

February 15, 1982

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



**Virgin Birth—
Fact or Fiction?**

The Watchtower[®]

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

February 15, 1982
Vol. 103, No. 4

IN THIS ISSUE

The Virgin Birth— Fact or Fiction?	3
The Virgin Birth— Can You Believe It?	4
The Virgin Birth— Should You Believe It?	7
Will You Listen to Counsel?	8
Insight on the News	10
A New Dimension to Bible Reading	11
Physician Luke Does the Best Work	12
Dedication—To Whom? Why?	16
Dedication and Its Symbol	21
"What Prevents Me from Getting Baptized?"	27
It Brings It All Together	32

THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER" is to exalt Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as they fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in the now-reigning king, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. "The Watchtower," published by Jehovah's Witnesses since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

- March 21: Dedication—To Whom? Why? Page 16.
Songs to Be Used: 1, 93.
- March 28: Dedication and Its Symbol. Page 21.
Songs to Be Used: 112, 92.
- April 4: "What Prevents Me from Getting Baptized?"
Page 27. Songs to Be Used: 57, 117.

Average Printing Each Issue: 9,300,000

Now Published in 106 Languages

SEMIMONTHLY EDITIONS AVAILABLE BY MAIL

Afrikaans, Arabic, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese, Cibemba, Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hiligaynon, Igbo, Iloko, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lingala, Malagasy, Maltese, Norwegian, Portuguese, Sesotho, Shona, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Thai, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

MONTHLY EDITIONS AVAILABLE BY MAIL

Armenian, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Croatian, Czech, Efik, Ewe, Fijian, Ga, Greenlandic, Gujarati, Gun, Hebrew, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian, Icelandic, Kannada, Kikuyu, Kiluba, Luvale, Malayalam, Marathi, New Guinea Pidgin, Pampango, Pangasinan, Papiamentu, Polish, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian, Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sango, Sepedi, Serbian, Silozi, Sinhalese, Slovenian, Solomon Islands-Pidgin, Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese

The Bible translation used is the "New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures," unless otherwise indicated.

Copyright © 1982 by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

Fifteen cents (U.S.) a copy

Yearly subscription rates

<i>Watch Tower Society offices</i>	<i>Semimonthly</i>
America , U.S., Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589	\$3.50
Australia , Box 280, Ingleburn, N.S.W. 2565	\$3.50
Canada , Box 4100, Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4Y4	\$4.00
England , The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN	£4.00
New Zealand , 6-A Western Springs Rd., Auckland 3	\$4.50
Nigeria , P.O. Box 194, Yaba, Lagos State	₦2.50
Philippines , P.O. Box 2044, Manila 2800	₱25.00
South Africa , Private Bag 2, Elandsfontein, 1406	R3.60

Remittances should be sent to the office in your country or to Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589, U.S.A.

Changes of address should reach us thirty days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly for \$3.50 per year by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.

Published by

**Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society
of Pennsylvania**

25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201, U.S.A.

Frederick W. Franz, President Grant Suiter, Secretary

The Virgin Birth— *Fact or Fiction?*



MOST people know of the Bible account of Jesus' being born of a virgin. But not all accept it as true. Do you think the virgin birth reasonable? Does it matter if you believe in it or not?

Among persons who reject the Bible record are those who view a virgin birth as *biologically unacceptable*. Yet some such persons may now be rethinking their position because of current scientific developments in genetic management. Is it possible that something of that kind was involved in the virgin birth of Jesus?

Other persons have been put off by the Roman and Orthodox Catholic Churches' embellishments of the simple Bible account of the virgin birth. For example, the elevation of adoration of the

virgin Mary has soured the whole story for some.

Still others find the idea of the virgin birth somewhat distasteful. 'Surely,' they think, 'if God is all powerful he does not need such a device to accomplish his purpose.' They may treat the virgin birth as simply an illustrative story, a parable.

We shall consider each of these views and see how the matter might affect our life and beliefs. But first it will pay to look briefly at what the Bible actually says about the virgin birth.

What the Bible Actually Says

There are two reports, both written by intelligent men who were on the scene when Jesus was on earth. Appropriately, one is by a physician, Luke. The other is by Matthew, a man who was used to the discipline of working with accounts and who had been selected by Jesus as one of the 12 apostles.

Matthew's account focuses on the role of Joseph, "the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born." (Matthew 1:16) Chapter 1, verse 18, explains that Mary, a virgin, was found to be pregnant before she was united with her fiancé, Joseph. On learning of this, Joseph, a "righteous" man, determined to end their engagement secretly so as not to expose Mary to public shame. However, God let him know that the conception had been by the power of holy spirit and that he had chosen Mary for a special role as the mother of the Savior. With

this assurance, Joseph took Mary home, "but had no intercourse with her until her son was born."—Matthew 1:25, *The New English Bible*.

Luke, on the other hand, presents the account from Mary's point of view. The essential facts are the same, but he gives details of the conversation between Mary and the angel who revealed to her the privilege of motherhood that she was being offered. Astonished, Mary responded: "How is this to be, since I am having no intercourse with a man?" To her it all seemed beyond belief, as it may seem to you. The angel then explained to her that the conception would be miraculous, by holy spirit, by the power of the Most High, whose son the child thus would be. Mary accepted the honor readily and duly gave birth to a son, Jesus.—Luke 1:26-38.

The Bible has comparatively little to say about Mary after the birth of Jesus.

She is mentioned in connection with him a few times, but there is no suggestion that she was prominent among the disciples. Certainly she held no influence over Jesus after childhood. On occasion he had to remind her and others of this. (John 2:4; Matthew 12:46-50) Still, he had affection for her. Even as he was dying, Jesus charged the apostle John to care for her.—John 19:26, 27.

Mary was also among the disciples after Jesus' resurrection and likely was present at Pentecost when about 120 were filled with holy spirit. (Acts 1:13, 14; 2:1-4) Clearly, Mary's role in her later years was that of a faithful, humble disciple, without any hint of prominence, authority or special distinction.

Having looked at what the Bible has to say about the virgin birth, we may now consider the questions that arise in many minds as to whether it is scientifically acceptable or even reasonably credible.

The Virgin Birth— *Can You Believe It?*

IF JESUS, the Son of God, truly was born of a virgin, you must concede that surely it was a miracle of historic proportions. But can you believe that it occurred? Does it have any bearing on your life in one way or another?

Some of those who do not believe in the virgin birth say that it is contrary to science and to the "laws of nature." Do scientists think so? Have recent discoveries in genetics shed any light on the matter?

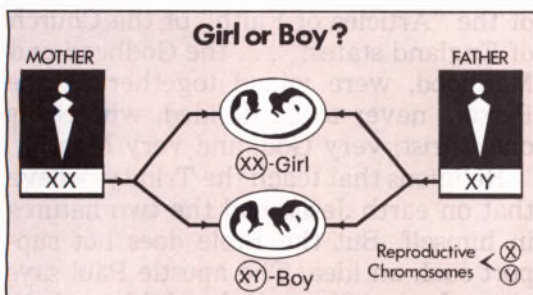
Scientifically Possible?

Reproduction without a male is known as parthenogenesis [Greek, *parthenos* meaning "maiden" plus "*genesis*"]. Recently scientists have been experimenting successfully with parthenogenesis in mammals. *The Economist* of August 1, 1981, reports: "Embryo development in the absence of sperm is the natural means of reproduction in many lower species of animal. . . . Parthenogenesis is being studied using laboratory mice. Several

means exist for artificially activating an unfertilised mouse egg."

Similarly, Dr. M. B. V. Roberts of Marlborough College, England, writes: "An unfertilized egg was removed from a female rabbit, activated by pricking, and then popped back into the uterus. Hormone treatment had been previously given to the female so that her uterine mucosa was prepared for implantation. Normal development ensued, and a visibly normal offspring was produced."

Are we to conclude from this that God induced Mary's pregnancy in some such way from an unfertilized egg? No. From the accompanying chart, you can see why. If Mary's firstborn had received both chromosomes (X) from her,



A female's egg contains two X chromosomes. The male sperm cell has an X and a Y. Each parent provides one chromosome. If two X's combine, a girl is produced. If an X and a Y, the child will be male.

Laboratory-induced parthenogenesis causes a female egg to divide and grow, so the result (XX) must be a female.

Such a type of parthenogenesis could not have occurred with Mary, for her firstborn (Jesus) was a male. Since she was a virgin, the Y chromosome must have been supplied miraculously, as the Bible indicates.

the offspring would of necessity have been female.

Hence, something more must have been involved in the conception of Jesus. Just what this was the angel explained to Joseph: "That which has been begotten in her is by holy spirit." (Matthew 1:20) We do not know precisely how this was done. Yet we must admit that if mere man can in a limited way manipulate the fertilization process in the laboratory, surely it is not beyond the power of the Creator and Life-Giver of the universe to do so and to transfer the life-force of his Son from the heavens to the ovum of a virgin girl.

