

Bible Story:

Jesus' Baptism • Matthew 3 (Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1)

Memory Verse:

"He must become greater; I must become less." John 3:30

Big Picture:

Why did Jesus become human?

Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.

FOR PARENTS ONLY: 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 kids 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.)

Bible Story: Jesus' Baptism • Matthew 3 (also found in Mark 1; Luke 3; John 1)

Matthew 3 - John the Baptist Prepares the Way

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea ² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." ³ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

⁴ John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵ People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. ⁶ Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹ And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ "I baptize you with  water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with  the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented. ¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Discuss:

John’s job was to get people ready for Jesus. He told people that Jesus was coming, and he told them to repent and be baptized.

- Can anyone tell me what it means to repent? (*to be sorry for your sin, to turn away from your sin, and to turn toward God*)

John baptized people in the Jordan River as a picture that their sins had been washed away. While John was baptizing people, Jesus came to the river. Jesus told John that He wanted to be baptized. John was confused. He had been baptizing people who confessed their sins. But Jesus never sinned.

- What did Jesus tell John next? Look at Matthew 3:15. [*Allow kids to read the verse and respond.*] Jesus said it was the right thing to do, so John baptized Jesus. Jesus wasn’t baptized as a sign of repentance but as a way of fully obeying the Father. **Jesus obeyed God by being baptized.** Let’s say our big picture question and answer together: ***Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father’s plan and rescue sinners.***

When Jesus came out of the water, the heavens opened and God’s Spirit came down like a dove. Think about the sound of water dripping off of Jesus’ body. Then a voice came from heaven.

- What did the voice say? Look at Matthew 3:17. [*Allow kids to read the verse and respond.*]

Christ Connection

“Jesus never sinned, but He obeyed God and was baptized like sinners are baptized. Baptism reminds us of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Jesus died on the cross for our sin. After three days, God raised Him from the dead. Baptism reminds us of Jesus and what He did to save people from sin. When we trust in Jesus, we turn from sin and start a new life—a life lived for Jesus.”

Questions from Kids, Bible Story Video

Show the **Questions from Kids** video (link on email) to the kids. You will also show the **Bible Story Video**. Prompt kids to think about why people are baptized. Guide them to discuss a time they saw a baptism or share any questions they have about baptism.

Missions Moment

It’s time to learn about an exciting missions organization called Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF). Some villages are hard to reach by car and would take days to hike to on foot; however, missionary pilots can fly small airplanes into these villages. We know that **Jesus obeyed God by being baptized**. Many people have heard about Jesus, have trusted in Him, and were baptized because of the work of MAF. Play the “Introduction to MAF” missions video. Then pray, thanking God for missionary pilots and their work in spreading the gospel.

Prayer

“Lord God, we don’t have to clean ourselves up before we come to You. Thank You for the blessing of baptism and the reminder of death to sin and new life in Christ. May You receive glory. Amen.”

Craft

Cut out dove. Punch hole between the 2 wings. Cut out verse and glue onto dove. Tie a length of yarn through hole. **Optional:** glue glitter onto the dove. Hang where it will remind you that even though Jesus had no sin, He was acting in obedience when He was baptized.



“...at that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.”
Matthew 3:16b - 17