

Week 3 - Jesus' Baptism

Lesson Takeaway: We must be baptized like Jesus.

Key Verses/Passages: Matthew 3:13-17

Commentary

Baptism is the outward reflection of an inward connection. Baptism confuses a lot of people. Initially, it's not easy to understand the significance of being totally immersed in water after becoming a Christian. Much of the confusion centers on questions like, "I was sprinkled as a child, so I don't have to be baptized, right?" or "If I don't get baptized does that mean I'm not a Christian yet?"

Baptism is both an act of obedience and a public declaration of faith. Baptism is symbolic of two truths essential to your faith:

1. **Outward Reflection:** What has happened *to* you because of salvation. You die to your old life, are buried in baptism, and are raised to live a new life in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-4).

2. **Inward Connection:** What Jesus did *for* you through salvation. He died for you through salvation. He died for your sins, was buried, and came back to life (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

Never get tricked into thinking that baptism is what saves you. The work of your salvation was done the moment you believed in your heart that Jesus is Lord and professed that belief with your mouth by asking Him to come into your life and forgive you of your sins. Baptism is a next step of obedience – the outward symbol of the work that God has done for you. You have been *raised to walk in newness of life* (Romans 6:4).

The Bible teaches that you should follow Jesus' example of baptism by immersion soon after you make the decision to commit your life to Him. The baptism of Jesus is a very big event because it was the starting point of His public ministry.

Before the baptism of Jesus, God had not spoken in 400 years. Think about it, four hundred years of divine silence until an angel comes and talks to Zacharias and Elizabeth. Then another angel comes and talks to Joseph and Mary. However, neither

of these conversations were public. They were private conversations between the angel and the individuals.

Think about this, the heavens have been silent and closed for 400 years, and now they open for this significant event in the life of Jesus. The Bible says, "*He saw the heavens opening ...*". Mark uses a verb to describe what the heavens do that Matthew and Luke do not use, *schizo*, which means "to rip". It's dramatic, the heavens rip open. This word is only used one other time in the New Testament, when the veil in the Temple at the time of the death of Christ was ripped from top to bottom. Wow!

This is so significant because Isaiah has been talking about the coming of Messiah in chapters 40 through the 50's, and when you come to chapter 64, here's the cry of the people. Listen to the cry of the prophet Isaiah's heart, (Isaiah 64:1) "*O that You would rip the heavens and come down.*" They were waiting for this event when God would rip open the heavens and come down and make His name known. This is the anticipation of the Messiah. The day is going to come when the silent heavens are going to rip open again, and God is going to come.

"The text of Isaiah 64 is a cry for God to do just that, break into history. And the Jews saw that text as evidence that Messiah would come, and heaven would split open and down would come God. There's an interesting document from 250 B.C., two hundred and fifty years before Christ called The Testimony of Levee, listen to what it says. It sounds like He was ... He was watching the baptism of Christ, two hundred and fifty years before that, at least. He says, "The heavens will be opened and from the temple of glory with a fatherly voice, the glory of the Most High will burst forth upon Him."

That sounds like a preview of the baptism. The heavens opened and a voice, heaven bursts, falls on Him. The drama of the moment, as I said, is intensified by the verb *schizo* which is to tear open, to rip open. God is about to come down and He does in the form of the Holy Spirit, I love this, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him. Heaven rips open and you might think of something violent happening, something crashing down. But the Spirit like a dove descends upon Him.¹

¹ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2014). [John MacArthur Sermon Archive](#). Grace to You.

Daily Scripture Readings

- **Monday:** Genesis 49:10; Hebrews 7:14; Mark 1:1-11
- **Tuesday:** Isaiah 11:1; Luke 3:1-20
- **Wednesday:** 2 Samuel 7:12; Luke 3:21-22
- **Thursday:** Micah 5:2; Acts 8:26-40
- **Friday:** Acts 2:14-41
- **Saturday:** Deuteronomy 18:18; Matthew 21:11; Acts 8:4-13
- **Sunday:** Attend City United Church and listen to the next message.

Deep Dive Discussion Questions

1. Talk about a time when you felt like John the Baptist, not worthy to do something for God.
2. Read Matthew 10:32-33. Why is baptism so important to the Christian faith?
3. Have you taken the next step of being biblically baptized? If not, why not?

