

THE WORD BECAME FLESH



CREATION AND THE BEGINNING OF HUMAN HISTORY

#07 - John the Baptist and Jesus Luke 3:1-23

PICTURES (Note: Inserted in brackets at the appropriate place in the lesson is the number of the picture to show the students.)

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| 7-1 | John the Baptist speaking to the people | 7-3 | Jesus' baptism |
| 7-2 | Process of winnowing | 7-4 | Trinity-Sunlight chart (included) |

REVIEW (Before teaching lesson)

- **Journal Review:** Ask students to share an important truth that they learned from their journal readings at home that week. Share some of your own insights.
- **Previous Lesson Review:** (Use the visual from the last lesson to aid in review) Where did Jesus' parents go every year? Why did they go there? What happened when they were going home? Where did they find Jesus? What was he doing there?
- **Big Question Review:** How do we grow to be like Jesus?
Let the students give their answers to the question.
- **Bible Verse Review:** Hebrews 12:1b-2a We are to fix our eyes on Jesus.

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ² Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

LESSON CONTENT

Note: The Bible verses included in the lesson are from the NIV 1984 edition. The wording of the questions is derived from that version. If another version of the Bible is used, questions may need to be adapted.

This lesson covers the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. What is baptism? Baptism is when a person who has put his faith in Jesus is submerged down into water and then raised up again.

What is the meaning of baptism? For Christians it is a sacramental rite symbolizing faith in Jesus and purification from sin. Going down into the water represents dying to the old self through the death of Christ and coming up out of the water represents coming alive to a new self through the resurrection of Christ.

John the Baptist publically baptized people as a demonstration of their desire to repent (turn away) from their sin. All the gospels relate John baptizing Jesus and the gospel of Mark even begins with it rather than the birth of Jesus. Jesus' baptism was a powerful revelation of who he is and marks the beginning of his ministry when he was about thirty years old.

Luke 3:1-6

¹In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar--when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene-- ²during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.

³He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

"A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. ⁵Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. ⁶And all mankind will see God's salvation.' "

Why did Luke record who were the rulers during the time John was baptizing? Luke is placing what happened in an historical time period and context. He wants to show that Jesus was a real person, who existed in a real time and place.

What was John preaching? A baptism of repentance **(picture 7-1)**

What is repentance? Repentance is a turning away from sin and a turning to God and what is right and true.

What is meant by a baptism of repentance? It is a public demonstration of the desire to turn from sin and turn to God.

How does what John did relate to Isaiah's words, "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'?" He was calling people to see their sin and turn from it. In seeing their sin they would recognize their need for the coming savior. He was preparing people's hearts for Jesus.

Luke 3:7-9

⁷John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ⁹The 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."

What derogatory term did John call the people coming out to be baptized by him? Brood of vipers. What is a brood of vipers? Den of poisonous snakes

What did he mean by calling the people that that? They were evil. They caused harm to others but they thought they were okay.

What did John tell them to do? He told them to do what is right, produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

What did he mean by that? We haven't really repented unless our actions demonstrate a change in our lives. If our faith really is in Christ, we will obey him and do what is right.

Who are the children of Abraham? The Jewish people. The people Jesus was born into. Abraham was the man God chose to be the father of his people Israel, the Hebrews.

What is special about the Jews? They are God's chosen people through whom he has revealed himself to the world. God's law came through Moses; salvation comes through Jesus. God chose and blessed Abraham and his descendants to be a blessing to the world.

What was John saying about the Jews? Being children of Abraham (Jews) wasn't enough to save them. They have to show their belief in God through repentance and right actions.

Luke 3:10-14

¹⁰"What should we do then?" the crowd asked.

¹¹John answered, "The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same."

¹²Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"

¹³"Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.

¹⁴Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?"

He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely--be content with your pay."

What is the good fruit John was telling people to produce? To do what is right in all circumstances: share with others out of what you have, don't take things from others, don't accuse people falsely, be content with what you have.