Religious Embellishments

As we have noted, however, the objection that some have to the virgin birth lies elsewhere. It concerns religious embellishments of the Bible account that have developed over the centuries. It seems that the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches were unwilling to acknowledge that, having fulfilled her role in bearing the Son of God, Mary had no special place in the Christian congregation. Through the centuries they made positive moves to elevate her to near equality with their Trinitarian concept of God.

In the year 553 C.E. the Second Council of Constantinople proclaimed Mary "eternal Virgin," which would mean that her marriage to Joseph was celibate and that they never had sexual relations or children together. Then in 1854 Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Immaculate Conception of Mary. That doctrine declares that she had been preserved from all sin inherited from Adam; in fact, that she was incapable of sin. In 1950 Pope Pius XII made it an article of faith that Mary, at the conclusion of her human life, had been assumed bodily into heaven. And since 1950 the Vatican has been

pondering whether the virgin Mary experienced death at all.

Despite official Church teaching, we may well question whether after the birth of Jesus Mary remained "ever virgin." Or did she have other children by Joseph after the birth of Jesus? Does it matter? Yes, if the truth matters. So what do the Scriptures say?

Matthew records that Joseph "had no intercourse with [Mary] *until* she gave birth to a son," Jesus. (Matthew 1:25) Commenting on the significance of "until" here, the *Revised Standard Version*, Catholic edition, published by the Catholic Truth Society, London, claims: "This means only that Joseph had nothing to do with the conception of Jesus. It implies nothing as to what happened afterwards."

However, there is no basis in Scripture for assuming that nothing happened afterward, that Joseph and Mary never had a normal marriage. No prophecy even hinted at such a thing, no divine requirement called for it. Their intimate life together and any resulting parenthood had no bearing at all on Jesus' earthly ministry or on his subsequent activities in the heavens. Indeed, far from supporting the notion that Mary was ever virgin, the Gospels state that Jesus was Mary's *first-born* and that he had half brothers and half sisters. Mark writes that in Jesus' hometown, Nazareth, he preached in the synagogue to people who recognized him. Most were astounded at Jesus' teaching and said: "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"—Mark 6:2, 3, RSV, Catholic edition; Luke 2:7.

Catholic theologians claim that these 'brothers and sisters' were really cousins. Yet the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Vol. 9, p. 337) admits that "the

Greek words . . . that are used to designate the relationship between Jesus and these relatives have the meaning of full blood brother and sister." These are the words *adelphos* and *adelphé*. However, the word for cousin is *anepsios* and for relatives, *syggenon*. (Colossians 4:10; Luke 1:36) There is no sound reason for thinking that the Gospel writers got these words mixed up. (Compare Mark 6:4; Luke 14:12.) Nor is there reason to deny that Joseph and Mary had a family after the birth of Jesus.

Was Jesus a God/Man?

A later embellishment of the simple Bible account of the virgin birth is that the babe born was not totally human but was an incarnation. Thus, the second of the "Articles of Faith" of the Church of England states: ". . . the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man."

Religions that teach the Trinity believe that on earth Jesus had the two natures in himself. But the Bible does not support such an idea. The apostle Paul says about Jesus: "Since all the children share the same blood and flesh, he too shared equally in it, . . . It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers." (Hebrews 2:14, 17, *Jerusalem Bible*) How could he be "completely like his brothers" if he were a God/man? Paul wrote to the Philippians of "Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in *God's form*, . . . emptied himself and took a *slave's form* and came to be in the likeness of men." (Philippians 2:5-7) So this heavenly Son of God divested himself completely of "God's form" to take on human nature, to become a man. Just *why* he had to be wholly man, not a God/man, and the implications as to the virgin birth, we shall discuss next.

The Virgin Birth— *Should You Believe It?*

SO WE come to the questions: Was Mary a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus? Did she need to be? Why did Jesus not have a *human* father? We are helped to answer these questions by examining who Jesus was and what was his mission on earth.

The apostle John explains that before Jesus was born on earth he lived in the spirit realm as the firstborn Son of God and was called the Word. In due time "the Word became flesh and resided among us." (John 1:1-14) Or, as expressed elsewhere in the Bible: "God sent forth his Son, who came to be out of a woman." (Galatians 4:4) Jesus himself acknowledged that "on coming into the world: '[God] who wanted no [animal] sacrifice or oblation, *prepared a body for me.*'" —Hebrews 10:5, *Jerusalem Bible*.

There were strong reasons for Jesus' becoming a human, "coming into the world" of mankind. High on the list was the redemption of the human family from slavery to sin, imperfection and death. The apostle Paul explained: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned." (Romans 5:12) As to how Almighty God would cope with that situation, Paul says: "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a *man*, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a *corresponding ransom* for all."—1 Timothy 2:5, 6; compare 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22.

Yes, death came to all humans through the rebellion of our forefather Adam, and justice required the life of another *perfect* man, not more, not less, to provide the ransom that would buy back the possibility of everlasting life for us. No

imperfect human could possibly provide that. (Psalm 49:6, 7) Someone would have to step down from the heavenly realm. Appropriately, the one to do this was the firstborn Son of God. He had to become a perfect man and yet not lose his continuity of life. His life-force was not to be extinguished but would be transferred to the ovum of the virgin girl, Mary. She, 'overshadowed by the protective power of the Most High,' could produce a perfect body for the babe Jesus.—Luke 1:35.

This explains also why the life-force could not come through an imperfect human male in the normal way. An imperfect Jesus could not have become the ransom. Nor could he have become such as an incarnation or God/man.

Jehovah selected a virgin to be the earthly mother of Jesus so that it would be clear that he was the son, not of an imperfect human father, but of God. Had a married woman been given this great honor there would always have been doubt about this.

We can thus see that the virgin birth of Jesus was essential to the outworking of Jehovah God's original purpose to have a perfect human family live forever on a paradise earth. (Genesis 2:7-9, 15-17) Out of his love he would provide a ransom. His justice would be satisfied. His wisdom would triumph.

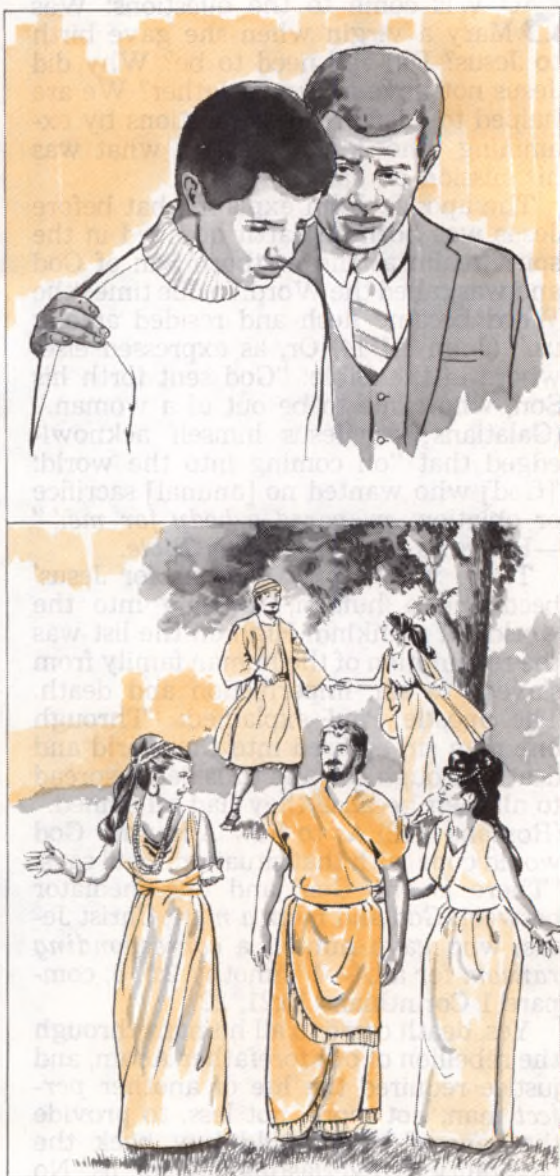
Hence, we should conclude that the Bible account of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ ought not to lose credibility because of the scorn of the skeptic or because of unscriptural and extravagant religious embellishments. It stands as a basic fact, essential to Christian faith. And it is intimately tied in with our prospects of everlasting life.—John 17:3.

Will You Listen to Counsel?

HAVE you ever received counsel, as you see the young man here receiving? Perhaps you were told that certain associations were bad, or that a particular course of action could lead to trouble and could even make you displeasing to God. Did you listen? Something that happened to God's people of ancient times shows how important it can be to pay attention to counsel.

After delivering the Israelites from Egypt, God instructed them to avoid association with worshipers of other gods. He said: "You are not to conclude a covenant [or, agreement] with them or their gods." Nor were these worshipers of false gods to be allowed to stay in the land. The reason God gave was "that they may not cause you to sin against me." (Exodus 23:32, 33) However, just before going into the Promised Land, many of the Israelites did not heed that counsel. What happened?

The false prophet Balaam had the women of Moab and Midian, whom you see here, invite the Israelites to a banquet of the best food and wine. Really, it was unwise for them to accept such an invitation from false worshipers. Probably many of them were advised not to go. But they did not listen to the counsel. They went anyway.



