

Lesson Overview

Biblical Passages	Matthew 3:13-17, John 1:29-34
Supporting Passages	Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22
Memory Verse	Acts 2:41
Table Talk Question	What is the purpose of baptism?
Biblical Truth	In obedience to God and His calling, Jesus submitted to baptism, even though He was without sin.
Context	The account of Jesus' baptism is recorded near the beginning of all four Gospels. Jesus' baptism was an appropriate beginning to His ministry. His entire ministry pointed to His fulfillment as the Messiah. His baptism, and God's response, emphasized that Jesus was God's Son even before He began His ministry. All four Gospels record how John was used by God to proclaim the coming of the Messiah prior to Jesus' baptism.
Learning Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will consider why Jesus chose to be baptized. • Students will identify why it is important for believers to be baptized.
Prayer Suggestions	<p>As you prepare to teach this lesson, pray for those in your group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray that students will understand why Jesus chose to be baptized even though He was without sin. • Pray that students will understand that baptism publicly expresses their desire to follow Christ. • Pray that God will lead students to pursue a life of connection to His church, His purpose, and His mission.

Biblical Commentary

Investigation

At the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus came to John to be baptized. Although John initially hesitated because he felt unworthy, he eventually baptized Jesus. When Jesus came out of the water, the Holy Spirit came down on Him in the form of a dove. God's voice proclaimed that He was well pleased with His Son. As a result, John testified that Jesus is the Son of God who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Importance

This passage of Scripture is important because it reveals that **Jesus is God and Savior**. God's response after Jesus' baptism clearly shows the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Jesus' baptism was a righteous act of obedience to His Father. Believers' baptism at its core involves following Jesus' example.

This passage also affirms that **Salvation is by Faith Alone** by demonstrating the biblical meaning of baptism as an important picture of salvation.

Interpretation

Matthew 3:13 Until He was about thirty years old, Jesus lived in the town of Nazareth, located in the northern region of Palestine known as Galilee. Jesus traveled south to the region of Judea to where John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing. Others came to hear John, repent of their sins, and be baptized. However, Jesus came specifically "to be baptized" by John.

Matthew 3:14 John had already recognized Jesus as Messiah. Because of that, he tried to convince Jesus that He had no need to be baptized. John claimed that he was the one who needed to be baptized by Jesus. Perhaps John was referring to the Spirit baptism Jesus would begin. John demonstrated humility but also recognized that his baptism was intended for those who had repented (Mt. 3:11). To repent, one must first sin. Jesus never sinned; therefore, from John's perspective, Jesus had no need to be baptized.

Matthew 3:15 The baptism of Jesus was necessary "to fulfill all righteousness," or to complete what God wanted done. Jesus' baptism by John was important for several reasons:

1. Jesus was baptized to validate John's mission. Jesus identified Himself with John, the forerunner of the Messiah.
2. Jesus was baptized to identify with humanity. Though He was sinless, Jesus came to be the substitute for sinful humanity and to open the way for people to be right with God.
3. Jesus was baptized to symbolize what He had come to earth to do: to die, be buried, and be raised back to

life. This is what Jesus does for those who accept Him: He puts to death and buries the old way of life and brings about a new life. Water baptism symbolizes this amazing truth.

4. Jesus was baptized to officially launch His ministry. The confirmation of this launch is seen in the events that occurred immediately following His baptism. John apparently understood Jesus' statement and proceeded to baptize Jesus.

Matthew 3:16 The moment Jesus came up from the water the heavens opened. God's Spirit descended on Jesus "like a dove" and rested on Him. This anointing by God's Spirit signified the beginning of His ministry and revealed Him to be the Messiah, which means "anointed one."

Matthew 3:17 God the Father spoke from heaven when the Spirit descended upon His Son. Note the presence of the Trinity at this time. This declaration from heaven echoes both Isaiah 42:1 and Psalm 2:7, two passages that refer to the Messiah. God was not just pleased with Jesus at this one moment, for He has always been "well pleased" with Him. This action was God's confirmation of His Son's identity as the Messiah as well as the initiation of Jesus' mission on earth.

