

Youth Teaching Resources

January 10, 2021



Season After Christmas

Ephesians 1:3-14—“Where Hope Belongs”

Season of Epiphany

Mark 1:1-11 (RCL 1:4-11)—“Jesus, the Beloved”

John 1:43-51—“Jesus, the Convincer”

Mark 1:14-20—“Jesus, the Summoner”

Mark 1:21-28—“Jesus, the Healer”

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Find links and videos related to this lesson.

“Jesus, the Beloved”

Mark 1:1-11

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGE

Don't post, but repent... Take the time that you would spend posting on social media to find the people that you need to say "I'm sorry." This may be a large apology or something smaller, but use this week to apologize.

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your season by showing the clip “Forgiveness Scene” from *Peter Rabbit*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following?

- 1) What has happened that he needs to apologize?
- 2) Why does he apologize?
- 3) Why does he take responsibility?
- 4) Why doesn't she believe him until Peter shows him the button?
- 5) Why is it hard to apologize?
- 6) What does your faith say about apologizing and accepting an apology?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Mark 1.1-11. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why do you think the writer of Mark runs through Jesus' birth, baptism, and temptation?
- 2) Who was John the Baptist?
- 3) Why does Mark quote these prophet texts about Jesus?
- 4) What are the two parts of John's message to the people who have gathered?
- 5) How was the baptism that John offered both a new and an old thing?

Information *continued*

- 6) Why is it important for Jesus to claim his humanity while God proclaims Jesus' divinity?
- 7) Why would the spirit have been a dove when it was used in sacrificial offerings?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) Why would it have been odd for John to be baptizing in the way in which he was baptizing?
- 2) Why was John considered to be "wild"?
- 3) How many times should you be baptized?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": Was Jesus baptized by immersion?

Transformation

Conclude your time together by introducing the Social Media Challenge for the week:

Don't post, but repent... Take the time that you would spend posting on social media to find the people that you need to say "I'm sorry". This may be a large apology or something smaller, but use this week to apologize.

Allow the students time to talk about why it is hard to apologize. Consider asking questions like the following to continue the discussion:

- 1) Why is it hard to apologize?
- 2) Should you apologize if you aren't at fault?
- 3) How do you think the other person will take it when you apologize?

Close with a prayer thanking God for the opportunity to turn away from those things in which we do wrong and an opportunity to try again.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Baptist or baptizer?—John is commonly called “John the Baptist,” but Mark uses a participle, meaning “one who baptizes” or “baptizer.” Matthew and Luke use a noun form, but it still means “baptizer” or “washer,” though “baptist” is an option. I prefer to follow Mark and call John “the baptizer” instead of “the Baptist” to avoid confusing the biblical baptizer with the Baptist denomination. Despite the claims of Landmark Baptists and their so-called “Trail of Blood” (<http://history.landmarkbiblebaptist.net/BloodChart.html>), the Baptist denomination cannot be traced back to the first church in Jerusalem.

Year B and Mark—The gospel texts for Year B of the Revised Common Lectionary are taken from the gospel of Mark, with occasional texts from John, as in other years.

John the wild man—Ben Long’s portrayal of John at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church (at right) expresses just how unconventional John was. Dressing and acting in the mode of Elijah, John was a most memorable character.

Good news—The word typically translated as “gospel” is *euangelion*, a compound word that means “good news.” The prefix *eu-* means “good,” while *angelion*—the root of our word “angel” (messenger)—means “message.” In secular Greek, *euangelion* was used to proclaim the good news of military victories or to announce the emperor’s birthday. In scripture, it is the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is because Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John declare such good news that we call them “gospels” rather than “biographies of Jesus.”

English words like “evangelism” and “evangelize” are derived from *euangelion*.

Epiphany—This week’s lesson marks the first Sunday of Epiphany, a church season that focuses on Jesus’ early appearances. The word is from a Greek root (*epiphaneian*) meaning “appearance” or “manifestation.” The season traditionally begins on the twelfth day after Christmas as a celebration of Christ’s manifestation to the Gentiles, symbolized by the visit of the magi. Despite the frequent depiction of wise men at the manger, they probably did not arrive until long after Jesus’ birth, when his family was apparently still in Bethlehem, but living in a house. When Herod learned of their arrival and their mission, he reportedly ordered the killing of all boys two years old and under, indicating that it could have been up to two years after Jesus’ birth



Digging Deeper *continued*

A weird wordsmith—John’s appearance certainly attracted attention. His dress was that of a bizarre desert hermit. Camel hair garments held together with a leather belt were more rustic and coarse than ordinary dress, typically made of much softer cloth. “Locusts and wild honey” sound like a diet of desperation, but both were fairly common elements of a nomadic diet, providing both carbohydrates and protein.

