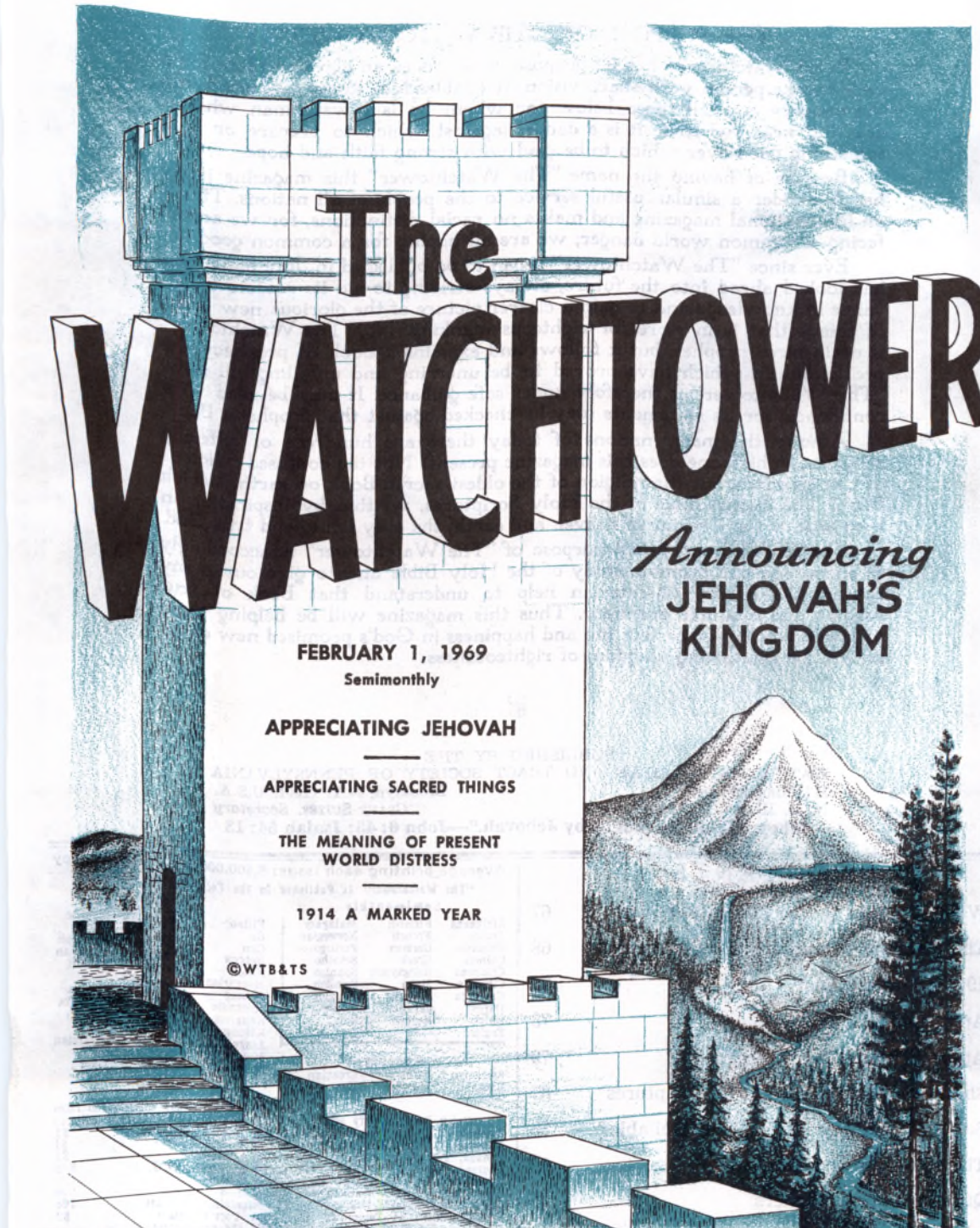




The WATCHTOWER

Announcing
**JEHOVAH'S
KINGDOM**

FEBRUARY 1, 1969

Semimonthly

APPRECIATING JEHOVAH

APPRECIATING SACRED THINGS

**THE MEANING OF PRESENT
WORLD DISTRESS**

1914 A MARKED YEAR

©WTB&TS

"YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS JEHOVAH.—Isa. 43:12

THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER"

Every watchtower has its purpose. It serves as an elevated place for a wide-awake person with sharp vision. It enables him to see far ahead into the distance and tell those below for whom he is a watchman what is drawing near, whether it is a danger against which to prepare or it is something good over which to be glad with strong faith and hope.

Because of having the name "The Watchtower" this magazine justly has to render a similar useful service to the people of all nations. This is an international magazine and makes no racial distinctions, for we are all facing a common world danger; we are all hoping for a common good.

Ever since "The Watchtower" began to be published in July of 1879 it has looked ahead into the future, always striving to aid its readers to advance in knowledge and to gain a clearer picture of the glorious new order of things that is in store for righteous mankind. No, "The Watchtower" is no inspired prophet, but it follows and explains a Book of prophecy the predictions in which have proved to be unerring and unfailing till now. "The Watchtower" is therefore under safe guidance. It may be read with confidence, for its statements may be checked against that prophetic Book.

Among the many nations of today there are hundreds of differing religions. Which one does this magazine present? Not the confused religions of Christendom, but the religion of the oldest sacred Book on earth. Which Book? The Sacred Bible of the Holy Scriptures, written by inspiration in the name of the Creator of heaven and earth, the only living and true God.

The sacred, nonpolitical purpose of "The Watchtower" is accordingly to encourage and promote study of the Holy Bible and to give our many readers the needed unsectarian help to understand that Book of true religion and infallible prophecy. Thus this magazine will be helping them to prove worthy of perfect life and happiness in God's promised new order under His everlasting kingdom of righteousness.



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"They will all be taught by Jehovah."—John 6: 45; Isaiah 54: 13

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Announcing
JEHOVAH'S
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When God's Kingdom Comes to POWER

FOR thousands of years men of faith have lived in eager expectation of the day when God's kingdom would begin its rule. They have felt keenly the need for God to take a direct hand in earth's affairs. Does this mean that God has not been King during the centuries past?

No, for Jehovah God has always been the Supreme Ruler of the universe. "He is the living God and the King to time indefinite," the Bible says. (Jer. 10:10) But here at the earth his rulership has been challenged. Yet, for sound reasons and with a loving purpose in view, God has allowed human governments under the influence of Satan to rule for a fixed period of time.*

Jehovah promised, however, that at the end of that time he would take direct action against all rebels and opposers of his rule. And he would bring the earth and its inhabitants completely under his rule again. How?

* Why God has allowed wickedness until our time was discussed in the January 15, 1969, issue of *The Watchtower*.

It would be by means of the Kingdom, a new heavenly government under his Son Christ Jesus. So the coming of that kingdom to power means that great changes are near at

hand. It means that Jehovah God has given to his Son "rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him."—Dan. 7:13, 14.

That event has already taken place in heaven. Kingdom authority has already been given to Jehovah's Son. Does that sound strange to you? It might, especially in view of the terrible conditions afflicting mankind. But, really, it is because of these very conditions that we can be certain that this is true. Why is this?

This is so because the coming to power of Jehovah's kingdom is not welcomed by all creatures. Not everyone wants to live under a government that insists on righteousness. (Luke 19:11-14) For this reason, Jehovah long ago recorded in his Word that when he 'begins ruling as king' toward the earth the 'nations would become wrathful.' (Rev. 11:17, 18) He foretold that, at the time of empowering his Son to act, it would be necessary for him to say: "Go subduing in the midst of your enemies."—Ps. 110:2.

Christ Jesus would then oust Satan from heaven, the seat of government, hurling him down to the vicinity of the earth, in preparation for putting him completely out of action. In the heavens the grand announcement would then be made: "Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ." (Rev. 12:5, 7-10) But for the earth, what?

The Bible goes on to give the answer: "Woe for the earth and for the sea, be-

cause the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." (Rev. 12:12) Yes, the start of the rule by God's kingdom does not mean immediate peace and righteousness on earth. To the contrary, it triggers a period of unprecedented trouble for earth's inhabitants.

Are we really living in that period of woe right now? What is the meaning of the terrible troubles now existing earth wide? Let us see.

The Meaning of Present *World Distress*



was at last on the throne, taking action as king. It would be proof that the wicked system of things that has oppressed mankind for centuries had entered its "last days."

(2 Tim. 3:1) Although it was foretold that there would be ridiculers that would try to belittle the facts, yet the evidence would be clear.—2 Pet. 3:3, 4.

TOWARD the close of his earthly ministry, Jesus Christ spoke about his second presence, when he would commence his rule as king of God's heavenly kingdom. His followers had asked him: "Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matt. 24:3) Jesus then described, for their benefit and ours, what would take place on earth when he would begin to rule in heaven.

In this way, although the events in heaven would be invisible to human eyes, there would be visible proof that Christ

As we consider the evidence together, it is important to realize that Jesus did not say that any one event, such as threat of war or a terrible earthquake, would be the proof that "the end" was at hand. (Matt. 24:6) Rather, he said: "Note the fig tree and all the other trees: When they are already in the bud, by observing it you know for yourselves that now the summer is near. In this way you also, when you see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near."—Luke 21:29-31.

If we see one tree put out its leaves in midwinter because the weather is warm for a few days, we do not reason that

summer has come, do we? But when we see *all* the trees budding and the days growing longer we know that summer has to be near. Likewise, when *all* the things that Jesus described take place, we can know for sure that Christ is on his heavenly throne and that his kingdom has, indeed, begun active rule. When that happens, liberation is near!

FULFILLMENT OF "THE SIGN"

Exactly what did Jesus point to as marking his second presence and the "conclusion of the system of things"? He said: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another."—Matt. 24:7.

Here Jesus tells us to look for a new kind of warfare—total war! The war that began in 1914 fits his description. Not only did armies fight on the battlefields; civilian populations too were organized to give full support to the war. As Jesus foretold, entire nations and kingdoms were fighting against one another. For the first time in history the world was at war. Hence it is called "World War I." Of it the book *World War I* by H. W. Baldwin says on pages 1 and 2:

"In its scope, its violence, and above all, in its totality, it established a precedent. World War I ushered in the century of Total War, of—in the first full sense of the term—global war.

"Never before 1914-1918 had a war absorbed so much of the total resources of so many combatants and covered so large a part of the earth. Never had so many nations been involved. Never had the slaughter been so comprehensive and indiscriminate."

