

united kingdom

JESUS'
BAPTISM

the Kingdom story from creation to revelation

JESUS' BAPTISM

Based on NLT

Introduction

Jesus grew to be a young man. God sent a prophet, John, to prepare the way for the people to receive Jesus – the Promised King.

Luke 3:1-3, Mathew 3:2

A message from God came to a man named John ... who was living out in the wilderness. John went from place to place ... telling people that they should be preparing for God's Kingdom to come. They should be baptised – washed in water – to show that they had turned away from their disobedience and turned to God to be forgiven.

Matthew 3:7-9

Some religious leaders came to watch John, and he said to them, "You bunch of snakes! ... Who warned you to flee from God's coming wrath? Prove by the way you live that you have ... turned away from your disobedience and turned to God. Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, because we are part of God's people – we're descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing. ... God can create His very own people from these ... stones here."

Luke 3:10-14

Then the crowd asked, "What should we do?" John replied, "If you have two coats, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry." Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptised and asked, "Teacher, what should we do?" He replied, "Collect no more taxes than the government requires." "What should we do?" asked some soldiers. John replied, "Don't extort money, and don't accuse people of things you know they didn't do. And be content with your pay."

Luke 3:15-16

Everyone was expecting the Promised King to come soon, and they were eager to know if John was he. John answered their questions by saying, "I baptise you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am – so much greater that I am not even worthy to be His slave. ... He will baptise you with God's Spirit. ..."

Luke 3:21, Matthew 3:13-15

One day when the crowds were being baptised, Jesus Himself came ... to be baptised by John – even though Jesus had never disobeyed God. But John tried to talk Him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptised by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" But Jesus said, "It should be done, because God wants it." So John agreed to baptise Him.

Matthew 3:16-17

After His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and He saw God's Spirit descending like a dove and settling on Him. And God said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

TELLING THE STORY

Why this story?

Jesus begins His ministry, and it becomes apparent that it will be different than anything expected. In fact, the concept of “God’s people” immediately becomes broader – it’s those whose hearts are right with God. God commissions His beloved Son for the task ahead of Him.

We don’t know much about Jesus’ childhood, but this story begins Jesus’ adult ministry with an immediate shock. Even before Jesus comes on the scene, John shows that he understands something of God’s Kingdom by telling people that it’s time to prepare for it. It is time for them to turn away from the wrong things that they had been doing, because God’s Kingdom isn’t about being a part of King David’s physical kingdom. It is about the condition of their hearts. Then John gives an exciting promise to the people – this Promised King will do more than forgive their sins; He will give them God’s Spirit! John recognises Jesus for who He is when He comes to be baptised, and God makes it known that Jesus is His beloved Son. Let the Kingdom come!

Key concepts to include in your story

- **Jesus grew to be a young man ...** Set the scene for your audience by transitioning from the birth of Jesus to His adulthood. Introduce John and explain his role.
 - John tells people to prepare for the coming kingdom by being baptised – washed in water – to show that they had turned away from their disobedience and turned to God to be forgiven
- John confronts the religious leaders
 - They are hypocritical (a bunch of snakes!)
 - They should prove that they follow God by the way they live
 - They shouldn’t trust in just their ancestry, because God can make anyone part of His kingdom
- Different kinds of people ask for practical advice about what they could do
 - The “normal” person can share their belongings
 - The tax collector can be honest in what they take
 - The soldiers should not extort money
- People wonder if John is the Promised King
 - John says that someone greater than he is coming
 - The Promised King will baptise them with God’s Spirit
- Jesus comes to be baptised
 - John doesn’t want to baptise Jesus, because Jesus has never disobeyed God
 - Jesus says God wants it to happen, so Jesus is baptised
 - God’s Spirit comes on Jesus in the form of a dove
 - God says that Jesus is His greatly loved Son, and that Jesus brings him joy

Notes about how the story was crafted

For a discussion of the term **prophet**, please see the Isaiah story.

