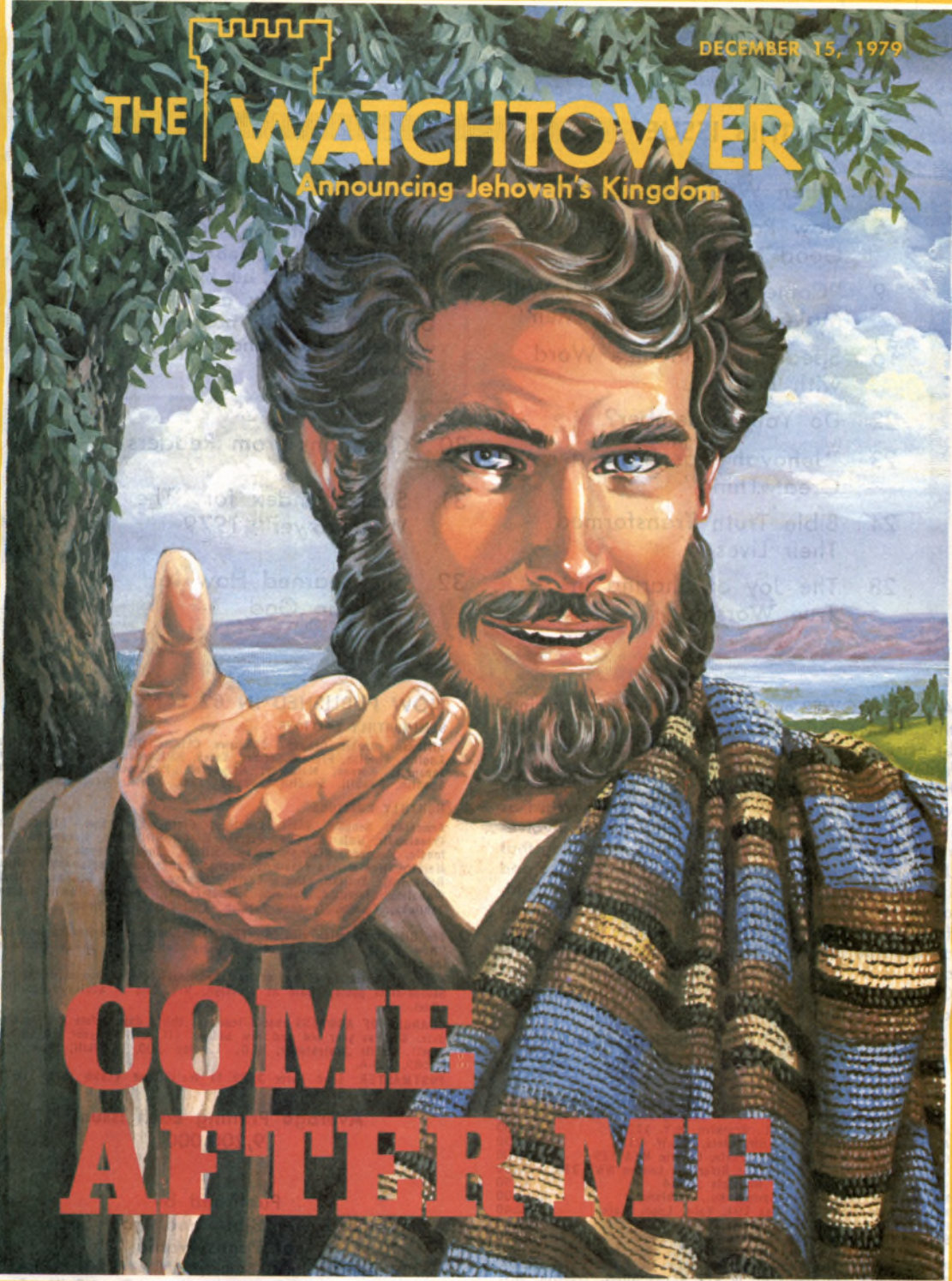


DECEMBER 15, 1979

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



**COME
AFTER ME**

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It was Jesus Christ who sounded forth the invitation, "Come after me." It is not by celebrating Jesus' birth once a year, but by following in his steps daily and speaking God's Word with boldness, that we receive favor and blessing from Jehovah

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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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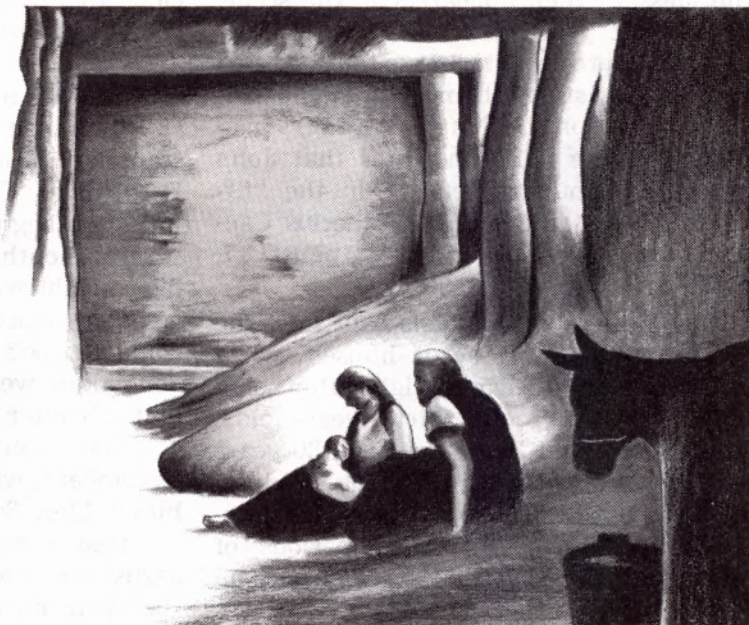
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When Was Jesus Born?



"THE most familiar solstic celebration of ancient times was that of the Romans," according to science writer Isaac Asimov. It was the week-long Saturnalia (December 17 to 24), held in honor of their agricultural god, Saturn. Dr. Asimov also comments:

"The Mithraists celebrated the birth of Mithra at the winter solstice, a natural time, and fixed on the day December 25 so that the popular Roman Saturnalia could build up to the Mithraist 'Day of the Sun' as a climax. . . . Sometime after A.D. 300, Christianity managed the final coup of absorbing the Saturnalia, and with that it scored its final victory over Mithraism. December 25 was established as the day of the birth of Jesus, and the great festival was made Christian. There is absolutely no biblical authority for December 25 as having been the day of the Nativity."

Interesting observations, indeed. But they do throw a pall over annual Christmas celebrations and raise certain questions. Is it possible to ascertain the year of Jesus Christ's birth? Can the approxi-

mate day be determined? Indeed, when was Jesus born?

PINPOINTING THE YEAR

One way to ascertain the *year* of Jesus' birth is to consider the divinely inspired prophecy of the "seventy weeks," or "seventy weeks of years," recorded at Daniel 9:24-27. (*An American Translation*; Moffatt; *Revised Standard Version*; compare *New World Translation*, footnote.) The angel Gabriel told the Hebrew prophet Daniel: "From the going forth of the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Leader, there will be seven weeks, also sixty-two weeks [of years, or 483 years]."—Dan. 9:25; Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6.

When did these 483 years begin? In the fall of 455 B.C.E., during the 20th year of King Artaxerxes, when that Persian monarch decreed that Jerusalem and its walls should be rebuilt. (Neh. 2:1-8) Accordingly, that period of 69 "weeks" (483 years) ended in the fall of 29 C.E.

The Messiah then appeared on the scene, for in that year Jesus was baptized by John the Baptizer and became the Anointed One or Christ by being anointed with God's holy spirit. (Matt. 3:13-17) Incidentally, Luke 3:1-3 indicates that John began his baptizing activity in the "fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar," which year ran from August 17, 28 C.E., to August 16, 29 C.E.

How old was Jesus at his baptism? The Scriptures answer: "Jesus himself, when he commenced his work [right after being baptized], was about thirty years old." (Luke 3:21-23) If we count back 30 years from Jesus' baptism in 29 C.E. (and remember that there is no zero year between the B.C.E. and C.E. periods of reckoning), we find that he was born in 2 B.C.E.

Lending support to this date is the prophecy of the "seventy weeks of years." It indicates that the Messiah would be killed, thus 'causing sacrifice and gift offering to cease' as no longer required, in the middle of the 70th "week." (Dan. 9:27; Rom. 6:14; Heb. 7:26-28) This means that Christ's ministry was three and a half years long. It began at his baptism in 29 C.E. and ended with his death at Passover time in 33 C.E. (Luke 22:7-20) Counting back 33½ years (the length of Jesus' earthly life) also enables us to calculate the year of his birth as being 2 B.C.E.

WHAT ABOUT THE DAY?

As just noted, Jesus died at Passover time, which was about April 1, 33 C.E. (Matt. 26:17-30) Since Christ was about 30 years of age when commencing his work and his ministry was three and a half years long, he was 33½ years old around Passover time, or about April 1, 33 C.E. Christ would have been 34 years of age six months later, or about October 1. Again counting back, we must con-

clude that Jesus was born, not on December 25, but *about* October 1, in the year 2 B.C.E.

NOT BORN IN WINTERTIME

Wintertime does not suit the circumstances of Jesus' birth 30 years earlier in Bethlehem. The cold rainy season for Palestine begins in late October and lasts several months. By December Bethlehem, like neighboring Jerusalem, experiences frequent frost at night. And how could it be? Concerning Judean King Jehoiakim, we read: "The king was sitting in the winter house, in the ninth month [Chislev, corresponding to November-December], with a brazier burning before him." (Jer. 36:22) He needed such heat to keep warm. Moreover, in postexilic Jerusalem, the people Ezra assembled in the open during that same winter month were "shivering because of the matter [then under consideration] and on account of the showers of rain." (Ezra 10:7, 9, 13) It is noteworthy that the next month, Tebeth (December-January), saw the lowest temperatures of the year, with occasional snow in the highlands.