The World Book Encyclopedia noted that the number of soldiers killed and wounded was over 37,000,000, and added: "The number of civilian deaths in areas of actual war totaled about 5,000,000. Starvation, disease, and exposure account-

ed for about 80 of every 100 of these civilian deaths. Spanish influenza, which some persons blamed on the war, caused tens of millions of other deaths."—1966 edition, Vol. 20, p. 377.

Total warfare, famine, and the pestilence too, were all foretold by Jesus. They have all occurred. Put together, these facts mark 1914 as the beginning of the "last days" and the year that God's heavenly kingdom began its active rule.—See also Luke 21:10, 11.

Also, after 1914 a series of earthquakes rocked the earth, causing great damage. In 1915, in Italy, nearly 30,000 were killed. In 1920, in China, 180,000 died. In 1923, 143,000 died in Japan. And major earthquakes have continued to take place with unusual frequency since then. As Jesus foretold, they are another mark of the "last days."

However, Jesus said that the events that marked the beginning of the "last days" in 1914 were only the "beginning of pangs of distress." (Matt. 24:8) Greater trouble was to come. True to his prophecy, it did. *The World Book Encyclopedia* (1966, Vol. 20) on page 379 under its heading "World War I" says: "World War I and its aftermath led to the greatest economic depression in history during the early 1930's. The consequences of the war and the problems of adjustment to peace led to unrest in almost every nation."

This paved the way for World War II. And of that war the same encyclopedia notes on pages 380 and 410 under its heading "World War II": "World War II killed more persons, cost more money, damaged more property, affected more people . . . than any other war in history. . . . It has been estimated that the number of war dead, civilian and military, totaled more than 22,000,000. The number of wounded has been estimated as more than 34,000,-

000." Truly, the "pangs of distress" Jesus foretold have become greater as the "last days" move toward their climax.

During and after World War II widespread food shortages added to the distress. Shortly after the war, *Look* magazine in its June 11, 1946, issue observed: "A fourth of the world is starving today. Tomorrow will even be worse. Famine over most of the world now is more terrible than most of us can imagine. . . . There are now more people hunting desperately for food than at any other time in history."

More recently, the book entitled "Famine—1975!" by William and Paul Paddock said concerning today's food shortages, on pages 52, 55 and 61: "Hunger is rampant throughout country after country, continent after continent around the undeveloped belt of the tropics and subtropics. Today's crisis can move in only one direction—toward catastrophe. Today hungry nations; tomorrow starving nations. . . . By 1975 civil disorder, anarchy, military dictatorships, runaway inflation, transportation breakdowns and chaotic unrest will be the order of the day in many of the hungry nations."

Jesus also foretold the "increasing of lawlessness" as a mark of the "last days." (Matt. 24:12) And God inspired the apostle Paul to add: "In the last days . . . men will be lovers of themselves, . . . disobedient to parents, . . . without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, . . . lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, . . . wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse." (2 Tim. 3: 1-5, 13) These are the conditions that have developed at an explosive rate since 1914! You have seen them with your own eyes, have you not?

Just look around. Throughout the world lawlessness is running wild. Said one of Britain's leading lawyers, Lord Shaw-

cross: "Almost everywhere, including Soviet Russia, there appears to be an increase in crime, and particularly, alas, in juvenile crime. . . . Nor are our statistics exaggerated. On the contrary, the figure of crimes known to the police probably constitutes only a small proportion of those not discovered, or, for one reason or another, not reported to the police."*

From nation after nation come reports such as the following: "A wave of crime and rioting is sweeping across the United States . . . In many cities, women are afraid to go out after dark. And they have good reason. Rapes, assaults, sadistic outbursts of senseless violence are on the rise. Crimes often seem to be committed out of sheer savagery . . . Respect for law and order is declining."†

As another feature of the "last days," Jesus spoke of great confusion and fear among the nations and their leaders. He foretold: "On the earth anguish of nations, not knowing the way out . . . men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth."—Luke 21:25, 26.

The fulfillment of this prophecy, too, is evident in the news of our time. *U.S. News & World Report* of November 27, 1967, page 62, said: "Is the world in greater tumult than before World War II? No doubt. Shooting troubles, on the average, erupt *once a month*. Counting out real wars like Korea and Vietnam, the record still shows *over 300* revolutions, coups, uprisings, rebellions and insurrections world-wide since the end of World War II."

Added to all these things is the fear of being destroyed by the huge supply of nuclear weapons some nations possess. Wrote the noted news editor David Lawrence: "The fact is that today the biggest

* *U.S. News & World Report*, November 1, 1965, p. 80.

† *Ibid.*, August 1, 1966, pp. 46, 47.

single emotion which dominates our lives is fear. It is fear of war, fear of nuclear holocausts, and fear of surprise attack that may leave vast areas of the world devastated and strewn with tens of millions of dead."* As former United States Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara said: "More than 120 million Americans would die in the event of a Soviet missile attack . . . If it were to include urban centers, . . . the death toll would be 149 million."† It is just as Jesus foretold: mankind is fearful and the nations are in anguish.

All the foretold marks of the "last days," are here. They prove beyond a

* *U.S. News & World Report*, October 11, 1965, p. 144.

† *New York Times*, February 19, 1965.

doubt that we have been in the "last days" since 1914. Hence it was in that year that God's heavenly kingdom came to power! —Rev. 11:17, 18.

It is true that in past generations there were periods marked by violence and much immoral conduct. The decline of the Roman Empire is an example. But never before in human history have *all* the conditions specified by Jesus been observed in the same generation. And never before have they existed at the same time in every nation of the earth. Today we live, not merely in the last days of one political empire, but in the "last days" of the entire wicked system controlled by Satan.



1914 A MARKED YEAR

YEARS in advance Bible scholars realized that 1914 was to be a year of great significance. Bible chronology specifically points to that year,* and careful students of God's Word knew that. They expected great changes to take place. In fact, they publicly pointed forward to the significance of the date 1914.

The August 30, 1914, issue of the secular publication called "The World" observed: "The terrific war outbreak in Europe has fulfilled an extraordinary prophecy. . . . 'Look out for 1914!' has been the cry of the hundreds of traveling

evangelists who . . . have gone up and down the country enunciating the doctrine that 'the Kingdom of God is at hand'."

The facts of history confirm that 1914 was, indeed, a marked year. The London *Evening Star* of August 4, 1960, commented that World War I "tore the whole world's political setup apart. Nothing could ever be the same again. . . . some historian in the next century may well conclude that the day the world went mad was August 4, 1914."

In 1954, as the fortieth anniversary of that marked year approached, the historian H. R. Trevor-Roper said of the great change 1914 made: "It is instructive to

* For details concerning this, see the book "Babylon the Great Has Fallen!" *God's Kingdom Rules!*, pp. 174-181; also *From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained*, p. 173.

compare the first World War with the second . . . the first war marked a far greater change in history. It closed a long era of general peace and began a new age of violence in which the second war is simply an episode. Since 1914 the world has had a new character: a character of international anarchy. . . . Thus the first World War marks a turning point in modern history.”*

World leaders have also commented on the significance of the year 1914. Former chancellor of West Germany Konrad Adenauer spoke of the time “before 1914 when there was real peace, quiet and security on this earth—a time when we didn’t know fear.” Then he added: “Security and quiet have disappeared from the lives of men since 1914. And peace? Since 1914, the Germans have not known real peace nor has much of mankind.”†

Note, too, the comment in the book entitled “1914” by J. Cameron: “In the year 1914 the world, as it was known and accepted then, came to an end. Far more than any year before or since was this the punctuation-mark of the twentieth century . . . from then on nothing could ever be the same.”—Pp. v, vi.

Satan the Devil and his demons know they have only “a short period of time” left before their destruction. (Rev. 12:12) Even when Jesus was on earth, the demons knew that someday they would be destroyed. They showed a vicious disposition back then, and now that they know their time is short they are more vicious and desperate than ever. (Luke 8:27-33) They are out to stir up all the trouble that they can, in order to direct the attention of mankind away from the kingdom of God. That is why this wicked system of things has been behaving so crazily

since 1914. It is behaving like a top, a child’s toy, that wobbles crazily just before it tumbles to a complete stop.

Are we disheartened by this situation? Jesus said that his disciples would have reason to lift their heads up. Why? Because they realize the meaning of it all. They see in these events proof that deliverance is near! (Luke 21:28) And they do not keep this joyful news to themselves, but in all the earth they are preaching the thrilling news that the kingdom of God now rules.

In his great prophecy concerning the conclusion of the system of things Jesus foretold that this preaching would be done. (Matt. 24:14) In North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia and the islands of the seas Jehovah’s witnesses zealously keep proclaiming this urgent message. In both large cities and small villages you will find them. Yes, this part of the “sign” is also being fulfilled.

Beyond all doubt, the evidence points to 1914 as the year when the kingdom of God went into operation, and that event is causing things to happen here on earth. In that same year “the present wicked system of things” entered its “last days.” (Gal. 1:4) Soon, now, the prayer for God’s kingdom to “come” will be answered, when it displays its great power by destroying Satan’s entire wicked system. Then God’s kingdom alone will operate as the one government to rule the earth throughout eternity.—Dan. 2:44.

Taking direct control of all earth’s affairs, God’s kingdom will shower down on obedient mankind blessings of peace, happiness and life. The prayer for ‘God’s will to take place, as in heaven, also upon earth,’ will have had glorious fulfillment, for God’s kingdom will have come to rule forever. And think of it! *You* may enjoy eternal life under the loving rule of that kingdom.—Matt. 6:9, 10.

* The New York Times Magazine, August 1, 1954, p. 9.

† Cleveland West Parker, January 20, 1966, p. 1.

Appreciating JEHOVAH

**"Many things
you yourself have done,
O Jehovah my God, even your wonderful
works and your thoughts toward us; there is none
to be compared to you. Were I inclined to tell and speak
of them, they have become more numerous than I can recount."—Ps. 40:5.**

FOR all intelligent creatures in this universe, their appreciation should begin with Jehovah God, the great Creator. Not a moment passes in the life of any creature when he is not personally benefiting by the loving-kindness of Jehovah, the great Life-Giver. Without life the creature has nothing.—Gen. 2:7; Ps. 36:9; 146:1-4.