At the banquet the Israelites became relaxed as a result of eating and drinking. Also, there was probably sexy dancing by the Moabite and Midianite women, which aroused the passions of the men. They let down their guard, so that these women drew them into having sexual relations. They even got the Israelites to bow down to false gods. With what result?

Jehovah's anger blazed against his people, and he sent a plague on them. Still, one of the Israelites brought Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite chieftain, right into the Israelite camp. He took her to his tent to have sexual relations with her. But Phinehas, the son of the Israelite high priest, rushed in and ran them both through with a spear. At that Jehovah stopped the plague. However, 24,000 Israelites died because they did not listen to counsel.—Numbers 25:1-15; 31:16.

Can you see a similar situation today? There is one. (1 Corinthians 10:11) We are now right near God's promised new system, ready to enter it as the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land. Judging from past examples, what would you expect Satan to attempt? Yes, to get God's people into situations where they would commit sexual immorality, so that Jehovah would judge them as being unfit to enter his righteous new system.

So when you receive counsel to avoid situations that could lead to your committing fornication, what will you do? Be wise. Listen to the counsel!



Insight on the News

Flesh and Blood for Sale

"Cornea for sale . . . Please call working days." So read an advertisement in a Rio de Janeiro newspaper. And that was not an isolated incident. On a recent Sunday one paper carried 10 advertisements offering kidneys and three offering corneas for sale. Another paper had three cornea advertisements and five for kidneys. What is happening? Apparently Brazil's 120-percent-a-year inflation and widespread poverty are forcing the poor to sell parts of their body to make ends meet. "I know I am risking my life," said one who advertised, "but I see no other way. . . . This is the only thing left."

Many of the poor and unemployed also sell their blood regularly, some as often as twice a week, to support their families. Hundreds of commercial blood banks buy blood from individuals at \$3 or \$4 a half liter (1 pint) and sell it for \$60 (U.S.) to hospitals and clinics. In several documented cases, individuals sold so much of their blood that they actually collapsed and died while shopping for food with money from the sale.

Clearly, these people have become helpless victims of Satan's oppressive, greedy and corrupt world system. What is happening is very much like what the prophet Micah observed in his days. Then men were spoken of as "haters of what is good and lovers of badness, tearing off their skin from people and their organs from off their bones." (Micah

3:1, 2) For such "badness," Jehovah God brought that unjust system to an end in 607 B.C.E. Likewise, he will bring to an end the present oppressive system and usher in a new order of righteousness.—2 Peter 3:13.

Writership of Genesis

A team of researchers at the Technion Institute in Haifa conducted a linguistic analysis of the book of Genesis by feeding its 20,000 words into a computer programmed to study word usage and occurrence. The results touched off a new debate on the writership of the book. For years Biblical scholars have held to the so-called documentary hypothesis—that Genesis was not written or compiled by one person, Moses, but by several writers, some of whom lived long after Moses' time. The researchers, however, reported that the computer study indicated an 82-percent probability that the book was written by one person and that it revealed the stylistic "fingerprints" of only one writer.

Though unconvinced, Professor Moshe Weinfeld of Hebrew University acknowledged that the study "perhaps has proven" that the documentary hypothesis "was not correct in asserting that portions of the Book of Genesis were probably written in the modern era." Another professor conceded that the study "may show that some areas [of the hypothesis] have to be reinvestigated."

Regardless of what further evidence the computer experts may

turn up, true Christians agree with Jesus Christ who attributed the compiling of the Law, including the book of Genesis, to Moses.—Luke 24:27, 44; see also 2 Timothy 3:16.

Curbing Crime "Epidemic"

"Crime is an American epidemic," said President Ronald Reagan in a speech to the International Association of Chiefs of Police. Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics show that a total of 13,295,400 serious crimes were reported in 1980, averaging one every 2.4 seconds!

Talking about proposals to curb the "epidemic," the president continued, "It is ultimately a moral dilemma, one that calls for a moral or, if you will, a spiritual solution. . . . In the end, the war on crime will only be won when an attitude of mind and a change of heart takes place in America."

Will such a "spiritual solution" and "change of heart" ever take place? Not if we look to human governments or agencies. However, concerning such a change, the prophet Isaiah wrote: "They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea." (Isaiah 11:9) In God's promised new order and under the messianic Kingdom, "the knowledge of Jehovah" will bring about the needed change in all then living, for a crime-free and peaceful world.—See also Isaiah 9:6, 7.

A New Dimension to Bible Reading



Have you had the pleasure of listening to someone who is skillful in reading from the Bible? A good reader can bring to life the dynamic narratives, heartwarming dialogues, powerful arguments, forceful counsel and a host of other Biblical details to which no casual reading can ever do justice. With this in mind, the Watchtower Society has produced cassette recordings of the entire Christian Greek Scriptures in English, and portions thereof in 10 other languages.

What have been the reactions of those who have obtained copies of the cassettes? "I thought that you wouldn't get much out of them after hearing them once," said one woman. "But how wrong I was! I never got tired of the tapes playing over and over, because I truly get more and more out of them."

Many have commented on how the tapes have helped them to build their appreciation for even familiar Scriptural passages. One person put it this way: "Listening to it over and over again has brought out many fine points in the account that are missed from a reading or an occasional playing of the tape."

Others felt that listening to the recordings helped them to visualize events and actually feel the impact of what had happened. "It was as if I was there reclining with Jesus Christ at his evening meal . . . and to see Mary perfume the Christ for burial," wrote an appreciative listener. An 81-year-old woman who has been one of Jehovah's Witnesses for over 50 years said that listening to the tapes daily made her realize for the first time that Jesus and the apostles were human and

had their trials and hardships as we do. This, she said, made her "feel close to them."

We have heard from another person who, when telling about a visitor who had been studying the Bible for only about three months, said: "I was amazed at his Scriptural knowledge and his ability to recite and quote scriptures in the Bible. It was no surprise when I learned that he would constantly be playing the tape recordings in his car while driving, before he retired at night, and even early in the morning." Someone else commented that limiting oneself to one tape per week helps in remembering what verses belong to what Bible book.

Many have found the Bible tapes a ready tool in helping them to make the best use of their time. Housewives, especially, have commented many times that with the cassettes they can keep their minds on spiritual things while doing housework or cooking. Those who have to travel to work each day are able to 'buy out' the time spent on the road by playing the cassettes in their car. One Witness who was hospitalized for an extended period of time was extremely grateful for the tapes, which she and a "hospital mate," another Witness, played regularly during their stay.

The apostle Paul tells us: "Faith follows the thing heard. In turn the thing heard is through the word about Christ." (Romans 10:17) Listening to Bible tapes regularly can, indeed, be an effective way to strengthen your faith.

Physician Luke Does the Best Work



HOW do you feel about doctors? Down through history people have esteemed physicians. Primitive societies regarded their medicine men as highly as modern societies do their men of medicine. Why?

Even though our body's recuperative powers overcome about three quarters of our illnesses without medical assistance, conscientious doctors often generate confidence and trust, which can greatly assist a patient to recover. Also, physicians have been able to help us by their knowledge of effective remedies and healing techniques. Hence, many persons admire physicians as persons who accomplish outstandingly good work.

Yet the Bible tells of a dedicated physician who changed professions so he could do even greater good. He sets us an example of how we can do good with our lives.

This man, Luke, lived in the first century C.E. Paul, the Christian apostle, called Luke "the beloved physician," and as we will see, Luke's writings give evidence that he was a medical doctor. (Colossians 4:14) It is noteworthy, however, that Luke's reputation did not come

from treating the sick or injured. Rather, it resulted from what he did after becoming a Christian.

Though Luke likely could have remained in one city and earned a comfortable living as a physician, he chose to accept hardships by accompanying Paul on missionary journeys. And later Luke applied himself to researching and to the writing of a Gospel account of Jesus' life and ministry. "Gospel" means "good news." By his efforts at spreading the Christian good news, including the writing of his Gospel and Acts of Apostles, Luke showed that the good a person can accomplish in Christian works excels even what a skilled physician could do in temporarily relieving sickness or suffering. We may better appreciate Luke's good work by noting some things about the man and his Gospel account.

The Man Behind the Book

Some have claimed that Luke was a Gentile because of his Greek name, his style of writing and the fact that in Colossians 4:10-14 Paul speaks of "those circumcised" and later mentions Luke.

However, that is just an interpretation and it runs contrary to the indication of Romans 3:1, 2. There we are told that God entrusted his sacred pronouncements to 'the Jews.' So Luke may have been a Greek-speaking Jew having a Grecian name.

Luke's writing confirms that he was well educated. He wrote in a pure, flowing style of Greek. His sentences are more complex than are those in the other Gospels, and he uses a larger vocabulary.

The introduction of the Gospel also reflects Luke's learned, well-schooled background. It begins: "Whereas many have undertaken to compile a statement of the facts that are given full credence among us, just as those who from the beginning became eyewitnesses . . . , I resolved also, because I have traced all things from the start with accuracy, to write them in logical order . . . that you may know fully the certainty of the things that you have been taught orally." (Luke 1:1-4) This resembles introductions in classical Greek literature.