Augustus Caesar ordered a registration that, as it turned out, coincided with the time of Jesus' birth. But do you think that the Roman emperor would have unnecessarily provoked his often rebellious Jewish subjects by decreeing that they go to register in their home cities during the rainy, cold, wintry month of December, when traveling would be especially difficult? Not at all.

Shepherds were tending their flocks "out of doors" on the night of Jesus' birth. (Luke 2:8-14) But already in the autumn month of Bul (October-November) the rainy season had started. (Deut. 11:14) By the latter part of October, when Bul began, the animals would have been brought into shelters at night. So the presence of shepherds in the open fields during the night harmonizes with other

evidence indicating that Jesus was born in the early *autumn* month of Ethanim (September-October).

AN OBSERVANCE THAT IS REQUIRED

It is clear, therefore, that Jesus was not born on December 25. Rather, the available evidence points to about October 1 of 2 B.C.E. Hence, celebrating his birthday through Christmas observance on December 25 is totally inappropriate for those guided by the Holy Scriptures.

Yet the lack of a specifically stated birth date for Jesus should not disturb us. After all, the only birthday celebrations of Bible record are those of worldly rulers.—Gen. 40:20; Matt. 14:6; Mark 6:21-28; John 18:36.

Nevertheless, Jesus should be remembered. To that end, he instituted the Memorial of his death, often called the Lord's Evening Meal. Christ did so on the last night of his earthly life, shortly before he gave "his soul a ransom in exchange for many." (Matt. 20:28) Using the emblems of unleavened bread and wine to represent the body and blood he was about to offer, Jesus had his faithful followers partake, and urged: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26) Hence, although true Christians have some interest in knowing when Jesus was born, it is the death, not the birth, of Jesus Christ that they are to commemorate annually.



OF ALL the messages published throughout the centuries, the "good news" set forth in the Holy Scriptures has had the greatest motivating power for good. The Bible refers to it as "the good news of the kingdom," "the good news

about Jesus Christ," "the good news of the undeserved kindness of God," "the good news of God," "the good news of peace" and the "everlasting good news." (Matt. 4:23; Mark 1:1; Acts 20:24; Rom. 15:16; Eph. 6:15; Rev. 14:6) This "good news"

is primarily the message that salvation or everlasting life is possible on the basis of genuine faith in the atoning benefits of Jesus Christ's sacrifice, and that God's kingdom by Christ will bring all things on earth into perfect unity with the holy heavens. (Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 1:7-14) Why does that message have a powerful effect on those accepting it?

Consider the situation of many individuals when the "good news" reaches them. Before hearing this message, a person may sense a certain emptiness in his life. On account of personal problems and because of witnessing injustices and oppression, he may have cried out inside himself for relief from distress. The individual may be disappointed because of his own inability to be the kind of person he would like to be. Then, when the "good news" is presented to him, he learns the basic reason for his distress, namely, that he, along with all other members of the human family, is a sinner. Therefore, no matter how sincere a person may be, he will not succeed in living his life in such a way that he does not disappoint himself and others. He can never prove himself righteous before God by adhering to a particular code of law. The "good news," however, makes it clear how he can enjoy a clean conscience before God and men, with everlasting life in view. It also helps him to see how God's kingdom will put an end to all distress.—Dan. 2:44.

ATTAINING GOD'S APPROVAL

Nothing difficult is required of the individual in gaining an approved standing with God. The Most High himself has taken the initiative in making an arrangement whereby sins can be forgiven.

To appreciate the arrangement for having our sins forgiven, we need to understand just why we are sinners. The Bible reveals that our common forefather, the first man Adam, deliberately chose to sin

against God. This estranged him from his heavenly Father and put all who descended from Adam into a state of alienation. Adam, as a sinner, could father only sinful children who were subject to death. The Scriptures tell us: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned." (Rom. 5:12) "The wages sin pays is death." —Rom. 6:23.

In this way, God's Word makes it clear that death is the penalty that divine justice requires when sin is committed. Hence, for a man to gain everlasting life, he must be freed of the penalty for sin. Since all humans are sinners, not one of mankind can take upon himself the punishment that justice requires in the case of even one fellow sinner. The total helplessness of man as regards escaping the penalty for sin is set forth in the following words of the psalmist:

"Not one of them can by any means redeem even a brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; (and the redemption price of their soul is so precious that it has ceased to time indefinite) that he should still live forever and not see the pit."—Ps. 49:7-9.

Help was needed from outside the human realm. And, in his great mercy, Jehovah God provided the needed aid. His dearest Son, the firstborn, fully cooperated with his Father in this. Explaining what happened, the Christian apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians:

"Keep this mental attitude in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God. No, but he emptied himself and took a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men. More than that, when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake."—Phil. 2:5-8.

Because the Son of God, by an operation

of the holy spirit, was made flesh miraculously in the womb of a virgin, Mary, he was born without sin. That is why he could take upon himself the penalty that justice required for sinners. Through his sacrificial death on Nisan 14 of the year 33 C.E., he fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:5, which reads: "He was being pierced for our transgression; he was being crushed for our errors. The chastisement meant for our peace was upon him, and because of his wounds there has been a healing for us."

Our Maker requires that we accept, in faith, the fact that his Son has taken upon himself the full penalty for sin and that this resurrected Son is "both Lord and Christ," yes, the promised Messianic King. (Acts 2:36) The Scriptures declare: "We behold Jesus, who has been made a little lower than angels, crowned with glory and honor for having suffered death, that he by God's undeserved kindness might taste death *for every man*."—Heb. 2:9.

A FAITH THAT STIRS TO ACTION

It is our faith in the atoning benefits of Christ's sacrifice that puts us in a position to receive God's free gift of everlasting life. As a result of this faith, a person comes under the influence of the holy spirit. Through the operation of that spirit on him, the fruitage of genuine faith will become evident in his life. His love for Jehovah God, Jesus Christ and fellowmen will grow. The individual will be stirred to action.

This is well illustrated by what happened in the first century C.E. to certain Thessalonians. The apostle Paul wrote to them in these words:

"The good news we preach did not turn up among you with speech alone but also with power and with holy spirit and strong conviction, just as you know what sort of men we became to you for your sakes; and you became imitators of us and of the Lord, seeing that you

accepted the word under much tribulation with joy of holy spirit, so that you came to be an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. The fact is, not only has the word of Jehovah sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith toward God has spread abroad, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves keep reporting about the way we first entered in among you and how you turned to God from your idols to slave for a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from the heavens, whom he raised up from the dead, namely, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath which is coming."
—1 Thess. 1:5-10.

Note that the proclamation of the "good news" in Thessalonica was not just a matter of spoken words that produced no results. To the contrary, the message had a powerful effect on those who embraced it, causing them to forsake idolatry and to become servants of the true God, Jehovah. The operation of God's holy spirit became evident in the lives of these believers as they reflected the joy that the spirit produces. Their strong conviction was seen in the fact that persecution did not hinder them from acting on the "good news" as the "word of God." (1 Thess. 2:13) Prompted by faith and love and fully convinced that everlasting blessings would be received at the time that divine wrath is expressed against all who reject the "good news," the Thessalonians were impelled to proclaim the truth that they had embraced. So active did the congregation at Thessalonica become that news of their conversion and beliefs spread to other parts of Macedonia and even into parts of Achaia. Hence, when Paul and his companions took the "good news" to people in these areas, the faith of the Thessalonian Christians was already known.

GOOD EXAMPLES HAD THEIR EFFECT

In part, the zeal of the Thessalonians resulted from their seeing the good examples of the apostle Paul and his fellow

workers. The very lives of Paul and his associates testified to the fact that they had God's spirit upon them. Before coming to Thessalonica, Paul and Silas had been insolently treated at Philippi. Their rights as Roman citizens had been trampled on. Without a trial, they had been beaten, jailed and confined in stocks. Divine intervention had effected their release and had led to the conversion of the jailer and his household.—Acts 16:22-33.

The unpleasant experience of Paul and Silas at Philippi did not dampen their zeal. With the boldness that only God can provide by means of his spirit, they came to Thessalonica. In his preaching, Paul shunned all deceit and pretentiousness. He labored with his own hands to procure his necessities and then expended himself fully in teaching the truth to the Thessalonians. It was obvious to any sincere observer that a man who was so loyal, righteous, unblamable and self-sacrificing could not reasonably be the source of falsehood. He was clearly under the direction of holy spirit and was a faithful imitator of the Lord Jesus Christ.—1 Thess. 2:5-12.

Accordingly, the "good news," coupled with Paul's own example of the fine influence that God's message has on individuals, enabled the Thessalonians to imitate Jesus Christ. They began walking in a divinely approved way and did not hold back from declaring the "good news" at every opportunity. Living as they did in a seaport, they reached many merchants and travelers who could tell others about the zeal of the Thessalonians, doing so far and wide.

HAVE YOU BEEN AFFECTED?

Have you, like the Thessalonians, exercised faith in the atoning benefits of Christ's sacrifice? If so, observers should be able to see that you are letting God's spirit be a real force in your life. When that is the case, with the passing of time

there will be observable evidence that you are conforming ever closer to the example and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Deeply appreciative of the love that has been shown toward you personally, you will exert yourself to avoid sin. How inconsistent it would be for an individual to claim that he has faith in the cleansing power of Christ's blood and then deliberately to follow a course of sin! It would be comparable to a person who thanks someone for washing his clothes and then, after putting on those clean garments, deliberately begins rolling around in the nearest mud puddle. (Compare 2 Peter 2:22.) Clearly, no appreciative individual would do this. Likewise, no person who maintains genuine faith in what God has done through Jesus Christ can become a practicer of sin.—1 John 3:4-6.

