

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS
Lesson 57

MEMORY TEXT: "Lo, I come...to do Thy will, O God." Hebrews 10:7

We learned that only Jewish sinners were supposed to be baptized by John. Imagine how surprised John was to see the perfect man Jesus come to be baptized!

John said to Jesus, "If either of us should baptize the other, you should baptize me. I am not worthy to baptize you. You are not a sinner." To the others around, John said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Matthew 3:14, John 1:29,36.

Of course Jesus knew he was not a sinner, and of course he understood that John's baptism was only for Jewish sinners, but Jesus said to John, "Let it be as I say," and so John, puzzled, baptized Jesus.

From the time Jesus was thirty (and immersed in the Jordan River) until he died on the cross, he was being baptized. In other words, immersion in water is only the beginning of true baptism. Three years after he had been baptized at Jordan, Jesus said he still had a baptism to be baptized with. Luke 12:50.

This is true baptism: Just as a dead person is laid down into the grave and will not rise again until he is brought up in the resurrection, so a Christian kills his personal desires -- they are buried forever in this picture of immersion; then the Christian is raised from the water to begin a new life, a life completely dedicated to the Lord.

Christians are baptized into Christ's death. Romans 6:3. And "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him." 2 Timothy 2:12. When a Christian is raised in the immersion service, it shows he is living a new life, trying to be Christ-like

GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

Lesson 58

MEMORY TEXT: "O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations." Daniel 9:18

For more than 1600 years, God's chosen people waited and prayed for their Deliverer who would be greater than Moses, their King who would be greater than David or Solomon in all his glory.

Now John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2) and Jesus (Matthew 4:17) and Jesus' followers (Luke 10:9,11) told of the Kingdom being at hand, but many Jews would not believe it. They were either too busy to remember God's promises at all, or too selfish to fit into God's plan for a Kingdom. They wanted to be rich and powerful rulers like the heathen emperors of their day, but they did not want to follow a poor carpenter's son who didn't even have a place to live. Matthew 8:20.

Jesus talked to his own people about the Kingdom, but most of them did not want him or his message. John 1:11. As many Jews as did believe Jesus' words, he led to be sons of God. John 1:12,13; Hebrews 3:1-6.

Up until this time, God's people were like beloved, well-cared-for servants. They remembered Moses as their greatest leader, and knew they should serve God by obeying the laws He gave Moses.

Now they could be more than favored and protected servants. Now they could be sons of God, brethren of Jesus, joint-heirs of the Kingdom. At Pentecost, they received God's Holy Spirit--His power and the understanding they needed to work with God.

A very important part of God's plan was to choose a Bride class of 144,000 to work with Jesus in heaven. Although 144,000 are only a Little Flock, there were not enough faithful Jews for God to complete this Flock. He could not trust unfaithful people