

United in Worship
of the Only True God

United in Worship **of the Only True God**

Millions of persons have a knowledge of basic Bible teachings. But to experience to the full the joy of sharing in united worship of the true God, they need to press on to Christian maturity. This book has been prepared to help all such persons to broaden and deepen their understanding of God's Word and to apply it more fully in their lives.

—The Publishers

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WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY
OF PENNSYLVANIA

Publishers
WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY
OF NEW YORK, INC.
INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, U.S.A.

First Edition:
2,000,000 Copies

Made in the United States of America

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Unity in Worship

—What Should It Mean for You?

AROUND the globe there is a thrilling movement toward unity of worship. It is drawing together people of all nations and tribes and languages. Their unity is not a result of any compromising of beliefs. It is not being achieved by their refraining from criticizing life-styles that are in conflict with God's Word. Then what accounts for it? The fact that people of every background are coming to know Jehovah as the only true God and are willingly bringing their lives into harmony with his righteous ways.—Compare Revelation 15:3, 4.

² This is in fulfillment of a prophecy that was recorded some 2,700 years ago by the prophet Micah. With reference to "the final part of the days," he wrote: "Many nations will certainly go and say: 'Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.'" (Mic. 4:1, 2)* Do you see that taking place?

* Scripture quotations in this book are from the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, 1981 edition.

1, 2. (a) On what basis is true unity of worship being brought about in our day? (b) How does the Bible describe what is taking place?

³ No entire "nations" are presenting themselves at Jehovah's spiritual house for worship. But individuals out of such nations are doing so. As they learn about the loving purpose and the appealing personality of Jehovah God, their hearts are deeply moved. Humbly they seek to find out what God requires of them. Their prayer is like that of David, a man of faith who said: "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God."—Ps. 143:10.

⁴ Do you see yourself among that vast crowd of worshipers of Jehovah? Does your response to the instruction received give evidence that you truly appreciate that Jehovah is its source? To what extent are you 'walking in his paths'?

HOW IT IS ACHIEVED

⁵ Jehovah's purpose is for all intelligent creation to be united in worship—none being misled by falsehood, none groping because of failure to find the real meaning of life. How we long for the day when all who live will bless the only true God! (Ps. 103:19-22) But before that can be, Jehovah must purge his creation of those who spurn his loving kingship and who insist on spoiling life for others. Mercifully he gives advance notice of what he will do. People everywhere have opportunity to change their course. Thus in our own day this urgent appeal is being made worldwide: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of the judgment by him has arrived, and so worship the One who made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters." (Rev. 14:

3, 4. (a) How is it true that "nations" are turning to Jehovah? (b) What questions should we ask ourselves?

5. (a) To what extent will unity of worship eventually be achieved? (b) Why is it urgent to become a worshiper of Jehovah now, and how can we help others to do this?

6, 7) Have you accepted that invitation? If so, it is now your privilege to work with Jehovah's organization to help others to do so.

⁶ It is not God's purpose to bring into his organization people who simply say they believe in Jehovah and that they want to live in Paradise but who at the same time continue to pursue their own selfish interests. He wants people to come to an "accurate knowledge of his will," and this should be reflected in their lives. (Col. 1: 9, 10) After appreciative persons learn the fundamental teachings of the Bible, they want to press on to Christian maturity. Their desire is to get to know Jehovah intimately, to broaden and deepen their understanding of his Word, and to apply it more fully in their lives. They seek to be like their heavenly Father, reflecting his qualities and viewing matters as he does. This moves them to search out ways to share as fully as possible in the work that he is having done in the earth in our day. Is that what you are doing?—Eph. 5:1; Heb. 5:12–6:3; 1 Tim. 4:15.

⁷ The Bible shows that those who serve Jehovah are to be a united people. (Eph. 4:1-3) This unity is to exist now, even though we live in a divided world and are still struggling with our own imperfections. Jesus earnestly prayed that his disciples would all be one, enjoying true unity. What would this mean? That first of all they would have a good relationship with Jehovah and his Son. Also that they would be united with one another. (John 17:20, 21) This is now being

6. After learning basic teachings of the Bible, what further progress should we earnestly endeavor to make?

7. In what ways is true unity possible now, and how is it achieved?

achieved as they apply the instruction received at Jehovah's "house."

WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO UNITY?

⁸ Some of the key factors contributing to this unity are numbered below. As you answer the questions that follow these, give thought to how each one affects your own relationship with Jehovah and with fellow Christians. Reasoning on these points in the light of the scriptures cited will contribute to your development of God-oriented thinking ability and discernment, which are qualities that all of us need. (Prov. 5:1, 2; Phil. 1:9-11) So consider these factors one at a time:

(1) We all worship Jehovah and acknowledge his right to set the standard as to good and bad.

How would Jehovah view it if we deliberately ignored his counsel on a matter that seemed minor to us? (Luke 16:10; compare Malachi 1:6-8.)

Are others affected if we do not always obey Jehovah's commands? (Compare Romans 5:12; Joshua 7:20-26; 1 Kings 14:16.)

(2) Wherever we are in the world, we have God's Word to guide us.

When we make decisions, what danger is there in simply doing what we "feel" is right? (Jer. 17:9; Prov. 14:12)

If we do not know what counsel the Bible gives on a certain matter, what should we do? (Prov. 2:3-5)

(3) We all benefit from the same spiritual feeding program.

What conditions exist among those who do not

8. (a) What do we develop when we personally use the Bible to reason out answers to questions that affect us? (b) By answering the questions listed above, analyze the factors contributing to Christian unity.

appreciate Jehovah's arrangements for spiritual feeding? (Compare Isaiah 1:3; 9:16; 65:14.)

(4) *Jesus Christ, and no human, is our Leader and the one through whom we all approach Jehovah in worship.*

Do any of us have valid reason to believe that as persons we are superior to others? (Rom. 3:23, 24; 12:3; Matt. 23:8-10)

(5) *No matter where we live, we look to God's Kingdom as the only hope for humankind.*

How does this safeguard us against divisive influences? (Matt. 6:9, 10; Mic. 4:3)

(6) *Holy spirit produces in worshipers of Jehovah qualities that are vital to Christian unity.*

How do we open the way for God's spirit to produce its fruitage in us? (Ps. 1:2; Prov. 22:4; Rev. 3:6; Acts 5:32)

How does our having the fruits of the spirit influence our relationship with Jehovah? With our brothers? (Gal. 5:22, 23)

(7) *All of us have the responsibility to preach the good news of God's Kingdom.*

How does our being busy sharing in this preaching activity with fellow Christians influence how we feel about them? (Compare Colossians 4:7, 11.)

⁹ Acknowledging these facts is one thing. Living in harmony with them requires much more. But when we do so, we are drawn close to Jehovah. Our association with fellow believers also becomes a source of refreshment. As Psalm 133:1 says: "Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" Have not you personally experienced how refreshing it can be to get away from the world, with all its selfishness, and to be present at meetings with others who truly love Jehovah?

9. What is the effect when we really apply these truths in our lives?

AVOID DIVISIVE INFLUENCES

¹⁰ So as not to mar that precious unity, we must avoid divisive influences. One of the foremost among these is the spirit of independence. Jehovah helps us to avoid it by unmasking its originator, Satan the Devil. He is the one who deceived Eve into thinking that it would be to her advantage to ignore what God had said and to make her own decisions. Adam joined her in that rebellious course. The result was calamity for them and for us. (Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-6, 17-19) We are living in a world that is saturated with that independent spirit, so it should not surprise us if we need to curb that spirit in ourselves. Lovingly Jehovah helps us to do so by counsel through his organization.

¹¹ Through that organization we have learned of Jehovah's grand promise to replace the present environment with new heavens and a new earth in which "righteousness is to dwell." (2 Pet. 3:13) We thrill at the prospect that soon this wicked world will be gone and the earth will be transformed into a Paradise. But does our own life pattern show that we are sincerely preparing for life in a world where righteousness will be the prevailing practice? The Bible plainly tells us: "Do not be loving either the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15) It is true that there are many things about the world that none of us like. But do we dislike mainly those aspects of the world that infringe on our own immediate enjoyment of life? Or do

10. Why do we need to be careful to avoid an independent spirit?

11. What will show whether we are sincerely preparing for life in God's righteous New Order?

we also shun its spirit—its independent attitude, its excessive concern for self? Are we genuinely making it a practice to listen to Jehovah and to obey him from our heart, despite any contrary inclinations of the flesh? Our entire life course—no matter where we are, no matter what we are doing—should give evidence that our thinking and our motives are God oriented.—Prov. 3: 5, 6.

¹² When Jehovah's appointed time comes to destroy this wicked system of things and all who love its ways, he will not delay. He is not going to postpone that time or change his standards so as to accommodate those who are still trying to cling to the world, those who are only halfhearted about learning God's will and doing it. Now is the time for action! (Luke 13:23, 24; 17:32; 21: 34-36) How heartwarming it is, therefore, to see the "great crowd" of persons who are taking hold of this precious opportunity, eagerly seeking the instruction that Jehovah provides through his loving organization and then unitedly walking in his paths!

12. (a) Why is it important to seize the opportunity now to learn Jehovah's ways and to follow them in our lives?
(b) What do the scriptures cited in the paragraph mean to us personally?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- What is Jehovah's purpose as to worship?
- After having learned basic Bible teachings, what further progress should we earnestly seek to make?
- What can we individually do, so that the unifying factors that we have discussed will influence our lives as they should?

Magnify Jehovah as the True God

TO FELLOW Christians the apostle Paul wrote that, even though there are many who are called gods, "there is actually to us one God the Father . . . and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 8:5, 6) The "one God" to whom Paul referred is Jehovah, the Creator of all things. (Deut. 6:4; Rev. 4:11) Appreciative persons who learn of his qualities and the things that he has done for humankind find themselves irresistibly drawn to him. With what result? It is only natural for them to magnify the One that they so deeply admire, doing so by both words and deeds. As their love for God grows, they feel impelled to tell others about him, and to the extent possible for them as humans they want to imitate him. The Bible encourages all of us to do that, saying: "Become imitators of God, as beloved children, and go on walking in love." (Eph. 5:1, 2) To apply that counsel, we need to get to know Jehovah as he truly is.

THE KIND OF PERSON JEHOVAH IS

² Throughout the Bible are found numerous direct statements identifying the outstanding qual-

1. (a) Who is the true God? (b) As we learn about him, how should our own lives be affected?
2. What are some of God's outstanding qualities that move us to praise him?

ities of God. When you read these, take time to think about what the qualities really are and how important they are to you. For example: "God is love." (1 John 4:8) "All his ways are justice." (Deut. 32:4) 'With him there is wisdom.' (Job 12:13) He is "vigorous in power." (Isa. 40:26) As you reflect on these attributes, are you not moved, out of admiration for God, to praise him?

³ Further acquainting us with his appealing personality, the Bible tells us that Jehovah is "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth." (Ex. 34:6) "You, O Jehovah, are good and ready to forgive." (Ps. 86:5) "As regards Jehovah, his eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him." (2 Chron. 16:9) "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) Jehovah "gives generously" and is "the happy God." (Jas. 1:5; 1 Tim. 1:11) How refreshing it is to serve this incomparable God and to experience his loving care!

⁴ Consistent with his attributes is the fact that he is "a God exacting exclusive devotion." (Ex. 20:5) To serve him acceptably we must give him our full devotion. We cannot also love the world of which Satan is god. (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4) Jehovah sees through any mere pretense of righteousness. He knows full well not only what

3. What other aspects of Jehovah's personality are very appealing?

4. (a) What kind of devotion does Jehovah require, and how important is it? (b) In what does Psalm 34:3 invite us to share?

we do but also how we feel about it and what kind of persons we are trying to be. If we truly love righteousness, he helps us. (Jer. 17:10; Prov. 15:9) Because of the kind of person Jehovah is, millions of people earth wide have gladly accepted the invitation of the Bible psalmist who wrote: "O magnify Jehovah with me, you people, and let us exalt his name together." (Ps. 34:3) Are you one of them?

⁵ Your desire to talk about God will deepen, and you will be greatly assisted in your efforts to imitate him if you examine closely his lofty qualities. Find out (1) exactly what each quality is, perhaps what makes it different from other qualities, (2) how Jehovah has demonstrated it and toward whom, also (3) how you can manifest it or how it should affect your viewpoint.

⁶ Consider here just one example. When the Bible says, "God is love," what does it mean? (1 John 4:8) There are, of course, a number of kinds of love. The Greek word used in this text is *a·ga'pe*, which refers to the highest form of love, as exemplified in Jehovah God himself. Such love is an expression of complete unselfishness. With that in mind, frame your own answers to the questions below, using the scriptures cited.

How is this quality demonstrated in Jehovah's works of creation? (Acts 14:16, 17)

What is the most outstanding example of Jehovah's love for humankind? (John 3:16) Was it because of man's goodness that Jehovah did this? (Rom. 5:8)

5. What will help us to benefit fully from our study of Jehovah's personality?

6. Using love as an example, show how you might examine Jehovah's qualities. Do this by answering the questions at the end of this paragraph, including scriptures in your answers.

How should what Jehovah did by means of his Son influence the way we use our lives? (2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 18, 19)

In what ways may we as Christians show that we have the same kind of love for fellow Christians? (1 Cor. 13:4-7; 1 John 4:10, 11; 3:16-18)

Toward whom else should we show love, and how? (Matt. 5:43-48; 28:19, 20; Gal. 6:10)

⁷ Would you like also to explore some of Jehovah's other qualities? For a start, in personal study why not try "justice" and "wisdom," then perhaps "loving-kindness" and "mercy." With the use of indexes to Watch Tower publications and a Bible concordance, you will find a wealth of enlightening material.

HELP OTHERS TO LEARN THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD

⁸ In opposition to the worship of the true God, literally millions of other gods are worshiped by humans. In the fourth century, Christendom adopted belief in a "Trinity," taught by Babylonians, Egyptians, Hindus and Buddhists before then. In addition to this concept of God, there are powerful rulers, outstanding athletes and singers who have been idolized like gods. Money, self and sex have also become gods to which fervent devotion is given. Who is behind it all? "The god of this system of things," Satan the Devil. (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Cor. 10:20) By every conceivable, crafty means he tries to turn people away from Jehovah, or at least to divide their devotion.

7. In your personal study, how can you find similar material about Jehovah's other qualities?

8. (a) What gods do people of the world worship? (b) Who is behind all this confusion, and why do you say so?

⁹ How can we assist such persons, whether professed Christians or others, to know the truth about God? One of the finest ways is to show them in a helpful manner what the Bible itself says about the identity of the true God and the kind of person he is. Then we need to back this up by conduct that reflects godly qualities in our own lives.—1 Pet. 2:12.

¹⁰ But what if some who are members of Christendom's churches contend with you, claiming that their belief in the "Trinity" is Scriptural? First of all, realize that, although there are official statements of the "Trinity" doctrine, many persons have their own ideas. Invite them to express themselves, and then help them to compare their beliefs with what is in their own Bible. In time, also encourage them to compare official church teaching with God's Word.

¹¹ Having in mind the desire to help sincere persons, consider how you might use the texts noted below to reason on the points with which these scriptures are shown:

(1) Some Trinitarians emphasize the idea that there are three divine Persons (Father, Son and Holy Ghost) but just one God.

But does Acts 2:4, 17 indicate that the "Holy Ghost," or "holy spirit," is a person?

Why is it helpful to note how many persons are

9. What is the best way to help anyone learn the truth about God?

10. When talking to a Trinitarian, why is it not wise to assume that we know exactly what he believes?

11. Taking just one of the five main points at a time, use the questions and scriptures listed with this paragraph to reason on the unscripturalness of the "Trinity" doctrine.

referred to in each of the following scriptures?
(John 17:20-22; Acts 7:56; Rev. 7:10)

(2) *Some believe that all members of the "Trinity" are of equal glory, that none is greater or less than another, that they are coequal as well as coeternal.*

Do the Scriptures agree? (For the answer, see John 14:28; Matthew 24:36; Revelation 3:14.)

(3) *Some people point to John 1:1 as proof of the "Trinity." They argue that the Greek text here has no indefinite article ("a") and that the scripture must therefore read: "the Word was God," instead of "a god."*

But how many persons are spoken of in John 1:1? Three? Or two? How does John 1:18 also conflict with the "Trinity" doctrine?

It is true that Greek has no indefinite article, but many languages do, and it is used in those languages in order to express thoughts correctly. If someone feels that it is wrong to use the indefinite article when translating John 1:1, would he also want it left out at Acts 28:6 according to the *King James Version* and others? (Another way of rendering John 1:1, as shown in *An American Translation*, is "the Word was divine," that is, he had the same divine qualities that God has.)

(4) *Trinitarians also argue that at Genesis 1:1, 26 the Hebrew word translated "God" is El·o·him' and that this is the plural in Hebrew and actually means "Gods."*

Why does that not support the teaching of three divine Persons in "one God"?

If it indicates a "Trinity" at Genesis 1:1, what does it indicate at Judges 16:23, which uses *el·o·him'* for "god," with the Hebrew verb in the singular number, not the plural?

Why is the plural form of God used in these texts in Hebrew? This is one way that Hebrew conveys the idea of excellence or majesty. If more than one person were meant, accompanying verbs

would also be plural, but in the above instances they are not.

(5) *Because of the emphasis that the churches have put on Jesus (along with the fact that the name Jehovah has been removed from many Bible translations), some persons think only of Jesus when God is mentioned.*

But what example in worship did Jesus provide for us to imitate? (Luke 4:8)

¹² Although Jesus is spoken of in the Scriptures as “a god,” even “Mighty God,” yet he magnified his Father, referring to him as “my God and your God.” (John 1:1; 20:17; Isa. 9:6) He agreed with Moses, who had earlier stated: “Jehovah is the true God; there is no other besides him.” (Deut. 4:35) Jehovah stands in utter contrast to such objects of worship as idols, deified humans and Satan the Devil. In contrast to all such, Jehovah is, as Jesus called him, “the *only* true God.” —John 17:3.

“WALK IN THE NAME OF JEHOVAH”

¹³ After years of confusion as to the identity of God, many persons find it thrilling when first they see God’s personal name, Jehovah, in their Bible. (Ex. 6:3) But they will be lastingly benefited by this knowledge only if they ‘walk in the name of Jehovah forever.’ (Mic. 4:5) This involves much more than simply knowing the name Jehovah or claiming that they are Jehovah’s Witnesses.

¹⁴ Regarding the significance of God’s name, Psalm 9:10 states: “Those knowing your name will trust in you, . . . O Jehovah.” What does

12. Why did Jesus fittingly address his Father as “the *only* true God”?

13, 14. What is involved in “knowing” and ‘walking in’ Jehovah’s name?

that involve? It involves more than just knowing the name Jehovah, which does not automatically mean trusting in Jehovah. "Knowing" God's name here means appreciating the kind of God that Jehovah is, respecting his authority, obeying his commands. Similarly, 'walking in the name of Jehovah' implies being dedicated to him and representing him as one of his worshipers, truly using one's life in harmony with God's will. (Luke 10:27) Are you doing that?

¹⁵ If we are going to serve Jehovah eternally, more than a sense of duty must impel us. The apostle Paul urged Timothy, who had already been serving Jehovah for many years: "Be training yourself with godly devotion as your aim." (1 Tim. 4:7) Devotion comes from the heart; it is stirred by appreciation for the person to whom it is directed. "Godly devotion" is profound respect for Jehovah personally. It manifests loving attachment to him because of appreciation for him and his ways. It causes us to want everyone to hold his name in high esteem. We must cultivate "godly devotion" as the goal or aim in our lives if we are going to walk in the name of Jehovah, the true God, forever.—Ps. 37:4; 2 Pet. 3:11.

15. What, besides a sense of duty, is needed if we are going to serve Jehovah forever?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- What kind of person is Jehovah? How are we benefited by getting a clear understanding of each of his qualities?
- How can we help other people to learn the truth about God?
- What is involved in "knowing" Jehovah and 'walking in his name'?

Keep a Firm Grip on the Word of God

“YOU well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you.” This was the reminder that Joshua gave the older men of Israel after they were settled in the Promised Land. But in the years that followed they did not consistently take God’s Word to heart and apply it. What was the result? The Bible makes it plain that just as Jehovah’s promises of blessing had proved trustworthy, so, too, he carried out what he said as to the consequences of disobedience. (Josh. 23: 14-16) That record, as well as all the rest of the Bible, was preserved for our instruction—so that “we might have hope” and so that we would not do something that would result in our forfeiting that hope.—Rom. 15:4.

² Although some 40 human “secretaries” were used to record the Bible, Jehovah himself is its Author. Does that mean he actively directed the writing of everything in it? Yes. As the apostle Paul truthfully said, “All Scripture is inspired of God.” Being convinced of that, we urge people

1. (a) How did ancient Israel experience the truthfulness of God’s Word? (b) Why is that of interest to us?
2. (a) In what sense is the Bible “inspired of God”? (b) Knowing this, what responsibility do we have?

everywhere to pay heed to it and to build their lives around what it contains, just as *we* endeavor to do.—2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Thess. 2:13.

WHAT WILL HELP OTHERS TO APPRECIATE IT?

³ Of course, many to whom we speak do not share our conviction that the Bible really is the Word of God. How can we help them? Often, the very best way is to open the Bible and show them what it contains. "The word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart." (Heb. 4:12) "The word of God" is his word of promise, recorded in the Bible. It is not dead history but is alive and irresistibly moves toward fulfillment. As it does so, the true heart motivations of persons who are brought in touch with it become manifest as to meeting the conditions. Its influence is far more powerful than anything that we personally might say.

⁴ Simply seeing God's name in the Bible has been the turning point for many persons. Others have decided to study the Bible when shown what it says about the purpose of life, why God permits wickedness, the significance of current events or the realistic hope centered on God's Kingdom. In lands where religious practices have laid people open to much harassment by evil spirits, the Bible's explanation of the cause of this and how to gain relief has aroused interest. Why are these

3. What is the best way to help many of those who are not convinced that the Bible is the Word of God?

4. What simple explanations of Bible truths have changed the attitude of some persons toward the Bible? Why?

points so impressive to them? Because the Bible is the only source of reliable information on these vital matters.—Ps. 119:130.

⁵ However, what if a person directly tells us that he does not believe the Bible? Should that end the conversation? Not if he is willing to reason. We ought to feel a responsibility to speak up with conviction in behalf of God's Word. It may be that he views the Bible as Christendom's book. Her record of hypocrisy and political meddling, as well as her constant solicitations for money, may account for his negative reaction to the Bible. Why not ask if that is so? The Bible's condemnation of Christendom's worldly ways, along with points of contrast between Christendom and true Christianity, may arouse his interest.—Compare Matthew 15:7-9; James 4:4; Micah 3:11, 12.

⁶ For others, a straightforward discussion of evidences of inspiration is helpful. What clearly proves to *you* that the Bible is from God? Is it what the Bible itself says as to its origin? (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Rev. 1:1) Or is it the fact that the Bible contains numerous prophecies reflecting detailed knowledge of the future, which prophecies must therefore have come from a superhuman source? (2 Pet. 1:20, 21; Isa. 42:9) Is it perhaps the Bible's internal harmony, although written down by many men over a period of 1,610 years? Or its scientific accuracy in contrast with other writings from those times? Or the candor of its writers? Or its preservation in the face of vi-

5. When a person says he does not believe the Bible, what may be the reason? How might we help him?

6. (a) What convinces you personally that the Bible is God's Word? (b) What other lines of reasoning could be used to help people to appreciate that the Bible really is from God?

cious efforts to destroy it? Whatever you have found to be impressive can also be used to help other people.

OUR PERSONAL BIBLE READING

⁷ In addition to helping others to believe the Bible, we ourselves need to take time to read it regularly. Are you doing that? Of all the books ever produced, this one is the most important. Of course, that does not mean that if we read it we need nothing else. The Scriptures warn against isolating ourselves, thinking that we can figure out everything with independent research. Both personal study and regular meeting attendance are needed if we are to be balanced Christians. —Prov. 18:1; Heb. 10:24, 25.

⁸ For our benefit the Bible tells about an Ethiopian official to whom an angel directed the Christian evangelizer Philip when the official was reading from the prophecy of Isaiah. Philip asked the man: "Do you actually know what you are reading?" Humbly the Ethiopian replied: "Really, how could I ever do so, unless someone guided me?" He urged Philip to explain the passage of Scripture. Now, Philip was not merely an independent Bible reader who there gave his opinion on the Scriptures. No; the record shows that he had maintained close contact with the apostles in the congregation at Jerusalem and was a member of Jehovah's visible organization. So he could help the Ethiopian to benefit from the instruction that Jehovah was making available through

7, 8. (a) What should we individually be doing with the Bible? (b) What do we need in addition to personal Bible reading, and how does the Bible itself show this? (c) How have you personally gained an understanding of Jehovah's purposes?

that organization. (Acts 6:5, 6; 8:5, 14, 15, 26-35) Similarly today, who of us arrived at a clear and correct understanding of Jehovah's purposes on his own? On the contrary, we needed, and we continue to need, the aid that Jehovah lovingly provides through his visible organization.

⁹ To help us to use and understand the Bible, Jehovah's organization supplies excellent Scriptural material in *The Watchtower* and related publications. In addition, a regular schedule of Bible reading is set out for us in connection with the Theocratic Ministry School in the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses. Some of Jehovah's Witnesses do consecutive Bible reading in addition to this. Great benefit can come from time spent in examining the Holy Scriptures. (Ps. 1:1-3; 19:7, 8) Have you personally read the *entire* Bible? If not, make a special effort to do so. Even though you do not fully understand everything, your having an overall view of it will be of great value. If you were to read only four or five pages a day, you would complete the Bible in about a year.

¹⁰ When can you personally arrange to do this Bible reading? If you are able to set aside even 10 or 15 minutes a day, how beneficial that will be! If not, at least schedule regular times for it each week, and then hold to that schedule. Bible reading should be a lifelong habit, like eating food. As you know, if a person's eating habits become poor, his health will suffer. So, too, with our spirituality. Our life depends on our being

9. What programs of Bible reading can benefit all of us?

10. (a) When do you do your Bible reading? (b) Why is regularity important?

regularly nourished by “every utterance coming forth through Jehovah’s mouth.”—Matt. 4:4.

¹¹ What should be our objective in reading the Bible? It would be a mistake if our goal were simply to cover a quota of pages or even solely to gain eternal life. To benefit lastingly, we must have higher motives—love for God, a desire to know him better, to understand his will and to worship him acceptably. (John 5:39-42) Our attitude should be like that of the Bible writer who said: “Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths.”—Ps. 25:4.

¹² As we receive that teaching, it should be our desire to gain “accurate knowledge.” Without it, how could we apply God’s Word properly in our own lives or explain it correctly to others? (Col. 3:10; 2 Tim. 2:15) Gaining *accurate* knowledge requires that we read carefully, and if a portion is deep we may need to read it more than once in order to grasp the sense of it. We will also be benefited if we take time to meditate on the material, thinking about it from various standpoints. Five valuable avenues of thought to explore are highlighted on page 27 of this book. Many portions of Scripture can beneficially be analyzed by using one or more of these. As you answer the questions on the following pages you will see how that is so.

11. What should be our objective in reading the Bible?

12. (a) Why is gaining “accurate knowledge” necessary, and what effort when reading may be needed in order to get it? (b) As shown on page 27, from what viewpoints might we beneficially analyze what we read in the Bible? (c) Illustrate these five points, one at a time, by answering the questions provided at the end of this paragraph. Be sure to use your Bible.

(1) Frequently the portion of Scripture that you are reading gives some indication as to the kind of person Jehovah is.

When we meditate appreciatively on what the Bible tells us about Jehovah's works of creation, how does that affect our attitude toward him? (Ps. 139: 13, 14; from Job chapters 38-42 note especially 38: 1, 2 and 40:2, 8, then 42:1-6.)

In view of what Jesus said at John 14:9, 10, what can we conclude about *Jehovah* from incidents such as the one recorded at Luke 5:12, 13?

(2) Consider how the account contributes to development of the Bible's theme, namely, the vindication of Jehovah's name by the Kingdom under Jesus Christ the Promised Seed.

How are the plagues on Egypt related to this theme? (See Exodus 5:2; 9:16; 12:12.)

What about the heartwarming account concerning Ruth the Moabitess? (Ruth 4:13-17; Matt. 1:1, 5)

How does Gabriel's announcement to Mary of the coming birth of Jesus fit in? (Luke 1:26-33)

Why is the anointing of Jesus' disciples with holy spirit at Pentecost significant? (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Pet. 2: 4, 5, 9; 2 Pet. 1:10, 11)

(3) Context has a bearing on the meaning of specific verses.

To whom are the statements at Romans 5:1 and 8:16 addressed? (See Romans 1:7.)

Does the context indicate that 1 Corinthians 2:9 is commenting about life on earth in God's New Order? As shown in verses 6-8, whose eyes and ears were not comprehending the things about which Paul was writing?

(4) Ask yourself how you can make personal application of what you are reading.

Is the record about Cain's killing Abel merely of historical interest or is there counsel in it for us? (Gen. 4:3-12; 1 John 3:10-15; Heb. 11:4)

WHEN YOU READ THE BIBLE CONSIDER—

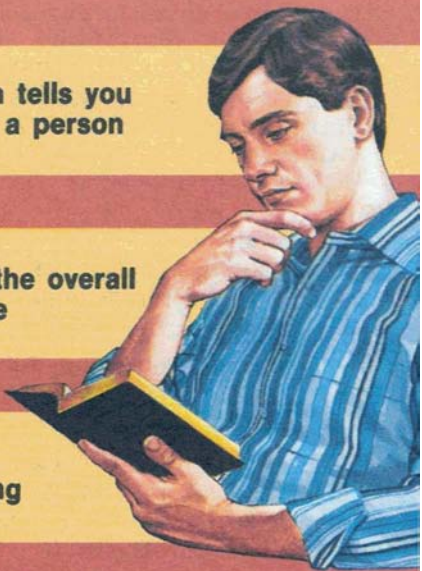
**What each portion tells you
about Jehovah as a person**

**How it relates to the overall
theme of the Bible**

**How context
affects the meaning**

How it should affect your own life

How you can use it to help others



When we read (in Exodus through Deuteronomy) about Israel's experiences in the wilderness, what personal application should we make? (1 Cor. 10: 6-11)

Does counsel on conduct written to anointed Christians apply to persons who have hope of eternal life on earth? (Compare Numbers 15:16; John 10:16.)

Even though we are in good standing with the Christian congregation, is there need to consider ways that we could more fully apply Bible counsel that we already know? (2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Thess. 4:1)

(5) Give thought to how you might use what you are reading to aid others.

Who might be helped with the account of the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus? (Luke 8: 41, 42, 49-56)

¹³ How richly rewarding Bible reading becomes when done in this manner! To be sure, reading the Bible is a challenge—a project that we can beneficially work at for a lifetime. But as we do it we will grow spiritually stronger. It will draw us closer to our loving Father, Jehovah, and to our Christian brothers. It will help us to heed the counsel to keep “a tight grip on the word of life.”—Phil. 2:16.

13. What results can we expect from a continuing program of Bible reading and study with Jehovah's organization?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- Why was the Bible written and preserved until our day?
- How can we help others to appreciate it?
- Why is regular personal Bible reading profitable? From what five viewpoints might we beneficially analyze what we read?

The One to Whom All the Prophets Bore Witness

DESCRIBING his own warm relationship with Jehovah, Jesus said: "The Father has affection for the Son and shows him all the things he himself does." (John 5:19, 20) The closeness of that relationship began at the time of his creation, countless millenniums before his human birth. He was God's only-begotten Son, the only one created by Jehovah alone. Everything else in heaven and on earth was created by means of that dearly loved firstborn Son. He also served as God's Word or Spokesman, the one through whom the divine will was communicated to others. This one, the Son that God was specially fond of, became the man Jesus Christ.—Col. 1:15, 16; John 1:14; 12:49, 50.

