



JOHN THE BAPTIST

MATTHEW 3:1-17, MARK 1:1-11, LUKE 3:1-22, & JOHN 1:19-34

GOAL

- ▶ **To teach children that John prepared for Jesus' coming by preaching about Him.** The lesson will also teach children that Jesus was baptized and that they should consider their own need to be baptized.
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CHARACTERS

- ▶ **John the Baptist:** Preached to thousands of people, telling them that they needed to repent; he told them that someone else is coming after him who would be much greater than himself; and he baptized Jesus

Jesus: The Son of God was baptized by John the Baptist

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MEMORY VERSES

- ▶ **John 1:29:** The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Matthew 3:17: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

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OVERVIEW

- ▶ **Read over Matthew 3:1-17:** John burst onto the scene in Israel, with his attention-grabbing style and his revolutionary sermons. He preached repentance and the coming of One who was much greater than himself. Jesus came to John the Baptist and asked to be baptized. John baptized Jesus to reveal Jesus' identity as the Messiah and that His ministry could begin.



SUGGESTIONS

John the Baptist was the first prophet sent by God since Malachi, who lived about 400 years earlier. Jesus once said of him, “Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11). John the Baptist was a man of single-minded, fearless, and steadfast faith.

1. Single-minded: God gave John a mission—to prepare the way for Jesus. He lived a simple life focused only on preparing people to meet their Savior.

2. Fearless: John’s calling was to tell everyone, including the religious leaders and the king, that they needed to repent. He called people out on their sins without regard for people’s position or his own life. The importance of his message outweighed any concerns he may have had for his life.

3. Steadfast: With his whole heart, John believed in the Messiah and that He was coming. He preached about the coming of the Messiah regardless of whether or not people were receptive to the message.

PRE-LESSON ACTIVITY

Pass the Grasshopper | Supplies: a stuffed grasshopper or a fake bug and music
Have the students sit in a circle. Give the stuffed grasshopper or fake bug to one student. Turn on some music and instruct the students to pass the object to the person on their right. Stop the music at random times. Whoever is holding the object when the music stops is out of the game. The last student still in the game wins.

MEMORY VERSE MEANING

John 1:29: John the Baptist had dedicated his life to preparing people for the Messiah, and in this moment, he sees Him approach. The people who heard him call Jesus the Lamb of God would have understood his meaning: Jesus was the pure and sinless sacrifice that would wash us all from sin.

Matthew 3:17: This line was spoken by God. It was God’s audible approval of Jesus and His ministry that was about to begin.



POST-LESSON ACTIVITY

▶ **Pass the Grasshopper** | *Supplies:* rope or twine, strips of paper, markers and crayons

Provide each student with a length of rope or twine long enough to create a belt. Using strips of paper and twine, write down memory verses and attach them to the rope.

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TAKE HOME

▶ John the Baptist lived a life of unwavering faith. How can we practice faith like John's?

Prayer: John the Baptist had a strong relationship with God, which was established through regular prayer and conversation with God. The closer we become to God, the more we will be able to trust Him through any and all situations we face.

1. Obedience: God gave John a mission, and he carried it out with single-minded enthusiasm. When God gives us something to do, we should give all of our attention and energy to accomplishing the task we've been given.

2. Recognition: John the Baptist had never met Jesus until the day Jesus came to him to be baptized, but John knew who Jesus was the moment he saw Him. Something inside of him instantly recognized the power that stood before him. We can tap into this same responsiveness by recognizing the urgings of the Holy Spirit who lives inside of each and every one of us. The Holy Spirit helps lead us through everyday and extraordinary life experiences. If we recognize these urgings, we can be confident that our choices won't lead us away from God.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 1



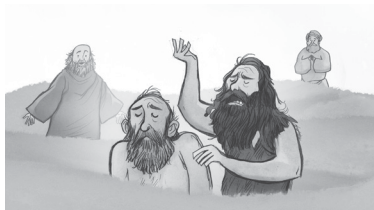
Q1a: What were the only things John did?