John 1:29 In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), John the Baptist's message focused on preparing the way for the Lord—preaching about every person's need for repentance. Yet John's Gospel presents John the Baptist more so as a witness to the Messiah. John identified Jesus as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Because the Gospels are not entirely chronological accounts of Christ's ministry, scholars disagree about when John made this statement about Jesus. Many believe John's witness about Jesus came during a three-day period after Jesus' 40 days of temptation in the wilderness. If so, "the next day" would refer to the day after John denied being the Christ (Jn. 1:19–23).

When John proclaimed that Jesus was the "Lamb of God," he was referring to a sacrificial lamb as part of the Old Testament's sacrificial system. The Jews knew the process of forgiveness for sins. Sacrificing an unblemished lamb as an offering to God was part of receiving forgiveness. The prophet Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would be like a lamb "led . . . to the slaughter" (Is. 53:7). The Messiah would be "pierced for our transgressions . . . crushed for our iniquities" and punished so we could experience peace and healing (Is. 53:5). While the people did not expect the Messiah to suffer and die, apparently John understood the sacrificial nature of Jesus' mission as the suffering Messiah.

Jesus would take away sin through His suffering and death on the cross. That sin was the rebellious nature first seen in Adam. Every person since Adam has inherited that nature from him as members of the human race. All people still sin, but believers in Christ are set free from the strength and guilt of sin; it no longer has mastery over humanity (Rom. 6:14).

Note the scope of Jesus' ministry: He would take away the sin of "the world." The Jews were expecting a Messiah who would restore the nation of Israel to a place of authority over all the other nations. Jesus' mission, however, was to all people in the world. He would take away the penalty of their sins and restore their relationships with God.

John 1:30 John the Baptist had spoken about the Messiah as coming after and surpassing him (Jn. 1:15). The word *surpassed* means "in front of" and refers to a higher position of greater importance. The Messiah would come after John; that is, He would appear in public sometime after John had done so. However, He was in fact before John. As the Creator of the world, He has always existed, having been with God in the beginning (Jn.1:2).

John 1:31 John's statement makes it seem as if he did not know Jesus. This is unlikely since they were relatives, and the events surrounding their births must have been well known to both of their families. Most likely John was proclaiming that prior to baptizing Jesus he did not know that Jesus was the One of greater importance for whom he would make preparations.

Even though John did not know the identity of the Messiah nor the time the Messiah would appear, he was faithful to do what God had called him to do. He preached and baptized until the Messiah was revealed to Israel.

John 1:32-33 John the Baptist went on to testify about what he had observed when he baptized Jesus. John actually saw God's Spirit in the form of a dove descending from heaven and resting on Jesus. This was in accordance with what God promised him: He would see the Holy Spirit come down and remain on someone as a sign from God that this person was the Messiah.

John the Baptist emphasized that God had called him to baptize with water, but God would send another to "baptize with the Holy Spirit." Water baptism involves an external action; Spirit baptism involves an internal action that is the work of God alone.

Being baptized with the Spirit refers to a transforming encounter with God's Spirit. In that encounter, God does away with a person's old nature and gives birth to a new nature in his or her heart. Since the Holy Spirit comes into a believer's life at conversion, this baptism refers to the new presence and power of the Spirit.

John 1:34 At this point there was no question in John the Baptist's mind regarding the identity of Jesus. John had seen the promised sign with his own eyes. Thus he gave testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ is indeed God's Son.

Implications

As Jesus prepared to begin His public ministry, He approached John the Baptist for baptism. When John the Baptist protested his unworthiness to baptize Jesus, Jesus convinced him to perform the baptism to "fulfill all righteousness." God used this momentous occasion to publicly reveal that Jesus was His only beloved Son. As the Holy Spirit descended and remained on Jesus, John witnessed the fulfillment of God's revelation that the Spirit would descend and remain on the One who would baptize others with the Holy Spirit. With the assurance of His Father's love and the presence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus defeated Satan's temptations in the wilderness and began His public ministry. John the Baptist, as well as the others who observed His baptism, repeatedly told others that Jesus was the Son of God.