² Before his miraculous birth as a human, scores of inspired prophecies about him were recorded. As the apostle Peter testified to Cornelius, "To him all the prophets bear witness." (Acts 10:43) To such an extent is Jesus' role in connection with pure worship featured in the Bible that an angel told the apostle John: "Worship God; for the bearing witness to Jesus is what inspires prophesying." (Rev. 19:10) Those prophecies clearly identify him and draw attention to aspects of

1. What do the facts about Jesus' prehuman existence show as to his relationship with Jehovah?
2. To what extent do Bible prophecies refer to Jesus?

God's purpose regarding him that are of keen interest to us today.

WHAT THE PROPHECIES REVEALED

³ The first of such prophecies was spoken after the rebellion in Eden. It was embodied in Jehovah's judgment addressed to the serpent. Jehovah said: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel." (Gen. 3:14, 15) What did that mean? In God's due time other prophecies clarified it and enlarged on it. As a result we know that the one to whom it was addressed, as represented by the serpent, is Satan the Devil. "The woman" is Jehovah's own loyal heavenly organization, which is to him like a faithful wife. 'The seed of the serpent' includes both angels and humans who manifest the spirit of the Devil, those who oppose Jehovah and his people. In view of the way the serpent was used by the Devil in Eden, it could be discerned from the prophecy that the 'bruising of the serpent in the head' referred to eventual destruction of this rebel son of God who had slandered Jehovah and brought great grief to mankind. But as for the identity of the "seed" that would do the bruising, this long remained a sacred secret.—Rom. 16:25, 26.

⁴ After some 2,000 years of human history Jehovah provided further details. He indicated that the Seed would appear in the family line of Abraham. (Gen. 22:15-18) However, the line leading

3. (a) In the prophecy at Genesis 3:14, 15, who is represented by "the serpent"? "The woman"? 'The seed of the serpent'? (b) Why would the 'bruising of the serpent in the head' be of great interest to Jehovah's servants?

4. How did Jesus' ancestry help to identify him as the promised Seed?

to the Seed would depend not merely on fleshly descent but on God's choice. In spite of Abraham's love for his son Ishmael, born to the slave girl Hagar, Jehovah pointedly said: "My covenant I shall establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you." (Gen. 17:18-21; 21:8-12) Later that covenant was confirmed, not to Isaac's firstborn son Esau, but to Jacob, from whom the 12 tribes of Israel descended. (Gen. 28:10-14) In time it was indicated that the Seed would be born in the tribe of Judah, in the house of David.—Gen. 49:10; 1 Chron. 17:3, 4, 11-14.

⁵ Over 700 years in advance, the Bible named Bethlehem as the place of the human birth of the Seed but also revealed that he was one who had already existed "from the days of time indefinite," since the time when he was created in heaven. (Mic. 5:2) The time of his appearance on earth as Jehovah's Anointed One, the Messiah, was foretold through the prophet Daniel. (Dan. 9:24-26) And when he was anointed with holy spirit, a voice from heaven identified him. (Matt. 3:16, 17) So, after becoming a follower of Jesus, Philip could say with conviction: "We have found the one of whom Moses, in the Law, and the Prophets wrote, Jesus, the son [by adoption] of Joseph, from Nazareth."—John 1:45.

⁶ Thereafter, Jesus' followers came to realize that literally scores of prophetic references to him were woven into the inspired Scriptures. Following his death and resurrection, he personally "interpreted to them things pertaining to himself

5. Even early in Jesus' earthly ministry, what else made it evident that he was the Messiah?

6. (a) After Jesus' death, what did his followers come to realize? (b) Who, principally, is the 'seed of the woman,' and what is meant by his bruising the serpent's head?

in all the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:27) It is now apparent that Jesus, principally, is the ‘seed of the woman,’ the one who bruises the head of the “serpent” in such a manner that Satan is finally crushed out of existence. By means of Jesus all God’s promises to humankind, all the things for which we earnestly long, will be brought to fulfillment.—2 Cor. 1:20.

⁷ When you first read some of these prophecies perhaps you asked, as did the Ethiopian eunuch, “About whom does the prophet say this?” But the eunuch did not let the matter rest when he received the answer. After listening carefully to the explanation that Philip gave, the man realized that appreciation for how Jesus fulfilled the prophecy called for action on his own part, by his getting baptized. (Acts 8:32-38; Isa. 53:3-9) Do we respond similarly? Sometimes it is the manner in which a prophecy is presented that deeply moves us, or our heart may be touched by the conclusions that are drawn in the Bible itself when the fulfillment is pointed out.

⁸ Notice how this is so with the following prophetic promises and patterns concerning Jesus Christ. The questions are for you to answer with the aid of the cited scriptures.

(1) How does the record about Abraham’s attempt to offer up Isaac help us to appreciate what Jehovah did in providing the ransom by means of his Son? (John 3:16; Gen. 22:1-18 [notice how Isaac is described in verse 2.])

7. In addition to the identity of the one referred to in these prophecies, what else is it beneficial to consider?

8. Four prophetic patterns regarding Jesus Christ are considered here. Reason on the questions and scriptures provided to show how these prophecies affect us. Consider just one at a time.

What confidence should this give us? (Rom. 8:32, 38, 39)

But what is required on our part? (Gen. 22:18; John 3:36)

(2) In identifying Jesus as the prophet like Moses, of what serious responsibility does the Bible remind us? (Acts 3:22, 23; Deut. 18:15-19)

What are some of the things that Jesus has spoken to us, and why are they timely now? (Matt. 28:18-20; 19:4-9; 18:3-6)

(3) When explaining what was foreshadowed by the priesthood of Aaron, to what appealing qualities of Jesus as high priest does the Bible direct attention? (Heb. 4:15-5:3; 7:26-28)

So how should we feel about approaching God in prayer through Christ for help to overcome our weaknesses?

(4) In view of the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice (replacing all those offered under the Mosaic Law), why should we be very careful to avoid getting into the habit of doing anything that we know is displeasing to God? (Heb. 10:26, 27)

If we truly appreciate the hope of life made possible as a result of Jesus' sacrifice, what things will we be diligent to do? (Heb. 10:19-25)

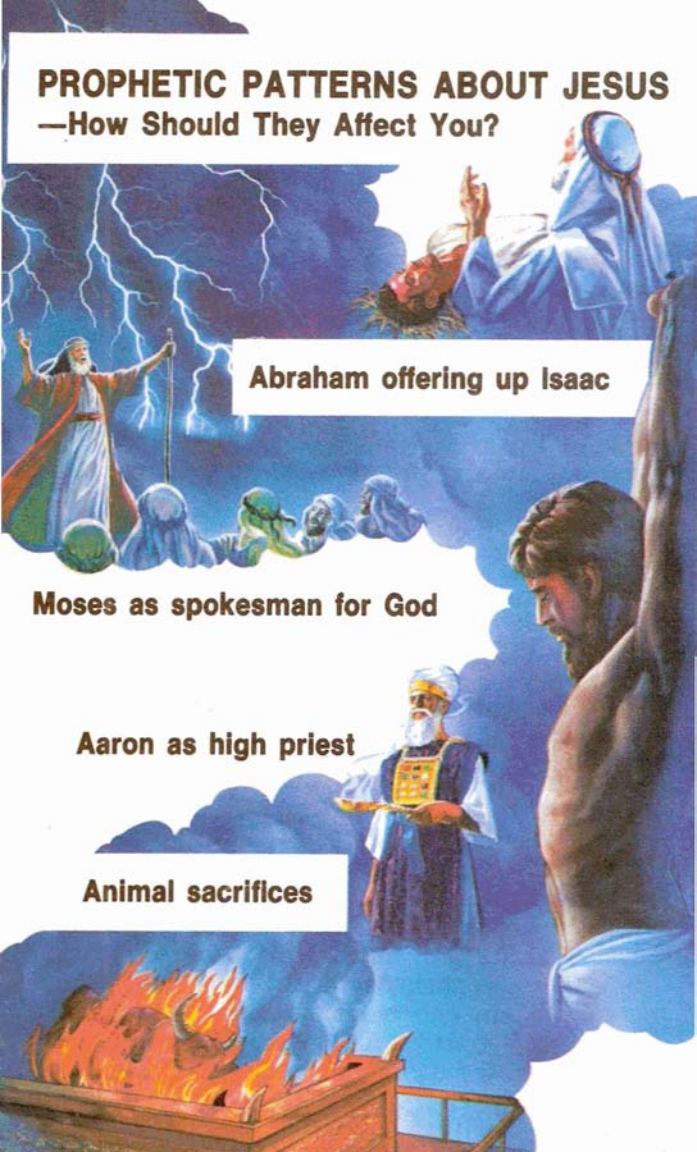
HOW CAN WE SHOW OUR FAITH IN CHRIST?

⁹ After pointing out to the Jewish high court in Jerusalem how prophecy had been fulfilled in Jesus, the apostle Peter forcefully concluded: "There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved." (Acts 4:11, 12; Ps. 118:22) All Adam's offspring are sinners, so their death comes as the condemnation for sin and holds no merit that can be applied as a ransom for anyone. But Jesus was perfect, and the laying down of his life has sacri-

9. Why is there no salvation for us apart from Jesus Christ?

PROPHETIC PATTERNS ABOUT JESUS

—How Should They Affect You?

An illustration depicting the biblical story of Abraham offering Isaac. In the upper right, Abraham is shown in a blue robe, holding Isaac up in the air. Isaac is lying down, his head tilted back, with his hands raised in a gesture of surrender or prayer. In the upper left, a figure representing God, with a long white beard and a red and white robe, stands with arms outstretched, holding a staff. The background is a dark blue sky with bright white lightning bolts. In the center, a group of figures in blue robes are shown in various poses of prayer or devotion. On the right side, a large, muscular man with a beard, representing Jesus, is shown from the chest up, looking down. At the bottom, a large fire burns in a wooden structure, with a bull's head visible in the flames. The overall scene is set against a backdrop of dark blue clouds.

Abraham offering up Isaac

Moses as spokesman for God

Aaron as high priest

Animal sacrifices

ficial value. (Ps. 49:6-9; Heb. 2:9) He offered to God a ransom that exactly corresponded in value with what Adam had lost for his descendants. How has this benefited us?—1 Tim. 2:5, 6.

¹⁰ It has made possible our having a clean conscience because of forgiveness of sin—something far more than was ever achieved for Israel by the animal sacrifices under the Mosaic Law. (Acts 13:38, 39; Heb. 9:13, 14) Having this, of course, requires that we be honest with ourselves and that we have genuine faith in Jesus Christ. Do we personally appreciate how much we need Christ's sacrifice? "If we make the statement: 'We have no sin,' we are misleading ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."—1 John 1:8, 9.

¹¹ Of course, some who say that they know they are sinners and who profess to believe in Christ, who even share to some extent in telling others about God's Kingdom as Jesus did, nevertheless stop short of full faith in Jesus. In what way? Well, as shown in the Bible, when persons in the first century truly became believers, how did they publicly demonstrate that? They got baptized. Why? Because Jesus had commanded that disciples be baptized. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 8:12; 18:8) When a person's heart is really moved by the loving provision that Jehovah made through Jesus Christ, he will not hold back. He will make any needed adjustments in his life, dedicate himself to God and symbolize this by water immer-

10. Explain one way in which Jesus' sacrifice has greatly benefited us.

11. Why is water immersion an important factor in gaining a good conscience toward God?

sion. As the Bible shows, it is by demonstrating faith in this way that he makes 'request to God for a good conscience.'—1 Pet. 3:21.

¹² Even after that, of course, sinful traits will show themselves. What then? "I am writing you these things that you may not commit a sin," said the apostle John. So we should not lightly pass off sin in ourselves, whether manifest in action, speech or attitude. "And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world's." (1 John 2:1, 2) Does that mean that, no matter what we do, if we pray to God, 'Forgive us our sins,' everything will be all right? No. The key to forgiveness is genuine repentance. Help may also be needed from elders in the Christian congregation. We must recognize the wrongness of what was done and feel sincere regret over it so that we will make an earnest effort to avoid repeating it. (Acts 3:19; Jas. 5:13-16) If we do this, we can be assured of Jesus' help. On the basis of our faith in the sin-atonement value of his sacrifice, restoration to Jehovah's favor is possible, and this is vital if our worship is to be acceptable to him.

¹³ Jesus' sacrifice has also opened to us the opportunity for eternal life—in the heavens for a "little flock," and on a Paradise earth for billions more of mankind. (Luke 12:32; Rev. 20:11, 12; 21:3, 4) This is not a reward that we earn. No matter how much we do in Jehovah's service, we

12. If we realize that we have committed a sin, what should we do about it, and why?

13. (a) Explain another way in which Jesus' sacrifice has benefited us. (b) Why does our service to God not earn this reward? (c) But if we really have faith, what will we be doing?

can never build up such merit that God will owe us life. Eternal life is “the gift God gives . . . by Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-10) Nevertheless, if we have faith in that gift and appreciation for the manner in which it was made possible, we will make this manifest. Discerning how marvelously Jehovah has used Jesus in accomplishing His will and how vital it is that all of us follow Jesus’ steps closely, we will make the Christian ministry one of the most important things in our life. Our faith will be evident from the conviction with which we tell others about this magnificent gift of God.—Compare Acts 20:24.

¹⁴ What a fine, unifying effect such faith has! By means of it we are drawn close to Jehovah, to his Son and to one another within the Christian congregation. (1 John 3:23, 24) It causes us to rejoice that Jehovah has kindly given to his Son “the name that is above every other name [except God’s name], so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the ground, and every tongue should openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” —Phil. 2:9-11.

14. How does such faith in Jesus Christ have a unifying effect?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- When the Messiah appeared, why was his identity clear to those who truly believed God’s Word?
- How should the prophetic patterns fulfilled in Jesus, as depicted on page 34, affect us?
- In what ways has Jesus’ sacrifice already benefited us? How can we show our appreciation for it?

Freedom Enjoyed by Worshipers of Jehovah

WHEN Jehovah created the first human pair, they enjoyed freedom far surpassing any that humans have today. Their home was Paradise. No illness marred their enjoyment of life. Death was not waiting for them. But respect for God's laws was an important factor in their continuing to have such freedom.

² Some of those laws may not have been stated in words, but Adam and Eve were made in such a way that it was only natural to obey them. Thus appetite signaled the need to eat; thirst, the need to drink. The setting of the sun encouraged them to get needed rest and sleep. Jehovah also spoke to them and gave them an assignment of work. Actually that assignment was a law, because it would govern their course of action. But what a kindly, beneficial law it was! It gave them work that would be thoroughly satisfying, enabling them to use their faculties to the full in wholesome ways. They were to bring forth children, exercise dominion over earth's animal life and gradually extend the borders of Paradise until it covered the globe. (Gen. 1:28; 2:15) God did not burden them with unnecessary details. Ample leeway was

1, 2. (a) What kind of freedom did God give the first human pair? (b) Mention some of the laws that governed their activity.

allowed for them to make decisions. What more could anyone ask?

³ Of course, when Adam was granted the privilege of making decisions, that did not mean that just any decision he might make, no matter what it was, would produce good results. His freedom to make decisions implied responsibility. He could learn by listening to his heavenly Father and observing His works, and God had given Adam intelligence that would enable him to apply what he learned. Since Adam was created "in God's image," his natural inclination would be to reflect godly qualities when making decisions. He surely would be careful to do that if he truly appreciated what God had done for him and wanted to please God.—Gen. 1:26, 27; compare John 8:29.

⁴ As a reminder of man's dependence on his Creator and Life-Giver, Jehovah laid this command on him: "From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will positively die." (Gen. 2:16, 17) Did that law deprive man of freedom? Certainly not. Adam was free to obey or to disobey. The prohibition imposed no burden. He had an abundance to eat without touching that one tree. However, it was only fitting that he recognize that the earth on which he lived belongs to God and that, as the Creator, God is the rightful Ruler of his creation.—Ps. 24:1, 10.

3. How could Adam have been helped to use wisely his freedom to make decisions?

4. (a) Did the restrictive command given to Adam deprive him of freedom? (b) Why was it a fitting requirement?

⁵ But what happened? Motivated by selfish ambition, an angel deceived Eve by posing as a true guide, assuring her of something contrary to God's will. Rather than obeying his Father, Adam joined Eve in transgression. By grasping for something that did not belong to them, Adam and Eve lost the glorious freedom that they had. Sin became their master and, as God had warned, death positively awaited them. As a result, what inheritance was passed on to their offspring? Sin, manifest in an inborn tendency toward wrongdoing, in weaknesses that make one susceptible to disease and in eventual deterioration through aging. Also death. The inherited inclination toward wrongdoing, aggravated by Satanic influence, has produced a society in which life has become precarious for everyone. What a contrast to the freedom that God gave mankind at the beginning!—Rom. 5:12; Job 14:1; Rev. 12:9.

WHERE FREEDOM CAN BE FOUND

⁶ In view of conditions today, it is no surprise that people long for greater freedom than what they have. But where can real freedom be found? Jesus Christ said: "If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:31, 32) This freedom is not the limited kind that men hope for when they reject one political ruler or form of government in favor of another. Instead, it gets right to the core of human problems. What Jesus was discussing was freedom from sin, slavish bondage to sin. (See John 8:24, 34-36.)

5. (a) How did Adam and Eve lose the glorious freedom they had? (b) What took its place, and how have we been affected?

6. (a) Where can real freedom be found? (b) About what kind of freedom was Jesus speaking at John 8:31, 32?

Thus if a person becomes a true disciple of Jesus Christ, this results in a notable change in his life, a liberation.

⁷ That does not mean that at present true Christians no longer feel the effects of the inborn tendency toward sinful conduct. On the contrary, they have a struggle because of it. (Rom. 7:21-25) But if a person really lives in harmony with Jesus' teachings, he will no longer be an abject slave to sin. Sin will no longer be to him like a king that gives orders that he obeys. He will no longer be trapped in a way of life that lacks purpose and that leaves him with a disturbed conscience. He will enjoy a clean conscience before God because past sins have been forgiven on the basis of his faith in the sacrifice of Christ. Sinful inclinations may try to assert themselves, but when he refuses to act on them because he calls to mind the clean teachings of Christ he will show that sin is not his master.—Rom. 6:12-17.

⁸ As Christians we enjoy great freedom. We have been liberated from the effects of false teachings, from bondage to superstition and servitude to sin. The grand truths about the condition of the dead and the resurrection have freed us from the unreasoning fear of violent death that causes men to suppress their conscience. Knowledge that imperfect human governments will be replaced by God's righteous Kingdom frees us from hopelessness. But such freedom does not justify disregard for law or disrespect for governmental officials on the premise that soon the old system will be gone.—1 Pet. 2:16, 17; Titus 3:1, 2.

7. (a) In what sense, then, can we be free from sin now?
- (b) To have that freedom, what must we do?
8. (a) What further freedom does true Christianity give us?
- (b) How should this affect our attitude toward secular rulers?

⁹ Jehovah does not leave us to figure out by trial and error which is the best way to live. He knows how we are made, what will bring us genuine contentment and a feeling of personal dignity, and what will be most lastingly beneficial for us. He also knows his own time schedule for carrying out his purpose and, therefore, the activities in which it is most worth while for us to engage. He likewise is aware of thoughts and conduct that can degrade a person or spoil his relations with others, even bar him from the blessings of God's Kingdom. Lovingly he informs us of these things through the Bible and by means of his visible organization. (Gal. 5:19-23; Mark 13:10; compare 1 Timothy 1:12, 13.) Then it is up to us, using our God-given free will, to decide how we are going to respond. If we have taken to heart what the Bible tells us about how Adam lost the freedom given to mankind at the start, we will make those decisions wisely. We will show that a good relationship with Jehovah is our main concern in life.

CRAVING ANOTHER KIND OF FREEDOM

¹⁰ At times some young folks raised as Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as others not so young, get to feeling that they want another kind of freedom. The world may appear glamorous, and the more they think about it the stronger becomes their desire to do things that worldly people do. They may not plan to get high on drugs, to drink too much or to commit fornication. But they begin to spend time after school or after work hours with world-

9. (a) How does Jehovah lovingly help us to enjoy the greatest measure of freedom now possible for humans? (b) In making decisions, how can we show that we clearly understand what resulted from Adam's abuse of his freedom?

10. What kind of freedom have some who professed to be Christians reached out for?

ly associates. Of course, they want to be accepted by their new associates, so they begin to imitate their speech and their conduct.—3 John 11.

¹¹ Sometimes the enticement to indulge in worldly conduct comes from another person who professes to be serving Jehovah. That was what happened in Eden when Satan seduced Eve, and then when Eve urged Adam to join her. It was also true among early Christians, and the same thing happens in our day. Such persons often love excitement and crave things that bring intense pleasure. They urge others to “have some fun.” They ‘promise freedom, while they themselves are slaves of corruption.’—2 Pet. 2:18, 19.

¹² The fruitage is not pleasant. Illicit sex results in emotional turmoil. It may also lead to disease, unwanted pregnancy and possibly the breakup of a marriage. (Prov. 6:32-35; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:3-8) Drug abuse can produce irritability, slurred speech, blurred vision, dizziness, impaired ability to breathe, hallucinations and death. (Compare Proverbs 23:29-35.) It can result in addiction, which may lead to crime in order to support the habit. Those who get involved in such conduct usually know what the outcome can be. But their craving for excitement and for sensual pleasure causes them to shut their mind to the consequences. They tell themselves it is freedom, but then they find out, too late, that they are slaves of sin, and what a cruel master sin is! Reasoning on the matter *now* can help to safeguard us against such an experience.—Gal. 6:7, 8.

11. From where does the enticement to do this sometimes come?

12. (a) What are the sad results of worldly conduct? (b) If those involved know the outcome, why do they insist on doing such things?

WHERE THE PROBLEMS BEGIN

¹³ Stop and think about where those problems often begin. The Bible explains: "Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire. Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin; in turn, sin, when it has been accomplished, brings forth death." (Jas. 1: 14, 15) But how do those desires get stirred up? By what goes into the mind, and often this is as a result of association with people who do not apply Bible principles. Of course, we all know that we should avoid "bad associations." But the question is, Which associations are bad? How does Jehovah view the matter? Reasoning on the following questions and scriptures should help us to arrive at proper conclusions.

Does the fact that certain people seem to be honorable mean that they will be good associates? (Compare Genesis 34:1, 2, 18, 19.)

Could their conversation, perhaps their jokes, indicate whether we belong in close company with them? (Eph. 5:3, 4)

Is there any reason for us to be concerned if they do not happen to believe the same things regarding God's purpose that we do? (Compare 1 Corinthians 15:12, 32, 33.)

How would Jehovah feel if we chose the association of people who do not love him? (Compare 2 Chronicles 19:1, 2.)

Although we may work with unbelievers or go to school with them, how can we show that we do not choose them as associates? (1 Pet. 4:3, 4)

13. (a) How do the desires that lead to these problems often get stirred up? (b) To understand what "bad associations" are, whose viewpoint do we need? (c) As you answer the questions at the end of the paragraph, emphasize Jehovah's viewpoint. Comment on just one question at a time.

Viewing television and reading books, magazines and newspapers are also ways of associating with others. Against what type of material from these sources is there special need to be on guard these days? (Prov. 3:31; Isa. 8:19; Eph. 4:17-19)

What does our choice of associates tell Jehovah as to the kind of persons we are? (Ps. 26:1, 4, 5; 97:10)

¹⁴ Immediately ahead of us lies God's New Order. By means of His Kingdom mankind will be freed of the enslaving influence of Satan and his entire wicked system of things. Gradually all the effects of sin will be removed from mankind. Eternal life in Paradise will lie before them. Freedom that is in full harmony with "the spirit of Jehovah" will eventually be enjoyed by all creation. (2 Cor. 3:17) Would it make sense to risk losing all of that because of treating lightly the counsel of God's Word now? By the way in which we exercise our Christian freedom today may we all show clearly that what we really want is "the glorious freedom of the children of God."—Rom. 8:21.

14. What grand freedom lies ahead for those who faithfully apply the counsel of God's Word now?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- What kind of freedom did the first human pair enjoy? How does that compare with what mankind is experiencing now?
- In contrast with the world, what freedom do true Christians have? How is this possible?
- What price is paid by those who seek the kind of freedom that the world has?
- Why is it so important to avoid "bad associations"? Unlike Adam, whose decisions as to what is bad do we accept?

The Issue That All Creation Has to Face

WHEN rebellion broke out in Eden a serious issue was raised that affects all creation. Approaching Eve, Satan implied that she and her husband Adam were being seriously deprived. He asked: "Is it really so that God said you must not eat from every tree of the garden?" Eve replied that only concerning one tree had God said: "You must not eat from it, no, you must not touch it that you do not die." At that Satan directly charged Jehovah with lying, saying that neither Eve's life nor that of Adam was dependent on obedience to God. He claimed that God was withholding from his creatures something good—the ability to set their own standards in life. "You positively will not die," Satan asserted. "For God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad." (Gen. 3:1-5) Satan led Eve to believe that she would be better off making her own decisions. By implication, he there challenged God's right to rule and His way of ruling. The issue raised actually involved universal sovereignty.

² Love for Jehovah could have safeguarded Eve. Respect for the headship of her husband could

1. (a) What issue did Satan raise in Eden? (b) How is that issue implied by what he said?

2. What could have safeguarded the first human pair?

also have held her back from wrongdoing. But she thought only about what seemed to be an immediate benefit. What was forbidden became desirable in her eyes. Thoroughly deceived by Satan's reasoning, she violated God's law. Then she involved Adam. Though not deceived by Satan's lie, he, too, showed gross lack of appreciation for God's love. He disregarded the headship of Jehovah and chose to throw in his lot with his rebellious wife.—Gen. 3:6; 1 Tim. 2:13, 14.

³ Satan's attack on Jehovah's sovereignty did not stop with what took place in Eden. His apparent success there was followed by his calling into question loyalty to Jehovah on the part of others. This, then, became a closely related secondary issue. His challenge reached out to include both the offspring of Adam and all the spirit sons of God, even Jehovah's dearly loved firstborn Son. In the days of Job, Satan contended that those who serve Jehovah do so, not because they love God and his way of ruling, but for selfish reasons. He argued that, when subjected to hardship, they would all give in to selfish desires. Was he right? —Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Rev. 12:10.

HOW THEY RESPONDED TO THE ISSUE

⁴ Jehovah did not rule out the possibility that others would join Satan in rebellion. In fact, when passing judgment in Eden, God referred to those who would comprise the 'seed of the serpent.' (Gen. 3:15) The Pharisees who plotted Jesus' death and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ, were among those. They did not simply take some false step before they were aware of it. They knew what

3. (a) What further issue is closely related to Satan's attack on Jehovah's sovereignty? (b) Who are affected by it?

4. Why have many humans not upheld Jehovah's sovereignty?

was right, yet deliberately took a position in opposition to Jehovah and his servants. However, countless others who have not conformed to Jehovah's requirements have acted in ignorance. —Acts 17:29, 30.

⁵ In contrast with all of these were men and women of faith who informed themselves about their Creator and proved their loyalty to him as Sovereign. They believed God. They knew that their lives depended on listening to him and obeying him. Noah was such a man. So, when God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before me . . . Make for yourself an ark," Noah submitted to Jehovah's direction. Other people of that day, despite being given warning, went about their normal routine of life as if nothing unusual was going to happen. But Noah built a gigantic ark and kept busy preaching to others about Jehovah's righteous ways. As the record says, "Noah proceeded to do according to all that God had commanded him. He did just so."—Gen. 6:13-22; see also Hebrews 11:7 and 2 Peter 2:5.

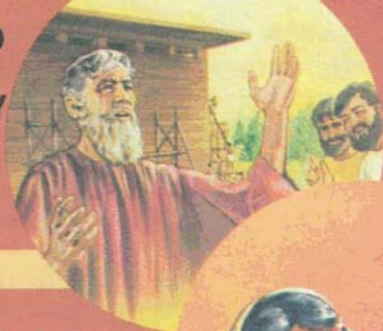
⁶ High regard for the principle of headship, coupled with personal love for Jehovah, has also been outstanding among integrity keepers. They have not been like Eve, who ran ahead of her husband. Nor like Adam, who ignored Jehovah's law. Sarah, the wife of Abraham, demonstrated these fine qualities. Not only in her speech but also in her heart Abraham was her "lord." Furthermore, she personally loved Jehovah and was a woman

5. (a) Unlike Eve, how have those who have remained loyal to Jehovah viewed his word? (b) How did Noah prove his loyalty, and how can we benefit from his example?

6. (a) What else has characterized integrity keepers? (b) How did Sarah manifest these qualities, and in what way can we benefit from her example?

THEY UPHELD JEHOVAH'S SOVEREIGNTY

NOAH



SARAH



MOSES



JOSEPH



**How Can
We Benefit
From Their
Example?**

JOB



of faith. With Abraham, she was "awaiting the city [God's Kingdom] having real foundations, the builder and maker of which city is God."—1 Pet. 3:5, 6; Heb. 11:10-16.

⁷ About 430 years after Abraham left his homeland, Moses upheld Jehovah's sovereignty in face-to-face confrontation with Pharaoh of Egypt. Not that Moses was self-confident. On the contrary, he doubted his ability to speak well enough. But he obeyed Jehovah. With Jehovah's backing and the aid of his brother Aaron, Moses repeatedly delivered Jehovah's word to Pharaoh. Pharaoh was obstinate. Even some of the sons of Israel were harshly critical of Moses. But loyally Moses did everything that Jehovah commanded him, and by means of him Israel was delivered from Egypt.—Ex. 7:6; 12:50, 51.

⁸ Those who were loyal to Jehovah did not reason that all that was required was to conform to the letter of the law, to obey only what God had put in writing. When Potiphar's wife tried to entice Joseph to have adulterous relations with her, there was no written commandment from God that specifically prohibited adultery. But on the basis of what Joseph knew about the marriage arrangement instituted by Jehovah in Eden, he was aware that having sex relations with another man's wife would be displeasing to God. Joseph was not interested in testing the limits to which God would let him be like the Egyptians. He upheld Jehovah's ways by meditating on God's dealings

7. (a) Under what circumstances did Moses uphold Jehovah's sovereignty? (b) How might his example benefit us?

8. (a) What shows that loyalty to Jehovah involves more than doing what God has specifically named in writing? (b) How might appreciation of this kind of loyalty help us to apply 1 John 2:15?

with mankind and then conscientiously applying what he discerned to be God's will.—Gen. 39:7-12; compare Psalm 77:11, 12.

⁹ Even if severely put to the test, those who truly know Jehovah do not turn away from him. Satan charged that if Job lost his possessions or was physically abused, even this one of whom Jehovah spoke highly would desert God. But Job proved the Devil a liar, and he did it even though he did not know what accounted for all the calamity that was engulfing him. (Job 2:3, 9, 10) Still trying to prove his point, Satan later caused an infuriated king of Babylon to threaten three young Hebrews with death in a fiery furnace if they did not bow in worship before an image set up by the king. Forced to choose between the command of the king and Jehovah's law against idolatry, they firmly made it known that they served Jehovah and that he was their Supreme Sovereign. More precious to them than life was faithfulness to God.—Dan. 3:14-18.

¹⁰ Are we to conclude from this that to be loyal to Jehovah a person has to be perfect, that one who makes a mistake has completely failed? By no means! The Bible specifically tells us about times when Moses fell short. Jehovah was displeased, but he did not reject Moses. The apostles, though exemplary in many respects, had their weaknesses. Loyalty requires consistent obedience from the heart. But, taking into account our inheritance of imperfection, Jehovah is pleased if we do not *deliberately* ignore his will in any respect. If, because of weakness, we become involved in wrongdoing,

9. How has the Devil repeatedly been proved a liar in the charge that he raised in Job's day?

10. How is it possible for us imperfect humans to prove that we are truly loyal to Jehovah?

it is important that we be sincerely repentant and so not make a practice of it. Thus we demonstrate that we truly do love what Jehovah says is good and hate what he shows to be bad. On the basis of our faith in the sin-atoning value of Jesus' sacrifice, we can enjoy a clean standing before God. —Amos 5:15; Acts 3:19; Heb. 9:14.

