

# Year 3, NT 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.

## 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 break? (*take some answers*) Sounds about like most kids I know who are your age. Sleep, eat, play...see friends, family...good times and some hard times, I’m sure. 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. I’d love to know if that was true when Jesus was your age. The Bible tells us almost nothing about his life growing up. There are some things we know. His dad, Joseph, was a carpenter. They lived in a small town called Nazareth...just like God had said He would in the Old Testament words. 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 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. In fact, the Bible says that He grew physically...and in other ways. He grew in wisdom...He learned more and more...and He grew in favor with God and men. He was a man who by the time we see Him in **Matthew’s** book is not known to be anybody really special. But there were some who knew who He was...and soon He would appear to all as the One that all of Israel had been waiting on. One of those waiting was named John the Baptist. He was

### Year 3, NT Lesson 1: Announcing the King

---

Jesus' cousin. His name was John...some knew him as 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. It's our way of saying that we are no longer living for ourselves, but for Him. John was doing something like that...though it was a message that was really strange to those who were listening. Turn to **Matthew 3**. Look at his message in **verse 2**. What does it say? (*repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*)

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. It's like someone coming up to you and saying, "Hey, I know your life is full of things that God hates and you must stop them...NOW!" How many of us like being told we're sinners? (*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 be cleaned from those sins. And all this was coming from a strange kind of guy. Read with me what John was like and was doing in **vs. 4-6**.

John wore...what? (*camel's hair and a leather belt*) And only eats...what? (*locusts and honey*) What are locusts? (*large flying bugs that eat plants*) There isn't enough honey in the world to make me think that locusts would taste good! Yuck! And so this really weird guy is calling out for the people to repent, to turn away from their sins...and to be baptized. Well, word got out about what John was doing and some of the leaders of the Jewish people, 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 festivals and sacrifices that God commanded. They were the people of God. They didn't have to worry about anything like they thought others did. God would have to give them life with Him in heaven...they were His people.

But that's what's so amazing about John's message. And that's what's so important for us to understand today because we can be a lot like them. 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. Let's read **verses 7-10**.

Wow. What did John call these "good" people in **verse 7**? (*brood of vipers*) He looked at these people who did all the right things and called them a bunch of poisonous snakes! But they might say to him: "We're not the ones who need to repent! We're from Abraham's family!" But that had nothing to do with having a relationship with God. In **verse 8**, he told them what they must have if they are a part of this new kingdom. What does that verse say? (*bear fruit in keeping with repentance*) That can be kind of hard to understand. Let me see if I can help you to understand what John was saying.

Let's say that you decided that you wanted to grow apples. So, you go to the nearest nursery which is a store that sells all kinds of plants including trees. There they all are...row after row of trees...but we have a problem. None of the trees are marked with any names. Some have different leaves on them...the bark is a little different from tree to tree...but you don't really know that much about apple trees. How in the world could we figure out which one is an apple...so we don't end up with lemons or mangos? Well, there would only really be a couple of ways to do it. If there was an expert in tree, maybe he could tell us...but since it's just you and me...and we're kind of clueless about telling an apple from an orange tree...what can we do? We can wait, can't we? Because if we wait long enough, what's going to eventually happen with all of those trees? (*they will bear fruit*) Exactly. Fruit will grow next summer. If we wait to see what grows, then we'll know what kind of trees we're looking at.

Well, that's what John was seeing in them. They walked around saying that they knew God...that they were God's people...that they were a part of God kingdom. But every part of their life showed something different. It's like imagining that a tree had a bunch of lemons hanging from it while a guy stood underneath it saying, "Look at this apple tree! Isn't it great?! Don't those apples look good!" We'd all think he was crazy because apples don't look like and certainly don't taste like lemons. The same is true with those who think they are followers of God...who are God's people living in God's kingdom. There are actions and attitudes and feelings and words...our whole lives are to be marked by certain ways of doing things. Our lives should "bear fruit"...it should show off what's really true about us. And that "fruit" must look like people who are repentant...whose lives are changed from the world around us.

But changed into what? It's one thing to hear, "Don't be a lemon." It's another to know what an apple actually LOOKS like. For that, we need someone who could live life for us to see. We need words that show off the new kingdom. We need to be taught what this looks like to live in a family...to play in the streets...to buy from the markets...to work with our hands. We need to know what to do about those who hurt us...and those who help us. We need to know how to feel about money and prayer and church and all the rest of the things that make up life. 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. Look with me in **verses 13-17**.

This is Him! That's what God is telling the world. This is the one who is a true son of the kingdom. This is the one who was sent for our repentance to really happen. This is the King of that kingdom who was willing to give up the throne to come to earth to show us the way to live...to show us what it means to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. This is the one we will learn about for the next few weeks. We'll learn about how to live and why He had to live here...for us...to make us true citizens of that kingdom...and what it means for us in our every word and action to live as if we really are truly citizens of God's kingdom...truly those who are followers of the King. Because the truth is, many of us are a lot like those Pharisees, those people who thought they were "in" the kingdom because they did all the things that they thought God wanted. We go to church. We give some money. We obey some rules. We're "good" people, right? Well, mostly. But it's not

### **Year 3, NT Lesson 1: Announcing the King**

---

enough to do a few things in the “right” way to be one of His people. God wants our whole lives to be His. He wants us to give every part of ourselves to Him. We must die to that other life...and live for Him alone. We’ll talk more about that soon. For now, let’s pray together and thank God for this gift of one who called out to us to be made clean with our lives...and the One who came to actually make us clean from the inside out.

### **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. Older kids can be asked if they will pray for another who mentions something. As the leader, begin by opening in prayer and thanking God for this lesson:

- Praise 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 in class. Play a memory game with the kids if you have time.

**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

**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

## 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.

