

The King is Here

Text: Mark 1:9-13

Big Idea: The Lord arrives! At his baptism, God tells everyone that Jesus is his son and in the desert Jesus proves he can conquer sin.

Aim: To teach that Jesus' baptism shows that he was chosen by God as the one who is willing and able to conquer sin.

The Story So Far

Lesson 1:

- John the Baptist announces that the Lord (Jesus), is coming.
- He tells the people that Jesus is greater than he is because Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit, not just water.
- He tells the people to prepare their hearts for the Lord by turning to God. They show this by being baptised.



Leader's Study Notes

Read Mark 1:9-13 taking note of the unusual events surrounding Jesus' baptism and what these tell us about Jesus.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

Jesus' baptism and the temptation that follows are two very important events. They not only show who Jesus is (the Son of God), but what he has come to do (help his people and resist the devil). They announced his arrival as the universal king of the ages. It is this grand arrival that is the focus of the lesson.

The Baptism (1:9-11)

Unlike the crowds, Jesus did not need the repentance and cleansing that baptism symbolises – Jesus is perfectly sinless.

For Jesus, baptism is the way he identifies himself with the people he has come to rescue – much like a substitute in a football match will wear the same uniform as the rest of the team.

The people were being baptised to show their repentance and commitment to God, but Jesus' baptism shows his commitment to identify with and represent people.

- **The Spirit** – the heavens are 'torn open' (as Isaiah prayed they would be in Isaiah 64:1), and the Holy Spirit descends 'like' (perhaps in the form of), a dove.

In the Old Testament, people received the Spirit to equip them for their God-given task. This is the case with the various Judges and also King David (1 Samuel 16:13). But none of these people receives the Spirit in the same dramatic way.

Jesus is God so, unlike David, he did not change when he was baptised and 'received' the Spirit. Instead, this is visual confirmation that he is God's anointed king and that he will baptise with the Spirit as John the Baptist had said he would (Mark 1:8).

- **The Voice** – the voice from heaven confirms Jesus' unique relationship with God the Father. It makes clear the fact that while Jesus identifies with sinful people, he is very different from them – he is the one in whom God delights.

In the first verse of his Gospel, Mark boldly declares that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. In 1:11, at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, God tells the world this same truth.

But the truth must now be tested. Can Jesus live up to this claim? Is he really the perfect Son of God?

The Temptation (1:12-13)

Mark doesn't elaborate on the actual temptation the way Matthew and Luke do (Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:1-13), but what he tells us is sufficient to understand that Jesus' ministry is to be understood with Israel's wilderness experience as a backdrop.

Israel, the 'son' God brought out of Egypt (Hosea 1:10; Exodus 4:22), was tested in the wilderness for forty years and the people of Israel failed on many occasions to trust God completely.

But Jesus, the Son God delights in, overcomes temptation in the wilderness and remains perfectly obedient to the Father. He is the first person in history to resist the devil and the power of sin completely.

He is the long-anticipated descendant of Adam, the one who came to crush the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). And here he is being commissioned for the task – visually (dove), audibly (voice from heaven) and practically (overcoming temptation). Jesus is the champion the world has been waiting for!

Reflect

- Imagine reading this for the first time. What does Mark want you to understand?
- In your daily struggle with sin, what comfort do you find in this passage?
- Give thanks to God that Jesus is able (and willing), to identify with and help sinners.



Review

Review the previous lesson using the following questions:

- Who was the special messenger God sent to get people ready for the king? [*John the Baptist* (Mark 1:2, 4)]
- How should people get ready? [*By turning to God and being baptised* (Mark 1:4)]
- What made this king more important than the messenger? [*He is more powerful and will baptise with the Holy Spirit, not just water.* (Mark 1:7-8)]



Introductory Idea - Option 1

For younger children – get all the children to do an activity that is either competitive or at least measurable, such as running, jumping high, press-ups, lifting weights or even drawing (for the very youngest). Who is the champion at that activity?

Then discuss:

- If you were the best in this group, what might you get as a prize?
- If you were the best in this church what might you get?
- Would you get a mention in the local newspaper or your picture on a board?
- What about if you were the best in the town? In the country? In the world?

In today's true story from the Bible, we are going to find out about the arrival of a champion. Listen carefully to find out what happened to show he was the champion. [Use the Bridge Questions below to form a link into the lesson.]



Introductory Idea - Option 2

For older children – gather a number of pictures of sporting celebrities together with some statistics about their various abilities (some of these should be from the same sport).

