

Bible Stories for Adults

Jesus is Baptized

Matthew 3

Opening

- Gathering: Give examples of people whose lives were clearly changed when they repented.
- Today's Focus: Jesus' ministry as the Messiah began at His baptism with His anointing by the Spirit and pronouncement by the Father.
- Key Verses: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near. Matthew 3:2*
I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who ... will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:11

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Look to the Light (*John 1:1-9*)

When is the first time in the New Testament we learn that Jesus is more than a regular human?

Luke 1:30-35

Did the Son of God begin when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary?

John 1:1-5

How would people recognize the light so they could understand it from their darkness?

John 1:6-9

When did John first recognize Jesus to be the light?

Luke 1:41-44

How could John, as a 6-month fetus, recognize and respond to Jesus' presence?

Luke 1:15

John - The Special Son (*Luke 1:59-66*)

When did people other than his parents realize that John was something special?

Luke 1:59-65

Besides Zechariah giving the same name and regaining the ability to speak, what did people talk about?

Luke 1:7

What did people think about these things?

Luke 1:66

How would John have been raised by Zechariah and Elizabeth?

Luke 1:5-6

What happened to this child as a result of having elderly parents?

Luke 1:80

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Living in the Desert (*Matthew 3:4*)

How did John fend for himself in the desert?

Matthew 3:4

Wasn't it unclean for a man of God to eat something gross like locusts?

Leviticus 11:20-22

Rough camel hair clothes were worn only by the poor. Who else wore clothes like these?

2 Kings 1:7-8

What was significant about this similarity?

Malachi 4:5 (Luke 1:17)

Desert Messenger (*Matthew 3:1-5*)

What did John do in the desert?

Matthew 3:1

Who did he preach to in the desert – locusts and bees?

Matthew 3:5

Why did John stay in the desert? Wouldn't he reach more people in the cities?

Matthew 3:3

Who is this Lord for whom John was preparing the way?

Malachi 3:1

Repent! (*Matthew 3:2, 6-10*)

What did John preach to prepare the way for the Messiah?

Matthew 3:2

What does it mean to repent?

Colossians 3:7-10

Why did John call the people to repent?

Malachi 3:7

Who especially did John stress that needed to repent?

Matthew 3:7-10

Did John's bold call to repentance get him into any trouble?

Matthew 14:3-5

How did people respond to show that they accepted John's call to repent?

Matthew 3:6

Dip and Dye (*Revelation 7:13-14*)

Bapto - Common Greek word used by cloth makers meaning *to dip* or *to dye*

Cloth from sheep's wool was dull and needed to be cleansed

Cloth turned clean and white after being "baptized" in bleach

Cloth was then further changed to its desired appearance by being "baptized" in dye

How does this dipped, bleached and dyed cloth relate to us?

Revelation 7:13-14

How can Jesus' blood make us clean?

Hebrews 9:13-14

What does Jesus promise to those who wash their robes in His blood?

Revelation 22:14

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Cleansing Waters (*Leviticus 11:31-32*)

How would faithful Jews view the waters of John's baptism?

Leviticus 11:31-32

Proselytes (converts to Judaism) were baptized to be cleansed

Was soaking required for cleansing the unclean?

2 Kings 5:14

Was any other method used for cleansing besides immersion?

2 Kings 3:11

Was there a minimum amount of water needed for pouring to be effective?

Numbers 19:17-19

Jesus' Dirty Dozen (*Mark 7:1-13*)

Did Jews follow God's commands to cleanse with water in Jesus' time?

John 2:6

Why were expensive hollowed stone jars used for cleansing instead of more available clay jars?

Leviticus 11:33

How did Pharisees make sure they didn't accidentally fail to cleanse something that became unclean?

Mark 7:3-4

How did this create conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus?

Mark 7:1-2, 5

How did Jesus point out that their problem with His disciples was really one that God had with them?

Mark 7:6-9

Jesus Teaches About Cleanliness (*Mark 7:14-23*)

What did Jesus explain is important about being clean?

Mark 7:14-16

Does this mean that it is okay to touch four-footed animals and to eat pork?

Mark 7:17-19 (*Acts 10:9-16*)

Was Jesus referring to bodily discharges of Lev. 15 as the things that come out that make us unclean?

Mark 7:20-23

Next in Line (*Matthew 3:11-14*)

Who showed up one day to be baptized by John?

Matthew 3:13

Did John move Jesus to the front of the line to be baptized?

Matthew 3:14

Why did John feel it was inappropriate for him to baptize Jesus?

Matthew 3:11-12

Why didn't Jesus need to be baptized?

Hebrews 4:15

Did John really recognize this about Jesus?

John 1:29-31

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To Fulfill All Righteousness (*Matthew 3:15*)

How did Jesus respond to John's refusal to baptize Him?

Matthew 3:15

What was one purpose God had for having John baptize Jesus?

Exodus 29:1, 4

What sin could possibly be involved in Jesus' baptism?

2 Corinthians 5:21

What is a third reason that Jesus found it important to be baptized?

1 Peter 2:21-24

What fourth reason did God have for John to baptize Jesus?

John 1:32-34

A Triune Baptism (*Matthew 3:16-17*)

What happened that confirmed to John that Jesus was God's Son?

Matthew 3:16

Did God do anything else to make sure that John and others recognized this sign?

Matthew 3:17

What unique feature of God do we see in this story?

Acts 10:37-38

How do we recall this as we baptize others today?

Matthew 28:19

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When I ask God for forgiveness, do I truly repent (turn away from my sinful ways and towards God's holy ways) or do I just keep on sinning as I please?
(*Matthew 3:2; Romans 6; Ephesians 4:17-32; Titus 2:11-13*)
2. How far out of my way have I gone to hear God's Word and receive His Spirit?
(*Matthew 3:5-6; 1 Kings 10:1-9; Mark 6:35-36, 54-56; Luke 18:28-30; Acts 2:5-11*)
3. When have I boldly stood up against sin and evil, even when it opposed popular opinion?
(*Matthew 3:7-10; 14:3-5; 1 Kings 18:18, 22; Isaiah 1:10-17; Luke 3:1-2*)
4. How have I felt cleansed when I have laid my sins and burdens on Jesus?
(*Matthew 3:11; 11:28-30; Psalm 68:19; Heb. 9:13-14; 1 Peter 5:7; 1 John 1:9; Rev. 7:13-14; 22:14*)
5. What does my baptism mean to me?
(*Matthew 3:11, 14-15; 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37-39; 10:44-48; 11:15-18; Galatians 3:26-27*)

From Luther's Small Catechism

What is Baptism?

Baptism is not water only, but it is water used together with God's Word and by His command.

What is this Word?

In Matthew 28 our Lord Jesus Christ says: "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."

What benefits does God give in Baptism?

In Baptism God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what He has promised.

What is God's promise?

In Mark 16 our Lord Jesus Christ says: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

How can water do such great things?

It is not water that does these things, but God's Word with the water and our trust in His Word. Water by itself is only water, but with this Word it is a life-giving water which by grace gives the new birth through the Holy Spirit.

St. Paul writes in Titus 3: "He saved us ... in virtue of His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit, which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we might be justified by His grace and become heirs in hope of eternal life. The saying is sure."

What does Baptism mean for daily living?

It means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever. St. Paul writes in Romans 6: "We were baptized therefore with Him by Baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life."