



John Prepares the Way for the Lord

Matthew 3:1–12



LESSON GOAL

The student will understand what true, fruit-bearing repentance is.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

The student will be able to:

- Explain how John fulfilled prophecy.
- Characterize the appearance and preaching of John.
- Explain why John rejected the Pharisees and Sadducees.
- Describe the purpose of the three types of baptism.

KEY VERSE

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” —*Matthew 3:11*

APPLICATION

- Submit to Jesus’ reign as King.
- Admit that God’s grace is your only hope for salvation.
- Examine your life for areas where you are not bearing fruit.
- Warn others of coming judgment.

NEXT WEEK

Matthew 3:13–17

John Baptizes Jesus

Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

Bible Background

Introduction

The Bible says surprisingly little about Jesus’ youth. After His family settled in Nazareth (Matt. 2:23), the only record of Jesus’ childhood is Luke’s description of His trip to Jerusalem when He was twelve. Luke’s evaluation of Jesus’ youth is beautiful in its simplicity: “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). Instead of elaborating on Jesus’ youth, Matthew’s presentation of the Gospel jumps from Jesus’ settlement in Nazareth to the preaching of John the Baptist. God prophesied through the prophet Isaiah that He would prepare His people for their King by sending “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” (Matt. 3:3). John the Baptist was that voice. Just as he called the people of Israel to repentance, John’s preaching warns today’s readers to “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (3:2).

John the Baptist Preaches in the Wilderness (Matt. 3:1–6)

Even before his birth, John the Baptist was set aside as a herald of the coming King. After telling Zacharias that he and his wife would have a child (both of whom were old), an angel of the Lord told Zacharias that the child would be “filled with the spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15). From birth, John would be set apart and controlled by God to accomplish a specific purpose. God would use his preaching “to turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God” (Luke 1:16). But the child would become more than a prophet preaching repentance. He himself would be the fulfillment of prophecy. The angel told Zacharias that John would “go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). The angel’s message clearly shows that John was the Elijah prophesied in the final two verses of the Old Testament (Mal. 4:5–6). John’s message of repentance would help “make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” All four Gospels point to John as being the fulfillment of a similar prophecy in Isaiah 40:3: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’” The apostle John was like a herald who traveled before a king making sure that the king’s way was easily traveled and announcing the king’s approach. John’s prophetic role was to prepare Israel’s heart for their coming King.

John’s message was centered around preparing the people of Israel for their King. As a prophet of the Lord, he commanded the people, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matt. 2:2). Repentance means more than changing one’s mind or feeling bad for what one has done. Although it does include sorrow, repentance is the radical turning away from sin and turning to righteousness. John’s message came with motivation: the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The kingdom of

heaven, like the synonymous expression the kingdom of God, refers to the sphere of God's dominion over those who belong to Him. It has both a present reality in those whose hearts have embraced Christ as King and submitted to His rule and a future reality in which Christ will rule a literal kingdom on earth. The kingdom was "at hand" because Jesus, the coming King, was about to begin His public ministry. The arrival of the kingdom of heaven was motivation to repent because the kingdom, in its final form, is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, including judgment of those who are God's enemies. Those who have not submitted to God's reign in Christ should indeed fear the coming of His kingdom.

Everything about John added to the urgency and authority of His message. John preached in the wilderness of Judea (Matt. 3:1), a barren desert west of the Dead Sea. Jews from Jerusalem who wanted to hear his confronting message of repentance needed to travel a full day's walk into the desert. When they came to the desert, there was nothing impressive about John's appearance. He was dressed in rough "camel's hair, with a leather belt around the waist" (3:4). Not only were these clothes long-lasting and practical for desert life, but they also were visibly reminiscent of Elijah (2 Kings 1:8) and were the traditional garments worn by prophets (Zech. 13:4). Although not uncommon among poor people, his diet of "locusts and wild honey" (Matt. 3:5) emphasized how different John the Baptist was from most Jews, especially the prosperous Jewish leaders. John's physical appearance and unusual lifestyle were a visible reminder of the desperate, spiritual condition, which characterized most Jews. The Jews needed to repent, humble themselves inwardly, and forsake their self-love just as John had humbled himself outwardly.