Luke here assures his readers that he is not proceeding on the basis of hearsay or mere oral tradition. Why? Since Luke evidently did not become a disciple while Jesus was on earth, when Luke was preparing his Gospel he did careful research among "eyewitnesses." Also, he investigated contemporary records, 'tracing all things from the start with accuracy.' This should build our confidence in Luke's writings.

But how did Luke obtain his detailed information? At a certain point in its account of Paul's travels, the book of Acts switches from the third person ("he," "they") to the first person ("we," "us"). It is understood from this that Luke began to travel with Paul during his second missionary journey. (Acts 16:10) Evidently by accompanying Paul to Jerusalem

at the end of the third journey, Luke would there have been able to interview men and women who were eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry. (Acts 21:1, 7, 15-18) There Luke may also have examined documents, such as those used in preparing the genealogy at Luke 3:23-38.

The apostle Paul was imprisoned at Caesarea from about 56 to 58 C.E. Since Luke wrote his Gospel before the book of Acts (completed about 61 C.E.), it seems that Luke, using his time well, wrote his Gospel while Paul was imprisoned.

What Should You Look For?

You will find it most rewarding to read the carefully written, warm and informative book of Luke. In doing so, you can profitably look for certain interesting characteristics or unique features. We might list four.

The first is Luke's use of medical expressions and descriptions. Women and prayer also received special attention in Luke's Gospel, so keep alert for those two aspects. Point four is the fact that Luke wrote for all people. To whet your appetite for the book, let us note some examples of these four features.

From a Doctor's Viewpoint

All the Gospels report on Jesus' miracles, but as you read Luke observe how frequently he relates Jesus' *healings*. And pay attention to the language used or the details given.

For instance, Luke often supplies some medical observation that Matthew and Mark omit. While those two tell us that Peter cut off Malchus' ear, Luke specifies that it was the *right* ear and that Jesus *restored the amputated body member*. Does that not sound like a doctor? (Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50, 51) Similarly, Luke reports accurately that Peter's mother-in-law "was distressed with a *high fever*," that Jesus

cured both a man "full of leprosy" and another whose "right hand was withered."—Luke 4:38, 39; 5:12-14; 6:6-10.

There are many other evidences of Luke's medical outlook. In reporting that Jesus "cured many of sicknesses and grievous diseases and wicked spirits," Luke distinguished the cures that were solely of a physical nature from those related to the demons. (Luke 7:21) Luke alone tells us that while Jesus was praying just before his arrest, he 'got into an agony' and that "his sweat became as drops of blood." (Luke 22:44) The physician's interest carried over even to his report of Jesus' parables. Only Luke tells us of the parable of the 'good Samaritan.' Do you recall how the Samaritan treated the wounds of the man found along the road? What Luke describes is in accord with medical practice of the time. (Luke 10:29-37) Luke provides the only account of the 'rich man and Lazarus.' And do you recall the precision Luke used as to Lazarus' health problem? Look it up in Luke 16:20. While there, note in verse 24 the rich man's cry, "I am in anguish." Luke used a Greek word for pain or grief that no other Bible writer employed, but which was often used by Greek physicians such as Hippocrates, Aretaeus and Galen.

In Coming Issues

■ **Jehovah Sustains His Army of Full-Time Servants**

■ **Loyally Advocating the Word**

■ **The Kingdom and the Resurrection Hope**

Concerned About Women and Prayer

In reading the book of Luke look for evidence of his sympathetic interest in women, perhaps reflecting the compassionate nature that attracted him to medicine. For example, chapter one gives the only Gospel information about Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptizer, even reporting that she felt the child jump in her womb. That same chapter offers warm insight into Mary's reactions to the idea of becoming mother to the Messiah.

Later in Luke's Gospel you will learn about: The prophetess Anna; the widow of Nain; the woman who had been a sinner but who washed Jesus' feet with her tears; the women who ministered to Christ from their belongings; Jesus' healing of the woman who had long been bleeding; the domestic interaction between Martha and Mary; the "daughter of Abraham" crippled for 18 years and the parables of the woman who lost a coin and the widow and the judge.—Luke 2:36-38; 7:11-15, 36-50; 8:1-3, 43-48; 10:38-41; 13:11-16; 15:8-10; 18:2-8.

Do you think that list covers all special references to women in the book of Luke? Well, if you are a woman, are interested in women or would like to see how sympathetically interested physician Luke was, read through his account and see what more you will find. As you do so, observe how frequently Luke mentions prayer.

You will find that only Luke mentions a number of Jesus' prayers. For instance, Luke alone tells us that Jesus was praying when the heavens were opened up and holy spirit was poured out on him and that later Christ spent a whole night in prayer. (Luke 3:21; 6:12) If you would like to note some other examples, look up Luke 5:16; 9:18, 28; 11:1; 23:46. Also, Luke shares with us a number of Jesus' parables about prayer, such as those about the midnight friend, the unjust

judge and the Pharisee and tax collector.—Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8, 10-14.

“Good News” for All Peoples

Matthew seems to have written his Gospel especially for the Jews, and Mark wrote his for the Romans, but Luke wrote “good news” for all peoples. One indication of that is that Luke traces Jesus’ genealogy back to Adam, the forefather of all mankind. (Luke 3:23, 38; compare Matthew 1:1, 16.) In his Gospel with *universal* appeal, Luke helps us to see that Christ’s message and works could bring good no matter what a person’s background—a Samaritan leper, the rich tax collector and even a condemned thief dying on the stake. (Luke 17:11-19; 19:2-10; 23:39-43) You will also sense Luke’s appeal to all who were ‘lost,’ in the fact that he records Jesus’ parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son and the Pharisee and the tax collector.

(Luke 15:4-32; 18:9-14) As you read Luke’s Gospel, be on the alert for other examples of Luke’s offering hope to all.

Of course, there are many other unique things you could note in the Gospel of Luke. But the overall impression should be that of a book written by an educated and careful writer, yet containing a warm and moving account of Jesus’ life. It is a Gospel account that brings to the fore that “good news” is now available to all.

Especially in our period is such “good news” appreciated. Physician Luke is the only Gospel writer to record Jesus’ prophecy that the time would come when, because of the distress on earth during the conclusion of the system of things, ‘men would become faint out of fear and expectation.’ How pleased Luke also must have been to record Jesus’ encouraging words at Luke 21:25-28!

‘A Very, Very Devoted Man’

William Kirk Jackson was born September 16, 1901, at Galveston, Texas. After a lifetime of devoted service to Jehovah God, he completed his earthly course on December 13, 1981.

From his earliest days, William displayed a great interest in Bible truth. In 1915, at age 14, he dedicated himself to Jehovah through Christ Jesus. He always treasured his calling as one of the Lord’s anointed in union with Christ. On June 1, 1933, he entered full-time service to Jehovah as a pioneer. After fulfilling special assignments in Washington, D.C., and in Chicago, Illinois, Brother Jackson became a permanent member of the Brooklyn Bethel family on November 13, 1937. Serving with legal counsel Hayden C. Covington from 1941, he was in the thick of the fight leading to many

notable victories for Jehovah’s Witnesses in the U.S. Supreme Court. He was appointed to the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses on October 15, 1971, and in due course he was assigned to care for matters in the Service and Publishing Committees.

Brother Jackson was humble, very self-effacing and never assumed the posture of a person of importance. Known to thousands around the earth as simply “Bill,” he was mild-tempered, approachable at any time, very pleasant and delightful as a companion; he always put people at ease. In the course of a memorial talk given at Brooklyn Bethel, F. W. Franz said: ‘We thank Jehovah God for having raised up such a fine Witness. He finished his course faithfully, and is sure of his reward. Bill Jackson was a very, very devoted man.’

Dedication- To Whom? Why?

"But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation [a consecrated nation; a dedicated nation], a people for special possession.'" —1 Peter 2:9, *New World Translation; The Jerusalem Bible; The New English Bible.*

OF ALL the churches of Christendom, not one could claim the 16th president of the United States of America as a member. Yet, when giving his famous Gettysburg address on November 19, 1863, that Bible-reading man, Abraham Lincoln, said these forceful words:

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. . . . But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. . . . It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us . . ."

² Since that memorable speech at the battle site at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the United States has belied the claim of the motto on its dollar bill, "In God We Trust." Despite the dedication of the president and of any other sincere Americans to it, "government of the people, by

the people," will "perish from the earth." Happily, "for the people" this will be no lasting calamity, because there will follow the supreme royal government of God by his appointed King, Jesus Christ, for the blessing of all the inhabitants of this globe, including what is now the American continent.

³ Then a new nation will come to the fore. What nation is that? It is the one to which the following inspired words were directed: "But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession.'" —1 Peter 2:9.

⁴ With those words the apostle Peter quotes expressions used by God with reference to His chosen people of Israel who were then at Mount Sinai in Arabia, as recorded at Exodus 19:5, 6. There we read: "And now if you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant, then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me. And you yourselves will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

⁵ At Exodus 19:6 and 1 Peter 2:9, quoted above, some translations enhance the

1, 2. (a) Did Abraham Lincoln belong to any church of Christendom, and yet in his Gettysburg speech how did he refer to the nation of which he was president? (b) What action reflects on the trust of this nation in God, and how will the government that follows the world trouble be "for the people"?

