Baptism of Jesus



Scripture Reference: Matthew 3:13-17

Suggested Theme: God was pleased with His Son's choice to follow Him, and He is pleased when we do too. Follow God.

Memory Verse: "And a voice spoke from heaven. The voice said, 'This is my Son and I love him. I am very pleased with him.'" Matthew 3:17, ICB

Story Overview:

At the age of thirty, Jesus was baptised in the Jordan River by His cousin, John the Baptist. Jesus was not baptised because He needed to repent of wrong but because He wanted to do everything that was right. He "fulfilled all righteousness." His heavenly Father was "well pleased."

Background Study:

The baptism of Jesus marked the official beginning of His ministry. This is the time Jesus publicly showed His choice to follow God's will. Until this time, he most probably lived in Nazareth, working as a carpenter like Joseph. Jesus probably walked about 70 miles from Nazareth to the Jordan River near Jericho. He must have known it was important to be baptised.

John was not sure that Jesus was the Messiah, but he knew it would be more fitting for Jesus to baptise him (Luke 3:3). John and Jesus probably were personally acquainted, though they lived far apart. Their mothers were related (Luke 1:36), and they may have seen each other when they went to Jerusalem for the Passover and other feasts. John's parents may have told him about the miraculous birth of Jesus.

Jesus did not need to repent and be forgiven because He had never done anything wrong. But He wanted to do everything right. When Jesus explained this, John baptised Him. Some of the reasons for His baptism were:

- It showed that He fulfilled all the requirements of the Messiah.
- At the baptism, He was officially announced as the Messiah.
- Jesus completely identified Himself with man's shortcomings (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- His baptism was an example to His followers.

John had baptised many people but had never seen anything like this before! There was an opening in the sky, and the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, came down to rest on Jesus. We do not know what the Spirit looked like or how the people knew it was the Spirit. Did it look like a dove or descend like one? Perhaps the Spirit took a body like a dove so that John and Jesus could see Him. When John saw Him, he knew that Jesus

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was the Christ the King John had been telling the people about (John 1:32-33). The Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all revealed together on this occasion.

The coming of the Holy Spirit would have been enough to let John know that Jesus was Christ, the King, but God added His statement, too. He declared that Jesus was His son and that He was well pleased with His son (Matthew 3:17). God had been pleased with Jesus before, but now He was especially pleased because Jesus wanted to do everything that was right. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness.

Way to Introduce the Story:

What makes your parents happy? When you obey your parents or do good things, are they happy? Think of a time when you made your parents happy. (Share something from your own life and then allow the children to share.) In today's bible story, we are going to learn about a time when God was very happy because of something His Son, Jesus, did.

The Story:

God sent Jesus to earth to do a very special work with His life. As He grew up, Jesus waited patiently until the right time to begin God's special work.

Jesus was the Son of God, but He was also a human being living on this earth. He learned all the things that a human being needs to know. Jesus grew up in the town of Nazareth. His mother was Mary, and Mary's husband was Joseph.

Joseph treated Jesus like he was his own son. Joseph was a carpenter, and he taught Jesus how to do carpentry work.

Finally, when Jesus was thirty years old, the time came to do God's special work. Jesus left His hometown of Nazareth to begin His preaching ministry.

Jesus first went to the Jordan River, where His cousin, John, was preaching. Jesus knew that John was telling people that they needed to repent of their sins. They needed to have soft hearts towards God. Many people were being baptised.

John the Baptist was baptising people because they were sorry for bad things they had done. John was so surprised when JESUS came to him and wanted to be baptised. How could this be? Jesus had never done bad things. Why should He be baptised? John said to Jesus, "I should not baptise You. You should baptise me instead!"

But Jesus insisted that John baptise Him. He explained to John that obeying God is not just about stopping the bad things in your life. Obeying God is also about doing what is right. Being baptised was the right thing, and Jesus wanted everyone to know that He chose to do everything right and follow God.

So John took Jesus down into the Jordan River and baptised him. He put Jesus all the way under the water and then pulled Him back up again.

John had baptised many people, but this time, something was very different. Something very special happened after Jesus was baptised. The clouds began to move apart, and the sky opened up. The Holy Spirit came down out of heaven like a beautiful dove and landed on Jesus. The voice of God also came from heaven. God said, "This is my Son and I love Him. I am very pleased with Him."

Now John knew for sure that Jesus was the Son of God, the Messiah, who came to save the world. Jesus was the King of the Jews. God loved the world so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to the earth.