¹¹ Nevertheless, could it be that *perfect* godly devotion simply is not possible for humans? For some 4,000 years the answer to this was a "sacred secret." (1 Tim. 3:16) Adam, though created perfect, did not set a perfect example of godly devotion. Who could? Certainly none of his sinful offspring. Jesus Christ was the only man to do so. What Jesus accomplished proved that Adam, who had more favorable circumstances, could have maintained perfect integrity if he had wanted to. The fault was not in God's creative work. Jesus Christ is therefore the example that we seek to imitate in demonstrating not only obedience to divine law but also personal devotion to Jehovah, the Universal Sovereign.

WHAT IS OUR PERSONAL ANSWER?

¹² Each one of us today has to face the universal issue. We cannot dodge it. If we have openly stated that we are on Jehovah's side, Satan makes us a target. He brings pressure from every conceivable direction and he will continue to do so down to the end of his wicked system of things. We must not relax our guard. (1 Pet. 5:8) Our conduct shows where we stand in relation to the supreme issue.

11. (a) Who among men maintained *perfect* godly devotion, and what did this prove? (b) How are we helped by what he did?

12. Why must we be constantly on the alert as to our attitude toward Jehovah's sovereignty?

¹³ We cannot afford to treat disloyal conduct as unimportant simply because it is common in the world. Maintaining integrity requires that we apply Jehovah's righteous ways in every matter of life. To illustrate, consider the following:

(1) Satan used a lie in order to lead our first parents into sin. He became "the father of the lie." (John 8:44)

Under what circumstances do young people sometimes fail to be truthful with their parents? Why is it important for Christian youths to avoid this? (Prov. 6:16-19)

What business practices might identify a person with "the father of the lie" instead of with the God of truth? (Mic. 6:11, 12)

If we say things to give a better-than-factual impression of ourselves, is that wrong if it does not hurt anyone else? (Ps. 119:163; compare Acts 5:1-11.)

If someone has become involved in serious wrongdoing, why is it important not to try to cover it up by resorting to falsehood? (Prov. 28:13)

(2) When Eve and then Adam acted on Satan's urging to make their own decisions as to good and bad, the first thing they did was to take something that did not belong to them. They became thieves.

Is stealing justified if a person is in need or if the one from whom items are taken has much? (Prov. 6:30, 31; 1 Pet. 4:15)

Is it less objectionable if it is a common practice where we live or if what is taken is small? (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:28; Luke 16:10)

¹⁴ During the Thousand Year Reign of Christ,

13. (a) What is there about the origin of lying and stealing that should make us shun them? (b) Answer the questions at the end of this paragraph, one at a time, regarding situations that incline some people toward such wrongdoing.

14, 15. (a) At the end of Christ's Thousand Year Reign what test will come on all humankind? (b) How will what we do now affect the outcome for us then?

Satan and his demons will be in the abyss, unable to influence mankind. What a relief that will be! But following the thousand years, they will be loosed for a little time. Satan and those who follow him will bring pressure on the “holy ones,” those of restored mankind who are maintaining their integrity. He will advance as in warfare against “the beloved city,” the heavenly New Jerusalem, by trying to wipe out the righteousness that it has established on earth.—Rev. 20:7-10.

¹⁵ It is very likely that, as in the past, Satan will employ deceit, along with appeals to selfishness and pride, to entice humans to acts of disloyalty to Jehovah. If it is our privilege to be alive then, how will we personally react? Where will our hearts be regarding the universal issue? Since all mankind will then be perfect, any act of disloyalty will be deliberate and will result in eternal destruction. So that we may prove loyal then, how vital it is that we cultivate the habit now of responding readily and positively to whatever direction Jehovah gives us, whether through his Word or through his organization! Doing so, we show our genuine devotion to him as the Universal Sovereign.

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- What is the great issue that all creation has to face? How did we get involved?
- What is outstanding about the ways in which each of the men and women shown on page 49 proved integrity to Jehovah?
- Why is it vital that we be careful every day to honor Jehovah by our conduct?

What We Learn From God's Permission of Evil

REGARDLESS of the difficulties that may come our way in life, our being born was no injustice on God's part. He endowed the first humans with perfection and gave them Paradise as their home. If he had immediately executed them after they rebelled, there would have been no human race as we know it with its sickness, poverty and crime. Mercifully, however, Jehovah allowed Adam and Eve to bring forth a family before they died, even though these would inherit imperfection. Through Christ he made provision for those of Adam's descendants exercising faith to have what Adam forfeited—eternal life under circumstances that would make possible the greatest enjoyment of life.—Deut. 32:4, 5; John 10:10.

² The benefits of this to us personally are immeasurable. But from the Bible record we learn that something far more significant than our personal salvation was involved.

FOR THE SAKE OF HIS GREAT NAME

³ Jehovah's name, his reputation as the Universal Sovereign and the God of truth, was involved in the fulfillment of his purpose regarding the

1. (a) If Jehovah had promptly executed the rebels in Eden, how would that have affected us? (b) Instead, what loving provisions has Jehovah made available to us?
2. Was all of this done only for our salvation?
3. What was at stake in connection with fulfillment of Jehovah's purpose for the earth and mankind?

earth and mankind. Because of Jehovah's position, the peace and well-being of all the universe require that his name be given the full respect it deserves and that all be obedient to him.

⁴ After creating Adam and Eve, he gave them an assignment to fulfill. He made it clear that his purpose was not only to subdue all the earth, thus extending the boundaries of Paradise, but to populate it with descendants of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. (Gen. 1:28) Was this purpose going to fail because of their sin, with resulting reproach to the name of God?

⁵ Jehovah had warned Adam that if he disobediently ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad he would positively die "*in the day*" of his eating. (Gen. 2:17) True to God's word, on the very day of Adam's sinning Jehovah called the transgressors to account and pronounced sentence of death. The punishment was inescapable. Judicially, from God's standpoint, Adam and Eve died that day. (Compare Luke 20:37, 38.) But so as to carry out his own stated purpose regarding the populating of the earth, Jehovah allowed them to produce a family before they literally died. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of God's viewing 1,000 years as one day, when Adam's life ended at 930 years, this was within one "day." (Gen. 5:3-5; compare Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8.) Thus Jehovah's truthfulness was upheld as to the time when punishment would be executed, and his purpose to populate the earth with Adam's offspring

4. Exactly what did that purpose include?

5. (a) According to Genesis 2:17, when would anyone eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad die? (b) How did Jehovah fulfill that, while also respecting his purpose regarding the populating of the earth?

was not thwarted. But it has meant that, for a time, sinful people have been allowed to live.

⁶ What Jehovah said to the ruler of Egypt in the days of Moses further indicates why God has allowed the wicked to continue for a time. When Pharaoh forbade the departure of the sons of Israel from Egypt, Jehovah did not immediately strike him down. Ten plagues were brought on the land, demonstrating Jehovah's power in amazing and diversified ways. When warning of the seventh, Jehovah told Pharaoh that he could easily have effaced Pharaoh and his people from the earth. "But, in fact," Jehovah said, "for this cause I have kept you in existence, for the sake of showing you my power and in order to have my name declared in all the earth."—Ex. 9:15, 16.

⁷ When Jehovah delivered Israel, his name did indeed come to be widely known. Today, nearly 3,500 years later, what he did has not been forgotten. Not only was the personal name Jehovah declared but so was the truth about the One bearing that name. This established Jehovah's reputation as a God who keeps his covenants and takes action on behalf of his servants. It demonstrated that because of his almighty power nothing can block his purpose. Even more impressive will be the approaching destruction of the entire wicked system, visible and invisible. That display of almighty power and the glory it brings to Jehovah's name will never be forgotten in universal history. Its benefits will be unending!—Ezek. 38:23; Rev. 19:1, 2.

6, 7. (a) What does Exodus 9:15, 16 indicate as to why Jehovah allows the wicked to continue for a time? (b) In Pharaoh's case, how was Jehovah's power shown and how was His name made known? (c) So what will be the outcome at the end of the present wicked system?

'O THE DEPTH OF GOD'S WISDOM!'

⁸ In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul raises the question: "Is there injustice with God?" And then he answers by emphasizing God's mercy and by referring to what Jehovah said to Pharaoh. He also calls to mind the fact that we humans are like clay in the hands of a potter. Does the clay complain about the use to which it is put? Paul adds: "If, now, God, although having the will to demonstrate his wrath and to make his power known, tolerated with much long-suffering vessels of wrath made fit for destruction, in order that he might make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory, namely, us, whom he called not only from among Jews but also from among nations, what of it?"—Rom. 9:14-24.

⁹ Ever since Jehovah made the prophetic statement recorded at Genesis 3:15, Satan and his seed have been "vessels of wrath made fit for destruction." During all that time Jehovah has exercised long-suffering. The wicked have ridiculed his ways; they have persecuted his servants, even killed his Son. But Jehovah has shown great restraint, with lasting benefit to his servants. All creation has had opportunity to see the disastrous results of rebellion against God. At the same time, Jesus' death provided the means for delivering obedient mankind and for 'breaking up the works of the Devil.'—1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14, 15.

¹⁰ During the more than 1,900 years since Jesus'

8. What additional factors does Paul urge us to consider?

9. (a) Who are the "vessels of wrath made fit for destruction"? (b) Why has Jehovah shown great long-suffering in the face of their hostility, and how will the final outcome be for the good of those who love him?

10. Why has Jehovah continued to tolerate the wicked during the past 1,900 years?

resurrection Jehovah has tolerated further the "vessels of wrath," holding off their destruction. Why? Because he has been preparing the secondary part of the woman's seed, those who are to be associated with Jesus Christ in his heavenly Kingdom. (Gal. 3:29) These ones, 144,000 in number, are the "vessels of mercy" spoken of by the apostle Paul. First, individuals from among the Jews were invited to make up this class. Then the circumcised Samaritans were added and, finally, people of the Gentile nations. With much long-suffering Jehovah has worked out his purpose, forcing no one to serve him, but bestowing grand blessings on those who responded appreciatively to his loving provisions. Now the preparation of that heavenly class is nearly complete.

¹¹ But what about inhabitants for the earth? In God's due time billions will be resurrected as earthly subjects of the Kingdom. Also, particularly since 1935 C.E. Jehovah's long-suffering has made possible the gathering together of a "great crowd" out of all nations with a view to their salvation.—Rev. 7:9, 10; John 10:16.

¹² Has there been any injustice in all of this? Certainly not! If God holds off the destruction of the wicked, the "vessels of wrath," so that he can show compassion to others in harmony with his purpose, how can anyone rightly complain? Instead, as we observe the unfolding of his purpose, we learn much about Jehovah himself. We marvel at the facets of his personality that have come to light—his justice, his mercy, his long-

11. What other group is now benefiting from Jehovah's long-suffering?

12. (a) As a result, what have we learned about Jehovah himself? (b) How do you react to how Jehovah has handled these matters?

suffering, the diversity of his wisdom. Jehovah's wise handling of the issue will forever stand as a testimony to the fact that his way of ruling is best. With the apostle Paul we say: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and past tracing out his ways are!"—Rom. 11:33.

OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW OUR DEVOTION

¹³ There are situations that involve real personal suffering because God has not yet destroyed the wicked and brought about the foretold restoration of mankind. What is our reaction to such? Do we see in them opportunities to share in clearing Jehovah's name of reproach and proving the Devil a liar? We can be greatly strengthened to do so by keeping in mind the counsel: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me." (Prov. 27:11) Satan, the one who taunts Jehovah, charged that if people suffer material loss or physical affliction they will blame God, even curse him. (Job 1:9-11; 2:4, 5) We bring joy to Jehovah's heart when, by our loyalty to God in the face of hardships, we demonstrate that such is not true in our case. We have full confidence that Jehovah has tender affection for his servants and that, as in the case of Job, in due time Jehovah will reward us generously if we prove faithful.—Jas. 5:11; Job 42:10-16.

¹⁴ If we trustingly rely on Jehovah when we undergo grievous trials, we can develop priceless qualities. As a result of the things Jesus suffered,

13. (a) When we undergo personal suffering what opportunity is presented to us? (b) What will help us to respond wisely?

14. If we rely on Jehovah when we undergo trials, what other benefits can come to us?

he “learned obedience” in a way that he had never known it before. We, too, can learn—cultivating long-suffering, endurance and a deepened appreciation of Jehovah’s righteous ways. Will we patiently accept that training?—Heb. 5:8, 9; 12:11; Jas. 1:2-4.

¹⁵ Others will observe what we do. Because of what we undergo on account of our love for righteousness, some of them may in time come to appreciate who truly are Christ’s “brothers” today, and by uniting with his “brothers” in worship they can come in line for the blessings of eternal life. (Matt. 25:34-36, 40, 46) Jehovah and his Son want them to have that opportunity. Do we? Are we willing to put up with hardship to make it possible?

¹⁶ How fine it is when we thus view even difficult situations in life as opportunities to show our devotion to Jehovah as well as to share in accomplishing his will! Our doing so can give evidence that we are indeed moving toward the unity with God and Christ for which Jesus prayed on behalf of all true Christians.—John 17:20, 21.

15. As we patiently endure hardship, how may others benefit?

16. How is our view of such personal hardship related to the matter of unity?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- While permitting evil, how has Jehovah properly shown great respect for his own name?
- How has God’s tolerating “vessels of wrath” enabled his mercy to reach all the way to us?
- What should we endeavor to see in situations that involve suffering that we personally experience?

‘Wrestling Against Wicked Spirit Forces’

PEOPLE who are materialistically minded may scoff at the idea of wicked spirits. But it is no laughing matter. Whether they believe it or not, demonic activity exerts pressure on everyone. Worshipers of Jehovah are not exempt. In fact, they are a primary target. The apostle Paul alerts us to this conflict, saying: “We have a wrestling, not against blood and flesh, but against the governments [that are not in the realm of blood and flesh], against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 6:12) In our day the pressure has reached an all-time high because Satan has been cast out of heaven and is furious, knowing his time is short.—Rev. 12:12.

² How can any of us possibly succeed in a struggle against superhuman spirit forces? Only by complete reliance on Jehovah. We must listen to him and obey his Word. By so doing, we can be spared the physical, moral, emotional and mental damage experienced by those under Satanic control.—Eph. 6:11; Jas. 4:7.

1. Why is the activity of wicked spirits of particular interest to us?
2. How is it possible for us to wrestle successfully against superhuman spirits?

WORLD RULERS IN HEAVENLY PLACES

³ Jehovah vividly describes for us the world situation as he sees it from his vantage point in the heavens. He gave the apostle John a vision in which Satan was depicted as "a great fiery-colored dragon" poised to devour, if possible, God's Messianic Kingdom as soon as it would be brought to birth in heaven in 1914 C.E. Failing in that, Satan unleashed against the visible representatives of that Kingdom, the secondary part of the seed of God's "woman," a flood of vicious opposition. —Rev. 12:3, 4, 13, 17.

⁴ The source of the power and authority of human governments was also laid bare in that revelation to John. He was shown a composite wild beast, with 7 heads and 10 horns, a beast having authority "over every tribe and people and tongue and nation." This represents, not just one government, but the global political system. John was informed that "the dragon [Satan the Devil] gave to the beast its power and its throne and great authority." (Rev. 13:1, 2, 7; compare Luke 4:5, 6.) Despite any religious professions on the part of political rulers, none of the member nations of the "beast" submit to Jehovah's sovereignty and to his appointed King, Jesus Christ. They are all struggling to hold on to their own sovereignty. Today, as the Revelation shows, "expressions inspired by demons" are gathering them all to "the war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon. (Rev. 16:13, 14, 16) Indeed, as the apostle Paul wrote, "the world rulers" are not mere men but "wicked spirit forces in the heav-

3. To what and whom is Satan viciously opposed?

4. (a) To what fact concerning the source of the power of human governments does the Bible alert us? (b) To what are all the political rulers now being gathered, and by whom?

enly places." (Eph. 6:12) All who would prove themselves true worshipers of Jehovah need to grasp the full significance of that.

⁵ Daily our lives are touched by conflicts that tear apart the human family. It is common for people to take sides, verbally or otherwise, with the nation, tribe, language group or social class of which they are a part. Even when their particular segment of society is not directly involved in some current conflict, they may find themselves favoring one side over another. But no matter what the grievance, regardless of the person or the cause that they endorse, what are they really supporting? The Bible states plainly that "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19) How, then, can a person avoid being misled with the rest of mankind? Only by giving his full support to God's Kingdom and maintaining complete neutrality as to conflicts between factions of the world.—John 17:15, 16.

SLY DEVICES OF THE WICKED ONE

⁶ At all periods of history Satan has used verbal and physical persecution to turn individuals away from true worship. But he has also employed more subtle means—cunning acts and sly devices.

⁷ He has cleverly kept a large proportion of mankind in darkness by means of false religion, letting them think, if they so desire, that they are serving God. Lacking a genuine love for truth, they may be attracted by mystical and emotional religious services or be impressed by powerful works. (2 Thess. 2:9, 10) But we are warned that,

5. Why is care needed in order to avoid being maneuvered into supporting the satanic system?

6. What are included among the means that Satan has used to turn people away from true worship?

7. How is Satan's cleverness shown in his use of false religion?

even from among those who have shared in true worship, "some will fall away . . . paying attention to misleading inspired utterances and teachings of demons." (1 Tim. 4:1) How could that happen?

⁸ Slyly the Devil appeals to a person's weaknesses. Does fear of man still have a hold on him? If so, he may give in to pressure from relatives or neighbors to share in practices that are of false religious origin. Is the individual proud? Then he may take offense when counseled or when others do not accept ideas that he advocates. (Prov. 29:25; 15:10; 1 Tim. 6:3, 4) What if his participation in the field ministry is not motivated by love? Instead of adjusting his viewpoint to conform to the example of Christ, he may incline toward those who 'tickle his ears' by saying that just reading the Bible and living a "good life" are enough. (2 Tim. 4:3) Whether he actually joins another religious group or simply holds to his own brand of religion is not important to Satan, just as long as he does not worship Jehovah in the way that God directs through his Word and his organization.

⁹ Satan also cunningly entices people to satisfy normal desires in wrong ways. He has done this with the desire for sexual intimacies. Rejecting Bible morality, many in the world view sex relations between unmarried persons as legitimate pleasure or as a way of proving they are adults. And what about married persons? It is not unusual for worldly people who experience marital problems to get a divorce and remarry or simply to separate and live with another mate. When we observe this way of life, do we feel that we are missing out on something, that the Christian way

8. How has Satan lured into false religion even some who used to worship Jehovah?

9. How does Satan cunningly use sex to accomplish his aims?

is too strict? Satan's subtle approach is to make a person think that Jehovah is withholding something good. He urges us to think of the pleasure we can have *now*—not the long-range effect on ourselves and others, and certainly not our relationship with Jehovah and his Son.—Gal. 6:7, 8; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10.

¹⁰ Another natural desire is for entertainment. When wholesome, it can be physically, mentally and emotionally refreshing. But what is our reaction when Satan cleverly uses occasions of relaxation to try to alienate our thinking from that of God? We know, for example, that Jehovah hates those who love violence. (Ps. 11:5) But when movies on television or at the theater feature it, do we passively sit and take it all in? Or when it is presented in the name of sport, do we accept it and perhaps even shout encouragement to the participants?—Compare Genesis 6:13.

¹¹ We are also aware that those who indulge in any form of spiritism—practicing divination, employing witchcraft or trying to communicate with the dead—are “something detestable to Jehovah.” We would not think of consulting spirit mediums and certainly we would not welcome them into our home to practice their demonic arts. But would we listen to them and watch in fascination if they appeared on our television screen? Although we would never accept treatment from a witch doctor, might we tie a string around the wrist of our newborn with the thought that it might somehow protect the child from harm? Or, knowing that the Bible condemns ‘binding others with a spell,’

10. By what means does Satan try to subvert our attitude toward violence?

11. In what ways might even a person who knows the truth about spiritism be ensnared if he is not alert?

would we allow a hypnotist to control our mind, even temporarily?—Deut. 18:10-12; Gal. 5:19-21.

¹² We have read in the Scriptures that 'fornication and uncleanness of every sort should not, with improper motive, even be mentioned among us.' (Eph. 5:3-5) But what if such themes are cleverly accompanied by music that has a pleasing melody, a catchy rhythm or an insistent beat? Might we even unconsciously start repeating lyrics that glorify sex without marriage, use of drugs for pleasure and much more? Or, while we know that we should not imitate the way of life of people who indulge in such things, do we tend to identify ourselves with them by imitating the way they dress, their hairstyle or their way of speaking? How crafty Satan is! How insidious the methods he uses to entice humans to conform to his own corrupted mind! (2 Cor. 4:3, 4) To keep from falling victim to his sly devices, we must avoid drifting along with the world. We need to keep in mind who the "world rulers of this darkness" are and earnestly be wrestling against their influence.—Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8.

EQUIPPED TO BE CONQUERORS

¹³ Before Jesus' death he said to his apostles: "Take courage! I have conquered the world." So, too, they could be conquerors; and over 60 years later the apostle John wrote: "Who is the one that conquers the world but he who has faith that Jesus is the Son of God?" (John 16:33; 1 John

12. (a) How is music used to get us to entertain ideas that we know are wrong? (b) How might a person's clothing, hairstyle or manner of speech indicate admiration for those whose life-style Jehovah disapproves? (c) What is required on our part if we are to avoid falling victim to sly satanic devices? 13. How is it possible for any of us, with our imperfections, to conquer the world that Satan rules?

5:5) Such faith is shown by our obeying Jesus' commands and relying on God's Word, even as he did. What else is required? That we stay close to the congregation of which he is the head. When we fall short, we must earnestly repent and seek God's forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice. In this way, despite our imperfections, we too can be conquerors.

¹⁴ To succeed, we need to put on "the complete suit of armor from God," neglecting no part of it. Please open your Bible to Ephesians 6:13-18 and read its description of that armor. Then, by answering the questions below, consider how you can benefit from the protection afforded by each piece of the armor.

"Loins girded about with truth"

Even though we may know the truth, how do regular study, meditation on Bible truth and meeting attendance protect us? (Phil. 3:1; 4:8, 9; 1 Cor. 10:12, 13; 2 Cor. 13:5; 1 Pet. 1:13, *Kingdom Interlinear*)

"Breastplate of righteousness"

Whose standard of righteousness is this? (Rev. 15:3)

Illustrate how disobedience to Jehovah's commands, because of failure to cultivate love for his ways, could expose one to great spiritual harm. (See 1 Samuel 15:22, 23; Deuteronomy 7:3, 4.)

"Feet shod with the equipment of the good news of peace"

How is it a safeguard for us to keep our feet busy taking us to talk to people about God's provisions for peace? (Rom. 10:15; Ps. 73:2, 3; 1 Tim. 5:13)

"Large shield of faith"

If we have faith that is firmly founded, how will we react in the face of efforts that are meant to

14. (a) Read Ephesians 6:13-18. (b) Use the questions and scriptures provided as a basis for discussing benefits from each part of the spiritual armor.

cause us to doubt or fear? (Compare 2 Timothy 1: 12; 2 Kings 6:15-17.)

"Helmet of salvation"

How does the hope of salvation help one to avoid being ensnared by excessive concern with material possessions? (1 Tim. 6:7-10, 19)

"Sword of the spirit"

On what should we always rely when fighting off onslaughts against our spirituality or that of others? (Ps. 119:98; Prov. 3:5, 6; compare Matthew 4: 3, 4.)

In harmony with that, at Ephesians 6:18, 19, what else is shown to be vital to success in spiritual warfare? How often is it to be employed? In behalf of whom?

¹⁵ As Christian soldiers we are part of a large army engaging in spiritual warfare. If we keep alert and make good use of the full suit of armor from God, we will not become casualties in this war. Instead, we will be a strengthening aid to fellow servants of God. We will be ready and eager to take the offensive, spreading the good news of God's Messianic Kingdom, that government to which Satan is so violently opposed.

15. (a) Is it simply a personal spiritual warfare that we all wage? (b) How can we take the offensive in the fight?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- Why do worshipers of Jehovah endeavor to maintain complete neutrality as to conflicts between elements of the world?
- What are some of the sly devices used by Satan to bring Christians to spiritual ruin?
- How does the armor provided by God safeguard us in ways that are crucial in this spiritual warfare?

Power of the Resurrection Hope

WITHOUT the resurrection, there is no hope for any future life for the human dead. But Jehovah, out of undeserved kindness, has opened up for billions who have died the priceless opportunity to enjoy eternal life. As a result, we also have the heartwarming hope of being reunited with loved ones who have fallen asleep in death. —Compare Mark 5:35, 41, 42; Acts 9:36-41.

² Because of the resurrection Jehovah can, without lasting harm to his faithful servants, let Satan go to the limit in trying to prove his malicious charge, “Everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul.” (Job 2:4) Because Jesus was raised from the dead he was able to present the value of his human sacrifice before his Father’s heavenly throne, with lifesaving benefit to us. By means of resurrection those who are joint heirs with Christ are united with him in the heavenly Kingdom. And for all of us who have faith, the resurrection is a source of strength beyond what is normal when we undergo trials that bring us face to face with death.

1. What marvelous prospects are made possible by the resurrection?
2. (a) In what ways has the resurrection proved to be important in the carrying out of Jehovah’s purpose? (b) When in particular is the resurrection hope an important source of strength to us?

WHY FUNDAMENTAL TO CHRISTIAN FAITH

³ The resurrection is, as stated at Hebrews 6: 1, 2, a "primary doctrine," part of the foundation of faith without which we could never become mature Christians. But it is alien to the thinking of the world in general. Lacking spirituality, more and more people live in pursuit of pleasure. They see only this life as real. (1 Cor. 15:32) Those who adhere to traditional religions, both inside Christendom and outside, think they have an immortal soul, which would make resurrection unnecessary. Any who try to reconcile these two concepts find it more confusing than hope inspiring. How can we help those who are willing to listen?—Acts 17:32.

⁴ Before such ones can appreciate what a wonderful provision the resurrection is, they need to understand what the soul is and the condition of the dead. Often, just a few scriptures are sufficient to make these matters clear to a person who is hungry for the truth. (Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 18:4; Ps. 146:3, 4) But some modern translations and paraphrase editions of the Bible obscure these truths. So it may be necessary to consider the expressions used in the Bible's original languages.

⁵ The *New World Translation* is especially valuable in doing this, because it consistently renders the Hebrew term *ne'phesh* and the corresponding Greek word *psy-khe'* as "soul," and in its appen-

3. (a) In what sense is resurrection a "primary doctrine"?
 (b) What does resurrection mean to the world in general?

4. (a) Before a person can appreciate resurrection, what may we need to discuss with him? (b) What scriptures would you use to explain what the soul is? The condition of the dead? (c) But what if someone uses a Bible translation that seems to obscure the truths found in those texts?

5. How would you help such a person to understand what the soul is?

dix are listed many texts where these terms are found. Other modern versions may render the same original words not only as "soul" but also as "creature," "being," "person" and "life"; "my *ne'phesh*" may be rendered "I," and "your *ne'phesh*" as "you." A comparison of these Bibles with some older translations or with the *New World Translation* will help a sincere student to appreciate that the original-language terms rendered "soul" refer to (1) persons, (2) animals and (3) the life that they enjoy as such. But never do they convey the idea that a soul is an invisible, intangible thing that can escape from the body at death and have a continued conscious existence somewhere.

⁶ Likewise, the *New World Translation* is consistent in its use of Sheol to transliterate the Hebrew term *sh'eōl'* and in its use of Hades for the Greek term *ha'des* and Gehenna for *ge'en·na*. But some other modern translations and paraphrases of the Bible confuse the reader by rendering BOTH *ha'des* and *ge'en·na* as "hell," in addition to using "the grave" and "the world of the dead" as other renderings of *sh'eōl'* and *ha'des*. By comparing translations, where necessary, it can be shown that Sheol is the equivalent of Hades. (Ps. 16:10; Acts 2:27) The Bible makes it clear that Sheol, or Hades, mankind's common grave, is associated with death, not life. (Ps. 89:48; Rev. 20:13) It also points to the prospect of return from there by means of resurrection. (Job 14:13; Acts 2:31) In contrast, no hope for future life is held out for those who go to Gehenna, and, of course,

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6. (a) Why do some modern translations leave readers confused as to the meaning of Sheol, Hades and Gehenna? (b) How would you explain from the Bible the condition of persons in Sheol, or Hades? In Gehenna?

the soul is not spoken of as having conscious existence there.—Matt. 18:9; 10:28.

⁷ With those matters cleared up, the death and resurrection of Christ take on real meaning. A person can now be helped to grasp what the resurrection might mean to him and can begin to appreciate Jehovah's love in making such a marvelous provision. The grief felt by those who have lost dear ones in death can now be replaced with joyful anticipation of reunion in God's New Order. First-century Christians realized that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a cornerstone of the Christian faith. Zealously they witnessed to others about it and the hope that it assured. So, too, those who appreciate it today are eager to share this precious truth with others.—Acts 5:30-32; 10:40-43; 13:32-39; 17:31.

USING THE 'KEY OF HADES'

⁸ All who are to be associated with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom must eventually die. But they know well the assurance that he gave when he said to the apostle John: "I became dead, but, look! I am living forever and ever, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." (Rev. 1:18) What did he mean? He was calling attention to his own experience. He, too, had died. But God did not leave him in Hades. On the third day Jehovah personally raised him to spirit life and conferred immortality upon him. Not only that, but God gave him "the keys of death and of Hades" to use in releasing others from mankind's common grave and from the effects of Adamic sin. Because of

7. Properly understood, how can the resurrection influence a person's attitude and actions?

8. What does Jesus' use of "the keys of death and of Hades" mean for his spirit-anointed followers?

being in possession of those keys, Jesus is able to raise his faithful followers from the dead. When he does so, he confers upon the spirit-anointed members of his congregation the precious gift of immortal heavenly life, just as his Father did for him.—Rom. 6:5; Phil. 3:20, 21.

⁹ When would faithful anointed Christians experience that resurrection? It has already begun. The apostle Paul explains that they would be raised ‘during Christ’s presence,’ which presence began in 1914 C.E. (1 Cor. 15:23) Now, when these finish their earthly course, they do not have to wait in death for the return of their Lord. As soon as they die they are raised up in the spirit, being “changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” What happiness is theirs, because “the things they did go right with them”!—1 Cor. 15:51, 52; Rev. 14:13.

¹⁰ But theirs is not the only resurrection. The fact that it is called the “first resurrection” indicates that another must follow. (Rev. 20:6) Those who benefit from this latter resurrection will have the happy prospect of everlasting life on a Paradise earth. When will that take place? The book of Revelation shows that it will be after “the earth and the heaven” of the present wicked system of things are removed. That end of the old system is very near. Thereafter, at God’s appointed time, the earthly resurrection will begin.—Rev. 20:11, 12.

¹¹ Who will be included? Faithful servants of Jehovah from earliest times. Among them will be

9. When does the resurrection of faithful anointed Christians take place?

10. What other resurrection will there be, and when will it begin?

11. Who will be included among the faithful ones raised to life on earth, and why is that a thrilling prospect?

men who, because of their strong faith in the resurrection, "would not accept release by some ransom"—some compromise of their integrity to God in order to escape a violent death. (Heb. 11:35) What a delight it will be to get to know them personally and to hear from them, firsthand, the details concerning events that are reported on only briefly in the Bible! Among others, there will be Abel, the first faithful witness of Jehovah. Enoch and Noah, fearless proclaimers of God's message of warning before the Deluge. Abraham, who entertained angels. Moses, through whom the Law was given at Mount Sinai. Courageous prophets such as Jeremiah, who saw the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. And John the Baptizer, who heard God himself identify Jesus as His Son. There will also be loyal ones who died during the last days of the present system.—Heb. 11:4-38; Matt. 11:11.