The meaning of **baptism** is unpacked in this story so that the audience will understand more about the concepts involved in it without needing an in-depth explanation of it after the story. Our English word for **baptism** is taken directly from the Greek *baptizo* and means “to put inside or under water” or “to wash in a spiritual sense.” (Translator’s Notes on Luke.) John’s baptism was done to show that a person wanted to stop sinning and obey God. Although the baptism was symbolic and the water had no physical properties to forgive sins, the act of public obedience and commitment to God would definitely have an effect on a person and give them greater encouragement to continue in their commitment. In the example story we have added the phrase **washed in water** to the term **baptism** in order to both retain the traditional word and include a short explanatory note. If you need to use **washed in**

water throughout this story for your audience's understanding, you can.

John preached "repentance," a concept whose meaning is unpacked in this story by the phrase **turned away from their disobedience and turned to God to be forgiven**. "Repentance" may be a concept that your audience will not fully understand or the word itself may have an unwanted negative connotation.

For a discussion of the term **disobedience**, please see the Isaiah story.

We've used the Matthew 3:7-9 passage instead of the corresponding Luke passage to emphasise that even **religious leaders** (the term used for **Pharisees and Sadducees** in this story set) would think that they are safe because of the people group into which they were born. The religious leaders symbolise those in Israel who opposed and disbelieved the way God chose to bring in His kingdom. This symbolism is clearer in the Matthew passage.

John was telling the religious leaders that although they thought they were safe simply because they were Jews and followed the Jewish religious laws, they weren't. God's requirement for admittance into His kingdom was a heart change. The way people lived as a result of their heart change, rather than their ancestry, would prove that they were truly part of God's Kingdom. Because our audience will have heard the Abraham story, we have retained the allusion to him. However, if your audience doesn't know Abraham, an alternate wording could be:

Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, *because we are part of God's people.*' That means nothing. ... God can create *His very own people* from these ... stones *here.*"

For a discussion of the title **Promised King**, please see the Isaiah story.

We have omitted the **with fire** in the phrase "**He will baptise you with God's Spirit and with fire.**" Scholars are not consistently clear about what **with fire** means. It may refer to the purging or judging role of Jesus, or it may refer to the refining that the Holy Spirit brings (and physically fulfils in the tongues of fire we see at Pentecost). Whatever the case, we do know that John expects this coming person to fulfil the role of the Promised King. Discussions about the fire may distract the hearer from the main theme of this story, which is to show that even from the beginning of Jesus' ministry, His emphasis was to be on the heart condition of those in His kingdom rather than their ancestry or religious tradition. Although both of the proposed meanings of the fire relate to the theme, it may confuse someone who does not have a church background. Mark's Gospel also omitted **with fire** in his account of Jesus' baptism.

God's Spirit is used instead of **Holy Spirit** for our audiences who may not be comfortable with "religious" terminology.

The original audience of this story would have understood John's hesitation in baptising Jesus as his understanding that Jesus had never disobeyed God. We have included this implicit information in the example story so that our audience will have no doubt that Jesus was not asking God to forgive any wrongdoing. This implicit information also connects this story to the Isaiah story in which it is clear that the Promised King has never done anything wrong, and it is exegetically supported in 2 Corinthians 5:21.

You may find the phrase **the heavens were opened** too archaic for your audience. If so, you may omit it from your story or say something like **God's Spirit came down from heaven in the form of a dove**.

God's Spirit plays an important role in this story. Just like the King David story, God's Spirit comes at a time of anointing or commissioning to a God-given task or role. (Not that God's Spirit was not with Jesus before this moment, but His appearance here signifies the start of something.) Place an emphasis on God's Spirit coming and on what God says about Jesus. God emphatically validates His Son in this story.