3, 4. (a) What "nation" will then come to the fore? (b) From what words of Jehovah addressed to Israel was Peter quoting with regard to this new "nation"?

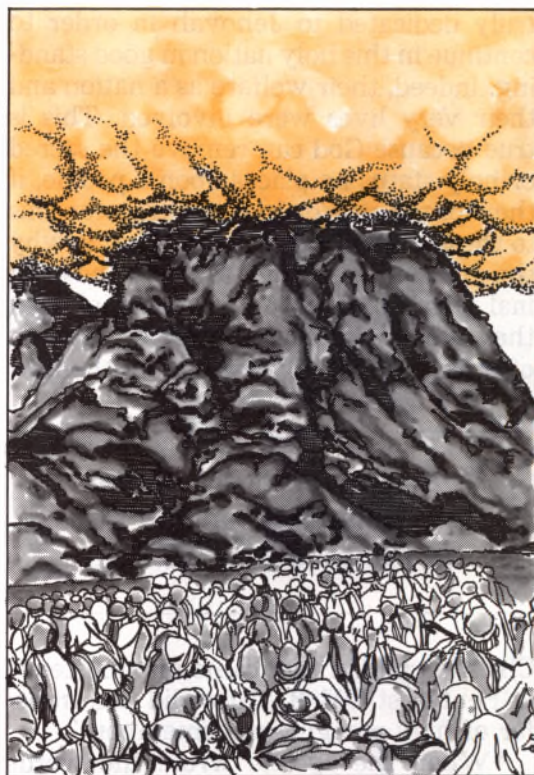
5. In the light of Bible usage, do "consecrate" and "dedicate" mean the same thing?

simple phrase "a holy nation" by translating it "consecrated nation" or "dedicated nation."* (See *The Jerusalem Bible*; *Moffatt*; *Knox*; *The New English Bible*.) Accepting and living by Jehovah's standards would set the Israelites apart as a consecrated or dedicated people. God can "consecrate" or "dedicate" a thing or person or group of people. From God's standpoint, the two words can mean basically the same thing. However, imperfect humans, while not being able to "consecrate" anything, constituting it clean for a holy purpose, can properly and lovingly "dedicate" something, including themselves.

⁶ God proposed to the delivered Israelites that they would become a holy nation to him, on the condition that they 'strictly obeyed his voice and kept his covenant.' They answered: "All that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do." Thus, individually as well as collectively, they irreversibly dedicated themselves to their Savior, Jehovah God. Although Jehovah had already chosen them because they were the natural descendants of Abraham, and had miraculously delivered them from Egypt through the Red Sea, yet he waited upon the Israelites to make this dedication of themselves to him and his worship voluntarily. On this basis they were made Jehovah's covenant people. Concerning this, we read:

* The first appearances of the word "Dedicated" in the Hebrew Scriptures are found in Genesis 5:18-24, in the name "Enoch," which name means "Dedicated." In the Hebrew text this name is spelled *Hha nokh'*, and is related to the Hebrew word *Hanukah*, which means "Dedication." In John 10:22 the "feast of dedication" that Jesus attended is mentioned. (*Rotherham; Authorized Version*) To this day the Jews call this festival *Hanukah*, meaning "Dedication," as can be seen from Hebrew translations of John 10:22.

6. (a) In saying, "All that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do," what action was taken by the nation of Israel, individually and collectively? (b) Into what arrangement did God bring them without coercion?



The ancient Israelites dedicated themselves to Jehovah God

"When every commandment according to the Law had been spoken by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of the young bulls and of the goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop and sprinkled the book itself and all the people, saying: 'This is the blood of the covenant that God has laid as a charge upon you.'"—Hebrews 9:19, 20; Exodus 24:1-8.

⁷ Subsequent generations of Jews would be born into this dedicated nation and, as a consequence, into a dedicated relationship with God. But individually, in growing to the age of responsibility, they would have to imitate those Jews at Mount Sinai in proving by their motivations of heart and actions that they were

7. (a) What would be the situation of Jews in subsequent generations? (b) How could they lose their dedicated status?

truly dedicated to Jehovah in order to continue in this holy nation in good standing. Indeed, their welfare as a nation and their very lives were involved. This is true because God can remove the sacred or holy status he places upon a people, if they prove unworthy, and transfer this to those who prove worthy. That is why the apostle Peter came to apply the original words of God to natural Israel, that they would become to him "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," to the new

A new "nation" came into existence on the day of Pentecost of 33 C.E.

Christian nation that came into existence at Pentecost C.E. 33. How did this transfer of holy recognition come about?

⁸ When the apostle wrote the words of 1 Peter 2:9, the Jewish people were nearing a national disaster. Their temple city of Jerusalem was about to be destroyed by the Roman legions and they were to be dispersed internationally, as Jesus had foretold. (Luke 21:20-24) Sad to say, in 33 C.E., they had rejected Jesus Christ the Mediator of God's new covenant, and unquestionably the old Law covenant that had been mediated through the prophet Moses was no longer in force. "That which is Israel in a fleshly way" was now being rejected. (1 Corinthians 10:18; Matthew 23:38) The new nation of spiritual Israel had been produced by Jehovah God. (Romans 9:6; Galatians 6:15, 16) This new "consecrat-

ed nation" was made up of the disciples of Jesus Christ to whom Peter addressed his letter, namely, "the ones chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, with sanctification by the spirit."—1 Peter 1:1, 2.

⁹ This does not mean that God knew the individual members and appointed them by name beforehand. Rather, he foreknew that he would produce a new nation, "a holy nation," and foreknew the things that would be required of each individual member in order for that one to be chosen and taken into the holy nation. Also, this spiritual nation would be made specially holy by God's holy spirit, the members of the nation being begotten by means of the holy spirit to become spiritual sons of God. (Titus 3:4-7) In this holy, or sanctified, standing they could serve as a "royal priesthood." As spirit-begotten ones, they were a "race," a "chosen race."

¹⁰ But how does dedication to Jehovah by the individual members of the new nation come into the matter? While God "consecrates" or "dedicates" them as a group or nation, must each one make an unreserved dedication of himself to God in order to be accepted as a member of this new nation? Do not the Scriptures simply say, in effect: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved'? Or, simply, 'Repent and be converted'? Thus, are not simple belief, repentance and conversion all that are specified as being required to become a disciple of Jesus, a Christian? Did Jesus, the Son of God, take the step of dedication when he was on earth? Let us see.

8. (a) When Peter wrote his first inspired letter, what calamity was about to befall Israel, and what relationship did the Jews no longer hold with Jehovah God? (b) Who, then, composed the "consecrated nation"?

9. Did God foreknow the members of that holy nation individually, and how did they become a chosen "race"?

10. Since God deals with anointed Christians as a "nation" or group, what questions arise as to individual responsibility?

"I Have Come . . . to Do Your Will"

¹¹ With regard to Jesus' human birth, Galatians 4:4 tells us: "When the full lim- it of the time arrived, God sent forth his Son, who came to be out of a woman and who came to be under [Mosaic] law." After his miraculous birth to a Jewish virgin, his circumcision on the eighth day confirmed that by birth he was one of God's covenant people, and in this con- nection Joseph and Mary "brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to Je- hovah."—Luke 2:22-24.

¹² It was to this dedicated nation that the forerunner of Jesus Christ, John the Baptizer, was sent, to call the nation to repentance. Even Jesus said: "I was not sent forth to any but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matthew 15:24) The message to this dedicated people of God was a special one, not applicable to non-Israelite nations. John the Baptizer called upon those "lost sheep of the house of Israel" to repent of their sins against the Law covenant. (Matthew 3:1-6) "John baptized with the baptism in symbol of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus." (Acts 19:4) However, when Jesus presented himself to John for water bap- tism, this obviously was not in symbol of repentance, for Jesus was sinless and no violator of the Law covenant under which he had been born. John, know- ing this, hesitated to baptize Jesus, but complied with his request on being told: "Let it be, this time, for in that way it is suitable for us to carry out all that is righteous." (Matthew 3:13-17) What did he mean?

11. Under what covenant arrangement with God was it that Jesus was born, and how was that so?

12. In symbol of what did John baptize Jews who came to him, but why did he first object to bap- tizing Jesus?

¹³ Here Jesus was acting in harmony with the prophecy concerning him at Psalm 40:7, 8: "In view of that, I said: 'Here I have come, in the roll of the book it being written about me. To do your will, O my God, I have delight- ed.'" In Hebrews 10:5-10 that prophecy is applied to Jesus Christ, since, in Jesus' case, God did not want sacrifices that were offered in line with the Mosaic Law covenant, but wanted as a sacrifice the perfect human body that God had pre- pared for his Son to be sacrificed as the basis for a new covenant. So when get- ting baptized, Jesus was not dedicating himself to God, for he was already a member of a dedicated nation and, being sinless, needed no conversion. (Hebrews 7:26) Rather, his baptism was a sym- bol of the *presenting of himself* to his heavenly Father to do His further will. And in this respect Jesus set a pattern for the baptism of his disciples.

