

7th Grade New Testament (Gospels)

Lesson Plan: The Baptism of Jesus

Learning Goals: Through the study of Jesus' baptism, students should be introduced to the ritual of baptism and the roll it played in the life and ministry of Jesus as an anointing and official beginning of his public ministry.

Question: Why do you think Jesus was baptized?

Prayer.

Discuss question on board. (5 minutes)

Read Matthew 3:13-17

Jesus' baptism is one of the most certain events we know of in his life - attested by all four gospels.

Also a testimony to the truthfulness of the gospels - it was an embarrassment for early followers. This was one of those stories that are counterproductive to the spread of the Gospel. Why would Jesus be baptized? Surely, he didn't need to repent, did he?

What was John's Baptism?

- John was preaching a baptism of water for repentance
- John was announcing that the Kingdom of God was beginning and was inviting people to "Get on board"

Why did John refuse to baptize Jesus?

- Notice that John recognizes who Jesus is and refuses to baptize him at first, saying that Jesus needs to baptize him instead
- He recognizes who Jesus is
- He knows that his ministry is only preparing the way for the Messiah and now that Messiah is here (his ministry is being fulfilled)
- Jesus responds that he is doing this to "fulfill all righteousness" - what does that mean?

Was Jesus repenting of sin?

- No. Jesus did not have sin of which to repent
- Jesus was experiencing a "conversion" - he was shifting from his old carpenter way of life and his past and becoming a part of this messianic kingdom that John was initiating.
- This commitment meant for Jesus the reality that it would lead to his death. He was committed to the will of God and was willing to follow it to the end.
 - Jesus knew what had happened to the OT prophets.
 - Denouncing sin and calling for repentance would not be well received by the rich and the religious elite
- Also, this was (in a way) a corporate confession for the entire nation of Israel.
 - To the extent that Jesus was joining in this corporate confession of the nation's sins, Jesus could participate.
 - If Jesus is going to die in our place, he must first identify with us as one of us

3 Accompanying Signs

1. Heavens were "torn apart" (Mark) or "opened to him" (Matthew)

- in Jesus, heaven has broken into earth
 - connection (foreshadowing) to the story of Jesus' death - curtain of the temple torn in two; curtain separated the Holy Place where God's presence was; the priest could only enter once a year; this is same language of the curtain being torn and God's presence being made available to all
2. The Spirit descends on Jesus like a dove
 - One of the signs of the coming messianic age is the pouring out of God's Spirit (Joel 2:28)
 - John's message: "one is coming after me who will baptize you with the spirit" - before Jesus can baptize with the spirit, he must be anointed with the Spirit
 - Spirit coming as a dove on the water = connection to creation account (spirit hovering over the face of the water)
 - This is a new creation; new beginning
 3. The voice from heaven
 - This is an affirmation of who Jesus is for the people and for Jesus
 - I imagine that this brought great comfort to Jesus during those times when he was suffering and did not feel God's presence

The Message of Jesus' Baptism

1. Jesus is obedient to God's plan
2. Jesus is being Anointed as King (Messiah = "anointed one")
3. Connection to prophecy - Isaiah 42:1 - he is the fulfillment of what God had promised
4. New Creation - in Christ a new creation is taking place
5. New Exodus
 - Israelites crossed over the Red Sea to escape slavery - baptism symbolizes that, in Jesus, we are being set free from slavery to sin and death
 - Israelites crossed over the Jordan to enter the Promised Land - baptism symbolizes that, in Jesus, we are being led to the true promised land

Lesson Summary /Review:

Students should review and highlight the following vocabulary terms and concepts from this lesson in their notes:

- Messiah
- Baptism
- What were the three signs at Jesus' baptism?