¹² In time, others, too, will be raised. The extent to which Jesus will use the 'key of Hades' on behalf of mankind is shown in a vision given to the apostle John in which he saw Hades "hurled into the lake of fire." What does that mean? That it is destroyed; it goes out of existence because of being completely emptied. Thus, in addition to raising faithful worshipers of Jehovah, Jesus will mercifully bring back from Hades, or Sheol, even unrighteous persons. None of these are raised simply to be judged worthy of death again. In the righteous environment under God's Kingdom they will be helped to bring their lives into harmony with Jehovah's ways. The vision showed "the scroll of life" opened, and they will have opportunity to

12. (a) How many of the dead in Hades will be raised? (b) So who will be included, and why?

get their names entered in it. They will be “judged individually according to their deeds” performed *after* their resurrection. (Rev. 20:12-14; Acts 24:15) Thus, viewed from the standpoint of the final outcome, theirs can prove to be “a resurrection of life” and will not unavoidably be “a resurrection of [condemnatory] judgment.”—John 5:28, 29.

¹³ Of course, not all who have ever lived will be resurrected. Some committed sins for which no forgiveness is possible. Those executed in the “great tribulation,” now near at hand, will be included among those who experience everlasting destruction. (Matt. 12:31, 32; 23:33; 24:21, 22; 25:41, 46; 2 Thess. 1:6-9) Thus, while extraordinary mercy is shown in releasing all who are in Hades, the resurrection provides no basis for our being indifferent about how we live now. Rather, it should motivate us to show how deeply appreciative we are of this truly undeserved kindness of God.

STRENGTHENED BY HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION

¹⁴ Those who have made the resurrection hope their own are able to draw great strength from it. When they near the end of their life, they know that they cannot indefinitely postpone death, regardless of the medical procedures used. (Eccl. 8:8) If they have kept busy in the work of the Lord and served loyally with his organization, they can look to the future with full assurance. They know that by means of resurrection they will in God’s due time enjoy life again. And what a life it

13. (a) Who will not be resurrected? (b) How should knowledge of the truth about the resurrection affect our lives?

14. How can the resurrection be a source of great strength to a person who is nearing the end of his present life?

will be! "The real life," as the apostle Paul called it.—1 Tim. 6:19; 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 6:10-12.

¹⁵ Not just knowing that there is a resurrection, but knowing the One who is the Source of that provision is what enables us to be strong. This fortifies us to be loyal to God even if threatened with death at the hands of violent persecutors. Satan has long used fear of untimely death as a means of holding people in slavery. But Jesus did not give in to such fear; he proved faithful to Jehovah right down to death. By what his death accomplished he provided the means for emancipating others from such fear. (Heb. 2:14, 15) As a result of their faith in that provision, his true followers have built up an outstanding record as integrity keepers. When put under pressure, they have proved that 'they do not love their own souls' more than they love Jehovah. (Rev. 12:11) Wisely, they do not try to save their present life by abandoning Christian principles, only to lose the prospect of eternal life. (Luke 9:24, 25) Do you have that kind of faith? You will if you truly love Jehovah and have taken to heart what the resurrection hope means to you.

15. If we are threatened by violent persecutors, what can help us to maintain integrity to Jehovah?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- Why does a person need to understand what the soul is and the condition of the dead before he can appreciate the resurrection?
- Who will return from the dead? How should this knowledge affect us?
- How does the resurrection hope strengthen us?

A Kingdom

“That Will Not Be Brought to Ruin”

WORLD events each day underscore the fact that humans have not found happiness by rejecting Jehovah's sovereignty and, instead, trying to govern themselves. No system of human government has brought benefits impartially to mankind. Although men have developed their scientific know-how to an unprecedented extent, they have not been able to root out sin, conquer sickness and put an end to death, not for even one of their subjects. On the contrary, the nations continue to develop new and more horrible weapons. Criminal violence flourishes. Technology, greed and ignorance combine to pollute the land, water and air. Skyrocketing inflation and unemployment are making it extremely hard for many to obtain life's necessities. People are desperate for a way out.—Eccl. 8:9.

² What is the answer? God's Kingdom, for which Jesus taught his followers to pray. (Matt. 6:9, 10) How grateful we should be that the relief it will bring is now very near!

³ Already, since 1914 C.E., God's Kingdom in

1, 2. (a) What fact is emphasized each day by world events, and how? (b) What is the only solution?

3. (a) In connection with this Kingdom, what took place in heaven in 1914 C.E.? (b) Why is that important to us?

the hands of Jesus Christ has been in operation.* In that year the events that Daniel had seen in prophetic vision actually took place in heaven. The "Ancient of Days," Jehovah God, conferred upon the Son of man, Jesus Christ, "rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him." Reporting on the vision, Daniel wrote: "His rulership is an indefinitely lasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom one that will not be brought to ruin." (Dan. 7:13, 14) It is by means of this Kingdom that God will enable lovers of righteousness to enjoy the countless good things that he purposed when he put our first human parents in Paradise.

⁴ Loyal subjects of the Kingdom are keenly interested in the structure and operation of this government. They want to know what it is doing now, what it will accomplish in the future and what it requires of them. They examine it closely, and as they do, their appreciation for it grows and they equip themselves to tell others about it. —Ps. 48:12, 13.

A HEART-STIRRING INSPECTION

⁵ One of the first things that such an examination reveals is that this Messianic Kingdom is an expression of Jehovah's own sovereignty. He it is who gave "rulership and dignity and kingdom" to his Son. Thus, after this Kingdom began to rule, voices in heaven appropriately declared: "The

* See the book *"Let Your Kingdom Come,"* pages 127-139.

4. What details regarding the Kingdom are of keen interest to us, and why?

5. (a) How do the Scriptures show whose sovereignty is expressed by means of the Messianic Kingdom? (b) So how are we affected by what we learn about the Kingdom?

kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah God] and of his Christ, and he [Jehovah] will rule as king forever and ever." (Rev. 11:15) So everything that we observe about this Kingdom and what it accomplishes draws us closer to Jehovah himself. It instills in us a desire to submit to his sovereignty forever.

⁶ How fine it is that Jehovah has put Jesus Christ on the throne as His deputy ruler! As the Master Worker whom God used to make the earth and man, Jesus knows our needs better than any of us do. Furthermore, he demonstrated from the beginning of human history his 'fondness for the sons of men.' (Prov. 8:30, 31; Col. 1:15-17) So great is that love that he personally came to earth and gave his life as a ransom in their behalf. Thus he made available for us the means of release from sin and death, and the opportunity for eternal life.—Matt. 20:28.

⁷ This is a stable, enduring government. Its enduring quality is assured by the fact that Jehovah himself is not subject to death. (Hab. 1:12; Ps. 146:3-5, 10) In contrast with human kings, Jesus Christ, the one to whom God has entrusted kingship, is also immortal. (Rom. 6:9; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16) Associated with Christ on heavenly thrones will be 144,000 others, loyal servants of God taken out of "every tribe and tongue and people and nation." These, too, are given immortal life. (Rev. 5:9, 10; 1 Cor. 15:42-44, 53) Already the vast majority of them are in the heavens, and the remnant of them yet on earth make up the "faithful and discreet

6. Why is it of special interest to us that Jesus Christ is Jehovah's deputy ruler?

7. (a) In contrast with rulership by any human, why will this government endure? (b) What relationship does the "faithful and discreet slave" have to the heavenly government?

slave" class, which loyally furthers the interests of that Kingdom here.—Matt. 24:45-47.

⁸ Soon now, at Jehovah's appointed time, his executorial forces will go into action to cleanse the earth. They will destroy forever those humans who because of their own choice do not know God, refusing to acknowledge his sovereignty, and who treat with scorn the loving provisions that he makes through Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 1:6-9) This will be Jehovah's day, the long-awaited time for his vindication as Universal Sovereign.

⁹ All false religion, and also all human governments and their armies, which have been manipulated by the unseen wicked ruler of this world, will be annihilated forever. All who identify themselves as part of this world by pursuing a self-centered, dishonest, immoral way of life will be cut off in death. Satan and his demons will be removed from contact with earth's inhabitants, securely confined for a thousand years. What a relief this will be for all who love righteousness! —Rev. 18:21, 24; 19:11-16, 19-21; 20:1, 2.

ITS OBJECTIVES—HOW ATTAINED

¹⁰ This Messianic Kingdom will fully accomplish God's original purpose for the earth. (Gen. 2:8, 9, 15; 1:28) To this day, man has failed to carry out that purpose. However, "the inhabited earth to come" has been subjected to the Son of man, Jesus Christ. All who survive the execution of Jehovah's judgment on this old system will work

8, 9. (a) What divisive, corrupting influences will the Kingdom remove? (b) So, if we are to avoid becoming enemies of God's Kingdom, in what organizations and activities would we avoid becoming entangled?

10. (a) How will the Messianic Kingdom accomplish Jehovah's purpose for the earth itself? (b) What will this mean for people living on earth then?

unitedly under Christ as King, gladly doing whatever he directs so that the earth becomes a global Paradise. (Heb. 2:5-9) All mankind will enjoy the work of their hands and benefit fully from the abundance of earth's produce.—Ps. 72:1, 7, 8, 16-19; compare Isaiah 65:21, 22.

¹¹ When Adam and Eve were created they were perfect, and it was God's purpose for the earth to be filled with their offspring, all of them enjoying perfection in mind and body. Under the rule of the Kingdom, that purpose will come to glorious reality. This requires the removal of all the effects of sin, and to that end Christ serves not only as King but also as High Priest. Patiently he will help his obedient subjects to benefit from the sin-atoning value of the sacrifice of his own human life. Blind eyes will be opened. Deaf ears will be unstopped. Flesh disfigured by age or disease will become fresher than that of a child. Chronic weaknesses will give way to vigorous health. The day will come when no one will have reason to say, "I am sick," because God-fearing humans will be relieved of the burden of sin and its grievous effects.—Compare Isaiah 33:22, 24; 35:5, 6; Job 33:25; Luke 13:11-13.

¹² Attaining perfection, however, involves much more than having a sound body and a sound mind. It includes properly reflecting the qualities of Jehovah's personality, because man was made 'in God's image, according to his likeness.' (Gen. 1:26) To that end, much education will be required. This is a New Order in which "righteousness is to dwell," so, as the prophet Isaiah foretold, "righ-

11. (a) How will perfection in mind and body be brought about for the Kingdom's subjects? (b) What will this include?

12. (a) What else does human perfection require? (b) How will that be achieved, and what will result from it?

teousness is what the inhabitants of the productive land will certainly learn." (2 Pet. 3:13; Isa. 26:9) This quality leads to peace—between people of all nations, among close associates, in one's family and, above all, with God himself. (Isa. 32:17; Ps. 85:10-13) Those who learn righteousness will progressively be educated in God's will for them. As love for Jehovah's ways comes to be deeply rooted in their hearts, they will follow these in every aspect of their lives. The perfect man Jesus was able to say, 'I always do the things pleasing to my Father.' (John 8:29) How enjoyable life will be when that is true of all humankind!

ACCOMPLISHMENTS ALREADY EVIDENT

¹³ Already the impressive accomplishments of the Kingdom are clearly evident to persons who have eyes of faith. The following questions and Scripture citations will remind you of some of these, as well as of things that all subjects of the Kingdom can and should be doing now:

Against whom did the King first take action, and with what result? (Rev. 12:7-10, 12)

The gathering of the final members of what group was given prompt attention after Christ was enthroned? (Matt. 24:31; Rev. 7:1-4)

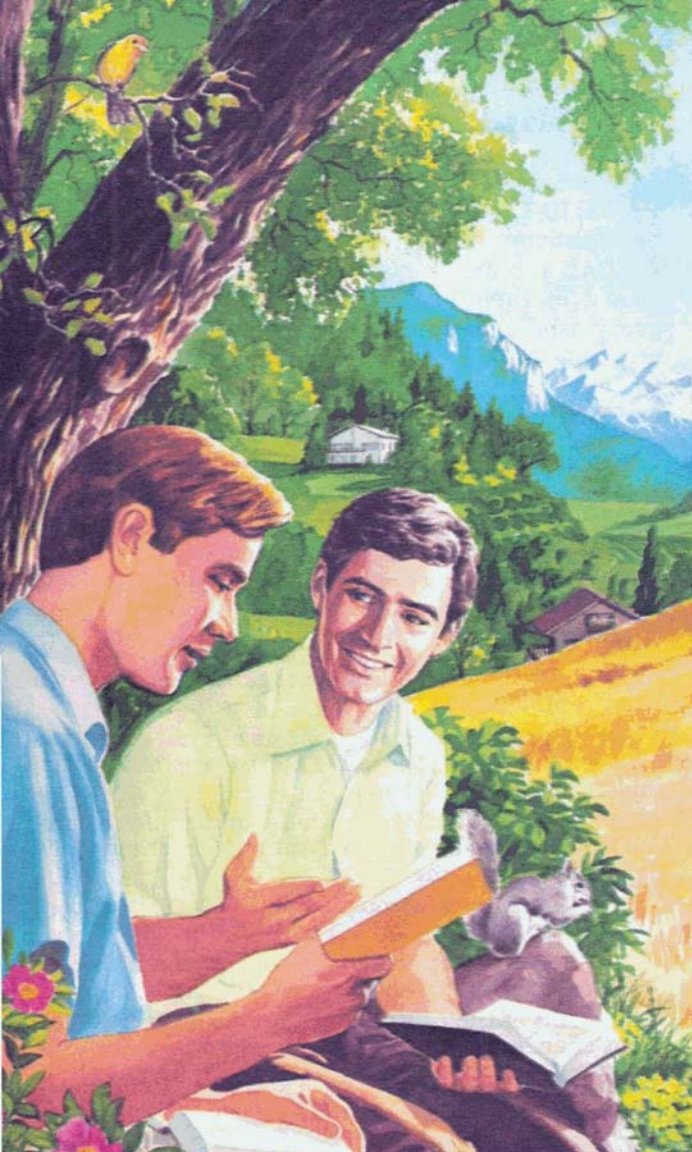
At Matthew 25:31-33, what other work did Jesus foretell that he would do after taking his throne and before destroying the wicked?

How is this work accomplished? Who are participating in it? (Matt. 24:14; Ps. 110:3; Rev. 14:6, 7)

Why have political and religious opposers been unable to stop it? (Acts 5:38, 39; Zech. 4:6)

As a result of the educational work being carried out, what changes have already taken place in the lives of

13. Use the questions above to highlight accomplishments of the Kingdom and what we should therefore be doing.





**Righteousness
is what the people will learn**

persons who submit to Kingdom rule? (Isa. 2:4; 1 Cor. 6:9-11)

• ENDURING QUALITY OF THE KINGDOM

¹⁴ After the abyssing of Satan and his demons, Jesus Christ along with his 144,000 joint heirs will rule for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:6) During that time mankind will be brought to perfection. All government and authority and power in opposition to Jehovah will be removed. That having been accomplished, Jesus will turn the Kingdom back to his Father, "that God may be all things to everyone."—1 Cor. 15:24, 28.

¹⁵ Jesus' own position in relation to the earth will therefore change. Nevertheless, his rulership will be "indefinitely lasting" and his Kingdom "will not be brought to ruin." (Dan. 7:14) In what sense? In that the ruling authority will not pass into the hands of others who have different aims. The accomplishments of the Kingdom will 'never be brought to ruin.' What the Kingdom does to vindicate Jehovah's name and his purpose regarding this earth will stand forever.

14. (a) How long will Christ rule? (b) What will be accomplished during that time?

15. How is it true that this Kingdom will 'never be brought to ruin'?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- Why is God's Kingdom the only solution to mankind's problems? When did it begin to rule?
- What is especially appealing to you about God's Kingdom and what it will accomplish? Why?
- What accomplishments of the Kingdom can we already see? What part do we have in these?

‘Keep On Seeking First the Kingdom’

OVER 1,900 years ago, in a discourse given in Galilee, Jesus urged his hearers: “Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness.” But why? Was not the time for Christ’s enthronement many centuries off? Yes. But that Messianic Kingdom is the means by which Jehovah’s own holy name will be vindicated and his grand purpose toward the earth will be fulfilled. Anyone who truly appreciates the importance of this is going to give the Kingdom first place in his life. That was true in the first century and it certainly is so now that the Kingdom is ruling. Does your way of life show that you are seeking God’s Kingdom first?—Matt. 6:33.

² People in general are more interested in other things. They eagerly pursue riches and the clothing, food and other material possessions and pleasures that money can buy. (Matt. 6:31, 32) Their way of life reflects preoccupation with self and pleasure. In their lives, God is put in second place—if they believe in him at all.

³ But to his disciples Jesus gave the counsel: “Stop storing up for yourselves treasures upon

1. (a) Why, 1,900 years ago, did Jesus say to seek the Kingdom first? (b) What question should we ask ourselves?
2. What are the things that people in general eagerly pursue?
3. (a) What kind of treasures did Jesus encourage his disciples to seek, and why? (b) Why was there no need to be overly concerned about material needs?

the earth," because none of such possessions last forever. "Rather," he said, "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven," by serving Jehovah. He urged his followers to keep their eye "simple," focusing their attention on just one thing, the doing of God's will. "You cannot slave for God and for Riches," he told them. But what about material needs—food, clothing and shelter? "Stop being anxious," Jesus counseled. He directed their attention to the birds—God feeds them. He encouraged his followers to take a lesson from the flowers—God clothes them beautifully. Are not Jehovah's intelligent human servants worth more than any of these? "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness," Jesus said, "and all these other [necessary] things will be added to you." (Matt. 6:19-34) Do you believe that? Do your actions show it?

DO NOT LET KINGDOM TRUTH BE CHOKED OUT

⁴ If a person is excessively concerned about material things, the results can be disastrous. Even though he professes interest in the Kingdom, if in his heart he puts other things first, Kingdom truth will be choked out. (Matt. 13:18, 19, 22) For example, on one occasion a rich young ruler asked Jesus, "What must I do to inherit everlasting life?" His response to Jesus' reply showed that he led a moral life and treated others well. But he was overly attached to his material possessions. He could not bring himself to part with them in favor of being a follower of Christ. So he passed up an opportunity that could have led to his being a ruler with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom. As

4. If a person puts too much emphasis on material things, what may be the outcome? Illustrate.

Jesus said on that occasion: "How difficult a thing it will be for those with money to enter into the kingdom of God!"—Mark 10:17-23.

⁵ Years later, the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, who was then in Ephesus, a wealthy commercial center. He reminded him: "We have brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out. So, having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things." Working in order to provide suitable "sustenance and covering" for oneself and one's family is right. But Paul warned: "Those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires, which plunge men into destruction and ruin." Satan is subtle. At first he may entice a person in small ways. This is often followed by greater pressure—perhaps opportunity for promotion to a job that pays more but that demands time formerly set aside for spiritual matters. Unless we are on guard, "love of money" can choke out the all-important Kingdom interests. As Paul put it, "By reaching out for this love [of money] some have been led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains."—1 Tim. 6:7-10.

⁶ With genuine love for his Christian brother, Paul urged Timothy: "Flee from these things," and, "Fight the fine fight of the faith." (1 Tim. 6: 11, 12) Earnest effort is needed if we are to avoid being swept along with the materialistic way of life of the world around us. But if we do exert ourselves in harmony with our faith, Jehovah will

5. (a) With what things did Paul encourage Timothy to be content, and why? (b) How does Satan use "love of money" as a destructive snare?

6. (a) To avoid being ensnared, what must we do? (b) Is that realistic in view of the world's economic situation today?

never forsake us. Regardless of high prices and widespread unemployment, he will make sure that we have what we really need.—Heb. 13:5, 6.

EARLY DISCIPLES PROVIDE A PATTERN

⁷ After Jesus had given his apostles suitable training he sent them out in Israel to preach good news. “The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.” What a thrilling message it was! Jesus Christ, the Messianic King, was in their midst. Since the apostles were devoting themselves to the service of God, Jesus urged them to have confidence that God would care for them. So he said: “Carry nothing for the trip, neither staff nor food pouch, nor bread nor silver money; neither have two undergarments. But wherever you enter into a home, stay there and leave from there.” (Matt. 10:5-10; Luke 9:1-6; 10:4-7) Jehovah would see to it that their needs would be satisfied through the hands of fellow Israelites, among whom hospitality to strangers was customary.

⁸ Later, just before his death, Jesus alerted his apostles to the fact that they would be working under changed circumstances. As a result of official opposition, hospitality might not be so readily extended in Israel. Also, they would soon be carrying the Kingdom message to Gentile lands. Now they were to take along a “purse” and a “food pouch.” Nevertheless, they were to keep on seeking first Jehovah’s Kingdom and his righteousness, confident that God would bless their efforts to obtain needed sustenance and covering.—Luke 22:35-37.

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7. When Jesus sent the apostles to preach in Israel, what instructions did he give them, and why were these appropriate?
8. (a) Why did Jesus give different instructions shortly before his death? (b) Nevertheless, what was still to be in first place in their lives?

⁹ The apostle Paul gave a fine example of how to apply Jesus' counsel. Paul built his life around the ministry. (Acts 20:24, 25) When he went into an area to preach he took care of his own material needs by working at tentmaking. He did not expect others to look after him. (Acts 18:1-4; 1 Thess. 2:9; 1 Cor. 9:18) Yet he gratefully accepted hospitality and gifts when others wanted to express their love and appreciation in this way. (Acts 16:15, 34; Phil. 4:15-17) He did not encourage Christian men and women to neglect their family obligations in order to go preaching, but rather to handle their varied responsibilities in a balanced way. He counseled them to work with their hands, to love their families and to be liberal in sharing with others. (Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:7-12; Titus 2:3-5) He also urged them to put their confidence, not in material possessions, but in God and to use their lives in a way that showed that they really understood what the more important things in life are. In harmony with Jesus' teachings, that meant seeking first God's Kingdom and his righteousness.—Phil. 1:9-11.

KEEP THE KINGDOM FIRST IN YOUR LIFE

¹⁰ To what extent do we personally share the Kingdom good news with others? That depends, in part, on our circumstances and, to a large extent, on the depth of our appreciation. Keep in mind that Jesus did not say, 'Seek the Kingdom when you have nothing else to do.' Neither did he say, 'As long as you talk about the Kingdom once in a while, you are doing all that is necessary.' Nor did

9. (a) How did Paul keep the Kingdom in first place? (b) How were his physical needs cared for? (c) What counsel did he give to others on these matters?

10. (a) What does it mean to 'seek first the Kingdom'? (b) But what should not be neglected?

he say, 'Start out with zeal for Kingdom interests; but if the New Order seems long in coming, keep doing something in God's service but live more like other people.' Knowing well the importance of the Kingdom, he expressed his Father's will in the matter, saying: "Seek continually his kingdom." Or, as the apostle Matthew recorded it: "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness." (Luke 12:31; Matt. 6:33) Though most of us find it necessary to do some kind of work to care for the physical needs of ourselves and our families, if we truly have faith, our lives will revolve around the work that God has given us in connection with his Kingdom. At the same time we will not neglect our family responsibilities.—1 Tim. 5:8; Prov. 29:15.

¹¹ Some of us are able to devote more time than others can to the field ministry. But in his parable concerning various kinds of soil Jesus showed that all whose hearts are like fine soil will bear fruit. To what extent? The circumstances of individuals vary. Age, health and family responsibilities are all factors. But when there is genuine appreciation, much can be accomplished.—Matt. 13:19, 23.

¹² It is good to have goals that will help us to expand our share in the Kingdom ministry. Young ones should think seriously about the excellent example of that zealous young Christian Timothy. (Phil. 2:19-22) What could be finer for them than to enter the full-time ministry when they complete their secular schooling? Older ones, too, will benefit by setting wholesome spiritual goals.

11. (a) How did Jesus illustrate the fact that not all would be able to do the same amount in spreading the Kingdom message? (b) What factors have a bearing on this?

12. What wholesome spiritual goal are young ones especially encouraged to consider?

¹³ Rather than criticizing those who we might feel could do more, we should be moved by faith to work for personal improvement so that we might serve God to the full extent that *our own* circumstances permit. (Rom. 14:10-12; Gal. 6:4) As shown in the case of Job, Satan contends that we are interested mainly in our material possessions, our own comfort and personal well-being, and that our motive in serving God is a selfish one. But if we truly seek first the Kingdom, we are having a share in proving the Devil to be the gross liar that he is. We are giving evidence that what comes first in our lives is neither material possessions nor personal comfort but the service of God. In word and deed we thus prove our deep love for Jehovah, our loyal support of his sovereignty and our love for fellowmen.—Prov. 27:11; Job 1:9-11; 2:4, 5.

¹⁴ A schedule can help us to accomplish more than we might otherwise get done. Jehovah himself has 'appointed times' for the carrying out of his purpose, and we do well to imitate that. (Ex. 9:5; Mark 1:15; Gal. 4:4) If possible, it is good to share in the field ministry at one or more appointed times each week. Tens of thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses around the world have enrolled as auxiliary pioneers and enjoy spending two or more hours a day, on an average, in preaching the good news. Some do this regularly; others, a few times each year. Many thousands more serve as regular pioneers, using at least three hours

13. (a) Who decides what you personally are able to do in Kingdom service? (b) If we truly seek first the Kingdom, of what is this evidence?

14. (a) Why is a schedule for field service beneficial? (b) To what extent are many Witnesses sharing in the field ministry, and why?

a day, on an average, to proclaim the Kingdom message. Others, as special pioneers and missionaries, spend even more time in Kingdom service. And whether actually in the field ministry or not, we can seek opportunities to share the Kingdom hope on every suitable occasion with any who will listen. (Compare John 4:7-15.) We should all think seriously about the implications of Jesus' prophecy that "this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." Our desire should be to have just as full a share in that work as our circumstances permit.—Matt. 24:14; Eph. 5:15-17.

¹⁵ Unitedly, in all parts of the earth, regardless of the nation in which they live, Jehovah's Witnesses are actively sharing in this grand privilege of service. They apply to themselves the inspired Bible counsel: "Become steadfast, unmovable, always having plenty to do in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in connection with the Lord."—1 Cor. 15:58.

15. In connection with our ministry, why do you feel that the counsel at 1 Corinthians 15:58 is timely?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- When Jesus said to seek first the Kingdom, what was he indicating should be put in a secondary place?
- What viewpoint should we have toward caring for the physical needs of ourselves and our families? What help will God give us?
- Does it make any difference how much we do in Kingdom service as long as we have some share? Why?

The Meaning of Your Baptism

IN THE year 29 C.E., Jesus was immersed in the Jordan River. Jehovah himself was watching and expressed approval. (Matt. 3:16, 17) Three and a half years later, following his resurrection, Jesus gave instructions to his disciples, saying: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth. Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them." (Matt. 28:18, 19) Have you been baptized in harmony with what Jesus there directed? Or are you preparing to do so?

² In either event a clear understanding of baptism is important. Questions that deserve consideration include these: Does the baptism of Christians today have the same meaning as that of Jesus? Does everything that the Bible says about baptism apply to you? What is involved in living in harmony with what Christian water baptism signifies?

BAPTISMS PERFORMED BY JOHN

³ About six months before Jesus was baptized, John the Baptist went into the wilderness of Judea, preaching: "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." (Matt. 3:1, 2) People

1, 2. (a) Why should water baptism be of personal interest to each of us? (b) Briefly, how would you answer the questions set out in paragraph 2?

3. To whom was John's baptism limited?

from all that region heard what John said, openly confessed their sins and were baptized by him in the Jordan. That baptism was for the Jews.—Acts 13:23, 24; Luke 1:13-16.

⁴ Those Jews were urgently in need of repentance. In the year 1513 B.C.E. at Mount Sinai their forefathers had entered into a national covenant with Jehovah God. But they had not lived up to their responsibilities under that covenant and so were condemned by it as sinners. Their situation was critical. "The great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah" foretold by Malachi was near, and in 70 C.E. it came upon Jerusalem as swift destruction. John the Baptist, with a zeal for true worship like that of Elijah, was sent in advance of that destruction "to get ready for Jehovah a prepared people." They needed to repent of their sins against the Law covenant and be prepared in heart and mind to accept the Son of God, whom Jehovah was sending to them. (Mal. 4:4-6; Luke 1:17; Acts 19:4) As John explained, God's Son would baptize with holy spirit (which baptism faithful disciples first experienced at Pentecost of 33 C.E.) and with fire (which came upon the unrepentant ones as destruction in 70 C.E.). (Luke 3:16) To avoid personally experiencing that 'baptism with fire' those first-century Jews needed to get baptized in water in symbol of their repentance, and they had to become disciples of Jesus Christ when that opportunity opened up.

⁵ Among those who came to John to be baptized was Jesus himself. But why? John knew that Je-

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4. (a) Why did the Jews need urgently to repent? (b) What was required if they were to avoid being 'baptized with fire'?
5. (a) When Jesus came to be baptized, why did John question it? (b) What was symbolized by Jesus' baptism in water? (c) How serious was Jesus about fulfilling God's will for him?

Jesus had no sins to confess, and so he said: "I am the one needing to be baptized by you, and are you coming to me?" But Jesus' baptism was to symbolize something different. So he replied: "Let it be, this time, for in that way it is suitable for us to carry out all that is righteous." (Matt. 3: 13-15) Jesus' baptism could not symbolize repentance over sin; nor did he need to dedicate himself to God, because he was a member of a nation already dedicated to Jehovah. Rather, his baptism, on attaining to Jewish adulthood at 30 years of age, symbolized *the presenting of himself to his heavenly Father to do His further will*. God's will for the "man, Christ Jesus," involved activity in connection with the Kingdom, also the sacrifice of his perfect human life as a ransom and as the basis for a new covenant. (Luke 8:1; 17:20, 21; Heb. 10:5-10; Matt. 20:28; 26:28; 1 Tim. 2: 5, 6) Jesus took very seriously what his water baptism symbolized. He did not allow himself to be diverted to other interests. To the end of his earthly life he stuck to the doing of God's will. —John 4:34.

BAPTISM INTO DEATH

⁶ In harmony with what Jesus' baptism in water symbolized, he also underwent another baptism. He knew that the assignment set before him by God would lead to his laying down his human life as a sacrifice but that he would be raised in the spirit on the third day. He spoke of this as being a baptism. This "baptism" began in 29 C.E. but was not completed until he actually died and was resurrected. So about three years after his water immersion he could appropriately say: "I have a

6. What other baptism did Jesus undergo and over what period of time?

baptism with which to be baptized, and how I am being distressed until it is finished!"—Luke 12:50.

⁷ Those who will reign with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom must likewise be baptized into death. (Mark 10:37-40; Col. 2:12) At their death they lay aside forever their human life, as Jesus did. And at their resurrection they join him in heavenly rulership. This is a baptism performed, not by any human, but by God through his heavenly Son.

⁸ Those who are baptized into Jesus' death are also said to be "baptized into Christ Jesus." By means of holy spirit channeled through Christ they become united to him, their head, as members of his spirit-anointed congregation, his "body." Because that spirit enables them to reflect Christ's superior personality, it can be said of them that they all become "one person in union with Christ Jesus."—Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27, 28; Acts 2:32, 33.

WATER BAPTISM OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES

⁹ Jesus' first disciples were baptized in water by John and were then directed to Jesus as prospective members of his spiritual bride. (John 3:25-30) Under Jesus' direction they also did some baptizing, which had the same significance as John's baptism. (John 4:1-3) Starting with Pentecost of 33 C.E., however, they began to fulfill the commission to baptize "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit." (Matt. 28:19)

7. (a) Who else are baptized into death? (b) Who performs this baptism?

8. What is meant by their also being "baptized into Christ Jesus"?

9. (a) When did baptism in the manner directed at Matthew 28:19 first take place? (b) Using the questions and scriptures provided with this paragraph, analyze what Jesus was indicating that baptismal candidates must recognize.