A voice from heaven is readily accepted by scholars as being **God's voice**, so we have used that in this story for clarity.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Retelling the story

- As your group practises retelling this story, help them see the different scenes in this story.
 - Introduction and setting the scene
 - What John says and does in the wilderness
 - John talks to the religious leaders
 - John addresses the different groups in the crowd
 - John describes the Promised King
 - Jesus comes to be baptised
 - Jesus is baptised
 - God's Spirit comes down on Jesus and God confirms His pleasure in His Son, Jesus
- This story has quite a few visual reminders: repentance in the form of a U-turn away from our sins, the snakes, the stones, the things the different groups in the crowd do, the water of baptism. Drawing or storyboarding this story may help your group remember it.
- Your group could divide into smaller groups, each representing one of the groups of people in this story (i.e. the religious leaders, the crowds, the tax collectors, the soldiers). When the narrator reaches that part of the story, the small group could say their part together. Each of those small groups could discuss in their groups how it must have felt to be someone like that in that day and age, and how they would have responded if they had been in that same position themselves.

Questions for discussion

You don't have to ask all of these questions in your discussion times. These questions are discussion starters, but you will find that often, once people feel comfortable, they talk about many of these things naturally. However, these questions are helpful to keep a conversation going where needed, and they provide a logical sequence of working through the story. Even if you don't ask all the questions in a group, try to ask people what this story means for them personally. You'll find that as you continue to interact with God's Word at a deep level, God's Spirit will reveal things for your life in a wonderful way!

- What do you like about this story?
- What bothered you about this story?
- What does this story show you about God?
- What does this story show you about people?
- What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
- How will you remember this story? (*Tell it!*)
- Is there anyone you would like to tell this story to? Or anyone you would like to practice with? E.g. Your children, your best friend, your wife, your husband, a mum at the school gate, your work colleague, your neighbour. (It's true that the best way to learn a story is to tell it. So why don't you give it a go and chat to each other next week about how you found it?)
- How does this story contribute to our understanding of the Gospel? How is this story part of the Gospel?

Questions people may have

This section can never be exhaustive. Remember that during your group discussion times, you want to focus on the above questions rather than get sidetracked by deeply academic issues. Part of the joy of experiencing and studying God's Word in this way is allowing God's Spirit to teach us and reveal His truth to us through the narrative of the individual stories, and ultimately through the narrative of the larger story line. However, we understand that sometimes people feel they need

some deeper answers. Sometimes, the storyline has to speak for itself, and we have to trust it to do so. However, if your group needs some deeper answers in order to go on, here are some basics that you can discuss. If you have unresolved questions, please come and ask, and we'll help you find the answers.

- What is God's Kingdom?

Mk 10:23-30 assumes that the kingdom and eternal life are synonymous and a free gift, and receiving the kingdom means to open one's heart to the rule of God in his life. A kingdom implies both a realm and a reign. God's realm is universal, and He reigns and has divine authority in the hearts of those who submit to His rule.

In Mt 13:11 and Mk 4:11 Jesus says that the disciples are permitted to understand the mystery of the kingdom. The mystery is that there is a preliminary fulfilment before the eschatological one – the fulfilment found in the person of Jesus and His gift of life, and proven by His miracles. The mystery is illustrated in His parables. Jesus often describes the coming kingdom in feast or wedding banquet terms, symbolising a restoration of relationship between God and man (in biblical culture, eating together was a symbol of good relationship). In fact, for the Jews the wedding was a symbol of the Messianic fulfilment. But Jesus' focus is on the present kingdom. ... (Mk 1:15; Lk 4:16-31, 10:23-24) Mk 2:19 implies that the wedding feast had already begun. Jesus' fulfilment of the coming of the kingdom in the form of helping people, rather than apocalyptic fulfilment, was unexpected.

