Preschool–Grade 6

The Baptism of Jesus

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: God Himself showed who Jesus is: the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh. Jesus did everything right, even though He never sinned, and He left us an example to follow.
Bible passage: Matthew 3:13–17. Students read Matthew 3:1–17 and John 1:29–34 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." *Matthew 3:17 (KJV)* and "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." *Colossians 2:9 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Matthew 3, Mark 1:1–11, Luke 3:21–23 and John 1:29–34. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: Who Can Vouch for You? (5–10 minutes)

Ask: *If you met someone new, how would you prove who you are?* Write answers on the board: a name, a student ID, a birth certificate, a parent or friend who knows you, the things you do. Then ask: *Which proof is strongest?* Most students will say someone who knows you well and tells the truth about you. Say: "Today we will see the day God Himself showed everyone who Jesus is."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Matthew 3:1–6, then 3:13–17. Students take turns, a few verses each. Old words in this passage:

- **repent** (3:2): turn away from sin; **at hand**: very near
- **raiment of camel's hair** (3:4): clothes made of camel's hair; **leathern girdle about his loins**: a leather belt around his waist; **meat**: food
- **confessing their sins** (3:6): telling God the wrong they had done
- **forbad him** (3:14): tried to stop Him; **comest thou to me?**: do you come to me?
- **suffer it to be so now** (3:15): let it happen now; **becometh us**: is right for us; **fulfil all righteousness**: do everything that is right in God's eyes; **he suffered him**: John let Him
- **straightway** (3:16): right away; **lo**: look; **lighting upon him**: landing on Him
- **beloved** (3:17): dearly loved; **well pleased**: delighted, very happy with

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Read out loud: John 1:29–34. Old words in this passage:

- **seeth** (1:29): sees; **Behold the Lamb of God**: look, here is the Lamb of God; **taketh away**: takes away
- **preferred before me** (1:30): ranked above me; **he was before me**: He existed before me
- **made manifest to Israel** (1:31): shown to the people of Israel
- **bare record** (1:32, 1:34): told what he saw, as a witness; **abode upon him**: stayed on Him

Put the accounts together: Mark 1:9 says Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee. Luke adds that Jesus was praying, that the Holy Ghost came down "in a bodily shape like a dove," and that Jesus was about thirty (Luke 3:21–23). John 1:33 explains the sign: God had told John to watch for the Spirit coming down and remaining on someone, and that would be the One.

Teacher note: there is one God (Deuteronomy 6:4), and "God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). God fills heaven and earth (Jeremiah 23:24), so He can speak from heaven while He is in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19). The voice and the dove were signs so John and the people could know who Jesus is (John 1:33–34). Jesus is called the Son of God because the Holy Ghost came upon Mary (Luke 1:35). Teach it simply from these verses, and never put down another church.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. John tried to stop Jesus and said, "I have need to be baptized of thee" (3:14). What does that tell you about how John saw Jesus?
2. Jesus "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22), yet He was baptized "to fulfil all righteousness" (3:15). Why might it matter that Jesus did what was right, even when He didn't need it for Himself?
3. 1 Peter 2:21 says Jesus left "an example, that ye should follow his steps." What is one step of obedience God is asking you to take?
4. John said, "I knew him not," until God showed him the sign (John 1:33). Why do you think God gave a sign people could see and hear?
5. God said He was well pleased before Jesus had done one miracle (His first was at Cana, John 2:11). What does that say about what pleases God?
6. Colossians 2:9 says all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus bodily. How does that help you understand who Jesus is?

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4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Explain the words: in Matthew 3:17, **lo** means look, **beloved** means dearly loved, and **well pleased** means delighted. In Colossians 2:9, **dwelleth** means lives, **the fulness of the Godhead** means everything that God is, and **bodily** means in a body: the one God came to live in a real human body in Jesus. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Matthew 3:17 this week; keep working on Colossians 2:9 next week too.

5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Jesus obeyed God all the way, and God said He was well pleased. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, 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.

Teacher note on John's baptism: John preached "the baptism of repentance," telling people to believe on the One coming after him, Christ Jesus (Mark 1:4; Acts 19:4). After Jesus rose, Peter preached baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38), and when Paul met disciples who had only John's baptism, "they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5). If students ask, read Acts 19:1–5 together and say no more than it says.

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6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Jesus did what was right even when He didn't have to. Where is God asking me to obey, even if I think I don't need to?
2. John told everyone, "This is the Son of God" (John 1:34). Who could I tell about Jesus, and what would I say?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to help you follow Jesus' steps this week.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: take one step of obedience you have been putting off. Then tell one person something true about who Jesus is.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for showing us who Jesus is. Thank You that You came to us in Jesus to save us. Help us follow His steps, obey You all the way, and tell others about Him. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks why Jesus prayed if He is God (Luke 3:21): Jesus was fully God and also a real man (1 Timothy 3:16). As a man, He prayed and obeyed, and He left us an example (1 Peter 2:21). Keep it short and come back to the story.
If a student asks what happened next: Matthew 4:1 says Jesus was then led up into the wilderness. Students may read Matthew 4:1–11 on their own.

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