² Everything around us, the entire universe, would be a delight to man if it were all in harmony with Jehovah and parts of it had not been corrupted by the influence of Jehovah's adversary Satan. But even in its present condition the creation around man is often very pleasant and beautiful in his eyes. Kings, rulers and persons of great wealth seek out places of natural beauty. Great homes or castles are built in locations well watered, where trees, plants and flowers are produced in abundance. Beautiful formal gardens are often created near these palatial homes and they are very enjoyable. In these surroundings the warm rays of the sun add comfort to man while doing their part in the growth and production of plant life.

When the rain or snow comes to provide necessary water, these are refreshing to persons who enjoy good health. Air in the vicinity of the profuse plant life is very fresh and invigorating, containing the oxygen required by the human body. The trees and other plants produce delicious fruit, seeds and roots, which serve as food for both man and the animal creation. All of these things give evidence that on the earth everything was in the beginning made just right for the human family.—Gen. 1:31; Neh. 9:6; Psalm 104.

³ How strange, then, that so many rulers and persons of wealth who often reside in the most beautiful natural surroundings show little or no appreciation for Jehovah, the Creator. How infrequently men realize that the earth and man upon it, in fact, all the universe, fully depend upon the Maker. Perhaps because of pride and a desire to shine before men, they will put forth ideas contrary to what has been said by the Creator, the great fact that "to Jehovah the heavens belong, but the earth he has given to the sons of men." Ignoring statements such as this,

1. Why should an intelligent creature's appreciation begin with Jehovah God?
2. What are some things around us that help us to appreciate the Creator?

- 3, 4. (a) Why is it that some men fail to show appreciation for the Creator but others do? (b) What reasons can you give for man's living on the earth rather than on the moon?

some men have theorized about man's living on other heavenly bodies. However, as science makes it possible for men to investigate the heavens, and powerful telescopes give man a closer look, it becomes more and more clear that the earth alone as designed by the Creator is ideally suited to man's existence.—Ps. 115:16; 19:1-4; Isa. 40:26; 45:18.

⁴ Even the nearest heavenly body, the moon, does not present conditions satisfactory to support human life. The lunar surface is pocked by craters, as evidence of its being struck by asteroids or flying objects from space. It does not have an atmosphere, which would serve to burn up such objects before they could strike the surface of the moon. Nor is there atmosphere to carry sound waves for communication, speech or warning. There is no air to breathe. There is no water; there is no food. It has been discovered that the long lunar day is hot enough to cause human blood to boil, the temperature reaching at least 212 degrees Fahrenheit. And yet if one were to pass into the shadow of a large rock or mountain he can expect to encounter freezing temperatures. In contrast, the lunar night reaches 270 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, certainly not a temperature suitable to human life.

⁵ Nearby planets, which men have called Venus and Mars, likewise are found not fit to support human life as more and more exploratory thrusts are being made toward these bodies. Information already gained in space exploration should cause all deep-thinking persons to increase appreciation of the Creator and his wonderful works and thoughts toward us on earth. When one considers the creation with all of its marvels and intricacies, he can realize that God's wonderful works

have become more numerous than man can recount. And yet so many of the human race do not show appreciation toward Jehovah himself. Is there any excuse for this? The apostle Paul answers: "For his invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable."—Rom. 1:20.

SACRED GUIDANCE FOR MAN

⁶ Jehovah's wonderful works of creation, especially with regard to the earth and all the suitable provisions made for man here, are some evidence of the fact that God has thoughts toward us, the human family. Even creation in itself is ample testimony to the existence of the Creator and his consideration for his creatures. However, when Jehovah thought about the creation of man and arranged to give man some intelligence and ability to think, he knew it would be good for man to have guidance for his life on earth. First of all, it would be important for man to know about his Creator and his relationship to God and his dependence upon God for life. Then he would need some good information about God's laws and principles and how God wished man to conduct himself on this earth. Therefore, the first man Adam was given instruction and knowledge that should have built up in Adam a further appreciation of his Father and Creator in the heavens.

⁷ That was only the beginning of God's giving information to his creatures on earth. Over the centuries God in his loving-kindness provided a full set of laws and principles in the unique book that today is called the Holy Bible. By means

5. (a) If the moon is not suitable for man to inhabit, what about some nearby planets? (b) Then how should thinking persons on earth react to the marvels of creation?

6. Besides these objects of creation, what else did God thoughtfully provide for man on earth?

7. What provision of Jehovah is now available to us, and how should it be viewed?

of this book we have an opportunity to seek out knowledge of the Creator and his purposes for mankind. There is opportunity to gain knowledge of sacred things. The Bible contains sacred secrets, and we need them. How we use them shows our appreciation of the Giver of them and of these good things. Since appreciation implies sufficient understanding to admire and enjoy a thing's excellence, as one grows in understanding of the value of the Bible he appreciates it as a prize and treasure, something to cherish. The Bible's value grows as we use it. A wise man, such as the psalmist, gives thanks to Jehovah for his provision of the written Word and guide for man and all the evidence of loving-kindness Jehovah has shown: "O give thanks to Jehovah, you people, for he is good; for his loving-kindness is to time indefinite."—Ps. 107:1.

⁸ Among many things we can learn from the Bible is information about men who showed appreciation and others who did not. Yes, the Bible contains the record about those who did wrong as well as those who did right. God had his good purpose in including all of this information, as Paul pointed out: "Now these things went on befalling them as examples, and they were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived."—1 Cor. 10:11.

⁹ Looking back to the beginning when God placed the first man and woman on the earth in the Garden of Eden, we observe that every need was thought of and everything was provided. There was a very beautiful, comfortable paradise. Adam and Eve lacked nothing, because Jehovah is both wise and loving and a very good Father. Adam received God's law concerning his way of life in the Garden and he was expected to be obedient to

God's arrangement. Certainly the Creator has a right to say what a creature should do or should not do. But Adam did not allow his beautiful natural surroundings to help him keep a strong appreciation of Jehovah's provisions. He lacked appreciation of God's sacred law, thinking too much of himself. In a way he showed the same attitude as so many today who live in the lovely countryside surrounded by Jehovah's creation but do not show appreciation for God and his laws. Disobedience led to Adam's downfall and cost him his life. Lack of appreciation for Jehovah and his sacred things can mean the same for many people even in this generation.—Gen. 2:7-17; 5:5.

¹⁰ Later Noah came on the earthly scene, and he proved to be a man of appreciation. When God's words were given to him, he showed appreciation and faith. He believed what God said, conformed his ways to what God purposed and was preserved alive through the great flood, and thus he stands in direct contrast to the first man, who lost appreciation for what God told him and lost his life on that account. This contrast, which is recorded in the sacred Word of God, is of great benefit to us.—Gen. 6:9, 22; 7:5.

¹¹ More years passed after Noah's day, and a prominent man who appreciated God and his sacred things received evidence of the loving-kindness of God in many ways. One outstanding gift of God was the promise made to Abraham: "I shall surely bless you and I shall surely multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens and like the grains of sand that are on the seashore; and your seed will take possession of the gate of his enemies. And by means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves due to the fact that you have listened

8. Mention some things to be learned from the Bible.
9. (a) What was done for Adam to help him appreciate Jehovah? (b) But what course did Adam pursue?

10. How is Noah a contrast with Adam?

11. What loving-kindness did God show toward Abraham?

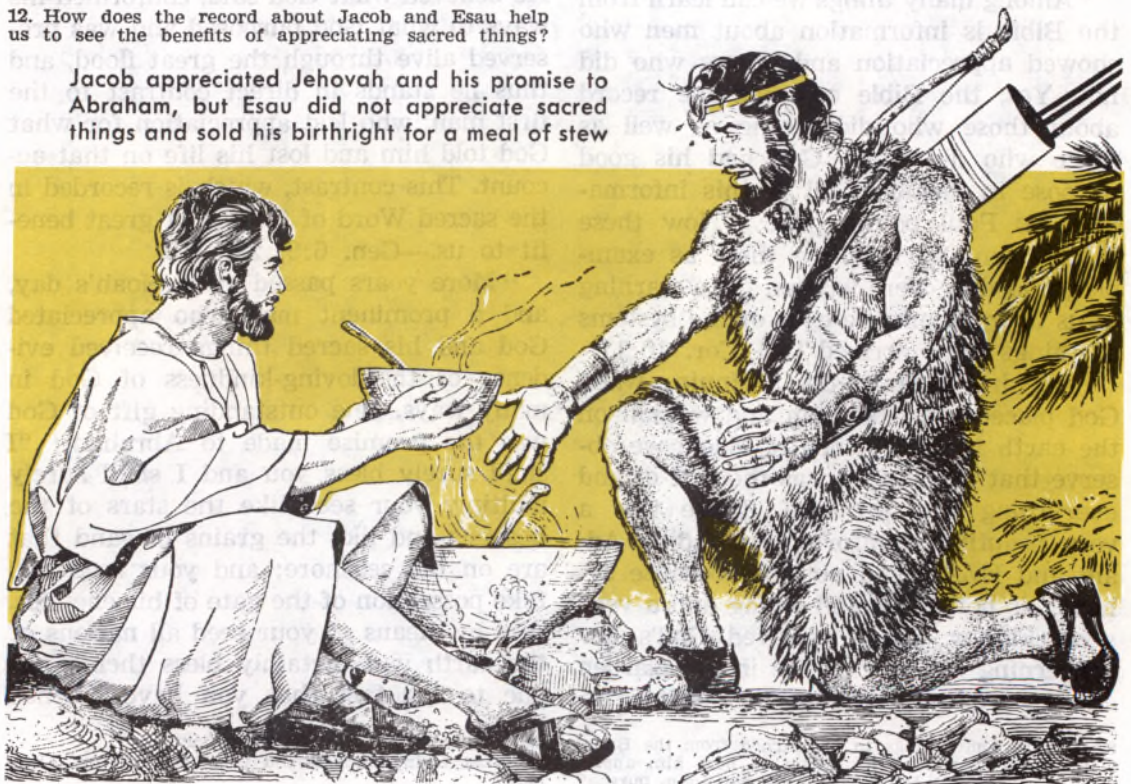
to my voice." (Gen. 22:17, 18) This meant that the descendants of Abraham would have someone special to look forward to; an individual would be born as a descendant of Abraham and would cause blessings to come to people of all the nations. This was an oath-bound covenant that God made with Abraham and could not be changed. It was sacred.