In Mt 16:18-19 Jesus says that He will build His 'church,' which means his gathering of the people of Israel – i.e. 'His new people of God;' those over whom He reigns. Church as we currently define it is NOT the kingdom – kingdom is about God's reign in His people. In the Old Testament, Israel was the custodian of the kingdom, but now the church is. (Mt 21:43; Mk 12:9) Acts 2:33-35 shows that Jesus is now sitting at the right hand of God and is currently ruling. Jesus is Lord of all now ... although invisible to many until the end of time.

In summary, basileia in Greek means "to reign." The Kingdom of God in the New Testament refers to the time when God comes to rule – His reign and authority which begins its fulfilment with Jesus' ministry on earth and people's acceptance of Him. The Kingdom also has a future fulfilment in the last days. This future kingdom comes when Jesus comes back – we inherit the 'kingdom' and all of creation is redeemed. (Mt 25:31-46)

- It sounds like Luke 3:10-14 advocates salvation through works; John just tells people what they should do rather than addresses the heart issue of faith.

Most scholars believe that the crowd in Luke 3:10 represents people who have come to hear John and have repented of their disobedience already. The actions that John tells them to take are practical suggestions and ideas for living out their faith – the faith that they already have and that has already caused them to be forgiven. John does not imply that the people must do these things in order to gain favour or forgiveness from God. Even in Matthew 3:8, when John tells the religious leaders to prove that they have repented by the way they live, assumes that a heart change occurs before the change in behaviour.

- Why does John call the religious leaders a "bunch of snakes"?

You may notice that in the Luke account of the baptism, Luke 3:7 does not specify "religious leaders." Scholars believe that whomever the specific group was that John was addressing, they represented the disbelief and opposition in Israel. The religious leaders, unlike the different group of people also labelled "crowds" in Luke 3:10, did not come to be baptised. The discourse of the Matthew account suggests that the Pharisees and Sadducees came as a "cross-party delegation" to check out what John was doing. John knew that they did not truly support his ministry, and the title "snakes/vipers" refers to this hypocrisy and craftiness. "Snakes" refers to the danger posed that the religious leaders could lead people away from God, and it may be a slight allusion to the original deception caused by Satan in the garden when he led the first man and woman away from God. John is being sarcastic when he asks them who warned them to "flee from the coming wrath." He knows that they do not feel a need to flee from wrath, because they think they are safe.

- Is John's baptism different than our modern baptism?

Remember that the Bible takes us on an unfolding journey, and we will understand more as we continue the journey. John's baptism is not a full picture of what modern baptism symbolises, but it introduces the concept. Ceremonial washings were already practised in the Jewish faith as a symbol of ritual purity, but they had to be performed again and

again. Another type of baptism was done when Gentiles wanted to become Jewish, and the baptism symbolised a break from the old life and an initiation into the new community and moral value system of the Jewish faith. Both of these types of washings provide a backdrop to John's baptism, but John's was slightly different. His baptism was for Jewish people, but symbolised a breaking away from an old life of disobedience and a preparation for God's soon-to-come kingdom.

The early church certainly saw baptism as a symbol of repentance, initiation into the Christian community and sign of commitment to Jesus. Christian baptism includes the symbolism of Jesus' burial and resurrection, our death to our old life, and our resurrection into our new life with Jesus. As we continue into the New Testament stories and stories of the early church, we will come back to this subject and address it more fully.

- Why do different churches baptise differently? Is full immersion the only way to do biblical baptism or is sprinkling with water acceptable?

Both the Jewish proselyte baptism and John's baptism seem to be full immersion, and on the basis of that historical evidence, our church has chosen to follow that example. We also see baptism as a symbol of Jesus' burial and resurrection, so we feel that immersion best encompasses all aspects of baptism. Baptism in water is an essential part of conversion-initiation, as we will see in future stories. As we continue into the New Testament stories and stories of the early church, we'll come back to this subject and address it more fully.