You will find it very beneficial to review what that means, in the light of the scriptures cited with the following questions:

To be baptized "in the name of the Father," what must a person recognize concerning the Father? (2 Ki. 19: 15; Ps. 3:8; 73:28; Isa. 6:3; Rom. 15:6; Heb. 12:9; Jas. 1:17)

Baptism in the name "of the Son" calls for recognition of what? (Matt. 16:16, 24; Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 5:9, 10)

What must a person believe in order to be baptized in the name "of the holy spirit"? (Luke 11:13; John 14: 16, 17; Acts 1:8; 10:38; Gal. 5:22, 23; 2 Pet. 1:21)

¹⁰ The first ones to be baptized in harmony with those instructions given by Jesus were Jews (and Jewish proselytes), who as a nation were already dedicated to God and were shown special consideration by him down till 36 C.E. However, when the privilege of Christian discipleship was extended to the Samaritans and the Gentiles, before being baptized they personally had to make *an unreserved dedication to Jehovah to serve him as disciples of his Son*. For all, including Jews, this continues to be the significance of Christian water baptism down to our day. This "one baptism" applies to all who become true Christians. They thus become Christian witnesses of Jehovah, God's ordained ministers.—Eph. 4:5; 2 Cor. 6:3, 4.

¹¹ Such baptism has great value in the eyes of God. After mentioning Noah's constructing of the ark in which he and his family were preserved through the Flood, the apostle Peter drew attention to this. He wrote: "That which corresponds

10. (a) What is symbolized by Christian water baptism today? (b) How is this different from Jesus' own baptism? (c) When Scripturally qualified persons are baptized, what do they become?

11. (a) To what does Christian water baptism correspond, and how? (b) From what is a Christian thus saved?

to this is also now saving you, namely, baptism, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the request made to God for a good conscience,) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 3:21) The ark was a tangible evidence that Noah had dedicated himself to do God's will and had then faithfully done the work assigned by God. This led to his preservation. In a corresponding way, those who dedicate themselves to Jehovah on the basis of faith in the resurrected Christ, who get baptized in symbol of that and who then proceed to do God's will for his servants in our day are saved from the present wicked world. (Gal. 1:3, 4) No longer are they headed for destruction with the rest of the world. They have been saved from this and have been granted a good conscience by God.

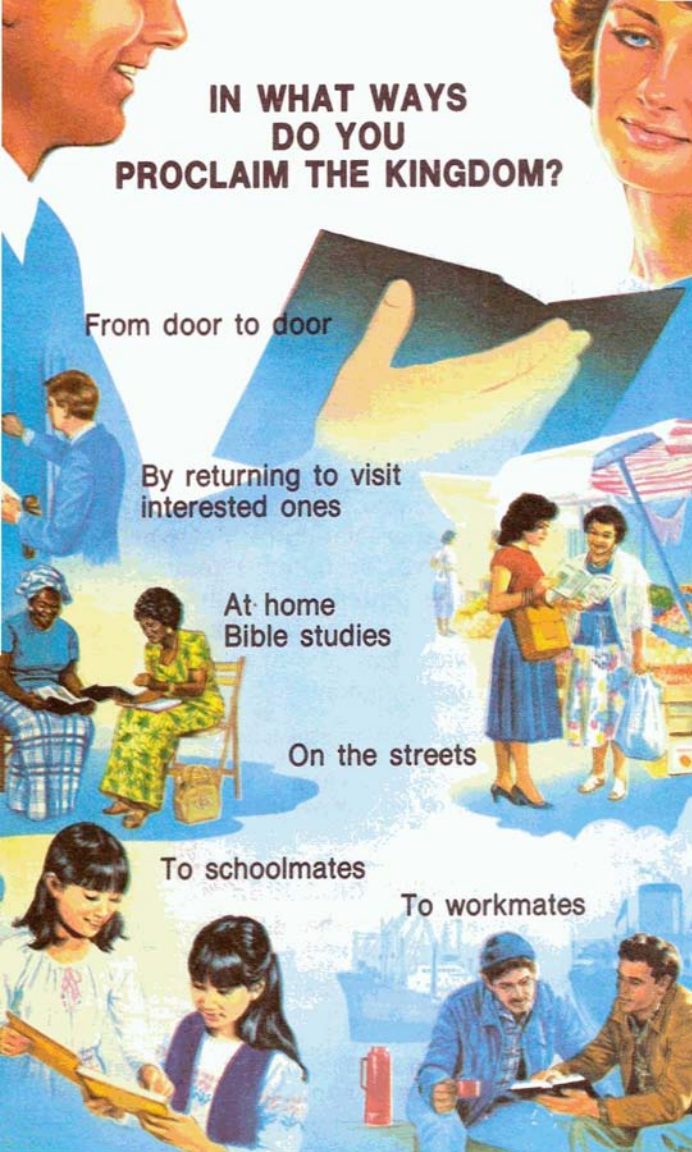
LIVING UP TO OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

¹² It would be a mistake to conclude that being baptized is in itself a guarantee of salvation. It has value only if a person truly has dedicated himself to Jehovah through Jesus Christ and thereafter carries out God's will, faithful to the end.—Matt. 24:13.

¹³ God's will for Jesus included how he used his life as a human. It was to be laid down in death as a sacrifice. In our case our bodies are to be presented to God, to carry on a self-sacrificing life. They are to be used exclusively in the doing of God's will. (Rom. 12:1, 2) Certainly we would not be doing that if, even occasionally, we deliberately conducted ourselves like the world around us or if we built our lives around selfish pursuits while

12. Why is one's getting baptized not in itself a guarantee of salvation?

13. (a) What is God's will as to the way that baptized Christians use their lives? (b) How important should Christian discipleship be in our lives?



IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU PROCLAIM THE KINGDOM?

From door to door

**By returning to visit
interested ones**

**At home
Bible studies**

On the streets

To schoolmates

To workmates

giving only token service to God. (1 Pet. 4:1-3; 1 John 2:15-17) When a certain Jew asked what he must do to get everlasting life, Jesus reminded him of the importance of living a morally clean life, and then he pointed out the need to make Christian discipleship, being a follower of Jesus, the primary thing in life. It could not take second place to material pursuits.—Matt. 19:16-21.

¹⁴ It should also be remembered that God's will for Jesus included vital activity in connection with the Kingdom. Jesus was himself anointed to be King. But while on earth he was also a zealous witness concerning the Kingdom. We have a similar witnessing work to do and we have every reason to engage in it wholeheartedly. By so doing we demonstrate our appreciation for Jehovah's sovereignty and our love for fellow humans. Also we show that we are united with fellow worshipers worldwide, all of whom are Kingdom witnesses, in pressing on toward the goal of everlasting life in the realm of that Kingdom.

14. (a) What responsibility in connection with the Kingdom do all Christians have? (b) As illustrated on page 101, what are some effective ways in which to do this work? (c) If we truly share in such activity wholeheartedly, of what does that give evidence?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- What similarities and what differences are there between Jesus' baptism and water baptism today?
- For whom was John's baptism? Who are baptized into death? And who get "baptized into Christ Jesus"?
- What is involved in living up to the responsibilities of Christian water baptism?

A Great Crowd Before Jehovah's Throne

ALTHOUGH faithful servants of God from Abel to John the Baptizer put the doing of God's will first in their lives, they all had to die and wait for a resurrection. The 144,000 who will be with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom must also die before they can receive their reward. In contrast, the apostle John was shown in vision that there would be a great crowd that would actually survive the "great tribulation" and, without dying, have the prospect of living forever.—Rev. 7:9-17.

IDENTIFYING THE "GREAT CROWD"

² For centuries the identity of this "great crowd" was not understood. But the progressive understanding of related prophecies prepared the way. In 1923 it was discerned that the "sheep" of Jesus' parable at Matthew 25:31-46 and the "other sheep" to which he referred at John 10:16 were persons now living who would have opportunity to dwell forever here on earth. In 1931 the ones described in Ezekiel 9:1-11 as being marked in their foreheads by the man with the secretary's inkhorn were identified with the "sheep" of Matthew chapter 25. Then, in 1935, the "great mul-

1. (a) Before either pre-Christian servants of God or the 144,000 receive their reward, what must they experience? (b) But what will be possible for a great crowd who are living when the "great tribulation" strikes?
2. What led up to a clear understanding of the identity of the "great crowd" of Revelation 7:9?

titude," or "great crowd," of Revelation 7:9-17 was seen to be the same as the "sheep" of Jesus' parable of the sheep and goats. Although back in 1923 it was realized that some such sheeplike individuals had already begun to manifest themselves, it was not until 1935 that their numbers began to grow rapidly. Today there are literally millions who are seeking to be identified as part of that divinely favored "great crowd" of the "other sheep."

³ Those of the "great crowd" are distinguished from the 144,000 members of spiritual Israel, referred to earlier in the same chapter of Revelation. In his vision John did not see this "great crowd" as being in heaven. Their "standing before the throne" (Greek: *e·no'pi·on tou thro'nou*, "in sight of the throne") of God does not require that they be in heaven. Their position is simply "in sight" of God, who tells us that from heaven he beholds the sons of men. (Rev. 7:9; Ps. 11:4; compare Psalm 100:1, 2, also Luke 1:74, 75 and Acts 10:33, *Kingdom Interlinear*.) Likewise, it is not necessary for "all the nations" to be in heaven for them to be before the throne of Christ (literally, "in front of him"), as described at Matthew 25:31, 32. The fact that the "great crowd, *which no man was able to number*," is not a heavenly class is shown by comparison with Revelation 7:4-8 and 14:1-4, where the specific number of those taken from the earth to be in heaven is revealed.

⁴ In identifying the "great crowd," John writes: "These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation." What they survive will be, indeed,

3. Why does their "standing before the throne" not mean that they are a heavenly class?

4. (a) What is the "great tribulation" that they survive?

(b) As stated at Revelation 7:11, 12, who observe the "great crowd" and share with them in worship?

the greatest tribulation ever experienced on earth. (Rev. 7:13, 14; Matt. 24:21) Survivors of that fear-inspiring day of Jehovah will have no doubt as to who is responsible for their deliverance. When they thankfully attribute their salvation to God and to the Lamb, then, as John saw in vision, all the faithful creatures in heaven will unite their voices with them in worship of the only true God, saying: "Amen! The blessing and the glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the power and the strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen."—Rev. 7:11, 12.

TESTED AS TO WORTHINESS OF SURVIVAL

⁵ The preservation of the "great crowd" takes place in harmony with Jehovah's own righteous standards. Clear indications of the identifying traits of those who will be delivered are embodied in the Bible's prophetic references to them. Thus it is possible for lovers of righteousness to act now with a view to surviving. We have already referred to the scriptures that follow. But now analyze them carefully, with the help of the additional texts cited, and consider what you must do in order to fit these prophetic descriptions.

"Other sheep" referred to at John 10:16

What does it mean for a person really to listen to Jesus' voice? (John 10:27; Matt. 9:9; Eph. 4:17-24)

How can we show that we acknowledge Christ as our "one shepherd"? (Matt. 23:10, 11)

"Sheep" in Jesus' illustration of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46)

Who are the "brothers" of Christ to whom these do good? (Heb. 2:10, 11; 3:1)

5. (a) How can we determine what is required in order to be part of the "great crowd" that will be preserved? (b) By answering the questions at the end of this paragraph, explain what is required to survive the "great tribulation."

Under what difficult circumstances are they called on to identify themselves with Christ's brothers on earth? And in what work do they give loyal assistance? (Rev. 12:12, 17; Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20)

Persons marked for survival by the man with the secretary's inkhorn (Ezek. 9:1-11)

How do they show that they are not in harmony with the detestable things done in antitypical Jerusalem, or Christendom? (Rev. 18:4, 5)

What is included in the "mark" that differentiates them from pretending Christians and puts them in line for preservation? (1 Pet. 3:21; Matt. 7:21-27; John 13:35)

⁶ The description of the "great crowd" as found at Revelation 7:9-15 adds further important details. In telling us how those of the "great crowd" appear *after* the "great tribulation," the Scriptures also draw attention to factors that led to their being preserved.

⁷ Though they come from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, they are shown unitedly "standing before the throne," giving recognition to Jehovah, the One seated on the throne, as the Universal Sovereign. They have proved by their way of life that they are loyal upholders of his rulership. The fact that they have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" indicates that they have recognized their need of the sin-atonement merit of Jesus' sacrifice as the Lamb of God. (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2) In faith they have dedicated themselves to God on the basis of that sacrifice, have symbolized this by water immersion and now enjoy a clean stand-

6. How does John's description of the "great crowd" help us to understand why they were preserved?

7. What did they do before the "great tribulation," and how is this suggested?

ing before God, as pictured by their white robes. They have not held back from publicly making known their faith in God's Son. (Matt. 10:32, 33) Consistent with all of this, they are shown as being in God's temple, or universal house of worship, as worshipers who render to God "sacred service day and night." Thus they have made a record as loyal supporters of true worship and proclaimers of his Kingdom.—Isa. 2:2, 3.

⁸ Do the details of these prophetic pictures fit you? Are there ways in which you need to bring your life more fully into line with what is here described? If so, now is the time to do it!

LIVING IN A SPIRITUAL PARADISE

⁹ Are you one who hopes to survive as part of the "great crowd"? If you have conformed to Jehovah's righteous ways, then you are no doubt already beginning to enjoy the promised conditions that have appropriately been termed a spiritual paradise. The apostle John was told: "They will hunger no more nor thirst anymore, neither will the sun beat down upon them nor any scorching heat, because the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them, and will guide them to fountains of waters of life. And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes." (Rev. 7:16, 17) How has this proved true in your case?

¹⁰ Before coming under the loving care of the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ, were you hungering and thirsting for righteousness? (Compare Mat-

8. For this information to benefit us, what must we do?

9. How does John describe spiritual blessings enjoyed by the "great crowd" even now?

10. (a) In a spiritual sense how is it true that the "great crowd" "hunger no more nor thirst anymore"? (b) Have you experienced this?

thew 5:6.) If so, what you craved was something that could be provided only by Jehovah through his Son. When you learned about Jehovah's righteous ways—his purpose to destroy the wicked, yet his undeserved kindness in making possible salvation for the offspring of Adam—then, no doubt, for the first time in your life you felt truly content. Spiritual food and drink from God's Word, as served through his organization, have continued to bring you satisfaction. (Isa. 65:13, 14) And if you have dedicated yourself to God through Christ you now have a real purpose in life. (Compare John 4:32-34.) Before you is the joyful prospect of eternal life on a Paradise earth, because the Lamb "will guide [the "great crowd"] to fountains of waters of life."

¹¹ As trusting "sheep," those of the "great crowd" are also protected and safely guided by the Fine Shepherd. That is why, figuratively speaking, 'neither the sun nor any scorching heat beats down upon them anymore.' This does not mean that, as one of the "great crowd," you will suffer no persecution from the world. Rather, it signifies that you are safeguarded from the scorching heat of God's own displeasure. And when he rains down divine destruction on the wicked, it will not bring you to ruin. This favored relationship can continue forever.—Ezek. 38:22, 23; compare Psalms 11:6; 85:3, 4.

¹² What wonderful reasons for joy are yours if you truly are one of that "great crowd"! You

11. (a) In what way is it true that 'neither the sun nor any scorching heat beats down upon them anymore'? (b) How important is that to you?

12. How have tears been wiped out of your eyes even now?

have the marvelous hope of seeing the wicked completely removed and then having your own mind and body actually freed of all the effects of sin. But even now the grief experienced by people because they are ignorant of God does not afflict you. You are beginning to know the joy that belongs only to the people whose God is Jehovah. (Ps. 144:15b) In this way you are already beginning to experience fulfillment of the promise: "God will wipe out every tear from their eyes."

¹³ Even as the "great crowd" will survive the end of this system of things, so will the spiritual paradise. If you are one of them, then you will continue to enjoy a spiritual feast of fat things as the millennial reign of Christ progresses. Your knowledge of God himself will deepen as you see his unfailing purpose come to glorious realization. Your joy will be enhanced as you share in welcoming back a growing multitude from the dead to be united with you in true worship. And the physical blessings that are then provided will be especially precious to all loyal servants of God as they are seen to be expressions of the love of Jehovah himself.—Isa. 25:6-9; Jas. 1:17.

13. What will add to the joys of the spiritual paradise as Christ's millennial reign progresses?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- With what extraordinary event does the Bible associate the "great crowd," and how?
- If we really want to be included in that divinely favored "great crowd," what must we do now?
- How important to you are the blessings of the spiritual paradise?

‘I Make a Covenant With You for a Kingdom’

IT WAS on the night before Jesus was put to death that he told his faithful apostles: ‘In the house of my Father there are many abodes. I am going my way to prepare a place for you, that where I am you also may be.’ He further said to them: “I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom.” (John 14:2, 3; Luke 22:29) What a marvelous prospect he set before them!

² However, Jesus did not mean that *only* those apostles would rule with him in his heavenly Kingdom. Later it was made known that 144,000 redeemed from the earth would have that grand privilege. (Rev. 5:9, 10; 14:1, 4) Are some today reaching out to lay hold of it?

GATHERING THE KINGDOM HEIRS

³ After John the Baptizer was imprisoned by Herod Antipas, Jesus undertook an intense campaign of public preaching in which he focused attention on “the kingdom of the heavens.” (Matt. 4:12, 17) He made people aware that there would be opportunity for them to enter that Kingdom, and his disciples earnestly reached out for that prize.—Matt. 5:3, 10, 20; 7:21; 11:12.

1. On the night before Jesus' death what prospect did he set before his apostles?
2. How many will share with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom?
3. In his public ministry, to what opportunity did Jesus draw attention?

⁴ At Pentecost of 33 C.E. the first of them were anointed with holy spirit. (Acts 2:1-4; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22) God's provision for salvation leading to immortal heavenly life was made known. Peter used "the keys of the kingdom of the heavens" to open up this knowledge—first to the Jews, next to the Samaritans, and then to people of the Gentile nations. (Matt. 16:19) Special attention was being given to making up the government that would rule mankind for 1,000 years, and nearly all the inspired letters in the Christian Greek Scriptures are primarily directed to this group of Kingdom heirs—"the holy ones," "partakers of the heavenly calling."*

⁵ Their being called to heavenly life was not because they were somehow better than all the servants of God who had died before Pentecost of 33 C.E. (Matt. 11:11) Rather, Jehovah now had begun to select those who would be associate rulers with Jesus Christ. For some 19 centuries after this there was only one calling, the heavenly one. It was an undeserved kindness that God bestowed on a limited number in furtherance of his own wise and loving purposes.—Eph. 2:8-10.

⁶ In time the prescribed but limited number of

* See the opening verses of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Titus, 1 and 2 Peter; also Galatians 3:26-29, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 2 Thessalonians 2:14, 2 Timothy 4:8, Hebrews 3:1, James 1:18, 1 John 3:1, 2 and Jude 1.

4. (a) When were the first of Jesus' disciples anointed with holy spirit? (b) What shows that attention was being directed from then on to the gathering of the Kingdom heirs?

5. Was their being called to heavenly life because they were better servants of God than those who had lived before?

6. (a) Why must the time come when the heavenly calling would close? (b) Who would direct matters so that the prophecy regarding the "great crowd" would also be fulfilled, and what has actually happened?

144,000 would be filled. The final sealing of these spiritual Israelites as approved would be near. (Rev. 7:1-8) Then Jehovah, by means of his spirit and the understanding of his Word that he made possible for his visible organization, would direct matters so as to fulfill another part of his purpose, as described in Revelation 7:9-17. A "great crowd" out of all nations would be gathered, with the thrilling prospect of surviving the great tribulation and living forever in perfection amid an earthly Paradise. When we consider what has actually occurred, it seems evident that the heavenly calling in general was completed by about the year 1935 C.E., when the earthly hope of the "great crowd" was clearly discerned. Since then there have been brought into association with the comparatively few thousand remaining ones of the heavenly class millions of worshipers of Jehovah who are earnestly hoping to live forever right here on earth.

⁷ Does this mean that none are now being called by God for heavenly life? Until the final sealing is done, it is possible that some few who have that hope may prove unfaithful, and others will have to be chosen to take their place. But it seems reasonable that this would be a rare occurrence.

SPIRITUAL SONS—HOW DO THEY KNOW?

⁸ God's spirit gives positive assurance of adoption as spiritual sons to baptized Christians who have received the heavenly calling. The apostle Paul showed this when he wrote to the "holy ones" in Rome, describing what was at that time

7. Is it possible that some even today might receive the heavenly calling, and why do you so answer?

8. What explanation does Paul give showing how those begotten by holy spirit are aware of that fact?

the situation of all true Christians. He said: "All who are led by God's spirit, these are God's sons. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery causing fear again, but you received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which spirit we cry out: '*Abba*, Father!' The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ, provided we suffer together that we may also be glorified together."—Rom. 1:7; 8:14-17.

⁹ Two uses of the word "spirit" are here brought to our attention: "the spirit itself" and "our spirit." The first is God's invisible active force. It inspires in his spiritual children a conviction of having been adopted as God's free children. That spirit also bears witness through God's inspired Word, the Bible, which is like a personal letter to his spiritual children. (1 Pet. 1:10-12) When those who have been begotten by holy spirit read what the Scriptures say to those who are spiritual sons of God, they properly respond: 'That applies to me.' Thus God's own active force in various ways bears witness with their spirit, the motivating force of their own mind and heart, that they are God's children. In accord with what God's spirit thus indicates, their minds and hearts become set on the prospect of being joint heirs with Christ, and they accept the responsibilities of God's spiritual children.—Phil. 3:13, 14.

¹⁰ Is that true of you? If so, you have a wonder-

9. How does 'the spirit itself bear witness' with the spirit of those who truly are sons of God?

10. (a) What factors do not by themselves identify one as an anointed Christian? (b) What view do the "other sheep" take regarding their place in God's purpose?

ful privilege. However, it would be a mistake for any to conclude that because a person has keen appreciation for deeper spiritual things or is zealous in the field ministry or has intense love for his brothers he must therefore be a spirit-anointed Christian. Those very things characterize many of the "other sheep." Their hearts, too, are moved by what they read in the Scriptures regarding Christ's joint heirs, but they do not presume to claim for themselves something that God has not reserved for them. (Compare Numbers 16:1-40.) They recognize God's original purpose for the earth and work appreciatively toward sharing in that.

PARTAKING WORTHILY

¹¹ Each year, on Nisan 14, after sundown, the anointed followers of Jesus Christ in all parts of the earth commemorate his death, in harmony with the instructions that he gave to his apostles. (Luke 22:19, 20) The "other sheep" also attend, not as partakers of the bread and the wine, but as respectful observers.

¹² This is no empty religious ritual but is filled with powerful meaning. To first-century Christians in Corinth, Greece, some of whom failed to show proper appreciation for the occasion, the apostle Paul wrote serious counsel, saying: "Whoever eats the loaf or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty respecting the body and the blood of the Lord." What made them 'unworthy' partakers? They were not properly preparing themselves in heart and mind. There were divisions in the congregation. Also some overindulged in food and

11. Who attend the annual commemoration of Jesus' death, and why?

12. How were some early Christians in Corinth failing to show proper appreciation for the Lord's Evening Meal?

drink before the meeting. They treated the Lord's Evening Meal with indifference. They were not in condition to discern the serious significance of the bread and the wine.—1 Cor. 11:17-34.

¹³ What is that significance? It does not lie in any supposed miraculous transformation of the bread and the wine. Christ is not in any sense sacrificed again at each Memorial. The Scriptures state that "Christ was offered *once for all time* to bear the sins of many." (Heb. 9:28; 10:10; Rom. 6:9) The loaf of unleavened bread and the red wine are merely emblems to represent the literal body Jesus sacrificed and the literal blood he shed. But how precious these realities are! Jesus' sinless human body was given so that the world of mankind could have the opportunity to live forever. (John 6:51) And his shed blood serves a twofold purpose—cleansing from sin those humans who exercise faith in it, also making operative the new covenant between God and the congregation of spiritual Israel, which is composed of spirit-anointed Christians. (1 John 1:7; 1 Cor. 11:25; Gal. 6:14-16) It is these precious provisions that make it possible for the members of the "little flock" to be declared righteous by God, actually having human perfection *credited* to them. (Luke 12:32) This is done so that they can be begotten by holy spirit as God's sons, with a view to their sharing with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom. As they partake of the Memorial emblems each year, thus bearing witness to their heavenly hope, their appreciation of being in the "new covenant" mediated by Christ is renewed and deepened.—Heb. 8:6-12.

13. What is the significance of the bread and the wine served at the Memorial?

"WE WILL GO WITH YOU PEOPLE"

¹⁴ The "other sheep" discern how Jehovah has been dealing with his anointed ones, and they have joined with them, saying: "We will go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people." (Zech. 8:20-23) Not only do they meet together but they share together in making known the good news of the Kingdom in all the inhabited earth. However, the "other sheep" are not taken into the "new covenant" with spiritual Israel nor are they included in the "covenant . . . for a kingdom" made by Jesus with those chosen to share heavenly life with him, and hence, properly, they do not partake of the Memorial emblems. (Luke 22:20, 29) But as the "new covenant" achieves its purpose, gathering the final members of the "little flock" to the heavenly Kingdom, the "other sheep" realize that this indicates that the blessings they will receive on earth by means of that Kingdom are drawing near. They count it a privilege, during the "last days," to serve unitedly with the loyal remnant of Kingdom heirs.

14. (a) Why do the "other sheep" not partake of the Memorial emblems, but what do they eagerly anticipate? (b) How do they view their association with the remnant of Kingdom heirs?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- Why does so much of the Christian Greek Scriptures direct attention to the heavenly hope?
- How do those who have been begotten as God's sons know that? What is the meaning of the Memorial emblems of which they partake?
- How do the "other sheep" demonstrate that they truly are united with the "little flock"?

How Does Jehovah Direct His Organization?

THROUGH the inspired Scriptures, Jehovah gives us glimpses of his marvelous heavenly organization. (Isa. 6:2, 3; Ezek. 1:1, 4-28; Dan. 7:9, 10, 13, 14) Although we cannot see spirit creatures, he alerts us to ways in which activity of the holy angels affects true worshipers on earth. (Gen. 28:12, 13; 2 Ki. 6:15-17; Ps. 34:7; Matt. 13:41, 42; 25:31, 32) The Bible also describes the visible part of Jehovah's organization and helps us to understand how he directs it. If we truly have spiritual comprehension of these things, this will help us to "walk worthily of Jehovah to the end of fully pleasing him."—Col. 1:9, 10.

IDENTIFYING THE VISIBLE PART

² For 1,545 years the nation of Israel was the congregation of God. But they failed to keep the Law covenant and rejected God's own Son. So Jehovah brought into existence a new congregation, with which he made a new covenant. This congregation is identified in the Scriptures as the "bride" of Christ, made up of 144,000 chosen by God to be united with his Son in heaven. (Eph.

1. What information regarding Jehovah's organization does the Bible reveal, and why is it important to us?
2. Since Pentecost of 33 C.E. what has been the congregation of God?

5:22-32; Rev. 14:1; 21:9, 10) The first ones were anointed with holy spirit at the time of Pentecost, 33 C.E. By means of holy spirit Jehovah gave unmistakable evidence that this was now the congregation that he would use to accomplish his purpose.—Heb. 2:2-4.

³ Today only a remnant of the 144,000 are on earth. But, in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, a great crowd of “other sheep” have been brought into active association with them. Jesus Christ, the Fine Shepherd, has merged these “other sheep” with the ones who are the remnant of his spirit-begotten followers so that they form just “one flock” under him as their “one shepherd.” (John 10:11, 16; Rev. 7:9, 10) These all make up one united organization, Jehovah’s visible organization today.

THEOCRATIC IN STRUCTURE

⁴ The Scriptural expression “congregation of the living God” makes evident who directs it. The organization is theocratic, or God-ruled. Jehovah provides direction for his people through the one that He appointed to be the invisible head of the congregation, the Lord Jesus Christ, and by means of His own inspired Word, the Bible.—1 Tim. 3:14, 15; Eph. 1:22, 23; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

⁵ Such theocratic direction was very much in evidence when the first members of the congregation were stirred to action by holy spirit at Pentecost of 33 C.E. (Acts 2:1-4, 32, 33) It was manifest when Jehovah’s angel directed events that led to the spreading of the good news into

3. Who today comprise Jehovah’s visible organization?

4. Who directs the organization, and how?

5. (a) How was heavenly direction of the congregation manifest in the first century? (b) What shows that Jesus is still the head of the congregation?

Africa. (Acts 8:26-39) Likewise, when Jesus' voice gave directions at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and again when missionary work among the Gentiles was initiated. (Acts 9:3-7, 10-17; 10:9-16, 19-23; 11:12) But needed direction was not always provided in such spectacular ways. In time there were no more voices heard from heaven, no more angels that appeared to men and no more miraculous gifts of the spirit. Yet Jesus had promised his faithful followers: "Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things," and the facts show that he is. (Matt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 13:8) Not only do Jehovah's Witnesses acknowledge his headship, but it is evident that it would have been impossible for them to continue to proclaim the Kingdom message in the face of intense hostility without his help.

⁶ Shortly before Jesus' death he spoke to his disciples about a "faithful and discreet slave" that he as Master would entrust with special responsibility. That "slave," according to Jesus' description, would be on hand when the Lord departed for heaven and would still be alive at the time of Christ's return. Such a description could not possibly fit an individual human. But it does fit Christ's faithful anointed congregation viewed as a whole. Jesus knew that he was going to purchase them with his own blood, so he fittingly referred to them collectively as his "slave." He gave them work to do, commissioning all of them to make disciples and then progressively to feed these spiritually, giving them "their [spiritual] food at the proper time." Their appointment was confirmed by holy spirit at Pentecost of 33 C.E.

6. (a) Who make up the "faithful and discreet slave," and why? (b) What assignment did he give to that "slave"?

—Matt. 24:45-47; 28:19, 20; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; compare Isaiah 43:10.

⁷ At the Master's return, if the "slave" was faithfully doing his work, he would be entrusted with enlarged responsibilities. The years that followed would be the time for a global witness to the Kingdom, and a "great crowd" of worshipers of Jehovah would be gathered with a view to their preservation through the "great tribulation." (Matt. 24:14; Rev. 7:9, 10) These, too, would need spiritual food, and it would be served to them by the composite "slave," Christ's spirit-anointed servants. To please Jehovah, we need to accept the instruction he provides through this channel and act in full harmony with it.

⁸ At times, of course, questions about doctrine and procedure might arise. What then? The 15th chapter of Acts tells how an issue regarding requirements for Gentile converts was resolved. It was referred to the apostles and older men at Jerusalem, who served as a central governing body. Those older men were not infallible; they were not persons who never made a mistake. (Compare Galatians 2:11-14.) But God used them. They considered what the inspired Scriptures said on the subject at hand as well as the evidence of the operation of God's spirit in opening up the Gentile field, and then they rendered a decision. God blessed that arrangement. (Acts 15:1-29; 16:4, 5) From that central body, individuals were also sent out to further the preaching of the good news in

7. (a) What enlarged responsibilities does the "slave" now have? (b) Why is our response to instruction through this channel important?

8, 9. (a) In the first century what arrangement was there for resolving questions about doctrine and giving needed direction with reference to preaching the good news? (b) What similar arrangement exists today?

harmony with what the Lord himself had authorized.—Acts 8:14; Gal. 2:9.

⁹ In our day the Governing Body is made up of spirit-anointed brothers from various lands. It is located at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. Loyally it furthers the interests of pure worship under the headship of Jesus Christ. These brothers share the viewpoint of the apostle Paul, who, when sending spiritual counsel to fellow Christians, wrote: "Not that we are the masters over your faith, but we are fellow workers for your joy, for it is by your faith that you are standing."—2 Cor. 1:24.