¹² But what appreciation did the grandsons of Abraham show toward this sacred promise? Again in the loving-kindness of God a record is made about Jacob and Esau to help us see the benefits of appreciating the sacred thing. Concerning these twin boys the history states: "And the boys got bigger, and Esau became a man knowing how to hunt, a man of the field, but Jacob a blameless man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac had love for Esau, because it meant game in his mouth,

whereas Rebekah was a lover of Jacob. Once Jacob was boiling up some stew, when Esau came along from the field and he was tired. So Esau said to Jacob: 'Quick, please, give me a swallow of the red—the red there, for I am tired!' That is why his name was called Edom. To this Jacob said: 'Sell me, first of all, your right as first-born!' And Esau continued: 'Here I am simply going to die, and of what benefit to me is a birthright?' And Jacob added: 'Swear to me first of all!' And he proceeded to swear to him and to sell his right as first-born to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he went to eating and drinking. Then he got up and went his way. So Esau despised the birthright." (Gen. 25: 27-34) What a difference between the twin sons of the same parents! Jacob appreciated Jehovah's promise to Abraham

12. How does the record about Jacob and Esau help us to see the benefits of appreciating sacred things?

Jacob appreciated Jehovah and his promise to Abraham, but Esau did not appreciate sacred things and sold his birthright for a meal of stew



and the birthright, but Esau did not appreciate such sacred things and thought only of himself. He became the father of Edom, a nation God later condemned. He is an example of those who think of the present only, ones who despise sacred things. Those with appreciation of Jehovah's things always get the blessing, as did Jacob.—Gen. 27:27-29; Heb. 12:16.

APPRECIATING WORSHIP

¹³ Turning to a later period in the sacred history, after Jacob's descendants as a nation had entered into the land that God promised to give them, we read about judges in the nation of Israel. Eli was one of them. He was also a high priest. A man in that position required a good knowledge and appreciation of Jehovah God and his sacred laws. It was the privilege of the tribe of Levi to serve at the tabernacle of worship of God, so the sons of Eli inherited a great privilege of sacred service. As time went by, the sons of Eli did not show appreciation for the sacredness of the tabernacle service, but practiced immorality. Although Eli himself did not practice such things, he did not enforce God's law and make his sons conform to what was righteous. So the sons continued in their evildoing. By not taking the proper parental position and giving direction to his children, Eli brought upon himself much unhappiness and disaster. The Sacred Record tells us: "And Eli was very old, and he had heard of all that his sons kept doing to all Israel and how they would lie down with the women that were serving at the entrance of the tent of meeting. And a man of God proceeded to come to Eli and say to him: 'This is what Jehovah has said, "Did I not for a fact reveal myself to the house

of your forefather while they happened to be in Egypt as slaves to the house of Pharaoh? Why do you men keep kicking at my sacrifice and at my offering that I have commanded in my dwelling, and you keep honoring your sons more than me by fattening yourselves from the best of every offering of Israel my people? That is why the utterance of Jehovah the God of Israel is: 'I did indeed say, As for your house and the house of your forefather, they will walk before me to time indefinite.' But now the utterance of Jehovah is: 'It is unthinkable, on my part, because those honoring me I shall honor, and those despising me will be of little account.' And this is the sign for you that will come to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas: On one day both of them will die.'"—1 Sam. 2:22, 27, 29, 30, 34.

¹⁴ This statement proved to be true. When the Philistines engaged in war with the people of Israel, the older men of Israel tried to gain a victory by having the ark of the covenant of Jehovah brought into the camp of Israel, and the two sons of Eli went along with the Ark. Instead of this bringing a blessing to Israel or to the family of Eli, the Philistines defeated Israel, inflicting death on 30,000 men. "And the ark of God itself was captured, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died." (1 Sam. 4:11) It was not a time of prosperity for Israel.

¹⁵ A man who really appreciated the sacredness of pure worship and value of God's laws was David. He was not of the priesthood and the tribe of Levi, but of the tribe of Judah and a fighter for Jehovah. He was positive about his worship of Jehovah, thankful for all that Jehovah did, and he wrote with great appreciation for Jehovah's things. "One thing I have

13. What blessings did Eli have, but in what did he fail?

14. For failure to appreciate Jehovah's pure worship, what happened to the sons of Eli?

15. How appreciative was David?

asked from Jehovah—It is what I shall look for, that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the pleasantness of Jehovah and to look with appreciation upon his temple.” (Ps. 27:4) “The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling. The law of Jehovah is perfect, bringing back the soul. The reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making the inexperienced one wise. The orders from Jehovah are upright, causing the heart to rejoice; the commandment of Jehovah is clean, making the eyes shine. The fear of Jehovah is pure, standing forever. The judicial decisions of Jehovah are true; they have proved altogether righteous. They are more to be desired than gold, yes, than much refined gold; and sweeter than honey and the flowing honey of the combs. Also, your own servant has been warned by them; in the keeping of them there is a large reward.” —Ps. 19:1, 7-11.

¹⁶ Not only did David say these things, but he also lived in harmony with the thoughts expressed. David was not content to have a comfortable place of residence for himself and at the same time to see the ark of the covenant of Jehovah located at a temporary place. Because sacred worship was so important, David wished to construct a temple as a center for the worship of Jehovah. However, Jehovah told David that he would not be allowed to build the temple, but rather Solomon his son would do the building. This took nothing away from David's zeal for the house of Jehovah, and David did everything he possibly could to advance the interests of worship by preparing for the temple building. David gathered together gold worth more than \$132,000,000

16. How did David show great regard for sacred worship?

as well as other precious metals. He gave Solomon his son the architectural plans for the temple, which he received by inspiration. The plans were quite complete, including, not only the main part of the temple, but also the storerooms, the courtyards, the lampstands and all the utensils, details of which are found at 1 Chronicles chapter 28. There is no doubt about the good heart attitude of David toward sacred things, and the Bible record indicates for us the surety of David's resurrection. He will be able to get everlasting life in God's due time.

¹⁷ The building of the temple was completed under King Solomon, and with it there came to be peace and prosperity in all Israel. Jehovah God himself acknowledged his acceptance of the new center for worship at the time of inauguration of the temple, sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifices and later speaking to Solomon. Jehovah told Solomon how the blessings for his family and for the nation were dependent upon appreciation for Jehovah's regulations and judicial decisions, keeping the statutes, maintaining pure worship. But before the end of Solomon's reign he lost appreciation for the worship of Jehovah, which resulted in disaster for the nation and the splitting of it into two kingdoms.—2 Chronicles chap. 7; 1 Kings chap. 11.

¹⁸ The books of Kings and Chronicles in the Bible detail the history of God's covenant people after the time of Solomon. It is sad to note that the majority of the rulers failed to show proper appreciation for Jehovah and pure worship. Many were the troubles of the people. King Ahaz went so far as to close the doors of the

17. History of the days of Solomon shows what relationship between right worship and prosperity?

18. After Solomon, what course did the majority of the kings in Israel and Judah take?

house of Jehovah and bring in false worship.—2 Chron. 28:24, 25.

¹⁹ But there were a few rulers who showed appreciation for Jehovah. One of such was Hezekiah, who reopened the doors of the temple, reorganized the priests and Levites and caused temple sacrifices to Jehovah to be offered according to Jehovah's laws. All of Israel and Judah were sent messages inviting them to comply with Jehovah's instructions and celebrate the Passover. Many other acts of appreciation for sacred things were performed by Hezekiah, and Jehovah showed his thoughts toward his people by blessing them with plenty. (2 Chron. 31:10) When enemies threatened Jerusalem, Hezekiah showed appreciation for prayer, in faith asking Jehovah to intervene. In response, Jehovah preserved his people, striking down the enemy army who were

19. Why did those in Jerusalem under Hezekiah receive blessings?

set to attack Jerusalem.—2 Ki. 19:15, 35.

²⁰ Such deliverance did not occur in the days of Zedekiah, however, for he was not one to show proper appreciation of Jehovah or to see that pure worship was maintained at the temple. Suffering, not prosperity, was the lot of the people then. Priests and people were unfaithful to God, defiling the house of Jehovah. Therefore, as Jehovah had warned Solomon after the dedication of the temple, Jehovah permitted the destruction of the temple and the city.—2 Chron. 36:11-21.

²¹ So there is great value to men in appreciating the privilege of sacred worship of Jehovah. Worship of Jehovah and obeying his laws are ways of demonstrating that we appreciate Jehovah. The Bible reveals how life and prosperity are involved with the appreciation we show.

20. Why was Jerusalem not delivered in Zedekiah's day?

21. How can we show that we appreciate Jehovah?

APPRECIATING

Sacred Things

JEHOVAH'S wonderful works and thoughts toward us and the things he has done for the world of mankind are indeed numerous. As soon as the human family came into difficulty and under condemnation because of Adam's sin, hope for the future was revealed. Thus today we find among the sacred things of Jehovah his first prophecy recorded in the Bible: "And I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your

1, 2. (a) Why is prophecy to be appreciated? (b) Why should the ransom be highly regarded?

seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel." (Gen. 3:15) In his loving-kindness Jehovah later enlarged upon this subject, providing more than three hundred prophecies concerning the "seed" who was to come so there would be no doubt about who was meant. Down through history Jehovah God directed the course of events to cause an accurate fulfillment in Christ Jesus, by whom deliverance was to come. It was an outstanding thing that Jehovah did, and it is explained this way

by the apostle John: "For God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." "By this the love of God was made manifest in our case, because God sent forth his only-begotten Son into the world that we might gain life through him."—John 3:16; 1 John 4:9.

² The provision Jehovah has made through Christ Jesus for everlasting life is not anything ordinary. It is something special, to be highly regarded. As Paul expressed the matter in Hebrews 10:28, 29: "Any man that has disregarded the law of Moses dies without compassion, upon the testimony of two or three. Of how much more severe a punishment, do you think, will the man be counted worthy who has trampled upon the Son of God and who has esteemed as of ordinary value the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and who has outraged the spirit of undeserved kindness with contempt?"

TEACHINGS

³ When on earth, God's only-begotten Son did more than provide a ransom sacrifice for the benefit of the human family. He came as a teacher of God's sacred truth and set an example for others of the course to follow in harmony with God. Jesus revealed God's message and said: "What I teach is not mine, but belongs to him that sent me. If anyone desires to do His will, he will know concerning the teaching whether it is from God or I speak of my own originality." "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone that is on the side of the truth listens to my voice."—John 7:16, 17; 18:37.

