

The Power of Living Water
Matthew Ch 3 v 13 - 17

During a holiday to the Holy Land in 2005 I visited the place on the Jordan River where John the Baptist supposedly baptised Jesus and where people still today are baptised. Their baptism takes the form of complete immersion imitating the baptism performed by John and the early disciples who accompanied Jesus throughout his ministry.

Although slightly commercialised the place was obviously very special and meaningful for those taking part. The waters of the Jordan did not look exactly inviting but I know that many visiting clergy bottle and take home authentic "River Jordan Water" for use in baptism services in their own churches. As we know, the tradition in the Moravian Church is usually for infant baptism followed by confirmation at a time when the individual can confirm for themselves the promises made on their behalf when an infant. In both these services the words "I baptise you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost" are spoken by the minister.

We read in all three Synoptic Gospels that Jesus was baptised by John. Matthew, in Ch 3, writes that John was reluctant at first but Jesus said "in this way we shall do all that God requires." You may ask "Why did Jesus need to be baptised?" He was sinless. He had no need to repent which was the reason why John was calling the people to **be** baptised. John called people to repent, leave their old ways and have a new start.

That is exactly the key.

Jesus' baptism signified a **new beginning** for him – a brand new chapter in his life – a time when he would heal the sick, cast out demons, perform miracles and more.

Secondly in being baptised Jesus **publicly demonstrated** that he was prepared to follow his Father's wishes. He was **obedient**. He was obedient, not just in private, but in front of others.

Thirdly in being baptised Jesus **set an example** for us today. At our adult baptism (or confirmation) we confirm our belief in Christ, we are given a new life and we agree to continue as his disciples.

Fourthly, theologians think that in being baptised Jesus **demonstrated what was to come** – his death and resurrection. His old life was dying and his new life beginning. These thoughts are very much in our minds as we travel through Lent, the events of Passion Week and the joy of Easter Morning.

Immediately Jesus was baptised God showed his pleasure by sending the Holy Spirit like a dove saying "This is my dear Son with whom I am pleased."

I am sure God is pleased every time one of his followers is baptised – every time one of us publicly, follows his example, turns away from wrong and starts a new life with him. Whether it is complete immersion or a small amount of water poured over our head when an infant that water is a powerful symbol. It is a symbol of The Power of Living Water. As the minister says the words "In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit" and the congregation respond "In the name of Jesus Amen" we can almost feel the warmth of God's love, see Him smiling and being pleased.

For discussion

1. Can you remember your own baptism and what form the service took?
2. Did it mark a turning point in your life? If so what changed?
3. Following his baptism Jesus was led into the wilderness – a time remembered as Lent. How does Lent affect you?