

The Ministry of John and the Baptism of Jesus

Matthew 3:1-17

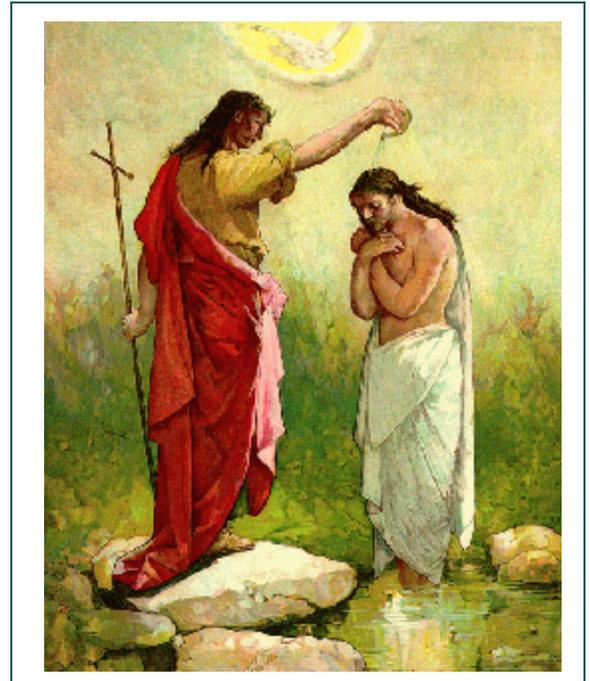
About thirty years after Jesus' birth, His cousin John began his ministry in Judea. Isaiah had prophesied about John in chapter 40:3,

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
Prepare the way of the LORD. Make his path
straight."*

John preached in the wilderness, where living off the land was difficult to do. His clothing was camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was simple also-- locusts (grasshoppers) and wild honey. He called for the people to repent of their sins, and when they did he baptized them in the Jordan River. Many people of Judea and Jerusalem came out to confess their sins and be baptized by this prophet of God. His work was to prepare the people for the coming of the promised Messiah and His ministry.

As John's ministry continued he drew not only the attention of the people, but also of the chief religious leaders, namely, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. When he saw them coming he confronted them by calling them a "brood of vipers!" Some Pharisees and Sadducees thought that since they were descendants of Abraham, they were assured of salvation. John warned them that without true repentance for sins they would be like a tree that does not bear good fruit and is thrown into the fire. Many people consulted John on how to bear fruits of faith. When speaking to tax collectors, John advised them not to collect more than was due them. John counseled soldiers not to intimidate anyone, falsely accuse anyone, or complain about their wages.

Many people wondered if John was the Christ. John humbly rejected this expectation, preaching that the One coming after him was mightier and greater than he. John believed he



The Baptism of Jesus

was not even worthy to untie Jesus' sandals. John baptized with water, but the coming Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Jesus journeyed from Galilee to John at the Jordan so He could be baptized. When John saw Jesus approaching, he declared Him to be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." At first, John was reluctant to baptize Jesus, thinking that he was not worthy to baptize Him. Jesus told John to baptize Him, and John obeyed. Immediately after the baptism the



heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, flew down and landed on Jesus. The Father's voice from heaven declared, "This is My beloved Son in who I am well pleased."

After Jesus' baptism, He began His ministry. Many people listened and believed. As Jesus'

following grew, those that followed John became fewer and fewer. King Herod, upset that John had rebuked him for a public sin, imprisoned John. Eventually, as a favor to his daughter, he had John beheaded.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for showing us that through His baptism Jesus is Your Son sent to be our Savior. Help us to picture in our hearts Jesus' baptism and how He kept the Law for us to be our perfect Savior. When we sin, call us to repentance and faith that Jesus Christ, Your Son, washes us clean from all our sin, just as our baptism reminds us. We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Outer Aim Jesus was baptized to publicly begin His ministry as our Savior.

Answer the Questions

1. Where did John the Baptist preach? (Mt. 3:1)
2. Which two Old Testament prophets foretold John's coming? (Mk. 1:2-3)
3. What did Malachi call John? (2)
4. What did Isaiah call John? (3)
5. What was John's message to the people? (4)
6. What did John wear? Eat? (Mt. 3:4)
7. Who went to hear John preach? (5)
8. How did many people respond? (6)
9. Which two groups of skeptics also came to hear John? (7)
10. What did John call these people? (7)
11. What did John tell them to do? (8)
12. What did they think was their automatic ticket to heaven? (9)

13. What warning did John give them? (10)
14. Whose coming did John announce? (11)
15. When Jesus arrived, what did He want John to do? (13)
16. How did John try to prevent this? (14)
17. Why did Jesus want to be baptized? (15)
18. What happened after the baptism? (16)
19. What did a voice from heaven say? (17)
20. How did all three Persons of the Trinity appear in this story?