A1: He baptized people and preached about repentance.

Q1b: Have you ever burned your hand on a stove's burner?

TN: Even if students haven't had this experience, they understand the consequences of such a mistake. We know that touching the stovetop when it's hot will cause quite a lot of pain. When we approach a stove, we know to carefully assess the surface. Like touching a hot burner, sin is something we shouldn't do that will cause us pain in some fashion. Understanding that we shouldn't touch burners because there are consequences, is very like coming to understand that certain actions are sinful, and there are consequences for committing them. In the same way we learn to avoid hot burners, believers learn to avoid sins we've committed in the past. Admitting the sin, asking for forgiveness, and actively working to never commit that sin again is repentance.

SLIDE 2



Q2a: When people chose to repent, what would they do next?

A2: They would have John baptize them.

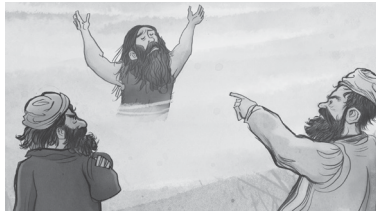
Q2b: What activities or games can make us really dirty?

TN: No matter what activities students name, after doing any of them, we'd probably need to do some laundry and take a shower. It's easy to wash off any trace of these activities, but sin also leaves us dirty. Baptism, when combined with faith in Jesus, is a symbolic way of washing ourselves clean of our sins.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 3



Q3a: How had God shown the religious leaders about the Messiah?

A3: He had told them through the Scriptures.

Q3b: Has someone ever taught you how to play a game?

TN: What if that person didn't really understand the rules of the game? We'd be learning a variation of the game. If we were to play this game with someone who had read and knows the rules, they would point out areas where we were playing incorrectly, which might cause a conflict between us. While the religious leaders had read the Scriptures that predicted the coming of the Messiah, they misunderstood the way He would be revealed to them. Because they had a different understanding of how the Messiah would come, they rejected Jesus as the Messiah. John understood the real way the Messiah was going to come, and he worked to prepare people for His ministry. Because of this difference of understanding, the religious leaders did not like John.

SLIDE 4



Q4a: What was John the Baptist's true job?

A4: His job was to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry.

Q4b: Jesus lived a sinless life, so why did He need to be baptized?

TN: In Matthew 3:15 Jesus tells a protesting John, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." The John consented. Jesus' baptism shows us that whatever God asks of us, Jesus would do. Jesus wasn't baptized because he needed redemption, but so that in perfect obedience he could be our perfect sacrifice.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 5



Q5a: What did John say to Jesus when He came to be baptized?

A5: John said that he needed Jesus to baptize him.

Q5b: If a stain is removed from your favorite shirt, do you need to keep trying to clean the stain?

TN: If the stain is gone, the stain is gone. The same can be said of our sins. Once we accept Jesus as our Savior and recognize what His sacrifice on the cross has done for us, we are forgiven and saved. So if we are made clean by the blood of Jesus, why do we need to be baptized too? Baptism does symbolize being washed clean of sin, but it also symbolizes being made new. When we are submerged into the water, it symbolizes the burial of our old sinful self with Jesus. Because of His death, we are no longer under the curse of sin. When we emerge from the water, it symbolizes our resurrection with Christ. As believers, we are made into a new creation. Another reason to be baptized is because Jesus commanded us to in Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

SLIDE 6



Q6a: What landed on Jesus' head when He rose up out of the water?

A6: God's Spirit descended like a dove on Jesus' head.

Q6b: Do you know any identical twins?

TN: It may be hard to tell identical twins apart just by looking at them, but they are completely different people with very different personalities. God is three persons in one, which is a tough concept to understand. God is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit make up what is called the Holy Trinity. They are three different forms of the same person. When Jesus rose out of the water, it was the only time all three persons of the Trinity were present at the same time: Jesus was in the Jordan River, God's audible voice was heard, and the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove.