John's preaching of repentance was accompanied by the sign of baptism. As "Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him," they were "baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matt. 3:6). When Jews responded to John's message, they admitted their spiritual bankruptcy by being baptized. Baptism was normally administered to Gentiles who wanted to proselytize to Judaism. By being baptized, Gentiles admitted that they desired to be counted among the people of God. For a Jew to be baptized was the most profound admission that they were unworthy of being admitted into God's kingdom. The Jews whom John baptized had humbly forsaken a misplaced confidence in being the descendants of Abraham and instead cast themselves before the throne of a gracious God.

John the Baptist Rebukes False Repentance (Matt. 3:7–10)

When the reputation of John as a prophet grew, John saw "many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism" (Matt. 3:7). The Pharisees were a small sect of Jews who added a multitude of rules to God's Law in an attempt to not break any of His commands. They took pride in the fact that they were more religious and obedient than other Jews. The Sadducees tended to be aristocratic and powerful because of their willingness to cooperate with the Roman Empire. They were known for their rejection of supernaturalism and their opposition to the Pharisee's legalism. Neither group was spiritually healthy, although both thought they were. Their arrival to be baptized by John may suggest that they believed he was a prophet, that they wanted to be ready for the Messianic kingdom, or that they wanted to meet the public's expectations. Regardless of their reason, John knew that they lacked spiritual brokenness and a willingness to repent.

When John saw the Pharisees and Sadducees, he rebuked them for their hypocrisy. He called them a "brood of vipers" to highlight the dangerous nature of their religious facade (3:7). Their desire to be baptized without repentance was a deadly poison to both their own hearts and the hearts of those they led. John rhetorically

questioned them: “Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” Unlike other Jews who had actually feared God’s wrath and repented, the Pharisees and Sadducees thought they were in no danger of judgment. If they had realized their sin, John’s message of a coming kingdom would have been a warning. But their hardened, self-righteous hearts had sensed no need to flee from God’s wrath and trust in God’s grace. Because they had never really been warned, their desire for baptism was an empty hoax, a worthless ritual.

Although he could not guarantee their response, John the Baptist did not let the Pharisees and Sadducees leave without calling them to repentance. Instead of relying upon their Jewish descent as an immediate pass into heaven, John challenged them to “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Matt. 3:8). The Jewish leaders would know the reality of their repentance when they humbled themselves before God and obeyed His Law. John warned that they should not deceive themselves that obedience was unnecessary because Abraham was their father (3:9). God was able to “raise up children to Abraham from these stones” (3:9). The Jewish leaders thought that they were ensured the kingdom because they were descended from Abraham, but John warned that God would sooner create spiritual children from stones than accept the self-righteousness of the Jews. The Jewish leaders were nothing like Abraham and not related to him spiritually (Gal. 3:7, 29). Not only could God raise up spiritual children for Abraham (as He had from the Gentiles), but the Jews were also in danger of being destroyed. John warned: “And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matt. 3:10). The time of judgment was approaching. A fruitless life was one waiting to be chopped down and burned in hell.

John the Baptist Proclaims Christ’s Greatness (Matt. 3:11–12)

Following closely upon the pronouncement of coming judgment, John the Baptist focused his attention on the one through whom both salvation and judgment would come, the King whose Kingdom John preached. John unabashedly proclaimed the greatness of Christ. He said, “He whose coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry” (Matt. 3:11). John understood he was unworthy even to take off the shoes of his Master, a job which was traditionally performed by the lowliest of slaves. John did not want the glory belonging to the King but was content to prepare His way.

Just as the person of Christ was incomparably greater than the person of John, the baptism of Christ was greater than the baptism of John. The baptism of John was “with water unto repentance” (3:11). John’s baptism was only an outward expression of an inner change. But when Jesus came, John prophesied that Jesus would “baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (3:11). After the death and resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit was outpoured on believers, thus ushering them into the body of Christ (Acts 2:1–4; 8:5–17; 10:44–48; 19:1–7). Since the end of Acts, all believers have been baptized with the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). While the baptism of the Spirit is for salvation, the baptism of fire is a baptism of judgment. John further described the baptism of fire with the image of harvesting grain in verse 12. Ancient farmers would use a winnowing fork to throw a pile of wheat and chaff from the threshing floor into the air. While the lighter chaff would blow away in the wind, the heavier grain would fall back to the ground and be gathered into the barn. John said that Jesus “will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matt. 3:12). Whoever was not rescued through the Spirit’s baptism would be punished in the fire of hell. Although the final separation of wheat and chaff will not happen until Christ’s second coming (Matt. 25:46), every person will either be saved through Spirit’s baptism or punished through the baptism of fire.

