



session 3 group study guide

the baptism of Jesus

message

Read the following account of Jesus' baptism from Matthew chapter 3. At this point, Jesus is an adult and has come to John the Baptist to be baptized by him. John the Baptist was born before Jesus and was used by God as a messenger to prepare the people's hearts and minds for the arrival of the Son of God.

As you read this passage, keep the following questions in mind: (1) How would Jesus' request to be baptized make John feel? (2) How are the events of this passage important in our understanding of Jesus as being fully God and fully man?

In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near . . ."

John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? . . . I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?"

Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:1-2,4-7,11-17).

dig

John the Baptist plays an important part in the life of Christ. He was even Jesus' relative by birth (see Luke 1:36). Let's learn a little bit more about John the Baptist by looking at some key aspects of his life.

1. Read Luke 1:5-20. Why was it hard for Zechariah to believe that his wife would bear a child?

2. What was the consequence of Zechariah's lack of faith?

3. According to the angel, what was John's role going to be?

4. What similarities are there between this story and the story of the birth of Jesus?

5. Now look at the passage we read in Matthew 3:1-6 again. What was John's message to the people?

6. How did John the Baptist fulfill the prophecy that was given in Isaiah 40:3?

7. What do we learn in the Gospel accounts of John's appearance and style of living?

8. Why do you think the angel told Zechariah, "He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth" (Luke 1:15)?

9. Read Mark 1:7-8. How does John say the baptism Jesus will perform will be different?

After me will come one more _____ than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not _____ to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with _____, but he will baptize you with the _____.

apply

Imagine that you are a basketball player and one day Michael Jordan appears and asks you to shoot some hoops. Or that you're a huge fan of Aretha Franklin and one day she shows up and asks you to sing a duet. Or that you are a computer freak and one day Bill Gates arrives at your front door and asks to see your latest programming creation. Can you imagine what that would feel like?

This is similar to the situation in which John the Baptist found himself. John knew that his job was to prepare people for the arrival of Jesus, the Son of God. He understood that he had an

important role but that Jesus would offer the people something infinitely more valuable and eternal. Then, one day, Jesus walks up and asks John to baptize him.

Whoa.

1. Look up John 1:29-31. What does John mean when he says, “This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me’” (John 1:30)?

2. Read Matthew 3:13-14. How did John respond when Jesus asked John to baptize Him? Why did he respond this way?

3. Read Matthew 3:16-17. What miraculous occurrences took place at the baptism of Jesus?

4. In session 2, we talked about the incarnation of God—that Jesus is both fully God and fully man. In light of this, why are the events of Jesus’ baptism (especially verses 16 and 17) so significant?

reflect

1. What does John the Baptist’s life tell us about how God uses people for His purposes?

2. Most baptisms require an individual to answer a set of questions or make a profession of faith. There are three key elements of this portion of baptism: (1) confession, (2) repentance, and (3) forgiveness. *Confession* involves understanding we have sinned and admitting our wrong doings. Read 1 John 1:9. What is the result of our confession?

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If we confess our sins, he is _____ and _____ and will _____
_____ and _____
_____ .

3. Why is confession important?

4. What actions, thoughts and words do you need to confess to God?

5. *Repentance* means feeling sorry for the wrongs we have done and changing our thoughts and actions from our sinful ways. Read Acts 3:19. What does this verse say about repentance?

Repent, then, and _____ , so that your sins may be
_____, that times of _____ may come from the Lord.

6. Look up the following verses. What does each reveal about how God views repentance?

2 Peter 3:9:

Luke 15:7:

7. Repentance involves turning away from our sins. What happens if you confess your sins but make no change in your future behavior?

8. In what areas of your life do you need to turn away from sin and turn back toward God?

9. *Forgiveness* is what God does when you faithfully and sincerely confess and repent. When you confess what you've done wrong and turn away from those thoughts and actions, God promises to cleanse you from your sin. Once you have confessed and repented for a sin, God forgives you completely and forgets it eternally. However, it is easy to hold on to feelings of guilt and remorse over past sins. Based on how God treats your forgiven sins, how should you act once you are forgiven?

10. Are there areas in your life where you have asked for and received God's forgiveness, but are not living as though your slate has been wiped clean? If so, in what areas?

11. Confession, repentance and forgiveness are necessary for us to practice in order to keep our relationships right with those around us. Describe a time when you used (or should have used) these three steps to make amends with a friend or family member.

12. Baptism signifies a new life and a new beginning. What does Romans 6:1-4 say about the new life available in Christ?

13. God chose Jesus' baptism to be the symbol of a tremendous change in Jesus' life—the beginning of His public ministry. Take some time to reflect on your own baptism. Do you view it as a significant event in your spiritual walk? What impact has it had on your life? On your faith?

meditation



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17