¹⁴ After Jesus heard that John the Baptizer had been put into prison, he launched out on a campaign of preach- ing to the already dedicated Israelites. "From that time on Jesus commenced preaching and saying: 'Repent, you peo- ple, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" (Matthew 4:17) Bap- tizing in symbol of repentance gained new intensity. (John 3:26; 4:1, 2) When the Greater Moses, Jesus Christ, ascend- ed to heaven and presented to Jehovah God the value of the merit of his hu- man sacrifice, the Mosaic Law covenant was voided and the basis was laid for the setting up of the foretold "new cov- enant." (Jeremiah 31:31-34) So, on the day of Pentecost of 33 C.E., the Jewish

13. (a) How did Jesus fulfill Psalm 40:7, 8? (b) What did Jesus' baptism symbolize?

14. (a) After John's imprisonment, what message did Jesus start to preach? (b) For what did the re- pentance and baptism at this time prepare people?

disciples of Jesus were transferred from the Mosaic Law covenant to the "new covenant" of which the Greater Moses, Jesus Christ, was the Mediator.*

¹⁵ While the Law covenant had now been invalidated, God's time period of special favor and attention to the Jews, on the basis of their being the natural seed of Abraham, had not ended; it ended first in the year 36 C.E. So, even after the first outpouring of holy spirit in 33 C.E., the spirit-anointed apostle Peter said to a crowd of Jews in Jerusalem: "Repent, therefore, and turn around [be converted] so as to get your sins blotted out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the person of Jehovah and that he may send forth the Christ appointed for you, Jesus." To repair their dedicated relationship with God would now involve not only repenting over sins against the Law covenant in which they still considered themselves to be but also presenting themselves as prospective members of this new nation, which was God's will then for all who became disciples of Jesus, Christians. This is confirmed by what Peter said earlier on the day of Pentecost to Jews who were "stabbed to the heart" over their share in causing the death of Jesus. To them, Peter said: "Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ

* There is no record of these early disciples of Jesus getting baptized again in symbol of their presentation sometime before the outpouring of holy spirit on them at Pentecost. Evidently their earlier baptism of repentance while still under the Law included this aspect, which would be in imitation of Jesus, since John's baptism was carried out with Messiah's appearance in prospect and prepared them for God's will for them in connection with his coming.

15. (a) What did not end immediately for the Jews with the canceling of the Law covenant? (b) What was God's will now for Jews who cared about their dedicated relationship with God?

for forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the free gift of the holy spirit." Thus, much more was involved than simple repentance and a general resolve to do better based on belief in Jesus.—Acts 3:19, 20; 2:37-40, NW; AV.

¹⁶ Before ascending to heaven, Jesus told his apostles that they would widen out the witness regarding him to "Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) While the Samaritans were non-Israelites, people "of another nation," they got circumcised because they accepted the books of the Bible written by Moses and considered him the mediator between themselves and God. (Luke 17:16-18) In His undeserved kindness, Jehovah saw good to have Peter use a special key for the Samaritans somewhat earlier than the use of one for uncircumcised Gentiles in opening up opportunities in connection with the kingdom of the heavens. But since those Samaritans had not really been in the Mosaic Law covenant, and were 'worshiping what they did not know,' they now, in getting baptized, first had to *dedicate themselves* understandingly to Jehovah God in the name of the Messiah, Jesus, as the Mediator of a new covenant. Their being baptized afterward with the holy spirit substantiated that they had been accepted into the new covenant.—Matthew 16:18, 19; John 4:4-42; Acts 8:5-25.

¹⁷ In the year 36 C.E., when God's time of special favor to the Jews expired, Jehovah God turned his attention to the un-

16. (a) When the Kingdom message reached the circumcised Samaritans, what did their baptism in water symbolize? Why? (b) What substantiated that they had been taken into covenant relationship with God?

17. (a) When and how did God first visit the uncircumcised non-Jews "to take out of them a people for his name"? (b) What did their baptism in water symbolize?

circumcised non-Israelites, the Gentiles, "to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14-18) Using another of the "keys," Peter was sent to the household of the Roman centurion named Cornelius, who was kindly disposed to the Jewish people. These Gentiles must have accepted the witness about Jehovah God and his glorified Messiah, for the holy spirit fell upon them and they began speaking in tongues. God had mercifully begun to grant "repentance for the purpose of life to people of the nations also," through Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." (Acts 11:18; John 1:29) Jehovah had accepted them, too, into his spiritual nation on the basis of the dedication made to him in their hearts. Holy spirit confirmed this. So none of the Christianized Jews who accompanied Peter could find objection to his command that they get "baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." That started off "the conversion of people of the nations." (Acts 10:1-48; 15:3) Since then all who have desired to serve God, whether Jew or Gentile, have had to make a *dedication* in their hearts to Jehovah. And, in connection with their baptism in water, they *pre-*

IN REVIEW, CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?

- ☐ Who compose the "holy" or "dedicated" nation of 1 Peter 2:9?
- ☐ How did the ancient Israelites dedicate themselves to Jehovah God?
- ☐ When Jesus was baptized, was he dedicating himself to God?
- ☐ What was symbolized by the water baptism of believing Samaritans and Gentiles?
- ☐ To become Jesus' followers, uncircumcised non-Jews had to do what?

sent themselves for the doing of God's will for them, in imitation of Jesus.

¹⁸ But how important is dedication, of which water baptism is a symbol? How is this connected with salvation, especially in view of God's day of wrath just ahead? Must those who are not part of Jehovah's spiritual nation, but who hope to live on earth forever, get baptized?

18. What questions now present themselves, to be taken up in the next study?

Dedication and Its Symbol

A SIGN or symbol of a person's identity or official standing can be a good thing, yes, a necessary thing. For

1. How can a sign of a person's identity be a good thing, as in the case of sincere Jews before Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E.?

instance, when Jerusalem was about to be destroyed in 607 B.C.E., a symbolic "man" was sent out to mark the foreheads of right-hearted Israelites in order to protect them from being slaughtered. Only those few who were outraged over

The glorified Jesus Christ is a royal High Priest, higher than ancient Israel's chief priests with their material symbol of being dedicated to sacred service



'the detestable things being done' in the midst of what should have been God's holy city were marked for salvation.—Ezekiel 9:1-7.

² Today a "great tribulation" is about to strike the whole world. So Revelation 7:1-8 tells us that the "four angels" stationed at the four corners of the earth are instructed to hold back the four winds from blowing and producing a most destructive storm or "tribulation" until the fixed number of God's chosen ones have been given a seal in their foreheads. Also, this allows time for a "great crowd" to cleanse themselves "in the blood of the Lamb" in order to be identified as worthy of surviving this "great tribulation."—Revelation 7:9-14; Matthew 24:21, 22.

³ In ancient Israel a priesthood was set up. Moses had carried out the specific instructions from Jehovah on making the distinctive garments for the high priest. Regarding the turban, it is written: "They made a rosette of pure gold as the symbol [sign] of their holy dedication and inscribed on it as the engraving on a seal, 'Holy to the LORD' ["Consecrated to Yahweh," *The Jerusalem Bible*], and

2. What identifying factors are discussed in Revelation chapter 7, and how do these relate to salvation?

3, 4. In the case of the Jewish high priest, of what would the 'symbol of dedication' on his turban be a reminder?

they fastened on it a violet braid to fix it on the turban at the top."*—Exodus 39:30, 31; 29:6; Leviticus 8:9, *The New English Bible; New World Translation*.

⁴ This 'symbol of dedication' would be a reminder to the high priest and to all observers that he had been "consecrated" or dedicated by God to a sacred service in behalf of a dedicated people. He and his fellow priests would take the lead in instructing the people and offering acceptable sin-atoning sacrifices, which would help them to live up to their dedication to God. This would contribute to the holy dedicated status of the nation, for they were warned that if they left Jehovah, he would, in turn, leave them and abandon them to their enemies.—Deuteronomy 28:15, 25, 63.

⁵ The tragic history of the Israelites is filled with the calamities they suffered as a result of turning away from God's commandments and their dedicated service to him. After the second destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 C.E., the high priest with the symbol of dedication on his turban passed off the scene. Today no Jew with the family name of Cohen (meaning "Priest") can prove himself to be the high priest of Israel. Is our situation, then, hopeless? No! For concerning the glorified Son of God, we read: "Such a high priest as this was suitable for us, loyal, guileless, undefiled, separated from the sinners, and become higher than the heavens. . . . he offered himself up."—Hebrews 7:26, 27.

* The expression "sign of dedication" translates the Hebrew word *nezer*, which *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* defines as follows: "Prop[erly] something set apart, i.e. (abstr[act]) dedication (of a priest or Nazirite); hence (concr[ete]) unshorn locks; also (by impl[ication]) a chapel (espec[ially] of royalty);—consecration, crown, hair, separation."

5. Though today there is no Jew named Cohen who can identify himself as the Aaronic high priest, why is our case not hopeless?

