

Year 3, NT PreK Lesson 1: Announcing the King

Lesson Highlights:

- ✓ **Scripture References:** Matthew 3
- ✓ **Teaching Point:** John announces that the new kingdom means a new way of living.
- ✓ **Unit Memory Verse:** *Matthew 4:17* – From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
- ✓ **Alternate Verse:** *Matthew 3:8* – Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.
- ✓ **ABC Verse:** *Psalms 147:1* – Praise the Lord: for it is good to sing praises to our God.

Lesson

Overview

We change our focus from the first kings of Israel to the only true King of kings this spring. We saw men pick men...we saw men fall...and we saw a kingdom on earth begin to crumble. But though Israel is now ruled by others, they did have one thing right. God’s people are a part of a kingdom...not of this world, but from heaven come to earth to show the way for God’s people to live now as they will forever with Him. To do that, we need to know about this new kingdom and what is necessary for those who claim to be a part of it. There is much at stake as John baptizes those who repent from the ways of the world...and also baptizes Jesus who stands for us all.

Story

So...what did you do this Christmas? (*take some answers*) Sounds about like most kids I know who are your age. Sleep, eat, play...see friends, family...get presents. And you know what? If you head to Ukraine or Peru...the Middle East or Mexico...you’ll find the same things happening with kids your age. The Bible doesn’t tell us much about what Jesus was like when He was growing up, but I bet it was a lot like your life. There are some things we know. His dad, Joseph, was a carpenter, a man who built things out of wood. They lived in a small town called Nazareth, and we find out later that Jesus had brothers and sisters just like so many of you. But that’s about it.

When we next see Jesus, He’s not a little baby any more. He’s a grown man. We missed Him playing in the streets of His home town with His brothers and sisters. We missed seeing Him grow sleepy even when He didn’t want a nap. We missed his first scratch from falling down...the first time His feelings were hurt...the first time He took a step. But we know He did these things. He was a man...a human just like us. He lived and walked and talked and grew. But you know what? Some people were waiting for Jesus to grow up because they knew He was really, really special. One of those men who were waiting was named John. He was Jesus’ cousin. He was a LITTLE strange. He wore clothes made from camel’s hair and guess what he ate. Bugs and honey! Yuck! He was different, right?

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He was also known by a special name...John the Baptist. That's because he went around Israel doing something that was pretty different for back then...though we've heard of it before. It's called baptism. Have any of you ever seen a baptism? (*see what they say*) It's where you go to a place that has quite a bit of water there...enough so that you can go under the water. Someone helps you into the water...and helps you go under and back up. We do it, don't we? It's our way of showing that we are buried with Christ...that's going down in the water...and are alive with Him, too...that's coming out of the water. John was doing that. He was telling the people that they had to repent. Can you say that word with me? (*repeat it*)

Have any of you heard of that word "repent"? What does it mean? (*see what they say*) When John was crying out to the crowds of people and telling them to repent, he was first of all telling them that they were sinners, that they were doing things that God didn't like. How many of us like being told we're bad? (*none, I bet*) Nope, not many of us like that. John was telling them that he knew they were sinners, and that it was time to stop and to do good things that God likes.

Well, people heard about what John was doing and some of the leaders of God's people came to listen to him. These were guys who were getting it "right" as far as anyone could tell. They obeyed God's rules...they went to their church...they kept all of the laws and sacrifices that God commanded. They thought that because they were in the right places and did the right things like sat and listened to teaching like this we are...or went to church like we are...or gave money like we do...that they didn't have to worry about their relationship with God. But John says, they were really wrong about that. In fact, he looked at these people who did all the right things and called them a bunch of poisonous snakes. He told them what they must have if they are a part of this new kingdom. He told them that their whole lives have to be lived like God wants not just some of it. They have to have good hearts that do and say good things.

If we wanted to go get apples off of a tree, what kind of tree should we go to? (an apple tree) Okay...well, if you wanted peaches, what kind of tree should you go to? (peach) Right. And John was telling them that if they wanted to be in God's kingdom then they needed to live lives that showed that. They needed to be sorry for the bad things they did...and they needed to start doing the good things God wanted. But what are those things that God wants. We need someone to show us. We need someone to walk in our place...to show us the kingdom of God so that we can follow after Him. So, you know what **Matthew** tells us about next? Jesus.