Place all the pictures on a board and ask some questions that will help the children determine which person would be the best one to represent the country in a particular event.

Where there are two or more possible candidates, quote some of the statistics to help them choose the best one for the job.

Finally, ask the children what the person would need to wear to represent their country?

In today's true story from the Bible, we will see why Jesus is the best person to win a battle

for us. [Use the Bridge Questions below to form a link into the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to discover the answers to the following questions:

- What three things show that Jesus is the best? [*Dove – He received the Holy Spirit and can baptise with the Holy Spirit (Mark 1:10) Voice – He is the Son of God and God is pleased with him (Mark 1:11) Temptation – He can resist the devil. Sinless, perfect (Mark 1:13)*]
- What does Jesus do to show he is on our side? [*He gets baptised by John (Mark 1:9)*]



Teaching Plan

Vocabulary – You will probably need to explain the following words.

Baptism – an outward sign that shows that a person knows they need their sins forgiven and are committed to following Jesus as their king. Think about how to explain this in a way that is consistent with what your church teaches on this subject.

Temptation – when people are encouraged to do the wrong thing (like Adam and Eve were encouraged by the snake to eat the fruit).

For younger children, you can make this lesson quite fun. Get one child to be John the Baptist (wearing something furry or hairy), and another to be Jesus. Have a washing up bowl of water ready with an inch of water in the bottom.

Tell 'Jesus' to take off his socks and shoes, step into the bowl of water and crouch down. Have another child to be God the Father – he stays hidden at all times. Have a third child to be the Holy Spirit – preferably have him holding a cardboard cut out of a dove. Get the children to practice the following actions individually before doing it all together:

- Jesus stands up.
- John helps Jesus out of the water.
- From his hiding place, God the Father says, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."
- God the Holy Spirit (looking like a dove), flies to Jesus and rests on him.

Get each individually to practise, then get it all done together. Repeat if it goes well. Explain that you will count down from five, and when you say "Go" they must act out the whole sequence.

Depending on the age of your group, you may choose only to teach the baptism.

For the temptation, there is value in acting out Adam's encounter with the snake and then

contrasting it with Jesus'. The children could be prompted to tell you the story of Adam (and Eve), and the snake.

Mark chooses to give no details of Jesus' encounter, so perhaps he wants us to focus on the outcome rather than the events. To show the encounter, you could have the devil offering Jesus authority over the whole world (Luke 4:5-7), as a representative temptation.

For older children – the passage is short enough to be read during the lesson. You could start with the baptism idea outlined for younger children above as a fun way to cover some of the details of the story. Then teach the lesson using a simple small group Bible study. You could structure the study around three characters: the dove, the voice and the devil.

What does each of these characters (or their presence), tell us about Jesus?

In what way does each of them show that Jesus is unique and the perfect person to be our champion? If Jesus is the champion who will win the battle against the devil, what is there for us to do?



Game Idea - Option 1

For younger children – play a variation of the 'shipwreck' game. Mark an area down the centre of the room to be the River Jordan. Designate one side of the room to be 'Nazareth' (picture of a city), and the other 'Wilderness' (picture of a desert).

The leader calls out the following in random order and the children respond accordingly:

'Nazareth' – run to that area of the room.

'Jordan' – all stand in the middle of the 'river'.

'Wilderness' – run to that area of the room.

'Baptism' – children crouch down and then spring back up.

'Holy Spirit' – flap their wings like a dove.

'God the Father' – children say, "This is my son. I love him. I am pleased with him".

Remind the children that Jesus' baptism showed that he wanted to help us with our sin problem. His temptation in the desert shows that he can help us because he never sinned (did anything wrong).



Game Idea - Option 2

For older children – this game focuses on temptation. Have a number of differently coloured clothing pegs or balls in a bag and a large bag of sweets.

A child is invited to take one peg out of the bag at a time. The colours represent the following number of sweets:

White = 1 sweet
Green = 5 sweets
Yellow = 10 sweets
Red = -5 sweets
Pink = Back to zero and end of chance.

Keep count of the number of sweets earned. After each peg, ask the other children what they advise the child to do. Will the child risk losing it all? Adam and Eve lost everything when the devil offered them the fruit. What did Jesus do when he was offered even more?

Remind the children that Jesus can help us with our sin problem because when he was tempted he never sinned.