Conclusion

John's call to genuine, fruit-bearing repentance is as valid today as it was two thousand years ago. Like the Pharisees and Sadducees who came for baptism, many have outwardly confessed their need of salvation but have not yet humbly submitted to the lordship of Christ. To them, John's warning is just as valid: the axe is still at the root of the trees. The King is coming to establish His kingdom on earth and to separate the wheat from the chaff. Those who will not humble themselves will be destroyed in fire. Any one who claims Christ as their King but does not bear fruit will be baptized with fire.

POINT TO THE TRUTH

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth."
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



Review Questions

What place was both King Herod and the wise men looking for?
Where Jesus was born.

How did the priests and the teachers of the law respond to the arrival of Jesus?
The chief priests and scribes ignore the coming of Jesus the Messiah.

What was lead the wise men to the King of the Jews?
God appointed a star to direct the wise men to the place where Jesus was living.

How did the wise men respond to the birth of Jesus?
They were overjoyed (5:10), and sought to worship Him with the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (5:11).

How did God protect His Son Jesus after the wise men left from worshipping Him?
God gave Joseph a dream, warning him to flee Israel and escape to Egypt with his family.

How did King Herod respond to Jesus?
Herod despised Jesus and tried to kill Him.

After Herod died, how did God again protect Jesus and His family?
God spoke to Joseph in another dream and told him that it was safe to return to Israel.

How did the wise men and Herod respond to Jesus in Matthew 2?
The wise men responded correctly by worshipping Jesus, and King Herod responded incorrectly by wanting to kill Him.



Don't Judge a Book by its Cover

Explain why John rejected the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism. To illustrate the concept 'fruit of repentance,' pose a test before the students. Setting out several items on a table (i.e., apple, bar of soap, sponge, etc.), label each item with a label that correctly identifies one of the other items. After labeling them incorrectly, ask the students to verify whether or not the item is truly what its label identifies it to be. As they respond 'no' to each item, ask them how they can be sure that they know what each item is (i.e. tasting the apple, smelling the soap, squeezing the sponge). In drawing out each of their observations, point out that these are characteristics of each of the objects on the table. They can tell what each item is based on its defining characteristics (i.e. an apple will taste sweet, the soap will smell nice, and the sponge will be squeezable). These characteristics are the fruit, or evidence, of its of what it is. In the same way, the Pharisees and Sadducees had no evidence in their life of repentance. They had come to John for baptism without having repented of their sins. Since baptism is an outward expression of this repentance, John was able to refuse their request for baptism. Because they lacked the fruit of repentance, John knew that they did not truly want the Christ as their Messiah and King.



Who's Your Dad?

Have several of the children tell you who their fathers are, and what they do for a living. As some of the children tell how their fathers are firemen, bankers, policemen, etc., ask whether or not that makes them a firefighter, banker, policeman, etc. Take this time to explain how their dad being a firefighter does not make them a firefighter as well. In the same way, just because our dads are going to heaven does not mean we are going to heaven. We, like the Pharisees and Sadducees, are instructed to rely on Jesus the Messiah for salvation, not our fathers. John the Baptist rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees for relying on their father Abraham for salvation. Because Abraham could not save them from their sins, they were going to be judged with the baptism of fire.



Misplaced Confidence

The ministry of John the Baptist was to prepare people for the coming Messiah. Since he taught and baptized multitudes, his criticism of the Pharisees is significant. The Pharisees were particularly unprepared for the Messiah because their hope and confidence was placed in themselves and their own righteous acts rather than the righteousness and grace that the Messiah would bring. Select a few students from the class and give them some fake money and/or other objects with which they can bargain. Ask the class which child they think has the best chance of successfully bargaining for the bag of candy you are offering. In the marketplace it is generally true that the more we have to offer, the more confident we can be that we will get what we want. Such confidence is, however, misplaced when it comes to gaining salvation. In today's lesson we will learn about a group of people who had misplaced their confidence and so were not ready to accept Jesus' offer of salvation. Hand out the bag of candy at the end of the lesson, reminding the children that salvation is a gift from God, it cannot be bargained for.



