Preschool–Grade 6

The Baptism of Jesus

Sunday School Lesson for Preschool (Ages 3–5), 20–30 minutes

Main point: Jesus is God's Son, and Jesus obeyed God. I can obey God too.
Bible passage: Matthew 3:13–17. Read Matthew 3:1–17 yourself before class.
Memory verse: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" *Matthew 3:17 (KJV)*. The old word **beloved** means loved very much.
You need: a Bible, masking tape or a blue towel for a "river" on the floor, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: make a "river" on the floor with two lines of masking tape, or lay down a blue towel. Put a bookmark in your Bible at Matthew 3.

1. Opening game: Down and Up (5 minutes)

Kids stand along the "river." Say "Down!" and everyone squats down low. Say "Up!" and everyone pops up tall. Mix it up: "Down... down... UP!" Then say "Fly!" and everyone flaps their arms slowly, like a bird. Play a few times. Say: "Good listening! Today we will hear a true story about Jesus at a river."

2. Bible story (5 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Matthew 3. Say: "This story is true. It is in God's Word." Read each line slowly and do the motion. When you see **Say it with me**, the kids say the line back to you.

A man named John baptized people in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:5–6). *(Make waves with your hands.)*

One day Jesus came to Jordan, to John (3:13). *(Walk in place.)*

John said, "I have need to be baptized of thee" (3:14). That means, "You should baptize me!" *(Point to yourself.)*

Jesus said it was the right thing to do (3:15). *(Nod your head yes.)*

Say it with me: "Jesus obeyed God!"

So John baptized Jesus in Jordan (3:16). *(Squat down low.)*

Jesus came up out of the water (3:16). *(Pop up tall.)*

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The story continues:
The heavens opened up (3:16). *(Stretch your arms up high and open them wide.)*
God's Spirit came down like a dove (3:16). *(Flap your arms slowly and bend down low.)*
A voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (3:17). *(Cup your hand by your ear.)*
Beloved means loved very much. **Say it with me: "Jesus is God's Son!"**
There is one God. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). *(Hold up one finger.)*
Say it with me: "I can obey God too!"

3. Questions to ask (3 minutes)

1. Where did John baptize Jesus? *(In Jordan, the Jordan River, Matthew 3:13)*
2. What came down like a dove? *(God's Spirit, 3:16)*
3. What did God say about Jesus? *(This is my beloved Son, 3:17)*

4. Memory verse (3 minutes)

Say: "God said, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Beloved means loved very much." Teach the motions: point up for "This is my," hug yourself for "beloved Son," and smile big with your hands on your cheeks for "in whom I am well pleased." Say it with the motions three times: in a normal voice, in a whisper, and in a happy voice. Then say "Matthew 3:17" and clap three times.

5. What this means for us (3 minutes)

Say: "Jesus obeyed God, and God loves you! Everyone has done wrong things. That is called sin (Romans 3:23). Jesus is God. He came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins. He was buried. Then He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us what to do (Acts 2:38). We repent: we tell God we are sorry, and we stop doing wrong. We are baptized in Jesus' name, down under the water, and our sins are washed away. And God gives us the Holy Ghost. That is God's own Spirit in us. When people are filled with the Holy Ghost, they speak in other tongues, words God gives them (Acts 2:4)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

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6. Activity: River and Dove (5–10 minutes)

Give each child a take-home sheet. In the drawing box, help them draw wavy blue lines for the river and a white dove flying down from the sky. While they color, ask: "Who obeyed God? How can you obey this week?" Kids who finish early can play Down and Up again.

7. Prayer

Say each line, and the kids say it after you:
"Thank You, God, for Jesus.
Help me obey You, like Jesus did.
In Jesus' name, amen."

Tips for little ones: keep the story moving and let every child do the motions. If they get wiggly, play Down and Up again. Send the take-home sheet home so parents can tell the story again this week.

If a child asks who talked from heaven: say simply, God did. There is one God, and He is everywhere. God was in Jesus (Deuteronomy 6:4; Jeremiah 23:24; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

If a child asks why Jesus was baptized: say, Jesus never did anything wrong. He was baptized because it was the right thing to do, and He always obeyed God (Matthew 3:15; 1 Peter 2:22).

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