QUESTION & ANSWER

SLIDE 7



Q7a: What did the people on the shores witness that day?

A7: They saw everything that happened after Jesus rose out of the water and they heard God's voice.

Q7b: Would you believe that an image of a unicorn being chased by a dragon was a real photograph?

TN: Computer programs enable us to make all kinds of impossible things look real, but there are a number of ways we can disprove such a thing actually happened. When people on the shores of the Jordan River heard the voice of God declare that Jesus was His son, and they saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus like a dove, some people believed, and some people didn't. How could anyone deny that Jesus was the Son of God after witnessing something like that? Even in regard to the most important choice of our lives, we have free will, and God will not force us to choose Him. With blatant evidence staring us in the face, we can choose to believe in the miraculous grace we find in Jesus, or we can choose to reject it.



**MEMORY
VERSES**

▷ **John 1:29:** The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Matthew 3:17: This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.

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BIG IDEA

▷ Baptism is an outward display of the inward change we experience as believers in Christ.

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**CLOSING
PRAYER**

▷ Dear God, thank You for the example of incredible faith we have in John the Baptist. We are so thankful for Jesus, who came to the earth to take away our sins. Help us to repent, help us to believe, and help us to follow You in everything. We ask these things in Jesus' name, Amen.



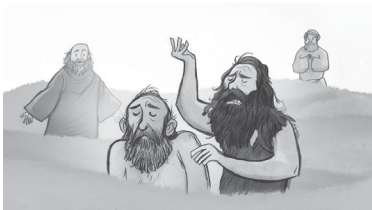
LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 1



Israel had been conquered by the Roman Empire, brutal captors who occupied their cities and ruled their lives. At about the same time of Jesus' birth, another baby boy was born by the name of John. He was Jesus' cousin, and he was destined to be a great prophet. John was quite a character. He lived in the desert, wore rough clothes, and ate strange food. All he did was baptize and preach a single important message: Repent!

SLIDE 2



People thronged to hear and see John. He was preparing the way for Jesus' ministry by telling people about this wonderful Savior who would take away their sins and free them. John called on people to change their minds and behavior. He told them to stop sinning, repent, and turn in obedience to God. Those who chose to repent would be baptized, which symbolized their changed life. Every day, John preached about Jesus, and the more he did, the more people's anticipation grew. They wanted to see this Savior and were excited for His coming. John made sure that they weren't looking to him for salvation; he was merely a prophet. Instead, he told them that he was not even worthy to carry Jesus' sandals.

SLIDE 3



Of course, not everyone appreciated John's message. Some of the religious leaders didn't like all the hype and commotion. They were worried that it would stir up the people. They didn't fully understand the news of Jesus because they believed that God would show them first when this Savior was to come. God had shown them about the Messiah in the Scriptures, but they failed to grasp it. The religious leaders also didn't like John because he was taking attention away from them.



LESSON TRANSCRIPT

SLIDE 4



But John the Baptist's job was an important one. After all, he was preparing the way for Jesus' ministry. Up to this point, few people knew or even cared that Jesus was living among them. To them, He was simply another young man learning His father's trade. But Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to begin His ministry. That day, Jesus came out to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. This was a baptism that would be unlike any other baptism in history.

SLIDE 5



When Jesus waded into the Jordan River where John was baptizing, John said, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you come to me?" But Jesus insisted that John continue to baptize Him. This special moment would signal the beginning of three years of ministry like the world had never seen. So Jesus was baptized by John.

SLIDE 6



Jesus rose up out of the water, and immediately the heavens opened up with a bright light. God's Spirit descended like a dove and landed upon Jesus' head. Then God spoke and said that Jesus was His beloved Son and that He was very pleased with Him.

SLIDE 7



All around the shores of the river, the throngs of people saw what had happened and heard the voice. Many believed, and many were still doubtful. Jesus' ministry had finally begun.