jesus was the Messiah

that God had promised long ago. When we show people love and teach them about the gospel, we are preparing the way for the Holy Spirit to change their hearts to love and worship Jesus.

Movement Mania: Baptize It! (Bop It)

Supplies: none

Directions: Say the list of moves down below in any order. This game is similar to Bop It, but instead we will be active! Have the kids go over all the moves so they know what to do. Start by saying the moves slow, then slowly speed up! If they get too tired or mess up they can sit down and wait for the next round.

Cook it! = hold a pot and stir

Hug it! = hug themselves

Touch it! = touch something

Dance it! = do a dance move

Bake it! = pretend to put something in the oven

Climb it! = pretend to climb

Baptize it! = have them fall on the floor and stand back up