Jesus came out to where John was baptizing people and He told John that He wanted to be baptized, too. But John almost said, "No way!" He knew that Jesus hadn't done anything wrong...in fact, John wanted Jesus to baptize him! But Jesus reminded John that He came to do everything that God wanted Him to do...and us to do. So, John baptized Jesus that day...and guess what happened when Jesus came up out of the water. The Bible says that God's Spirit came down like a dove on Jesus and a voice came from heaven saying, "This is my Son whom I love. He makes me very happy!" Jesus was the one who came to us to show us the way. When we see Jesus we can see what the

new kingdom of God is like and how we can live in it, too. God sent His Son Jesus here for us so that we can follow Him. That's what we'll be learning about from Jesus in the next few weeks...what this new kingdom is like and how we are supposed to be as we live in it. Let's pray and thank God for all of this.

Prayer Time

Before you pray, allow the kids time to share with you things that are happening in their lives. Be sure you write these down with their names for you to pray for as the week goes along. Ask individuals about how things went with the things they mentioned the previous week. As the leader, begin by opening and thanking God for this lesson:

- Thank Jesus for coming to show us the new kingdom and for even being baptized by John so that His whole life was lived for us to see how we also must live.
- Ask Him to help us to see the new kingdom in His life and to give us new hearts that want Him and that kingdom above our own.

Pray for any specific requests named either by praying yourself or by opening it up to those who said they would pray.

Suggested Follow-up Activities

Teachers are free to choose the activities that they feel are best for their group. The idea is that as the children work and play, remind them of the truths they just learned.

Scripture Memory: Figure out your reward system for memorizing the Scriptures provided in this section. Give the children several opportunities to tell it to you either when they first arrive or at the end of class. **If using the ABC verses, a color page is provided as a take home page.**

Craft: Dove Puppet – Remind the kids that today we learned about John's baptism of repentance and his call to live a life that is in line with the repentance that God demands of His people. We also saw Jesus come to be baptized by John even though Jesus was God's Son. When Jesus came up out of the water, God declared to everyone that this was His Son, the one who pleased Him in all He did. We can watch and learn from His life what it means to please the Father in all we do.

Give each of the kids a cardstock cut out of the dove along with a craft stick. Have them cut out the doves, but make sure that they don't cut the line that keeps the doves together. Tell them to bend the wings down slightly so that they will move at the kids bounce their puppet. Have them cut a small slit between the doves so that the craft stick fits inside of it. They can tape or glue the stick to the inside of the doves.

If desired, you could have the kids use glue and silver glitter to add details to the wings of the doves.

Materials: craft page; scissors; stick glue or tape; craft sticks; optional: liquid glue and glitter