What does good fruit have to come from? A changed, repentant heart

What happens if a person tries to produce good fruit without a change of heart? It isn't real. They will have a hidden agenda. They will be hypocrites, appearing to be good but not really being good. They will continue to be vipers.

Luke 3:15-20

¹⁵The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ. ¹⁶John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the things of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." ¹⁸And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.

¹⁹But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, ²⁰Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

What was the difference between John's baptism and that of Christ? Water symbolized repentance and the desire to be cleansed from sin. The Holy Spirit and fire are what give one the power to change.

What does verse 17 mean? (Reread the verse and use the visual to explain.) **(picture 7-2)** A winnowing fork is used to throw the grain and the chaff into the air. The grain is heavy and falls back to the ground, while the chaff is light and is blown away. The grain (righteous people) is saved but the chaff (unrepentant people) will be burned up and destroyed.

How does Jesus winnow people? Christ separates those who are submitted to God and under his authority from those who aren't. The response of people to the message of the Gospel shows what is really in their hearts.

What did Herod do to John? He threw him into prison for speaking the truth about the evil things he was doing.

Why would Herod lock John in prison for speaking the truth? When confronted with (shown) their own evil most people want to deny or cover it up rather than repent from it. People will do whatever it takes to silence a person who is pointing out their sin. They love darkness rather than light. They don't want to be made clean. They want to do what they want to do rather than what God wants

Luke 3:21-23

²¹When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²²and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

²³Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.

What happened as Jesus was being baptized? The Holy Spirit came down in the visual form of a dove. The Father spoke from heaven. **(picture 7-3)**

What did God mean when he said, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."? God the Father was acknowledging his special relationship with Jesus and that as a man Jesus was fulfilling completely the purpose for which he came.

Would the Father ever say that about us? Yes, if we put our faith in Jesus, follow him and do what is right. He would see us as he sees his own Son. No, if we go our own way apart from Jesus.

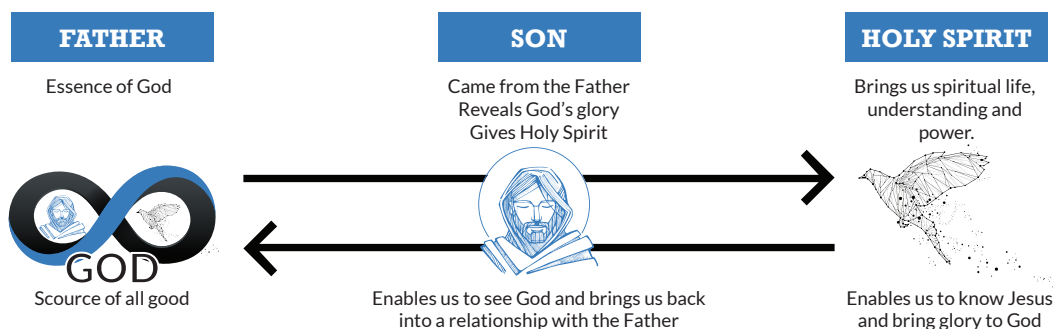
Why was this incident so important? This is a picture of the triune nature of God, there is only one God who exists in three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is referred to as the Trinity.

How one thing can be three separate entities can be demonstrated by looking at a book. (Hold up a book.) How many books are there? Just one How many dimensions are there to a book? 3 – Height, width, depth. What would happen if any of the dimensions were taken away from the book? There would be nothing left of the book. The dimensions are separate aspects of the book that together make up the one book. The one book can't exist if there aren't three dimensions.

What did Jesus' baptism mark? It marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the work he actually came to do.

EXTRA MATERIAL – The Doctrine of the Trinity

- The Father is the one we think of when we refer generally to God. In the Bible the Father is said to dwell on high and oversee his creation.
- The Son (Jesus) is God in the flesh. Jesus came to earth as a man in physical form to reveal the truth about the nature of God and make a way for men to come back into a right relationship with him by dying on the cross. The Son Jesus is the means by which a person comes to the Father (God).
- The Holy Spirit is God's presence with people personally here on earth when they put their faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to live rightly with God. He dwells within us to give us both understanding of Jesus and the truth and conviction of sin.