Inner Aim

God declared Jesus to be the Promised Messiah, our Savior.

Discuss It

What is repentance?

How does this story support the biblical truth that our God is triune?

What God Tells Us - Mark each statement (T) true or (F)alse.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. ____ John the Baptist lived and preached in the city. | 3. ____ John the Baptist wanted Jesus to baptize him. |
| 2. ____ John the Baptist preached about repentance. | 4. ____ Jesus baptized John. |

Passages

John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

1 John 1:7, 9 - "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Ephesians 5:25-26 - "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word."

Galatians 4:4-5 - But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

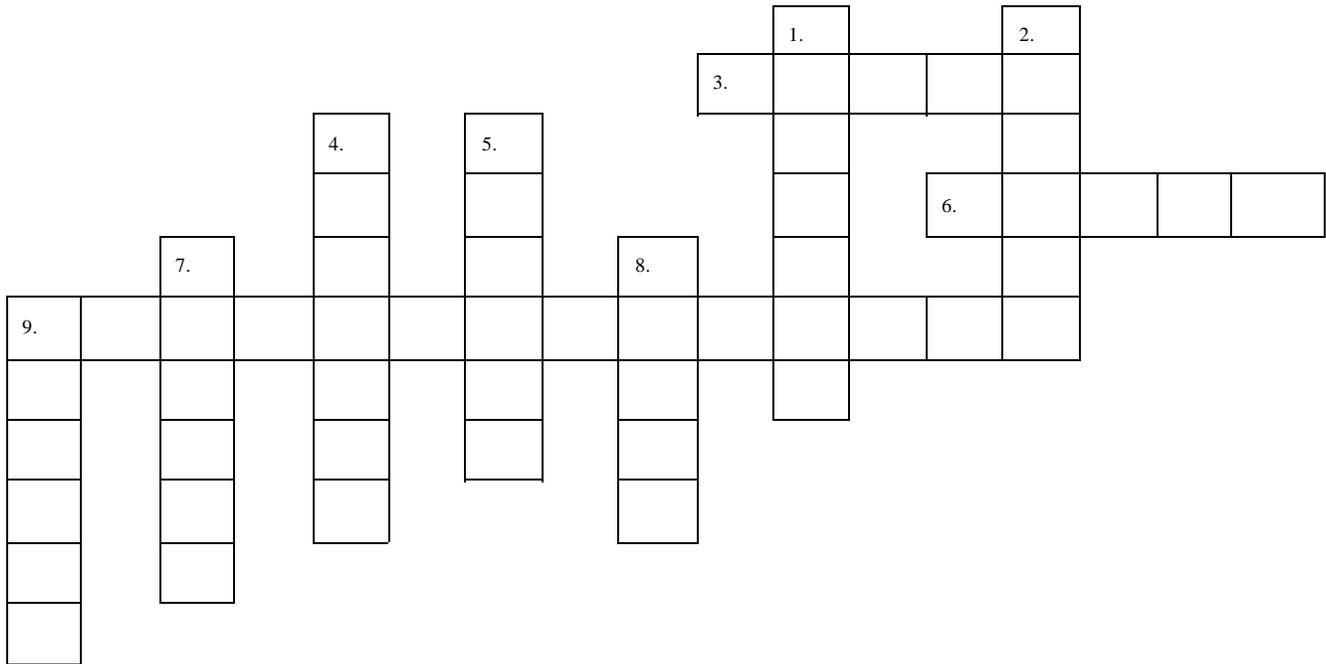
Crossword Fun

ACROSS

3. The form of God the Father
6. He was baptized by John
9. He preached repentance in wilderness

DOWN

1. John ate these insects
2. Be sorry for sin, have faith in Christ's forgiveness.
4. The application of water along with God's Word
5. Poisonous snakes
7. Jesus' age when He began His ministry
8. John's coat was made from hair of this animal
9. The river in which Jesus was baptized by John



Hymn - Read through Hymn 63 v. 1-3 "On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry." Use this hymn as a closing prayer.