

Have You Been BAPTIZED for Life?

Would you like to live forever in God's beautiful New World paradise? If so, then you must get baptized for life and that before it is too late!

THE Divine Will International Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses, held in the summer of 1958, attracted world-wide attention by reason of both its size and its unique features. One feature that was widely publicized was its baptism of 7,136 Christians. To the four corners of the globe newspapers and magazines, newsreel and television cameras carried pictures of it.

Why did that baptism attract so much attention? Quite likely because it was a baptism by total immersion. And why do the witnesses of Jehovah insist on total immersion? Because their baptism is commanded by God's Word; and in its original Greek tongue the words rendered "Baptist," "baptism" and "baptize" have the meaning, not of sprinkling, but of Immerse, immersion and immerse, or Dipper, dipping and dip. Literal Bible translations, such as those of Rotherham and Benjamin Wilson, bear this out.—Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:3, 16; *Ro, ED (interlinear)*.

John the Baptist baptized by immersion in the Jordan and Jesus' disciples did the same. That is why John baptized "in Aenon near Salim, because there was a great quantity of water there." Early religious history shows that in the first centuries of our common era Christians invariably baptized by immersion. Sprinkling was resorted to later on only because of convenience.—John 3:23.

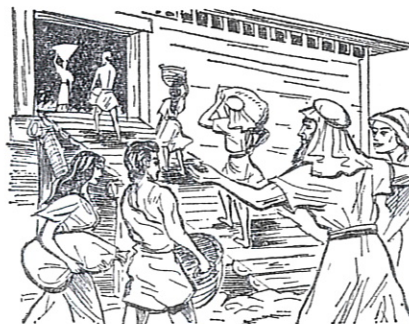
Represented among those 7,136 immersion candidates at the Divine Will assembly were

all races, many nationalities as well as a wide range of ages, from barely in their teens to long past the proverbial threescore years and ten. Among them, however, were no infants. Why not? Because

of Jesus' commission regarding baptism, which states: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them." A disciple is "one who receives instruction from another." An infant cannot receive Scriptural instruction. As with baptism by sprinkling, baptism of infants was not practiced by the early Christian congregation.—Matt. 28:19, 20.

What is the meaning and value of Christian baptism in water? Does it wash away original sin, as claimed by some? That could not be, for Jesus himself set the pattern for Christians in baptism as in everything else, and he was without sin. Rather, baptism is a symbol of one's having dedicated himself to do God's will and therefore associates itself with one's ordination as a minister of Jehovah's Word. Thus the apostle Paul shows that when Jesus came to the Jordan to be baptized he said: "Look! I am come to do your will."—Heb. 10:9.

By going under the water in his baptism Jesus was, in symbol, dying to his past course of action, that of helping to support his mother and her family by carpentering, and embarking on the specific mission for which his Father had sent him to earth. What was that special mission? "For this purpose I have been born and for this purpose I



the matter of family opposition. Jesus promised that even if his disciples lost their relatives because of following him, they would gain a larger spiritual family. (Mark 10: 29, 30) These fellow believers will show you brotherly love, help you to endure persecution, and support you on the road to life. (1 Peter 5:9) Especially can the congregation elders help you to cope with problems and to meet other challenges successfully. (James 5:14-16) As to losing favor in this world, you may well ask yourself, 'What can possibly compare to having the approval of the Creator of the universe, causing him to rejoice over my chosen life course?'—Proverbs 27:11.

LIVING UP TO YOUR DEDICATION AND BAPTISM

¹⁷ It is important to remember that baptism is not the end of your spiritual progress. It marks the beginning of lifelong service to God as an ordained minister and one of Jehovah's Witnesses. **Although baptism is vitally important, it is not a guarantee of salvation.** Jesus did not say: 'Everyone baptized will be saved.' Instead, he said: "He that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved." (Matthew 24:13) Therefore, it is vital that you seek God's Kingdom first by making it the paramount concern in your life.—Matthew 6:25-34.

¹⁸ To endure in your service to Jehovah, you will want to set spiritual goals for yourself. One worthy goal is to further your knowledge of God through regular personal study of his Word. Plan for daily reading of the Bible. (Psalm 1:1, 2) Attend Christian meetings regularly, for the association you find there will help to give you spiritual strength. For your part, why not make it your goal to comment at congregation meetings and thus

17. Why should you view baptism as a beginning rather than an end?

18. After baptism, what are some goals to pursue?

praise Jehovah and seek to upbuild others? (Romans 1: 11, 12) Another goal might be to improve the quality of your prayers.—Luke 11:2-4.

¹⁹ If you are to live up to the meaning of your baptism, you need to pay constant attention to what you do, letting God's holy spirit produce in you such qualities as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22, 23; 2 Peter 3:11) Remember, Jehovah gives his holy spirit to all who pray for it and obey him as his faithful servants. (Luke 11:13; Acts 5:32) So pray to God for his spirit and ask him for help in displaying qualities that please him. Such qualities will become more evident in your speech and conduct as you respond to the influence of God's spirit. Of course, every individual in the Christian congregation is striving to develop "the new personality" so as to become more like Christ. (Colossians 3:9-14) Each one of us faces different challenges in doing this because we are at varying stages of spiritual progress. Since you are imperfect, you must work hard to have a Christlike personality. But never despair in this regard, for it is possible with God's help.

²⁰ Among your spiritual goals should be that of imitating Jesus' joyful example more closely. (Hebrews 12:1-3) He loved the ministry. If you are privileged to share in the Kingdom-preaching activity, then, do not let it become mere routine. Seek to find satisfaction in teaching others about God's Kingdom as Jesus did. Put to use the instruction that the congregation provides to help you improve as a teacher. And be assured that Jehovah can give you the strength to carry out your ministry.—1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

19. What qualities can the holy spirit help you to display?

20. In what ways can you imitate Jesus in the ministry?