3. What did Jesus do besides providing the ransom?

⁴ Sacred truth is not appreciated by all; some are not worthy of it. An account about the teaching work of Jesus and his use of illustrations states: "Now when he got to be alone, those around him with the twelve began questioning him on the illustrations. And he proceeded to say to them: 'To you the sacred secret of the kingdom of God has been given, but to those outside all things occur in illustrations, in order that, though looking, they may look and yet not see, and, though hearing, they may hear and yet not get the sense of it, nor ever turn back and forgiveness be given them.'" (Mark 4:10-12) To understand the sacred secrets of God and the meaning of the Bible teachings is indeed a special privilege granted those who love him. Accurate knowledge about the kingdom of God is a treasure. It comes to those who apply themselves diligently as students of the Scriptures. Do you have such appreciation for sacred teachings that you study them regularly?—John 17:3; 1 Cor. 2:10, 14, 15.

THE KINGDOM

⁵ That Jesus highly valued the kingdom of heaven is well proved by his own teaching. "The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and for the joy he has he goes and sells what things he has and buys that field. Again the kingdom of the heavens is like a traveling merchant seeking fine pearls. Upon finding one pearl of high value, away he went and promptly sold all the things he had and bought it." (Matt. 13:44-46) Jesus illustrated how he would give up all, even life itself, in order to gain the Kingdom. Who could show greater appreciation for a sacred thing? How was he able to do it?

4. Why should understanding sacred secrets be considered a special privilege?

5. What value did Jesus place on the kingdom of heaven?

Not by thinking much about dying, but in faith looking beyond to enjoying the greatly treasured sacred thing, the kingdom of heaven. His attitude is described for us by the apostle Paul: "We look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus. For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."—Heb. 12:2.

⁶ So with such appreciation of values Jesus was able to give practical instruction on the subject: "Stop storing up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, . . . Rather, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you." (Matt. 6:19-21, 33) Jesus fully agreed with what he taught because he indeed sought first the Kingdom, and everything else has been added.

⁷ That kingdom is now established. It is sacred. Do you show appreciation for it? If we are of the congregation of true Christians now we are publicly declaring what was foretold at Revelation 11:17: "We thank you, Jehovah God, the Almighty, the one who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and begun ruling as king." That is *active* appreciation. Indifference toward sacred things does not bring God's approval. We do not wish to have the spirit of the Laodiceans. "To the angel of the congregation in Laodicea write: These are the things that the Amen says, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation by God, 'I know your deeds, that

you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or else hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth.'" (Rev. 3:14-18) See the importance of being very positive in support of the kingdom of heaven!

KINGDOM MINISTRY

⁸ With due appreciation the footstep followers of Jesus repeated his words, recorded them and carried them to others, and they too lived according to what Jesus taught. Among them was the apostle Paul. He was not personally able to hear Jesus give his teaching, but, like us, he was able to read about it, and we note with interest his evaluation of sacred things: "Yet what things were gains to me, these I have considered loss on account of the Christ. Why, for that matter, I do indeed also consider all things to be loss on account of the excelling value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. On account of him I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ."—Phil. 3:7, 8.

⁹ This man Paul had a sacred commission and he thoroughly appreciated his ministry, the assignment received from Christ Jesus: "I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who imparted power to me, because he considered me faithful by assigning me to a ministry, although formerly I was a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent man. Nevertheless, I was shown mercy, because I was ignorant and acted with a lack of faith. But the undeserved kindness of our Lord abounded exceedingly along with faith and love that is in connection with Christ Jesus. Faithful and deserving of full acceptance is the saying that Christ Jesus

6. Because Jesus practiced what he taught at Matthew 6:19-33, what has resulted to him?

7. What are those who appreciate the Kingdom now found doing?

8. How did Jesus' followers show appreciation for him and his teachings?

9. In what ways do we benefit by Paul's expressions of gratitude for the ministry?

came into the world to save sinners. Of these I am foremost. Nevertheless, the reason why I was shown mercy was that by means of me as the foremost case Christ Jesus might demonstrate all his long-suffering for a sample of those who are going to rest their faith on him for everlasting life." (1 Tim. 1:12-16) The fact that Paul recorded these details shows his humility, and we appreciate having the information, because we too may not all of our lives have known God's sacred things or what his will was. We see that, regardless of what was done in the past, it is what we do when we learn God's will, it is how we react to the ministry offered, that counts. Do you have appreciation similar to Paul's?

¹⁰ The ministry is part of our worship, our sacred service. As the apostle Paul learned the truth and made a solemn offering to Jehovah for the doing of Jehovah's will, so we are encouraged to do, and according to our appreciation of sacred things we will try to do the will of God. When we reason on the written Word of God, we see that this is the only course to take. Paul appealed to his brothers to keep presenting their sacred service. "Consequently I entreat you by the compassions of God, brothers, to present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason. And quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:1, 2) This sacred service and worship means exclusive devotion to Jehovah. Paul knew this because he was informed about the temptation of Jesus and also about the Hebrew Scriptures. Of this temptation Matthew 4:10

reports: "Then Jesus said to him: 'Go away, Satan! For it is written, "It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service."'"—Matt. 4:10.

THE CONGREGATION

¹¹ Along with this the apostle Paul had appreciation for the provision of God in fellow ministers. "I am grateful to God, to whom I am rendering sacred service as my forefathers did and with a clean conscience, that I never leave off remembering you in my supplications." (2 Tim. 1:3) "I always thank God for you in view of the undeserved kindness of God given to you in Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. 1:4) Paul appreciated them as part of God's sacred possession, for he had learned how part of the work of Jesus on earth was to establish a congregation or organization of individuals unitedly carrying on the pure worship of God and doing his will. Members of this congregation receive the anointing of God's holy spirit, the adoption of sons of God. This class or body of 144,000 anointed Christians, footstep followers of Jesus, are described as a wife of the Lamb, Christ Jesus. (Rev. 19:7) Christ feeds and cherishes the congregation and even laid down his life for it. (Eph. 5:25-29) Therefore, the congregation is a sacred thing, to be looked upon with high appreciation, all members appreciating the whole association of brothers.—Acts 20:28.

¹² Members of the Christian congregation are today to be found upon the earth. In association with them there is a great crowd of "other sheep." The visible organization of Jehovah on earth operates under his spirit's direction, adheres to his

11. How did Jesus and Paul show appreciation for the congregation?

12. Considering Jesus and Paul, how can we show appreciation for the congregation now?

10. How do we do our sacred service?

holy Word and must be viewed as God's possession. It is an honor to have association with any group of dedicated true Christians, especially at this time to be *showing* love for others in the congregation. When Jesus was upon the earth, he was *personally present* with members of the dedicated Christian body, and so we may be sure that if he were personally on earth at this time, he would in the same way show his appreciation for the arrangement of God. But even in his heavenly position Jesus is attentive to the needs and interests of the congregated servants, whether in large number or small. (Matt. 18:20) So, looking to the example of the Master, present-day Christians show appreciation of the congregation by being in regular association together, as urged by the apostle Paul: "Let us hold fast the public declaration of our hope without wavering, for he is faithful that promised. And let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near."—Heb. 10:23-25.

¹³ It is in association with the congregation that the best opportunities are provided to show appreciation for the written Word of God. It is studied in the congregation meetings. It is also used in personal study and in the divinely arranged work of preaching the good news of the Kingdom. Because of appreciation for the Kingdom, the true congregation is found today preaching the good news of that kingdom in all the world for a witness to all the nations before the end comes. It is God's arrangement.—Matt. 24:14.

13. What are some benefits gained through the congregational arrangement?

PRAYER

¹⁴ Paul was not alone in praying for the congregation. Jesus expressed appreciation for the flock of worshipers of Jehovah through prayer. Jesus' prayer at John chapter 17 took into consideration the purposes of Jehovah and also the welfare of the congregation. "Also, I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world and I am coming to you. Holy Father, watch over them on account of your own name which you have given me, in order that they may be one just as we are. I have given your word to them, but the world has hated them, because they are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world. I request you, not to take them out of the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one. I make request, not concerning these only, but also concerning those putting faith in me through their word." (John 17:11, 14, 15, 20) This sacred congregation would exist and grow only with the blessing and help of the heavenly Father Jehovah. We do not work independent of Jehovah. That example of Jesus in appreciating the privilege of prayer is outstanding and should be a guide to us in our daily life. Regular prayer is a requirement for success in sacred service. Do you remember to pray each day?—John 16:23, 24; 1 Thess. 5:17.

DEDICATION

¹⁵ Another special privilege to be greatly appreciated is that of dedication and baptism. It was Jesus who provided the example and caused his followers to take a similar righteous course. "Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, in order to be baptized by him. But the latter tried to prevent him, saying: 'I am the one needing to be baptized by you, and are you coming to me?'" In reply Jesus

14. Why is appreciation of prayer necessary?

15. Why are dedication and baptism important?

said to him: 'Let it be, this time, for in that way it is suitable for us to carry out all that is righteous.' Then he quit preventing him. After being baptized Jesus immediately came up from the water; and, look! the heavens were opened up, and he saw descending like a dove God's spirit coming upon him. Look! Also, there was a voice from the heavens that said: 'This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.'" (Matt. 3:13-17) Furthermore, Jesus left no doubt that this should be continued after his death, for he instructed at Matthew 28:19, 20: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you." This sacred arrangement would lead those who showed appreciation for it to obtaining blessings under the Kingdom rule.

¹⁶ Appreciation of some other sacred things must precede one's dedication and baptism. He must learn God's will. But once a person begins to appreciate the sacred truths about baptism he is wise to pursue a course in accord with the example of Jesus and be baptized. Holding back does not demonstrate faith and appreciation for this sacred arrangement making it possible to become part of the congregation. Have you made your dedication?

HOLY SPIRIT

¹⁷ As Jesus pointed out, those who would be properly baptized would first have appreciation for the Father, the Son (and the provision for the ransom sacrifice made through him) and for the operation of God's holy spirit. Holy spirit or God's active force is a thing to be regarded with care and great respect, because it is

sacred. Many powerful works have been done by means of holy spirit. It was used at creation. (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30) Holy spirit caused prophecy to be brought to light. (Acts 28:25; 2 Pet. 1:21) Holy spirit was involved with the miraculous birth of Jesus. Holy spirit can cause men to serve God and preach the good news. (Acts 2:1-4; Mark 13:11) By means of holy spirit Jesus did many wonderful and miraculous works when on earth. As a token of what the Kingdom would accomplish in healing the nations Jesus cured the demon possessed, the blind, the dumb and the diseased, but he was criticized by the Pharisees, who said Jesus acted by power of the Devil. Thus these Pharisees not only showed a lack of appreciation for holy spirit but committed an unforgivable sin, as Jesus said: "On this account I say to you, Every sort of sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven. For example, whoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the holy spirit, it will not be forgiven him, no, not in the present system of things nor in that to come." —Matt. 12:31, 32.