- John said that the Promised King would baptise in God's Spirit. How can someone be baptised in God's Spirit? *John's baptism is centred on repentance and living a new life characterised by mercy on the poor and service to others. John's baptism clears the way for the early church's baptism in God's Spirit, which is the stronger one. The early church's baptism in God's Spirit refers to God's presence that helps us carry out God's redemptive plan. This is what God's Spirit does in Acts 2 when He comes at Pentecost. Luke, the author of both Luke and Acts, seems to see the promise of baptism in the Holy Spirit fulfilled at Pentecost. We'll come back to this subject in later New Testament stories. Remember that John's original audience didn't know exactly what he was talking about!*

- Why would God want Jesus to be baptised? *If John's baptism was a symbol of repentance and turning towards God, along with a preparation for God's soon-to-come kingdom, why would Jesus need to be baptised? For some, Jesus' response to John, "It should be done, because God wants it" is sufficient. Others are curious about why God would want it to be done. Biblical scholars have theorised several possible reasons – all of which seem to be supported, although not confirmed, in Scripture. 1) Jesus was given an opportunity to show His obedience to God – God wanted this to happen (for an unknown reason), and Jesus did it without questioning. 2) Jesus was to affirm John's message of the need for repentance before the imminent coming of God's kingdom, and this was the best way to do it. 3) Jesus was distancing himself from the self-righteous who saw no need for repentance and taking a stand with those who wanted to follow God. 4) Jesus is baptised as a representative of the people and acknowledged their need for repentance and forgiveness – just as He later hangs on the cross in mankind's place.*

This question does not have a clear answer, but we can be sure that Jesus felt that God wanted Him to be baptised, and He was determined to obey.

JESUS' BAPTISM – for children

Based on NLT

Introduction

Jesus grew to be a young man. God sent a prophet, John, to prepare the way for the people to receive Jesus – the Promised King.

Luke 3:1-3, Mathew 3:2

A message from God came to a man named John ... who was living out in the *desert*. John went from place to place ... telling people that they should be *getting ready* for God's Kingdom to come. They should be baptised – washed in water – to show that they had *turned away from their disobedience – all the things they had done wrong* – and turned to God to be forgiven.

Matthew 3:7-9

Some religious leaders came to watch John, and he said to them, "You bunch of snakes! ... Who warned you to run away from God's coming punishment? Do the things that show that you really have changed your hearts and lives and have ... turned away from your disobedience and turned to God. Don't just say to each other, 'We're safe, because we are part of God's people – we're descendants of Abraham.' That means nothing. ... God can create His very own people from these ... rocks here."

Luke 3:10-14

*Then the crowd asked, "What should we do?" John replied, "If you have two coats, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry." Even *dishonest* tax collectors came to be baptised and asked, "Teacher, what should we do?" He replied, "*Don't take more taxes from people than you have been ordered to take.*" "What should we do?" asked some soldiers. John replied, "*Don't force people to give you money, and don't accuse people of things you know they didn't do.* And be *okay with how much you get paid.*"*

Luke 3:15-16

Everyone was expecting the *Promised King* to come soon, and they *wondered if John might be the one*. John answered their questions by saying, "I baptise you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am – so much greater that I am not even worthy to be His slave. ... He will baptise you with *God's Spirit*. ..."

Luke 3:21, Matthew 3:13-15

One day when the crowds were being baptised, Jesus Himself *came* ... to be baptised by John – *even though Jesus had never disobeyed God*. But John tried to talk Him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptised by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?" But Jesus said, "It should be done, *because God wants it.*" So John agreed to baptise Him.

Matthew 3:16-17

After His baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and He saw *God's Spirit coming down* like a dove and *landing* on Him. And *God* said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy."

TELLING THE STORY – for children

Key concepts to include in your story

The story will need to be simplified at varying levels based on the age group of the children you are teaching. This means that many of the details in the story will need to be summarized. However, you should include the following concepts in your story.