Welcome to the Kingdom

Hang butcher paper on the wall with a large castle drawn, colored, and decorated. Use this mural as you talk about what to expect in a king and a kingdom.



The Arrival of the King

Bring in examples to share and discuss the following ways we announce important events today: We might read in the newspaper about something special that will happen; in the same way, we could hear announcements on the radio or see something on television. We often send out announcements for new babies, weddings, graduations, or special birthdays in the mail. We could tell people we know in person or stand on the street corner with a megaphone and shout it to all who might be near; we could call everyone we know on the phone and tell them of this special event. Now many people send e-mails to communicate with others. In some foreign countries, they might have a parade with marching bands, soldiers, and flags to announce the arrival of a special person. Ask the students how they think special announcements were made in Bible times. Explain that their methods were much more limited than ours are today. They could physically tell people with their voices. This meant that they could tell those around them but would have to travel elsewhere to tell people who were not in the immediate proximity. They might send a letter to someone but it would take a very long time to get to its destination. Tell the students that this morning they will hear about a man whose job was to announce the arrival of a very special King.



Preparing for the King

Ask the students what they would need if they had to set up their kingdoms to prepare for the arrival of a special king: a king, a castle, an army, a lot of money, a throne, a red carpet, multitudes of servants? Ask the students how they might be able to tell if the person who finally arrived was the king they had been waiting for. Would he already be wearing some kind of crown, have royal clothing, be riding on a white horse or in a fancy carriage? The Israelites were expecting a king who would set up a kingdom to conquer the Romans. They were looking for an earthly king and not a heavenly one.

PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” —Psalm 78:4

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students' understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

Bible Lesson

Passage Outline

John the Baptist Preaches in the Wilderness (3:1–6)

John the Baptist Rebukes False Repentance (3:7–10)

John the Baptist Proclaims Christ's Greatness (3:11–12)



Introduction

What is the one thing our families do when expecting a visit from a guest? We prepare! Our moms might cook dinner, while we make sure the house is completely ready for company. And it is always considered an awful thing when one is not ready for their own company. Well this is exactly what the prophet John found after the arrival of Christ. The nation of Israel had turned their hearts away from God and was not ready for their long awaited Messiah. In order to prepare the people for the Lord, John the Baptist came preaching for the people to turn back to God. Let us now look into Matthew 3 for the nature of this ministry, and for Israel's response to this message of repentance.

Lead-Off Questions (LOQ's)

LOQ: What prophesy was fulfilled in the coming ministry of John the Baptist?

Answer: The prophet Isaiah told of one who would be crying out in the desert, "Prepare the way for the Lord" (Isa. 40:3)." John's ministry in the desert was a fulfillment of these words from Isaiah. His message of repentance was used to prepare the nation of Israel for the ministry of Jesus the Messiah (Malachi 4:5-6).

LOQ: What was significant about John's appearance and lifestyle?

Answer: John's desert clothes (made out of camel's hair and leather) and wilderness lifestyle (eating locusts and honey) was a sign of his humility before the Lord. It is this humility that John's message of repentance required of the people of Israel. They were to recognize their inability to earn salvation, confess their sins, and repent before the Lord.

LOQ: If John was unattractive in appearance, what was it then that attracted the people of Israel to John the Baptist (3:2)?

Answer: It was his message. The Jews had been waiting many years for the coming of God's kingdom on earth. John the Baptist was saying that this kingdom was now here in the arrival of God's Son, Jesus.

LOQ: What was significant about John baptizing the people in the Jordan River (3:6)?

Answer: This baptism with water was an outward sign of their obedience to God. The Jews had realized their unworthiness to be part of God's kingdom, and responded rightly in repenting of their sins.

LOQ: If John was baptizing those who had come out to him from Jerusalem, why then did he reject the Pharisees and Sadducees request for baptism?

Answer: The Pharisees and Sadducees desired to be baptized without repentance. They did not fear God, nor did they acknowledge that their sins were worthy of judgment. Because of this, their request to be baptized was meaningless.

LOQ: Why did the Pharisees and Sadducees feel OK about ignoring John's call to repentance?

Answer: These men thought they were going to be part of God's kingdom because they were Jewish. Instead of relying on the Messiah for salvation, they relied on their being ancestors of Abraham to get them to heaven.

LOQ: Why did John call the Pharisees and Sadducees to 'bear fruits worthy unto repentance' (3:9)?