¹⁰ This theocratic arrangement is recognized by Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide. All their local congregations work in close cooperation with it. They look to the Governing Body to provide for appointment of elders and ministerial servants to care for the smooth functioning of the congregations. On what basis are persons selected for such appointment? The requirements are clearly stated in the Bible. Both the elders who make recommendations and those authorized to do the appointing bear a serious responsibility before God to adhere to these. (1 Tim. 3:1-10, 12, 13; 5:22; Titus 1:5-9) There is no electioneering among members of the congregation nor any congregational voting. Instead, in harmony with what was done by the apostles when appointments were made in the first century, those overseers responsible for recommending, and those who later make appointments, offer prayer for the aid of God's spirit and seek guidance from his inspired Word. (Acts 6:2-4, 6; 14:23; compare Psalm 75:6, 7.) By our response

10. (a) How is it determined who will be elders or ministerial servants? (b) Why should we cooperate closely with the ones appointed to such positions?

to the direction the elders give, we can show our appreciation for Christ's loving provision of these "gifts in men" to aid us all in attaining to "oneness in the faith."—Eph. 4:8, 11-16.

¹¹ The Scriptures direct that positions of oversight in the congregation be cared for by males. This in no way downgrades women, for many of them are included among the heirs of the heavenly Kingdom. By modest, chaste conduct and diligence in caring for their families, Christian women also contribute to the fine reputation of the congregation. (Titus 2:3-5) They often do much of the work in locating newly interested ones and bringing them into contact with the organization. (Ps. 68:11) But teaching within the congregation is cared for by men who are appointed. (1 Tim. 2:12, 13) And if there are no qualified men at a meeting arranged by the congregation, then a woman would wear a head covering when presiding or praying.* Thus she shows respect for Jehovah's arrangement, even as Jesus set the example for all in submission to his Father.—1 Cor. 11:3-16; John 8:28, 29.

¹² In the world an individual who holds a prom-

* She does not need a head covering, however, when preaching from house to house, since the responsibility to preach the good news rests on all Christians. But if circumstances require that she conduct a home Bible study in the presence of her husband (her head, even though not a Christian), she should use a head covering. Also, if, as an exceptional circumstance, a dedicated male member of the congregation is present when she conducts a prearranged home Bible study, she should cover her head, but he should offer the prayer.

11. (a) What valuable services are performed by women within the theocratic arrangement? (b) When do they need to wear a head covering, and why?

12. (a) What view does the Bible urge elders to take toward their position? (b) In what splendid privilege may all of us share?

inent position is considered to be important, but within God's organization the rule is: "He that conducts himself as a lesser one among all of you is the one that is great." (Luke 9:46-48; 22:24-26) So the Scriptures counsel elders to be careful not to lord it over those who are God's inheritance but, rather, to become examples to the flock. (1 Pet. 5:2, 3) Not just a select few, but all of Jehovah's Witnesses, male and female, have the splendid privilege of representing the Sovereign of the universe, humbly speaking in his name and telling people everywhere about his Kingdom.

¹³ We do well to ask ourselves: "Do we truly appreciate how Jehovah is directing his visible organization? Do our attitudes, speech and actions reflect that?" Reasoning on the following points can help each of us to make such an analysis:

If we truly submit to Christ as head of the congregation, then, as indicated in the following scriptures, what will we be doing? (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20; Luke 21:34-36; John 13:34, 35)

In their efforts to be productive Christians, to what extent should all who are part of the organization feel dependent on God and Christ? (John 15:5; 1 Cor. 3:5-7)

When elders try to readjust the thinking of persons so they view matters in harmony with the rest of the organization, whose kindly concern should we discern in this? (Eph. 4:7, 8, 11-13; 2 Cor. 13:11)

When we appreciatively accept the spiritual provisions that come through the "slave" class and its Governing Body, for whom are we showing respect? But what if we were to speak disparagingly of these? (Luke 10:16; compare 3 John 9, 10.)

Why should we not be harshly critical of appointed elders? (Acts 20:28; Rom. 12:10)

13. Using the scriptures cited, discuss the questions listed at the end of this paragraph.

¹⁴ It is by means of his visible organization under Christ as appointed head that Jehovah is dealing with us today. So our attitude toward this organization demonstrates in a practical way the stand that we are taking on the issue of sovereignty. (Heb. 13:17) Satan contends that we are all motivated by desire for personal gain, that our chief concern is self. But if we gladly make ourselves available to serve in any way that is needed, while avoiding saying and doing things that would draw undue attention to self, we prove that the Devil is a liar. If we love and respect those who 'take the lead' among us, imitating their faith but refusing to be the kind of person who 'admires personalities for his own benefit,' we bring joy to Jehovah's heart. (Heb. 13:7; Jude 16) By cultivating wholesome respect for Jehovah's organization and wholeheartedly doing the work that he directs, we give evidence that Jehovah truly is our God and that we are united in his worship.—1 Cor. 15:58.

14. (a) By our attitude toward the theocratic organization, what do we demonstrate? (b) In this regard, what opportunities are there for us to prove the Devil a liar and to bring joy to Jehovah's heart?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- What is Jehovah's visible organization today? What is its purpose?
- Who is the appointed head of the congregation? Through what visible arrangements does he provide loving direction for us?
- What wholesome attitudes toward responsibility and persons in the organization should we cultivate?

Listen to Counsel, Accept Discipline

MOST of us readily agree with the scripture that says: "We all stumble many times." (Jas. 3:2) It is not difficult to think of instances in which we have fallen short of being the sort of person that God's Word urges us to be and that we want to be. So we acknowledge that the Bible is right when it tells us: "Listen to counsel and accept discipline, in order that you may become wise in your future." (Prov. 19:20) We know that we need such help. No doubt we have made adjustments in our lives to align them with what we have learned from the Bible. But how do we react if a fellow Christian counsels us personally on a specific matter in which we acted unwisely? Or what if he simply offers a suggestion as to how we might improve in some activity?

² Despite our immediate inward reactions due to imperfect human nature, we should sincerely express appreciation for counsel and work at applying it. The outcome of our doing so can be beneficial. (Heb. 12:11) Perhaps, however, when counseled, we have tried to justify ourselves, minimize the seriousness of the situation or shift the blame to someone else. Have you ever reacted in that way? As we think back on the occasion, do

1. (a) Are there any of us who do not need counsel and discipline? (b) But what questions do we do well to consider?
2. (a) Why should we show appreciation for personal counsel? (b) How should we not react?

we feel resentment toward the one who gave the counsel? Are we inclined to pick on the shortcomings of the one who counseled us or the manner in which he counseled, as if this somehow excused our own weakness? Can the Bible help a person to overcome such inclinations?

EXAMPLES RECORDED FOR OUR ADMONITION

³ In addition to providing an abundance of direct admonition on this subject, God's Word contains real-life experiences about individuals who were counseled. Often the counsel was also discipline, in that the one receiving it needed to change his attitude or his conduct. As you use the questions below to examine some of these examples, you will find that there is much from which we all can benefit:

SAUL, SON OF KISH: He had failed to obey Jehovah fully in that, when warring against Amalek, he had spared the king and the best of their animals. (1 Sam. 15:1-11)

In Saul's response to reproving counsel given by Samuel, what shows that he was trying to minimize the wrong? (Vs. 20) To whom did he try to shift the blame? (Vs. 21) When he finally admitted the wrong, what excuse did he offer? (Vs. 24) What did he seem to be most concerned about even at this point? (Vss. 25, 30)

UZZIAH: He went into Jehovah's temple to burn incense, even though only the priests were authorized to do this. (2 Chron. 26:16-20)

When the chief priest tried to stop King Uzziah, why did the king react with anger? (Compare verse 16.) What was the outcome? (Vss. 19-21)

3. (a) What does the Bible contain that can help us to develop the right view toward counsel and discipline? (b) Use the questions provided above to analyze the reactions of Saul and Uzziah to counsel.

⁴ In each of these cases, why did the individual find it so difficult to face up to his need for counsel? The basic problem was pride, thinking too highly of self. Many persons today bring much grief on themselves because of this trait. Having attained to what they consider to be some status, whether because of age or position, they are not receptive to personal counsel. They seem to feel that it implies some deficiency in them or mars their reputation. But what really indicates weakness is pride. This is not something to excuse in oneself simply because the fault is common. It is a snare that Satan uses to becloud a person's thinking so that he resists the loving help provided by Jehovah through his Word and his visible organization. Jehovah warns: "Pride is before a crash, and a haughty spirit before stumbling."—Prov. 16:18; see also Romans 12:3; Proverbs 16:5.

⁵ On the other hand, the Scriptures contain fine examples of those who accepted counsel. Valuable lessons can be learned also from these. Consider:

MOSES: His father-in-law gave him some practical advice on how to handle his heavy work load without ruining his health. Moses listened and immediately applied it. (Ex. 18:13-24)

Although Moses had great authority, why was he so receptive to sound counsel? (Compare Numbers 12:3.) How important is that quality to us? (Zeph. 2:3)

DAVID: He was guilty of committing adultery, then scheming to have the woman's husband killed so that David could marry her and thus cover over the adul-

4. (a) Why did both Saul and Uzziah find it hard to accept counsel? (b) Why is that also a serious problem today?

5. Use the questions that are part of this paragraph to ascertain what lessons can be learned from the accounts regarding Moses and David.

tery. Months went by before Jehovah sent Nathan to reprove David. (2 Sam. 11:2-12:12)

Did David get angry at the reproof, minimize the wrong or try to shift the blame? (2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 51:superscription and vss. 1-3) Did the fact that God accepted David's repentance mean that David and his household were freed of bad effects from his wrong conduct? (2 Sam. 12:10, 11, 14; Ex. 34:6, 7)

⁶ King David well knew the benefit of listening to sound counsel, and on occasion he thanked God for the one through whom it came. (1 Sam. 25:32-35; see also Proverbs 9:8.) Are we like that? If so, we will be safeguarded against saying and doing many things that could cause regret. But if we come into circumstances that lead to our being severely disciplined, as David was in connection with his sin with Bath-sheba, may we not lose sight of the fact that the discipline is an evidence of Jehovah's love, with our eternal welfare in view.—Prov. 3:11, 12; 4:13.

PRICELESS QUALITIES TO CULTIVATE

⁷ To have a good relationship with Jehovah and with our Christian brothers, we need to develop certain personal qualities. Jesus highlighted one of these when he set a young child in the midst of his disciples and said: "Unless you turn around and become as young children, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Therefore, whoever will humble himself like this young child is the one that is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens." (Matt. 18:3, 4) Those

6. (a) How did David feel about those who gave him sound counsel? (b) How can we be benefited if we readily accept such counsel? (c) What should we not forget if we are severely disciplined?

7. What quality did Jesus show that persons must have in order to get into the Kingdom?

disciples needed to make changes. They had to get rid of their pride and to cultivate humility.

⁸ The apostle Peter later wrote to fellow Christians: "All of you gird yourselves with lowliness of mind toward one another, because God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones." (1 Pet. 5:5) We know that we need to be humble before God, but this scripture is saying that we need to be humble, or lowly in mind, also in our relations with fellow believers. If we are, we will not foolishly resent suggestions they may offer us. We will be willing to learn from one another. (Prov. 12:15) And if our brothers find it necessary to give us corrective counsel, then, recognizing that Jehovah lovingly uses this means to mold us, we will not refuse it. —Ps. 141:5.

⁹ Another quality, closely related to humility, is genuine concern for the welfare of others. We cannot get away from the fact that what we do affects other people. The apostle Paul counseled early Christians in Corinth and Rome to show concern for the conscience of others. He was not saying that they had to set aside all personal preferences, but he did urge them not to do anything that might embolden another person to do what his conscience told him was wrong, thus leading to his spiritual ruin. Clearly expressing the overall principle, Paul wrote: "Let each one keep seeking, not his own advantage, but that of the other person. . . . Therefore, whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all

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8. (a) Before whom do we need to be humble, and why?
(b) If we are, how will we respond to counsel?
9. (a) What important quality is closely related to humility?
(b) Why should we be concerned about the effect of our conduct on others?

things for God's glory. Keep from becoming causes for stumbling to Jews as well as Greeks and to the congregation of God."—1 Cor. 10:24-33; 8:4-13; Rom. 14:13-23.

¹⁰ Are you a person who makes it a practice to put the welfare of other people ahead of personal preference? There are many ways in which this can be done, but consider an example: Generally speaking, dress and grooming are simply matters of personal taste, as long as we are modest, neat and clean. But if you were to learn that, because of the background of people in your community, your manner of dress or grooming hindered others from listening to the Kingdom message, would you make adjustments? Is the life of another person more important to you than pleasing self?

¹¹ When the qualities discussed above become part of our personality, this gives evidence that we are beginning to have the mind of Christ. In being humble, Jesus set the perfect example. (John 13:12-15; Phil. 2:5-8) In showing concern for others, instead of simply pleasing himself, he set the pattern for us to follow.—Rom. 15:2, 3.

DO NOT REJECT JEHOVAH'S DISCIPLINE

¹² Because we are all sinners, changes in our attitude, our speech and our conduct are required in order for us to reflect the personality of our God. We need to put on the "new personality." (Col. 3:5-14; Titus 2:11-14) Counsel and discipline help us to identify areas where adjustments are needed and then to see how to make these.

10. What might indicate whether we make a practice of applying that Scriptural counsel?

11. What shows that it is important to cultivate these qualities if we really want to be Christians?

12. (a) What changes do we all need to make in order to have a personality that is pleasing to God? (b) What will help us?

¹³ The basic source of that instruction is the Bible itself. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) Then through Bible literature and meetings provided by Jehovah's visible organization he helps us to see how to apply it. Will we humbly recognize our personal need for it—even if we have heard it before—and constantly seek to make improvement?

¹⁴ Jehovah does not leave us to struggle alone with matters that may be a special problem for us. With loving concern, he makes provision for personal help. Millions of persons have benefited from such help by means of home Bible studies. Parents have a special responsibility to discipline their children in order to safeguard them against conduct that could cause much heartache later in life. (Prov. 6:20-35; 15:5) Within the congregation, too, those who have spiritual qualifications bear responsibility to use the Scriptures to readjust others when they discern a need, but doing so in a spirit of mildness. (Gal. 6:1, 2) In these ways Jehovah counsels and disciplines us so that we might worship him as a united people.

13. (a) By what means has Jehovah provided counsel and discipline for all of us? (b) What should we do with it?

14. What further help does Jehovah provide for us as individuals?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- How does Jehovah lovingly help us to see where we personally need to make adjustments?
- Why do many persons have difficulty in accepting counsel? How serious is this?
- What priceless qualities will help us to be receptive to counsel? How did Jesus set the example in these?

“Have Intense Love for One Another”

WHEN people first come to congregation meetings of Jehovah’s Witnesses they are often deeply impressed by the love shown there. They observe it in the warm fellowship and in the welcome extended to them personally.

² At our conventions visitors also notice that most of those attending are very well behaved. A news reporter wrote regarding such a convention: ‘Nobody under the influence of drugs or alcohol. No yelling and screaming. No pushing. No shoving. No one swearing and cursing. No dirty jokes or foul language. No smoke-filled air. No stealing. No one throwing cans on lawns. It was really unusual.’ All of this is evidence of love, the kind that ‘does not behave indecently and does not look for its own interests.’—1 Cor. 13:4-8.

³ Love is a quality that identifies every genuine Christian. (John 13:35) As we grow spiritually, we ought to express it more fully. The apostle Paul prayed that the love of his brothers would “abound yet more and more.” (Phil. 1:9; 1 Thess. 3:12) Also Peter urged fellow Christians to allow their love to embrace “the whole association

1, 2. (a) What often impresses newcomers at the meetings of Jehovah’s Witnesses? (b) What other evidence of this quality do they observe at our conventions?

3. (a) In time, what should be evident as to our displaying love? (b) In imitation of Christ, what kind of love do we need to cultivate?

of brothers." (1 Pet. 2:17) Our love should move us to do more than simply attend meetings with people whom we put forth little effort to know personally. It ought to include more than saying a kind "Hello" from time to time. The apostle John showed that it should be self-sacrificing. He wrote: "By this we have come to know love, because [the Son of God] surrendered his soul for us; and we are under obligation to surrender our souls for our brothers." (1 John 3:16; John 15:12, 13) We have not yet done that. But would we actually give our life for our brothers? Well, to what extent do we go out of our way to help them now, even when it may not be convenient?

⁴ Along with deeds that reflect a self-sacrificing spirit, it is also important to have a genuinely warm feeling toward our brothers. God's Word urges us: "In brotherly love have tender affection for one another." (Rom. 12:10) We all feel that way toward some persons. Could we include more in the group for which we feel such fondness? As the end of the old system draws near, it is vital for us to draw ever closer to our Christian brothers. The Bible alerts us to this, saying: "The end of all things has drawn close. . . . Above all things, have intense love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins."—1 Pet. 4:7, 8.

⁵ Of course, as long as we are imperfect, there will be times when we do things that offend others. They, too, in various ways will sin against us. (1 John 1:8) If you find yourself in such a situation, what should you do?

4. (a) In what other way may we find that we could express love more fully? (b) Why is it vital to have intense love for one another?

5. Why would it be wrong to expect that no problems would arise between members of a congregation?

WHAT TO DO WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE

⁶ The Scriptures provide the needed direction. But what they counsel may not coincide with what we as imperfect humans are inclined to do. (Rom. 7:21-23) Nevertheless, our earnestly working at it will give evidence of our sincere desire to please Jehovah, and it will also enrich the quality of our love toward others.

⁷ Sometimes when people are hurt they look for ways to get even with the offender. But that only makes the situation worse. If recompense is needed, we should leave that to God. (Prov. 24:29; Rom. 12:17-21) Others may try to shut the offender out of their life, avoiding contact with him. But we cannot do that to fellow worshipers. The acceptability of our worship depends, in part, on our loving our brothers. (1 John 4:20) Can we honestly say that we love someone that we will not talk to or whose very presence disturbs us? We need to come to grips with the problem and solve it. How?

⁸ On this matter the apostle Paul wrote: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also." (Col. 3:13) Can you do that? What if the person repeatedly sins against you in various ways?

⁹ The apostle Peter had the same question, and he suggested that perhaps he should try to for-

6. (a) Why may the Bible's counsel not always agree with our inclinations? (b) But what will result if we apply it?

7. (a) If someone hurts us, why should we not retaliate? (b) Why should we not simply avoid a brother who offends us?

8, 9. (a) If we have cause for complaint against a brother, what is the right thing to do? (b) But what if he has repeatedly sinned against us? (c) Why should we handle the matter in this way, and what will help us to do so?

give a brother up to seven times. Jesus replied: "I say to you, not, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy-seven times." But why? Jesus explained with an illustration that highlighted the enormity of our debt to God in comparison with what any human may owe us. (Matt. 18:21-35) In numerous ways we sin against God every day—sometimes by a selfish act, frequently by what we say or think, as well as by failure to do what we should. In our ignorance we may not even realize that some of the things we did were wrong, or in the rush of life we may not think seriously enough about the matter. God could demand our life in payment for our sins. (Rom. 6:23) But he has continued to be merciful toward us. (Ps. 103:10-14) It is not at all unreasonable, therefore, that he require us to deal similarly with one another. (Matt. 6:14, 15; Eph. 4:1-3) When we do that, instead of harboring resentment, it is evidence that we have attained to the kind of love that "does not keep account of the injury."—1 Cor. 13:4, 5; 1 Pet. 3:8, 9.

¹⁰ There may be times when we realize that, even though we have no hard feelings toward our brother, he has something against us. What should we do? Without delay we ought to talk to him and endeavor to restore peaceful relations. The Bible urges us to take the initiative. (Matt. 5:23, 24) Doing that may not be easy. It requires love coupled with humility. Are those qualities strong enough in you so that you would do what the Bible advises? This is an important goal toward which to work.

¹¹ On the other hand, it could be that someone is doing things that upset you—and possibly oth-

10. What should we do if a brother has something against us?

11. If a brother does things that upset us, what should be done about it?

ers. Would it not be good for someone to talk to him? Perhaps. If you personally will explain the problem to him in a kind way, this may bring good results. But first you ought to ask yourself: 'Are the things he does really unscriptural? Or is the problem largely because my background and training are different from his?' If so, be careful not to set up your own standards and then judge according to these. (Jas. 4:11, 12) Jehovah impartially accepts persons from all sorts of backgrounds and is patient with them as they grow spiritually.

¹² However, if someone in the congregation gets involved in gross wrongdoing, this needs prompt attention. But by whom? Usually by the elders. However, if it involves a business matter between brothers, or possibly misuse of the tongue in a way that has seriously harmed someone, then the one sinned against should *first* endeavor to help the offender on a personal basis. That may seem difficult to some. But it is what Jesus counsels at Matthew 18:15-17. Love for one's brother and an earnest desire to keep him as a brother will help one to do it in a manner that will, if possible, reach the heart of the erring one.—Prov. 16:23.

¹³ When a problem comes up, whether great or small, we are helped if we endeavor to understand how Jehovah views it. He does not approve of sin in any form, yet he sees it in all of us. In his due time unrepentant practicers of sin are cleaned out of his organization. But what about the rest

12. (a) If there is a case of gross wrongdoing in the congregation, who takes care of that? (b) But under what circumstances is it the responsibility of the one sinned against to act first? With what objective?

13. If a problem arises between us and another brother, what will help us to view the matter properly?

of us? We are all objects of his long-suffering and mercy. He sets the pattern to be imitated by us. When we do so, we are reflecting his love.—Eph. 5:1, 2.

SEEK WAYS TO "WIDEN OUT"

¹⁴ The apostle Paul had spent many months building up the congregation in Corinth, Greece. He had worked hard to help the brothers there and he loved them. But some of them lacked warmth of feeling toward him. They were very critical. He urged them to "widen out" in expressing affection. (2 Cor. 6:11-13; 12:15) We all do well to consider the extent to which we express love to others and to seek ways to "widen out."—1 John 3:14; 1 Cor. 13:3.

¹⁵ Are there some in the congregation to whom we find it difficult to draw close? If we go out of our way to cover over any minor transgressions on their part, as we would want them to do for us, this can help to warm the relationship between us. (Prov. 17:9; 19:11) Our feelings toward them can also improve if we seek out their good qualities and concentrate on these. Have we really taken note of the ways in which Jehovah is using these brothers? This will surely cause our love for them to grow.—Luke 6:32, 33, 36.

¹⁶ Admittedly, there are limitations to what we can do for others. We may not be able to greet everyone at each meeting. It may not be possible

14. (a) Why did Paul encourage the Corinthians to "widen out"? (b) How do the scriptures cited here indicate that we all do well to think about this?

15. What can help us to grow in love for any to whom we personally may not feel attracted?

16. Realistically, how can we "widen out" in showing love to those in our congregation?

to include everyone when we invite friends for a meal. We all have intimate associates with whom we spend more time than we do with others. But could we "widen out"? Could we spend just a few minutes each week getting better acquainted with someone in our congregation who has not been a close friend of ours? Might we occasionally invite one of these to work with us in the field ministry? If we truly have intense love for one another, we will surely find ways to show it.

¹⁷ Christian conventions afford fine opportunities to "widen out" in our love. Thousands may be present. We cannot meet them all. But we can conduct ourselves in a way that shows we put their welfare ahead of our convenience, even if we have never met them before. And we can show personal interest between sessions by taking the initiative to meet some of those around us. Someday all who live on earth will be brothers and sisters, united in worship of the God and Father of all. What a joy it will be to get to know them all, with their many and varied qualities! Intense love for them will move us to want to do that. Why not start now?

17. When among brothers that we have never met before, what will show whether we have intense love for them too?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- When problems arise between brothers or sisters, how should these be resolved? Why?
- As we grow spiritually, in what ways should our love also grow?
- How is it possible to show intense love for more than a circle of close friends?

We Need to Practice Godly Devotion at Home

AMONG the heartwarming truths that we learned during our earlier Bible study were those that relate to marriage and family life. We came to recognize Jehovah as the Originator of marriage and saw that in the Bible he had provided the very best guidance for families. As a result of that guidance, many persons commendably have abandoned a life of sexual immorality and had their marriage properly registered. But there is much more to Christian family life than that. It also involves our attitude as to the permanence of the marriage union, fulfillment of our responsibilities in the family, and how we deal with other family members.—Eph. 5:33–6:4.

² Millions of persons know what the Bible says about these matters. But when faced with problems in their own home, they do not apply it. What about ourselves? Certainly none of us want to be like those whom Jesus condemned because they sidestepped God's commandment requiring children to honor their parents by reasoning that a pretense of religious devotion was enough. (Matt. 15:4-9) We do not want to be persons

1. (a) After learning Jehovah's standards for marriage, what changes have many persons made? (b) But what more is involved in Christian family life?
2. (a) Does everyone apply at home what he knows from the Bible? (b) How do Jesus and Paul emphasize the importance of doing so?

who have a form of godly devotion but who fail to practice it "in their own household." Rather, we should want to display true godly devotion, which is "a means of great gain."—1 Tim. 5:4; 6:6; 2 Tim. 3:5.

HOW LONG WILL THE MARRIAGE LAST?

³ With increasing frequency, marriage bonds are proving to be very fragile. Some mates that have been together for 20, 30 or 40 years are now deciding to start a "new life" with someone else. Also it is no longer unusual to hear that young couples have separated after only a few months of marriage. Regardless of what others are doing, as worshipers of Jehovah we should have the desire to please God. What does his Word say about this?

When a man and a woman get married, how long should they expect to stay together? (Rom. 7:2, 3; Mark 10:6-9)

What is the only basis for divorce that is valid before God? (Matt. 19:3-9; 5:31, 32)

How strongly does Jehovah feel about divorces that are not authorized by his Word? (Mal. 2:13-16)

Does the Bible advocate separation as a means to solve marital problems? (1 Cor. 7:10-13)

⁴ Why do some marriages endure, while others—even among professed Christians—are breaking up? Waiting to marry until both parties are mature is often a key factor. Finding a mate who shares one's interests and with whom one can discuss matters openly is also important. But of

3. (a) What is happening to many marriages, but what should our determination be? (b) Use your Bible to answer the questions listed above regarding the permanence of marriage.

4. In spite of the modern trend, why do some marriages endure?

greater importance is one's being a person who practices genuine godly devotion. If a person truly loves Jehovah and is convinced that His ways are right, then there will be a sound basis for handling problems that arise. (Ps. 119:97, 104; Prov. 22:19) The marriage of such a person will not be undermined by the attitude that, if it does not work out, he can always get a separation or a divorce. He will not seize on his mate's shortcomings as an excuse for sidestepping his own responsibilities. Instead, he will learn to face up to problems of life and find workable solutions.

⁵ We are well aware that the Devil contends that when we experience personal suffering we will ignore Jehovah's ways and will conclude that it is better to decide for ourselves what is good and what is bad. But persons who are loyal to Jehovah are not like that. (Job. 2:4, 5; Prov. 27:11) The vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses who have experienced persecution from unbelieving mates have not renounced their marriage vows. (Matt. 5:37) Some, after a period of years, have even had the joy of being joined by their mates in serving Jehovah. (1 Cor. 7:16; 1 Pet. 3:1, 2) As for others, whose mates show no signs of change or whose mates abandoned them because they held firm to their faith—these too know that they have been richly blessed by holding to Jehovah's standards. In what way? Their circumstances have taught them to draw closer to Jehovah. They have learned to reflect godly qualities even under adversity. They are persons whose lives give evidence of the power of godly devotion.—Ps. 55:22; Jas. 1:2-4; 2 Pet. 1:5, 6.

5. (a) How is loyalty to Jehovah involved? (b) Even when severe hardship is encountered, what benefits can come from holding firmly to Jehovah's standards?

EACH ONE DOING HIS PART

⁶ Of course, more than just staying together is required in order to have a truly successful marriage. A basic need is respect on the part of each family member for Jehovah's arrangement of headship. This contributes to good order and a feeling of security in the home.—1 Cor. 11:3; Titus 2:4, 5; Prov. 1:8, 9; 31:10, 28.

⁷ How is that headship to be exercised? In a manner that reflects the qualities of Jesus Christ. Jesus is firm in upholding Jehovah's ways; he loves righteousness and hates lawlessness. (Heb. 1:8, 9) He also deeply loves his congregation, provides it needed direction and cares for it. He is not proud and inconsiderate but, rather, "mild-tempered and lowly in heart," and those who come under his headship 'find refreshment for their souls.' (Matt. 11:28, 29; Eph. 5:25-33) When a husband and father deals with his household in that manner, it is clear that he is subjecting himself to Christ, who set the perfect example in godly devotion. Christian mothers should, of course, reflect those same qualities in dealing with their children.

⁸ However, because of human imperfection, problems may arise. A measure of resentment toward direction from others may already have become deeply ingrained in some before anyone in the family began to apply Bible principles. Kind requests and a loving manner may not seem to get results. We know that the Bible says to

6. To have a successful marriage, what arrangement must be respected?

7. How should headship in the family be exercised?

8. (a) In some homes, why may it seem that Christian methods do not get the desired results? (b) What should we do if faced with such a situation?

put away "anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech." (Eph. 4:31) But if some people do not seem to understand anything else, what should be done? Well, how did Jesus react when under severe pressure? He did not imitate those who threatened and reviled. Instead, he committed himself to his Father, relying on him. (1 Pet. 2:22, 23) Likewise, if trying situations arise in the home, we give evidence of godly devotion if we turn to Jehovah, praying for his help, instead of adopting the ways of the world.—Prov. 3:5-7.

⁹ Changes do not always come quickly, but Bible counsel really does work. Many husbands who used to complain bitterly about their wives' faults found that improvement began when they themselves came to appreciate more fully Christ's dealings with his congregation. That congregation is not made up of perfect humans. Yet Jesus loves the congregation, set the right example for it, even gave his life on its behalf, and uses the Scriptures as a means to help it to improve so that it might be altogether pleasing to him. (Eph. 5:25-27; 1 Pet. 2:21) His example has encouraged many Christian husbands to work at providing a fine example and offering loving personal help toward improvement. Such methods yield much better results than does bitter faultfinding or simply refusing to talk.

¹⁰ Of course, it may be the husband and father whose shortcomings give rise to problems in the home. What if he is not sensitive to the emo-

9. Instead of faultfinding, what methods have many Christian husbands learned to use?

10. (a) In what ways might a husband and father—even one who professes to be a Christian—be making life hard for others in his home? (b) What might be done to improve the situation?

tional needs of his family or does not really take the lead by arranging for family discussion of the Bible and other activities? Some households have seen good results after frank, respectful discussions of the problem. (Prov. 15:22; 16:23; 31:26) But even if the results are not all that was hoped for, each one can make a valuable contribution to an improved home atmosphere by personally cultivating the fruits of the spirit and showing loving concern and consideration for other family members. Progress will come, not by waiting for the other person to do something, but by doing our own part well, thus showing that we personally practice godly devotion at home.—Col. 3:18-20, 23, 24.

WHERE TO GET ANSWERS

¹¹ There are many sources to which people turn for counsel on their family affairs. But we know that God's Word contains the very best advice, and we are grateful that through his visible organization he helps us to apply it. Are you fully benefiting from that help?—Ps. 119:129, 130; Mic. 4:2.

¹² In addition to attending congregation meetings, do you have regular times set aside for family Bible study? Families that do this regularly each week become united in their worship. Their family life is enriched as they discuss application of God's Word to their own circumstances.—Compare Deuteronomy 11:18-21.

¹³ Perhaps there are questions about specif-

11, 12. (a) What provisions has Jehovah made to help us with problems in family life? (b) To benefit fully, what is it recommended that we do?

13. (a) If we have questions on specific marital or family matters, where can we often find the needed help? (b) What should be reflected in all decisions that we make?

ic marital or family matters that concern you. For example, what about birth control? Is sterilization proper for Christians? Is an abortion justified if it seems likely that a baby will be born malformed? Are there any limitations on the kind of sex relations that are proper between husband and wife? If a youth in his teens shows little interest in spiritual matters, to what extent should he be required to share with the family in worship? You no doubt have an opinion on each of these. But can you answer on the basis of Bible principles? Each of these questions has been discussed in *The Watchtower*. Learn to use available indexes to find such material. If you do not have older publications to which an index refers, check the library at the Kingdom Hall. Do not expect a Yes or a No to every question. Sometimes you must decide—individually or as a married couple. But learn to make decisions that reflect your love for Jehovah and for the members of your family. Make decisions that give evidence of your earnest desire to be well pleasing to God. If you do so, it will be evident both to Jehovah and to others who know you well that you truly do practice godly devotion not only in public but also in your own home. —Eph. 5:10; Rom. 14:19.