- **Jesus grew to be a young Man ...** Set the scene for your audience by transitioning from the birth of Jesus to His adulthood. Introduce John and explain his role.
 - John tells people to prepare for the coming kingdom by being baptised – washed in water – to show that they had turned away from their disobedience and turned to God to be forgiven
- John confronts the religious leaders
 - They are hypocritical (a bunch of snakes!)
 - They should prove that they follow God by the way they live
 - They shouldn't trust in just their ancestry, because God can make anyone part of His kingdom
- Different kinds of people ask for practical advice about what they could do
 - The "normal" person can share their belongings
 - The tax collector can be honest in what they take
 - The soldiers should not extort money
- People wonder if John is the Promised King
 - John says that someone greater than he is coming
 - The Promised King will baptise them with God's Spirit
- Jesus comes to be baptised
 - John doesn't want to baptise Jesus, because Jesus has never disobeyed God
 - Jesus says God wants it to happen, so Jesus is baptised
 - God's Spirit comes on Jesus in the form of a dove
 - God says that Jesus is His greatly loved Son, and that Jesus brings him joy

Example of a simplified version of the story for children

Jesus grew to be a young man, and God sent the prophet John to prepare the way for people to accept Jesus – the Promised King. God sent a message to John while he was living in the desert. So John travelled from place to place, telling people that they needed to get ready for God's Kingdom. John told them they needed to be baptised – washed in water – to show that they had turned away from all the things they had done wrong and turned to God to be forgiven. One day John saw some religious leaders watching him, and he said to them, "You bunch of snakes! If you really have changed your hearts and lives then show it by the way you act. Turn to God and turn away from the things you do to disobey Him. You're not safe just because you're part of God's people. If He wants to, God can create people for Himself from these rocks." Then the crowd asked John, "What should we do?" John said, "If you have two coats, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry." Then when the tax collectors came to be baptised, they asked, "Teacher, what should we do?" John told them to be honest and only take the money from people that they had been ordered to take. Then some soldiers asked John what they should do, and John said, "Don't force people to give you money, and don't blame people for things you know they didn't do. And be happy with the amount of money you get paid." Now the people were waiting for the Promised King to come, and they wondered if John was that person. John told the people, "I'm baptising you with water. The Promised King is coming soon, and He's much greater than I am. I'm not even worthy to be His slave. And when He comes, He will baptise you with God's Spirit." Then one day when John was baptising the crowds, Jesus came. Even though Jesus had never disobeyed God or done anything wrong, He wanted John to baptise Him. John tried to talk Jesus out of it and said to Him, "Why are you coming to me? I am the one who needs to be baptised by You." Jesus said, "God wants me to do this." So John agreed to baptise Him. After His baptism – as Jesus came out of the water – the heavens opened. Jesus saw God's Spirit coming down like a dove, and it landed on Him. Then God said, "This is my Son, and I love Him very much. He brings me great joy."

Retelling the story

The following activities can be used to vary your storying sessions with the children and keep the action fresh and exciting. They also help the children learn the stories in different ways. You'll find as children journey through this story set with you, they become more and more capable of learning even complicated stories quickly and well. Varying activities and keeping it fun helps the children write the stories on their heart so that they can pull them out of their toolbox whenever a situation comes up where they can use them!