Furthermore, faith in God's provision for everlasting life impels us to speak. That is why, 'in all the inhabited earth' today, Jehovah's Witnesses are calling at the people's homes with the Kingdom message. (Matt. 24:14) And surely, individually we want our relatives, our acquaintances, yes, anyone whom we can personally reach, also to hear and act on the "good news." Only by their accepting the "good news" can they escape the divine wrath that is to be expressed against godless mankind, and in that way alone will they see the time when God's kingdom by his Christ transforms this earth into a place free from pain, sickness and death.—2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:4, 5.

The passing of over 1,900 years has not dulled the power of the "good news." It is still causing thousands to yield to the influence of God's spirit and to produce its fruitage, principally love. Impelled by that spirit, true Christians cannot stop speaking to others about the grandest message in existence today. Is this true in your case? It will be if you have genuine faith in the "good news."

"COME AFTER ME, AND I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN"

JOHN THE BAPTIZER had completed his work, and now the anointed Jesus had taken up the exciting proclamation: "Repent, you people, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." (Matt. 3:2; 4:12-17) But Jesus Christ was not to be alone in making known the good news. Walking alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon Peter and Andrew

1-3. (a) For what work did Jesus invite people to follow him?
(b) How does the response of the first ones invited demonstrate that they had faith?



letting down a fishing net. He bade them: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." They did not hesitate. "At once" they abandoned their nets and followed Jesus. Then Jesus saw James and John in a fishing boat, and called them. "At once" they left the boat and their father to follow Jesus.—Matt. 4: 18-22.

² Jesus set a fine example for these new disciples, as he trained them to be "fishers of men." They were his constant companions as he "went around throughout the whole of Galilee, teaching in [the] synagogues and preaching the good news of the kingdom and curing every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity among the people."—Matt. 4:23.

³ At Capernaum, in Galilee, Jesus saw Matthew (Levi) seated at the tax office and extended the invitation, "Be my follower." Matthew immediately left off collecting taxes in order to follow Jesus. (Matt. 9:9; Mark 2:14) Again, Jesus "set out on a tour of all the cities and villages" to teach and preach the good news of the kingdom, while also performing works of healing. Although his followers were increasing in number, Jesus told them: "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest."—Matt. 9:35-38.

⁴ From among these first disciples, Jesus now chose 12 to be apostles, "that they might continue with him and that he might send them out to preach." (Mark 3:14) Later, the faithful apostles would become foundation stones of the Christian congregation. (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14) They were willing, ready to serve and happy to be in association with Jesus in the Kingdom work. Jesus instructed them and gave them orders to go to the cities and villages, and visit the houses of the

people. He told them: "As you go, preach, saying: 'The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" Jesus let his disciples know that the work would not be easy and that many would refuse to listen to their words. However, they were to give the witness, even before rulers and people of the nations. They would need to be self-sacrificing and courageous, for Jesus said: "Whoever does not accept his torture stake and follow after me is not worthy of me."—Matt. 10:7-18, 38.

⁵ Not everyone accepted Jesus' invitation to follow him. For example, there was the rich man who preferred material possessions to the spiritual treasure he might have enjoyed while preaching the good news of the Kingdom. (Matt. 19:16-24) Others, too, offered excuses, as the account at Luke 9:57-62 shows:

"Now as they were going on the road, someone said to [Jesus]: 'I will follow you to wherever you may depart.' And Jesus said to him: 'Foxes have dens and birds of heaven have roosts, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay down his head.' Then he said to another: 'Be my follower.' The man said: 'Permit me first to leave and bury my father.' But he said to him: 'Let the dead bury their dead, but you go away and declare abroad the kingdom of God.' And still another said: 'I will follow you, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those in my household.' Jesus said to him: 'No man that has put his hand to a plow and looks at the things behind is well fitted for the kingdom of God.'"

⁶ After giving these negative examples, Luke strikes a positive note. He describes how Jesus selected 70 of his followers and sent them out two by two to pioneer the territory ahead of him. They were to let the people know that "the kingdom of God has come near to you." (Luke 10:1-16) The 70 found great joy in their service. But Jesus showed them that they

4. (a) Why were the apostles chosen? (b) What does Jesus expect of those who follow him?

5. Why are some not acceptable as followers of Christ?
6. How did Jesus train and encourage his followers, as described at Luke 10:1-20?

had even greater reason for happiness, saying: "Rejoice because your names have been inscribed in the heavens."—Luke 10:17, 20.

JESUS SETS THE PATTERN

⁷ The inspired Bible writers Matthew, Mark, Luke and John relate how the early disciples of Jesus associated with him in the work of preaching and teaching that resulted in great benefit to themselves and others. Jesus taught them many wonderful things about the Kingdom, and these truths they were able to share with persons who would listen. Above all, Jesus helped his disciples to appreciate their very precious relationship as slaves, servants or stewards of Jehovah God and Christ Jesus.—Matt. 6:24; compare Luke 12:37, 42, 43.

⁸ Like his Father, Jesus was a worker. He wanted his disciples to be workers, too, in making known the Kingdom message. (John 4:34; 5:17; 9:4) So, for about three years, Jesus trained his disciples to be "fishers of men." Also, he forewarned them that they would be treated the same way that he, their Lord, was treated. They saw his example and his reaction to suffering, as he gave them a model to follow closely. (Matt. 10:22-26; 1 Pet. 2:21) Jesus taught them many things that he had received from God, and they saw him fulfill numerous prophecies. All of this strengthened their faith.

⁹ Jesus also encouraged them humbly to follow his pattern as slaves of God. He said:

"Who of you is there that has a slave plowing or minding the flock who will say to him when he gets in from the field, 'Come here at once and recline at the table'? Rather, will he not say to him, 'Get something ready for me to have my evening meal, and put on an apron

and minister to me until I am through eating and drinking, and afterward you can eat and drink'? He will not feel gratitude to the slave because he did the things assigned, will he? So you, also, when you have done all the things assigned to you, say, 'We are good-for-nothing slaves. What we have done is what we ought to have done.'"—Luke 17:7-10; compare 1 Corinthians 7:22, 23; Revelation 19:5.

¹⁰ As Jesus' work on earth drew toward its end, he gathered his apostles for the Passover festival, and here, privately, he imparted to them much counsel and encouragement. He also washed their feet to impress upon them the need to serve others, saying: "I set the pattern for you, that, just as I did to you, you should do also. Most truly I say to you, A slave is not greater than his master, nor is one that is sent forth greater than the one that sent him. If you know these things, happy you are if you do them."—John 13:15-17.

¹¹ After dismissing the traitor Judas, Jesus instructed his 11 faithful apostles concerning a new celebration—the memorial of his death. He spoke very intimately with them, preparing them for the responsibility they were to shoulder after his departure. (John 13:30-16:33) To show their faith in Christ, the disciples would have to do works similar to his. So he encouraged them with the words: "Most truly I say to you, He that exercises faith in me, that one also will do the works that I do; and he will do works greater than these, because I am going my way to the Father." (John 14:12) Jesus had confined his work to the land of Palestine, but the Kingdom work must expand after his death and resurrection. His disciples must spearhead that future work. Finally, the good

10. How was the example of Jesus part of the training of his followers to serve God?

11. (a) Where is the record found on Jesus' intimate talk with his disciples before his arrest? (b) On that occasion, how did Jesus stress the relationship between faith and works? (c) In what manner could the disciples do works greater than those of Jesus?

7, 8. Name some benefits the early "fishers of men" received by regular association with Jesus in the work.
9. What did Jesus teach his followers about their relationship to God as slaves?



Jesus sent his disciples to the people's homes

news of the Kingdom would be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end would come.—Matt. 24:14.

¹² On this last occasion of being with his disciples, Jesus emphasized the need for self-sacrificing love, saying:

"If you love me, you will observe my commandments. He that has my commandments and observes them, that one is he who loves me. In turn he that loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will plainly show myself

12. What is the relationship between love for Christ and what we do?

to him. . . . If anyone loves me, he will observe my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our abode with him. He that does not love me does not observe my words; and the word that you are hearing is not mine, but belongs to the Father who sent me." (John 14:15, 21, 23, 24)

How necessary it is to obey the commandments of Jesus Christ!

**Jesus' last evening meal on earth
provided a powerful message
for us today »**



A HELPER PROMISED

¹³ The apostles had been closely associated with Jesus. Whenever they wished to know something or if any problem arose, they could talk to Jesus about the matter. But now Jesus was going away to his Father. So he asked his Father to give them another helper, God's holy spirit, which would teach them and bring back to their minds all the things Jesus had spoken to them. (John 14:16, 17, 25, 26) That meant they would have much witnessing to do, for Jesus stated: "When the helper arrives that I will send you from the Father, the spirit of the truth, which proceeds from the Father, that one will bear witness about me; and you, in turn, are to bear witness, because you have been with me from when I began."—John 15:26, 27.

¹⁴ Jesus was limited in what he could tell his disciples at that time. However, with the arrival of holy spirit, they would gain fuller understanding, equipping them for the work ahead. (John 16:12-14) How encouraging! Those who follow Jesus as slaves of God can always be confident of receiving help from above and guidance in the truth through holy spirit.

¹⁵ In order to succeed in their work, Jesus' followers must maintain close union with him and prove themselves his disciples. Jesus illustrated this by the vine and its branches, stressing the need for them to remain in the vine and to bear fruit so that his Father may be glorified. They were to produce fruitage by Kingdom witnessing and by displaying a Christ-like personality. Men would see that they were his disciples because of their genuine love among themselves.—Matt. 21:43; John 13:34, 35; 15:1-12; see also *The Watchtower*, December 15, 1978.

13. How would help come to Jesus' followers after his going away, and what would they be moved to do?

14. How would the disciples learn many additional truths later on?

15. (a) Why must Christians maintain a close relationship with Jesus Christ at all times, according to his illustration of the vine? (b) What part does Christian love play in this?

NO PART OF THIS WORLD

¹⁶ Those who become "fishers of men" show this strong love, one toward another. However, because they are followers of the Master, Christ Jesus, they are not loved by the world. Jesus was not loved by the world, for he was no part of it. (John 15:17-22; 16:1) This knowledge is helpful to all true Christians in keeping integrity under trial—even as Jesus kept integrity. Those who are of the world do not know Jehovah God or the One he sent forth, Jesus Christ. They do not understand Jesus' teachings, or what Christian love is. They hate his followers, for they do the desires of the Devil.—John 8:42-44; 14:30; 16:11.

¹⁷ Since genuine Christians are "no part of the world," they must not adopt the world's selfish, proud and divisive spirit. This enables them to glorify God and to bear much fruit in proof of their discipleship. But it means tribulation for them, as Jesus warned:

"Men will expel you from the synagogue. In fact, the hour is coming when everyone that kills you will imagine he has rendered a sacred service to God."—John 16:2-4; 15:8-10.

NEVER ALONE IN GOD'S SERVICE

¹⁸ Jehovah's servants can count on Him because of his great love. Jesus gave this assurance: "For the Father himself has affection for you, because you have had affection for me and have believed that I came out as the Father's representative." (John 16:27) Jehovah's servants do not work alone. It is God's work that they are doing as his stewards, and the way is

16. (a) What did Jesus teach his followers at John 15:17-22 concerning their position in the world? (b) Why did he teach about this?

17. Because of being no part of the world as followers of Christ, what would happen to some Christians?

18, 19. (a) Of whose affection are Jesus' disciples assured, and because of what? (b) Why is it important to appreciate the fact that a servant of Jehovah is never alone, and therefore what should he do?

always open for them to seek the help of Jehovah in prayer. Jesus said: "If you ask the Father for anything he will give it to you in my name." (John 16:23, 24) With the arrest of Jesus, a difficult time would come for his followers, even as he forewarned:

"Look! The hour is coming, indeed, it has come, when you will be scattered each one to his own house and you will leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. I have said these things to you that by means of me you may have peace. In the world you are having tribulation, but take courage! I have conquered the world."—John 16:32, 33.

¹⁹ How vital it is to remember that we are not alone, just as Jesus was not alone when he was arrested! And how essential it is to rely on Jehovah in prayer, especially in times of tribulation or difficulty! Jesus prayed fervently and often in his hour of trial. (Matt. 26:36-46; 27:46) Likewise, his followers should never hold back from seeking Jehovah's help, but pray to him with confidence and faith.—Matt. 7:7, 8.

JESUS' PRAYERFUL REQUEST

²⁰ After Jesus had instructed his faithful disciples on that last night of his earthly life, he raised his eyes to heaven and offered to Jehovah a wonderful prayer on their behalf. His prayer mentioned that he had finished his own work on earth, but his followers were still in the world. These disciples would continue to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom, making known Jehovah's name, just as Jesus had done. Therefore he requested:

"Holy Father, watch over them on account of your own name which you have given me. . . . I have given your word to them, but the world has hated them, because they are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world. I request you, not to take them out of

the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one. They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world. Sanctify them by means of the truth; your word is truth. Just as you sent me forth into the world, I also sent them forth into the world."—John 17:11, 14-18.

²¹ Jesus' prayer extended far beyond those 11 faithful apostles. He was looking ahead to an expanding congregation that would encircle the globe, with many more men and women putting their faith in Jesus through the word proclaimed by his followers. Said Jesus:

"I make request, not concerning these only, but also concerning those putting faith in me through their word; in order that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in union with me and I am in union with you, that they also may be in union with us, in order that the world may believe that you sent me forth."—John 17:20, 21.

²² Not long after he had thus prayed, Jesus was arrested. On being brought before the ruler, Pilate, he bore witness that, since his kingdom was no part of the world, his servants—who were also no part of the world—would not fight. As the leading Witness of Jehovah, he declared: "You yourself are saying that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone that is on the side of the truth listens to my voice." (John 18:33-37) Thus Jesus left a fine example for Christians to copy in the years following his departure from the earthly scene. On that same day he was put to death, having faithfully finished the work that Jehovah had given him to do. (John 17:4) During his earthly ministry, what a marvelous pattern he provided for his followers! Truly, these are encouraged to imitate him as Jehovah's witnesses in their grand work as "fishers of men"!

21. How did Jesus express his confidence in the future expansion of the Christian congregation?

22. How did Jesus finish his work on earth as one of Jehovah's witnesses?

20. What are some points made by Jesus in his marvelous prayer recorded in John 17?

SPEAKING JEHOVAH'S WORD WITH BOLDNESS

*"And now, Jehovah, . . . grant
your slaves to keep speaking
your word with all boldness."
—Acts 4:29.*

ALTHOUGH death had separated Jesus from his disciples, they did not forget his invitation to become "fishers of men." They knew this meant speaking God's word among the people. But how would they proceed? They needed guidance and direction.

² To the disciples' great joy, the resurrected Jesus appeared to them on a number of occasions before he ascended to his Father. (1 Cor. 15:3-8; John 20:20) Thus he was able to give them further instructions concerning their future work. In Galilee, he said:

"All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth. Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matt. 28:18-20)

The Christian work of making disciples, baptizing and teaching them, must reach out to the people of all the nations. How encouraging it was to know that this resurrected Son of God would be with Christians in their Kingdom work daily until the conclusion of the system of things!

³ Jesus had promised his disciples that a helper, the holy spirit, would come. (John 14:16, 26) What would this be, and how would it operate? Just before

ascending to his Father, Jesus told those disciples:

"You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

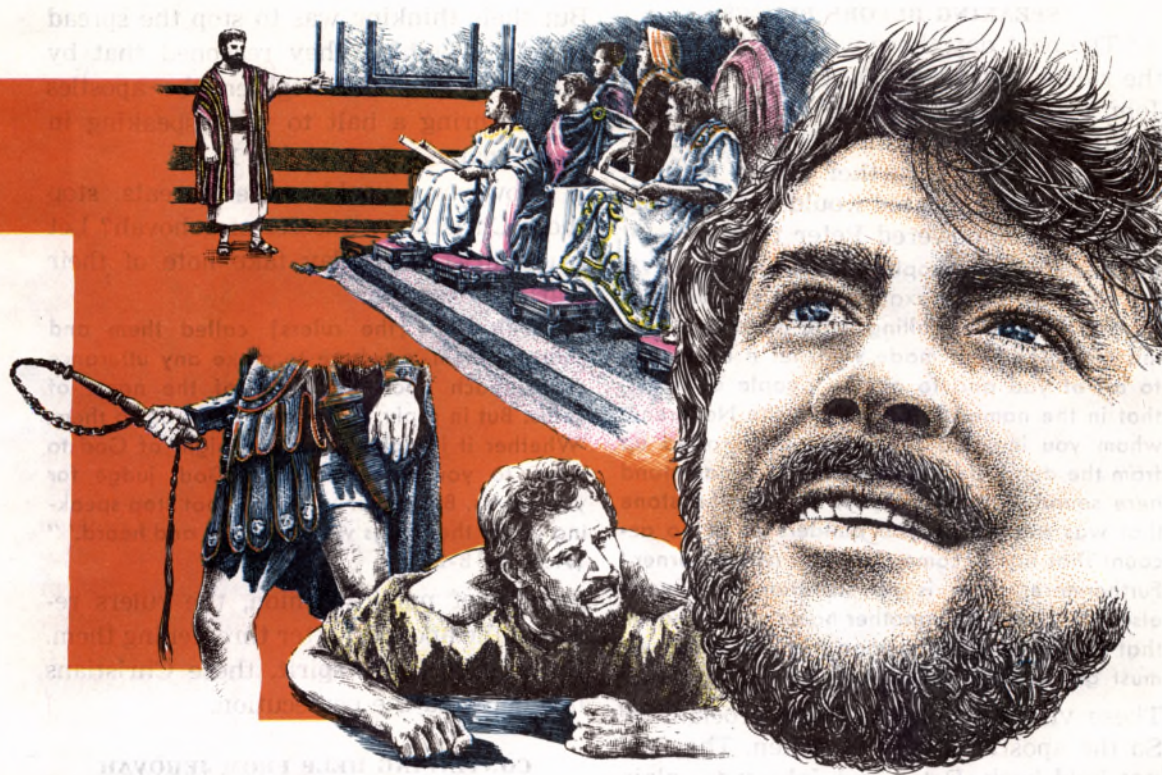
What a grand prospect for an extended witness! The disciples returned to Jerusalem, and there they were persisting in prayer. The 50th day from Jesus' resurrection was Pentecost, and the disciples were all gathered in one place. Suddenly there was a noise "like that of a rushing stiff breeze," with other miraculous manifestations. Jehovah was pouring out on them the promised holy spirit, his active force. And what did that spirit move them to do? It caused them "to speak . . . to make utterance."—Acts 2:1-4.

⁴ The time had come to do a lot of 'fishing for men.' With the help of holy spirit, those disciples could speak God's word in a multitude of languages. Thus, in their native tongue, people attending the festival of Pentecost from many parts of the world were enabled to hear about "the magnificent things of God." Onlookers were astonished. Then Peter stood up and spoke out boldly in explanation. He bore thorough witness concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ, calling upon those present to repent, be baptized and get saved from that crooked generation. What was the result? About 3,000 accepted the word! These were baptized and added to the

4. How was the "good news" received on that occasion?

1, 2. (a) After being resurrected, what interest did Christ have in his disciples, and so what instructions were given them? (b) How extensive was the witnessing to be?

3. What part does holy spirit have in it, starting at Pentecost?



Christian congregation. There was great rejoicing, as "Jehovah continued to join to them daily those being saved."—Acts 2:5-47.

⁵ This witnessing by power of holy spirit had produced many new praisers of Jehovah. These, in turn, rejoiced to go forth daily, and their public witnessing filled Jerusalem with the "good news." Peter and John took the lead in this work, calling on the people to turn around and get their sins blotted out, in order to receive spiritual refreshment from Jehovah. Many of these listened gladly to the "good news"—but not so the chief priest, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees. They arrested Peter and John, and placed them in custody. Thus the disciples began to

feel the hatred of which Jesus had forewarned them, when he said:

"Look! I am sending you forth as sheep amidst wolves; therefore prove yourselves cautious as serpents and yet innocent as doves. Be on your guard against men; for they will deliver you up to local courts, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. Why, you will be haled before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them and the nations. However, when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you are to speak; for what you are to speak will be given you in that hour; for the ones speaking are not just you, but it is the spirit of your Father that speaks by you." (Matt. 10:16-20)

However, by now those "fishers of men" could rejoice in a large catch of about 5,000 new believers. How they must have thanked Jehovah for that increase! We, too, are encouraged by their service report.—Acts 4:1-4.

5. (a) For what purpose do Christians come before rulers in times of opposition? (b) What encouragement is there for us in this?

SPEAKING BEFORE RULERS

⁶ The next day there was a gathering of the rulers, and these questioned Peter and John about their activity, including their healing of a crippled man. Here was a fine opportunity for a further public witness. As Jesus had indicated would happen, holy spirit now empowered Peter to say:

"Rulers of the people and older men, if we are this day being examined, on the basis of a good deed to an ailing man, as to by whom this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you impaled but whom God raised up from the dead, by this one does this man stand here sound in front of you. This is 'the stone that was treated by you builders as of no account that has become the head of the corner.' Furthermore, there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved." (Acts 4:8-12)

These vital truths had to be proclaimed! So the apostles were outspoken. They did not hold back. Peter and John were plain fishermen, but they had been trained by Jesus to speak in a dynamic way, with confidence and conviction. As witnesses of Jehovah, they spoke because they *wanted* to be declaring God's word.—Compare John 7:15-18, 45, 46.

⁷ How grateful we should be to Jehovah for the record in Acts chapter 4! For not only does this show clearly how genuine Christians must speak with boldness, but also it reveals the twisted thinking of worldly rulers who oppose God's work. After the apostles had given that bold witness, the rulers sent them outside the Sanhedrin hall while they consulted together. What was their objective? They could not deny that a noteworthy sign had occurred in the name of Jesus Christ.

6. (a) What did Peter and John do when brought before the rulers? (b) Why were they well fitted to do that?

7. What do we learn from the account at Acts 4 concerning the thinking and objectives of the opposers?

But their thinking was to stop the spread of true worship. They reasoned that by threats they could frighten the apostles and so bring a halt to their speaking in Jesus' name.—Acts 4:16, 17.

⁸ However, would mere threats stop those Christian witnesses of Jehovah? Let true Christians today take note of their fearless example:

"With that [the rulers] called them and charged them, nowhere to make any utterance or to teach upon the basis of the name of Jesus. But in reply Peter and John said to them: 'Whether it is righteous in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves. But as for us, we cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard.' " (Acts 4:18-20)

Fearful of public opinion, the rulers released the apostles, after threatening them. By help of God's spirit, those Christians had defeated the persecution.

CONTINUING HELP FROM JEHOVAH

⁹ After their release, the apostles went back to the congregation. They reported to the brothers what had occurred, and then the congregation did what Christians should always do under such circumstances. They spoke to Jehovah in prayer. Theirs was a prayer of faith, expressing their keen desire to keep serving God. They said:

"Sovereign Lord, you are the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them, and who through holy spirit said by the mouth of our forefather David, your servant, 'Why did nations become tumultuous and peoples meditate upon empty things? The kings of the earth took their stand and the rulers massed together as one against Jehovah and against his anointed one.' Even so, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with men of nations and with peoples of Israel were in actuality

8. What shows that the disciples were not afraid?

9, 10. (a) What procedure did Jehovah's servants follow, and what desire was in their hearts? (b) For what did they make request, and how were they answered?

gathered together in this city against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, in order to do what things your hand and counsel had foreordained to occur. And now, Jehovah, give attention to their threats, and grant your slaves to keep speaking your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand for healing and while signs and portents occur through the name of your holy servant Jesus."—Acts 4:24-30.

¹⁰ The disciples did not ask to be taken out of the work or away from the threats of the enemies of truth. They knew their commission from Jehovah—to be his witnesses. Their heart's desire was to keep speaking God's word with all boldness, and they requested his help in this. They would never succumb to fear. Was Jehovah pleased with this attitude? The record tells us:

"When they had made supplication, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were one and all filled with the holy spirit and were speaking the word of God with boldness."—Acts 4:31.

¹¹ Those witnesses of the Kingdom continued their work with renewed vigor, and Jehovah was with them. "Believers in the Lord kept on being added, multitudes both of men and of women." (Acts 5:14) As a result, the religious leaders became angry again and put the apostles in prison. However, it was Jehovah's will for their witnessing to continue in Jerusalem. So he sent his angel to release the apostles, and to tell them:

"Be on your way, and, having taken a stand in the temple, keep on speaking to the people all the sayings about this life." (Acts 5:20)

Being put in prison did not frighten the apostles into silence any more than did the threats of the priests and rulers.

¹² However, the apostles were again ar-

11. (a) What resulted from their speaking boldly? (b) Why did not imprisonment make them stop the work?

12. How did the apostles next come to give a testimony before the court, and were they intimidated?

rested by the officers and brought to the Sanhedrin hall to face an angry high priest, who said:

"We positively ordered you not to keep teaching upon the basis of this name, and yet, look! you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you are determined to bring the blood of this man upon us." (Acts 5:28)

In that unfriendly court, with officers guarding them and the high priest speaking so strongly against them, would the apostles cave in? Not so.

"In answer Peter and the other apostles said: 'We must obey God as ruler rather than men. The God of our forefathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew, hanging him upon a stake. God exalted this one as Chief Agent and Savior to his right hand, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these matters, and so is the holy spirit, which God has given to those obeying him as ruler.'" —Acts 5:29-32.

¹³ Here, again, we are indebted to the Scripture record that shows the warped

In Coming Issues

- Will the Church Practice What the Pope Preached?
- They Need Their Friends
- Survival Depends upon God

thinking of those who oppose God's work. Although the apostles were good men, the court had in mind doing away with them. However, the esteemed law teacher Gamaliel rose and spoke timely words of counsel to the religious rulers. He said:

13. What was the counsel of Gamaliel, and how did the court view it?

31 "Men of Israel, pay attention to yourselves as to what you intend to do respecting these men. For instance, before these days Theudas rose, saying he himself was somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined his party. But he was done away with, and all those who were obeying him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose in the days of the registration, and he drew off people after him. And yet that man perished, and all those who were obeying him were scattered abroad. And so, under the present circumstances, I say to you, Do not meddle with these men, but let them alone; (because, if this scheme or this work is from men, it will be overthrown; but if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them;) otherwise, you may perhaps be found fighters actually against God." (Acts 5:34-39)

This wise counsel of Gamaliel was accepted in part. Although the religious leaders did not stop their fighting against God, at least they did not do away with the apostles. Instead, they gave them a severe beating, ordered them to stop speaking about Jesus, and let them go.—Acts 5:40.

COURAGE UNDER TEST

14 Did all of this discourage the apostles from speaking God's word with boldness? The account answers:

"These, therefore, went their way from before the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of his name. And every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus." (Acts 5:41, 42)

Courageously the apostles and other Christians continued to busy themselves with the word of God and to speak with boldness, and Jehovah blessed their work.

"The word of God went on growing, and the number of the disciples kept multiplying in Jerusalem very much; and a great crowd of priests began to be obedient to the faith." —Acts 6:7.

14. How did the Christians then act courageously and with what results?

15 Now that priests, too, were turning around and becoming Christians, there was no letup in the opposition of the hard-line religious leaders. Very soon, the zealous witness Stephen found himself before the Sanhedrin. He gave a powerful testimony, in which he reviewed the outworking of Jehovah's purposes. But the opposers angrily rushed upon him and stoned him to death. It turned out for Stephen just as Jesus had foretold: "The hour is coming when everyone that kills you will imagine he has rendered a sacred service to God." —John 16:2; Acts 6:8-7:60.

16 Stephen's martyrdom was the signal for a wave of bitter persecution.

"On that day great persecution arose against the congregation that was in Jerusalem; all except the apostles were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria." (Acts 8:1)

But would this silence Jehovah's witnesses of that time? Here, indeed, was another Satanic attempt to break up the activities of God's servants. They had to leave behind houses and possessions. However, they had the right viewpoint on material things. In this, they were like those Christians to whom the apostle Paul later wrote: "For you both expressed sympathy for those in prison and joyfully took the plundering of your belongings, knowing you yourselves have a better and an abiding possession."—Heb. 10:34.

17 The disciples fully appreciated that they must continue to be faithful witnesses of God and of Christ. Hence, "those who had been scattered went through the land declaring the good news of the word." (Acts 8:4) Philip went to the city of Samaria, where he kept speaking the word with boldness, bringing much joy to the

15. What were some of the things Stephen spoke boldly, and in what way did the religionists react?

16. (a) Then what happened to the rest of the Christian congregation? (b) What viewpoint did they have toward their material things?

17, 18. (a) How does the action of Philip and other scattered Christians show us the way to defeat Satan's methods? (b) What blessings came from Jehovah?

people. Soon, he had other believers associated with him, and a message was sent to Jerusalem informing the apostles that Samaria had accepted the word of God. Peter and John went there, holy spirit fell on the Samaritans, and the Christian congregation became established there.—Acts 8:5-8, 14-17, 25; 9:31.

¹⁸ Those Christians of the first century had the right point of view. They prayed that Jehovah would keep them speaking the word of God with boldness. That is what they did, with the help of his spirit, and he blessed them. As the record says, “the hand of Jehovah was with them!”—Acts 11:19-21.

SPEAKING WITH BOLDNESS NOW

¹⁹ Down through the centuries, Jesus has been true to his promise: “I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things.” (Matt. 28:20) Now

19. What evidence do we have that Jehovah God and Christ have been with the Christian witnesses in modern times?

that we have arrived at that time, how thankful we are that more than 2,000,000 witnesses are ‘speaking Jehovah’s word with boldness’! And our God has so blessed the work of these “fishers of men,” that “this good news of the kingdom” has become known in all continents on the face of the earth, even as far as Antarctica. It has penetrated into remote mountain areas and to small islands scattered about in the seven seas. (Matt. 24:14) Yes, the witness work has reached into every nation “to the most distant part of the earth,” and all this has been accomplished by Jehovah’s spirit.—Acts 1:8; Zech. 4:6.

²⁰ As God’s Word foretold, the Devil is angry, for he knows his time is short. He continues to oppose the work of witnessing. (Rev. 12:12, 17) The Devil and his dupes hate Jehovah’s Witnesses because these Christians are “no part of the

20. How has the Devil shown his opposition to the bearers of God’s Word, and can his representatives stop the work?



Jehovah God blesses the work of modern-day “fishers of men”

world." Many of them have been scattered from their homes by persecution. Hundreds have met a violent death, as did Stephen in the first century of our era. (Rev. 17:6; 20:4) But the work has proved to be of God. Men have not been able to overthrow it, as true slaves of God keep speaking his word with boldness. In this way they have overcome, yes, defeated the Devil's schemes.—Compare Ephesians 6: 11, 12; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8, 9.

²¹ Today, the Kingdom 'fishing' work continues to move forward, in spite of mounting opposition. And Jehovah's blessing keeps being manifested upon it. In the last service year alone, Jehovah's Witnesses have rejoiced to see 113,672 new persons baptized. How happy these are to share in speaking Jehovah's word! This

21. (a) What is the work Jehovah wishes to have done now? (b) Why do we want to finish the work given to us, and how can we keep speaking the word with boldness?

is God's work for us today, and it should be in the hearts of all those dedicated to Jehovah to keep busy in it, for it is their assignment. (1 Cor. 9:16) Does your heart move you to speak Jehovah's word with boldness? As world conditions keep on worsening, our determination should be to continue telling out the good news of the Kingdom until the work is finished. When opposition arises, we are not dismayed. We remember that Jesus not only started but also finished the work Jehovah gave him to do. (John 17:4) He prepared us to face the world's hatred. May we ever be like him, and like the apostles and other Christians of the first century, as, in full faith, we seek Jehovah's help in accomplishing his will concerning us. May our united prayer be always: "And now, Jehovah, . . . grant your slaves to keep speaking your word with all boldness."—Acts 4:29.

Do You Remember?

Have you read recent issues of *The Watchtower* carefully? If so, you will doubtless recall these points:

● How are we to understand the apostle Paul's words at Acts 20:18-21?

From the "first day" that he entered Asia, Paul 'bore thorough witness.' This he did "publicly and from house to house," searching for spiritually minded persons, then teaching them on a regular basis and later making shepherding calls as necessary. All of this provides a fine pattern for the work that Jehovah's Witnesses are doing today.—7/15 pp. 11-13.

● What is meant by the reference at Psalm 72:16 about there being 'an overflow of grain on the top of the mountains'?

With God's blessing, the soil would produce abundantly. Usually, mountaintops are not places where grain flourishes. So this is a beautiful picture of the plenty that was to be enjoyed, initially under the reign of King Solomon and finally under the rule of Jesus Christ.—8/15 p. 8.

● Why did Jeremiah refer to Jehovah as "King of the nations"?—Jer. 10:7.

Jehovah is the outstanding King, the Supreme One, the One who dominates all other kings. The Most High has demonstrated his superior kingship

by taking action against the rulers of the nations, as when he gave the Israelites the victory over Sihon and Og.—8/15 pp. 19, 20.

● Why did Jeremiah say: "You have fooled me, O Jehovah"?—Jer. 20:7.

Jeremiah was fooled in a beneficial way. God's word had exercised a persuasive influence on him. Jehovah had proved stronger than Jeremiah's weakness, making it possible for the prophet to endure in the divine service to its completion.—9/1 p. 31.

● From what tree are the "good" and "bad" figs mentioned at Jeremiah 24:1, 2 obtained, and what do they represent?

The symbolic figs came from the nation of Israel. The 'good figs' represented the repentant remnant of the nation, whereas the 'bad figs' stood for the unfaithful ones. The modern fulfillment is to be found in true Christians, as contrasted with unrepentant Christendom.—9/15 pp. 18, 19.

● Why has the truth about Christ's 1,000-year reign been distorted?

During the first century C.E. the apostles exercised a restraining force that preserved the purity of Christian teaching. However, not long after they died an apostatizing from the true faith took place. This eventually led to the development of a host of conflicting sectarian views.—10/15 pp. 5, 6.

"Jehovah Has Done a Great Thing"

HOW refreshing to receive "a good report from a distant land"! (Prov. 25:25) It was indeed a joy to receive from Bangui, Central African Republic, a letter dated October 1, 1979, and written on the official stationery of Jehovah's Witnesses, incorporated in that land as "Association Les Témoins de Jéhovah" (French title). The letter opened with these words:

"Are you surprised to see this association letter-head? Well, we here are just as surprised as you are. In fact, since Thursday evening, September 27, at six o'clock, all of Jehovah's Witnesses here in Central African Republic have been living in a happy dream, filled with the same inexpressible joy that is explained in Psalm 126. At that time, it was announced publicly over the state radio here in Bangui that the ban of August 19, 1976, against Jehovah's Witnesses was effectively annulled, and that we are again authorized to preach freely throughout all the territory of Central African Republic."

Along with this joyful news came a copy of the governmental decree, signed by the president of the Republic, Mr. David Dacko, making official the lifting of the ban. Mr. Dacko replaced Emperor Bokassa as head of government on September 20, and is to be congratulated on his swift action in restoring freedom of religion and of speech to the oppressed witnesses of Jehovah.

How have the Witnesses reacted to this enlightened governmental action? The report from Bangui continues:

"The friends here have been very quick to return to zealous activity. Already this past weekend, a large number were out enjoying the door-to-door activity once again. Those congregations that had access to their Kingdom Halls were already back in them for their Sunday public talk and *Watchtower* study. Just three congregations here in the city, with a present total of 150 [Witnesses], registered a combined attendance total of 612 persons yesterday. Even many people who are not Jehovah's Witnesses have expressed their joy at the removal of the ban. [Some] are asking . . . why all the other religions became closely involved

with the [former government], with only Jehovah's Witnesses remaining completely neutral."

The neutrality of Jehovah's Witnesses with regard to the political revolutions and conflicts now raging in various parts of Africa has won them the respect of many of the people, as well as some of the rulers. In contrast to Christendom's religions, which try to curry favor with whatever ruler may be in power, whether he be tyrannical or liberal, Jehovah's Witnesses consistently follow the only course open to true Christians—that of being "no part of the world." Because of this, they suffer persecution in many countries. But this they willingly accept, even as did their Master, Jesus Christ, who endured all things "for the joy that was set before him."—John 15:18-21; Heb. 12:2.

It was one of the rulers of Jerusalem, Gamaliel, who wisely counseled concerning first-century Christians: "Do not meddle with these men, but let them alone." (Acts 5:38) As president of the Central African Republic, Mr. David Dacko has followed the same noble course with regard to the Christian witnesses of Jehovah. Lovers of freedom throughout the world will commend him for this. And it is hoped that the rulers of other African lands where Jehovah's Witnesses are still under ban will heed this fine example, granting these harmless Christians freedom to worship Jehovah God in the way that he commands them through the pages of his Word, the Bible.

Truly, Jehovah's Witnesses of the Central African Republic are delighted that they may express themselves in the words of Psalm 126:2, 3: "Our mouth came to be filled with laughter, and our tongue with a joyful cry. At that time they proceeded to say among the nations: 'Jehovah has done a great thing in what he has done with them.' Jehovah has done a great thing in what he has done with us. We have become joyful."

BIBLE TRUTH TRANSFORMED THEIR LIVES



THE first thing you notice about Delia Rosero is her stature. She is short. Delia bubbles the explanation: "I believe I came from pygmy ancestors." Her face is full of sunshine. You like Delia right away.

Daniel Rosero, her husband, is a "young" 50-year-old, and a handsome outgoing man. His smiling exuberance at seeing you frequently overflows into a hug. Daniel wasn't always like that.

Knowing something about their past, I visited them recently with the purpose of recording their experiences. It seemed to me that these could be a real help and an encouragement to many persons.

The Roseros live in the Andean city of

Latacunga, Ecuador, a city of some 30,000 people. This is an agricultural community where flowers abound and the people are proud to be tillers of the earth. The following conversation took place as we sat in the parlor of the Rosero home, overlooking the Cutuchi River.

EXTREME MARITAL TROUBLES

"I was barely 15," Delia begins, "when I put my foot into the sea of matrimony. It was not long before I got the hard knocks. For 14 years I was in slavery. No place to go. No hope. Daniel drank. Every Saturday he would come home about midnight to mistreat and beat the family.

"One has to have lived the desperation to know it. When Daniel would strike me, I would climb up on a chair and clutch a picture of 'Saint' Vincent Ferrer to my breast and cry, 'Hit me! Hit me!' Daniel would desist for fear of the 'saint.'"

Daniel confirms Delia's account. "We married in 1948. I was only a scrap of a lad, just 19 years old. No training, and unable, really, to support a growing family. We eventually had four daughters and three sons. To me, life had no purpose.

"According to what we were told, my future was one of death and of burning in hellfire. The priest had us convinced that we were worthless, doomed to damnation. I remember so often in my drunken frustration saying: 'I'm going to burn, so let me drink!'"

Picking up the thread of conversation, Delia continues: "We had a large reed basket for storing clothes. Benigno, our eldest son, and I emptied the basket and carefully stored the garments elsewhere. Then when Daniel would come home angry, Benigno would often hide in the basket until his father was overcome by sleep. It was the only way to avoid mistreatment."

The Roseros' pink home, with a neat patio and flowers abloom, is a far cry from their economic status of the early years of marriage. Daniel explains: "I was a maker of trousers—one pair a day. I did piece work. But I was always asking the tailor to advance me the next day's wages."

"The money didn't come home for food," Delia adds. Her eyes brim with tears. "Oh, how painful to recall some of those midnight showdowns!" The family situation deteriorated to the point where Delia, once wielding a large knife, threatened: "One or both of us may die but you will not beat me this time." Happily, the Roseros' story does not end there.

THE TURNING POINT

Daniel talks about the turning point. "It was a Sunday morning in June of 1962. Mario Hernández, a special pioneer (full-time preacher of Jehovah's Witnesses) was giving his Scriptural presentation to my wife at the door and I was lying on the bed, out of view. Actually, I was doing more listening than Delia was. I had heard that the Bible was one of the best religious books in the world, although it did not strike me as necessarily communication from God.

"When Mario Hernández left, I leaped out of bed and insisted: 'Call the preacher! Call the preacher back! I want to study the Bible.'"

Here Delia interjects. "I was very skeptical. I hesitated two or three times before going into the street after the Witness."

When the Witness returned, Daniel asked for a Bible. "I still recall Brother Hernández' reply," Daniel goes on. "'Fine, I'll bring you a Bible, but not to gather dust. It is to be studied!' Brother Hernández was always like that. Very direct. He came right to the point. You knew where you stood."

Daniel continues: "Fifteen days later a Bible study was established, but it was not altogether regular. My brother Homero also started to study and made fine progress. Homero left the use of images quickly, but I remember telling him: 'Homero, I'm still with the virgin Mary.' Homero replied: 'Little brother, keep studying! Soon it will come to you.'"

Daniel's decision to do something about what he was learning came as a result of attending a circuit assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses. "Homero told me of the assembly in Ambato. I replied that if there was money enough I would go.

"The organization overwhelmed me. People got along, lots of them, together.

You could feel love in the crowd. No one smoked. No dirty language. The young men and the older ones, too, did not make passes or talk nasty to the young girls. I remember thinking, "This is the truth!" It was not fear of death or fear of the world's end that moved me. It was the cleanness of the organization."

THE TABLES ARE TURNED

"I came home enthused and announced to Delia: 'I'm going to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses.'"

"You are a drunkard. Jehovah's Witnesses are not," was the reply.

At that point, the Roseros explained to me, a strange thing started to happen. Daniel began to change his life-style for the better and Delia took an opposite turn. It appeared that Delia was caught in the vise of vengeance. Daniel was to suffer for all her suffering.

"No money for food, but for the Bible, oh, yes!" was her taunt. Delia admits that she deliberately baited Daniel. She felt secure that as he grew in spiritual stature, the danger of his abusing her had progressively lessened.

On one occasion, Daniel openly wept. "Delia, Delia, I've changed! What is happening to you?" he pleaded. Even Benigno asked his mother if she really wanted the beatings of earlier times.

As Daniel's knowledge expanded, he put what he was learning into action. "The matter of images presented some problem for me," he notes. "I felt that miracles had actually happened to me as a result of the icon's intercession. However, Mario Hernández used 2 Corinthians 11:14 in his argument—'Satan keeps transforming himself into an angel of light.' My response? 'Fine, the demons can trick us with idols. So be done with them!'"

Removing all the pictures and statues to the patio, Daniel jumped on them and later burned them. "I was horrified and

rushed from the house expecting the roof to collapse as an expression of divine wrath," Delia recalls, "all the while pleading, 'Please, dear God, forgive this ignoramus. I pray that you will not punish us!'"

Daniel, though, had made the change. On May 4, 1963, he was baptized in symbol of his dedication to God. "It was uphill after that," Daniel continues. "Smoking was a real problem. I remember at breakfast I used to say: 'Don't give me bread. Bring me tobacco.' But this vice, too, I conquered."

THE PICTURE BRIGHTENS

Daniel and Homero Rosero were the first Witnesses in Latacunga. The brothers recall the words of Arthur Bonno, who was serving as circuit overseer: "*Conduct yourselves as Christians for you will open the door for others.*" And they did. Delia, in time, dedicated her life to Jehovah, doing so in 1965.

Daniel remembers how a congregation overseer, Luís Narváez, encouraged him to acquire more self-confidence with these words: "Daniel, you have learned the truth from the Bible, which is a real accomplishment. Why can't you learn to work sleeves, cut and sew suit coats? Be a tailor!"

"And I did," Daniel says, grinning. "Luís would bring me his old suit coats. I would take them completely apart and re-do them. I got the practice and Luís got almost new suits. I built a business; set up a nice shop with glass windows. I became a master tailor. No more asking for advances. The customers paid me up front. In time, with Jehovah's help we got a home."

But as Bible truth grew in his heart, Daniel realized he needed, not more money, but more time for preaching. Homero, his brother, had several fine home Bible studies and Daniel wanted that same joy. So

in July 1968 he took up the special pioneer service. At the time there were 12 baptized Kingdom publishers in the congregation and some 30 persons attending the meetings.

THE TRUTH SPREADS IN LATACUNGA

When Luís Narváez was about to leave Latacunga, Daniel remembers his saying: "Daniel, I want to leave you a 'sheep.'" The interested person was the wife of one of Latacunga's outstanding physicians, Dr. Mario Moscoso. Within two weeks of initiating the study, Dr. Moscoso joined in.

"Mario Moscoso was always so humble," Daniel recalls. "He never made me feel inadequate. In fact, he made me a student. I had to study to find the answers to his questions. Dr. Moscoso was the director of the blood bank, and when the subject of blood came up it was openly discussed. Within a matter of weeks he left his position with the blood bank."

Within six months, Mario Moscoso, who was later to be the family physician to the president of the republic, openly thanked Daniel for helping him find the truth. He sent Daniel to study with his relatives. "There occurred an explosion of truth!" Delia exclaims. "The list read like a telephone directory—the Armas, the Bravos, the Coronels, the Leons, the Villagómez family. More than 30 family members dedicated their lives to Jehovah, to say nothing of the many children and others who regularly attended the meetings.

"In three and a half years, 60 new ones were baptized, and attendances of 200 persons were common in Latacunga."

OTHER ASSIGNMENTS

In 1971 the Roseros were assigned to Cayambe, a small community of 8,000 people. "We took the whole family," Daniel relates, "including my mother-in-law." In three and a half years, a congregation was established in Cayambe, and 12 persons

took the positive step of dedication and symbolized this by water baptism.

The year 1974 took the Roseros to Otavalo, Ecuador. "Again our whole family moved, with the exception of Benigno and my mother-in-law, who stayed behind to cook for Benigno. But the family grew anyway," Daniel says, beaming. "In two years, 11 new ones were baptized, including three young men who became my sons-in-law. They married three of my daughters."

Especially since 1973 has the bite of inflation made it continually more difficult for the Roseros to keep on in the special pioneer service. But continue they have. In 1976 they were reassigned to their home city of Latacunga where the economic strain is somewhat less.

"The greatest encouragement for me to keep on is a progressive home Bible study," Daniel explains. "I ask Jehovah regularly to direct me to someone who really wants the truth, for this is as stimulating to me as it is to the student. Right now there is a 'beautiful' family that is advancing and coming to the meetings. I think the husband's description of his religious development is very revealing. He says, 'Catholic by tradition, Baptist by emotion, Jehovah's Witness with accurate knowledge.'"

GRATEFUL FOR BIBLE TRUTH

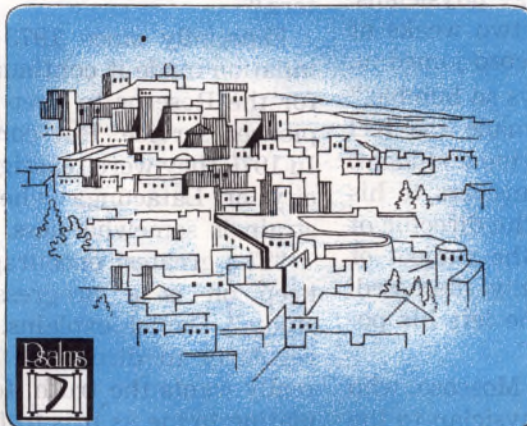
Our conversation slows and we go into the patio where zinnias, roses and vines abound. Across the Cutuchi River cattle graze on a grassy carpet amidst brightly colored clothes laid out to dry. Dusty eucalyptus trees rustle in the breeze. The sky is bright blue. Delia is reflective.

"People tell me I'm full of life," she says. "You know I owe it all to the truth of the Bible. Who knows where my children would be without God's Word? All seven of them are baptized and stable. The truth has meant a completely new life,

new happiness, for me." She bursts into a smile and states: "We'll keep on serving Jehovah and trusting his direction."

Daniel adds: "The truth is life to me. I am convinced that had it not been for the truth, I would have died from alcoholism." I note that Daniel appears to be getting younger each time I see him. He laughs and remarks: "You know, people right

here in Latacunga say the same thing. In fact, they tell me it must have something to do with my preaching. I have a Scripture text that I like to show them, here at Psalm 92:14, 15: 'They will still keep on thriving during gray-headedness, fat and fresh they will continue to be, to tell that Jehovah is upright. He is my Rock, in whom there is no unrighteousness.'"



THE JOY OF SHARING IN TRUE WORSHIP

SHARING with others in true worship is a source of unspeakable joy for devoted servants of the Most High. The intensity of their feeling is reflected in Psalm 122, the opening words of which read: "I rejoiced when they were saying to me: 'To the house of Jehovah let us go.'" (Vs. 1) Just the thought of going to Jehovah's sanctuary engendered within the psalmist feelings of joy and peace.

The superscription attributes Psalm 122 to David. The *Septuagint Version*, however, omits the words "of David." This and certain words used in this psalm have led numerous scholars to conclude that it was written by someone other than David. Nevertheless, Psalm 122 can be understood without difficulty if we accept the superscription appearing in the Hebrew text.

God-fearing David found great delight in going up to Jehovah's house for worship. The extent of his joy is clear from what he did when the sacred ark was transferred to Mount Zion. The Bible tells us: "David was dancing around before Jehovah with all his power." He and "all the house of Israel were bringing up the ark of Jehovah with joyful shouting."—2 Sam. 6:14, 15.

From what follows, though, Psalm 122 doubtless was designed to express the sentiments of any worshiper going up to Jehovah's sanctuary. We read: "Our feet proved to be standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is one that is built like a city that has been joined together in oneness, to which the tribes have gone up, the tribes of Jah, as a reminder to Israel to give thanks to the name of Jehovah." (Ps. 122:2-4) Thus, this psalm represents the worshipers as coming from outside Jerusalem, then pausing immediately after entering through the gates to view the city. What greets their eyes? Jerusalem is a city "joined together in oneness." Houses were built close together, as if 'joined in oneness.' This was the usual arrangement for a city in ancient

times. Compact and surrounded by strong fortifications, such a city was easier to defend than a large, sprawled-out metropolis would have been. The city's defenders did not have to cover an extensive area, leaving certain parts vulnerable to enemy attack. Furthermore, Jerusalem was surrounded by mountains and steep valleys on the east, south and west, greatly limiting the space available for building. Since the city's inhabitants were living close together and depended upon one another for help and protection, the physical closeness could well represent the spiritual unity of the whole nation when all the tribes of Israel assembled for worship. Their giving "thanks to the name of Jehovah" meant their thanking the Most High, the One represented by the name.

Not only was Jerusalem the center of true worship but the city also was the seat of government. The psalmist continues: "For there the thrones for judgment have been sitting, thrones for the house of David." (Ps. 122:5) As the capital, Jerusalem was the place for final judgments. King David occupied the position of judge and so did others of his house. The Bible reports: "As for the sons of David, they became priests." (2 Sam. 8:18) Their being called "priests" signifies that they were ministers of state or officials and, in this capacity, must have rendered judgments.

In view of the importance of Jerusalem, the psalmist continues: "Ask, O you people, for the peace of Jerusalem. Those loving you, O city, will be free from care. May peace continue within your rampart, freedom from care within your dwelling towers." (Ps. 122:6, 7) It would be most appropriate for the Israelites to pray for the peace or welfare of Jerusalem as the capital of the nation and the center of worship. Love for the city because of what it was would be in harmony with God's will. Therefore, all lovers of the city, that

is, all lovers of true worship and justice, could rest assured of divine favor and would enjoy security, 'freedom from care' or anxiety. The prayerful expression of the psalmist is that within the rampart or fortifications of Jerusalem there would be peace, that the welfare of the city be secure. This security would include the dwelling towers or the fortified royal residences.

Especially because the city was a center for the worship of Jehovah, its enjoyment of peace was in the best interests of the nation. So, by praying for the peace of Jerusalem, an Israelite was seeking the interests of fellow Israelites. This is made clear in the following words of Psalm 122: "For the sake of my brothers and my companions I will now speak: 'May there be peace within you.' For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God I will keep seeking good for you."—Vss. 8, 9.

Today true worship is no longer associated with a specific city or a particular geographical location. Jesus Christ told a Samaritan woman: "The hour is coming when neither in this mountain [Gerizim] nor in Jerusalem will you people worship the Father. . . . Nevertheless, the hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him."—John 4:21-23.

So, instead of praying for a particular place, God's servants rightly pray for one another and for the peace of the Christian congregation as a whole, which today elevates true worship before others. When it comes to the meetings of this congregation, are your sentiments like those of the psalmist? Do you rejoice to be with others of like precious faith? Are you just as concerned about the welfare of the congregation as the psalmist was with the peace of Jerusalem? If this is the case, you are living in harmony with the spirit of Psalm 122.

QUESTIONS from READERS

● Around December 25 you hear much about 'three wise men' being led by a star to Jesus. But did they visit him in Bethlehem or later in Nazareth?

Luke tells us that Joseph and Mary traveled from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, south of Jerusalem. There Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. Through an angel Jehovah God announced the birth to shepherds, who were to find the "infant [Greek, *brephos*]" in Bethlehem. On the eighth day Joseph and Mary had Jesus circumcised. At the end of the required 40-day purification period, they "brought the young child [Greek, *paidion*]" to the temple in Jerusalem. There Simeon and the prophetess Anna saw Jesus. —Luke 2:1-38; Lev. 12:2-4.

The very next verse in Luke's account, Luke 2:39, adds: "So when they had carried out all the things according to the law of Jehovah, they went back into Galilee to their own city Nazareth." But what about the 'three wise men'? When did they visit Jesus, and where?

Matthew relates that "after Jesus had been born in Bethlehem" some men came to Jerusalem from the East. Tradition holds that there were three of them (possibly because they had three kinds of gifts—gold, frankincense, myrrh). But the Bible does not say that. Nor does it term them "kings." Rather, it calls them *magoi* (related to the English word "magician"). (Matt. 2:1) Rather than this meaning "wise men," Professor A. T. Robertson explains:

"Here in Matthew the idea seems to be rather that of astrologers. Babylon was the home of astrology."—*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 15.

Matthew tells us that after stopping in Jerusalem and conferring with King Herod, these astrologers went on "to Bethlehem." Once having presented their gifts, they were to return and let Herod know the child's whereabouts. But God intervened, causing the astrologers to take another route. Then he told Joseph to flee to Egypt because Herod wanted to destroy Jesus.—Matt. 2:1-15.

In the light of what Matthew and Luke say,

one may wonder just when the astrologers visited Jesus. It is not reasonable that it was during the 40-day purification period, for Luke assures us that the family went to Jerusalem at the end of that time. But Matthew says that right after the astrologers' visit Joseph fled with his family to Egypt. Hence, it seems that after presenting the child at the temple in Jerusalem the family returned to Bethlehem with plans to settle in King David's city from where the Messiah was to come, and there were visited later by the astrologers.

Matthew 2:11 tells us that when the astrologers "went into the house they saw the young child." So Joseph, Mary and Jesus were by this time living in a house, not in a stable as is often depicted erroneously. Also, Matthew used the Greek word *paidion*, which can apply to a newborn infant (John 16:21) or to a more advanced child, such as one able to speak and play games outside. (Luke 7:32) Hence, Jesus could then have been many months in age.

Indicating that he was no longer a newborn is the fact that when the astrologers did not return Herod ordered the killing of "all the boys in Bethlehem and in all its district . . . from two years of age and under, according to the time that he had carefully ascertained from the astrologers." (Matt. 2:16) The evidence is that Jesus was born about October 1, 2 B.C.E., and that Herod died in 1 B.C.E. or early 1 C.E.* Thus Jesus could have been even a year or more old when the astrologers came. Possibly they came from as far east as the region of Babylon, on a journey that could have taken several months. Calculating from when the "star" appeared to them in the east, Herod may have included ample time so as to be sure that Jesus would be killed.

Why, then, does Luke 2:39 read as if Joseph took the family right from Jerusalem to Nazareth without going back to Bethlehem?

It appears that Luke simply omits the intervening events (the return from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, the astrologers' visit and the flight to Egypt), even as Matthew says nothing of the shepherds or the trip to Jerusalem where Simeon and Anna saw Jesus. Certainly the astrologers did not visit Jesus in Nazareth, for Matthew says otherwise; and in Nazareth Jesus would not have been endangered by an order to kill children in 'Bethlehem and its districts.'

* See *Aid to Bible Understanding*, pp. 757, 758, 920, 921.

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She Learned How to Worship God

Jehovah God does not ignore those seeking to please him. Illustrating this is the following experience related by witnesses of Jehovah in Iran:

"Although it was not possible to speak with the manager [at a certain place of business], his secretary invited us into her office. . . . She had begun reading all kinds of books to find out how to pray and be heard by God

"One evening, after concluding her Zoroastrian prayers, this young woman prayed to God in her own words, saying: 'Dear God, whoever you are, show me how you want me to worship you. . . .'

"Two weeks later, we called. Many lengthy discussions followed. (Having been educated in a Catholic school, the woman had some knowledge of the 'Christian' religion. . . .) It was not long before she was convinced that she had now found the truth and that her prayers had finally been answered. From that initial week, she started attending the meetings [of Jehovah's Witnesses] regularly, enthusiastically preaching to others and making big changes in her life and attitude.

"As the Bible study with this woman progressed, she came to appreciate that all the books she had been reading in her search for God did not contain the truth, and that, in fact, many of them were associated with spiritism. Gradually, she disposed of more than 40 books, each being worth over 40 dollars. She discarded all her former religious items, including 'good luck' coins, crosses, Zoroastrian symbols and those associated with astrology—this also at great personal expense. (Acts 19:19) Thus within one year this young woman dedicated her life to Jehovah."

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

January 20: "Come After Me, and I Will Make You Fishers of Men." Page 9. Songs to Be Used: 108, 74.

January 27: Speaking Jehovah's Word with Boldness. Page 16. Songs to Be Used: 103, 51.