Honey, though rarely collected in the wild, remains a popular sweetener. In some parts of the world, insects related to locusts are commonly eaten. On the back roads of Cambodia, for example, one may see rows of cricket traps: upright sheets of plastic about three feet wide and four feet tall, with fluorescent lights at the top to attract the insects. When crickets fly into the plastic they drop into a pool of water below, where they drown and are collected, then deep-fried as snacks.

On the edge—Ted Smith, in *Feasting on the Word*, offers an intriguing description of John:

John’s dress marks him as the new Elijah, whose coming some believed marked the arrival of the end times (cf. 2 Kgs. 1:8). His appearance in “the wilderness” recalls Israel’s long wandering in between deliverance from slavery and entry into the promised land. In wilderness time the powers of sin and death have been broken, and the covenant has been kept, but the people of God still wait to receive the fullness of redemption. John baptizes people in the Jordan, the border between the wilderness and the land of milk and honey. He is not just any sort of radical, but the kind of witness who stands right at the edge of the reign of God and invites people to live into the now-and-not-yet reality of it. (*Feasting on the Word*, Year B, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, vol. 1 of Accordance electronic ed. [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008], paragraph 2841.)

Real confessions—Readers of a certain age will remember when a magazine called *True Confessions* enjoyed widespread popularity. People are drawn to the idea of hearing details of others’ seamy past or odd habits. Today one can Google “confessions of” and come up with entries on “confessions of a shopaholic,” “confessions of a dangerous mind,” “confessions of a teenage drama queen,” and others.

John, of course, had in mind the confession of sins and shortcomings. As a personal exercise, consider writing your own “true confessions” covering the past week. Where have you come up short? How would you like to do better?

How many baptisms?—Pastors often hear a request from someone who desires to be re-baptized because they have strayed from the path and wish to recommit their lives to Christ. Visitors to Israel or Jordan, though baptized years before, often wish to be baptized again in the Jordan River, seeking spiritual renewal. On our tours of Israel we do this gladly, though we emphasize that it is a ceremony of renewal and change the words from “I baptize you . . .” to “I challenge you to remember your baptism.”

Whether we go to the extent of re-entering the baptismal waters, we all can benefit from periodically remembering our baptism and the challenge it puts upon us.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Baptizing with power—Mark has John say that Jesus would baptize “with the Holy Spirit” (1:8), but Matthew and Luke quote John as saying Jesus would baptize “with water and with fire” (Mat. 3:11 and Lu. 3:16). Since both Greek and Hebrew can use the same word for “wind” and “spirit,” some scholars postulate that the word “Holy” was a secondary addition to “spirit” in Mark, and that the original intent of John’s saying was that Jesus would baptize with “wind and fire.” The combination may be an indication of judgment, but is particularly reminiscent of Pentecost, at which the coming of the Spirit was marked by the sound of wind and by “tongues of fire” above the heads of the disciples (Acts 2:1-4). Pentecostal believers often speak of a baptism in the Spirit as a second baptism.

Temptation—Although it stretches beyond today’s text, we should not overlook the significant conjunction of vv. 11 and 12. Through the Spirit, God declared love for and approval for Jesus. Immediately afterward, however, the same Spirit “drove him out into the wilderness” to experience a trial of temptation. God’s love for Jesus did not preclude doing what was necessary for Jesus’ continued growth and preparation for ministry.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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Was Jesus baptized by immersion?

This question is hard only because we can't know for sure. Neither this text nor the accounts in Matthew and Luke provide specific information about the mode of John's baptism. They relate that it took place in the river Jordan (1:5), and that Jesus was "coming up out of the water" following his baptism when the Spirit appeared as a dove (Mark 1:10 and Matt. 3:16, though Luke 3:21-22 says Jesus had been baptized and was praying when the Spirit became manifest).

Baptists typically assume that John practiced baptism by immersion, but the vocabulary used does not require that understanding. The present participle form of the verb (*anabaino*) means "coming up," and the preposition *ek* means "from" or "out of." In this context, the combination could have the sense of "coming up from (beneath) the water," or "coming up out of the water," largely depending on perspective—whether one thinks of Jesus' torso coming up from beneath the water, or of Jesus wading back to shore from the water.

Through the years, artistic representations of Jesus' baptism have often depicted John and Jesus standing knee-deep in the river, as John poured water from a shell over Jesus' head. Even so, most Baptists prefer to imagine a baptism by immersion, which would also be more in keeping with the Jewish practice of immersing Gentile proselytes who wanted to become Jews as a ritual of purification. Observant Jews in the first century also practiced frequent lustrations in pools called *mikvehs* (outdoor baths with water flowing both in and out) to keep themselves pure. For archaeologists, one identifying sign that ancient towns were inhabited by Jews is the presence of *mikvehs*.

We cannot be certain that Jesus was baptized by immersion, but Paul spoke of baptism as a symbol of death (being buried beneath the water) and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4), which supports an ancient understanding of baptism as being by immersion.