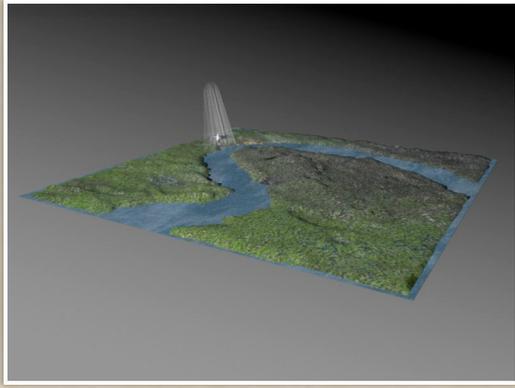


Baptism of Jesus



One of the most visited places by Palestinian Christians is the Jordan River, where Jesus was baptized. It has a special appeal because it allows some Christians to participate in the rite and in the same place where John baptized Jesus. Baptism is a rite practiced by Jesus Christ and ordained by him as necessary for salvation.¹ Through baptism Christians express their faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, their resignation from their life of sin, and their birth to a new life of obedience to God. In his Gospel, Matthew says that John baptized in the Jordan river², and John, the apostle, adds some more accurate data, 'John was giving baptism at Aenon near Salim, because there was abundance of water'.³ It was the most appropriate place in the area to baptize by immersion. The Greek verb *baptizo* means immerse and plunge underwater, as an empty vessel is filled with water.

According to the biblical text, John the Baptist '*preaching baptism as a sign of forgiveness of sin*'⁴, but in several texts states that Jesus '*did not sin*'.⁵ John himself felt unworthy to baptize someone so holy and pure.⁶ In addition, the apostle Paul says that baptism is a reminder of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁷ Jesus was baptized to give us example. After being baptized, Jesus rose from the water and knelt in prayer on the riverside. It was the beginning of his ministry and he searched for God. The Father answered his Son's request and opened the heaven. Over the head of the Savior a powerful light descended from the throne of God like a dove, a suitable emblem of the Meek and Humble. And a voice from heaven said, '*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*'.⁸ John was deeply moved by the scene and recognized that he had baptized the Redeemer of the world. The Holy Spirit also descended upon John, and pointing out to Jesus, said: '*See, here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*'.⁹ When a person is baptized take part of those experiences that Jesus lived. Water baptism is followed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Biblical References:

1. Mark 16: 16
2. Matthew 3: 13
3. John 3: 23
4. Mark 1: 4
5. I John 3: 5; II Corinthians 5: 21; I Peter 2: 22
6. John 1: 27
7. Romans 6: 3, 4
8. Matthew 3: 7
9. John 1: 29, 36