

Church Year Story 8

*Catechism and Memory Verse
from the Congregation at Prayer for the Week*

BIBLE STORY: THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

Matthew 3:1-2, 5-6, 13-17

Central Thoughts

- The Baptism of Our Lord declared Jesus to be the sin bearer or Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
- Jesus fulfills all righteousness for us by taking our sin upon Himself and by suffering the punishment that we deserved under the Law.
- The miracle of our baptism is revealed to us in Jesus' baptism: The Triune God is present in our Baptism; God the Father forgives us for the sake of His Son and bestows upon us the gift of His Holy Spirit.

Discussion Questions

What was John the Baptist sent to do?

Prepare the way for Jesus' coming by preaching repentance and by baptizing.

What did the people do who received John's preaching?

They came out to him at the Jordan River, confessing their sins, and to be baptized.

What did John's baptism give to the people?

The forgiveness of sins.

Why did John try to prevent Jesus from being baptized?

Jesus had no sin to be forgiven. He was the sinless Son of God. John was a sinner and those whom John baptized were sinners. Sinners came to baptism to have their sins washed away.

Why did Jesus say he came to be baptized?

To fulfill all righteousness

What is righteousness?

The fulfillment of the Law

How does Jesus fulfill the Law?

He fulfills the Law not only by His sinless life, but especially by suffering the death demanded of us by the Law.

What does Jesus signify by coming to a baptism for sinners?

That He will become the sinner for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). In His baptism, Jesus willingly aligns Himself with sinful humanity, and God the Father "lays upon Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6c).

What is the "Blessed Exchange" or the "Happy Exchange"?

That Jesus willingly takes all our sin to Himself and freely gives us His righteousness in exchange.

What did God the Father impute to ("charge" or "lay upon") Jesus in His baptism?

"The iniquity of us all"

How does Jesus "fulfill all righteousness"?

He takes all of our sin upon Himself and suffers the punishment that the Law demands of us.

Where does Jesus' baptism ultimately lead Him?

To the cross and death for us, that we might have forgiveness of sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and new life in Him.

What, therefore, is the righteousness of God that saves us from our sin?

That God the Father offered up His Son to die for us under the judgment of the Law, so that we could be declared "righteous" for Jesus' sake.

What does Jesus take from us in His baptism?

Our sin

What do we receive from Him in our baptism?

His righteousness, the forgiveness of all our sins (that is, His death for us whereby He fulfilled the whole will and law of God in our place)

What happened immediately after Jesus' baptism?

The heavens were opened to Him, the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove, and God the Father spoke from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Why were the heavens opened to Jesus?

Because only by the authority of Jesus' innocent suffering and death is sin taken away and heaven opened to us.

What does the dove signify?

The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of peace. Jesus is the source of peace with God by the forgiveness of sins which He earned in our place.

Why did the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus?

To anoint Him the Christ, the true King and Redeemer promised by God in the Old Testament, and to proclaim Jesus the source of new life in the Spirit for all who are baptized into Jesus.

Why did the Father speak His Word of divine approval?

Because Jesus, in love for the Father and for us, willingly bore the sin of the world as the Father's beloved Son. For Jesus' sake, God the Father calls us His beloved sons in our baptism.

What does the presence of the Triune God at Jesus' baptism teach us about our own baptism?

God the Father speaks His Word of approval upon us for Jesus' sake; the righteous Son of God is the content of the water of Baptism that we receive for our salvation; and the Holy Spirit descends upon us with the peace of sins forgiven for Jesus' sake which opens the kingdom of heaven to us.

Meditation on the Bible Story

We are baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." In Jesus' baptism we see the supernatural realities of our own baptism, as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are revealed to us. In Jesus' baptism, God the Father declared Him to be His beloved Son and laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. In His baptism, Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and declared to be the Christ who would preach the Gospel to the poor and free those who were held captive to sin (Isaiah 61:1). Jesus' public ministry began at His baptism in which He was declared to be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." His ministry culminated in His death and resurrection. At His baptism, Jesus began His journey to the cross where He suffered and died for the world as the sacrifice for all sin. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness by suffering all that the Law demanded of sinful man. John prepared the way for Jesus in the way that every pastor does: he preached repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name. Those who were brought to repentance came to John confessing their sins and were baptized by him for the forgiveness of sins. The source of both forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit is Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Our baptism has the power to save and bestows the gift of the Holy Spirit, because Jesus was baptized for us and suffered our death under the Law to fulfill all righteousness.

Prayer on the Bible Story

Father in heaven, at the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River You proclaimed Him Your beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized in His name faithful in their calling as Your children and inheritors with Him of everlasting life; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



The Baptism of our Lord

Matthew 3:13-17