Because this event is recorded in Scripture, believers today can also boldly proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God. And just like John the Baptist and the others who observed this event, believers can choose to live their lives in ways that reveal to others that Jesus is God's Son, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world, and the One who baptizes His followers with the Holy Spirit. As you teach this lesson, encourage students to consider how the assurance of God's love enabled Jesus to fulfill His mission on earth. Then, encourage students to consider how the assurance of God's love for them will enable them to fulfill His ultimate purpose in their lives—to glorify Him and to lead others to recognize Jesus as His Son.

Teaching Plan

Connect

Review Questions

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will answer five review questions from the previous lesson.

Print one copy of the "Review Questions" activity sheet for your use.

After greeting students, use the review questions to test what they can recall from the previous lesson as well as to provide the context for today's lesson.

Master Teacher Option: Symbols of Identity

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss their favorite brand logos.

Provide paper, markers, and tape.

Divide students into six groups, distributing a piece of paper and a marker to each group. Assign each group one of the following brands: *Nike, Apple, Mercedes, Target, AT&T, and Facebook*. Instruct groups to draw the symbol or trademark representing their specific brands. Then, give a piece of tape to each group and direct them to hang their symbols around the walls of the room.

After all the symbols have been hung on the walls, instruct students to find a symbol that they want to identify with and to stand by that symbol. Ask: **Why do you want to identify with this symbol?** After students share their reasons, conclude by explaining that today students will look at baptism as a symbol of identity for Christians.

Explore

Master Teacher Key Study: His Baptism

(15-20 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will study Matthew 3:13-17 and John 1:29-34 to determine why Jesus chose to be baptized.

Print a copy of the Master Teacher Key Study for your use. Provide a copy of the Student Worksheet and a pen for each student.

Learning Goal: Students will consider why Jesus chose to be baptized.

Pass out pens and copies of the Student Worksheet. Then, use the Master Teacher Key Study to teach Matthew 3:13-17 and John 1:29-34.

Transform

Deeper Discussion

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss the importance of following Jesus' example in baptism.

Learning Goal: Students will identify why it is important for believers to be baptized.

Use the following questions to lead students in a discussion of the importance of following Jesus' example in baptism:

- **In your own words, what does it mean to be identified with Jesus?**
- **How is baptism a witness of the gospel to others?**
- **What statement do we make when we are baptized?**
- **How important is baptism in the life of a Christ-follower? Why is it that important?**

After discussion, point out that baptism is an act that allows us to confirm the decision we have made to turn away from the sins in our lives while we simultaneously turn to Jesus, trusting Him for salvation and a new life as one of His followers. Emphasize that baptism doesn't save us, but instead allows us to publicly declare that Jesus has saved us from death and given us eternal life. Close by praying that students who have professed their faith in Christ will follow Him in baptism and in living a life that continually reveals His presence in their lives.

Master Teacher Option: May I See Your ID, Please?

(10 minutes, easy set-up)

Students will discuss the importance of baptism in the life of a believer.

Create presentation slides with each of the questions provided below, one question per slide.

Learning Goal: Students will identify why it is important for believers to be baptized.

Divide students into groups of two to three. Instruct groups to pull out as many forms of identification as they can find. Invite each group to share each type of identification. *(Examples might include a driver's license or state ID, insurance cards, school ID cards, frequent buyer cards, and Social Security cards.)*

Discuss: **Why do we carry so many different types of identification with us at all times? What does each form of ID say about us and what is important to us?**

Say: **Today's lesson portrayed baptism as a form of identification—as a way to identify publicly**

with Christ and His church. Lead groups to discuss these questions by working through the presentation slides:

- **Why do you think Jesus set the example of baptism?**
- **What role does baptism play in the lives of believers today?**
- **How does the fact that you've been baptized in the past impact what you do today and tomorrow?**

After discussion, point out that deciding to identify with Christ--to accept Him as Lord and Savior--is the most important decision we will ever make in our lives. Conclude by praying that students will be open to looking at how they identify with Christ.