Answer: True repentance can be seen in a person's life. The Pharisees and Sadducees reliance on their family lineage to get them to heaven was proof that they were unrepentant. They had not confessed their need for the Messiah, and failed to repent of their sins. John demanded them to produce evidence of repentance if they were to be baptized. This repentance is required for salvation.

LOQ: What does John say about them not repenting (3:10)?

Answer: Because the Pharisees and Sadducees had no proof of repentance (fruit) in their life, they were going to be separated from among God's people, judged for their sin, and sent to burn in the fires of hell.

LOQ: What will the one greater than John do in His coming?

Answer: The one that John refers to as greater than himself is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Where John the Baptist had baptized with water, Jesus will now come baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire.

LOQ: What is this baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire?

Answer: Jesus' baptism with the Holy Spirit was His giving eternal life (salvation) to those whom were repentant. To those who were unrepentant, he was going to baptize with fire. This baptism with fire was referring to the judgment they would receive in hell for their sins. One baptism was referring to salvation (Holy Spirit) and the other was referring to judgment (fire). The baptism one receives depends on their response to Jesus as Lord and King.

Summary

When Jesus, King of the Jews, was born in Bethlehem, it marked the beginning of God's kingdom here on earth. God now walked in the flesh. Unfortunately, the Jews had turned their hearts away from God and remained unrepentant of their sin. God prepared His people for the Messiah by sending John the Baptist to prepare the way for His Son.

John began preaching for the people of Israel to repent because God's judgement was coming (3:2). Christ will either baptize each man with the Holy Spirit or with fire according to his response of repentance. If they repent they will be saved through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. If they remained unrepentant, they will experience the baptism of fire, where their sins would be judged for an eternity in hell.

Application

This message of repentance is just as much for us today, as it was for the Jews in the day of John the Baptist. Even though Jesus has now come and died for the sins of man, His judgment still awaits. He continues to demand repentance from those who wish to follow Him. This repentance should serve as evidence of our submission to Him as King. For those who choose to remain unrepentant, Christ is coming to judge them with punishment of hell that their sins deserve. If one desires to be saved from this judgment, they are to look to the Savior Jesus Christ. For He alone has the power and authority to give salvation to men.



Presentation Ideas

A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



Ready for the King

John the Baptist came to prepare the people for the king. Teach the lesson by having the children help you prepare a dinner table for an important and very special guest. Have the children sit around the table and explain the ministry of John the Baptist to them. He did not instruct people to make sure their homes and their tables were ready, but that their hearts were ready. End the lesson by explaining to the children how they must be ready for when Christ comes again.



Baptized in the Spirit

John declared that Christ would not only baptize with water, but with the Holy Spirit and fire. To baptize means literally “to immerse.” What does someone who has been immersed in water look like? Bring a sponge to class and dip it in water to show the children. What does someone who has been immersed in fire look like? Bring a log which has been charred in the fire to show the children. What does someone look like who has been baptized (immersed) in the Holy Spirit? They look like Christ. We cannot see the Holy Spirit, but, as with the wet sponge and the burned log, we can see whether someone has been baptized in the Spirit by the effect it produces. Such a person will demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.

Praise and Worship

Lord, I Lift Your Name On High

God Is So Good

In My Life

PRACTICE THE TRUTH

“That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.” —Psalm 78:7

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



“Prophecy Megaphone”

Materials: Photocopy of craft pages on cardstock, scissors, glue, crayons

Directions: Pass out cardstock pages and scissors to each student. Instruct students to cut out the megaphone shape, including the handle, and each of the three banners. Students may decorate the megaphone to give it the appearance of the desert of Judea by adding sand, the sun, cacti, and other appropriate drawings. After the students finish coloring the megaphone, instruct them to glue the three banners, phrases that John the Baptist emphasized while preaching, to the right

edge of the megaphone. Model how to place glue on the banner where it is states "glue here," and then stick it to the back side of the megaphone. Space the three banners evenly from top to bottom (order is not important). It should look like the words are projecting from the end of the megaphone. Use the megaphone to review the important teachings of John the Baptist given in the lesson.