⁶ Since Jesus was the Son of God, he did not need to be a member of the tribe of Levi or of the priestly family of Aaron to become God's priest. That could be so according to the marvelous arrangements of Jehovah God. King David was inspired by God's spirit to prophesy concerning this illustrious descendant, who was to be higher than his royal forefathers: "The utterance of Jehovah to my Lord is: 'Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.' The rod of your strength Jehovah will send out of Zion, saying: 'Go subduing in the midst of your enemies.' Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day of your military force. In the splendors of holiness [in holy array], from the womb of the dawn, you have your company of young men just like dewdrops. Jehovah has sworn (and he will feel no regret): 'You are a priest to time indefinite according to the manner of Melchizedek!'" —Psalm 110:1-4, *New World Translation; An American Translation*.

⁷ So, down to our own day, the glorified Jesus Christ remains a royal High Priest, higher than the chief priests of ancient Israel with their material symbol of dedication. He is in office not because of being a Levite priest but by the sworn oath of Jehovah God.

A Symbol for Those Who "Offer Themselves Willingly"

⁸ The disciples of that royal High Priest, Christ Jesus, now "offer themselves willingly" on the day of his "military force." They dedicate themselves to Jehovah God in the name of this royal High Priest, getting baptized in water in symbol of that dedication. These are

the ones the complete number of whom must be finally sealed before the outbreak of the "great tribulation." They, along with their companions of the "great crowd," "offer themselves willingly" just like dewdrops in bringing God's refreshing message of salvation to the people. —Revelation 7:2-4, 9, 10, 14.

⁹ Writing to the disciples of 1,900 years ago, the apostle Paul said: "I entreat you by the compassions of God, brothers, to present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason. And quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." —Romans 12:1, 2.

¹⁰ The above entreaty comes immediately after Paul's discussion of the symbolic olive tree. Like branches in a garden olive tree, the dedicated nation of Israel was the natural offspring of God's "friend" Abraham. As such they were first in line to become "Abraham's seed" according to the promise made to him. (Genesis 12:3; 22:17, 18; Galatians 3:16, 29; James 2:23) But only a remnant of natural Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah and were transferred from being the natural seed of earthly Abraham to being the spiritual seed of the Greater Abraham, Jehovah. (Romans 11:5, 7) The rest were lopped off as "branches." To replace them, God turned to the non-Jews or, as it were, to a symbolic wild olive tree, to extract sufficient "branches" to graft into the spiritual garden olive tree that was to be composed of 144,000 branches rooted in the Greater Abraham, Je-

9. At Romans 12:1, 2, what counsel does Paul give to anointed Christians?

10, 11. (a) So Paul addresses his plea to the Gentile Christians in Rome as a follow-up to what discussion? (b) In what way was this arrangement an expression of great compassion on God's part?

6, 7. Was Jesus born into the priestly tribe of Israel, and how could he become a high priest?

8. Why is this the day of Christ's "military force," and how do those now offering themselves willingly proceed in this respect?

Jehovah God, the Source of all blessings.—Romans 11:13-33; Revelation 14:1.

¹¹ So it was an expression of great compassion on God's part for those Romans and all other uncircumcised non-Jews to become a part of the spiritual seed of Abraham for blessing all the families of the earth by means of God's kingdom. (Ephesians 2:12; Galatians 3:26-29) This laid upon them the course of self-sacrifice. But this was the only privilege that God then held out to human creatures, and what a special privilege it was! Not overstepping proper bounds, the apostle Paul wrote and said to them: "Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, also your members to God as weapons of righteousness. For sin must not be master over you, seeing that you are not under law [the law of Moses] but under undeserved kindness."—Romans 6:13, 14.

¹² While Paul is writing to those who were already dedicated Christians, "holy ones," he is not overlooking what they had done at first in dedicating their lives, when he said: "*Present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead.*" But they must live up to this dedication, in this sacrificial course. If such were not done, then they, as replacement branches, would be lopped off, too. (Romans 1:7; 11:21, 22) Moreover, these words written under inspiration would be read by future disciples of Jesus Christ and would offer strong encouragement for them to take all the steps necessary to enter into and maintain this dedicated, baptized relationship with God. To preserve their dedicated relationship with God, once made, they would be in a continual battle to fashion their fleshly members into weapons of righteousness rather than submitting these to the mastery of sin. This would be in obedience to Jesus'

12. What would be involved for spirit-anointed disciples of Christ when they are told, "present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead"?

words: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him *disown himself* and pick up his torture stake and continually follow me."—Matthew 16:24.

A "Great Crowd" of Symbolizers

¹³ Throughout the earth today more than 2,300,000 persons are joining in publishing the good news of the Kingdom, and the vast majority of these have presented themselves for baptism in water in symbol of their dedication. At the yearly celebration of the Lord's Evening Meal, less than 10,000 of all of these partake of the emblematic bread and wine to confess that they are Christ's disciples with a heavenly hope. But do all the others properly make a dedication and symbolize this by water baptism? Very definitely they do, for they, too, must come into a proper relationship with God through the Fine Shepherd, Christ Jesus, in order to survive the "great tribulation" just ahead and gain an inheritance as part of God's "new earth."—2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4.

¹⁴ So the overwhelming majority of Jehovah's dedicated witnesses do not entertain any heavenly hope of joint heirship with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom above. They do not claim to be spiritual Israelites begotten by Jehovah's spirit. Yet they inseparably associate with the remnant of spiritual Israelites as members of the "one flock" under "one shepherd," Jesus Christ. (John 10:16) This is excellent on their part and Scripturally correct.

¹⁵ Let us here do what the scripture at 1 Corinthians 10:18 tells us to do, "look

13. Is it proper for those having an earthly hope to make a dedication to God and to symbolize this by water baptism?

14. What fine relationship appropriately prevails within the "one flock" of the Fine Shepherd, Christ Jesus?

15. (a) Who, in addition to the natural Jews, left Egypt and finally entered the Promised Land, and as what were they rated there? (b) Whom do they picture today?

at that which is Israel in a fleshly way." At its exodus from Egypt under the leadership of Moses not all who left were natural, circumcised Israelites. "A vast mixed company also went up with them, as well as flocks and herds." (Exodus 12:38) When the Israelites entered the Promised Land, such ones became the "alien resident who is inside your gates." (Exodus 20:10; Numbers 35:15; Leviticus 19:9, 10) That ancient vast mixed company pictured the "great crowd" of the "other sheep" of the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ, of today.—John 10:14, 16; Revelation 7:9-17.

¹⁶ In Moses' day the non-Israelite "vast mixed company" shared similar experiences with the circumcised Israelites, including a marvelous baptism. As regards that baptism, the apostle Paul wrote, at 1 Corinthians 10:1-4: "Our forefathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea and all got baptized into Moses by means of the cloud and of the

sea; and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they used to drink from the spiritual rock-mass that followed them, and that rock-mass meant the Christ." Thus, in a figurative way, both the Israelites and the "vast mixed company" got baptized although they did not literally get wet.

¹⁷ That miraculous baptism by Jehovah God consigned them to Moses as their God-given leader, just as if they literally had been baptized into him. But this was not a baptism into death, as in the case of the pursuing Egyptians. (Exodus 14:1-15:21) Today we are nearing a similar situation. The faithful remnant of spiritual Israelites and their "great crowd" of companions have left the antitypical Egypt. (Revelation 11:7, 8) They march to the New Order of things under Christ's millennial kingdom. The Greater Moses, the glorified Lord Jesus Christ, leads them. Pursuing them is the enemy world, determined that they shall not make it to safety. The antitypical Egyptians are heading for the battlefield of God, Har-Magedon, where they will be baptized with fire, destruction. None of them will be left alive to tell the horrifying story. (Revelation 16:14-16; Matthew 3:11, 12) As during the Red Sea episode, the slaughter at Har-Magedon will not include any of spiritual Israel or the "great crowd" of the "other sheep" of the Greater Moses.

16, 17. (a) In what way did the "vast mixed company" get baptized with the Israelites, figuratively speaking? (b) Who have escaped from the antitypical Egypt of today, and who will suffer destruction under circumstances like those at the Red Sea?



A "great crowd" have been baptized in water in symbol of their unqualified dedication to Jehovah God through Jesus Christ. Have you similarly made and symbolized an unreserved dedication to God?

¹⁸ The faithful ones of the "great crowd" are not straggling behind, half-heartedly desiring to return to the antitypical plague-smitten Egypt under its Pharaoh, Satan the Devil. With faces forward, they keep in continuous touch with the remnant of spiritual Israelites, like "one flock." (John 10:16) Just as the "vast mixed company" survived through the Red Sea, so those of the modern-day "great crowd" will find themselves on the shores of salvation after the "war of the great day of God the Almighty."

¹⁹ Particularly since 1935 those now making up the "great crowd" have been submitting to baptism in water in symbol of the unqualified dedication of themselves to God through the Greater Moses, Jesus Christ. They have washed their robes of identification and have made them "white in the blood of the Lamb," the Greater Moses. (Revelation 7:9-14) They offer clean worship to God.

²⁰ This "great crowd" of clean worshipers are at God's spiritual temple day and night. (Revelation 7:15-17) They were prefigured by the ones whom the prophet Zechariah foresaw as worshipping at Jehovah's temple after its restoration in Jerusalem following the release of the Israelites from Babylon in 537 B.C.E.—Zechariah 8:20-23.