Take Home Activity

Family Devotion

(10-15 minutes at home, easy set-up)

Distribute copies of the Family Devotion to students and encourage them to share the devotion with their family.

A copy of the Family Devotion will be included in your lesson PDF download.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

(5-8 minutes, easy set-up)

Use these questions to review the content from Lesson 6: "John the Baptist's Message"
The correct answer for each question is printed in bold, italic font.

1. What was John the Baptist's main role?
 - a. ***He prepared the way for Jesus.***
 - b. He helped Jesus recruit disciples.
 - c. He criticized the Pharisees.
 - d. He baptized believers with the Spirit.
2. What was the main focus of John the Baptist's message?
 - a. "Honor your father and mother."
 - b. "Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God."
 - c. ***"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."***
 - d. "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."
3. What was unique about John the Baptist's appearance and diet?
 - a. He was cloaked in white and ate choice fruits.
 - b. ***He wore camel hair and ate locusts and wild honey.***
 - c. He was filthy and ate from the scraps of Herod's table.
 - d. He wore a tattered cloak and never had to eat.
4. In what river did John the Baptist baptize people?
 - a. Tigris
 - b. Euphrates
 - c. Nile
 - d. ***Jordan***
5. What did John the Baptist call the Pharisees?
 - a. ***a brood of vipers***
 - b. a den of lions
 - c. a gaggle of geese
 - d. a pack of vicious dogs

LESSON 7

HIS BAPTISM

Biblical Passage: Matthew 3:13-17, John 1:29-34

Memory Verse: Acts 2:41 “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”

1. Jesus _____ to be baptized by John (Matthew 3:13–15a, John 1:29–31).
2. John _____ unworthy to baptize One without sin (Matthew. 3:15b–16a).
3. God _____ Jesus as His Son (Matthew 3:16b–17, John 1:32–34).

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In your own words, what does it mean to be identified with Jesus?
 - How is baptism a witness of the gospel to others?
 - What statement do we make when we are baptized?
 - How important is baptism in the life of a Christ-follower? Why is it that important?
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DESCRIPTIVE LIFE

According to John 1:29-32, how did John describe Jesus?

According to John 1:29-32, what is the significance of John’s description of Jesus?

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT . . .

“Baptism with water is the sign and seal of baptism with the Spirit, as much as it is of the forgiveness of sins. Water-baptism is the initiatory Christian rite, because Spirit-baptism is the initiatory Christian experience.”—*John Stott*

HIS BAPTISM

(15–20 minutes, easy set-up)

Use this outline and any of the corresponding activities to share the Biblical Truth with students.

Introduction: Do you remember playing the game *Follow the Leader* as children? What made the game difficult? Easy? As believers, we are called to follow Christ's leadership modeled through His baptism experience. Today's Bible study focuses on Jesus' baptism. Jesus submitted to being baptized by John to be obedient to God's plan for His life. He knew that being baptized would be an example to His followers for generations to come.

1. Jesus chose to be baptized by John (Matthew 3:13-15a; John 1:29-31).

Biblical Background: Jesus sought out John the Baptist so John could baptize Him (Mt. 3:13; Jn. 1:29-31). Although John questioned whether he should be the one to baptize the Messiah, Jesus responded with acceptance and humility (Mt. 3:14-15). Jesus' desire to be baptized demonstrated His obedience to God's call for Him to be identified with righteousness and to identify Himself with God's mission of calling all people to righteousness.

Illustration: Stu Weber said "Jesus' baptism was unique. It was not a 'baptism of repentance' (as John's was) nor was it a 'Christian baptism' (as ours is today). But it was an identifying step of obedience at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus would not have been fully obedient if he had bypassed this step that seemed to John to be unnecessary for the Holy One" (*Holman New Testament Commentary: Matthew*).