"Kingdom of Heaven Sphere"

Materials: Copies of craft pages on cardstock, scissors, crayons, glue

Directions: Pass out the craft pages. On the first page, instruct students to cut around the outer edge of the Kingdom of Heaven, leaving the two half circles on each side attached. On the second page, instruct students to cut around the globe, and then down the center to cut it into two halves. Instruct the students to fold the half circles into the full circle to cover up the writing. Then, show the students how to glue the two globe halves onto the half circles (blank side). Use the sphere to help students understand the definition of Kingdom of Heaven used throughout the book of Matthew.



Game Board: "Preparing the Way for the Messiah"

Materials: copies of craft pages, scissors, tape, crayons, die, buttons or other objects that can be used as playing pieces

Directions: Have students cut out the road blocks and fold each one on the dotted line. Tape the roadblock to the matching number on the path. The tape should be placed on the side of the roadblock opposite the fold. This way students will be able to read what is on the path. Once the gameboard is complete, students can play the game using a button or other object for a playing piece.



Who Means It?

Have several teachers act out a scenario that has supposedly just followed a big fight. Each of the actors are to approach their friend for forgiveness. All of the actors except one should make it obvious that they are not really sorry for what they have done (i.e., smirking to where their friend can not see, crossing their fingers, blaming their friend in the midst of their apology, etc.). The other teacher should exemplify genuine remorse for what they have done, and that they desire their friend's forgiveness. At the end of the dramatization, ask the students how they are able to tell who was genuinely sorry, or repentant. Take this time to connect John's ability to observe the false repentance of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Their lives revealed that they neither feared God nor His judgment. Because of this, their request for baptism was meaningless.



Dead or Alive

Bring into the classroom two plants of the same kind. One of the plants is to be either dead (fruitless, mangled, etc.) and the other should be alive (full of fruit, healthy, etc.). Have the students observe which plant is dead, and which one is alive. They should be able to tell how they have derived their conclusion. Take this time to note how John was able to discern the spiritual status of the Pharisees and Sadducees. John was able to tell that they were not genuinely repentant because their lives did not show it. They neither feared God nor His judgment, and so they were not worthy of proceeding in baptism.



"John prepares the way for the Lord"

Use this worksheet to reinforce the key truths of today's lesson. The worksheet is located at the back of the lesson.

