



My Beloved Son

Matthew 3
Mark 1:1-11
Luke 3:2-22
John 1

Life of Jesus

Very little is known about the first thirty years of the life of Jesus. The Bible speaks about his birth, his dedication at the temple, the visit of the wisemen, and that the family went to Egypt to escape Herod. There is one story of Jesus at age twelve learning from the leaders and asking questions in the temple.

The next time Jesus is mentioned is alongside John the Baptist. From the stories of the birth of Christ, it is known that John the Baptist was born to Zacharias and Elizabeth, and that Elizabeth and Mary were cousins. That would make John the Baptist a relative of Jesus and it is possible that they knew who each other was prior to this time.

John the Baptist is introduced as a prophet. There is no doubt as to his identity, and that he is the one prophesied by Isaiah who is "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord." (Isaiah 40:3)

It was prophesied that John would come before Jesus and prepare the way for the Messiah, and make "the paths straight."

Discuss:

John was an interesting man. He wore clothes made of camel's hair with a leather girdle (type of belt or band) around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

He stayed out in the wilderness; and people came from all over to be baptized and confess their sins.

He calls the people to repent and warns of coming wrath. He tells them they need to have personal repentance, and they are not God's people merely because they are descendants of Abraham. (Luke 3:8)

People then ask John, what should we do? And he tells them give to others, not to take more from others than they owe. He tells the soldiers not to do violence or make false accusations. He tells the people to be content with their wages. (Luke 3:10-14) Then the people begin wondering, Is this the Messiah? Is he the Christ?

The Jews sent messengers to John. Priests and Levites came to him, and asked him, Who are you?

John said, I am not the Christ.

Then they asked him, Are you Elijah? It had been prophesied that Elijah would come before the Messiah (Malachi 4:5-6) but this was prophetically speaking comparing Elijah to John the Baptist, and of John coming before Christ. (Luke 1:17)

John replied that he was not Elijah. Perhaps he was speaking literally that he was not "Elijah," because Jesus himself said that John was the symbolic fulfillment of the prophecy about Elijah. (Matthew 11:12-14) There were distinct similarities between Elijah and John the Baptist. Elijah was a hairy man who also wore a leather girdle around his waist. (2 Kings 1:8).

They asked John if he was "that prophet," referring to Deuteronomy 18:15-18 which foreshadowed Jesus, and he said, No.

John said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah. (Isaiah 40:3)

John is humble. He immediately refers to Jesus. He says, I baptize you with water, but one is coming that is mightier than me, and I am not even worthy to tie his shoes. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.

For centuries, the Jews had been expecting a Messiah. When John came and began preaching about repenting from your sins, they thought that he might be the Messiah.

We can look back now it seems very clear who John was. But it was not that obvious to those who were watching it happen and living it.





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Discuss: Get the picture of what is happening. There's a strange man who wears camel hair clothing. He eats grasshoppers and honey from bees in the wilderness.

He's preaching a message telling everyone to repent. The people have been living in sin, and they thought it didn't matter what they did because they were descendants of Abraham. John is telling them it does matter what they do, and they need to change their ways. He is preparing their hearts for Jesus.

News spreads about this strange event, and the strange man who is preaching. People are coming from all over and traveling to see what is happening. People are realizing they are wrong, are changing their ways, and getting baptized.

What is baptism?

Baptism is symbolic of a pattern we see throughout the Old Testament.

The first hint we see is at creation, with God's spirit hovering over the water. God divides the water, and creates the land.

Noah and his family are saved in an ark through the water. (1 Peter 3:20) A dove is sent out when it is time to return to the land.

Moses, as an infant, is taken through the waters of death in an ark (basket) and rescued.

Moses leads the people of Israel out of Egypt through the Red Sea *on dry land*. (1 Corinthians 10:2)

Joshua leads the people out of the wilderness, through the Jordan River *on dry land*.

In the incidents with Noah, Moses and the Red Sea, and Joshua, the people had broken covenant with God, and they were starting anew by renewing their commitment to the God of Israel. In each scenario God tells the people of his faithfulness.

When John baptizes the crowds, the people repent for being unfaithful to God, and renew their hearts to to prepare for the Messiah.

Jesus shows up while John is baptizing people in the Jordan river.

What is the significance of the Jordan River?

The Jordan has been very important all throughout the Old Testament. The Jordan river was the border between the wilderness and the promised land. After forty years in the desert, Moses dies in the wilderness. Then just as God parted the Red Sea for Moses, God parted the waters of the Jordan so that his successor, Joshua, could lead the people across the river Jordan into the promised land on dry ground. (Joshua 3-4)

Hundreds of years later, Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan with his cloak, and both Elijah and Elisha crossed over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8) At this time they were leaving the promised land and going out into the wilderness where Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind.





