

REACH COMMUNITY CHURCH

Teacher Background & Preparation Sheet | For Teacher Study Only, Not Read Aloud

Week #	38	Date	September 20, 2026
Lesson Title	Jesus Is Baptized: God Revealed as Trinity	Primary Scripture	Matthew 3:1-17
Timeline	Beginning of Jesus' public ministry	Primary Focus	Matthew 3:13-17

PURPOSE OF THIS LESSON

There are moments in Scripture when God allows us to see something with unusual clarity, and the baptism of Jesus is one of those moments.

Jesus comes to the Jordan River and is baptized by John. As Jesus comes up from the water, the Holy Spirit descends upon Him like a dove, and the Father speaks from heaven. In one scene, Scripture shows us the Son in the water, the Spirit descending, and the Father speaking.

This passage gives teachers a wonderful opportunity to help children understand one of Christianity's deepest truths without pretending that we can explain everything about God. There is one God, and this one God eternally exists in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The children should leave understanding that Jesus was not baptized because He had sinned. Jesus is the sinless Son of God. His baptism was an act of obedience that publicly marked the beginning of His ministry and identified Him with the saving work He had come to accomplish.

Most importantly, children should see Jesus for who He truly is. He is not merely a good teacher beginning a new job. He is God the Son, sent by the Father, anointed by the Holy Spirit, and moving willingly toward the cross where He will save sinners.

BOOK & PASSAGE BACKGROUND

Book Name: Matthew

Traditional Author: Matthew, also called Levi, one of Jesus' twelve apostles.

Approximate Date Written: The exact date is debated. Many scholars place Matthew somewhere in the first century before or after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Scripture does not provide the date, so teachers should not present a disputed date as certain.

Original Audience: Matthew was written for Christians and presents the life and teaching of Jesus with particular attention to His fulfillment of Old Testament promises.

Purpose of the Book: Matthew presents Jesus as the promised Messiah and King. Its opening identifies Him as "Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham" in Matthew 1:1. From the beginning, Matthew wants us to understand that Jesus stands at the center of God's long promised work of salvation.

By the time we reach Matthew 3, Jesus has grown from the child described in the opening chapters into an adult. John the Baptist is preaching in the wilderness and preparing people for the coming of the Lord.

John's message is direct:

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Matthew 3:2

To repent means more than feeling sorry. It means recognizing our sin and turning toward God. John was preparing people to recognize the King who was coming.

Then the King Himself walked toward the Jordan.

HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT

The Jordan River runs through the land of Israel and carries enormous importance throughout biblical history. Israel crossed the Jordan under Joshua when entering the Promised Land, and several important Old Testament events occurred around it.

John was baptizing people in the Jordan as part of his ministry of repentance. Matthew tells us that people were "confessing their sins" as John baptized them in Matthew 3:6.

That creates an important question. Why would Jesus be baptized? Jesus had no sins to confess.

The New Testament consistently teaches His sinlessness. Hebrews 4:15 says Jesus "has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet he did not sin." First Peter 2:22 says, "He committed no sin."

John himself recognized that something unusual was happening. When Jesus came to him, John tried to stop Him.

"I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Matthew 3:14

John understood that Jesus was greater than he was.

Jesus answered:

"Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Matthew 3:15

Jesus was not admitting guilt. He was willingly obeying the Father and stepping publicly into the mission He had come to accomplish.

There is something beautiful about that. The sinless Savior did not remain distant from sinful people. He came among us. His public ministry would eventually lead Him to a cross where, though He had no sin of His own, He would bear ours.

IMMEDIATE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Matthew 3 begins with John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea. John calls people to repentance because God's kingdom is near.

Matthew connects John with the prophecy of Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" Matthew 3:3

John understood that his ministry was preparation for Someone greater.

He tells the people:

"But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry." Matthew 3:11

Then Jesus arrives.

Immediately after His baptism, Matthew 4 records Jesus being led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where Satan tempts Him. Jesus remains obedient where human beings so often fail.

Afterward, Jesus begins preaching, calling disciples, teaching, healing, and announcing the kingdom of God.

The baptism therefore stands at an important doorway in Matthew. Jesus' public ministry is beginning.

KEY THEOLOGICAL TRUTH #1: JESUS IS GOD THE SON

Matthew does not leave Jesus' identity for us to guess.

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17

Jesus is the Son.

That does not mean Jesus was created by God or became God's Son at His baptism. Scripture teaches that the Son existed before His human birth. John 1:1 tells us that the Word was with God and was God, and John 1:14 tells us that this eternal Word became flesh.

The baptism reveals Jesus' identity. It does not create it.

Teachers should be careful here because children sometimes hear "Son of God" and imagine human parenthood. Jesus is eternally God the Son. His relationship with the Father did not begin at Bethlehem or at the Jordan River.

KEY THEOLOGICAL TRUTH #2: JESUS DID NOT NEED FORGIVENESS

Because John's baptism was associated with repentance, children may naturally wonder whether Jesus needed to repent.