Jesus made God very happy that day because He chose to do the right thing. Do you choose to do the right thing? What things do you do to make God happy? (Let children answer.)

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using various methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible, but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Click here for visual aids and more storytelling methods.

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Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story. Reflection questions encourage them to internalise the meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child's spiritual development and help them connect to God. Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.

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Review:

- Why was John baptising people? (He was preparing the people to be ready for Jesus and His message for everyone)
- Why did John say Jesus should baptise him? (He knew that Jesus was greater than he and that Jesus hadn't sinned)
- Who baptized Jesus? (John the Baptist)
- Where was Jesus baptized? (The Jordan River)
- Why was Jesus baptized? (To do what was right)
- What symbol showed that God was pleased with Jesus and His choice to be baptised? (God's Spirit coming down from heaven like a dove)
- What did God say when Jesus was baptised? (This is my son, with whom I am well pleased)
- What did John learn from this event? What did he learn about God?
- What do you learn about God from this story?
- What do you learn about Jesus from this story? What do you learn about the Holy Spirit?

Reflection:

- What is something you wonder about in this story?
- What do you think the Jordan River looked or sounded like? Do you think it was cold or warm water?
- What do you think the Spirit of God looked like when it came like a dove to Jesus?
- What do you think God's voice sounded like?
- How do you think Jesus felt when he heard God's voice?
- How do you think John and all the people felt when they heard God's voice? How did they feel?

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- If you were John, would you have baptised Jesus or refused?
- Jesus was God's son, and God was so pleased with Jesus. What kind of things please God?
- When you obey your parents or teachers, how do you feel?
- It is wonderful to please God. We can show God we love Him by obeying Him. How can you show God you love Him?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. A variety of prayer methods are found here.

Song Suggestions:

- Deep and Wide Song
- I am a C-H-R-I-S-T-I-A-N (Song)
- He's Still Working on Me Song
- Goodbye World Song
- J-E-S-U-S Song
- Some children I reached helped make up verses to the following song sung to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It":
  *If you love God and you know it *don't tell lies.*
  *If you love God and you know it *don't tell lies.*
  If you love God and you know it, then your life will surely show it.
  *If you love God and you know it *don't tell lies.*
  **other verses could be things like "obey your parents," "never steal" or "say kind words."*
- Refer to the Song Page on this website for more song options.

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Activities and Crafts:

- How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation.
- Visit the activities and songs pages for additional activities and crafts.

Activities:

- Use interactive drawing to tell the story. You don't have to be an artist! The children are usually happy to help you draw. The Baptism of Jesus- Interactive Drawing Instructions
- Before children gather, write situations on individual cards. Children can take turns reading the situations out loud. Use a coin toss or roll of dice to decide if a right or wrong choice should be made in that situation. "Heads" is the right choice, and "tails" is the wrong one. The group can then decide the consequences of making the choice to do wrong. Example situations could be:

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- My brother gets to go to the movies, but I don't.
- The child tosses the coin and it is "tails" so the child might decide that the thing to do in that situation would be to cry and whine to their mother.

- This is a good story to tell while sitting beside a river.
- Use a bible atlas to find the probable location of Jesus' baptism.
- Have older children look up the word "baptism" in a number of good bible dictionaries. Discuss that baptism means to dip or immerse and not simply sprinkle.
- Before the day you teach, contact each parent and ask them to share something they are proud of their son or daughter for. Then, when the children are gathered and after you have talked about *Matthew 3:17* , tell the children that their parents are proud of them like God was proud of His son. One by one, share what each parent has written. Start each with, "*Child's Name*, you are my son (or daughter) and I love you. I am so proud of you because..." Note: I did this with 5-8-year-old children, and these words of affirmation so touched them.

Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable "God's Story" printable reflection page. Free printables for this story.

Crafts:

- Guide the children in reading today's scripture references. Then, have them draw about what they have read. Use a blank piece of paper or print this worksheet: The Baptism of Jesus-Responsive Drawing.
- Guide the children in reading today's scripture references. Then, have them draw about what they have read. Use a blank piece of paper or print this worksheet: The Baptism of Jesus_Responsive Writing.
- Make a dove craft. Christmas craft books are a good place to look for ideas.

Print and use these free bookmarks, trading cards or timelines. Free printables for this story.

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Other Online Resources:

- Colouring page with text (Ministry Spark)
- Colouring page (Christian answers)
- Craft: Use a paper cup to show Jesus being baptised. Adapted from the story of Naaman (Bible school teachers)
- Printable Bookmarks. Enter your own personal text and then print them (Activities for kids)

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Date
2026/11/02

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