- **Charades** – Have participants choose one line from the story and use actions to convey that line to the rest of the group. The child that guesses correctly goes next.
- **Skit** – Assign parts to groups and have them act out the story as you or a participant narrates. This can be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, you may choose to have each team act out the whole story, or assign sections and have them perform the skits in chronological order one after the other.
- **Song** – This activity seems to work best in small groups of older and more advanced students. If you believe your group would enjoy this activity, have them write and perform a song based on a story or a portion of a story. To make this task easier, have each group choose a song melody as their foundation and change the lyrics as needed, as opposed to starting from scratch.
- **Sign Language** – This is a great way to incorporate kinaesthetic learning into storying. Work with the participants to develop "sign language" for keywords in the story. This will help them to remember the order and progression of the story. This activity may also be done as a group or in smaller teams. If done in teams, have a participant from each team narrate as the group demonstrates their motions. The more creative, the more likely they are to remember it! Sign language is a good activity if younger and more inexperienced storytellers are part of the group.
- **Perspective Shift** – This creative and critical thinking activity works best later in the story set. Assign groups of children different characters in the story. They then adjust the story they have learned to the perspective of that character. For example, they could tell the Fall story from Adam and Eve's perspectives or the Abraham story from Abraham's perspective.
- **Memory** – The storyteller starts this activity by saying the first line of the story. The story then moves around the circle as each participant tells a line. An alternate method is to go back and forth between partners as they tell the story to each other.
- **Popcorn** – The storyteller also starts this activity. As children remember, they raise their hand. When ready, the storyteller yells "pop" and the name of someone with their hand raised. That person will then jump in until more hands are raised and they shout "pop" to pass the story to another child. You will likely need to demonstrate how this works.
- **Interview** – Children are assigned different characters. A child designated as "interviewer" asks the characters questions about what happened in the story and the character answers according to his or her role. For example, the interviewer could ask Adam about what he witnessed or the actions he took in the garden when he ate the fruit, and Adam would give his answer.
- **Action words** – Before telling the story, the storyteller gives instructions associated with particular words. Children listen for those words in the story, and must do appropriate action when heard. For example, the storyteller would tell the participants to wiggle their arm like a snake anytime they hear the word "snake." There should be multiple words associated with actions in the story. This activity also works well with a younger audience.

Children's Teaching Materials

Sunday mornings will begin in the warehouse with a joint children's worship time led by a youth worship band followed by a storytelling session with the roving storyteller. Then groups will disperse to their usual meeting locations for the age-appropriate teaching of the story and activities that reinforce that story's message.

Sparks

10:30 Retell the story.
Pretend baptisms

Snack – rice cakes

10:45 Veggie Tales (?)

11:15 Activity: "That's not my king. He's too ..." book series
(Repeat of the activity from the Kingdom #4 David story)

11:25 Play

Resources Needed:

- Towel
- Bowl
- Happyland figures
- Flannels
- Rice cakes
- DVD
- Pictures of different kings

Little Flames

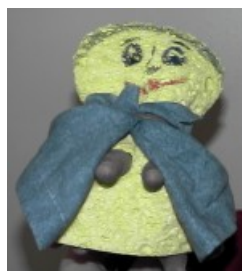
10:30 Begin with prayer. (Don't repeat a specific prayer, but follow the general idea of the prayer below.)

~ Say "Hi" to God, tell Him we're glad He's there with us and ask Him to help us see Him, hear Him and know Him. Invite Him into everything we'll be doing today.

Keep today's focus in mind: "God wants me to do the right thing."

10:35 Craft:
~ Make a sponge puppet (John)

~ Make a dove



Resources Needed:

- Sponges
- Small pieces of fabric
- Markers
- Paper plates
- Craft eyes
- Feathers
- Small triangles of orange or yellow paper
- Glue or tape
- Puppets
- Pictures representing different parts of the story

10:45 Retell the story together multiple times.
~ Puppets (Hand? Sock? Craft stick? Sponge?)
~ Act out the story
~ Use pictures, and have the children put them in order