*John Prepares the
Way for the Lord*



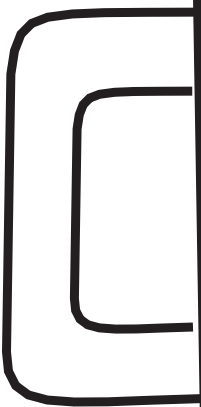
MEMORY VERSE

“...’Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’” —*Matthew 3:2*

Prophecy Megaphone

John the Baptist Fulfills Prophecy

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness...” —Isaiah 40:3



Prophecy Megaphone

Glue
here

Repent

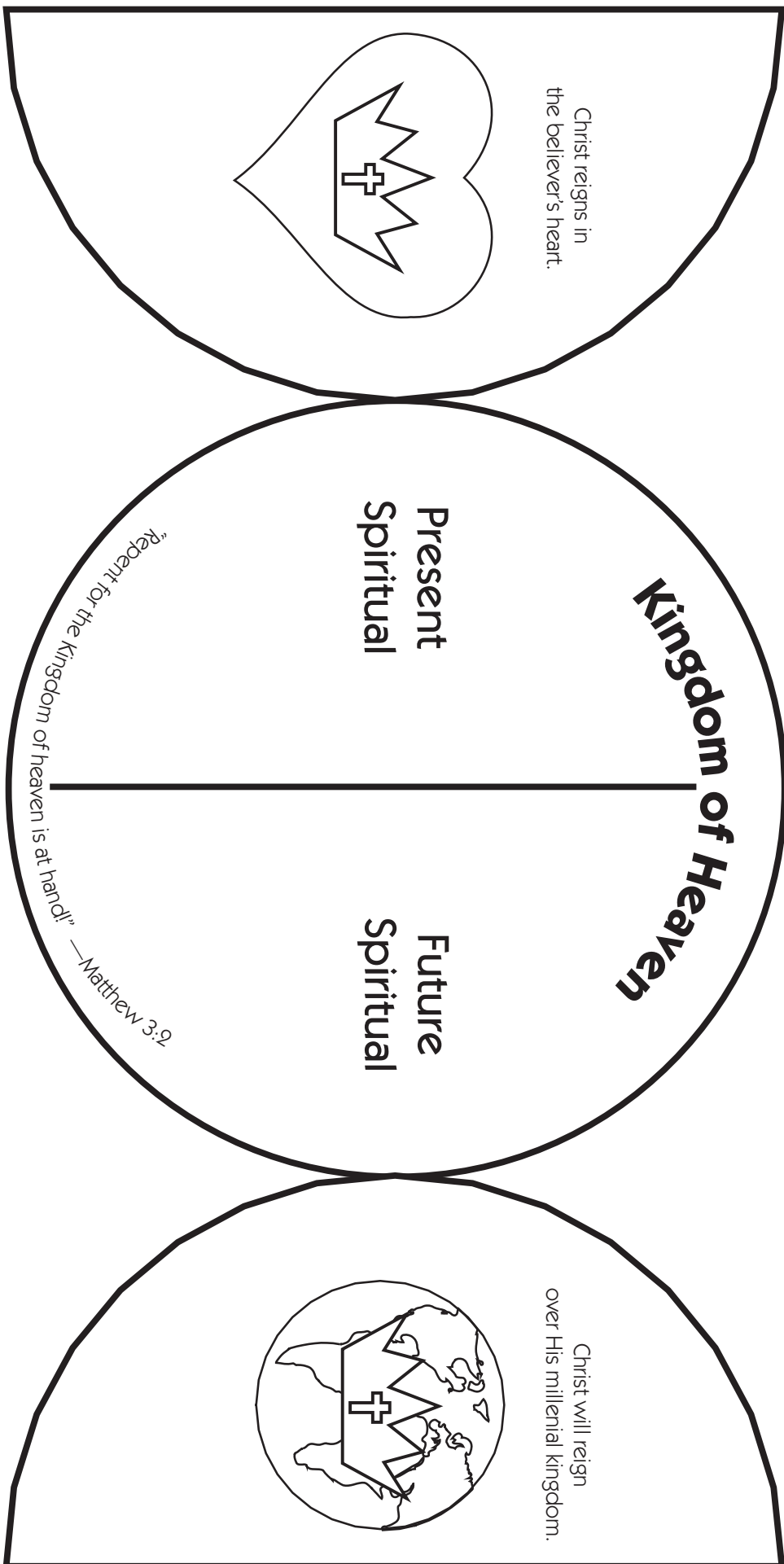
Glue
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Bear Fruit

Glue
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Kingdom of Heaven

Kingdom of Heaven



Kingdom of Heaven



Cut around outer edge and down the center.

START	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Aware of sin. Move forward 2 spaces. Romans 3:23					Aware of neediness. Move forward 3 spaces. John 15:5	

13	12	11	10	9	8
Watch out for hypocrisy. Miss a turn. Matthew 3:7-9		If your mom or dad agrees, move forward 3 spaces. If not, move back 1.			

Preparing the Way

for the **Messiah**

Matthew 3:3

15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7

16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
		Look up Mark 12:30-31. Move ahead 3 if you were right. Move back 2 if you were wrong.					

30	29	28	27	26	25	24
	Are you prepared to meet God? Miss a turn to think about it.		Move forward 2 spaces.			

END

23

Preparing the Way for the Messiah

2
Name 3 sins you have committed this week.

Ignorance of Sin

6
Give 2 reasons why you need Jesus.

Pride

11
List the 2 things you love the most.

Idolatry

13
List at least 1 sin you will abandon.

No Repentance

18
What is the greatest commandment in the New Testament?

Ignorance of God's Word

27
List at least 2 ways you can obey God.

Obedience

29
What does John mean in Matthew 3:2, 7-10?

Stop and Think!

2
Name 3 sins you have committed this week.

Ignorance of Sin

6
Give 2 reasons why you need Jesus.

Pride

11
List the 2 things you love the most.

Idolatry

13
List at least 1 sin you will abandon.

No Repentance

18
What is the greatest commandment in the New Testament?

Ignorance of God's Word

27
List at least 2 ways you can obey God.

Obedience

29
What does John mean in Matthew 3:2, 7-10?

Stop and Think!