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There are similarities in the lives of Moses and Elijah and the spiritual roles that they played. They both were in the wilderness at the time of their death, and in Elijah's situation, his exit from the earth. This wilderness repeats in the life of John the Baptist. Joshua took over leadership of the Israelites after Moses; Elisha took Elijah's place as prophet and received a double portion.

Both Joshua and Elisha represent the coming Jesus. Joshua means "Jehovah is salvation," and Elisha means "God is salvation." Joshua led his people into the promised land, and Elisha returned across the Jordan into the promised land after Elijah departed.

Elisha the prophet led Naaman the Syrian to dip in the Jordan where he received healing, and worshiped the God of Israel.

(These brief story references will help students understand how the whole Bible uniquely ties and is intertwined together.)

When John saw Jesus coming, he said, Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

John told the people that Jesus is the one who is greater than John, because he existed before John.

Jesus came to John to be baptized.

But John said, No. I need you to baptize me, and you're coming to me to baptize you?

Jesus told John, Allow it for now, because this is the way we fulfill all righteousness. (Matthew 3:15)

John baptized Jesus, and as soon as he came out of the water, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God coming down on him in bodily shape like a dove, and resting on Jesus.

Then a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

What is this all about?

This goes back to what has been said in prophecy. Psalm 2:7 says this is my Son. Isaiah 42:1 speaks that the coming king, the Messiah, will be a servant *in whom my soul delights*. Some translations say, *in whom my soul is well-pleased*. This is an announcement. The servant king has arrived.

As soon as Jesus came out of the water the heavens were opened.

This refers back to the days of Noah when the heavens were opened with God's judgment and poured out flood waters. Now God opens the heavens with grace and truth to mankind through Jesus Christ. This is the moment we have all been waiting for. Jesus, the prophesied Messiah is here. He is bringing the kingdom of God to his people.

The Spirit of God descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Jesus.

This refers back to the dove that Noah sent out from the ark seeking a place to rest. This Spirit of God descended and remained on Jesus. (John 1:33)

In John 1:32-34, John the Baptist says that this is how he knew who Jesus was. He said that the same one that sent him to baptize with water told him that to whom he saw the Spirit descend on and remain, this is the same one who would baptize with the Holy Ghost.

When John saw it, he knew that Jesus is the Son of God.



Jesus in the Story



This is the coming Kingdom of Heaven. John was the one who was prophesied to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. He had to prepare the hearts of the people for the New Covenant.

John's message of baptism is symbolic. It is a way for Israel to start over again. The Israelites crossed the Jordan into the promised land before, but they were unfaithful to God. Now through baptism they are symbolically crossing through the waters again, but this time not on dry land. Baptism symbolizes the death to the old way of life and repentance, a turning away from what was behind, and a readiness to accept the salvation that is coming - Jesus. This baptism was to prepare their hearts to receive Christ.

Jesus had no sin; he had no need of repentance. But he went through baptism to "fulfill all righteousness."

God opened the heavens and announced who Jesus is. This was a type of earthy unveiling, a statement that showed his obedience to God, and marked the beginning of his ministry. Everything we know about the life of Jesus as an adult begins at this point in time.

This was the announcement that everything was about to change. The Messiah has arrived; a new way is here. Your hearts have been prepared; you have a new beginning. Listen to Him.

