CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
FEBRUARY 15 2025

Scripture Story: Matthew 3:1-17; Luke 1:5-23.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 10; 11.

one of a kind



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keytext

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

(Matthew 11:11)

flashlight

" 'And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.' Before the birth of John, the angel had said, 'He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.' God had called the son of Zacharias to a great work, the greatest ever committed to men" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 100).

what do you think?

What does baptism symbolize?

Now let's take a look at what the Bible says about baptism. Match the statements with the corresponding Bible references:

Christ's death and resurrection _____
Being dead to sin _____
Being alive to God _____
Consecration to Christ's service _____
Covenant relationship with God _____
Entrance into Christ's spiritual kingdom _____

Romans 6:11; Galatians 3:27-29; Mark 10:38; Colossians 2:12; Matthew 3:11; John 3:3, 5.

did you know?

Now John [the Baptist] also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized' (John 3:23).

"Why did John the Baptist choose this particular place for his work of baptizing the people? The Bible tells us that it was 'because there was much water there.' But there'd be no reason to require a place where there was 'much water' if a mere sprinkling or pouring were the method used. Multiple Bible references to baptism throughout the New Testament show plainly that immersion was the one method used in the days of Christ and His apostolic church. Considering this matter from the point of view of language, the very word 'baptism' is from the Greek word *baptisma*, derived from the Greek verb *baptizo* meaning 'to dip' or 'to immerse' " (Mark Finley, *What the Bible Says About*, p. 315).

INTO THE STORY

"In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!' For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight."'

"Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. 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.

"But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. 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. 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. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.'

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?'

"But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him.

"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' "

(Matthew 3)

OUT OF THE STORY

What is the central message that John the Baptist is communicating?

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What is significant about baptism? Read the following Bible passages that offer more insight into the meaning of this symbolic act that represents a person's commitment to God: Mark 1:9-11; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37, 38, 41; Acts 8:36, 37; Romans 6:3, 4; Galatians 3:27; Titus 3:5; Matthew 28:19, 20. What important elements concerning baptism can you apply to your personal life?

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What lesson(s) will you take away from this lesson about baptism?

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If you could share one point about baptism with a friend, what would you share?

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When did you come to know Jesus and how would you describe your personal conversion story? Have you sealed your commitment to follow Jesus through baptism?

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punch lines

"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" **(Matthew 5:20).**

"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" **(Proverbs 28:13).**

"Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" **(Luke 6:46).**

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" **(Acts 1:8).**

further insight

"In ourselves we are incapable of doing any good thing; but that which we cannot do will be wrought by the power of God in every submissive and believing soul."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 98

Sabbath

Read Romans 6:1-6.

By any measure, John the Baptist was one of the most interesting figures in the entire Bible. He looked different, dressed differently, and preached a unique message. (See Matthew 3:4.)

Consider the importance of the message that John the Baptist preached. How was his calling people to repentance and baptism a part of John's mission to prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus?

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How is the conversion experience related to baptism?

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"Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit" (Baptism, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs, no. 15).

Think about your conversion experience. When have you accepted Jesus in your heart? How has your life changed? How does baptism represent the conscious act of committing your life to Jesus and following His example to start a new life in Him?

Sunday

Read Matthew 3.

Read the *Into the Story* section, then complete the *Out of the Story* questions. What are the requirements that God desires us to meet before baptism?

Acts 2:38: _____

Acts 8:36, 37: _____

Matthew 28:19, 20: _____

Monday

Read Galatians 3:27.

Read this week's *Key Text*. As compliments go, this is one of the best ones in the Bible. Jesus recognized the special role that John the Baptist played in preparing the way for His ministry.

How do you prepare the way for the second coming of Jesus? Are you taking seriously your preparation for heaven? How are you helping someone else to prepare for Jesus' soon return? _____

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Tuesday

Read Luke 1:80.

In today's *Flashlight* quotation Ellen White notes that John the Baptist grew up far away from the city—actually, in the desert. She also noted about the education that is most favorable for character development: "The more quiet and simple the life of the child,—the more free from artificial excitement, and the more in harmony with nature,—the more favorable is it to physical and mental vigor and to spiritual strength" (Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 74).

Why do you think God chose such simple environments both for the upbringing of John the Baptist and for Jesus?

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How did John's simple upbringing help him recognize and resist temptation and sin?

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Wednesday

Read Romans 5:8.

Read the *Punch Lines* for this week.

John was calling people to repentance and was baptizing them. However, it was the work of the Holy Spirit to convict people of sin and help them to live a new life through Christ.

How do the believers who are being baptized need an extra measure of God's Holy Spirit?

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Have you experienced the influence of the Holy Spirit in your life in an abundant measure? Ask for the Holy Spirit so that He may enable you to live a new life for Jesus.

Thursday

Read Acts 22:16.

This week you have been studying about the life and ministry of John the Baptist, the man chosen by God to prepare the way for Jesus' public ministry. Why do you think it was necessary for John to baptize Jesus publicly?

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Have you been baptized? If you have not, what's stopping you?

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Friday

Read Mark 16:16.

Ellen White wrote of John the Baptist: "John was to go forth as Jehovah's messenger, to bring to men the light of God. He must give a new direction to their thoughts. He must impress them with the holiness of God's requirements, and their need of His perfect righteousness" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 100).

What impression are you leaving on those who know you?

How can you inspire in someone the desire to commit his or her life to Jesus through baptism?

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this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapters 10; 11.

**Humble Hero* is a special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, created by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companionbooks#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.