John *prepares* *the way for the* Lord



Matthew 3:1-12

Name _____

1. Who was the "voice of one crying in the wilderness"? _____
 - a. Matthew
 - b. Jesus
 - c. Joseph
 - d. John the Baptist

2. John's message was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven _____ (3:2).

3. What was John's food and clothing? _____

4. John _____ those who confessed their sins (3:6).

5. True or False: John baptized the Pharisees and Sadducees. _____

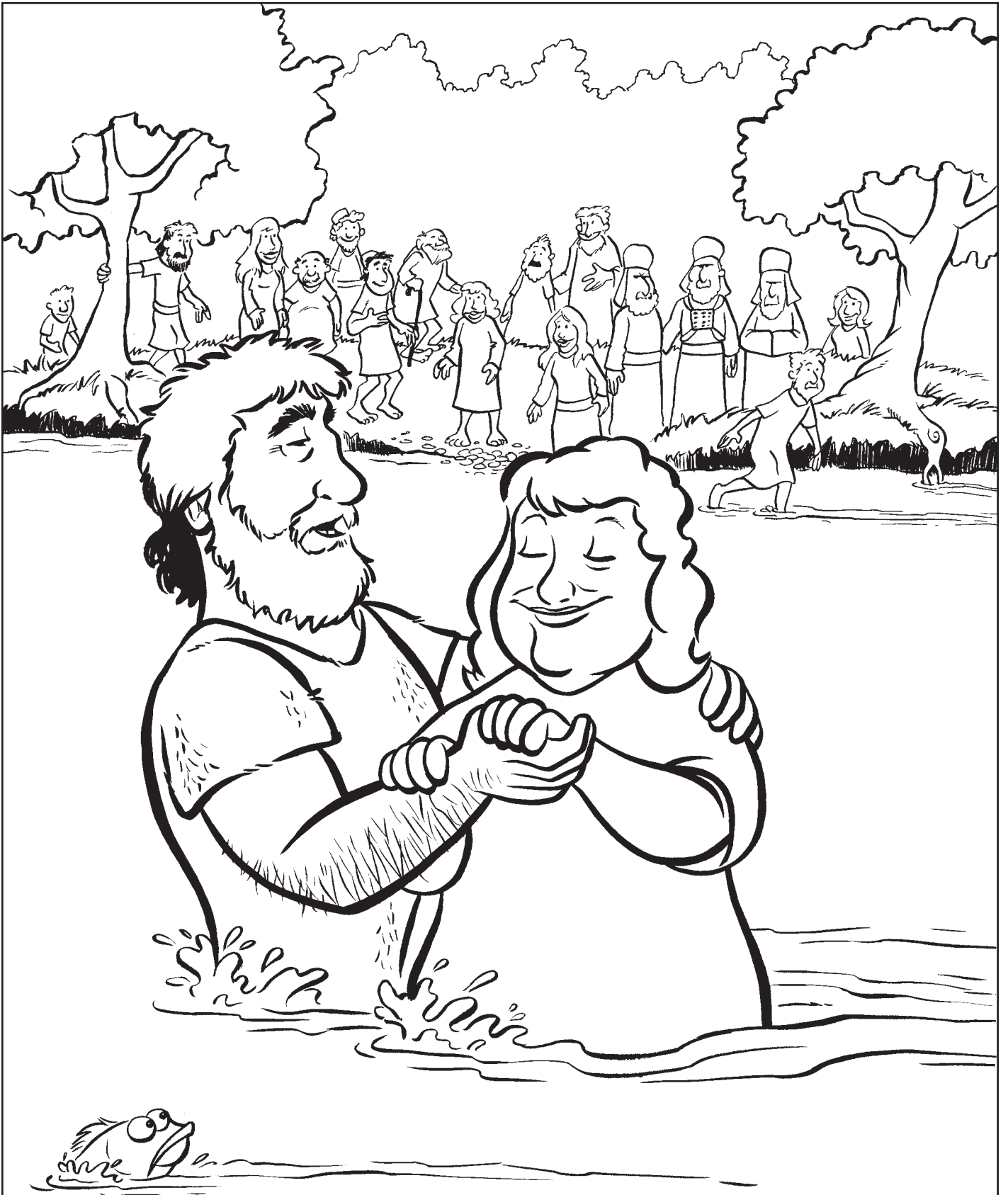
7. Who was coming that was mightier than John the Baptist? _____

8. John baptized with water, but Jesus baptizes with the _____
and _____ (3:11).



"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'"

—Matthew 3:1–2



“Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.”

—Matthew 3:5–6