¹⁸ Not only the Pharisees failed to appreciate the miracle-working of Jesus, but even some of the principals, individuals who personally received healing from Jesus, failed to show appreciation for such a sacred thing. "And as he was entering into a certain village ten leprous men met him, but they stood up afar off. And they raised their voices and said: 'Jesus, Instructor, have mercy on us!' And when he got sight of them he said to them: 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' Then as they were going off their cleansing occurred. One of them, when he saw

16. When should one be baptized?

17. Why do we appreciate holy spirit?

18. Give an example of lack of appreciation for what Jesus did.

he was healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice. And he fell upon his face at Jesus' feet, thanking him; furthermore, he was a Samaritan. In reply Jesus said: "The ten were cleansed, were they not? Where, then, are the other nine?" (Luke 17:12-17) Now, is not that amazing? Only one in ten stopped to express appreciation. And so at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ the King when Satan is let loose out of his prison there may be quite a number who will not show appreciation for the healing of the nations performed under the Kingdom rule.—Rev. 20:7-10.

INNUMERABLE BENEFITS

¹⁹ How many sacred things that have personally benefited you can you write down? We have mentioned but a few. Among the many benefits experienced by Jehovah's servants are truth, light and appreciation of Jehovah's purposes. While the world gropes about in spiritual darkness Jehovah's servants have guidance from his prophetic Word and know what is ahead. So they are not in fear. "Consequently we have the prophetic word made more sure; and you are doing well in paying attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and a daystar rises, in your hearts. For you know this first, that no prophecy of Scripture springs from any private interpretation. For prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit."—2 Pet. 1:19-21.

²⁰ A good example of appreciation for all that Jehovah has done is found at Psalm 107. His sacred works are lauded repeatedly in the same words, in verses 8, 15, 21 and 31, which say: "O let peo-

ple give thanks to Jehovah for his loving-kindness and for his wonderful works to the sons of men." Indeed, Jehovah has done much for the benefit of his creatures. He has never been indifferent to their needs or their distress. He is a great Rescuer and Deliverer. "And they kept crying out to Jehovah in their distress; out of the stresses upon them he proceeded to deliver them, and to have them walk in the right way, so as to come to a city of habitation."—Ps. 107:6, 7.

²¹ We appreciate Jehovah too for his great mercy and forgiveness and for the way he heals and takes care of creatures who try to serve him. He is a great reconciler when creatures show repentance from their error. "He proceeded to send his word and heal them and to provide them escape out of their pits."—Ps. 107:20.

²² Jehovah is also the provider of all good spiritual food; when his servants are loyal to him he prospers them spiritually. He looks with favor upon their expression of appreciation for his sacred things. So Jehovah's servants in these days have entered into a period of spiritual prosperity such as described in prophetic Psalm 107:35-38: "He converts a wilderness into a reedy pool of water, and the land of a waterless region into outflows of water. And there he causes the hungry ones to dwell, so that they firmly establish a city of habitation. And they sow fields and plant vineyards, that they may yield fruitful crops. And he blesses them so that they become very many; and he does not let their cattle become few."

²³ People who do not appreciate the sacred Word of Jehovah and do not use it cannot find the spiritual prosperity, faith, joy, hope, liberty and security that Jehovah's servants find. There are so many

19. Mention some sacred things God's servants can appreciate now.

20-22. What are some of the wonderful works Jehovah does for men as expressed at Psalm 107?

23. Why appreciate God's Word and provisions now?

advantages in having appreciation of the sacred Word of God. When God's laws are followed, good health results and care is taken of the body God has given. Also, by obeying what is right, there is a good conscience; there is improvement in family relationships. The importance of being separate from this system of things is made clear. All of this depends upon the use of God's Word. It is a protection against getting involved in what is wrong. "But solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong." (Heb. 5:14) Those who do have appreciation of their spiritual needs gain happiness, as Jesus put it in Matthew 5:3. We appreciate how Jehovah cares for our spiritual needs. We measure values by his Word and we seize the opportunities to learn more. With gratitude we recognize the regular watchcare and protection he gives to his servants. Jehovah's people stand out in contrast to ungrateful, unappreciative humankind described in 2 Timothy 3:2.

²⁴ Being unthankful in this day and age of great spiritual enlightenment is dangerous. Remember Esau and his lack of appreciation. He was indifferent to the importance of Jehovah's sacred provision. Many centuries after Esau died the record of what he did was still being called to the attention of Christians to urge them

on in their appreciating of sacred things. Paul wrote in Hebrews 12:16, 17: "That there may be no fornicator nor anyone not appreciating sacred things, like Esau, who in exchange for one meal gave away his rights as first-born. For you know that afterward also when he wanted to inherit the blessing he was rejected, for, although he earnestly sought a change of mind with tears, he found no place for it."

²⁵ Hence, the wise course now is to cherish and desire the sacred things. We can avoid the sadness and tears later on if we remember Esau and the other examples in the Scriptures. Hold true values. Cultivate your appreciation for them. "If you

keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures you keep searching for it, in that case you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God." (Prov. 2:4, 5) This is a positive statement. If we keep seeking, we appreciate the values and we are assured by Jehovah that we *will* understand, we *will* find the very knowledge of God. While we are doing this we have a fine opportunity to build in others greater appreciation for sacred things as we ourselves pay attention to Jehovah. "Who is wise? He will both observe these things and show himself attentive toward Jehovah's acts of loving-kindness. O let people give thanks to Jehovah for his loving-kindness and for his wonderful works to the sons of men."—Ps. 107:43, 31.

24. How does Esau's course serve as a warning?

25. What is the wise course to pursue?

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- Look to the Bible as Our Guide in Life.
- Keep Making Straight Paths for Your Feet.
- When Youths Have Something for Which to Live.
- The Last Days of This Wicked System of Things.



Share the Comfort from the Scriptures

How have mature Christians comforted themselves when depressed?

By not dwelling on matters causing grief, fear or depression, but heeding the apostolic command to "continue considering" uplifting things. (Phil. 4:8) In fact, this was one of the main reasons why Jehovah God caused his Word to be recorded: "For all the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope."—Rom. 15:4.*

Are Christians to be content with being comforted themselves?

By no means! They will want to share that comfort with others, even as indicated by the apostle Paul: "Blessed be . . . the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation through the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God."—2 Cor. 1:3, 4.

How can one mourning the death of a loved one be comforted?

Such a one can be comforted by calling to mind the wonderful promises of a resurrection from the dead, such as the one Jesus gave: "Do not marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear [Jesus'] voice and come out." Because of such promises Christians, while grieving over the loss of a loved one, do "not sorrow just as the rest also do who have no hope."—John 5:28, 29; 1 Thess. 4:13.

How can a Christian sister who is depressed because of having domestic problems be comforted?

She can be comforted by pointing out to her the wisdom of considering her problems one at a time in the light of the Scriptures. For example, if her problem relates to her unbelieving marriage mate, she can be encouraged to follow the advice found at 1 Peter 3:1-6.

How can comfort be shared with one suffering depression due to fatigue?

Such a person can be comforted by showing him the need to use the spirit of a sound mind in all his affairs and properly sched-

uling his activities. In particular would such a person need to be on guard against depriving himself of needed rest and sleep because of watching television or indulging in other forms of recreation when he should be in bed sleeping.—Eph. 5:15, 16; 2 Tim. 1:7.

How can those prone to fear man or demon attacks be comforted?

By pointing them to Jesus' wise counsel at Matthew 10:28: "Do not become fearful of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be in fear of him that can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." As for the attacks by wicked spirits or demons, these cannot harm them so long as they take full advantage of Jehovah's provisions by studying the Bible and Christian publications, applying their counsel, attending Christian meetings, engaging faithfully in the Christian ministry and being regular in prayer.—Eph. 6:11-18.

What will the Christian do who is desirous of sharing the comfort of the Scriptures with others?

He will not wait until those needing comfort come to him but will be alert to note those in his own family or congregation who are in need of comfort. Additionally, he will make opportunities for sharing the comfort from the Scriptures with others by going from house to house with the good news of God's kingdom and, in particular, by making return visits upon those who appreciate their need of comfort.—Matt. 5:3, 4, 6; 24:14.

How can those groaning over the detestable things taking place in Christendom be comforted?

By assuring them of the existence of a loving, all-wise, just and almighty God, whose name is Jehovah; that he is fully aware of what is taking place and will shortly make an end of all detestable things at Armageddon. Also by inviting these lovers of truth and righteousness to associate with the people who practice the worship that is pure and undefiled from God's standpoint.—Ezek. 9:4; Jas. 1:27; Rev. 16:14, 16.

What blessings result from sharing the comfort from the Scriptures with others?

Jehovah's approval, present increased happiness and the hope of everlasting life in God's new order.—Prov. 27:11; Acts 20:35.

* For details see *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1968.

BABYLONIAN CHRONOLOGY —How Reliable?

SOME of the writings of historians and archaeologists in this twentieth century leave the impression that there is a Babylonian chronology that seriously challenges the count of time recorded in the Bible. How serious is this challenge? Is there really a sound Babylonian chronology? Is it supported on solid foundations? Does it include data that command higher respect than the facts related in the Bible?

Babylon enters the scene, insofar as the Jewish people are concerned, principally from the time of Nebuchadnezzar. The reign of that monarch's father, Nabopolassar, is termed "the beginning of the Neo-Babylonian Empire." That era ended with the reigns of Nabonidus and his son, Belshazzar, when Babylon was overthrown by Cyrus the Persian. This is a period of special interest to Bible scholars, since it embraces the time of Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians and the greater part of the seventy-year desolation of the land of the defeated Jews.

The Bible record is quite detailed in its account of the first punitive expedition against the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (or Nebuchadrezzar) in his seventh regnal year (or eighth year from his accession to the throne). (Jer. 52:28; 2 Ki. 24:12) In harmony with this a

cuneiform inscription of the Babylonian Chronicle states: "In the seventh year, the month of Kislev, the king of Akkad [Nebuchadnezzar] mustered his troops, marched to Hatti-land [Syria-Palestine], and encamped against the city of Judah and on the second day of the month of Adar he seized the city and captured the king [Jehoiachin]. He appointed there a king of his own choice [Zedekiah], received its heavy tribute and sent (them) to Babylon."—*Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings* (626-556 B.C.), D. J. Wiseman, pages 67, 73.