Discuss and Apply

The challenge of this lesson is bringing together two conceptual events, the baptism and the temptation, into one striking fact: Jesus is being announced as the all-conquering champion who wants to help his people.

For younger children – this is a very hard concept to understand and apply! Perhaps focus on the voice from heaven and discuss what parents might say to their children when they're really pleased with them. Then you can discuss what God says about Jesus and why.

An alternative is to ask the children why they love Jesus so much. Show them that today's story is about Jesus arriving in a way that helped everyone to see that he was the best, the one they had all been waiting for. He was the one God chose to help us.

For older children – start by asking the group to name the four important parts of today's story. What happened? Give clues/actions to help them remember these four parts:

1. The baptism.
2. The Spirit appearing as a dove and descending on Jesus.
3. The voice from heaven saying, "You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."
4. Jesus was not defeated by the devil when he was tempted.

You could imagine and describe a modern story to illustrate the events. This is helpful to understand the four events of today's story as all pointing to Jesus, the one chosen by God to help us.

For instance, picture the history of the world as a really important football match in a huge stadium.

- It's a match between 'People United' vs 'Sin and the Devil Football Club'
- Huge crowds. It's a really important game. The result matters.

- Who has been winning so far? Sin and the Devil Football Club.
- Only five minutes left of the game. It's clear what the result is going to be.
- Then there is a flag on the touchline. There is a substitution...

Get the group to imagine the events of today's story as events in this football game. Get the children talking, suggesting things, imagining and getting excited. The details really don't matter because the illustration is not real, but can you get the group really excited by the arrival of a champion who would come onto the field and win the game?

You could draw a picture of the events, very roughly, to help them picture it. Or you could get them to describe the noise, the emotions, the sights and the reactions so it all comes alive. Use the table below to help.

In real life...	If it was a football game...
Baptism	A new player called Jesus comes on as a substitute – how is Jesus' baptism like this? What does a substitute do? How do you know which team the substitute plays for?
Spirit landing on him like a dove	A sign for all to see that he has skill, strength and power. If he was a footballer, what might that be? How would you know a footballer had these things?
Voice from Heaven	Public announcement over the stadium speakers. What would the announcer say?
Beat the devil when he tried to tempt him	On the football pitch, what would this be? How would the player Jesus show that he was unbeatable!

Finish by asking a few questions to draw this all together:

- How is Jesus like a champion?
- How is he better than a sports champion?
- If you were there that day by the River Jordan, what would you want to say to Jesus?
We can now pray exactly that.
- How are the events of this story excellent news for us?



Prayer Idea

Help the children to think about how wonderful it is that Jesus came to take our place to win the battle against sin for us – a battle we could never win ourselves. What do they want to thank Jesus for?



Activity A

For younger children choose either this activity or Activity B.

From the Media section of this webpage print Activity A onto paper for each child.

The children colour the picture. You could also provide blue cellophane for the water and feathers for the dove.

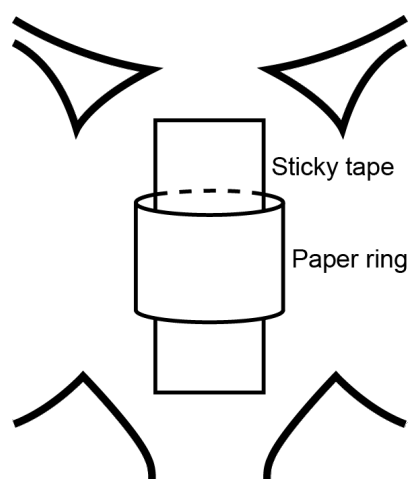


Activity B

For younger children choose either this activity or Activity A.

From the Media section of this webpage print Activity B onto paper or card. You will need one sheet for every four children.

Before the lesson cut out the doves and the finger strips. To save time during the lesson, glue the finger strips into rings – these will be glued (or stuck using sticky tape), to the underside of the dove during the lesson, as shown.



The children decorate the doves with googly eyes and white feathers if you have them.

Help the children roll the head of the dove to produce a cone and glue as marked.

The children slip a finger through the ring and place the fingertip inside the dove's beak – wiggling the finger moves the dove's head.

Can the children remember why the dove came down on Jesus?



Worksheets

For older children choose either Worksheet C or Worksheet D from the Media section of this webpage. Print whichever is appropriate onto paper for each child and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.



Memory Verse

Use one of the memory verse ideas in the Series Introduction to help the children memorise the following verse:

Mark 1:15 – *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"* [NIV]

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