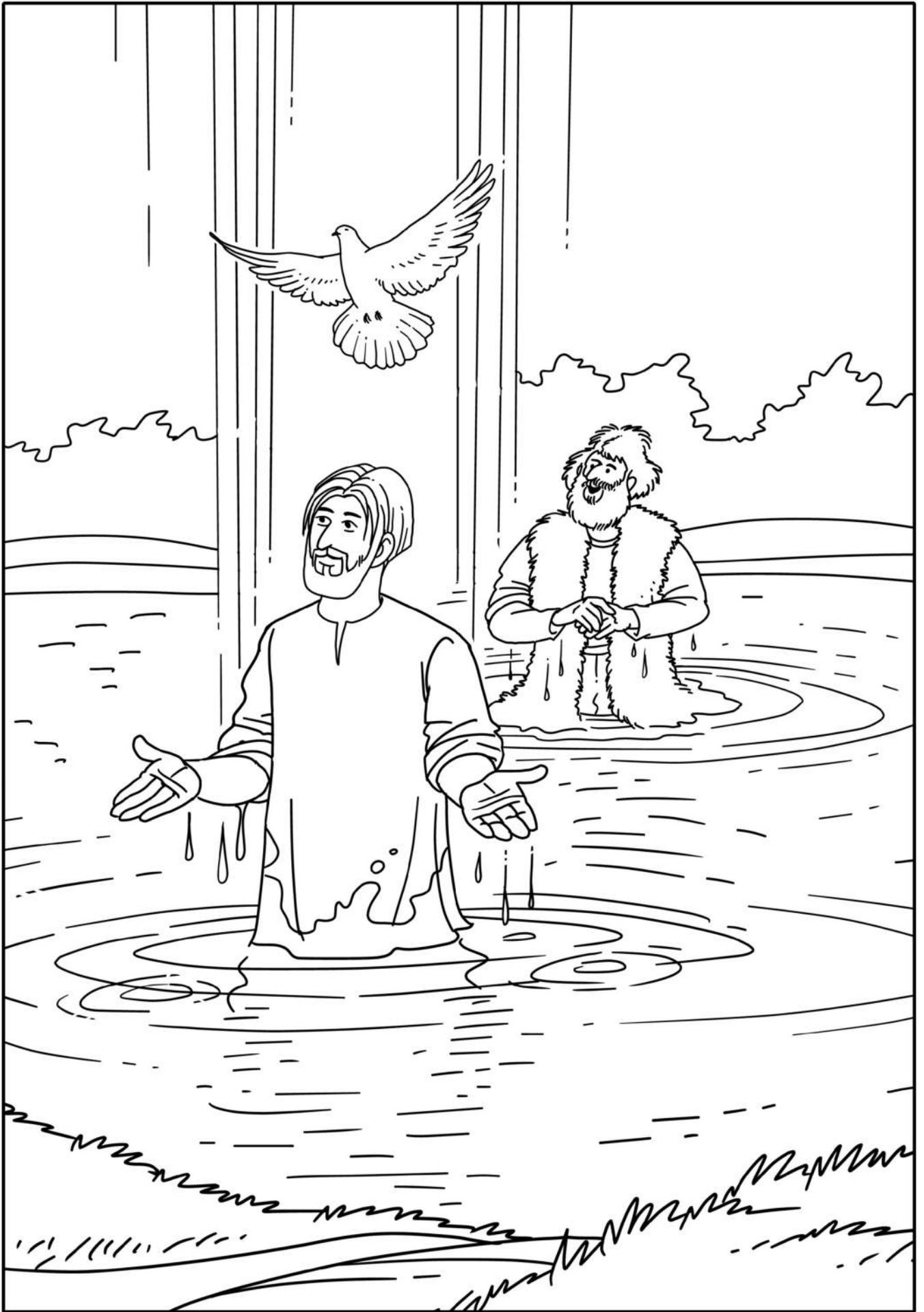
Jesus was baptized to represent our need for cleansing from sin.

He would complete and perfect what was represented by Joshua and Elisha. He would deliver God's people from their sins, and bring them into the eternal promised land.

For believers, baptism marks a change.

It represents God's deliverance through water, by not being consumed by the waters. It is a new beginning, and the passage through the waters symbolizes death to what lies behind. In baptism a person signifies that his old self was crucified with Christ (the waters of death) and he is now risen with Christ in newness of life. Baptism shows personal repentance by dying to a life of sin and following Jesus out the other side into the new creation. It symbolizes that our old man died with Christ, and we now through the Spirit walk in a new life. (Romans 6:3-11; Colossians 2:12)





Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

1. My Beloved Son

1. What opened when Jesus was baptized?
2. What did God send to Jesus, and how did it appear?
3. Where did the voice come from?
4. What did the voice say?

Matthew 3:16-17

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting upon him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2. Into the Wilderness

1. What three things did Satan use to tempt Jesus?
2. 1 John 2:16 lists different types of sin and temptations in the world. What three basic things are the beginning of all sin and temptation?

1 Samuel 12:24

Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.

3. A Wedding Invitation

Read John 4:45-46

1. Where did Jesus go?
2. What happened the last time Jesus was here?
3. Why were these people looking for Jesus?
4. How did they know about him?

Isaiah 43:19

Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

4. A Den of Thieves

Read Matthew 21:12-17

1. How many times did Jesus cleanse the temple?
2. What were the people doing in the temple?
3. What did Jesus say the temple is supposed to be?
4. What did Jesus do in the temple instead?

1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Peter 2:5

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