He did not.

Jesus lived the perfectly righteous life that none of us has lived. Hebrews 4:15 plainly says that He "did not sin."

This matters enormously to the gospel.

A Savior who needed forgiveness Himself could not save us. Jesus could take our sins because He had no sin of His own.

Second Corinthians 5:21 explains:

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Jesus stood among sinners at the Jordan, and eventually He would die among sinners at Calvary. Yet He remained the sinless Son of God.

KEY THEOLOGICAL TRUTH #3: GOD IS TRINITY

This passage gives us one of Scripture's clearest pictures of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit appearing distinctly at the same moment.

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'" Matthew 3:16-17

Notice carefully what Scripture shows us.

Jesus the Son is in the water. The Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus. The Father speaks from heaven.

These are not three gods. Scripture is clear that there is one God. Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "The LORD our God, the LORD is one."

Yet the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are personally distinct.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance summarizes this biblical truth by confessing that there is one God who exists eternally in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

For children, our language should remain simple:

God is one God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Father is God. Jesus the Son is God. The Holy Spirit is God. The Father is not the Son. The Son is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not the Father. Yet there are not three gods. There is one God.

We should resist the temptation to make this easier by comparing God to an egg, water, a three leaf clover, or one person who acts in three different roles. Those comparisons usually create more confusion because none accurately describes the God Scripture reveals.

We do not have to explain everything about God before we can faithfully believe what He has revealed about Himself.

KEY THEOLOGICAL TRUTH #4: THE FATHER LOVES THE SON

There is also something wonderfully personal in the Father's words.

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17

The Trinity is not merely a difficult doctrine Christians have to memorize. Scripture allows us to glimpse the eternal relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Father loves the Son.

Jesus later speaks of this love in John 17:24, saying that the Father loved Him "before the creation of the world."

Long before you or I existed, God was already God. He was not lonely and He did not create human beings because He needed companionship. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have eternally existed in perfect divine life and love.

Creation flows from God's goodness, not from some emptiness inside Him.

KEY THEOLOGICAL TRUTH #5: JESUS CAME TO SAVE SINNERS

The Jordan River does not stand alone in Jesus' life. Jesus knows where His mission is going.

Later in Matthew, Jesus tells His disciples:

*"The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
Matthew 20:28*

The baptism begins His public ministry, and that ministry moves steadily toward Jerusalem, the cross, and the empty tomb.

God is holy and good, while every one of us has sinned. We cannot erase our guilt by becoming nicer people or doing enough good things.

Jesus came because we cannot save ourselves.

Jesus is God the Son. He lived without sin. He willingly died on the cross for our sins and rose bodily from the dead. Everyone who turns from sin and trusts in Jesus is forgiven and receives new life.

The One standing in the Jordan is already walking toward our rescue.

CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE CONNECTION

This passage fits naturally within the Christ centered heart of Alliance teaching.

Jesus our Savior: The Son identified at the Jordan is the Savior who will eventually give His life for sinners and rise again.

Jesus our Sanctifier: The Holy Spirit is present at Jesus' baptism. For believers, the Spirit lives within us and works in us, helping us grow in obedience and become more like Christ.

Jesus our Healer: Jesus' later ministry demonstrates His compassion toward suffering people and His authority over sickness, while Scripture never teaches that sufficient faith guarantees immediate physical healing.

Jesus our Coming King: The Jesus whom the Father identifies as His beloved Son is also the risen Lord who will return personally and visibly as King.

The Fourfold Gospel is ultimately about one Person. Jesus is our Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King.

RELIABILITY OF SCRIPTURE

All four Gospels record Jesus' baptism or John's testimony surrounding it, although each writer emphasizes different details. Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:29-34 together show that Jesus' baptism belonged to the earliest Christian proclamation about His ministry.

The Jordan River is also a real geographical location, not an imaginary setting. People can still visit the Jordan today.

That geographical reality supports the historical setting, but we should explain the limits of evidence carefully.

Finding the Jordan River does not scientifically prove that the Father spoke from heaven or that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus. Those are supernatural events reported by Scripture.

Christian faith does not require us to pretend archaeology can prove every miracle. Our confidence begins with God's Word.

APOLOGETICS FOUNDATION

A child may ask, "How can God be three Persons and still be one God?"

The first answer is not an analogy. The first answer is Scripture.

Deuteronomy 6:4 teaches that God is one. Matthew 3:16-17 shows Father, Son, and Holy Spirit distinctly. Matthew 28:19 later places all three together in Jesus' command to baptize "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Notice that Jesus says **name**, singular, while naming Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe the Trinity because we are allowing all of Scripture to speak.

There are things about an infinite God that finite human minds will not fully understand. That should not embarrass us. If we could fit everything about God inside our minds, He would not be much of a God.

There is an important difference between a contradiction and a mystery.

Christians are not saying God is one God and three gods. That would contradict itself.

We are saying God is **one Being and three Persons**.

