

JESUS AND THE NEW COVENANT

UNIT ONE: THE WAY IS PREPARED

Lesson 7: Jesus is Baptised: A Two-Way Action

CONTENT:

1. Jesus came to John the Baptist to be baptised by him. John was hesitant to do this, but Jesus insisted. This event is part of the feast of the Epiphany (or manifestation) when God revealed that Jesus is the awaited Messiah, the Son of God and Saviour of the world.
2. During this event there was a 2-way action. Jesus on his part accepted his mission to take on the sin of the world and to give us new life. He showed himself obedient to His Father's will to love us to the extent of dying for us (the 'baptism' of his death).
3. On his part the Father showed that he was delighted with his Son's obedience. The heavens were opened; the Holy Spirit came to rest on Jesus in the form of a dove and the voice of the Father announced, "This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased."
4. These actions have a deeper meaning and significance. They show what a momentous event is taking place:
 - i] 'The heaven was opened' When Adam sinned, the way to God was closed. Now Jesus will make the way back.
 - ii] *The Spirit came down and rested on him:* At the very beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit moved over the waters. Now the Holy Spirit comes upon Jesus and the water of his baptism. This shows that a 'new creation' is about to take place.
5. As we look at Jesus' humble acceptance of God's plan to save us, we respond with love and gratitude.

ASSIGNMENT: Do some research and make a list of the various signs and symbols used during your baptism: words, actions, objects, places.

REFERENCES: Genesis 1:1-3; Isaiah 11:1-2. Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 12:50 John 1:33-36. CCC 528; 535-536.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Handouts.

I. STARTER:

[Ask if the students have found and written down the words of John the Baptist. They could share what they have chosen.]

- When a school prefect is chosen and is about to begin his or her duties what ceremony takes place? *[An installation or 'swearing-in' ceremony]*
- At this ceremony the action takes place from 2 sides: On one side, the prefect does something. What does he (or she) do? *(He stretches out his arm and makes a pledge, accepting his new responsibilities and promising to do his duty well.)*
- Who else does something important? *(The principal or chief guest pins a badge on the new prefect. This is a sign of his authority.)*
- A similar ceremony takes place when the ministers of our government begin their term of office. Today we will look at a very impressive 'ceremony' as Jesus begins to take up his work. Here too there is a 2-way action. By his actions Jesus is saying something and the Father responds. Let's look at the Bible passage and see what the actions are and what they mean.

II. DEVELOPMENT:

[Give out handouts. Read the Bible passages at the bottom, then do the answers together, as a class, beginning with Question 1 and ending with 8.]

1. Why do you feel John tried to stop Jesus from being baptized?
(Because he realised that Jesus was a holy person and not a sinner. John's Baptism was a sign of repentance, which was for sinners.)
 2. How did he know who Jesus was?
(Because God had given him a sign to recognise the Son of God: the one on whom the Holy Spirit came down. He may have also remembered the old prophesy from Isaiah 11:1,2 which talks about the coming Messiah. It said, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him!")
 3. Why did Jesus accept Baptism? What was he saying by his action?
(Jesus was saying, "Yes, Father, I will do what you sent me out to do. I will take the place of sinners and take their sin on myself. I will die and rise again and so make the way for them to come to you.)
 4. Jesus later said, "I have a baptism to receive, and what stress I am under until it is completed!" What do you think he was talking about?
(He was talking about his suffering and death.)
 5. What was the deeper meaning of the Holy Spirit coming down at this time?
(At the very beginning of creation, the Holy Spirit moved over the waters, and then creation began. Now the Holy Spirit comes upon Jesus and the water of his Baptism. This shows that a 'new creation' is about to take place.)
 6. What were the words spoken by the voice from heaven?
(*"This is my own dear Son, with whom I am pleased."* This shows that God was very happy at his son's obedience and readiness to do what he had come to do.)
 7. The passage below says, 'The heaven was opened'. When do you think it was closed?
When Adam and Eve sinned, the way to God was closed. Now God himself is opening it by sending his Son.
 8. This event is part of the feast of the 'Epiphany'. (Epiphany means manifestation or revealing) What did God reveal to the world at this time?
(He revealed to the world that Jesus was the Messiah whom the Jews were waiting for, the Son of God and the Saviour of the World.)
- What were the other 2 events which come under the 'Epiphany'?
(The visit of the Magi; the first miracle at the wedding at Cana.)

III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

- Let us be silent for a while and imagine what Jesus is thinking as he steps into the Jordan River and is immersed in the water. Perhaps he is picturing his Father looking down on him; his cross far ahead of him; and perhaps his gaze goes down the ages to each one of us, whom he came to save.
- Respond to him by writing a short prayer of love and thanks. [Students reflect and write in silence. They could use the reverse side of the handout.]

HOME ASSIGNMENT: Next week we will be thinking of the Baptism that you and I receive. Just as Jesus' baptism had signs which meant something deeper, we are going to try and figure out what happens during the Sacrament of Baptism. Do some research and make a list of the different actions, words, objects, places involved in baptism. You could ask your parents/godparents what they remember.