

An Epiphany journey with Jesus to thrive in his Kingdom

Session Two: January 19th 2021

“As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened.....a voice from heaven said, This is my son whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Matthew 3:16-17

“This was John’s message. After me will come one more powerful than i.....I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.”

Mark 1:7-8

Our study theme for this week was the Baptism of Jesus, and it was lovely to see 13 people online, who were Nick and Sarah Jarrett-Kerr, Ian and Sonya Stocker, Avril Chadwick, Kay Friend, Wendy Reakes, Matthew Thomson, Frances Urwin, Margaret Morris (Glastonbury), Jonathan and Viv Hayward (Nempnett Thrubwell), and Gillian Durbin (Compton Martin), whose microphone this week was working well. Apologies were received from Beth Ashton-Hilton.

Our objectives for each session are to engage in deeper conversation and prayer, and each session of the 6 focuses on how each episode in Jesus life and ministry might achieve the following points.

- **Help us to know and experience the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge and understanding.**
- **With the help of the Holy Spirit, encourage us to live our lives as apprentices and followers of Jesus**
- **Establish small steps that would lead surely and quietly to inner transformation.**

In our time together, we have and will continue to use the session structure and signpost formula introduced to us by Howard in the original Rule of Life group, namely that we check in with people that all is well with them, and that any concerns would be supported by prayer throughout. The flight time would be the study and discussion on the theme and the linked scripture, and the final landing would be a summary of the session and an ‘open mic’ prayer time. The signpost formula will be a study guide when looking at the Bible and thinking about its application for us today.

- **Is there something you wish to question?**
- **Is there something about which you wish to comment?**
- **Is there something to encourage us?**
- **Is there something to warn us?**
- **Is there something to help lead us to inner transformation?**

After check in time, we read Mark C1 V4-11 followed by Luke C3 V15-22, both accounts of Jesus Baptism by John, and in studying this, we focused on three main questions.

- **What are your memories of your Baptism, and how significant was, and is it, for you?**
- **Why was Jesus himself baptised?**
- **What does repentance mean?**

The discussion around these aspects brought out a number of themes and points:-

- Many books describe John the Baptist as preparing the way, but John did not invent Baptism, the Jews used ritual washing to baptise and symbolise cleansing.
- John was calling on people to be ready for the Messiah, he baptised with water including Jesus himself, but he was paving the way for Jesus to baptise with the fire of the Holy Spirit
- To Baptise comes from the Greek word *Baptizo*, meaning to immerse. New Testament Baptism was done by complete immersion rather than by pouring or sprinkling with water, immersion symbolised the ideas behind Baptism – washing away sin, turning from old ways, immersion into new life with Jesus that leads to repentance, to change.
- Some people present shared memories of their own Baptism, how it influenced their faith journey, and emphasised that at whatever age Baptism occurred, it is the calling to new beginnings, new life in Christ, symbolised through the clear freshness of water.
- Jesus was baptised to emphasise his humility, his oneness with humanity, his living a full earthly experience. John hailed him as the Lamb of God whose laces he was not fit to tie up, and who would bring a whole new Baptism experience.
- Baptism gave all present joy and hope, as well as peace in the love of God for us – John 15:9 onwards.
- It was discussed about the age of Baptism, Jesus was Baptised as a man and there is no real New Testament evidence of babies being baptised, only those old enough to believe for themselves. God loves us all and it does not matter at what age people commit to following Jesus.
- The links and differences between Baptism and Confirmation were discussed, agreed it was a golden thread linking various stages in journeys of faith. There was general agreement we should aspire to follow Jesus example of humility throughout, and how powerful the Baptism experience can be, regardless of age, location or circumstance.
- There was a consistent need for prayer in such matters to fulfil God's plan for all of us in following him as a rule of life.

The session concluded with open prayer time, followed by the Lord's Prayer and the Grace, concluding just after 9.00.