SOLID HISTORY OR QUESTIONABLE SYNTHESIS?

Despite such a bright beginning for the synchronization of the Bible account with Babylonian records, one is thereafter faced with a blank as to further information from actual Babylonian sources. For the final thirty-three years of Nebuchadnezzar, for example, no historical records have yet been unearthed aside from a fragmentary inscription relating to a campaign against Egypt in the king's thirty-seventh year. So we have no Babylonian account of Jerusalem's destruction in Nebuchadnezzar's eighteenth regnal year (nineteenth from his accession). (Jer. 52:29; 2 Ki. 25:8-10) The Bible is the sole

source of authentic information on this event.

As to Nebuchadnezzar's son Amel-Marduk (Evil-merodach, 2 Ki. 25:27, 28), tablets dating to his second year of rule have been found. However, they contain little information about his reign and give no indication as to its length. So, too, for Neriglissar, said to be the successor of Evil-merodach, only one strictly historical tablet has come to light, and it is dated in his third year as king.

What is thought to be a memorial tablet written either for the mother or the grandmother of Nabonidus, gives some chronological data for this period, but many portions of the text have been damaged, leaving much to the ingenuity and conjecture of historians. The reader can appreciate how fragmentary the text is *by ignoring the bracketed material* in the following translation of one section of this memorial—material that represents modern attempts at restoring the missing, damaged or illegible portions:

"[During the time from Ashurbanipal], the king of Assyria, [in] whose [rule] I was born—(to wit): [21 years] under Ashurbanipal, [4 years under Ashur-etillu-ilani, his son, [21 years under Nabopolassar, 43 years under Nebuchadnezzar, [2 years under Evil-Merodach], 4 years under Neriglissar, [in summa 95 years, [the god was away] till Sin, the king of the gods, [remembered the temple] . . . of his [great] godhead, his clouded face [shone up], [and he listened] to my prayers, [forgot] the angry command [which he had given, and decided to return t]o the temple é-hul-hul, the temple, [the mansion,] his heart's delight. [With regard to his impending return to] the [temp]le, Sin, the king of [the gods, said (to me)]: 'Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, the son [of my womb] [shall] make [me] en[ter/sit down (again)] in (to)

the temple é-hul-hul!' I care[fully] obeyed the orders which [Sin], the king of the gods, had pronounced (and therefore) I did see myself (how) Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, the offspring of my womb, reinstalled completely the forgotten rites of Sin, . . ."

Farther along in the text Nabonidus' mother (or grandmother) is represented as crediting Sin with granting her long life "from the time of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, to the 6th year of Nabonidus, king of Babylon, the son of my womb, (that is) for 104 happy years, . . ." —Pritchard's *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pages 311, 312.

From this very incomplete inscription it can be seen that the only figures actually given are the 43 years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and 4 years of Neriglissar's reign. As to this latter monarch, the text does not necessarily limit his reign to four years; rather it tells of something that happened in his fourth year. How far within the reign of Ashurbanipal the life of Nabonidus' mother (or grandmother) began is not stated, so that we are left in the dark as to the commencement and the close of the "104 happy years." Nor is there any information as to the lengths of the reigns of Ashur-etillu-ilani, Nabopolassar and Evil-merodach. And there is no mention of Labashi-Marduk, now generally acknowledged by historians as reigning between Neriglissar and Nabonidus.

It will be noted, too, that the conjectured numbers of years, inserted by modern historians on the basis of Ptolemy's canon, when added to the "6th year of Nabonidus," give a total of 100 or 101 years, and not the 104 years mentioned in the text itself. So this fragmentary record provides scant information for the chronology of the Neo-Babylonian period.

THE CANON OF PTOLEMY

And this canon of Ptolemy, what is it? We are particularly interested, seeing that historians find it necessary to lean so heavily upon it in connection with their chronology for the Neo-Babylonian period. Claudius Ptolemy lived in Egypt during the second century C.E., or over 600 years after the close of the Neo-Babylonian period. He was not a historian, and is known primarily for his works on astronomy and geography. As E. R. Thiele states: "Ptolemy's canon was prepared primarily for astronomical, not historical purposes. It did not pretend to give a complete list of all the rulers of either Babylon or Persia, nor the exact month or day of the beginning of their reigns, but it was a device which made possible the correct allocation into a broad chronological scheme of certain astronomical data which were then available."—*The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, page 293, ftn.

Ptolemy assigned 21 years to the reign of Nabopolassar, 43 to Nebuchadnezzar, 2 to Evil-merodach, 4 to Neriglissar, and 17 to Nabonidus, for a total of 87 years. Counting back from the first year of Cyrus, following the fall of Babylon, therefore, historians date Nabopolassar's first year as commencing in 625 B.C.E., Nebuchadnezzar's first year as 604, and the destruction of Jerusalem as in 586 or 587. These dates are some 20 years later than those indicated by Bible chronology, yet modern historians favor the system of dating based on Ptolemy.

Even though the length of the reigns of the kings of Babylon and Persia, as set forth in Ptolemy's canon, may be *basically* correct, there seems to be no reason for *holding* that the canon is necessarily accurate in every respect for all periods. As already noted, we lack Babylonian histor-

ical records that could either substantiate or undermine Ptolemy's figures for the reigns of certain kings.

Critics of the Bible claim that the date for the destruction of Jerusalem (607 B.C.E.), founded on Bible chronology, leaves a gap in the Babylonian chronology. On the other hand, those who hold to a strict Ptolemaic reckoning are obliged to explain a sizable gap of their own. This gap develops when they attempt to harmonize Babylonian and Assyrian history so as to arrive at 625 B.C.E. for the start of the Neo-Babylonian period.

The Babylonian Chronicle states that Nineveh, Assyria's capital, fell to the Babylonian forces in Nabopolassar's fourteenth year. Following Ptolemy, the secular historians date that event in 612 B.C.E. At the same time, on the basis of astronomical calculations, they also hold to the year 763 B.C.E. as an absolute date representing the ninth year of Assyrian king Assur-dan III. So, they should be able to count forward from that year and show that Assyrian rule at Nineveh did extend as far as 612 B.C.E. But can they? Well, with the help of eponym and king lists and other source material, they manage to set up a chronology that reaches as far as 668 B.C.E., the year they assign for the start of Ashurbanipal's reign. But from that point forward there is considerable confusion.

Especially with regard to Ashurbanipal's reign there is much confusion. For example, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1959 edition, Vol. 2, page 569) gives Ashurbanipal's reign as 668-625 B.C.E. Then, on page 851 of the same volume, the reign is given as 669-630 B.C.E. In volume 5 of the same edition, page 655, it lists this same reign as "668-638(?)." The 1965 edition of the same work says '669-630 or 626.' (Vol. 2, page 573) Other

suggested dates for the close of Ashurbanipal's reign are:

- 633 *A History of Israel*, John Bright, 1964.
- 631 *Ancient Iraq*, Georges Roux, 1964.
- 629 *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1962.
- c.631-627 *The New Bible Dictionary*, 1962.
- 626 *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, D. D. Luckenbill, 1926.

As might be expected, the above sources also give varied dates for the reign of Ashurbanipal's probable successor, Ashur-etillu-ilani. And so, too, for the reign of Sin-shar-ishkun, apparently the king at the time of Nineveh's fall. Some historians extend this last king's reign for as long as eighteen years, though dated tablets have been found only up to his seventh year.

Thus historians are willing to exhibit much flexibility in order to hold to both the Ptolemaic chronology and their pivotal date of 763 B.C.E., even to the point of conjecturing longer reigns for these final rulers of the Assyrian empire than the evidence at hand will support. They have an awkward gap on their hands—one that is not easy to fill. The Bible, however, offers stronger evidence for the 607 B.C.E. date for the destruction of Jerusalem.—See *The Watchtower*, August 15, 1968, pages 490-494.

BEROSSUS—HOW RELIABLE?

Ptolemy, in preparing his canon, is believed by some to have followed Berossus, a third-century B.C.E. Babylonian priest. Of his writings Professor Olmstead remarks: "... only the merest fragments, abstracts or traces have come down to us. And the most important of these fragments have come down through a tradition almost without parallel. Today we must consult a modern Latin translation of an Armenian translation of the lost Greek original of the Chronicle of Euse-

bios, who borrowed in part from Alexander Polyhistor who borrowed from Berossus direct, and in part from Abydenus who apparently borrowed from Juba who borrowed from Alexander Polyhistor and so from Berossus. To make a worse confusion, Eusebius has in some cases not recognized the fact that Abydenus is only a feeble echo of Polyhistor, and has quoted the accounts of each side by side!"

He continues: "And this is not the worst. Although his Polyhistor account is in general to be preferred, Eusebius seems to have used a poor manuscript of that author." (*Assyrian Historiography*, pages 62, 63) Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century C.E., also claims to make quotations from Berossus, but the figures he uses are not consistent, so they can hardly be considered conclusive. And, remembering that at least three hundred years intervened between Berossus and Ptolemy, we can see that there is no certainty that Ptolemy's supposed references from Berossus were accurate.

And what about the cuneiform tablets themselves? How accurate are they? Can they always be depended upon? The casual student may tend to think those tablets were always written close to the time of the events recorded. However, the Babylonian historical texts, and even many astronomical texts, give evidence of being of a much later period. Specifically, one portion of the so-called Babylonian Chronicle, covering the period modern historians would date as 747-648 B.C.E., is "a copy made in the twenty-second year of Darius from an older and damaged text."—*Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings*, page 1.

So this writing was not only separated from the events recorded by anywhere from 150 to 250 years, but it was also a copy of a defective earlier writing. And from this same publication we have the

following, relating to the Babylonian Chronicle texts covering the period from Nabopolassar to Nabonidus: "The Neo-Babylonian Chronicle texts are written in a small script of a type which does not of itself allow any precise dating but which can mean that they were written from any time almost contemporary with the events themselves to the end of the Achaemenid rule"—or 331 B.C.E. So even if Ptolemy had what he quite likely did not have, namely, authentic copies of Berossus' writings, there would still remain some serious question as to the age and authenticity of Berossus' cuneiform sources.

NO SERIOUS CHALLENGE

The reader can judge for himself whether the reckonings and conjectures of modern historians have produced a dependable Babylonian chronology. Probably it can be said that they have a system that brings some semblance of order out of the relative chaos of ancient secular records. However, when they place so

much confidence in Ptolemy's dating one may well question the wisdom of their doing so. We have noted that neither Ptolemy's purpose in setting down his record nor the nature of his source material were such as might inspire confidence in its historical accuracy. Further, if any of his information came from Berossus, it doubtless came through many hands, and offers, at best, very fragile testimony. The cuneiform sources, too, were subject to damage and restoration that may well have involved much conjecture.

Both the lack of contemporary historical records from Babylon and the ease with which secular data could be altered definitely allow for the possibility that one or more of the Neo-Babylonian rulers had a longer reign than the Ptolemaic canon shows. In view of all these factors, is it wise to accept without reserve the reconstruction of Babylonian history by modern historians? Surely one is justified in concluding that there is here no real challenge to the credibility of the Bible record!

"THRILLING, absolutely thrilling!" "Now I can imagine what Pentecost 33 C.E. must have been like!" "Something we have been looking for for years!" "The end of this system of things is very, very close, and we all know it!" Thus have some observers at the Brooklyn headquarters of Jehovah's witnesses expressed themselves. About what? About the recent increases in the activity of their fellow Witnesses in every part of the earth. God's servants everywhere keenly feel the spirit of urgency that is now surging throughout their ranks

**THEY FEEL
the URGENCY**

in this most momentous time in man's history.

It seems that suddenly in every part of the earth people are awakening to the crucial and terrifying problems plaguing this generation and many realize that only

God can solve them. They want to know what his Word says. As a result persons who never would take the time to read the Bible-study literature of Jehovah's witnesses are reading it now, and thousands more are attending their meetings.

Among the factors that have contributed to the great forward movement in the preaching work are the books *Did Man Get Here by Evolution or by Creation?* and *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*. These exciting and practical Bible-study aids have helped to speed up the work of Jehovah's witnesses. However, the main force inspiring their increased activity is God's spirit. By his dynamic holy spirit, Jehovah is making his servants aware of the urgency of the times and they are responding by devoting more time and effort to his work. Yes, Jehovah God is now urging his people to go forward as never before. And go forward they do!

REPORTS SHOW THEY FEEL THE URGENCY

How truly joyful it is to read the happy reports of the increase of Witnesses in various parts of the world! For example, there were only 10,070 Witnesses in the entire continent of Africa in 1942; today, over 180,000 are declaring the good news of God's kingdom there. In Asia, in 1942, there were only 406 Witnesses, and now 21,698 bear witness to their faith in this area. In 1942 Europe had only 22,796, but today 387,147 Witnesses preach there. The various islands in the Pacific, Atlantic, Caribbean and Mediterranean had only about 5,500 Witnesses in 1942. Today these islands have over 113,000 ministers of Jehovah God. In 1942, North America and South America saw only about 76,000 Witnesses preaching; presently well over 500,000 Witnesses represent God's kingdom there. This increase has not stopped, for in the first month of

the new service year twenty-four of the ninety-four branches of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in various parts of the earth reported further increases in the number of Jehovah's witnesses in the lands they look after.

Though Jehovah's witnesses enjoyed a 5.6-percent increase in the number of ministers last year, the phenomenal rise in the number of hours that they spent in preaching demonstrates how deeply they feel the urgency of God's work. Consider the astounding fact that they devoted 208,666,762 hours in the preaching work during the past year. This is close to 25 million more hours than the year before. This is not only because more were out in the field ministry! Nor are they being paid to preach! As one woman in the Falkland Islands exclaimed after seeing the crowds of Witnesses in photographic slides of their conventions, "No organization could ever pay that many people." Then what explains it? The spirit of wanting to do all they can in the short time remaining is moving them to augment their activity.—Ps. 110:3.

Desiring to spend their time in the most vital work in this day and age, last year Jehovah's witnesses made 89,903,578 return visits on individuals who wanted to know more about the Bible. This is over 23 million more return visits than the preceding year. And consider the 977,503 Bible studies they conducted each week, free of charge. This is 110,494 more than the previous year. Who could not help but be caught up in this contagious spirit of doing more than the usual in these perilous times!

EXPANDED MINISTRY OF MANY WHO FEEL THE URGENCY

One of the most outstanding proofs of the growing sense of urgency among God's people is the number of persons who arranged their affairs to spend their

full time in the preaching work regularly or for a vacation period. This past year over 10,000 more than during the preceding year enthusiastically took up this work. This meant many sacrifices for mothers, fathers, young ones and older folks.

In Cuba, where Jehovah's witnesses are forced to preach under great difficulty due to persecution, one father, for example, averages 154 hours in the preaching work each month. According to his personal records, he spoke to 408 persons about God's kingdom last April. All this in addition to caring for a family of five. On the other side of the world, in Indonesia, another Witness who has a wife and five children to look after spends his vacation time preaching.

Thousands and thousands of others arranged their affairs to be able to devote more time to God's work. One was a man in his fifties who went to preach in an isolated region in Réunion. His wife and two companions, one sixty-seven years old and the other fifteen years old, went with him. On foot the four of them journeyed into this section where there is no road. With a knapsack on his back, a suitcase in one hand and a large briefcase full of Bible literature in the other, they walked up a riverbed for six miles, fording the river fourteen times. They spoke to everyone they met. The entire journey required about one hundred miles of walking. Though they returned home very tired physically, they were spiritually refreshed beyond measure because they had responded to the urgent need to declare the "good news."

Consider the young ones who are responding to the energizing spirit of God that is encouraging increased activity. In Fiji, three youngsters, aged fourteen, twelve and ten, hurry back to school after lunch in order to witness to those children

who are interested in learning more about the Bible. The result of their loving concern for their classmates is that they regularly conduct two Bible studies each. Oh, yes, their eight-year-old brother too conducts a Bible study of his own. Their mother conducts four, and their father conducts seven. Thus this family conducts a total of eighteen studies. What joyous enthusiasm!

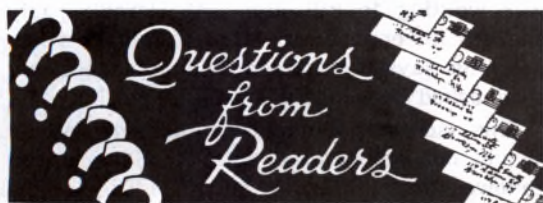
Such loving determination to search out ones who are interested in the Bible can be seen in the Witness in Austria who met an interested individual on the bus. Not having her address, the Witness returned to her village four times to find her. Finally she found the woman and began studying the Bible with her. In Mexico a sweeper in a factory also talks about the Bible. He approached the engineer where he works and spoke to him about the Bible's truth. Today the engineer is one of Jehovah's witnesses. Picture in your mind the zealous Witness in Germany who is paralyzed from the hips down and is confined to a wheelchair. On the streets he talks to all who are willing to stop and listen. He writes letters explaining the Bible's truth and conducts Bible studies in his home. Behind the Iron Curtain, too, thousands of Witnesses preach in parks, while waiting for buses and in doctors' waiting rooms and at every other opportune moment. Everywhere God's praises are resounding, and many are joining in the chorus.

The 1969 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* is filled with their experiences. In reading it one senses that the spirit of wanting to do more is sweeping through God's organization as never before. Obviously Jehovah's witnesses realize that this preaching work that is being done today will never be repeated; that their opportunity to engage in it is to be taken advantage of *now* and not to be postponed.

They sense that great things lie ahead of them in the immediate future. Yes, they will see the remainder of God's prophecies about these "last days" fulfilled before their very eyes. Down through the years Jehovah has been preparing his organization to care for the crowd of persons that are now coming into it. He has strengthened it to care for their spiritual needs. Would you like to associate with this society of Christian ministers and

assist in this great preaching work? Why not seek them out?—Gal. 6:10.

Those who respond to the influence of God's spirit today will in the future look back with joy and no regret. How inexpressibly happy they will be in knowing that they helped others to gain eternal life in God's new order! Yes, those who feel the urgency and work in harmony with it will be rewarded with marvelous blessings.



● The Bible tells that Samson killed men and animals. How could he touch dead bodies in view of his being a Nazirite?—M.G., Australia.

According to the Mosaic law an Israelite could take a vow to live as a Nazirite for a time. While under his vow he was not supposed to touch dead bodies. We read: "All the days of his keeping separate to Jehovah he may not come toward any dead soul. Not even for his father or his mother or his brother or his sister may he defile himself when they die, because the sign of his Naziriteship to his God is upon his head." (Num. 6:6, 7) If such a one did accidentally touch a dead body, he would have to go through a purification ceremony and make certain offerings. The time already elapsed would not count, and he would start the Nazirite period over again. (Num. 6:8-12) So one thus serving for a temporary period would be careful not to defile himself by touching a dead body.

Before Samson was born Jehovah's angel told his mother: "A Nazirite of God is what the child will become on leaving the belly." (Judg. 13:5) Samson was to be a Nazirite all his life. Hence, if he accidentally touched a dead body, he could not start a set period of Naziriteship over. While Samson undoubtedly had respect for the Nazirite requirements, the fact that he was a lifelong Nazirite made his

situation somewhat different from those serving as Nazirites for only a short time.

Though Samson was a Nazirite, God selected him to be a judge and to "take the lead in saving Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." (Judg. 13:5) It is understandable that he would, in line with his assignment, come in contact with dead bodies, and he did. He struck down thirty Philistines and stripped them of their outfits. Later he went smiting the enemy, "piling legs upon thighs with a great slaughter." And with a moist jawbone of a male ass he killed a thousand Philistine men. Did Jehovah disapprove of Samson, a Nazirite, striking down Israel's enemies like that? No, for just before the third slaughter "Jehovah's spirit became operative upon" Samson, giving him superhuman strength. And when Judge Samson was exhausted from the battle, "God split open a mortar-shaped hollow" and miraculously provided water to revive him.—Judg. 14:19-15:19.

Another time Samson demonstrated his God-given strength by bare-handedly and in self-defense killing a roaring maned young lion. (Judg. 14:5-9) We cannot be certain whether the Nazirite restriction about touching dead bodies applied to animal carcasses. The Israelites in general, and the priests in particular, were already under certain regulations that made touching dead unclean animals a thing to be avoided, for it resulted in temporary uncleanness. (Lev. 11:24, 25; 22:2-7) Possibly Nazirites were not restricted further in regard to animals. If Nazirites were to avoid touching all dead animals, that would have made them vegetarians, and there is nothing in the Scriptures saying that they were such.