Application: Jesus' baptism was in response to His sinfulness, but the opposite—His baptism identified as the righteous Son of God.

2. John felt unworthy of baptizing One without sin (Matthew 3:15b-16a).

Biblical Background: Even though he felt unworthy to do so, John obediently consented to baptizing Jesus (Mt. 3:15b). After being baptized, Jesus came up out of the water (Mt. 3:16a).

Illustration: Numerous organizations and groups exist in online communities such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. How many of these groups have you "liked," "joined," or "followed"? When we join these groups, we become linked to their messages and convictions. As a result, whenever those organizations or groups post information on their pages, those posts then appear on our pages so that we help them spread their messages even farther.

Application: Similarly, following Christ in baptism connects us to Him and joins us to His message of salvation. It is the outward expression of acceptance of all that Jesus has done for the one being baptized. And, as we understand His offer of salvation to all people, we seek to make the gospel known to all the world.

3. God affirmed Jesus as His Son (Matthew 3:16b-17; John 1:32-34).

Description: After Jesus came up out of the water, the Spirit of God appeared as a dove (Mt. 3:16b; Jn. 1:34-34). A voice from heaven declared that Jesus was God's son, that Jesus was loved, and that His Father was well pleased with Him (Mt. 3:17).

Illustration: We all want to be affirmed by those who are important to us. Author Gene Wilkes described a time when his father expressed pride in the man Gene had become. Gene said, "I was 54 at the time, and those words still meant as much to me then as they did after I brought home my first 'A' in elementary school" (*Christ: God's Transforming Touch*, p. 65). Receiving his father's affirmation was important to Gene, just as it must have been important to Jesus to hear God's affirmation of Him.

Application: God's affirmation of Jesus as His Son was important to Jesus and to Jesus' ministry. That affirmation revealed Jesus' identity as God's Son, His relationship to His Father, and God's purpose for His life on earth.

Conclusion: When Jesus submitted to baptism to fulfill His Father's plans, God responded by publicly identifying Jesus as His Son, thereby confirming that **Jesus is God and Savior**. As followers of Christ, we can join with John the Baptist in bearing witness to the truth that Jesus is God's Son and our Savior.

LESSON 7

HIS BAPTISM

Biblical Passage: Matthew 3:13-17, John 1:29-34

Is anyone in your family a fan of a sport's team? If so, there's probably a collection of team clothing and sports memorabilia around. Providing fan gear has become big business. Fans want to be decked out in team jerseys, caps, jackets . . . even socks . . . all to proudly proclaim their identity with and loyalty to their favorite teams.

Read Matthew 3:13-17 and John 1:29-34. This is the wonderful account of Jesus' baptism. His baptism served several purposes. First, "it fulfill[ed] all righteousness," meaning that it completed what God wanted done. Second, it identified Jesus with John, the forerunner of the Messiah. Third, it identified Jesus with humanity. Fourth, it symbolized what Jesus came to earth to do—die, be buried, and be raised back to life. And, fifth, it served as the beginning point of Jesus' public ministry.

As Christians, there are a few main reasons why we are baptized. First, we show ourselves as obedient to Jesus' example. Second, we engage in a symbolic ritual pointing to the death of our old life and the resurrection of our new life in Christ. Finally, similar to people wearing their teams' colors, baptism identifies us with Jesus Christ. It is a public statement to the role of Lordship that Jesus has in our lives.

If your teenagers have been baptized, help them to see how this simple yet poignant experience identifies them with Christ. Help them understand that they are forever of Jesus' team. Challenge them to embrace the spiritual transformation that occurs when they give their life over to Jesus.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS:

- Aside from your last name, or forms of identification, what are things you do that show you belong to your family?
- What do you think was the most important reason Jesus chose to be baptized?
- What did baptism mean to each of you?
- How are our lives different if we have identified ourselves with Jesus?
- Are there things we do as a family that tells the world we are different because we serve Jesus?