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- How is loyalty to Jehovah involved in faithfulness to one's marriage vow?
- When under pressure from family problems, what will help us to do what is pleasing to God?
- Even if others in the family fall short, what can we do to improve the situation?

What the Mosaic Law Means to You

A HOTLY debated issue in the days of the apostle Paul was whether Gentile Christians were obligated to conform to the requirements of the Mosaic Law. It is true that in 36 C.E. holy spirit had come upon uncircumcised Gentiles. But some Christians of Jewish background felt strongly that Gentile disciples should be circumcised and taught to observe the Law of Moses. Was it, in fact, necessary for them to keep that Law, or perhaps part of it? About 49 C.E. the issue was referred to the governing body in Jerusalem.—Acts 10:44-48; 15:1, 2, 5.

² The outcome is of keen interest to us. Why? Not only because at times we meet people who argue that Christians must conform to certain requirements of the Law, such as Sabbath observance, but also because the Bible itself says that “the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” (Rom. 7:12) Though referred to as the Mosaic Law because Moses was the mediator of the Law covenant, that Law code actually originated with Jehovah God.—Ex. 24:3, 8.

1. (a) What indicated that, beginning with 36 C.E., uncircumcised Gentiles were acceptable to Jehovah as Christians?
- (b) But over what issue did some early Christians have strong feelings?
2. Why does this issue interest us?

WHY THE LAW?

³ How we view the Law today is affected by whether we understand why Jehovah gave Israel a Law code. The Scriptures explain: "It was added [to the Abrahamic covenant] to make transgressions manifest, until the seed should arrive to whom the promise had been made . . . Consequently the Law has become our tutor leading to Christ, that we might be declared righteous due to faith." (Gal. 3:19, 24) How did the Law do this?

⁴ By setting out a perfect pattern covering the various facets of life, it showed up the Jews as sinners. It became evident that, despite any good intentions and diligent efforts, they could not measure up to its requirements. Using the Jews as a sample of the imperfect human family, the Law exposed all the world, including each one of us, as sinners, liable to God for punishment. (Rom. 3:19, 20) Thus it emphasized the need for a savior for mankind, and it led faithful ones to Jesus Christ as that Savior. In what way? It identified him as the only one who kept the Law perfectly, thus the only human who was sinless. Animal sacrifices under the Law had only limited value, but as a perfect human, Jesus could offer his life as a sacrifice that would really remove sin and open the way to eternal life for all those exercising faith.—John 1:29; 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.

⁵ With this background in mind, how would you answer the following questions?

Was the Mosaic Law ever meant to be binding on all mankind? (Ps. 147:19, 20; Ex. 31:12, 13)

3. Why was the Law given to Israel?

4. (a) How did that Law "make transgressions manifest"?

(b) How did it also lead faithful ones to Christ?

5. Using the scriptures provided, answer the questions included with this paragraph.

Did Jehovah give any indication to Israel that someday the Law covenant would end? (Jer. 31:31-33; Heb. 8:13)

Did the Ten Commandments, including the requirement to observe a weekly Sabbath, continue in force after the rest of the Law was canceled? (Col. 2:13, 14, 16; 2 Cor. 3:7-11 [as made clear by Exodus 34:28-30]; Rom. 7:6, 7)

By what means did Jehovah bring the Law covenant to its end? (Col. 2:13-17; Matt. 5:17, 18; Rom. 10:4)

⁶ In the light of this, what is implied by arguing that the Mosaic Law is still in force? In effect, this constitutes a repudiation of faith in Jesus Christ. Why is that so? Because such a view rejects the fact that Jesus fulfilled the Law, thus paving the way for God to terminate it. To persons who professed to be Christians but who were swayed by arguments in favor of keeping the Law, or some portion of it, the apostle Paul forcefully wrote: "You are parted from Christ, whoever you are that try to be declared righteous by means of law; you have fallen away from his undeserved kindness."—Gal. 5:4; see also Romans 10:2-4.

⁷ Those who argue for continuance of certain features of the Law do not fully appreciate that a righteous standing with God depends, not on one's works of the Law, but on one's faith in the value of Jesus' sacrifice. (Gal. 3:11, 12) They feel that a person must prove himself righteous by such works—something that is impossible for sinful humans. It is, indeed, important to do works in obedience to commands of God and Christ that apply to Christians. (Jas. 2:15-17; Matt. 28:19, 20)

6. What is implied by arguments claiming that the Mosaic Law is still in force?

7. (a) What is not fully appreciated by those who argue for continuance of certain features of the Law? (b) How important are Christian works, and what relation do these have to our receiving the gift of eternal life?

These are a means of demonstrating our love and faith, and lack of them would indicate that our faith was dead. But we cannot *earn* salvation no matter how hard we work. No salvation from sin and death would be possible without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Thus eternal life is a *gift* from God through Jesus Christ, an expression of extraordinary undeserved kindness and not payment for our works.—Eph. 2:8, 9; Rom. 3:23, 24; 6:23.

⁸ When the issue involving application of the Mosaic Law to Gentile Christians was presented to the governing body in Jerusalem in the first century, their decision was in harmony with these facts. They recognized that Jehovah was not requiring Gentile believers to perform works in obedience to the Mosaic Law before holy spirit was poured out on them. The decision of that governing body did list as “necessary things” certain prohibitions that were in harmony with that Law, but these were based on the Bible record concerning events that *predated* the Law. So there was not an imposing on Gentile Christians of a responsibility to conform to the Mosaic Law or some portion of it but, rather, there was a confirming of standards recognized prior to Moses.—Acts 15:28, 29; compare Genesis 9:3, 4; 34:2-7; 35:2-5.

⁹ After Pentecost of 33 C.E. the Jews themselves were no longer required by God to conform to the Mosaic Law code. And those Jews who exercised faith saw special reason to rejoice in this. Why? Although the Gentiles were also sinners and hence

8. What did the first-century governing body decide about the issue involving application of the Mosaic Law to Gentile Christians?

9. (a) Are Jews still required by God to obey the Mosaic Law? (b) What special provision was made for them by the manner in which Christ died?

dying, the Jews alone had come under God's curse because of being violators of the Law covenant. But by the manner in which Christ died—impaled on a stake as if he were an accursed criminal—he took the place of those Jews who would put faith in him and provided release for them from the penalty incurred as a result of their disobedience to the Law. (Gal. 3:10-13) Thus he provided for them forgiveness that they could never have had under the Mosaic Law.—Acts 13:38, 39.

¹⁰ The Law had, in fact, fenced the Jews off from the Gentiles. Requirements that did not apply to the Gentiles were laid on the Jews, and uncircumcised Gentiles were barred from sharing fully with the Jews in their worship. (Compare Exodus 12:48; Acts 10:28.) But once the Law had accomplished its purpose and was removed, it was possible for Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles to be united through Christ in worship of the only true God.—Eph. 2:11-18.

KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAW BENEFITS US

¹¹ Although we today are not under the Law, knowledge of it is of great benefit to each one of us. In what way? Remember, Jesus was born to a Jewish mother and came to be under the Mosaic Law. Certain things he did can be fully understood only on the basis of knowledge of the requirements of that Law. (Gal. 4:4; see Luke 22:7, 8.) Also it was among people who were under that Law that he carried on his ministry. So his teachings often were built on circumstances related to the Law.—Compare Matthew 5:23, 24.

10. In what way did removal of the Law prove to be a factor in united worship?

11. How does knowledge of the Law help us to understand the teachings of Christ?

¹² Following his resurrection, Jesus reminded his disciples that his life as a human had fulfilled the things written about him in the Law, in the Prophets and in the Psalms. (Luke 24:44) Also, the apostle Paul referred to features in connection with the Law covenant as being “a typical representation and a shadow of the heavenly things” and he said that “the Law has a shadow of the good things to come.” (Heb. 8:4, 5; 10:1) Amazing details that find fulfillment in the priesthood of Jesus Christ and in the sacrifice of his human life are embodied in the Mosaic Law. Our grasping these can enrich the meaning of such provisions to us. Among the prophetic patterns are details pointing to the arrangement for worshiping Jehovah acceptably today at his great spiritual temple. As our understanding of these grows, our appreciation for the spirit-anointed congregation and its role under Jesus Christ in connection with our worship will also increase.

¹³ The Mosaic Law is part of the Scriptures inspired by God, all of which are “beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight.” (2 Tim. 3:16) Our searching out and meditating on the enduring principles on which the Law is based can help to build up in us a heartfelt desire to do the things that are pleasing to God. If we perceive the spirit toward which the Law pointed and reflect that spirit in our lives, how beneficial that can be!

12. (a) What connection did Jesus point out between his life and the Mosaic Law? (b) How did the apostle Paul indicate the value of having knowledge of the Law? (c) What can result from our grasping the spiritual significance of its requirements?

13. Why is it beneficial to meditate on the fine principles reflected in the Law?

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES IN THE MOSAIC LAW

RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD GOD

Worship only Jehovah	Ex. 20:3; 22:20
Treat his name with respect	Ex. 20:7; Lev. 24:16
Love and serve him with whole heart, soul, vital force	Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 30:16
Fear to disobey, be in awe of him	Deut. 5:29; 6:24
Approach him only in the way he approves	Lev. 1:1-5; Num. 16:1-50; Deut. 12:5-14
Give him your best; it came from him	Ex. 23:19; 34:26
Worshippers must be physically clean	Ex. 19:10, 11; 30:20
Sacred interests not to be pushed aside for secular pursuits	Ex. 20:8-10; 34:21; Num. 15:32-36

FORBIDDEN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Idolatry	Ex. 20:4-6; Deut. 7:25
Interfaith	Ex. 23:13; 34:12-15; Deut. 6:14, 15; 13:1-5
Spiritism, sorcery, fortune-telling, divination, magic, casting spells	Ex. 22:18; Lev. 20:27; Deut. 18:10-12

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

Adultery prohibited	Ex. 20:14; Lev. 20:10
No marriage to one not serving Jehovah	Deut. 7:1-4
Incest forbidden	Lev. 18:6-16; 20:11
Avoid sex perversions	Lev. 18:23; 20:13
Respect life of unborn child	Ex. 21:22, 23
Honor your parents	Ex. 20:12; 21:15, 17; Deut. 21:18-21
Teach your children Jehovah's ways	Deut. 6:4-9; 11:18-21

DUTIES INVOLVING OTHER PERSONS

Hold human life sacred	Ex. 20:13; Num. 35:9-34
Love fellowman; avoid grudges	Lev. 19:17, 18
Be considerate of elderly ones	Lev. 19:32
Show loving concern for ones in economic adversity, orphans, widows	Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 15:7-11; 24:19-21
No mistreatment of deaf and blind	Lev. 19:14; Deut. 27:18
Be honest in business practices	Lev. 19:35, 36; 25:14
Respect property rights	Ex. 20:15; 22:1, 6; 23:4; Deut. 22:1-3
Do not covet what belongs to others	Ex. 20:17
Expose gross wrongdoers	Lev. 5:1; Deut. 13:6-11
Be truthful; not bear false witness	Ex. 20:16; 23:1, 2
No partiality because of position	Ex. 23:3, 6; Lev. 19:15

¹⁴ Jesus effectively illustrated this in his Sermon on the Mount. Speaking to people then under the Law, he showed that, instead of merely refraining from murder, they needed to root out any tendency to continued wrath and refrain from using their tongue in downgrading speech about their brothers. Instead of being content because they had never committed adultery, they should not even look at a woman lustfully. As was true of them, so, too, we should endeavor to use all our body members in harmony with Jehovah's righteous ways. (Matt. 5:21, 22, 27-30; see also Romans 13:8-10.) If we do this, we will show that we also understand the meaning of the greatest commandment in the Law: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind." (Matt. 22:36, 37) Surely this will draw us closer to Jehovah God. Though we are not under the Mosaic Law code, we will definitely be benefited by accurate knowledge of the principles on which it is based and the prophetic patterns that it contains.

14. (a) How did Jesus illustrate the value of grasping the spirit toward which the requirements of the Law pointed? (b) Draw attention to some of the additional fine principles embodied in the Law, as shown on page 152. (c) How can appreciation of these things aid us to be more pleasing to God?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- Why are those who insist on obedience to the Mosaic Law really rejecting Christ?
- How does knowledge of the Law help us to understand Jesus' role in Jehovah's purpose?
- Although we are not under the Law, what valuable things can we discern from study of it?

Life and Blood—Do You Treat Them as Sacred?

IT SHOULD NOT surprise us that God's viewpoint toward life is very different from that of the world. To God, human life is sacred. Do you view it in that way? We are completely dependent on God, who "gives to all persons life and breath and all things." (Acts 17:25-28; Ps. 36:9) If we share God's view, we will safeguard our life. But we will not violate divine law in an attempt to save our present life. We treasure God's promise of everlasting life for those who truly exercise faith in his Son.—Matt. 16:25, 26; John 6:40; Jude 21.

² In contrast, Jesus said that Satan the Devil, the ruler of this world, "was a manslayer when he began." (John 8:44; 12:31) From the very start of his course of rebellion he brought death to mankind. The world's violent history reflects his spirit. But Satan can also present a seemingly different appearance. Thus men who are influenced by his thinking argue that, while it may be all right to be religious, when life is at stake you would be benefited by heeding their "expert" advice instead of quoting the Bible. (Compare 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15.) When faced with an apparent life-or-death situation, which way will your heart incline? Of course, our desire should be to please Jehovah.

1. (a) How does God view life? (b) How can we demonstrate that we appreciate God's gift of life?

2. Whose attitude toward life does the world reflect, and to what kind of reasoning does this sometimes lead?

³ God's Word reveals an intimate relationship between life and blood, saying: "The soul [or life] of the flesh is in the blood." Just as life is sacred, so, too, God has made blood sacred. It is something that belongs to him, to be used only in the manner he approves. (Lev. 17:3, 4, 11; Deut. 12:23) So we do well to consider carefully what he requires of us with regard to blood.

Read Genesis 9:3-6

What practices in your area require you to be alert so as not to consume animal blood?

In view of what is said in verse 4 regarding animal blood, how would you react to the drinking of *human* blood (which was done at Roman gladiatorial events)?

As shown in verses 5 and 6, to whom primarily must one answer for shedding human blood?

Read Acts 15:28, 29

Does this state that the requirements would apply for only a limited time? Do they apply to us?

Is human blood excluded by the language used here?

Does the text indicate that exceptions might be made in cases of emergency?

⁴ As regards human blood, we cannot assume that simply refraining from murder keeps us guiltless. The Scriptures show that if we are part of any organization that is bloodguilty before God, we must sever our ties with it if we do not want to share in its sins. (Rev. 18:4, 24; Mic. 4:3) Such action deserves urgent attention.

3. (a) Why should we be especially interested in what the Bible says about blood? (b) Read Genesis 9:3-6 and Acts 15:28, 29, and then answer the questions listed above with these texts.

4. As discussed here, what action do the Scriptures show that a person may need to take so as not to share in bloodguilt?

⁵ In the case of God's servants whom he has commissioned to warn of coming destruction in the great tribulation, their remaining free from bloodguilt requires that they faithfully proclaim that message. (Compare Ezekiel 3:17-21.) The apostle Paul viewed himself as a debtor to people of all sorts because of the ministry assigned to him. He felt free of responsibility for their blood only after he had borne thorough witness to them about God's provision for salvation. (Rom. 1:14, 15; Acts 18:5, 6; 20:26, 27) Does your diligence in the field ministry reflect a similar awareness of the responsibility that rests on all of Jehovah's Witnesses?

⁶ Fatal accidents should also be of serious concern to us. Under the Mosaic Law persons who accidentally caused the death of a fellow human were not viewed as guiltless. Penalties were imposed. (Ex. 21:29, 30; Deut. 22:8; Num. 35:22-25) If we take to heart the principle involved, we will be careful to avoid contributing to any fatal accident by the way we drive a vehicle, by our taking some foolish chance or by allowing unsafe conditions to exist in our home or at our place of business. Does your attitude regarding these things reflect full appreciation for the sacredness of life?

WHAT ABOUT MEDICAL USE OF BLOOD?

⁷ Although the practice is not new, particularly

5. How is diligence in the field ministry associated with being free of bloodguilt?

6. What connection is there between accident prevention and respect for the sacredness of life?

7. (a) Is transfusing blood of one human into another compatible with the sacredness of blood? (b) Why is it unreasonable to restrict the command to 'abstain from blood' to practices that were common in the first century?

in the 20th century blood has been widely used for transfusions, with the intention of sustaining life. Both whole blood and primary components of blood are used in this manner. Of course, such medical procedures do not guarantee that the patient will not die. Sometimes, in fact, death follows as a direct result of such use of blood. But of even greater concern—Does the Bible requirement that we ‘abstain from blood’ apply to this medical practice? Yes! Taking blood into one’s body from any other creature, human or animal, violates the divine law. It shows disregard for the sacredness of blood. (Acts 15:19, 20) There is no basis for restricting the command to ‘abstain from blood’ to practices that were current in the first century and thus excluding modern medical techniques. Reason on the matter: Who would claim that the Bible’s command against murder did not include illegally taking human life by means of a gun, since gunpowder was not invented until the 10th century? And would it be reasonable to argue that the prohibition of drunkenness applied only in connection with beverages known in the first century and not to modern-day hard liquors? For persons who truly want to please God, the message conveyed by the command to ‘abstain from blood’ is clear.

⁸ Nevertheless, the complexity of some medical procedures may give rise to questions. How can these be resolved? First, ask your doctor for a clear explanation of the proposed procedure. Then

8. (a) How can you determine whether a certain medical procedure is suitable for a Christian? (b) If a doctor wanted to withdraw some of your own blood, store it and then return it to your body during an operation, what Bible principles could help you to make a sound decision? (c) How might a person reason on treatment that requires the blood to circulate through equipment outside the body?

analyze it prayerfully in the light of Bible principles. The doctor may suggest that you have some of your own blood withdrawn and stored for use, if necessary, during a later operation. Would you agree? Remember that, according to God's Law given through Moses, blood removed from a creature was to be poured out on the ground. (Deut. 12:24) We today are not under the Law code, but the underlying message is that blood is sacred and, when removed from a creature's body, is to be returned to God by pouring it out on his footstool, the earth. (Compare Matthew 5:34, 35.) So how could it be proper to store your blood (even for a relatively brief time) and then put it back into your body? But what if the doctor says that, during surgery or in the course of other treatment, your blood would be channeled through equipment outside your body, and then, right back in? Would you consent? Some have felt that, with a clear conscience, they could permit this, provided that the equipment was primed with a nonblood fluid. They have viewed the external equipment as an extension of their circulatory system. Of course, situations vary, and it is you that must decide. But your decision should leave you with a clean conscience before God.—1 Pet. 3:16; 1 Tim. 1:19.

⁹ To assure that your doctor will respect your decision to 'abstain from blood,' talk to him before any medical emergency arises. If it is necessary to check into a hospital for treatment, take the precaution of requesting *in writing* that no blood be used, also *speak about it personally* to the

9. (a) To assure respect for your decision to 'abstain from blood,' what precautions ought to be taken? (b) Even in the event of an emergency, how can an unpleasant confrontation sometimes be avoided? (c) If a doctor or a court tried to force a blood transfusion, what would you do?

doctor that will be handling your case. But what if there is an unexpected emergency? Unpleasant confrontations can often be avoided by having a respectful, reasonable discussion with the doctor, urging him to use his skills to help, but with respect for your Christian conscience. (Prov. 15:1; 16:21, 23) However, if perhaps well-meaning medical personnel insist that refusing blood will endanger our life and so try to force us to acquiesce, then what? Faith in the rightness of Jehovah's ways should make us firm. Loyalty to Jehovah ought to make us resist resolutely, because we choose to obey God rather than men.—Acts 5:29; compare Job 2:4; Proverbs 27:11.

HOW SERIOUS IS THE MATTER?

¹⁰ To persons who do not yet know Jehovah, arguments in favor of blood transfusions may at times seem to show high regard for the sacredness of life. But we do not forget that many who argue in this way also condone the destruction of life by means of abortion. Jehovah knows more about life and blood than any medical "expert." All His commandments have proved to be for our good, safeguarding our present life and our future prospects. (Isa. 48:17; 1 Tim. 4:8) Is the command to 'abstain from blood' any different?

¹¹ The seriousness of respecting the sacredness of blood is emphasized by what Jehovah said regarding the *only* use to which blood could be put. "The soul of the flesh is in the blood, and I myself have put it upon the altar for you *to make atonement for your souls*, because it is the blood that

10. Why would the claim that a transfusion is needed to save a life not change our view of the matter?

11. (a) What was the only use that Jehovah permitted the Israelites to make of blood? (b) Why is this very important to us as Christians?

makes atonement by the soul in it. That is why I have said to the sons of Israel: 'No soul of you must eat blood.'" (Lev. 17:11, 12) All the animal blood poured out at Jehovah's altar in harmony with that requirement foreshadowed the precious blood of Jesus Christ. (Heb. 9:11, 12; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19) Thus the sacredness of the blood of Jesus itself is emphasized by God's law prohibiting any other use of blood. From this it can be seen that any misuse of blood shows gross disrespect for Jehovah's provision for salvation through his Son.

¹² When faced with a life-or-death situation, how shortsighted it would be to turn one's back on God! Although we appreciate the services of conscientious doctors, we do not desperately try to keep ourselves or our loved ones alive for a few more days or years by violating God's law, as if this life were everything. We have faith in the value of Jesus' shed blood and the eternal life that it makes possible. With our whole heart we believe that faithful servants of God—even those who die—will be rewarded with eternal life.—John 11:25; 1 Tim. 4:10.

12. If faced with death, why would a true Christian not resort to any misuse of blood in an attempt to stay alive?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- What makes life and blood sacred? Why does the world argue for a different view?
- As regards animals, how do we show respect for the sacredness of their blood?
- In what various ways should all of us show that we treat human life as being sacred? How important is it to do so?

“They Are No Part of the World”

ON THE NIGHT before he was impaled, Jesus prayed earnestly on behalf of his disciples. Knowing that they would be put under tremendous pressure by Satan, he said to his Father: “I request you, not to take them out of the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one. They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world.” (John 17:15, 16) Why is separateness from the world so important? Because Satan is its ruler. Those who are part of the world are under his control. (John 14:30; 1 John 5:19) In view of this, it is vital for every Christian to understand just what is meant by being “no part of the world.” How was it true of Jesus?

² Jesus certainly did not isolate himself from other people. His being “no part of the world” did not mean lack of love for others. On the contrary, he went from city to city telling them the good news about the Kingdom of God. He healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, raised the dead, even gave his own life on behalf of mankind. But he did not love the ungodly attitudes and wicked deeds of people who were filled with the spirit of the world. He warned against immoral desires, a materialistic way of life and the selfish grasping

1. (a) What did Jesus pray on behalf of his disciples the night before he died? (b) Why was being “no part of the world” so important?

2. In what ways was Jesus “no part of the world”?

for personal prominence. (Matt. 5:27, 28; 6:19-21; Luke 12:15-21; 20:46, 47) Instead of imitating the way of life of people alienated from God, Jesus walked in Jehovah's ways. (John 8:28, 29) As for political controversies involving Rome and the Jews, Jesus, although a Jew, did not take sides.

"MY KINGDOM IS NO PART OF THIS WORLD"

³ The religious leaders of the Jews, however, charged that Jesus was subverting the national interests. They had him arrested and taken to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. What really disturbed them was that Jesus' teaching exposed their hypocrisy. But in order to get the governor to take action, they made the accusation: "This man we found subverting our nation and forbidding the paying of taxes to Caesar and saying he himself is Christ a king." (Luke 23:2) The fact is that a year earlier when the people had wanted to make him king, Jesus had refused. (John 6:15) He knew that he was to be a *heavenly* King and that the time for him to become King had not yet arrived, and he was to be enthroned, not by democratic or popular action, but by Jehovah God.

⁴ As for the paying of taxes, just three days before Jesus' arrest the Pharisees had tried to get him to say something incriminating on this matter. But in reply to their sly question, Jesus had responded: "Show me a denarius [a Roman coin]. Whose image and inscription does it have?" When they said, "Caesar's," he replied: "By all means, then, pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God."—Luke 20:20-25.

3. (a) What accusation regarding Jesus did Jewish religious leaders make to Pilate, and why? (b) What shows that Jesus had no interest in becoming a human king?

4. What do the facts reveal about Jesus' attitude on "the paying of taxes to Caesar"?

⁵ What happened at the very time of Jesus' arrest demonstrated that he was not stirring up rebellion against Rome, and he did not want his disciples to do so. Roman soldiers together with Jews bearing swords and clubs came to seize Jesus. (John 18:3, 12; Mark 14:43) Seeing this, the apostle Peter drew a sword and struck one of the men, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus reproved Peter, saying: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matt. 26:51, 52) The following morning, when before Pilate, Jesus explained the reason for his action, saying: "My kingdom is no part of this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from this source."—John 18:36.

⁶ After considering the evidence, Pilate declared that there was "no ground for the charges" brought against Jesus. Nevertheless, he bowed to the demands of the mob and had Jesus impaled.—Luke 23:13-15; John 19:12-16.

DISCIPLES FOLLOW THE MASTER'S LEAD

⁷ The record of early Christianity, both in the Bible and in other historical works, shows that Jesus' disciples understood what being "no part of the world" required of them. They endeavored to avoid the spirit of the world. Because they shunned the violent and immoral entertainment of the Roman circus and theater, they were derided as haters of the human race. However, far from

5. (a) What lesson did Jesus teach his disciples at the time of his arrest? (b) How did Jesus explain to Pilate the reason for what he had done?

6. What was the outcome of that trial?

7. How did early Christians show that they avoided the spirit of the world but that they loved people?

hating their fellowmen, they expended themselves to help others to benefit from God's loving provisions for salvation.

⁸ As was their Master, they also were the objects of intense persecution, frequently at the hands of misinformed government officials. (John 15:18-20) But in about 56 C.E. the apostle Paul wrote to fellow Christians in Rome reinforcing the counsel that Jesus had given. Paul urged them to "be in subjection to the superior authorities," the political rulers, "for there is no authority except by God." Not that Jehovah establishes secular governments, but they rule with his permission. Paul explained that they "stand placed in their relative positions by God," because God foresaw and foretold the order in which they would come to power. The "superior authorities" therefore constitute the "arrangement of God" for the present time, until God's own Kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ becomes the only government ruling the earth. So Paul advised Christians to show proper honor to secular officials and to pay taxes that they imposed.—Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1, 2.

⁹ Paul did not tell them, though, to be in absolute subjection with no regard for God, God's Word and their Christian conscience. They knew that Jesus had worshiped only Jehovah, that Jesus had refused to let the people make him king and that he had told Peter to put away his sword. They conscientiously adhered to their Master's lead. The book *On the Road to Civilization—A*

8. (a) Because of being "no part of the world," what did those early disciples experience? (b) But how did they view the political rulers and the paying of taxes, and why?

9. (a) What is not to be left out of account when being subject to the "superior authorities"? (b) How does history show that early Christians carefully followed Jesus' example?

World History (by Heckel and Sigman, pages 237, 238) reports: "Christians refused to share certain duties of Roman citizens. The Christians . . . felt it a violation of their faith to enter military service. They would not hold political office. They would not worship the emperor."

¹⁰ Regarding political and military controversies of their day, Jesus' disciples maintained strict neutrality. In the year 66 C.E. the Jews of the Roman province of Judea revolted against Caesar. The Roman army quickly surrounded Jerusalem. What did Christians in the city do? They remembered Jesus' counsel to stay neutral and to get out from between the warring armies. When the Roman army temporarily withdrew, the Christians seized the opportunity and fled across the Jordan River into the mountainous region of Pella. (Luke 21: 20-24) In their neutrality they served as a faithful pattern for later Christians.

CHRISTIAN NEUTRALS IN THE TIME OF THE END

¹¹ Does the historical record show that any group in this "time of the end," since 1914 C.E., has pursued a course of Christian neutrality in imitation of those early Christians? Yes, Jehovah's Witnesses have done so. In all the earth they have kept busy preaching that God's Kingdom is the only means by which peace, prosperity and lasting happiness are possible for lovers of righteousness in all the earth. (Matt. 24:14) But with regard to controversies among the nations, they have maintained strict neutrality.

10. (a) Why did Christians in Jerusalem take the action they did in 66 C.E.? (b) In what way does that provide a valuable pattern?

11. (a) In what work do Jehovah's Witnesses keep busy, and why? (b) Regarding what are they neutral?

¹² In sharp contrast, the clergy of Christendom are very much involved in the political affairs of the world. In some lands they actively campaign for or against candidates. Some of the clergy themselves hold political office. Others exert great pressure on politicians to favor programs that the clergy approve. Elsewhere the "conservative" clergy are close allies of the men in power while "progressive" priests and ministers may be supporting guerrilla movements working for their overthrow. However, Jehovah's Witnesses do not meddle in politics, no matter what the country in which they live. They do not interfere with what others do as to joining a political party, running for office or voting in elections. But, since Jesus said that his disciples would be "no part of the world," Jehovah's Witnesses take no part whatsoever in political activities.

¹³ As Jesus foretold, during this "time of the end" nations have repeatedly gone to war, and even factions within nations have taken up arms against one another. (Matt. 24:3, 6, 7) But in the face of all of this, what position have Jehovah's Witnesses taken? Their neutrality regarding such conflicts is well known in all parts of the world. Consistent with the position taken by Jesus Christ and later demonstrated by his early disciples, *The Watchtower*, in its issue of November 1, 1939, stated: "All who are on the Lord's side will be neutral as to warring nations, and will be entirely and wholly for the great Theocrat [Jehovah] and his King [Jesus Christ]." The facts show that Jehovah's Witnesses in all nations and under all cir-

12. (a) How does the neutrality of the Witnesses contrast with practices of the clergy? (b) What does neutrality as to politics include for Jehovah's Witnesses?

13. As to their participating in war, what do the facts show that the position of Jehovah's Witnesses has been?

cumstances continue to hold to this position. They have not allowed the world's divisive politics and wars to break up their international brotherhood as worshipers of Jehovah.—Isa. 2:3, 4; compare 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4.

¹⁴ An examination of the historical facts shows that not only have Jehovah's Witnesses refused to put on military uniforms and take up arms but, during the past half century and more, they have also declined to do noncombatant service or to accept other work assignments as a substitute for military service. Why? Because they have studied God's requirements and then made a personal, conscientious decision. No one tells them what they must do. Nor do they interfere with what others choose to do. But when called on to explain their position, Jehovah's Witnesses have made it known that, as persons who have presented themselves to God in dedication, they are obligated to use their bodies in his service and cannot now hand these over to earthly masters who are acting contrary to God's purpose.—Rom. 6:12-14; 12:1, 2; Mic. 4:3.

¹⁵ The result has been as Jesus said: "Because you are no part of the world . . . the world hates you." (John 15:19) Many of Jehovah's Witnesses have been imprisoned because they would not violate their Christian neutrality. Some have been treated brutally, even to the point of death. Others have continued to demonstrate their neutrality during years of confinement. The book *Values and*

14. (a) Because of their neutral position, what else have the Witnesses refused to do? (b) How do they explain the reason for this?

15. (a) Because of maintaining separateness from the world, what have Jehovah's Witnesses experienced? (b) Even when they were imprisoned, how have Christian principles guided them?

Violence in Auschwitz (by Anna Pawelczynska, page 89) reports: "Everyone knew that no Jehovah's Witness [in the concentration camp] would perform a command contrary to his religious belief and convictions or any action directed against another person, even if that person was a murderer and an SS officer. On the other hand, he would perform every other job, even the most obnoxious, to the best of his ability, if it was morally neutral for him."