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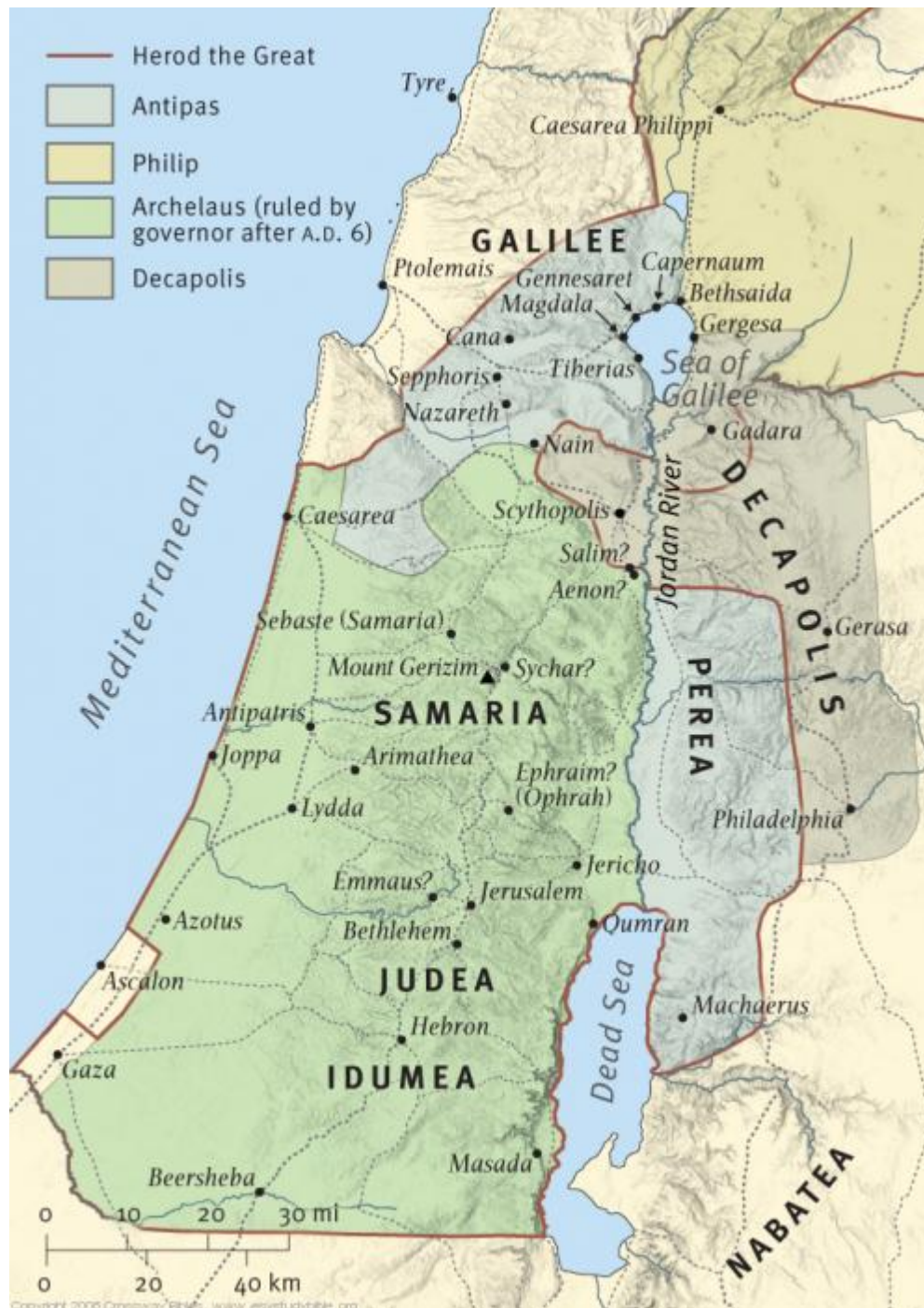
Craft: Spirit of God Descending – Remind the kids that today we learned about John’s baptism of repentance and his call to live a life that is in line with the repentance that God demands of His people. We also saw Jesus come to be baptized by John even though Jesus was God’s Son. When Jesus came up out of the water, God declared to everyone that this was His Son, the one who pleased Him in all He did. We can watch and learn from His life what it means to please the Father in all we do.

Give each child a scene of Jesus in the water and have them color it as they’d like. Have them cut along the dotted line to make a slit for the dove. Have them cut out the dove and one of the strips and fold the strip along the two middle lines. Show them how to glue the dove onto the small square that’s formed by that fold and then take the two end strips and feed it through the slit in their scene. This will enable to them to bring the dove down from the clouds to be over Jesus. Lastly, have them glue the words that God spoke over His Son just under the clouds to the left of Jesus.

Materials: copies of scene and dove; crayons or markers; scissors; glue sticks

Suggested study for Leaders

The events in the book of Matthew take place almost entirely within the vicinity of Palestine, an area extending roughly from Caesarea Philippi in the north to Beersheba in the south. During this time it was ruled by the Roman Empire. The opening chapters describe events surrounding Jesus' birth in Judea, where Herod had been appointed king by the Romans. The closing chapters end with Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension during the rule of Pontius Pilate and the tetrarchs Antipas and Philip.



Notes: