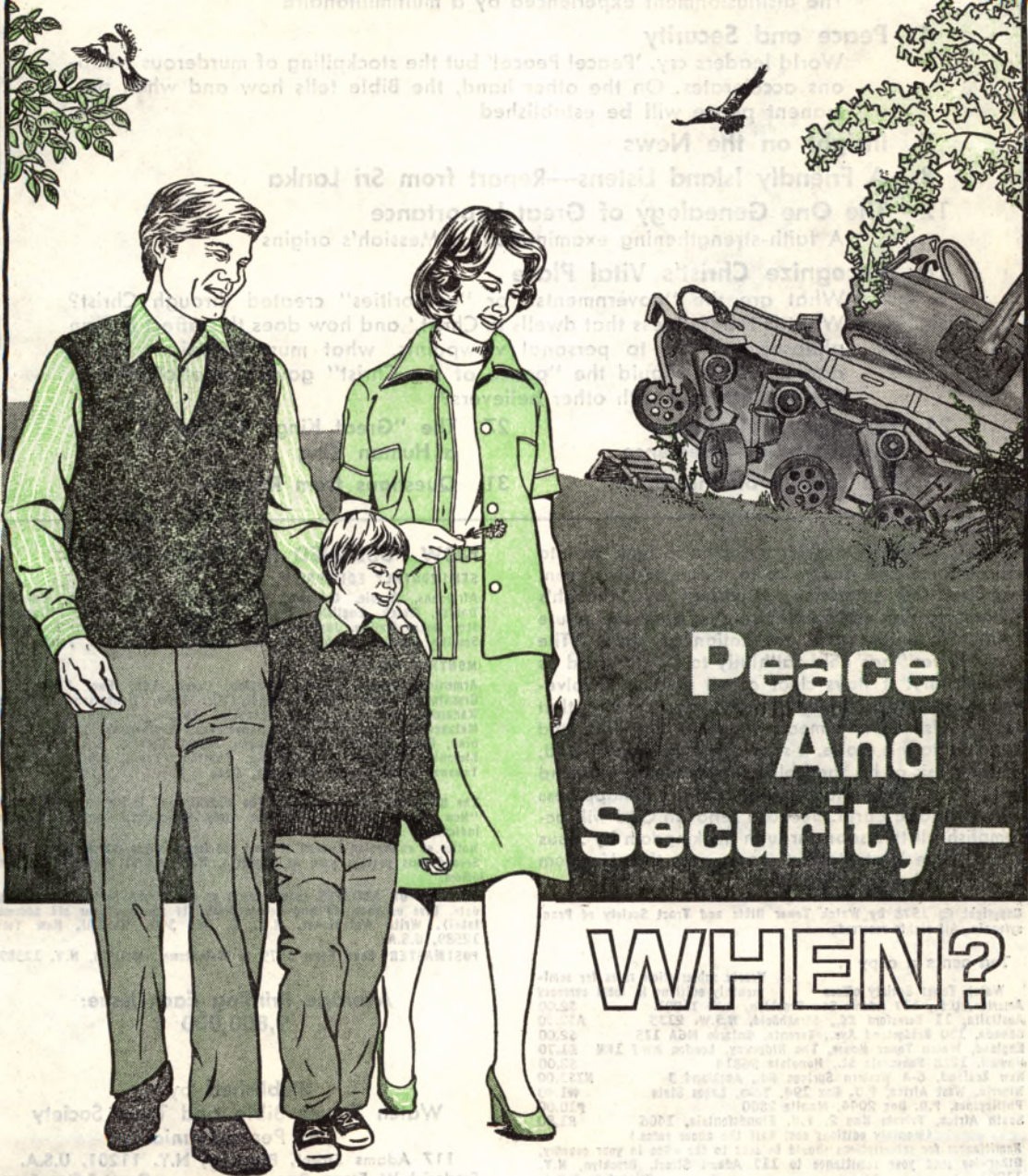


APRIL 1, 1978

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



Peace
And
Security—
WHEN?

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A WATCHTOWER enables a person to look far into the distance and announce to others what is seen. Likewise, this magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, aids the reader to see what the future holds. Since it began publication in 1879, "The Watchtower" has held faithfully to God's Word as its authority. It stays clear of all political involvement. It points to the Bible prophecies showing that Jesus Christ is God's means for restoring peace and harmony to this globe. It shows that this Son of God, on the basis of his shed blood, will release mankind from sin and death to enjoy eternal life in happiness on a paradise earth. Because Jehovah God will accomplish all this soon through his kingdom by Jesus Christ, "The Watchtower" announces that kingdom as the real hope for mankind.

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how rewarding is the pursuit of **FAME** and **FORTUNE**?

HE WAS a singer in his early twenties. Within two years he had become a multimillionaire. But did fame and fortune bring him real happiness and satisfaction?

This popular entertainer admitted: 'I wonder if it's all worth it—the fame and money thing, I mean. I can't even go into a restaurant and finish a meal without being tracked down by photographers, reporters and auto-graph hounds. I have to have my meals sent up to my hotel room. I can't go for a walk because I could be kidnapped. I can't go to a movie or a ball game. It's a lonesome life when you're out on the road touring. All you can do is sit in your room watching TV. I never open gifts—except from my friends. Never know what could be inside. Maybe an explosive sent by some kook.'

Although having gained popularity and riches, this young man had lost much. No longer could he enjoy very common things that he had at one time taken for granted. His changed situation made him a prisoner.

Others in similar circumstances have experienced like disillusionment. They struggled to attain a certain goal, only to find that it did not fulfill prior expectations. While the wealthy and famous may have many admirers, they have few, if any, real friends. It repeatedly happens that, when popularity and riches vanish, the admirers turn to someone else. This hard fact

of life is acknowledged in an ancient proverb: "Wealth makes many friends, but a man without means loses the friend he has."—Prov. 19:4, *The New English Bible*.

Clearly, the pursuit of fame and fortune is not satisfying. Since this is also true of other material goals, what should a person make his primary aim in life?

A man who is widely acknowledged as the greatest teacher of all times gave this advice: "Stop storing up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break in and steal. Rather, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break in and steal."—Matt. 6:19, 20.

Hence, if we desire abiding joy and contentment, we should avoid centering our life around material pursuits, for these have no lasting value and often lead to bitter disappointment. Rather, our main concern should be to have a fine standing with our Maker. A record of fine works with him will be like secure treasure deposited in the heavens. That treasure will yield rich rewards from the eternal God. So, instead of looking enviously at the few who have attained fame and fortune, we will be content in having something far more valuable—an approved relationship with the Most High.

Peace And Security

When will it come?
From what source?
What will it mean for mankind?



"[God] is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth. The bow he breaks apart and does cut the spear in pieces; the [war] wagons he burns in the fire."—Ps. 46:9.

COMMENTING on the outlook for 1978, the weekly journal *U.S. News & World Report* said, in its issue of December 26, 1977, that this should be "A Pivotal Year." The writer went on to say: "Major decisions are to be taken against a backdrop of rising optimism. Troubles? Plenty. But shaping up is a time of peace and prosperity." In these words, the journal echoed the hope of millions that peace with security may be 'just around the corner.'

In many parts of the earth the cry is for "Peace, Peace." But can we truly and optimistically say that world peace is to be seen on the horizon today? Or, rather, is

the situation similar to that facing Israel in the days of the prophet Jeremiah? The world situation was critical then. For the Babylonian juggernaut was advancing in its campaign of world conquest. The people were searching frantically for some hope of peace. Yet the prophet declared that they were "saying: 'There is peace! There is peace!' when there is no peace."—Jer. 8:11.

WHAT BASIS FOR PEACE?

If you planned a new house, where would you build it? Would you select a neighborhood well known for its crime? Would you build in an area where the people were

fighting one another on racial, religious and social issues? Would you move into a community where mistrust, hatred and violence of every sort abounded? Moreover, in constructing your house, would you try to make it "safe" by stocking its basement with every kind of high explosive? Surely you would not make plans for such a home!

However, the world of today has been building just like that! Since the total war first struck in 1914, the world environment has been one of increasing violence. Nationalistic, racial and religious hatreds have engulfed many peoples of the earth. Yet political leaders claim that they can bring peace to this world neighborhood. Some may be very sincere in their claims. But can they *really* succeed?

On what kind of foundation are they building? Is it a firm foundation of mutual trust and love? Or, is it, rather, a shaky foundation of fear and hatred? Very literally, the foundation on which the world powers are building is an explosive one. During the year 1976 the nations of earth spent more than 300 billion dollars on armaments, and in 1977 the figure soared toward the 400-billion-dollar mark. The armaments race is running out of control. What kind of foundation is this for constructing a world of peace and security? We can only say it is hopeless and impossible.

The prophet Daniel spoke about our very day when he foretold the climax of the centuries-long struggle between the "king of the north" and the "king of the south." Today these two kings are identified as *the opposing blocs* of Communistic and capitalistic nations that struggle for world domination. They carry on the age-old game of diplomacy: "As regards these two kings, their heart [is] inclined to doing what is bad, and at one table a lie is what they . . . keep speaking. But nothing will succeed." (Dan. 11:27) The louder they speak of "peace and security," the

farther does this desirable goal recede from their grasp. A house of real peace can never be built on a foundation of distrust and competitive rearmament—a foundation fortified by stockpiles of nuclear and other horrendous weapons. It can never be built in an environment of international hatreds, crime and violence.

"AS A THIEF IN THE NIGHT"

However, the nations continue to talk of "peace and security." In this they are chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. For what does the Bible prophecy concerning their efforts? The apostle Paul tells us: "Jehovah's day is coming exactly as a thief in the night. Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape." (1 Thess. 5:2, 3) Already, the cry for peace and security is rising in a crescendo. And it can be expected that, while the nations are making a significant cry of "peace and security," then suddenly, "Jehovah's day" will break forth in all its fury. It will come just like the unexpected arrival of a thief in the night. Like sudden pangs of childbirth, the day of accounting will catch up on the nations of earth, and divine judgment will be executed on them.—Zeph. 3:8.

This will not be an uncontrolled destruction, as if nuclear warfare were to destroy civilization completely from the surface of the earth. Rather, it will be a controlled, selective destruction brought by the Almighty God against "those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus." (2 Thess. 1:8) True lovers of peace and security can be assured that Jehovah will continue to be to them "a refuge and strength, a help that is readily to be found during distresses."—Ps. 46:1-7.

Astonishing events will be seen on earth as this "great tribulation" runs its course. (Matt. 24:21) It will result in something that no SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) or disarmament conferences have even *started* to accomplish—the complete disarming of the nations. We are invited to a preview of these world-shaking happenings: "Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth. The bow he breaks apart and does cut the spear in pieces; the [war] wagons he burns in the fire."—Ps. 46:8, 9.

There is purpose behind this decisive action by the Almighty God, Jehovah. The nations have proved over the centuries and are still showing that they cannot bring stable peace and security to the peoples of earth. They have been given every opportunity and they have tried every kind of government. However, all of them have built their house on a wrong foundation. In rivalry toward one another, they now pile their nuclear and other armaments higher and higher, vying with one another as they seek to maintain some kind of shaky balance of power. No wonder that the Almighty God, Jehovah, purposes to wipe out such an insecure and murderous arrangement.

BASIS FOR A REIGN OF PEACE

However, Almighty God will not only destroy the nations, along with their armaments, but also bring in the universal reign of peace. And upon what foundation will this new order be built? For one thing, there will be love and mutual trust among mankind. Those who qualify to live in that new order will be persons who subscribe to the two greatest commandments indicated by Jesus Christ: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your

whole strength and with your whole mind,' and, 'your neighbor as yourself.'" (Luke 10:27) These will have developed "the fruitage of the spirit," which is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control." They will have "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Gal. 5:22, 23; Eph. 4:24) Persons who have acquired these qualities and who have given themselves in dedicated service to God will become the very nucleus of God's new order. His Kingdom rule under Christ Jesus will succeed gloriously as such persons out of every national group, race and social status truly unite in a secure and peaceful worldwide community. And literally billions of mankind will be ushered into that happy society through the resurrection of the dead.—John 5:28, 29.

There is still another purpose, a noble purpose indeed, in God's destroying the false foundation for peace and security and building a true foundation. It is that the sovereignty of the true God, Jehovah, may be exalted in all the universe. For this reason Jehovah extends the invitation at Psalm 46:10: "Give in, you people, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." It is only when all mankind submit to Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe that peace at last will reign supreme. While lovers of true peace wait for that glorious time, they can exult in the protection that Jehovah assures: "Jehovah of armies is with us; the God of Jacob is a secure height for us." (Ps. 46:11) So, while the nations build on explosive foundations for a shaky peace and false security, all who heed the admonition of God's Word, the Bible, can press forward toward the real peace and security that is guaranteed only by God's kingdom through Christ Jesus.—Matt. 6:10.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

- When political leaders fail in their efforts to build peace, can the churches be counted on to motivate their members in the ways of peace? Not if history is any barometer of their actions. In his recent book "A History of Christianity," historian Paul Johnson reports that during the Hitler era both Catholic and Protestant churches, "in the main, gave massive support to the [Nazi] regime."

Look to the Churches for Peace?

He writes: "Bishop Bornewasser told the Catholic youth in Trier Cathedral: 'With raised heads and firm step we have entered the new reich and we are prepared to serve it with all the might of our body and soul.' In January 1934, Hitler saw twelve Evangelical [Lutheran] leaders . . . [who] issued a communique which pledged 'the leaders of the German Evangelical Church unanimously affirm their unconditional loyalty to the Third Reich and its leader.'" The sacrifice of millions of Catholic and Protestant lives on both sides of World War II proved these churches' loyalty to Hitler. Loyalty to the "God of peace" was not in evidence.—Phil. 4:9; Isa. 2:4.

However, Johnson says that of the religions who "stuck to their principles enough to merit outright persecution," the "bravest were the Jehovah's Witnesses." Because of their peaceful neutral stand politically, "they refused any [political] cooperation with the Nazi state . . . Many were sentenced to death for refusing military service."—Weidenfeld and Nicolson (London, England).

- New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art recently held an exhibition of "Early Christian Art" titled "The Age of Spirituality." In its review of this art display, "The Wall Street Journal" observed: "Fortunately for the course of art, the early Christian belief that had rejected imagery and pomp as idolatrous soon faded, as the wealth once supporting the centers of paganism was redirected by the Christian emperors. No doubt the visual splendor of the new churches and the incorporation of many pagan motifs into Christian art converted many non-believers. . . . The inter-

"The Age of Spirituality" ???

mingling of pagan and Christian themes and symbols is intriguing."

Of course, this "intermingling" of true Christianity with false worship was to be expected, as Christ himself predicted it. (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-40) The Bible shows that even in the time of the apostles, it could be said that "rebellion is at its work already, but in secret," until "the one who is holding it back" would be removed, allowing non-Christian beliefs to flourish. The apostle Paul, as part of "the one [the apostles as a class] who is holding it back," warned: "I know quite well that when I have gone fierce wolves will invade you and will have no mercy on the flock. . . . men coming forward with a travesty of the truth on their lips to induce the disciples to follow them."—2 Thess. 2:7; Acts 20:29, 30, Catholic "Jerusalem Bible."

● When youths from all over the world were invited to tell Pope Paul VI "whatever you believe he needs to know to make his work for people your age significant," 1,200 responded with a wide range of complaints. "The church seems to be suffering from the same thing lawyers are, functional illiteracy," wrote a 16-year-old Catholic youth. "This means that when you make a statement, it may be understood by bishops, but to normal people it is just so many words."

Communication Gap

However, rather than clarifying spiritual matters for the laity, clerics seem bent on keeping them in the dark. Benedictine priest Colman Barry recently recommended that Latin be used in all writings by theologians to avoid disturbing the laity with their speculations. Thereby "theologians would be judged by their peers," he declares, "rather than by ecclesiastical incompetents."

But instead of being considered "ecclesiastical incompetents," should not all those in the Christian church be taught the Word of God on an equal basis, as were the first Christians? And as the apostle Paul said, "if your tongue does not produce intelligible speech, how can anyone know what you are saying? You will be talking to the air."—1 Cor. 14:9-11, Catholic "Jerusalem Bible."

a friendly island listens



—Report from Sri Lanka

JESUS' prophetic statement that the good news of the Kingdom would "be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness" indicated a widespread work. (Matt. 24:14) Among the countries that have been reached with the "good news" in this time of the end is the friendly island of Sri Lanka, till recently called Ceylon. This teardrop-shaped island of 25,322 square miles (65,584 square kilometers), located just south of India in the Indian Ocean, is only 270 miles (435 kilometers) long and 140 miles (225 kilometers) wide.

The American writer Mark Twain, who visited Sri Lanka in 1896, described the capital city, Colombo, in these words: "What a dream it was of tropical splendours of bloom and blossom and Oriental conflagrations of costume! The walking groups of men, women, boys, girls, babies—each individual was a flame, each group a house afire for colour." The physical attractions of this beautiful tropical

island, as well as the friendliness and hospitality of its colorful people, are to be observed down to this day.

For the 550 or more witnesses of Jehovah in Sri Lanka, proclaiming God's kingdom is a pleasant assignment. Regardless of where in the island you choose to tell the "good news," usually the people welcome you and invite you into their homes. As you tell the Bible message and its promise of a happy future for mankind, it is likely that you will be offered a cup of the refreshing tea for which this country is famous. Publishers of the Kingdom message are often made welcome, too, at Buddhist temples for discussions of the Bible hope with head priest and underpriests.

RESPONSE TO THE "GOOD NEWS"

Has the proclaiming of the "good news" by Jehovah's Christian witnesses aided Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims to learn and accept the truth? There has been note-

worthy success among the Hindus. Former Hindus are to be found among the part-time and full-time Kingdom proclaimers in the local congregations. Even some elders and ministerial servants were formerly Hindus. One such person is presently an overseer in a congregation and has been very zealous and successful in aiding his wife, sisters and in-laws to learn the truth. An unusual problem arose with his mother who had chewed betel nut throughout her life. Her teeth were worn down to the gums, and as soon as she stopped chewing, her teeth ached. She could not qualify for baptism as one of Jehovah's Witnesses unless she stopped chewing the betel drug. How was this problem solved? The dentist came to the rescue by extracting what was left of her teeth. Then she was baptized.

A few former Buddhists are publishers of the "good news" today and one is even serving as a full-time pioneer. While progress with Muslim persons has been limited, Jehovah's Witnesses in Sri Lanka rejoice in the fact that an elder and a ministerial servant were previously followers of the Muslim religion.

Persons young and old are being disillusioned as to the teachings and practices of the Church systems of Christendom. An example of their failure to provide satisfactory instruction to their members is seen in the experience of a young man in his mid-twenties who had been born a Roman Catholic. Dissatisfied by the teachings of his church, he looked to Buddhism for answers to his many questions. But he was still undecided. Then someone gave him a *Watchtower* magazine. On the back was an advertisement under the caption "Is your faith shaken?" He immediately wrote to the local branch office of the Watch Tower Society. A "special pioneer" Witness called at his home and discussed the question of faith with the young man and his parents. Today all three mem-

bers of this family are publishers of the "good news." Pioneers working Roman Catholic areas have many fine experiences like this to relate.

PROGRESS OVER THE YEARS

The "good news" was first brought to Sri Lanka as early as 1910, when seeds of truth were sown in the hearts of a few interested people and their families. In 1912 Brother C. T. Russell, the then president of the International Bible Students Association, visited this country. Later in 1917 the photographic slide, motion picture and sound production called the Photo-Drama of Creation was shown in the cities of Colombo and Kandy. The progress of the truth was slow for many years until missionaries were sent to lend a hand in 1947. Since then the work has gone ahead on a more organized footing, and expansion resulted.

Zeal and endurance on the part of faithful missionaries have been important factors in the building up of the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in the country. Today there are 17 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in principal towns throughout the island. The peak of publishers reporting in 1977 was 552. Forty-nine persons were baptized during this same year. Jehovah's Witnesses in Sri Lanka had reason to be joyful when, in 23 different locations on the island, a peak of 1,662 persons attended the Memorial of Jesus' death on April 3, 1977. This attendance figure indicates a fine potential for further increase in the future.

The distribution of the *Kingdom News* tracts, which receives much enthusiastic support, has resulted in the "good news" reaching many isolated persons who now manifest interest in the Bible message. An outstanding response was noted with the distribution of the tract entitled "How Crime and Violence Will Be Stopped." A flood of requests for Bible literature

poured into the Sri Lanka branch office of the Watch Tower Society. Some persons also requested home Bible studies, which the local Witnesses were happy to provide.

WITNESSING IN RURAL TERRITORIES

As you approach the typical rural home you may notice a bustle of activity as the folk inside get a chair or two for you and your companion to sit on. Then they stand respectfully listening to what you have to say. Often they will insist that you stay to have a refreshing drink of *kurumba* or *thambili*, which are varieties of young coconut. The liquid centers of these fruits are sweet and most pleasant to taste and you would be surprised how many servings you can consume in a single morning as you busily proclaim the "good news" from house to house in the hot tropical sun.

Sometimes the enthusiasm of these hospitable and humble people in rural areas can be very touching, as was the experience of two pioneer Witnesses who work such territory. They came across a very old woman to whom the message was presented and an offer of a Bible study aid was made. The old woman went into her house and returned with her savings collected in a clay till (piggy bank). She broke it open and out poured scores of small, shiny coins. She patiently counted 150 of these—the equivalent of three Sri Lanka rupees (20 cents U.S.), and gave them to the pioneers as a contribution for the book that she was so anxious to have.

SPIRITISM AND SUPERSTITION WIDESPREAD

People of various communities and religious affiliations are known to be quite superstitious. Widespread spiritistic practices make it necessary for Christians to be alert so as not to be ensnared. This is illustrated by the experience of a witness of Jehovah, whose granddaughter had used

some oil for a headache. This oil belonged to the Witness' daughter-in-law who is a Buddhist and who had obtained the oil from a temple. The moment she applied the oil on her head, the granddaughter, a dedicated witness of Jehovah, began to act in a strange manner. She seemed to be dazed and kept asking questions of her grandmother, such as "Where am I?" "Who are you?" The grandmother discerned that this may have been due to the oil, so she immediately washed it off. This had the desired effect, for the child came back to her senses.

Since many persons in Sri Lanka are ensnared by spiritistic practices, the witnesses of Jehovah in this country have been thrilled to receive the recent English-language publication *Good News to Make You Happy*, as it promises to meet the very needs of the people in this Oriental land. Many of the Sinhalese-speaking and Tamil-speaking publishers are anxiously awaiting this book in their own languages so that they may be better equipped to teach in their territory.

RESPONSE TO THE CALL FOR MORE WORKERS

In response to the call for more workers in the final harvest, a number of young persons have entered the full-time "pioneer" service. (Matt. 9:38) Some have even given up lucrative jobs because of recognizing the great need for more workers to help in the last ingathering. Among these are a young married couple who left their secular jobs to take up pioneering and who were sent to serve in an area where the need was great. Today they rejoice that a congregation has been established there. This is what they have to say concerning their decision:

"Having a balanced view of material things and our love for our Creator, Jehovah, enabled us to make a decision to leave our secular jobs and take up the pioneer service. Since making this decision

we have not for even a minute regretted taking this step. Trusting in Jehovah to help us in the work of spreading the life-giving message has indeed resulted in many spiritual blessings. In our new assignment here many sheeplike ones are thirsting for the truth. Meeting them and helping them to come to an accurate knowledge of the Bible constantly reminds us of the urgent work that should be accomplished before the 'great tribulation.' It warms our hearts to see many responding to the message. It gives us great happiness and joy to see many regularly attending the congregation meetings. There is no greater work than the pioneer work that we can do today to make Jehovah's heart glad."

In this country it is not easy to find part-time employment to enable any who wish to engage in the regular pioneer work to do so while maintaining themselves. However, a number have made adjustments in their employment in order to have a greater share in the preaching and discipling work. (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) One husband gave up an executive job in a government corporation and, with his wife and three young children, established his own home textile printing industry. The parents pioneer by alternating their days of work at home. Many publishers of the "good news" are "tasting" the pioneer service on a temporary basis. In April 1976, which is a month of school and public holidays, 79 Kingdom publishers were busy in the regular and auxiliary pioneer service.

HAPPY CONGREGATIONS OF JEHOVAH'S PEOPLE

The two traveling overseers who visit the congregations experience much joy from their assignment because of the fine spirit of love and hospitality that prevails. One of these traveling ministers, with his wife and two young sons, visits congregations on his motorcycle. He says:

"Being a circuit overseer entails hard work, especially with a family, but it is a wonderful assignment from Jehovah. To

work with the brothers, to hear their experiences of faith and to partake of their hospitality is a grand experience. The brothers, however poor they may be, show great hospitality in looking after us as a family of four. At times many families get together as a group and have meals during the visit, making use of it as a time for relaxation."

The other traveling overseer, who carries out his assignment accompanied by his wife and three-year-old daughter, usually uses public transport like buses and trains to reach the congregations in his circuit. When serving a congregation he often uses a bicycle. He says: "My wife sits on the bar and our daughter on my wife's lap. We travel in this manner covering five to seven miles [8 to 11 kilometers] sometimes." Occasionally they have to stop to relieve benumbed legs and tired limbs. But the constant chatter of their daughter and her many questions and occasional singing help to brighten such journeys. This circuit overseer says: "We enjoy the service of Jehovah and have the joy of serving our brothers."

Jehovah's people in Sri Lanka may be few in number, but they enjoy a spiritual prosperity that invigorates them actively to proclaim their faith wherever they are. This is a cause for much anxiety on the part of the churches of Christendom in the island, whose representatives frequently publish literature warning their members of the untiring activity of these proclaimers of the "good news." Some of the anti-Witness literature published by those of Christendom's churches speaks enviously of the zeal and earnestness of Jehovah's Witnesses, even encouraging church members to manifest like qualities in upholding their beliefs. Jehovah's Witnesses in Sri Lanka are indeed making progress with Jehovah's help and look forward to helping more sheeplike persons to find salvation out of the "great tribulation."—Matt. 24:21, 22.

The One Genealogy of Great Importance

GENEALOGIES are of concern to some people today, who would like to discover the roots of their family tree. But there is really little practicality in tracing one's family tree into all its branches and identifying our ancient ancestors. Christians, in fact, know that all men are imperfect and there is nothing to boast about or to be humiliated about as to their distant ancestry. The apostle Paul wrote to the young man Timothy that he should not "pay attention to . . . genealogies, which end up in nothing, but which furnish questions for research rather than a dispensing of anything by God in connection with faith."—1 Tim. 1:3, 4.

Timothy was then in the Asian city of Ephesus. There were many Christianized Jews in that city, and some of them still hung onto the Jewish customs. They loved to trace back and discuss their ancestral connections and those of others, more from a sense of pride or show of knowledge than from any practical or constructive motive. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, speaking of the early centuries of the Common Era, says: "How prolific these Biblical books [Chronicles] were in provoking genealogical conceits is shown by the statement [in the Babylonian Talmud, Pes. 62b] that 900 camel-loads of commentary existed on I Chron. viii. 37 to ix. 44. . . . Much mischief must have been done by this speculation on family origins and pedigrees."—Vol. V, p. 597 (1910).

So, while a person's genealogy might be of occasional usefulness in legal matters, to argue over or take special pride in our ancestry is a waste of time and a detriment to faith. There is only one genealogy that is really important. That is the line of descent of Jesus Christ. Why is it of such great importance? And why should we now be concerned with it?

One of the strongest reasons for concern is that it serves to establish and strengthen our faith. We need everything that God has provided to this end, in order that we may not weaken during trials and under attacks by those who try to destroy our faith. Moreover, we want to be able to prove to others that Jesus Christ is the Messiah—to present a strong basis on which others can exercise faith.

Now, with regard to Jesus' genealogy, there are a few problems, all solvable. This very fact gives weight to the authenticity of the genealogy. For, although the Hebrews, who kept the genealogical records through the ages, knew that the Messiah was to come in Abraham's line of descent, they at first did not know that it would be restricted to the line of Judah, Abraham's great-grandson and, later, to the descendants of King David. Further, they did not know ahead of time that the legal *kingly* right would be through David's son, Solomon. Neither did they know when and how the Messiah would arrive. If the genealogy was perfectly smooth, with no

difficulties, no legal adoptions, and so forth, we would have good reason to have strong suspicion that the genealogy had been "doctored." So some difficulties in untangling the line of descent gives greater evidence of its being an honest record.

It is good, therefore, to consider this most important genealogy and to see the amazing accuracy and extent of it, for it is more detailed and comprehensive than any other 'family tree' in human history. We will be convinced that God carefully watched over this line of descent and saw that it was properly recorded, at times by men who had no idea of its real importance.

GENEALOGICAL LISTS ESTABLISH CHRIST'S MESSIAHSHIP

There are four primary lists of Christ's line of descent, three of them beginning with Adam, and they appear in the Bible as follows: (1) Genesis and Ruth; (2) 1 Chronicles, chapters 1-3; (3) Matthew, chapter 1; and (4) Luke, chapter 3 (Luke actually runs back from Jesus to Adam). With one exception,* they agree exactly from Adam to Solomon, the son of David. Then, parallel to Solomon, Luke lists Nathan, another son of David. To this point Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus from Heli, the father of Mary, the wife of Joseph, thereby proving Jesus' *natural* right to the Messiahship as a son of David, for Jesus had no earthly father, being the foster son of Joseph, but the actual Son of God by a miracle.—Luke 1:34, 35.

* Luke lists a second Cainan between Arphaxad and Shelah (Luke 3:36). This is regarded by most scholars as a copyist's error. This name is not found in this position in the genealogical listings in the Hebrew and Samaritan texts, nor in any of the Targums or versions except the *Septuagint*, and possibly not in its earlier copies, for Josephus, who usually follows the *Septuagint*, lists Selah (Shelah) next as the son of Arphaxad. (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book I, Chap. VI, par. 7) Early writers Africanus, Eusebius and Jerome rejected it as an interpolation. Another possibility is that "Cainan" is a variant of "Chaldean." Hence, the Greek text may have read, "the son of the Chaldean Arphaxad."

REASONS FOR DIFFERENCES IN ANCESTRAL LISTS

The account by Matthew traces Jesus' descent in the line of Solomon, through which the *legal* right to the throne of David ran. Therefore Matthew's and Luke's accounts purposely differ on lines of descent from David down to Jesus. It is noteworthy, however, that both writers take care to make it clear that Jesus was not *actually* the son of Joseph, but was the true natural son of Mary. Matthew says: "Jacob became father to Joseph the husband of *Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.*" (Matt. 1:16) Luke says: "Jesus himself, when he commenced his work, was about thirty years old, being the son, *as the opinion was, of Joseph.*" —Luke 3:23.

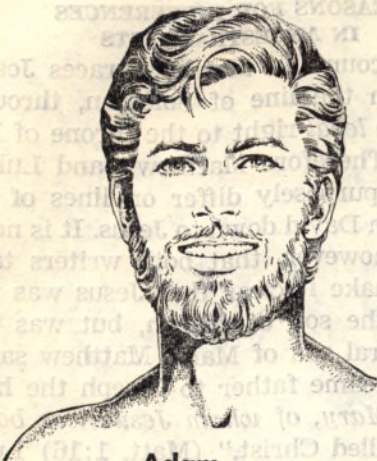
There are different names in the Chronicles account from those of Matthew, who follows Solomon's line, as do the Chronicles. These names appear after Zerubbabel, the nineteenth after Solomon. This difference can easily be explained by the fact that in many Bible genealogies some links are left out. A good example is found in Ezra's genealogy, in which he showed that he was a priest. (Ezra 7:1-5) His list omitted several names that are found in a parallel listing at 1 Chronicles 6:3-14.

In Coming Issues

● Is God's Name
in Your Bible?

● Who Cares About
Religion Anymore?

● Belief in a Resurrection
—Is There a Factual
Basis?



Adam

Why did Ezra leave these names out? He likely did this to avoid unnecessary repetition and to shorten the long list. Also, he may have used only the best-known names, just as today, a person wanting to prove that he was a descendant of some famous man, such as George Washington, would need only to name a few of the most recognizable, acknowledged descendants of the famous man, and show that his own father or grandfather was one of them. Ezra used what was needed to serve his purpose, and achieved it. This practice appears in some other Bible genealogies.

BIBLE LISTS OF JESUS' GENEALOGY

Genesis and Ruth	1 Chronicles Chaps. 1, 2, 3
Adam	Adam
Seth	Seth
Enosh	Enosh
Kenan	Kenan
Mahalaleel	Mahalaleel
Jared	Jared
Enoch	Enoch
Methuselah	Methuselah
Lamech	Lamech
Noah	Noah
Shem	Shem
Arpachshad	Arpachshad
Shelah	Shelah
Eber	Eber
Peleg	Peleg
Reu	Reu
Serug	Serug
Nahor	Nahor
Terah	Terah
Abram (Abraham)	Abraham
Isaac	Isaac
Jacob (Israel)	Jacob
Judah (and Tamar)	Judah
Perez	Perez
Hezron	Hezron
Ram	Ram
Amminadab	Amminadab
Nahshon	Nahshon
Salmon	Salmon (Salma, 1 Chron. 2:11)
Boaz (and Ruth)	Boaz
Obed	Obed
Jesse	Jesse
David	David

JESUS' OPPONENTS COULD NOT CHALLENGE PUBLIC RECORDS

As to Matthew's and Luke's listing of Jesus' genealogy, they doubtless got their list from the public register in the town of Bethlehem of Judah, where Jesus was born. (Luke 2:1-5; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6) There is a remarkable fact that should end any doubt about Jesus' being both the natural heir of David, and the one having the legal right to David's throne, since he was the firstborn son (actually foster-son) of a man descended from King Solomon.



Abraham

Luke Chap. 3	Matthew Chap. 1
Adam	Adam
Seth	Seth
Enos	Enos
Cainan	Cainan
Mahalaleel	Mahalaleel
Jared	Jared
Enoch	Enoch
Methuselah	Methuselah
Lamech	Lamech
Noah	Noah
Shem	Shem
Arphaxad	Arphaxad
Cainan	Cainan
Shelah	Shelah
Eber	Eber
Peleg	Peleg
Reu	Reu
Serug	Serug
Nahor	Nahor
Terah	Terah
Abraham	Abraham
Isaac	Isaac
Jacob	Jacob
Judah	Judah (and Tamar)
Perez	Perez
Hezron	Hezron
Arni (Ram?)	Ram
Amminadab	Amminadab
Nahshon	Nahshon
Salmon	Salmon (and Rahab)
Boaz	Boaz (and Ruth)
Obed	Obed
Jesse	Jesse
David	David (and Bath-sheba)

Lists of Jesus' Genealogy (Cont'd)

1 Chronicles Chaps. 1, 2, 3	Luke Chap. 3	Matthew Chap. 1
Solomon	Nathan*	Solomon
Rehoboam	Mattatha	Rehoboam
Abijah	Menna	Abijah
Asa	Melea	Asa
Jehoshaphat	Eliakim	Jehoshaphat
Jehoram	Jonam	Jehoram
Ahaziah	Joseph	
Jehoash	Judas	
Amaziah	Symeon	
Azariah (Uzziah)	Levi	Uzziah (Azariah)
Jotham	Matthat	Jotham
Ahaz	Jorim	Ahaz
Hezekiah	Eliezer	Hezekiah
Manasseh	Er	Manasseh
Amon	Elmadam	Amon
Josiah	Cosam	Josiah
Jehoiakim	Addi	
Jeconiah (Jeholachin)	Melchi	
Shealtiel (Pedaiah)†	Neri	Jeconiah
Zerubbabel‡	Shealtiel‡	Shealtiel
Hananiah	Zerubbabel	Zerubbabel
Jeshaiiah	Rhesa	Abiud
Rephaliah	Joanan	Eliakim
Arnan	Joda	Azor
Obadiah	Josech	Zadok
Shecaniah	Semein	Achim
Shemaiah	Mattathias	Eliud
Neariah	Maath	Eleazar
Elioenai	Naggai	Matthan
	Esli	Jacob (father of Mary)
	Nahum	Joseph (son-in-law)
	Amos	Jesus (Mary's son)
	Mattathias	
	Joseph	
	Jannai	
	Melchi	
	Levi	
	Matthat	
	Heli	
	Joseph	
	Jesus	
	(Mary's son)	

* At Nathan, Luke begins reckoning the genealogy through Jesus' maternal line, while Matthew continues with the paternal line.

† Zerubbabel evidently was the natural son of Pedaiah and the legal son of Shealtiel by brother-in-law marriage; or he was brought up by Shealtiel after his father Pedaiah's death and became legally recognized as the son of Shealtiel.—1 Chron. 3:17-19; Ezra 3:2; Luke 3:27.

‡ Shealtiel the son of Jeconiah evidently was the son-in-law of Neri.—1 Chron. 3:17; Luke 3:27.

§ The lines meet in Shealtiel and Zerubbabel, afterward diverging. This divergence could have been through two different descendants of Zerubbabel, or one here in the three lists could have been a son-in-law.



Genealogical records clearly affirm JESUS as the Messiah

It is this: None of Jesus' enemies among the Jews ever challenged his descent from David, either on the side of his mother or of his foster-father. Now we know that the Pharisees and Sadducees were as eager as a pack of wolves, seeking any possible way to discredit Jesus. But they could not deny the official birth registers, well known to the people and available for anyone to check. Neither did the pagan enemies attack Jesus' genealogy until after the Jewish records were destroyed when the Romans invaded and destroyed Jerusalem. Then, of course, no one could check their lying claims with the public records.

Jesus, being the long-looked-for Messiah, fulfilled and closed the Bible genealogy. He gained the throne of David, to sit on it without successors. (Luke 1:31-33) He was used by God to establish a new priesthood, he now being in heaven as a "high priest according to the manner of Melchizedek forever," not of the Levitical priesthood of the Jews. (Heb. 6:20; 7:11-14, 23, 24) The Biblical record of Jesus' genealogy remains in the Bible as part of the foundation of our faith and as a testimony to the sureness of the word and promises of God.

Recognize Christ's Vital Place

"All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth."—Matt. 28:18.

ARE you a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you recognize his vital place in God's arrangement? If so, does your daily life reflect appreciation for the Son of God and what he has done in your behalf?

The preeminent one among God's intelligent creatures

² The apostle Paul helps us to see just how important the position of Jesus Christ is. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and upon the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, no matter whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All other things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all other things and by means of him all other things were made to exist."—Col. 1:15-17.

³ According to these inspired words, the firstborn Son, the start of God's creation, is the preeminent One among all intelligent creatures. He is the image of his heavenly Father in that he is a spirit per-

son who perfectly reflects such admirable divine qualities as love, wisdom, justice, mercy, graciousness and long-suffering. (Ex. 34:6, 7; Ps. 33:5; Rom. 16:27; 1 John 4:8) Through him, Jehovah God brought into existence millions of angelic sons, the vast universe with its billions of galaxies and the earth with its abundant variety of plant and creature life. Additionally, "thrones," "lordships," "governments" or "authorities" came into existence through the Son. What are these?

⁴ They could not be worldly governmental positions or offices, for such are referred to in Scripture as human and not divine creations. (1 Pet. 2:13, 14) Hence, the "thrones," "lordships," "governments" or "authorities" must include those forms of rulership for which Jehovah God is responsible through his Son, including the kingdom of Melchizedek and that of David at Jerusalem.

⁵ As to the place of Jesus Christ in relation to the congregation, the apostle Paul states: "He is the head of *the body*, the congregation." (Col. 1:18) Hence, the congregation rightly looks to him and not to any human as the preeminent one, the head.

1. What questions might one who professes to be a disciple of Jesus Christ ask himself? (John 15:8-10)
2, 3. (a) In what sense is Jesus Christ the "image of the invisible God"? (Heb. 1:3) (b) How did Jehovah God use his firstborn Son, and so what place does this one occupy among all intelligent creatures? (John 1:1-3)

4. Why could the "thrones," "lordships," "governments" or "authorities" created through the Son not be worldly governmental positions or offices, and so what must they include?

5. (a) According to Colossians 1:18, what is the relationship of Jesus Christ to the congregation? (b) What effect should this relationship have on members of the congregation? (Matt. 23:8-10)

⁶ A failure to recognize this fact results in disunity. This is well illustrated by what happened in ancient Corinth. The apostle Paul had to write to the brothers there: "Disclosure was made to me about you, my brothers, by those of the house of Chloe, that dissensions exist among you. What I mean is this, that each one of you says: 'I belong to Paul,' 'But I to Apollos,' 'But I to Cephas,' 'But I to Christ.' The Christ exists divided." (1 Cor. 1:11-13) Because of giving undue attention to men, members of the Corinthian congregation split up into factions. They failed to appreciate that men taking the lead among Christians were but servants of God and Christ, slaving in behalf of their brothers. —1 Cor. 3:5-9.

Happily, Paul, Apollos and Cephas, or Peter, were not responsible for the situation that developed in the Corinthian congregation. They personally set the example in looking to Jesus Christ as head. The apostle Paul, for instance, was able to say: "Become imitators of me, even as I am of Christ." (1 Cor. 11:1) And certainly elders today should want to be like Paul. This requires that they speak in agreement. (1 Cor. 1:10) Once elders publicly express widely divergent personal views, members of the congregation will be inclined to look to those whose opinions are more in line with their own thinking. The situation becomes especially serious when an elder downgrades his fellow elders, perhaps implying that he is more zealous and more faithful than they are or perhaps more discerning, understanding and sympathetic. (Compare 2 Samuel 15:2-6.) This can result in his building up a following within the congregation and in his undermining the efforts of the

body of elders to care for the spiritual interests of the flock.

⁸ On the other hand, when elders strive to speak and act unitedly, allowing themselves to be guided fully by the Scriptures in their decisions, there will be unity in the congregation. The whole congregation will then be encouraged to look, not to individuals, but to Jesus Christ as the head of the congregation.

⁹ Continuing his discussion of the vital place of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul presents yet another reason for the preeminence of the Son of God. We read: "He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that he might become the one who is first in all things." (Col. 1:18) No one prior to Jesus Christ was raised to immortal life in the heavens. Because he was the first to experience a resurrection to perfection of life, he is "the firstborn from the dead." He prepared the way for his joint heirs to share with him in a heavenly inheritance by being raised to immortal life as he was. (Heb. 6:19, 20; Rev. 20:6) For a person to participate in that resurrection, he must recognize the headship of Jesus Christ over the congregation. In fact, anyone who would become a recipient of divine blessings must do so. —Phil. 2:9-11.

All fullness dwells in him'

¹⁰ Recognition of Christ's headship, however, is not just a matter of acknowledging his foremost position in the congregation. Note that the apostle Paul continues: "God saw good for all fullness to dwell in him." (Col. 1:19) According to

8. How is the congregation benefited when elders set the example in submitting to Christ's headship? (Eph. 4:11-16)

9. Besides Jesus' being the head of the congregation, what other reason does Colossians 1:18 give for the preeminence of the Son of God, and what should this mean to us?

10. How is it that 'God saw good for all fullness to dwell in the Son'?

1. (a) What can happen when Christians begin attaching undue importance to men? (Mark 9:33, 34) (b) How is this seen from what developed in the Corinthian congregation?

2. (a) Were Paul, Apollos or Peter responsible for the wrong view existing in the Corinthian congregation?

b) How can elders be like the apostle Paul, and so what should they guard against?

God's good pleasure, Jesus Christ occupies the foremost place in the congregation, not only as regards preeminence and authority, but also in having the "fullness" of everything that Christians need. The Son of God is the embodiment of divine qualities, including wisdom. Hence, he, not any human on earth, is *the one* to whom true Christians look as their exemplar and the appointed source of guidance and instruction.

¹¹ Jesus Christ's perfect example and teachings do not have to be supplemented by human philosophies and traditions. In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul developed this aspect further when he wrote: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ; because it is in him that all the fullness of the divine quality dwells bodily. And so you are possessed of a fullness by means of him, who is the head of all government and authority."—Col. 2:8-10.

¹² Back in the first century, Christians were in danger of being led astray by the "elementary things of the world," that is, the primary or fundamental principles of the world alienated from God. These elementary things included the unscriptural concepts of the Greeks and other non-Jewish peoples as well as the non-Biblical traditional Jewish teachings. On the surface, some of the philosophies and teachings may have seemed very plausible. They may have been accompanied by reasoning and argument that had a certain appeal to human thinking. But they lacked a solid foundation. These baseless teachings

—whether on doctrine, on human conduct, or as to how things should be done in the congregation—were really "empty deception." So, there was good reason for Christians to be on guard against becoming the prey of some false teacher and being turned aside from the way of the truth. —Compare 1 John 2:26, 27.

¹³ Discussing still other wrong views that were prevalent, Paul says further: "Let no man judge you in eating and drinking or in respect of a festival or of an observance of the new moon or of a sabbath; for those things are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to the Christ. Let no man deprive you of the prize who takes delight in a mock humility and a form of worship of the angels, 'taking his stand on' the things he has seen, puffed up without proper cause by his fleshly frame of mind, whereas he is not holding fast to the head, to the one from whom all the body, being supplied and harmoniously joined together by means of its joints and ligaments, goes on growing with the growth that God gives."—Col. 2:16-19.

¹⁴ Christians at Colossae were thus being urged not to allow others to sit in judgment of their faith and righteousness, claiming that they could not gain salvation unless they became circumcised and began following the law of Moses. Individuals judging in this way were going back to the "elementary things," the ABC's of true worship, ignoring God's further development of matters and denying that "all fullness" now dwells in Christ. Hence, such persons were not holding fast to the Head, Christ, and were sidetracking individuals from sound doctrine that was essential for them to grow spiritually.

11. Since all "fullness" dwells in Christ, what can be said about the need for human philosophies and traditions?

12. (a) What are the "elementary things of the world"? (b) Why could Paul refer to faith-destroying reasonings and teachings as "empty deception"?

13. According to Colossians 2:16-19, what false instruction were certain ones promoting, and why were these teachings dangerous?

14. (a) How might a Christian wrongly let himself be judged regarding eating and drinking or the observance of certain days? (b) Why were those who were making such judgments in error?

¹⁵ For Christians at Colossae to yield to the persuasions of a promoter of false doctrine could result in their being deprived of the "prize" set before them. What was this prize? It was the glorious reward of immortal heavenly life.—1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:14; 2 Tim. 4:7, 8; Rev. 2:7.

¹⁶ As the apostle Paul pointed out, a man who would deprive a Christian of the valuable prize of life might seem quite innocent of wrongdoing. The apostle described him as one "who takes delight in a mock humility." (Col. 2:18) So, to all appearances, he was a man of great condescension. Yet this condescension, or humility, was only a false front.

¹⁷ What he was in actuality is evident from Paul's referring to such a one as "taking his stand on" the things he has seen, puffed up without proper cause by his fleshly frame of mind." (Col. 2:18) What did the apostle mean by saying this about a teacher of falsehood? The expression "taking his stand on" was a phrase anciently used in connection with the initiation rites of pagan mysteries. Not satisfied with the complete and simple truth revealed through Jesus Christ, he took pride in the belief that he had attained wisdom and holiness superior to what his Christian brothers shared generally. By trying to supplement Christian truth with false, speculative reasoning, he actually deviated from the faith. In his estimation, the Son of God was not the sole depository of knowledge and wisdom. Such a person did not believe the inspired words: "Carefully concealed in him [Christ] are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." (Col. 2:3) He insisted that there were depositories of knowledge and wis-

dom other than God's Son that could be looked to by the congregation for direction.

A Christian's position today

¹⁸ Today God's servants do not face precisely the same situations that prevailed in the first century. Nevertheless, there are vital lessons for us to draw from what Paul wrote to the Colossians. For example, all Christians, especially elders, must exercise care not to inject themselves into the private affairs of others and not to put any unscriptural personal viewpoints and philosophies on an equal footing with the truth revealed in the teachings and example of Jesus Christ.—Compare 1 Timothy 1:3, 4; 2 Timothy 4:1, 2.

¹⁹ Whatever spiritual counsel or advice that a Christian may give to others should be based, not on personal preference, prejudice or on worldly principles, but on the example and teachings of Jesus Christ. Since everything that the Son of God taught harmonized fully with the inspired Scriptures, the complete Bible can and should rightly be used for giving spiritual help. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) A person's failure to stick to the Scriptures would constitute a disregard for the Head of the congregation. (Compare Matthew 7:24-27; 15:3-9; John 17:17.) It would also imply that all "fullness" does not dwell in the Christ but that Christ's "lack" must be supplemented by personal opinion and human philosophy.

²⁰ What of Christians who accept the personal philosophies and opinions of others as a guide for determining the right-

15. What could Christians at Colossae lose by accepting the arguments of false teachers?

16. According to Paul's words at Colossians 2:18, what kind of appearance might a teacher of error make?

17. (a) What did the apostle Paul mean when describing a false teacher as one who had 'taken his stand on he things he has seen'? (b) How was such a false teacher "puffed up without proper cause by his fleshly frame of mind"?

18. When it comes to unscriptural personal viewpoints and philosophies, what must all Christians, especially elders, guard against?

19. (a) On what should spiritual counsel always be based, and why? (b) What would a Christian be denying if he failed to stick to the Scriptures and advocated personal philosophies as a guide for others?

20. As is evident from Hebrews 5:14, why is it dangerous to let the personal opinions of others act as our guide?

ness of a particular course? They may well injure their conscience and hinder their spiritual growth. Why? For one thing, the Bible shows that 'perceptive powers must be trained by use.' So, when others are unduly influencing or even controlling an individual's decisions, this person is not going to grow spiritually but will remain a babe, unable to distinguish right from wrong.—Heb. 5:14.

²¹ Moreover, because of trying to conform to what are merely the unscriptural personal opinions of another Christian, some persons may get needless feelings of guilt about caring for personal affairs, wholesome entertainment, recreation, and so forth. For instance, a respected member of the congregation may openly express the view that the "last days" are absolutely no time for God's servants to be thinking about making major home improvements. While many may recognize this as a private opinion and remain unaffected by it, some could begin to feel guilty about their plans. Those who allow themselves to be unduly influenced by the personal opinion of someone else may later experience problems and inconveniences that could have been avoided by going ahead with their reasonable plans. Similarly, in other areas of life, whenever God's Word is displaced by the views of imperfect men as a source of guidance, serious problems can result. But we are always safe when we make decisions based on the example and teachings of the perfect Son of God.

Submit to Christ as head

²² In view of the exalted position of Je-

21. How can efforts to conform to the unscriptural personal opinions of others give rise to feelings of guilt about things that are proper in themselves?

22. (a) In view of Jesus' exalted position, how should we view his commands? (b) What questions might we ask ourselves in connection with Jesus' commands found at Matthew 28:19, 20; Luke 21:34-36; 22:19, 20 and John 13:34, 35?

sus Christ, his commands should certainly be taken seriously and be heeded in a whole-souled way. Are you striving to share fully in bearing witness and in making disciples? (Matt. 28:19, 20) Are you keeping awake spiritually, not allowing yourself to become weighed down by the daily cares of life or by overindulgence in food and drink? (Luke 21:34-36) Do your dealings with others show that you really want to display the self-sacrificing love that identifies true disciples of Jesus Christ? (John 13:34, 35) When you obediently assemble with fellow believers to commemorate the Lord's Evening Meal, do you think seriously about the benefits that have come to you through Jesus' sacrifice? (Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-32) Are you moved to take careful note of your conduct so that you might maintain the clean standing that resulted from your accepting, in faith, the atoning benefits of Jesus' shed blood?—1 Pet. 1:14-19.

²³ We should never forget that as long as our sins were not atoned for, we were alienated from God. But, through Jesus' blood shed on an execution stake, we have been reconciled to the Most High and are now at peace with him. (Col. 1:20) Nevertheless, after our initial cleansing from sin resulting to us from our acceptance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice in our behalf, we must continue to put forth effort to remain in an unblemished state before Jehovah God. In his letter to the Colossians, for example, the apostle Paul sets forth clearly what is required of a Christian in the way of conduct.

Control wrong desires

²⁴ "Deaden," Paul writes, "your body

23. How did we become reconciled to God, and so what should we continue to do?

24. (a) Before becoming a baptized disciple of Jesus Christ, how may a person have used his body members and his power of speech? (b) What should he do now?

members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." (Col. 3:5) Before becoming a baptized disciple of Jesus Christ, a person may have used his body members in a way contrary to God's purpose. The apostle even says: "In those very things you, too, once walked when you used to live in them. But now really put them all away from you, wrath, anger, badness, abusive speech, and obscene talk out of your mouth. Do not be lying to one another." (Col. 3:7-9) Yes, misuse of the body members and the power of speech is unbecoming to one with a clean standing before God. He should deaden wrong fleshly desires, not allowing them to cause his body members to sin. He should imitate the example of the apostle Paul who said of himself: "I pummel my body and lead it as a slave, that, after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved somehow."—1 Cor. 9:27.

²⁵ One thing that can help us to gain the mastery over wrong fleshly desires is a recognition of the seriousness of covetousness—an inordinate desire for something to which a person is not entitled. As Paul stated, covetousness is idolatry. This is so because the object of a person's wrong craving begins to take on too much importance in his life. It becomes an idol to him and so interferes with his giving Jehovah God exclusive devotion. It also prevents him from being wholehearted in his love for God, as his selfish craving prods him to disregard divine law. The Bible shows that one of the ways in which we display our love for Jehovah is by our loyal obedience to his commands. (1 John 5:2, 3) Therefore, when a Christian becomes aware that wrong desire is building up within him, he does well to call to mind

how precious his relationship with God is and how senseless it would be to forfeit this by making himself an idolater.

Positive action toward fellow believers

²⁶ Our continuing in an unblemished state before Jehovah God, however, involves more than refraining from wrong conduct and unwholesome speech. Positive action is also required. So the apostle Paul went on to urge his Colossian brothers: "Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering. Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Even as Jehovah freely forgave you, so do you also."—Col. 3:12, 13.

²⁷ Consider what Paul is here saying. As Christians, we have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ and are spiritual brothers and sisters. We should therefore treat one another in a brotherly way. Being imperfect, all of us repeatedly fall short of reflecting the fine qualities of our heavenly Father and of his Son. Rightly, then, we should not be overly severe with fellow believers, treating them harshly. It would be wrong for a Christian to set himself up as a judge of his brothers, proudly asserting his claimed right to punish them for their failures. No, he should willingly put up with their shortcomings and not hold back from showing compassion, kindness, humility, mildness and long-suffering. True, a person may have a valid complaint against a brother. But he does well to ask himself, Is my brother's fail-

25. (a) Why is covetousness idolatry? (b) How can recognition of this fact help us to gain the mastery over wrong fleshly desires?

26. Is our remaining in an unblemished state before Jehovah God just a matter of refraining from wrong conduct, and how is this shown at Colossians 3:12, 13? 27. Why should we treat fellow Christians in a brotherly way and manifest a forgiving spirit?

ing really so grave that I cannot forgive him? Then, when the one having the complaint views his own shortcomings, he will be far more inclined to be forgiving, just as Jehovah has been forgiving toward him.—Matt. 18:21-35.

²⁸ But what if the failings of others put our heart in a state of agitation? How can we calm it? The apostle Paul provides this inspired counsel: "Let the peace of the Christ control in your hearts." (Col. 3:15) This "peace" is the tranquillity, the calmness, that we gain upon becoming disciples of the Son of God. It results from our knowing that we are loved and approved by Jehovah God and by his Son. When this peace is the controlling force in our hearts, we will do our utmost to speak and act in a way that will preserve it. We will safeguard our precious relationship with Jehovah God and Jesus Christ by treating fellow believers in a kind, loving manner. This will lead to the furtherance of peace in the congregation and prevent us from becoming agitated to the point of sinning against our brothers.—Eph. 4:26, 27.

²⁹ Next, Paul recommends: "Show yourselves thankful." (Col. 3:15) Yes, a spirit of gratitude contributes much toward the preservation of the peace that we enjoy as Christians. Persons who genuinely recognize God's undeserved kindness toward them and fellow believers are happy and content. Because they deeply appreciate what Jehovah God and Jesus Christ have done in making it possible for them to be cleansed from sin with everlasting life in view, they do not quickly take offense when others fail in some way but forgive them freely, from the heart. How different it is with thankless persons! They often voice complaints, are never satisfied

and are most unhappy. Their selfish, unloving attitude is discouraging to those who are brought into association with them and gives rise to quarrels and strife. So, we do well to cultivate a spirit of gratitude.

³⁰ After encouraging Christians to be thankful, Paul writes: "Let the word of the Christ reside in you richly in all wisdom." (Col. 3:16) What does this mean? "The word of the Christ," or the message from Christ, the whole deposit of Christian teaching, should become a part of us. (*The Bible in Living English; Good News Bible; Weymouth*, margin) It should be as if the entire body of teaching as given by Christ has taken up residence within us. For that to be the case, we must be fully absorbed with the message of Christian truth, meditating upon it. When the "word of the Christ" is actually a part of us in all its fullness or richness, it will serve as a guide to us, helping us to make our way successful. That word will move us to act wisely. When we are filled with the "word of the Christ," we will be encouraging and upbuilding toward our brothers.

Our whole life is involved

³¹ The factors that can contribute toward the preservation of peace with fellow believers are also essential for finding joy and contentment in all other aspects of life. Never should we lose sight of the fact that we are disciples of Jesus Christ every day, yes, every hour of the day. The apostle Paul wrote: "Whatever it is that you do in word or in work, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, thanking God the Father through him." (Col. 3:17) So, in all matters of life, we should speak

28. (a) What is "the peace of the Christ"? (b) How does its control of our hearts affect our relationship with fellow believers?

29. What good will result from heeding the inspired counsel, "show yourselves thankful"?

30. What does it mean to 'let the word of the Christ reside in us richly in all wisdom'?

31. According to Colossians 3:17, what should we do with reference to all aspects of our life?

and act in the name of the Son of God, that is, as representing him, and we should be grateful to Jehovah God for the capacity he has given us to speak and to work.

³² Really, then, it is regard for Jesus Christ as Lord that should make Christians fine husbands and fathers, good wives and mothers, obedient sons and daughters and exemplary workers and employers. That our family life and secular employment should give evidence of our being Christians is manifest from Paul's counsel: "You wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as it is becoming in the Lord. You husbands, keep on loving your wives and do not be bitterly angry with them. You children, be obedient to your parents in everything, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord. You fathers, do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted. You slaves [today, employees], be obedient in everything to those who are your masters [today, employers] in a fleshly sense, not with acts of eyeservice, as men pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, with fear of Jehovah. Whatever you are doing, work

at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men, for you know that it is from Jehovah you will receive the due reward of the inheritance. Slave for the Master, Christ. Certainly the one that is doing wrong will receive back what he wrongly did, and there is no partiality. You masters [today, employers], keep dealing out what is righteous and what is fair to your slaves [today, employees], knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."—Col. 3:18-4:1.

³³ So, if we profess to be Christ's disciples, our lives should demonstrate a recognition of his vital role in God's arrangement. This means that we should obey his commands and look to his teachings and example for guidance. If we do, we can rest assured of his love and the love of his Father. Jesus himself said: "If you observe my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have observed the commandments of the Father and remain in his love." (John 15:10) As persons loved and approved by Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, we can be confident of gaining the reward of everlasting life.—1 John 2:25.

32. (a) What counsel will wives, husbands, fathers and children be heeding if they have a proper regard for Jesus Christ? (b) In what way should Christian employees perform their work, and why? (c) How should Christian employers deal with employees, and why?

33. (a) Recognition of whose role should be evident in the lives of Christians, and how is this recognition manifest? (b) What confidence can we have if we observe the commandments of Jesus Christ?

"Kicking Against the Goats"

BEFORE his conversion, Paul (Saul) bitterly persecuted God's true servants. When revealing himself to Paul, Jesus Christ said: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? To keep kicking against the goads makes it hard for you." (Acts 26:14) What did Jesus mean by this?

Jesus Christ views what is done to his followers as being done to him himself. (Matt. 25:40, 45) Therefore, Paul, in persecuting Christians, was in reality persecuting Christ. He was fighting against something that had God's back-

ing, to his own injury. Paul could rightly be spoken of as "kicking against the goads." A goad is a pointed stick, sometimes metal tipped, used in driving cattle or an animal used in plowing. The stubborn animal that resists the pricks of the goad by kicking against it does not get any relief but only harms itself. Similarly, Paul did not benefit by persecuting those whom God approved. His efforts in this regard were as fruitless as those of a draft animal when resisting the pricks of the goad.

First Samuel highlights

IMPORTANCE OF OBEDIENCE

THE importance to Christians of obedience can hardly be overemphasized. In particular is this true as to God's commands to them. Is not all the trouble in the world due to our first parents' having disobeyed God's command forbidding their eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and bad? Yes, those who desire God's approval must obey him.—Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-19.

The book of First Samuel serves very well in stressing the importance of obedience. It not only contains precepts commanding obedience but illustrates the fruits of obedience and the results of disobedience.

Originally this book constituted with Second Samuel one volume (scroll). It covers upward of 100 years of Israel's history, from shortly before the birth of Samuel, who proved to be the last of the line of judges, to the death of Saul, the first of Israel's kings. The outstanding historical event it records is Israel's change from rulership by judges to a monarchy. Three persons are made most prominent, the prophet Samuel, King Saul and David. The book covers in sequence: (1) Samuel and his judgeship; (2) Saul's early kingship; (3) David's exploits, Saul's persecution of David and Saul's suicide on the field of battle.

There has been much conjecture as to who wrote the book of First Samuel. However, for those with faith in the Bible's inspiration, 1 Chronicles 29:29 is plain: "As for the affairs of David the king, the first ones and the last, there they are written among the words of Samuel the seer and among the words of Nathan the prophet and among the words of Gad the visionary." That is, the prophet Samuel wrote all of Samuel until his death, as recorded at 1 Samuel 25:1, Nathan and Gad writing the rest. And that is the view held by ancient Jewish scholars as well as by most of the early Christian scholars.

As to the authenticity or the genuineness of the things recorded in the book: Many of its events are referred to in the book of Psalms and in the Christian Greek Scriptures; there is a straightforwardness and candor that stamps the book as truth. Archaeology also has testified to the accuracy of some of the things that the book records.

Further, the literary quality of the books of Samuel is such, in fact, that it might be said to add weight to its authenticity. Says a noted Hebrew authority: "*Samuel* contains some of the finest examples of Hebrew prose in the Bible. . . . Like all good Hebrew, it achieves the maximum effect with the greatest economy of words.

Its narratives are masterpieces of historical writing." This is something we would expect from Samuel, as he heard the Scriptures read at the sanctuary from the time he was weaned. The prophets Nathan and Gad may well have attempted to imitate his writing.

SAMUEL, JUDGE AND PROPHET

First Samuel opens by telling of a certain Hannah grieving because she is childless. While at the tabernacle at Shiloh, in prayer to God, Hannah vows that if He will give her a son she will dedicate him to Jehovah's service. God answers her prayer. She names the child Samuel, meaning "name of God." As soon as she weans him, most likely when he is between three and five years of age, she brings him to Shiloh to serve. As one who obeys God's command, as stated at Deuteronomy 23:23, to fulfill what one vows, she has a fine reward! It is no doubt a joy for her to see her son Samuel become such a mighty servant of Jehovah God!—1 Sam. 1:1-2:11.

The two sons of Eli the high priest are of just the opposite frame of mind. Though serving as priests at the tabernacle, they flagrantly disobey God's laws both with regard to their activities as priests, and in being grossly immoral. Although Eli chides them for these things, they pay no attention. Jehovah is so greatly displeased with their disobedient course of action that he warns that he will punish the house of Eli, using young Samuel to give this message. Jehovah uses the Philistines to execute this judgment by *defeating the Israelites in battle*. In this battle, not only do the sons of Eli die, but the Philistines capture the sacred ark of the covenant, which the Israelites have brought to the battlefield hoping that it may serve as a charm to ensure victory. Hearing about the loss of the ark, high priest Eli, old, very fat and blind, falls

backward off his seat, breaking his neck.—1 Sam. 2:12-4:22.

But it is not Jehovah's will to let the Philistines keep the ark. By a series of plaguing judgments, God maneuvers them into returning the ark to Israel.

Upon reaching manhood, Samuel serves as priest and judge of Israel. When the axis lords of the Philistines again gather to do battle, Samuel pleads with Jehovah, with the result that the Israelites gain a striking victory over their enemies. Year after year Samuel keeps judging Israel, making a "circuit of Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpah."—1 Sam. 5:1-7:17.

SAUL, ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

There is no question about Samuel's obeying God's commands and being blessed for it, but with his sons it is a different story. They 'follow unjust profit, accept bribes and pervert judgment.' The people of Israel use this situation as a basis for asking for a king to rule over them. There is also fear of aggression from surrounding nations. Israel's request for a king is a real blow to Samuel. But God assures him that by asking for a human king they not only are rejecting Samuel but are really rejecting God from being their King. Samuel warns them of how great a burden having a king will be for them, but still they want one. They want to be like the nations round about them. Jehovah indicates his disapproval of their decision by causing an unseasonal thunderstorm. Still, Jehovah does not turn his back on his people. He selects a king, modest Saul, who is head and shoulders taller than any of his people and who truly has the appearance of a king. Samuel first anoints Saul privately and then publicly, and has Saul proclaimed king over the nation of Israel.—1 Sam. 8:1-10:27.

Saul at first shows himself to be an able king. He unites the fighting forces of Israel to defeat the Ammonites who have threatened to impose a sadistic condition on the men of Jabesh, whose city they have taken. At this time Samuel gives what might be termed his farewell speech. He reminds his people of how justly and honestly he has judged Israel all the days of his life and repeatedly urges them to fear and serve Jehovah faithfully.—1 Sam. 11: 1-12:25.

After this, King Saul, in disobeying God's commands, makes one bad mistake after another. An emergency arises, with a large force of Philistines threatening to attack. Saul is told to wait for Samuel, who will supplicate Jehovah for help by offering sacrifices. Because Samuel delays in coming and there seems to be an emergency, Saul presumptuously disregards the command to wait and proceeds to offer the burnt offerings and the communion sacrifices. Right after he does so, Samuel appears. Because of Saul's presumptuous impatience, Jehovah rejects him as king: "Because you did not keep what Jehovah commanded you."—1 Sam. 13:1-23.

Saul again makes a serious mistake, that of not obeying God's command to wipe out completely the nation of Amalek. Centuries earlier, the Amalekites made a dastardly attack on the Israelite stragglers who were weary and exhausted on their march through the wilderness. (Deut. 25: 17-19) Because Saul, together with the people, spares the choicest of the flocks and the Amalek King Agag, Samuel tells him: "Does Jehovah have as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? Look! To obey is better than a sacrifice . . . Since you have rejected the word of Jehovah, he accordingly rejects you from being king." Thereafter Samuel sees Saul no more, al-

though he greatly grieves over him. —1 Sam. 15:1-35.

Shortly afterward Jehovah sends Samuel to the home of Jesse to anoint the youngest son David as Israel's next king. Now Jehovah's spirit leaves Saul and he is plagued with mental depression. Since David is an excellent harpist, he is chosen to play before King Saul, bringing relief to him. Next we learn of David's slaying the boastful Philistine giant Goliath with only a sling and a stone. David's great faith in and zeal for Jehovah's name so endears him to Saul's son Jonathan that 'Jonathan begins to love David as his own soul.' (1 Sam. 18:1) Though it becomes clear that David rather than Jonathan will be Israel's next king, Jonathan continues to be David's loyal friend, taking David's side even at the risk of his own life.

David now becomes so successful in battle that the women of Israel sing: "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." This fills Saul with a jealousy that becomes a consuming passion with him; uppermost now in his life is trying to get rid of David. During the time that Saul hunts David like a wild animal, David himself has two opportunities to kill Saul, but he refuses to 'touch Jehovah's anointed.'—1 Sam. 18:1-24:22; 26: 1-25.

The fugitive David is joined by other Israelites who have grievances, and they are rated as an outlaw band. But they serve to protect the farmers and their flocks from predators. Because of this, David asks a reward from a wealthy owner of sheep, Nabal. He, however, insolently rejects David's request, for which action David vows dire punishment. But Nabal's wife, noting what has happened, and fearing the worst, proceeds to pacify David with generous gifts. As a result, when Na-

bal suddenly dies, David asks her to become his wife, to which she gladly consents.—1 Sam. 25:1-42.

When the Philistines again mass for attack, King Saul seeks in vain for guidance from Jehovah. But Jehovah's spirit has departed from him. Saul's prayers go unanswered and the priests have no word for him from Jehovah. In desperation he consults a spirit medium. She gives him only bad news. In Saul's last battle Israel suffers a terrible defeat, his son Jonathan is slain

and Saul himself, mortally wounded, commits suicide.—1 Sam. 28:1-31:13.

The book of Samuel is truly part of the things written aforetime for our "instruction." It is "beneficial for teaching, for improving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that [we] may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work." In particular does it stress the importance of obedience and the tragic consequences of disobedience.—Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

the "GREAT KING" disciplines a HUMAN KING



WHO is the "great King"? None other than Jehovah, the God of heaven. (Matt. 5:35) And who is the human king whom he disciplines? King David. How the great King disciplines King David is told in the book of Second Samuel. This book covers about 40 years of David's life, from the time when his own tribe is about **to make him king** until just before he has his son Solomon proclaimed king over all Israel.*

The record of David's reigning as king does indeed show that he kept receiving

discipline from his God Jehovah. But David always responded to it in the right way, whether that discipline was in the form of oral instruction, or of severe chastisement because of mistakes or sins committed.—Compare Hebrews 12:5, 11.

As Second Samuel begins, we see David mourning the deaths of King Saul and of his close, loyal friend Jonathan. Next, David inquires as to what course he should take, and Jehovah tells him to go to the Judean city of Hebron. David obediently does so and is anointed as king over the tribe of Judah. However, Abner, chief of Israel's army, has Saul's son Ish-bosheth proclaimed king over all the rest of Israel. This results in civil war, which **continues**

* What has been previously said about the historicity and writership of 1 Samuel largely applies to 2 Samuel, the prophets Nathan and Gad continuing their writing.—1 Chron. 29:29.

for several years until Abner defects to David, bringing with him the allegiance of the rest of Israel. After reigning seven and a half years over Judah, David is now anointed as king over all 12 tribes of Israel. David at once takes Jerusalem, which has been held by the Jebusites, and makes it his capital.—2 Sam. 1:1-5:10.

David continues to ask of Jehovah how he should proceed, and repeatedly proves successful in his wars with the Philistines. He desires the sacred ark of the covenant, symbolic of God's presence, to be brought to Jerusalem. But because he does not proceed in the God-ordained way, he is disciplined; God slays one of the men involved because of his improperly taking hold of the ark. Later, amid great rejoicing, David has the ark brought the rest of the way to Jerusalem in the right manner, on the shoulders of the Levite priests. Considering it unfitting for the ark to continue being in a tent while he is living in a palace, David now desires to build a temple for it. But Jehovah tells him that because he is a man of war and bloodshed his son will build this temple. Nevertheless, Jehovah himself will build David a house, that is, a dynasty that will last forever. God has fulfilled this promise in his Son, Jesus Christ, a descendant of David.—2 Sam. 5:11-7:29; Luke 1:30-33.

David continues warring victoriously against Israel's enemies. However, one spring, instead of going forth in battle, David remains at home. As a result, he gets involved with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, one of his outstanding warriors. She becomes pregnant, and, David's efforts to cover over the infidelity failing, he sees to it that her husband falls in battle, upon which he marries her.—2 Sam. 8:1-11:27.

However, this course greatly displeases Jehovah. He sends his prophet Nathan to rebuke David, who admits his guilt and is repentant. Still, David suffers greatly

for his sin. The prophetic judgment is that the sword will never depart from his house. First, the son conceived in adultery dies. Then one of David's sons, Amnon, falls in love with his own half sister Tamar, violates her and then despises her. Her full brother Absalom bides his time and then murders Amnon. He is eventually reconciled to his father, David, only to start a conspiracy to win the affections of his people away from David. Absalom stages a revolt, causing his father, together with his large household, to flee Jerusalem. Truly David is being disciplined, chastised, because of his sins. Jehovah maneuvers matters so that Absalom's forces are defeated. Next follow some of David's poetic writings, most of which also appear at Psalm 18.—2 Sam. 12:1-20:26; 22:1-23:7.

Once more David makes a serious mistake and is disciplined for it. He orders a census to be taken, despite objections of his army chief Joab. No sooner has he done so than his conscience smites him. But it is too late. Given his choice of three punishments, David chooses pestilence. Seeing his people die like flies, he prays: "It is I that have sinned and it is I that have done wrong; but these sheep—what have they done?" His offering a sacrifice to Jehovah stops the plague. With this incident the book closes.—2 Sam. 24:1-25.

Truly Second Samuel tells how the great King Jehovah disciplined his servant King David. Commendably, at no time did David rebel or blame someone else, as did Adam, Eve and King Saul. David's heart was right, he accepted discipline. We never read of his making the same mistake twice. His reign was successful in that he had God's favor until the end and was used by him to extend Israel's borders to their divinely appointed limits. He certainly set a fine example as to how we should respond to discipline regardless of the form it may take.—Heb. 12:5-11.



IN THE Sermon on the Mount, Jesus expressed his deep love and respect for the written Word of God. He said: *"Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets [that is, the Hebrew Scriptures as a whole]. I came, not to destroy, but to fulfill."*—Matt. 5:17.

Both in word and in deed Jesus proved to be different from the Jewish religious teachers of his day. He spoke of a time when people would no longer worship God at the temple in Jerusalem. (John 4:21) He likened his teaching to "new wine" that "old wineskins" could not contain. (Luke 5:37) Jesus also took meals with "tax collectors and sinners" and performed miracles of healing on the weekly Sabbath day. (Mark 2:13-17; 3:1-5) This conduct did not violate any law of God; but it did run counter to Jewish traditions that were viewed as of greater importance than the Hebrew Scriptures.* Since they viewed Jesus as a transgressor of God's law, the Pharisees and Herodians had plotted to kill him even before he gave his famous Sermon on the Mount.—Mark 3:6.

However, the Son of God assured his listeners that he

* The ancient code of Jewish law known as *The Mishnah* states: "Greater stringency applies to [the observance of] the words of the Scribes than to [the observance] of the words of the [written] Law."—Tractate *Sanhedrin*, 11:3, translated by Herbert Danby.

had not come "to destroy" the Law. He neither disobeyed its commandments nor declared any part of it as not binding upon the Israelites. Instead, Jesus came "to fulfill" that divine legislation. As a sinless person, he kept it perfectly, even "as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake." (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22) His sacrificial death also fulfilled prophetic types furnished by the Law's system of animal sacrifices.—Dan. 9:26, 27; Heb. 10:1-9.

Jesus fulfilled, not only the letter of the Law, but also the spirit behind that Law. Whereas the Law forbade sinful acts, Jesus denounced the attitudes that motivate such acts. For example, murder and adultery were violations of God's law; but Jesus showed that continuing angry with someone and looking upon a woman with lust are the dispositions of mind that lead to such transgressions. (Matt. 5:21, 22, 27, 28; Jas. 1:13-15) Furthermore, Jesus' voluntary sacrifice of his human life for the benefit of mankind was a superlative display of love, which the Bible calls "the law's fulfillment."—Rom. 13:8-10; compare John 15:13.

Next in his sermon, Jesus stated: *"Truly I say to you that sooner would heaven and earth pass away than for one smallest letter or one particle of a letter to pass away from the Law by any means and not all things take place."*—Matt. 5:18.

As shown in *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, Jesus here used the word "Amen," meaning "truly," "so be it." As the anointed Son of God, the promised Messiah, he could certainly assure the truthfulness of his utterances.—Compare 2 Corinthians 1:20; Revelation 3:14.

The fulfillment of God's law would reach down to the "smallest letter or one particle of a letter." In the Hebrew alphabet then current, the smallest letter was *yod* (י). Certain Hebrew letters featured a tiny stroke, apex or "tittle." The scribes and Pharisees viewed as highly significant, not only the words and letters of God's law, but also those strokes or 'smallest particles.' A rabbinical legend represents God as saying: "Solomon and a thousand like him shall pass away, but not a tittle of thee (the Torah [Pentateuch]) will I allow to be expunged."

So remote was the possibility of any failure of fulfillment for even the tiniest detail of God's law that "sooner would heaven and earth pass away." This was equivalent to saying "never," for the Scriptures indicate that the literal heavens and earth will remain for eternity.—Ps. 78:69; 119:90.

Jesus gave further emphasis to his high regard for God's law, saying: *"Whoever, therefore, breaks one of these least commandments and teaches mankind to that effect, he will be called 'least' in relation to the kingdom of the heavens. As for anyone who does them and teaches them, this one will be called 'great' in relation to the kingdom of the heavens."*—Matt. 5:19.

A person might "break" one of the commandments by willfully disobeying it. Or, he might do what was viewed as even

worse, namely, teaching fellow Jews subject to the Law that some of its commands were not binding. While the Law covenant was in force, it was an expression of God's will for his people. Transgression or teaching things contrary to commandments that some may have viewed as even "least" in importance would be apostasy against God.—Compare James 2:10, 11.

The Law was given to lead the Israelites to the Messiah, who would be the principal ruler in God's kingdom. (Gal. 3:24; Isa. 11:1-5; Dan. 7:13, 14) Hence, as far as getting into God's kingdom was concerned, persons who broke God's commands would "be called 'least.'" They would not get into the kingdom at all.—Matt. 21:43; Luke 13:28.

On the other hand, those who observed the Mosaic law to the best of their ability would "be called 'great' in relation to the kingdom of the heavens." They would be the kind of persons who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and who subsequently were called to share Kingdom rule with him. (Luke 22:28-30; Rom. 8:16, 17) Interestingly, the Scriptures designate royalty as "great ones."—Prov. 25:6; Luke 1:32.

Jesus next made a statement that may have startled his hearers: *"I say to you that if your righteousness does not abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens."*—Matt. 5:20.

The "scribes" of Jesus' day were a class of men especially learned in the Law. Though some of them may have belonged to the Sadducees, many scribes were of the "sect" of the Pharisees, whose demands in regard to ceremonial cleanness, paying of tithes and other religious duties exceeded the Mosaic requirements.—Acts 15:5.

Those religious leaders held a narrow, legalistic viewpoint about gaining righteousness. They believed that it stemmed solely from deeds that literally conformed

to the letter of the law. According to Jewish tradition, each time an individual observed a commandment, he earned "merit." Every transgression was believed to incur "debt." An excess of merits was understood to make a person "righteous," whereas a superabundance of debts would make him "wicked."

Such a legalistic view, however, fell far short of God's standard of what is right. (Rom. 10:2, 3) Little attention was given to developing qualities such as love, justice, meekness, kindness and faithfulness. Yet God views these as more important than literal observance of legal precepts. (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Mic. 6:8) With good reason Jesus exclaimed: "Woe to you,

scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you give the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cummin, but you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness." —Matt. 23:23; compare Luke 11:42.

Christian righteousness would have to "abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees." According to Jesus, all who wish to be true worshipers of God must "worship the Father with spirit and truth." (John 4:23, 24) Their worship must be, not mere external acts of piety that conform to a legal code, but "with spirit," motivated from hearts full of faith and love.—Matt. 22:37-40; Gal. 2:16.

QUESTIONS from READERS

- How can one know for sure that the "time and times and half a time" of Revelation 12:14 amount to three and a half times?

That verse reads: "But the two wings of the great eagle were given the woman, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place; there is where she is fed *for a time and times and half a time* away from the face of the serpent." —Rev. 12:14.

It is useful to be sure of the length of time mentioned there. Why? Because this information helps a person to establish the length of the "seven times" in Daniel's prophecy of a huge tree that was cut down, as well as Jesus' reference to the "appointed times of the nations." —Dan. 4:16, 23-25; Luke 21:24.

The original Greek at Revelation 12:14 reads, "appointed time and appointed times and half of appointed time." Now, what is meant by the middle expression, "times"? If it is two, then the total is three and a half. But if it were understood as four or ten, for example, then the total would be five and a half or eleven and

a half. How does one know what John meant?

In the centuries before Revelation was written, the Greek language used a dual form, a grammatical form that indicated two of something. However, the dual form is not used in the Greek Scriptures, or New Testament; only the singular and plural forms are used. With the plural form a specific number could be added to indicate exactly how many of something, such as "*seven heads*." —Rev. 12:3.

Greek scholars recognize that when the Bible uses the plural form without a qualifying number, it must be understood as meaning the minimum plural amount, that is, two. German theologian John Albert Bengel commented on this verse: "The plural, *kairous, times*, denotes *two times*. The plural number is to be taken most strictly."

Hence, Revelation 12:14 means three and a half times. By comparing this with the 1,260 days mentioned in verse 6 (as well as with Revelation 11:2, 3), the student of the Bible can see that the "seven times" in Daniel chapter four amount to 2,520 days.

- What were the "various baptisms" that Paul mentions in Hebrews 9:10? Did the Hebrews perform water baptism of converts?

No, the apostle Paul was referring to ritual washings that were required by the Mosaic law.

Discussing worship associated with the ancient tabernacle, Paul wrote: "This very tent is

an illustration for the appointed time that is now here, and in keeping with it both gifts and sacrifices are offered. However, these are not able to make the man doing sacred service perfect as respects his conscience, but *have to do only with foods and drinks and various baptisms. They were legal requirements pertaining to the flesh and were imposed until the appointed time to set things straight.*"—Heb. 9: 9, 10.

So the "various baptisms" were features of worship under the Law. For example, speaking about certain unclean animals, the Law stated: "Now anything upon which any of them should fall in its death state will be unclean. . . . Any vessel of which some use is made *will be put in water*, and it must be unclean until the evening and then be clean." (Lev. 11:32) Similarly, as part of his ceremonial cleansing, a person might have to wash his garments and bathe. (Lev. 14: 8, 9; 15:5) Priests were required to bathe, and things having to do with burnt offerings were rinsed in water. (Ex. 29:4; 30:17-21; Lev. 1:13; 2 Chron. 4:6) By the time the Messiah arrived the Jews had added many cleansing rituals that the Law did not require. Jesus related: "When

back from market, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves by sprinkling; and there are many other traditions that they have received to hold fast, *baptisms of cups and pitchers and copper vessels.*"—Mark 7:4.

During the centuries when Israel was God's chosen nation, non-Israelites who took up the worship of Jehovah did not have to undergo water baptism, but they did have to get circumcised. (1 Ki. 8:41-43; Acts 8:27) John the Baptist was the first man authorized to baptize others, baptizing Jews in symbol of their repentance over sins against the Law. (Luke 3:3) Water baptism, however, became a requirement for those accepting Christianity. It was a means of displaying that they had repented, turned around and dedicated themselves to God.—Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 22:16.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

- May 14: Recognize Christ's Vital Place, ¶1-17.
Page 16. Songs to Be Used: 84, 46.
May 21: Recognize Christ's Vital Place, ¶18-33.
Page 19. Songs to Be Used: 83, 108.

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