- 10:55 "Knowledge Harvest" conversation: (use similar questions as below)
- ~ Whom did God send to prepare the way for Jesus' coming?
 - ~ What does it mean to be baptised?
 - ~ Why did John baptise people?
 - ~ What did John tell the religious leaders?
 - ~ What did John tell the crowds of people to do?
 - ~ What did John tell the tax collectors?
 - ~ What did John tell the soldiers?
 - ~ Who were the people waiting for?
 - ~ What did John tell the people about the Promised King?
 - ~ What did Jesus want John to do?
 - ~ What was John's response to Jesus?
 - ~ Why did Jesus want to be baptised?
 - ~ What happened after Jesus was baptised?
 - ~ What did God say about Jesus?
- 11:00 Sing: (choose a song that is appropriate to the story) • Music
- 11:05 Biscuit break – Use this relatively calm opportunity for a little chat and prayer time. • Biscuits
- Discussion: "God tells us that we need to turn away from the things we do to disobey God. We need to turn to God. How can we do that?"
- ~ Reflect back to them today's message: "God wants me to do the right thing."
- 11:10 Popcorn Prayer
- ~ Have simple prayers, popcorn style: "Thank you, Jesus, for _____!"
- 11:15 Games:
- ~ Parachute games (like the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus)
 - ~ Choose a game that reflects "Jesus is the Promised King but not what we expect" (This could be a similar game to those used in the 1st David story.)
- Parachute
- 11:25 Learn the words of the week: "God wants me to do the right thing." Use visuals for the kids to help them learn the words. • Visuals to help learn the message
- Wonder Questions: Think about things we can do to show God that we want to obey Him and live like He wants us to.

Blaze

Resources Needed:

- 10:35 Welcome and straight-forward telling of the story
- 10:40 Split into small groups. Have each group practice acting out the story. Then have each group take a turn acting out the story in front of the big group. (Use blue cloth for the pool.) • Blue cloth

10:50 Discuss the questions in small groups. Allow the children to try retelling the story.
Take time to pray after the discussion.

Discuss the questions:

- ~ What do you like about this story?
- ~ What bothered you about this story?
- ~ What does this story show you about God?
- ~ What does this story show you about people?
- ~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
- ~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*
- ~ To whom will you tell this story?

11:00 Craft:
~ Make a picture of John the Baptist using paper, crayons and wool



- Paper
- Crayons
- Wool
- Glue or tape

11:15 Game: "Throw your sins away!"
Divide the room into four sections by putting tape on the floor. Have a ton of newspaper, toilet paper or other "dry rubbish." The object is for each team to keep the rubbish out of their section by throwing it into another team's section.
THE POINT: Talk about ways we can get rubbish (sin, bad influences, etc) out of our lives.

- Dry rubbish (such as newspaper, toilet paper, etc)
- Tape

11:25 Circle Time: praying, reflection, responses and offering

- Container for the offering

TNT

Resources Needed:

10:35 Welcome and straight-forward telling of the story

10:40 Split into small groups. Have each group practice acting out the story. Then have each group take a turn acting out the story in front of the big group. (Use blue cloth for the pool.)

- Blue cloth

10:50 Discuss the questions in small groups. Allow the children to try retelling the story.
Take time to pray after the discussion.

Discuss the questions:

- ~ What do you like about this story?
- ~ What bothered you about this story?

- ~ What does this story show you about God?
- ~ What does this story show you about people?
- ~ What does this story mean for your life? How will you live your life differently having learned this story?
- ~ How will you remember this story? *Tell it!*
- ~ To whom will you tell this story?

- 11:00 Craft:
- ~ Make puppet people



- Ziploc bags for plastic
- Popsicle sticks
- Markers or crayons
- Tape
- Scissors
- Paper

- 11:15 Game: "Prepare the Way"
- Choose one child to be John, and place a blindfold over his/her eyes. Have the other children spread out in the room. The goal is for the child playing John to find another child and tag him/her without looking. To do this he/she (playing John) will call out, "Prepare the way ..." and the other children will answer, "... for the Lord." By listening to the children's responses, John should try to locate and tag one of the other children. John may call out "Prepare the way" as many times as he/she wants. Everyone else must answer with "for the Lord." When John tags someone, he/she must guess who it is. If guessed correctly then the person tagged takes a turn being John. (With a larger room, the children may move around. With a smaller room, everyone must stand still – except John.)

- Blindfold
- Sleeveless jacket (or other clothing) to dress up "John"

- 11:25 Circle Time: praying, reflection, responses and offering

- Container for the offering