¹⁶ Jehovah's Witnesses recognize that all nations are on the march to the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Armageddon. As a united people, Jehovah's servants have taken their stand in favor of His Messianic Kingdom. So they exercise care to avoid allowing themselves to be maneuvered into a position in opposition to that Kingdom. (Rev. 16:14, 16; 19:11-21) They appreciate the seriousness of Jesus' statement that his true followers are "no part of the world." They know that this old world will soon pass away, and only those who genuinely do the will of God will remain forever.—1 John 2:15-17.

16. (a) To what are all nations marching, and so what are Jehovah's Witnesses careful to avoid? (b) Why, then, is separateness from the world such a serious matter?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- How did Jesus show what is involved in being "no part of the world"?
- What indicates the attitude of early Christians toward (1) the spirit of the world? (2) secular rulers and the paying of taxes? (3) military service?
- In what ways have Jehovah's Witnesses in modern times given evidence of their Christian neutrality?

Continue to Speak God's Word With Boldness

THE most important events in over 4,000 years of human history had taken place. God's own Son, Jesus Christ, had been anointed as the future King over all the earth. Despite Jesus' execution at the instigation of religious enemies, Jehovah had raised his Son from the dead. Through him salvation was possible with everlasting life in view. But when Jesus' faithful disciples publicly proclaimed this good news, fierce opposition broke out. First, two of the apostles were thrown into prison, then all of them. They were flogged and ordered to stop speaking on the basis of Jesus' name. (Acts 4:1-3, 17; 5:17, 18, 40) What should they do? What would you have done? Would you have continued to witness boldly?

² In the year 1914 C.E. an even more marvelous event of universal importance took place. God's Kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ actually was established in heaven. Next, Satan and his demons were hurled down to the earth. (Rev. 12:1-5, 7-12) The last days of the present wicked system had begun. Before the generation that witnessed the events of 1914 dies off, God will crush the entire

1. (a) What good news did Jesus' disciples proclaim starting at Pentecost of 33 C.E., but what was the reaction of the rulers and older men of the Jews? (b) What questions might we ask ourselves concerning this?

2. (a) What even more marvelous news needs to be proclaimed in our day? (b) Who have the responsibility to do it?

Satanic system of things. (Matt. 24:34) Survivors will have before them the prospect of eternal life. In fulfillment of God's original purpose, all the earth will become a Paradise. If you have already embraced this good news, you have the responsibility to share it with others. (Matt. 24:14) But what response can you expect?

³ While some persons may welcome you warmly as a Kingdom proclaimer, the majority will simply be indifferent. (Matt. 24:37-39) Others may ridicule or may bitterly oppose you. Jesus warned that some opposition might come from your own relatives. (Luke 21:16-19) It may also be encountered at your place of work or at school. In many parts of the earth Jehovah's Witnesses are even under unjust governmental ban. When confronted with any or all of such circumstances, will you continue to speak God's Word boldly?

⁴ Without doubt, you want to be a courageous servant of God. Yet, some who felt that nothing could turn them back have dropped out of the ranks of Kingdom proclaimers. In contrast, others, including persons who are somewhat timid by nature, continue without letup to be zealous servants of God. How can you prove to be one who stands "firm in the faith"?—1 Cor. 16:13.

NOT RELYING ON OUR OWN STRENGTH

⁵ There are, of course, many factors involved in being a faithful servant of God. But basic to all of them is reliance on Jehovah and his provisions. How do we show such reliance? One

3. (a) How do people respond to the Kingdom message?
(b) So, what question must we face?

4. Does personal determination assure that we will continue to serve God faithfully?

5. (a) To prove ourselves faithful servants of God, what is a basic requirement? (b) Why are the meetings so important?

way is by attending congregation meetings. The Scriptures urge us not to neglect them. (Heb. 10: 23-25) Those who have continued to be faithful witnesses of Jehovah, whether in the face of public apathy or of persecution, have exerted themselves to be regular in attending meetings with fellow worshipers. At these meetings our knowledge of the Scriptures is increased, but it is not mere fascination with new things that draws us. (Compare Acts 17:21.) Our appreciation of well-known truths grows, and our awareness of ways in which to use them is sharpened. The example set for us by Jesus becomes deeply impressed on our mind and heart. (Eph. 4:20-24) We are drawn close to our Christian brothers in united worship and we personally are strengthened to continue doing God's will. Jehovah's spirit provides direction through the congregation, and by means of that spirit Jesus is in our midst when we assemble in his name.—Rev. 3:6; Matt. 18:20.

⁶ Do you regularly attend all the meetings and do you make personal application of what you hear discussed? Sometimes, when under ban, it has been necessary to hold the meetings in small groups in private homes. Places and times may vary and may not always be convenient, some meetings being held late at night. But, in spite of personal inconvenience or danger, faithful brothers and sisters put forth earnest effort to be present for each meeting.

⁷ Reliance on Jehovah is also shown by regularly turning to him in prayer—not as a mere formal routine, but with heartfelt realization that

6. Where Jehovah's Witnesses are banned, what is done about meetings?

7. (a) How else do we demonstrate our reliance on Jehovah?
(b) How can this help us to keep on speaking boldly?

we need God's help. Do you do that? Jesus prayed repeatedly during his earthly ministry. (Luke 3: 21; 6:12, 13; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 22:39-44) And on the night before his impalement he urged his disciples: "Keep on the watch and praying, in order that you do not come into temptation." (Mark 14:38) If we encounter much indifference to the Kingdom message, there could be a temptation to slow down in our ministry. If people ridicule us or if there is even more severe persecution, we might feel tempted to keep quiet so as to avoid it. But if we pray earnestly for God's spirit to help us to keep on speaking boldly, we will be safeguarded against giving in to that temptation. —Luke 11:13; Eph. 6:18-20.

A RECORD OF BOLD WITNESSING

⁸ The record contained in the book of Acts is of special interest to all of us. It tells how the apostles and other early disciples, people who had feelings like ours, overcame obstacles and proved to be bold and faithful witnesses of Jehovah. Let us examine a portion of that record with the aid of the following questions and the cited scriptures. As we do so, consider how you personally can benefit from what you are reading.

Were the apostles highly educated men? Were they individuals who by nature were fearless, regardless of what happened? (Acts 4:13; John 18:17, 25-27; 20:19)

What enabled Peter to speak boldly before the Jewish court that had condemned God's own Son not many weeks earlier? (Acts 4:8; Matt. 10:19, 20)

What had the apostles been doing during the weeks

8. (a) Why is the record in Acts of special interest to us?
 (b) Answer the questions provided at the end of this paragraph, emphasizing how the information can benefit us.

before they were brought before the Sanhedrin? (Acts 1:14; 2:1, 42)

When the rulers ordered them to stop preaching on the basis of Jesus' name, what did Peter and John reply? (Acts 4:19, 20)

Following their release, to whom did they again look for help? Did they beg him to put a stop to the persecution, or what? (Acts 4:24-31)

By what means did Jehovah provide assistance when opposers tried to stop the preaching work? (Acts 5:17-20, 33-40)

How did the apostles show that they understood the reason that they had been delivered? (Acts 5:21, 41, 42)

Even when many of the disciples were scattered because of the intensity of the persecution, what did they continue to do? (Acts 8:3, 4; 11:19-21)

⁹ Their work in connection with the good news was not in vain. About 3,000 disciples had been baptized at Pentecost of 33 C.E. "Believers in the Lord kept on being added, multitudes both of men and of women." (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14) In time it was reported that even one of the most ardent persecutors, Saul of Tarsus, had become a Christian and was himself boldly witnessing to the truth. He came to be known as the apostle Paul. (Gal. 1:22-24) The work that began in the first century has not stopped. It has gathered momentum in these "last days" and reached out into all parts of the earth. We have the privilege of sharing in it, and as we do so we can learn from the example set by loyal witnesses who served before us.

¹⁰ When Paul learned the truth about Jesus Christ, he did not procrastinate. "Immediately . . .

9. (a) What thrilling results came from the ministry of those early disciples? (b) How have we come to be involved?

10. (a) What opportunities did Paul use to witness? (b) In what ways do you spread the Kingdom message to others?

he began to preach Jesus, that this One is the Son of God.” (Acts 9:20) He appreciated God’s undeserved kindness to him and he realized that everyone needed the good news that he had received. According to the custom of the day, since he was a Jew he went to the synagogues, which were Jewish places of public assembly, to give a witness. He also preached from house to house and reasoned with people in the marketplace. And he was willing to move out into new territories to publish the good news.—Acts 17:17; 20:20; Rom. 15:23, 24.

¹¹ Paul was bold, but also discerning, as we should be. To the Jews he appealed on the basis of the promises made by God to their forefathers. To Greeks he spoke on the basis of things with which they were familiar. At times he used his own experience in learning the truth as a vehicle for giving a witness. As he explained: “I do all things for the sake of the good news, that I may become a sharer of it with others.”—1 Cor. 9:20-23; Acts 22:3-21.

¹² When opposition to the good news made it appear best to preach elsewhere or to move on to another territory for a time, Paul did this instead of forcing constant confrontations with enemies of the truth. (Acts 14:5-7; 18:5-7; Rom. 12:18) But he was never ashamed of the good news. (Rom. 1:16) Though Paul found the insolent, even violent,

11. (a) How did Paul show that, while bold, he was also discerning in the way he witnessed? (b) How might we reflect that quality when witnessing to relatives, workmates or schoolmates?

12. (a) Though bold, what did Paul do so as to avoid forcing constant confrontations with opposers? (b) When might we wisely imitate that example, and how? (c) From where does the power come to keep on speaking boldly?

treatment by opposers unpleasant, he “mustered up boldness by means of our God” to keep on preaching. Despite the difficult circumstances into which he came, he said: “The Lord stood near me and infused power into me, that through me the preaching might be fully accomplished.” (1 Thess. 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:17) The head of the Christian congregation, the Lord Jesus, continues to provide the power needed to do the work that he foretold for our day.—Mark 13:10.

¹³ We have every reason to continue speaking God's Word boldly, just as Jesus Christ and other faithful servants of God in the first century did. This does not mean being harsh or defiant in our manner. There is no need to be inconsiderate or to force the message on those who do not want it. But we do not give up because people are indifferent, nor are we frightened into silence by opposition. Like Jesus, we point to God's Kingdom as the rightful government of all the earth. We speak with confidence because we represent Jehovah, the Universal Sovereign, and the message we proclaim is not from us but from him.—Phil. 1:27, 28; 1 Thess. 2:13.

13. What gives evidence of Christian boldness, and what is the basis for it?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- Why is it important to share the Kingdom message with everyone possible? But what reactions should we expect?
- How can we show that we are not trying to rely on our own strength to serve Jehovah?
- What valuable lessons do we learn from the book of Acts?

Keep Close in Mind Jehovah's Day

NO DOUBT one of the first things you learned from study of the Bible was that deliverance from the heartaches of life in the present system of things is near. (Luke 21:28) You came to realize that God's purpose is for all the earth to be a Paradise. Crime, war, sickness and death will be no more, and even dead loved ones will live again. What a heartwarming prospect! The nearness of it all was emphasized by evidence that Christ's invisible presence as ruling King began in 1914 C.E. and that since then we have been in the last days of this wicked world. Has that knowledge produced changes in your life? Does your way of life really demonstrate conviction that "Jehovah's day" is near?

² The Scriptures clearly show that the "generation" that saw the beginning of Christ's presence would also see the "great day of Jehovah" in which he executes judgment against all who practice unrighteousness. (Matt. 24:34; Zeph. 1:14-2:3) That "generation" is now well along in years. But the Bible does not pinpoint the exact date when Jesus Christ will come as Jehovah's

1. (a) When you first learned that deliverance from the heartaches of this old system was near, how did you react? (b) What questions concerning this should we seriously consider?
2. (a) When will the "day of Jehovah" come? (b) How has the fact that Jehovah did not reveal the "day or the hour" proved beneficial?

executioner against Satan's earthly system of things. "Concerning that day or the hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father," said Jesus. (Mark 13:32) This has proved to be very beneficial. In what way? It has helped to show up what is in people's hearts. If any do not really love Jehovah, they are inclined to postpone his "day" in their minds and turn to secular pursuits toward which their hearts incline. Jehovah approves as his servants only those who truly love him and who show it by serving him whole-souled, regardless of when the end of the wicked system comes. The approval of God and of his Son is not with those who are lukewarm or of a double mind.—Rev. 3:16; Ps. 37:4; 1 John 5:3.

³ In a word of caution to lovers of Jehovah, Jesus said: "Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is." (Mark 13:33-37) He urges us not to allow eating and drinking or "anxieties of life" to absorb so much of our attention that we lose sight of the seriousness of the time.—Luke 21:34-36; Matt. 24:37-42.

⁴ Later, the apostle Peter counseled all who have true faith to 'await and keep close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah, through which the heavens being on fire will be dissolved and the elements being intensely hot will melt.' The nearness of "Jehovah's day" is a fact that none of us should ever minimize. The visible governmental heavens and wicked human society are soon to be replaced by "new heavens and a new earth" of God's making, and all the "elements"

3. What did Jesus say as a caution for us on this matter?

4. As Peter explained, what will the "day of Jehovah" bring?

that go along with the present worldly system—its independent attitude, its immoral and materialistic way of life—will be brought to their end in the destructive heat of “Jehovah’s day.” (2 Pet. 3:10-13) We need to keep alert, being aware that these world-shattering events could begin at any moment.—Matt. 24:44.

KEEP ALERT TO EVENTS FULFILLING THE SIGN

⁵ Especially in view of the time in which we live, we should be well acquainted with the details of the composite sign identifying the “last days,” or the “conclusion of the system of things.” To read the sign correctly, we must keep in mind that when Jesus answered the question of his disciples as recorded at Matthew 24:3, some of what he said applied to the end of the Jewish system in the first century, but the main application reached far beyond that. What he described in verses 4 through 22 did have a small-scale fulfillment between 33 and 70 C.E. But the prophecy has its major fulfillment in our day and identifies the period since 1914 C.E. as being the time of Christ’s “presence and of the conclusion of the system of things.” (Also Mark 13:5-20 and Luke 21:8-24) Matthew 24:23-28 tells what would take place from 70 C.E. forward into the time of Christ’s presence. (Also Mark 13:21-23) As for the developments described from Matthew 24:29 to the end of chapter 25, these point to the period since 1914 C.E.—Also Mark 13:24-37 and Luke 21:25-36.

5. (a) To what extent did Jesus’ reply to the question recorded at Matthew 24:3 apply to the end of the Jewish system? (b) What portions of his answer focus attention on events from 1914 C.E. forward?

⁶ We personally ought to be observant of current events that fulfill "the sign." Our relating these events to Bible prophecy will help us to keep "close in mind" Jehovah's day. It will also enable us to be persuasive when warning others of the nearness of "the day of vengeance on the part of our God." (Isa. 61:1, 2) With these objectives in mind, review the following facets of "the sign."

In what extraordinary way was the foretold rising of 'nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom' fulfilled starting in 1914 C.E.? What has happened even in recent months that adds to the fulfillment?

To what extent have food shortages affected the earth despite the scientific knowledge of the 20th century?

Has there really been any difference in the frequency of earthquakes in one place after another since 1914 C.E.?

In 1918 what pestilence claimed more lives than the world war? In spite of medical knowledge, what diseases are still of epidemic proportions?

What evidence do you see that men really are faint out of fear, as foretold at Luke 21:26?

What convinces you that the conditions described in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 are not simply the way life has always been but that they are intensifying to a shocking degree as we move toward the close of the last days?

SEPARATING OF PEOPLE

⁷ There are also other significant events that Jesus prominently associated with the conclusion of the system of things. One of these is the sep-

6. (a) Why should we personally be alert to how current events fulfill "the sign"? (b) Answer the questions at the end of this paragraph to show how "the sign" has been fulfilled since 1914.

7. (a) What other event, described at Matthew 13:36-43, did Jesus associate with the conclusion of the system of things? (b) What does that illustration mean?

aration of the “sons of the kingdom” from the “sons of the wicked one.” Jesus spoke of this in his parable about a wheat field that an enemy oversowed with weeds. The “wheat” in his illustration represents true anointed Christians. The “weeds” are imitation Christians. In the conclusion of the system of things the “weeds”—those who profess to be Christians but who prove themselves “sons of the wicked one” because they cling to the world of which the Devil is ruler—are separated from the “sons of [God’s] kingdom” and marked for destruction. (Matt. 13:36-43) Has this actually taken place?

⁸ After World War I there was, indeed, a great separating of all persons who claimed to be Christians into two classes: (1) The clergy of Christendom and their followers, who came out in strong support of the League of Nations (now the United Nations), while still holding fast to their nationalism. (2) The relatively few true anointed Christians of that postwar era, who gave their full support to God’s Messianic Kingdom. By open support of governments of the world as the means for achieving peace and security, the first class made it plain that they were not true Christians. (John 17:16) In contrast, Jehovah’s servants correctly identified the League of Nations as the modern-day “disgusting thing that causes desolation,” referred to in Matthew 24:15. Showing themselves to be true “sons of [God’s] kingdom,” they undertook the preaching of “this good news of the kingdom . . . in all the inhabited earth.” (Matt. 24:14) With what results?

8. (a) After World War I, what great separation of all claiming to be Christians took place? (b) How did the true anointed Christians give evidence that they were, indeed, “sons of the kingdom”?

⁹ First, there was a gathering of the remnant of the "chosen ones," spirit-anointed Christians. Though widely scattered among the nations, as if to the "four winds," under angelic direction they were brought into organizational unity.—Matt. 24:31.

¹⁰ Then, as Jesus foretold, he began separating people of all nations, "just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." This work, directed by Christ from his heavenly throne, continues right down to the present, and you personally are affected by it. The majority of mankind spurn God's Kingdom and its spirit-anointed "sons" and so will be consigned to "everlasting cutting-off" in death. However, to others the Lord extends the invitation to inherit the earthly realm of his Kingdom, with everlasting life in view. Such sheeplike ones have associated themselves with the anointed "sons of the kingdom," even though these are objects of cruel persecution. (Matt. 25: 31-46) Loyally they help them to publicize the vital message of the Kingdom. A great crowd numbering into the millions is sharing in this work. The Kingdom message is being heard to the ends of the earth. What do these events signify? That we are very near the end of the "last days" and that the "day of Jehovah" is close at hand.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

¹¹ Are there still prophecies to be fulfilled be-

9. What was the first result of this Kingdom-preaching activity?

10. (a) How has a further separating work been done, and in harmony with what prophecy? (b) What does fulfillment of these prophecies signify?

11. Is there more preaching work to be done before "Jehovah's day" arrives?

fore the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah begins? Yes! The separating of people over the Kingdom issue is not yet finished. In some areas where intense opposition was experienced for years, there is now a bumper crop of new disciples. And even where people reject the good news, Jehovah's justice and mercy are upheld by our giving the witness. So, on with the work! Jesus assures us that, when it is done, "the end will come."—Matt. 24:14.

¹² Another highly significant Bible prophecy foretells: "Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape." (1 Thess. 5:2, 3) What form that proclamation of "peace and security" will take remains to be seen. But it certainly will not mean that the world leaders have truly solved the problems of mankind. Those who are "keeping close in mind" Jehovah's day will not be misled by that proclamation. They know that, immediately thereafter, "sudden destruction" will come.

¹³ First, as the Scriptures show, the political rulers will, on a global basis, turn against Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, and annihilate her. (Rev. 17:15, 16) It is indeed noteworthy that hostile attitudes especially toward Christendom's religions are even now manifesting themselves. Governments with strong antireligious policies already exercise powerful influence in the United Nations, and the public

12. (a) As shown at 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3, what noteworthy event is yet to take place? (b) What will it mean to us?

13. What events will immediately follow the proclamation of "peace and security," and in what order?

themselves in traditionally religious lands are in large numbers forsaking the religions of their forefathers. What does it all mean? That the desolating of all false religion is near. Thereafter, when the nations defiantly turn, full force, against those who uphold Jehovah's sovereignty, divine fury will be unleashed against the political governments and their supporters, resulting in total destruction for all of them. Finally, Satan himself with his demons will be hurled into the abyss, completely restrained from influencing mankind. This will indeed be "Jehovah's day," the day when his name will be put on high.—Ezek. 38:18, 22, 23; Rev. 19:11-20:3.

¹⁴ It will come exactly on time, according to God's schedule. It will not be late. (Hab. 2:3) Remember, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. came quickly, when the Jews did not expect it, when they thought danger was past. And what of ancient Babylon? It was powerful, confident, fortified with massive walls. But it fell in one night. So, too, "sudden destruction" will come upon the present wicked system. When it does, may we be found united in true worship, having kept "close in mind" Jehovah's day.

14. Why would it be unwise to reason that Jehovah's day is yet far off?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- Why is it vital to keep "close in mind" Jehovah's day? How can we do that?
- How are we personally affected by the separating of people that is taking place?
- What still lies ahead before Jehovah's day begins? So what should we personally be doing?

Jehovah's Purpose Attains Glorious Success

ALL intelligent creation united in true worship and all of them enjoying the glorious freedom of children of God—that is Jehovah's wise and loving purpose. It is also what all lovers of righteousness earnestly desire.

² Jehovah began fulfilling this grand purpose when he started his works of creation. His first creation was a Son, one who proved to be "the reflection of his glory and the exact representation of his very being." (Heb. 1:1-3) This one was unique, being created by God alone. Through him other sons were brought into existence—first, angels in the heavens, then man on earth. (Job 38:7; Luke 3:38) All these sons made up one universal family. To all of them Jehovah was God, the only one to be worshiped. He was the Universal Sovereign. He was also their loving Father. Is he likewise your Father, and are you one of his children? What a precious relationship that can be!

³ Nevertheless, we must face the fact that when our first human parents were condemned to death as willful sinners, they were evicted from Eden and disowned by God. They ceased to be part of Je-

1, 2. (a) What is Jehovah's purpose regarding his intelligent creatures? (b) Who were included in God's united family of worshipers? (c) Regarding this, what personal question deserves consideration?

3. (a) Why were none of us at birth sons of God? (b) But what loving provision did Jehovah make for Adam's offspring?

hovah's universal family. (Gen. 3:22-24; compare Deuteronomy 32:4, 5.) All of us, because we are descendants of sinner Adam, have been born with sinful tendencies. Since we are offspring of parents expelled from God's family, we cannot claim to be sons of God simply on the basis of human birth. But Jehovah knew that some from among Adam's descendants would love righteousness, and He lovingly made provision whereby these could attain to the glorious freedom of children of God. —Rom. 8:20, 21.

ISRAEL'S FAVORED POSITION

⁴ Some 2,500 years after Adam's creation, Jehovah again extended to certain humans the privilege of having a relationship with him as his sons. In harmony with his covenant with Abraham, Jehovah chose Israel to be his people. So, to Pharaoh of Egypt, he spoke of Israel as "my son." (Ex. 4:22, 23; Gen. 12:1, 2) Later he gave Israel his Law at Mount Sinai, formed that people into a nation and used them in connection with his purpose. From a national standpoint, because they were Jehovah's "special property," they were spoken of as "sons" of God. (Deut. 14:1, 2; Isa. 43:1) Also, because of his special dealings with certain individuals within that nation, Jehovah referred to them as sons. (1 Chron. 22:9, 10) This standing was based on covenant relationship with God. It did not mean, however, that they enjoyed the glorious freedom that Adam had had as a son of God. They were still in bondage to sin and death.

⁵ Nevertheless, as sons they had a favored standing with God. They also had the responsibility

4. (a) On what basis were the Israelites "sons" of God?

(b) What did this not mean?

5. How did Israel lose its special standing with God?

to respect their Father and to work in harmony with his purpose. Jesus stressed the importance of their fulfilling that obligation—not only claiming God as their Father, but ‘proving themselves’ to be his sons. (Matt. 5:43-48; Mal. 1:6) However, the Jews as a nation failed in this. So, during the final year of Jesus’ earthly ministry, when the Jews who were seeking to kill Jesus declared, “We have one Father, God,” Jesus firmly pointed out that their actions and the spirit they showed belied such a claim. (John 8:41, 44, 47) In 33 C.E. the Law covenant was terminated by God, and the basis for the special relationship that Israel had enjoyed ended. Yet, Jehovah did not cease to have among mankind those he accepted as sons.

JEHOVAH UNIFIES HIS PEOPLE

⁶ To Christians in Ephesus the apostle Paul wrote about Jehovah’s program for unifying his people—God’s arrangement whereby those who exercise faith can become beloved members of His household, saying: “[God] made known to us the sacred secret of his will. It is according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for an administration [household management] at the full limit of the appointed times, namely, to gather all things together again in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth.” (Eph. 1: 9, 10) This “administration” centers around Jesus Christ. Through him, humans are brought into an approved condition before God—some with the prospect of being in heaven; others, on earth—to serve in unity with the angelic sons of God who have proved loyal to Jehovah.

6. What “administration” did Paul describe at Ephesians 1: 9, 10, and what is its objective?

⁷ First, starting with Pentecost of 33 C.E., attention was given to "the things in the heavens," that is, those who would be joint heirs with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom. On the basis of their faith in the value of Jesus' sacrifice, they were declared righteous by God. (Rom. 5:1, 2) Then they were "born again," or brought forth as sons of God with the prospect of heavenly life. (John 3:3; 1:12, 13) With these as a spiritual nation God made the new covenant. In time, both Jews and Gentiles were to be included, and these would total 144,000.—Gal. 3:26-29; Rev. 14:1.

⁸ Though still imperfect in the flesh, the remnant of such heirs of the heavenly Kingdom enjoy a precious and intimate relationship with the Father. Concerning this, Paul wrote: "Now because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts and it cries out: '*Abba*, Father!' So, then, you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, also an heir through God." (Gal. 4:6, 7) That Aramaic expression "*Abba*" means "father," but it is an endearing form of address—the kind used by a young child for his father. Because of the superiority of Jesus' sacrifice and God's own undeserved kindness, these spirit-anointed Christians enjoy a relationship with God that is more intimate than any that was possible for imperfect humans under the Law. However, what lies ahead for them is even more wonderful.

⁹ If they prove faithful until death, they receive the full realization of their sonship by being resurrected to immortal life in the heavens. There

7. What are "the things in the heavens," and what does being gathered together mean for them?

8. How does the relationship of Kingdom heirs with the Father compare with that of Jews under the Mosaic Law?

9. What does full realization of their sonship mean?

they will be privileged to serve unitedly in the very presence of Jehovah God. Only a relatively small number of these sons of God are still on earth.—Rom. 8:14, 23; 1 John 3:1, 2.

GATHERING "THE THINGS ON THE EARTH"

¹⁰ The same "administration" that makes it possible for humans to be gathered into God's household with heavenly life in view also directs attention to "the things on the earth." Particularly since 1935 C.E. have persons with faith in the sacrifice of Christ been gathered with the prospect of eternal life on earth. Shoulder to shoulder with the remaining ones of the anointed class, they magnify the name of Jehovah and exalt his worship. (Zeph. 3:9; Isa. 2:2, 3) With deep respect these, too, address Jehovah as "Father," recognizing him as the Source of life, and they earnestly endeavor to reflect his qualities as he expects his sons to do. They enjoy an approved standing before him on the basis of their faith in Jesus' shed blood. (Matt. 6:9; Rev. 7:9, 14) But they know that the joy of being fully acknowledged by God as his children is yet in the future for them.

¹¹ As shown at Romans 8:19-21, they are eagerly waiting for the "revealing of the sons of God," because then the time will come for these of the human creation to be "set free from enslavement to corruption." That "revealing" will take place when humans here on earth see evidence that the spirit-anointed sons of God who have attained

10. (a) What are "the things on the earth," and since when have they been gathered into unity of worship? (b) What is their relationship with Jehovah?

11. (a) What promise does Romans 8:19-21 hold forth for mankind? (b) What is the "revealing of the sons of God" that they eagerly await?

their heavenly reward have gone into action as associates of their glorified Lord, Jesus Christ. This will be manifest in the destruction of the entire wicked system of things, to be followed by the blessings of the Thousand Year Reign of Christ in which these "sons of God" will share with him as kings and priests.—Rev. 2:26, 27; 20:6.

¹² How exhilarating it will be when the great tribulation is past and those sons of God who have been united with Christ join their voices in praise to God, joyously proclaiming: "Great and wonderful are your works, Jehovah God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are your ways, King of eternity. Who will not really fear you, Jehovah, and glorify your name, because you alone are loyal? For all the nations will come and worship before you, because your righteous decrees have been made manifest"! (Rev. 15:3, 4) Yes, all mankind, made up of persons out of all the former nations, will unite in worship of the true God. Even those in the memorial tombs will be resurrected and be given opportunity to join their voices in praise to Jehovah.

¹³ No longer will Satan the Devil be the "god of this system of things." No longer will worshipers of Jehovah here on earth have to contend with his vile influence. (2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 20:1-3) No longer will false religion misrepresent our loving God and serve as a divisive influence in human society. No longer will servants of the true God experience injustice and exploitation at the hands of men in governmental office. What marvelous

12. Following the great tribulation, in what song of praise will the victorious spirit-anointed sons of God join, and what does it mean?

13. What marvelous freedom will be enjoyed right away by survivors of the great tribulation?

freedom that will signify for survivors of the great tribulation!

¹⁴ As the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," Jesus Christ will make application of the value of his sacrifice so as to cancel out all the past sins of mankind. (John 1:29) On earth, when Jesus pronounced a person's sins forgiven, he also healed the forgiven one as proof of it. (Matt. 9:1-7) In like manner, from heaven he will miraculously heal the blind, the deaf, the speechless, those physically maimed, the mentally afflicted and those with any other sickness. Gradually, through faithful molding of themselves to God's righteous ways, all willing and obedient ones will get "sin's law" completely nullified in themselves so that all their actions, their thoughts and the desires of their hearts will be pleasing both to themselves and to God. (Rom. 7:21-23; compare Isaiah 25:7, 8 and Revelation 21:3, 4.) Before the end of the Millennium, they will have been aided to full human perfection. They will be completely freed from sin and all its grievous effects. They will properly reflect 'God's image and likeness' in the midst of an earthly Paradise that embraces the entire globe.—Gen. 1:26.

¹⁵ When Christ has brought mankind to perfection, he will then return to the Father the authority that was conferred upon him for this work. As foretold at 1 Corinthians 15:28: "When all things will have been subjected to him [the Son], then the Son himself will also subject himself to the One who subjected all things to him, that God may be all things to everyone."

14. By what means will they be freed from sin and all its effects?

15. At the end of the Millennium, what action will Christ take, and with what objective?

¹⁶ Now perfected mankind will be given the opportunity to demonstrate that their unchangeable choice is to serve the only living and true God forever. Hence, before adopting them as his sons through Jesus Christ, Jehovah will subject all those perfected humans to a thorough, final test. Satan and his demons will be loosed from the abyss. This will result in no lasting harm to those who truly love Jehovah. But any who disloyally allow themselves to be led into disobedience to Jehovah will be forever destroyed along with the original rebel and his demons.—Rev. 20:7-10.

¹⁷ Jehovah will now lovingly adopt as his sons through Christ all the perfected humans who withstand that final, decisive test. They will then share to the full in the “glorious freedom of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21) They will at last become a part of God’s united, universal family, to all of whom Jehovah will forever be the only God, the Universal Sovereign, and their loving Father. Then all of Jehovah’s intelligent creation, in heaven and on earth, will once again be united in worship of the only true God.

16. To what will all perfected humans now be subjected, and why?

17. In fulfillment of Jehovah’s purpose, what situation will once again exist among all his intelligent creation?

REVIEW DISCUSSION

- Before the rebellion in Eden, what relationship did all worshipers of Jehovah have to him?
- What responsibility rests on those who are sons of God?
- Who today are God’s sons? Who will yet become children of God, and how is this related to Jehovah’s purpose regarding united worship?

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