Next Steps for the Journey

4. On the "Your Next Steps" Map on Page 10, where are you at and where do you need to go?

Outreach Opportunities

Taking the next step of baptism can be scary. If you have not taken this important step on your journey with Jesus, start praying about it. Taking this step of obedience is a great outreach to family and friends because you are publicly identifying that you are a follower of Jesus. Your act of obedience and public profession of faith in Christ may inspire someone else to do the same thing.

If you have already taken the next step of baptism, is there someone in your life that you need to talk with and encourage to do the same thing? Pray about having this conversation. Share your story of how you came to Jesus and were baptized. Then offer to walk with them as they journey with Jesus and identify that they too are a follower of Jesus.

To take this next step of obedience or to learn more about what it means to be biblically baptized, visit www.cityunited.church/baptism. You can fill out the simple

digital form on this page to let our church staff know that you are ready for this next step.

Prayer & Reflection

God, what needs to change in me and my life to make me more like You? Thank you for being an example to me on how I should live. Help me to walk in obedience with you each day. Please show me areas that I need to grow in and any sins to confess and give me the strength to make the changes that I need to make. Help me to be an example to those in my family and circle of influence. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week 4 - Jesus' Temptation

Lesson Takeaway: We must worship like Jesus.

Key Verses/Passages: Matthew 4:1-11

Commentary

Jesus was tempted to sin like us, but He never sinned. In fact, He can't sin.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15

For us it is important to understand the difference between temptation and testing. Many followers of Jesus get these two situations confused. Testing is designed by God for your development. Temptation is designed by Satan for your destruction. Temptation is "spiritual warfare".

Satan does not want you to develop in your relationship and journey with Jesus. He does not want you to take your next steps for spiritual growth. Satan wants you to give up and give in. Through the life of Jesus, we can understand how to handle temptation. We can press forward on the journey because of the power that lives within us.

Four Ways Jesus Dealt with Temptation

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." I Corinthians 10:13

A. Jesus escaped temptation through the Holy Spirit.

Read: Galatians 5:16

How does this help us understand the difference between testing and temptation?

B. Jesus escaped temptation through prayer.

Read: Matthew 17:14-21

What was Jesus trying to teach His followers about depending on God?

- C. Jesus escaped temptation through the Word.

Read: John 15:1-4

How does reading the Bible and prayer keep you from sin and able to deal with temptation?

- D. Jesus escaped temptation through worship.

Read: Romans 12:1-2

What does it mean to worship God with your life?

Living a life of true worship and devotion to God takes discipline. It is a commitment to saying "Yes" to connecting with God daily. We connect with God through the reading of His Word (the Bible), through prayer, memorizing Scripture, and engaging in personal worship. When we are connecting with God daily, it will be a lot easier to resist Satan and the temptation he tries to through our way.

Daily Scripture Readings

- **Monday:** Ephesians 6:10-18; Hebrews 4:12
- **Tuesday:** Romans 13:11-14; James 4:7-8
- **Wednesday:** Galatians 5:16-26; Matthew 6:33-34
- **Thursday:** 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Romans 8:5-11
- **Friday:** John 4:1-26; I John 5:1-4
- **Saturday:** I Timothy 6:11-16; Proverbs 30:5
- **Sunday:** Attend City United Church and listen to the next message.

Deep Dive Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the timing of temptation. Talk about times when have you experienced temptation like Jesus.
2. Read I John 2:15-17. Which type of temptation are you susceptible to? Why?
3. What steps can you take to improve in resisting temptation?

Next Steps for the Journey

4. On the “Your Next Steps” Map on Page 10, where are you at and where do you need to go?

Outreach Opportunities

Determine to invest in and invite one person to a gathering at City United Church this weekend. As we reflect on Jesus’ temptation, it reminds us that we need to continue to grow in our connection with God and others. Look at 2.1 and 2.2 on the “Your Next Steps” Map on p. 10. Do you need to grow in any of these areas? Are you regularly connecting with God and other followers of Jesus? If not, start praying about ways you can improve in these areas. Then take action. Take the necessary steps to grow in your relationship with God and others. Look for opportunities to get connected by visiting our Community Page, www.cityunited.church/community. Connecting with God and others helps us resist temptation.

Prayer & Reflection

God, what needs to change in me and my life to make me more like You? Thank you for being an example to me on how to resist temptation. Help me to walk in the Spirit and resist temptation. Please show me areas that I need to grow in and any sins to confess and give me the strength to make the changes that I need to make. Help me to live out the fruits of the spirit to those in my family and circle of influence. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