LESSON WRAP-UP

- **Overview Questions:** What did John the Baptist do? What did John call the people to do? What did John say about Jesus? What happened when Jesus was baptized?
- **Thought Questions:** What was John like? What was important about his preaching? What is the significance of Jesus' baptism?
- **Prayer:** Thank God for the boldness of John in proclaiming the truth about who we are. Thank God that he sent his Son to save us from our sin and empower us to live a life in keeping with repentance. Thank God that all the events surrounding Jesus testify to who he is and that you can put your faith in him.
- **The Big Question:** What happened when Jesus was baptized? Let the students give their answers to the question. Share the memory verse. Ask how it answers the question.
- **Memory Verse: Luke 3:21b-22**
When Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came down and the Father said he was well pleased with his Son.
And as he was praying, heaven was opened²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Questions: How is the triune nature of God (the Trinity) revealed in this verse? What did the Father say about his Son? What does that mean?

ACTIVITIES

Any age appropriate activity can be included which fits into the class time. The activities with a star are included on the class notes.

- ★ **Lesson Notes:** Ask the students to summarize in one sentence what the lesson was about. Then have them give three main points covered in the lesson. An example is below.

Theme: John was baptizing people and calling them to repentance when Jesus came to be baptized by him.

1. John called the people who came to him "a brood of vipers" and told them to produce good fruit in keeping with repentance.
2. John told people that he wasn't the Christ, but that the Christ would come after him and was greater than he was.
3. When John baptized Jesus heaven opened up, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus in the form of a dove, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son whom I love and with whom I am well pleased."

Why do I need to know this? Both people and events testify that Jesus was no ordinary person and we can believe in the reality of who he is. Demonstration of who Jesus is in terms of the Trinity.

★ **Memory Verse:** Read the memory verse on the cover of the booklet and then have the students fill in the blanks in the verse in the inside.

★ **Activity Page:** Repentance Acrostic poem

Instructions: Use the letters from repentance to write an acrostic poem of the good fruit that should be produced when we repent, the way we treat and interact with other people.

Example:

R – respect

E – encourage

P – protect

E – edify

N – nourish

T – take care of

A – accept

N – notice

C – compassion towards

E – elevate

★ **Further Understanding:** Investigation/Reasoning Skills

Instructions:

1. Read the whole passage below to the students as they read along in their Bibles or on the discussion notes.
2. Read the passage verse by verse and have the students explain each verse.
3. Have the students extract one important truth from the passage. This can be done as an entire class or you can break into pairs or small groups.
4. Have the students answer the additional two questions: How can you apply this truth in your life? What will be the result of applying that truth?

What does Jesus say about the Father and the Spirit? John 14:15-21

¹⁵ "If you love me, you will obey what I command. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

This would be a good point to share the sun illustration of the trinity if it was not included with the lesson.

JOURNAL

The daily journal inside the booklet has six readings that relate to a theme. It would be beneficial for the teacher to work through the journal readings also.

Journal Focus: What is the meaning of baptism?

Reading 1: Mark 1:1-8 Jesus baptizes us with the Holy Spirit

What is the difference between the baptism of John and that of Jesus? What does water baptism do for us? What does being baptized by the Holy Spirit do for us?

Reading 2: Romans 6:1-7 We are baptized into Christ's death and raised to life through his resurrection.

From this passage explain the symbolism involved in the act of baptism. What is the result of having died with Christ?

Reading 3: 1 Peter 3:18-22 Jesus was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

Why did Christ die? What does the water of baptism symbolize?

Reading 4: Galatians 3:26-4:7 When we are baptized we clothe ourselves with Christ.

What does it mean to be baptized into Christ? What does it mean to clothe yourself with Christ? What is the result of belonging to Christ?

Reading 5: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 We are baptized into Christ.

What did Paul want for the Corinthian church? What was the problem they were having? What happens when we follow men instead of Jesus?

Reading 6: Mark 10:35-44 We are baptized with Christ's baptism.

What is the baptism Jesus is referring to in this passage? How are all Christians called to that baptism?