That is mysterious, but it is not logically the same as saying one God equals three gods.

For children, we can make it even simpler:

There is only one God. The Father is God, Jesus the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. They are three distinct Persons, but they are one God.

We know that much because God has told us. We should be humble about everything beyond what Scripture reveals.

ANTICIPATED CHILD QUESTIONS

Why did Jesus get baptized if He never sinned?

Jesus was not baptized because He needed forgiveness. Hebrews 4:15 says Jesus did not sin. Jesus told John that His baptism was right "to fulfill all righteousness" in Matthew 3:15. He was obeying the Father and beginning His public ministry.

Did Jesus become God's Son when He was baptized?

No. Jesus was already God the Son. John 1:1 teaches that the Son existed eternally as God, and John 1:14 teaches that He became human. The Father's words at Jesus' baptism revealed who Jesus already was.

Was the Holy Spirit really a bird?

No. Matthew says the Spirit descended **like a dove**. Scripture describes how the Spirit descended, but it does not teach that the Holy Spirit is literally a dove.

Are there three Gods?

No. Deuteronomy 6:4 teaches that God is one. Scripture also reveals Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as distinct Persons. Christians therefore confess one God in three Persons.

Why is the Trinity so hard to understand?

Because God is greater than we are. We can truly know what God has revealed about Himself without knowing everything about Him. There is nothing wrong with saying, "I do not completely understand how this works, but I believe what God has told us."

If Jesus is God, why did the Father speak to Him?

Because Jesus is not the Father. The Father and Son are distinct Persons, yet both are the one true God. Jesus' baptism helps us see that distinction very clearly.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Misunderstanding: Jesus was baptized because He had sinned.

Correction: Jesus was completely sinless. His baptism was obedience to the Father, not repentance for personal sin.

Misunderstanding: God changed forms from Father to Son to Holy Spirit.

Correction: Matthew 3 shows Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at the same moment. They are distinct Persons, not one Person switching roles.

Misunderstanding: Christians believe in three gods.

Correction: Scripture teaches one God. The doctrine of the Trinity describes the one God as He has revealed Himself.

Misunderstanding: The Holy Spirit is a dove.

Correction: Scripture says the Spirit descended "like a dove." A dove may be used as a Christian symbol for the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, not an animal.

Misunderstanding: Baptism saves us.

Correction: Water baptism does not earn salvation. Salvation is God's gift received through faith in Jesus Christ. Baptism is an act of obedience in which believers publicly identify themselves with Christ.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

There is a beautiful movement beginning at the Jordan.

The Father identifies Jesus:

"This is my Son, whom I love." Matthew 3:17

Jesus then begins the ministry that will lead Him toward the cross.

At the cross, the sinless Son willingly bears the judgment our sins deserve. First Peter 3:18 explains it plainly:

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."

That sentence gives us the gospel in wonderfully simple language.

The righteous for the unrighteous.

Jesus is righteous. We are sinners. Jesus takes the place of sinners. Jesus brings us to God.

Then death does not get the final word. Jesus rises from the grave, proving that His saving work is complete and that He truly is Lord.

Children do not need to leave this lesson merely thinking, "The Trinity is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." They should leave knowing something much more personal.

The triune God has acted to save us.

The Father sent the Son. The Son willingly came and gave Himself for us. The Holy Spirit brings God's life and presence to those who belong to Christ.

Our salvation begins and ends with God.

TEACHER HEART PREPARATION

Before teaching this passage, spend some time simply reading Matthew 3:13-17 without trying to solve every theological question it raises.

Picture the moment Scripture actually gives us. Jesus stands in the Jordan. The Spirit descends. The Father speaks.

God is showing us something about Himself.

There may be a child in the room who has never heard the word *Trinity*. Another may have heard it many times but has quietly wondered whether Christians somehow believe in three gods. Someone else may ask a question you cannot answer.

That is all right.

A faithful teacher does not have to know everything about God. We need to know what Scripture says, explain it carefully, and be honest about where Scripture stops.

There is a quiet confidence in being able to tell a child, "That is a good question. The Bible does not tell us everything about that, so I do not want to pretend that I know."

Our task is not to make the mystery of God small enough to fit inside a child's mind. Our task is to help children know what God has truly revealed about Himself and discover that this great God can be trusted.

And at the center of what He has revealed stands Jesus.

The beloved Son entered the water that day knowing His road would eventually lead toward a cross. He came anyway.

He came for sinners like us. He died for sinners like us. He rose again.

And because Jesus lives, the children sitting in front of us can know the Father, receive the Holy Spirit, be forgiven, and belong to God forever.

Teacher Prayer Focus: Father, help me speak faithfully about You without pretending to understand what You have not explained. Help me show these children the glory of Your Son and teach them to trust Your Word. Holy Spirit, give me wisdom, gentleness, and love as I teach. May every question lead us closer to Jesus, and may every child leave knowing that the God who is greater than we can fully understand has made Himself known and has come to save us through Christ. Amen.