

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 = Before He was conceived by the HS – Mary would have the Son of God
- Did the Son of God begin when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary?
John 1:1-5 = No, Jesus was God and was with God from before creation
- How would people recognize the light so they could understand it from their darkness?
John 1:6-9 = God sent John as a witness to point people to the light
- When did John first recognize Jesus to be the light?
Luke 1:41-44 = While still in his mother's womb
- How could John, as a 6-month fetus, recognize and respond to Jesus' presence?
Luke 1:15 = He was filled with the Holy Spirit

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 = When deaf Zechariah gave the same name as Elizabeth, then could speak
- Besides Zechariah giving the same name and regaining the ability to speak, what did people talk about?
Luke 1:7 = John had been born to an old barren couple
- What did people think about these things?
Luke 1:66 = They wondered about God's plans for this special son
- How would John have been raised by Zechariah and Elizabeth?
Luke 1:5-6 = Righteous priestly parents would have raised him in faith and knowledge of God
- What happened to this child as a result of having elderly parents?
Luke 1:80 = They likely died while he was young, He raised himself in the desert

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

How did John fend for himself in the desert?

Matthew 3:4 = He ate locusts and wild honey, wore camel's hair clothes with a leather belt
Wasn't it unclean for a man of God to eat something gross like locusts?

Leviticus 11:20-22 = No, locusts were considered clean

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

2 Kings 1:7-8 = The great prophet Elijah

What was significant about this similarity?

Malachi 4:5 (Luke 1:17) = Elijah would "return" to prepare the way for the Messiah

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

What did John do in the desert?

Matthew 3:1 = He preached

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

Matthew 3:5 = Jews came to see him from all over

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

Matthew 3:3 = Isaiah had prophesied that John would preach from the desert

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

Malachi 3:1 = Messiah they sought, messenger of the new covenant, whom they desired

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

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

Matthew 3:2 = *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near*

What does it mean to repent? = Webster's Dictionary - To change one's sinful ways

Colossians 3:7-10 = To turn away from sin and to turn to God

Why did John call the people to repent?

Malachi 3:7 = God said the people needed to return to Him before He would return to them

Who especially did John stress that needed to repent?

Matthew 3:7-10 = Those who thought they didn't need to

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

Matthew 14:3-5 = Arrested for rebuking Herod's (Antipas) sin of taking his brother's wife

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

Matthew 3:6 = They confessed their sins and were baptized

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 = Our sinfully dull & dirty robes were made clean & white by Christ's blood

How can Jesus' blood make us clean?

Hebrews 9:13-14 = The sprinkling of His blood cleanses us

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

Revelation 22:14 = We will be blessed with eternal life

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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 = They took the unclean and made it clean

Proselytes (converts to Judaism) were baptized to be cleansed

Was soaking required for cleansing the unclean?

2 Kings 5:14 = Naaman was cleansed by dipping

Was any other method used for cleansing besides immersion?

2 Kings 3:11 = Pouring

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

Numbers 19:17-19 = Sprinkles were enough

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

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

John 2:6 = Yes, people kept stone water jars for cleansing

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

Leviticus 11:33 = Stone couldn't become permanently unclean like clay could

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

Mark 7:3-4 = Made traditions to wash themselves & objects, even if not commanded by God

How did this create conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus?

Mark 7:1-2, 5 = Pharisees were upset that Jesus' disciples didn't follow their washing traditions

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

Mark 7:6-9 = They ignored God's commands and focused on their own made-up laws

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

What did Jesus explain is important about being clean?

Mark 7:14-16 = Only what comes out of a man makes him unclean

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

Mark 7:17-19 (Acts 10:9-16) = Yes, all foods are clean

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

Mark 7:20-23 = No, it is the sin in our hearts that comes out and makes us unclean

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

Who showed up one day to be baptized by John?

Matthew 3:13 = Jesus – First we hear of Him since He was in the temple at 12

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

Matthew 3:14 = No, he didn't see a need for Jesus to be baptized

Why did John feel it was inappropriate for him to baptize Jesus? = Jesus was greater than this

Matthew 3:11-12 = John baptized for repentance for the forgiveness of sins

Why didn't Jesus need to be baptized?

Hebrews 4:15 = He had no sin that needed to be cleansed

Did John really recognize this about Jesus?

John 1:29-31 = Yes, he also saw his purpose in baptizing to prepare for Jesus to be revealed

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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 = It was needed to fulfill all righteousness

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

Exodus 29:1, 4 = To consecrate His ministry

What sin could possibly be involved in Jesus' baptism?

2 Corinthians 5:21 = Our sin – Jesus took it and gave us His righteousness

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

1 Peter 2:21-24 = To be an example for us

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

John 1:32-34 = To confirm to John that Jesus was God's Son

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

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

Matthew 3:16 = God's Spirit visibly descended on Him as a dove

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

Matthew 3:17 = The Father's voice made sure that they understood

What unique feature of God do we see in this story? = Messiah means *The Anointed One*

Acts 10:37-38 = The Trinity (F/S/HS) came together as Jesus was anointed as the Messiah

How do we recall this as we baptize others today?

Matthew 28:19 = We baptize in the name of the Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit

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."