²¹ The attitude of those "ten men out

18. How will those of the "great crowd" fare like the "vast mixed company" after their departure from Egypt under the leadership of Moses?

19. Particularly since when have those making up the "great crowd" of today been submitting to baptism in water, and how have they cleaned up their identity to offer pure worship to God?

20. Where do those of the "great crowd" worship Jehovah, and how was this foretold at Zechariah 8:20-23?

21. In what way do the "great crowd" "take hold of the skirt of a man who is a Jew," and because of what do they have hope of surviving the "great tribulation"?

of all the languages of the nations" bespeaks devotion to the one living and true God, Jehovah God! Today such devotion is acceptable to Him through the greatest "Jew" ever on earth, the once-sacrificed "Lamb," Jesus Christ. They faithfully imitate Jesus by submitting to water baptism in symbol not only of the presentation of themselves but additionally, in their case, of their wholehearted dedication to the same God. 'Taking hold of the skirt' of the remnant of the 144,000 spiritual Jews, they gather with that "people" to the Jerusalem above, the heavenly Jerusalem. At its spiritual temple, represented by the remnant yet on earth, they render "sacred service" to the Most High God, Jehovah, day and night. Their hope is to survive the "great tribulation," to continue their dedicated service to God forever on earth. Their being properly identified as unreservedly dedicated and baptized servants of God puts them in line for this, being assured that "the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him . . . with spirit and truth."—John 4:23, 24.

ARE YOU ABLE TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS BY WAY OF REVIEW?

☐ In what way was attention drawn to Jehovah's dedication of the high priesthood to his sacred service?

☐ How was Jesus able to become a high priest?

☐ According to Romans 12:1, 2, what is to be done by those who become Christ's disciples?

☐ As regards baptism, how does the "great crowd" compare with the "vast mixed company" that accompanied the Israelites out of Egypt?

"What Prevents Me from Getting Baptized?"

THE above question was asked by a devout man who already had a love for God, but who had just been enlightened as to "the good news about Jesus." He was the Ethiopian eunuch, who had "gone to Jerusalem to worship" as a Jewish proselyte. He was on his way back to Ethiopia to resume his duties of high position in the service of the queen of Ethiopia when Philip the evangelizer was directed by God's spirit to approach him.

² Running alongside the chariot, Philip heard the man reading aloud from the book of Isaiah. Asked if he understood the passage of Scripture he was reading, about an unprotesting lamb that was brought to the slaughter, the Ethiopian

eunuch had to confess that he did not comprehend whether the prophet was speaking about himself or another man. What a fine opening for Philip! "Starting with this Scripture, he declared to him the good news about Jesus." Yes, the prophecy of Isaiah was about the "Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world"!—Acts 8:26-35; Isaiah 53:7, 8; John 1:29.

³ How was the eunuch affected by this wholly unexpected but spectacular development in his life? "Now as they were going over the road, they came to a certain body of water, and the eunuch said: 'Look! A body of water; what prevents me from getting baptized?'" Apparently Philip saw nothing in this man's manner of life and understanding of God's

1. To what kind of person was Philip sent?
2. How did Philip help the eunuch to understand the prophecy?

3. How did this new understanding affect him?



purposes, especially as these now related to Jesus as the Messiah and Savior, that would cause a delay in his getting baptized. The chariot was halted; they went into the water together and Philip baptized him on the basis of his accepting Jesus' sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins.—Acts 8:36-39.

What About You?

⁴ Associated with Jehovah's Witnesses around the world today are many who have not as yet been baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah. The worldwide peak number of those sharing in preaching the "good news" in 1981 was 2,361,896 (of whom about 25 percent are not baptized as yet). But at the Lord's Evening Meal in 1981, the combined worldwide attendance was 5,987,893. This means that over one half of those attending some meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses are not as yet baptized. Is this cause for alarm? No, but it is a cause for loving concern. Some of these have been associated for more than a few months.

⁵ Perhaps one of those not yet baptized is you, dear reader. Your reason for not yet being baptized may be a good one, but if not, we invite you to consider carefully and prayerfully the fine example of the Ethiopian eunuch who did not delay in getting baptized. He searched his own mind and heart, and asked Philip if there were any factors that prevented him from getting baptized. Finding no cause for delay, he promptly got baptized.

⁶ You may not have been baptized due to your conclusion, based on an honest appraisal, that you just do not as yet

have sufficient understanding of God's Word to make a heartfelt dedication to Jehovah. To do this without reservation, you want to get to know Jehovah and his purposes better. That is commendable, and we encourage you to continue making fine advancement in your studies, while remembering that time is slipping away every day. Make the best of your opportunities to study the Bible privately and with the help of Jehovah's Witnesses. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Develop the habit of regularly attending Christian meetings, where you will receive vital instruction and the needed association with true Christians and encouragement from them. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) As you diligently follow this fine routine, likely it will be only a matter of a few months before you are ready to symbolize your dedication by water baptism. Our heavenly Father invites you into this very special relationship with him!

⁷ Perhaps you are one who has been attending the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses for several years but have not yet made up your mind to take the steps of dedication and baptism. When you examine the secret reasoning of the heart, could it be that you are delaying because you see that living as a Christian would impose restrictions upon you? Do you reason that as long as you are not baptized you will not be bound by these restrictions and will have a certain "freedom" to do some questionable things while the old system still exists, hoping to wait until the last minute to take your stand for true worship? Such reasoning can be dangerous, really disastrous! Jesus said: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and

7. (a) What could be the reasoning of some who are delaying baptism? (b) How does Jesus show this to be dangerous?

4. How many of those associating with Jehovah's Witnesses have taken the step of baptism?

5. How is the Ethiopian eunuch a good example for those not yet baptized?

6. What steps should be taken by those who feel they need additional time?

suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare.”—Luke 21:34, 35; 1 Corinthians 15:33, 34; Romans 13:11-14.

⁸ If you delay unduly in accepting Jehovah’s loving invitation to come into his favor by dedicating your life to him, the acceptable time for extending the invitation may run out in your personal case. (2 Corinthians 6:1, 2; Hebrews 12:25) So do not hesitate to reach out for the gift of life and draw it close to you in thankfulness. Do not continue to look back longingly to the attractions of this system, soon to go down. Respond to God’s love while you have the opportunity. While he is selective as to whom he brings into intimate relationship with him and is restrictive as to what can and cannot be done, the more you get to know Jehovah, the more you will see that what he does or requires is always the best for you. He does not wish to deprive you of anything that is *really* good or that will give you lasting happiness. (Psalm 145:16, 19) A respectful and obedient son considers it a very natural thing to be in the presence of his earthly father and to be instructed by him. How much more so this should be your attitude toward our loving heavenly Father!—John 14:23.

⁹ Of course, if you are having a real battle to bring some fleshly desire under control, and you really are trying with all your heart and strength to conquer this, you can be assured that God will help you to be victorious—not with a miracle to remove the problem, but with the help by his spirit to cultivate the needed fruits of the spirit in your life. Also, in the congregation you will find understanding and help by consulting the older men. They are there as God’s provision to help you.—Galatians 5:22-24; Ephesians 4:11-15.

8. How should we view Jehovah’s loving invitation to dedicate ourselves to him?

9. How should we face up to personal problems?

¹⁰ So do not delay in doing what you know you should do to please God. Follow the fine example of the Philippian jailer who asked of Paul and Silas: “Sirs, what must I do to get saved?” On being told to “believe on the Lord Jesus and you will get saved, you and your household,” the account tells us that “one and all, he and his were baptized without delay.”

¹¹ While an earthquake from God served initially to instill godly fear in this jailer, we should not expect such a spectacular awakening from God today to bring us to our senses and dissolve our reluctance. In the case of this man and his household, it was not a simple matter of showing general belief in Jesus that put them in a saved condition. Nor was it just an everyday commitment to the Christian way of life. No, for the account says that Paul and Silas “spoke the word of Jehovah to him together with all those in his house.” This involved getting to know Jehovah sufficiently to get forgiveness first of past sinfulness on the basis of accepting the ransom sacrifice. Admittedly, for them this took place in a very short time, in just one day. This was followed by their making a heartfelt dedication to the Sovereign Lord of the universe, Jehovah God, and being baptized in symbol of this. Yes, the jailer “rejoiced greatly with all his household now that he had believed God.”—Acts 16:25-34.

¹² Perhaps you are one who is holding back because of some lingering doubt or question. But if some technical point on doctrine remains unresolved, there is all the more reason to search for the answer in God’s Word, praying incessantly to God to give you discernment. He will

10, 11. (a) What fine example did the Philippian jailer and his household set? (b) To “get saved,” was more involved than simple belief in Jesus?

12. Should lack of complete understanding of some points delay one in getting baptized?

do so, as you build up complete trust in him. He will not put a "stone" or a "serpent" in your outstretched hand. (Matthew 7:7-11) You should not excuse yourself from dedicating your life to him because of some few things that may not be fully understood by you. The Christian is continually growing in knowledge of God and His purposes.—Philippians 1:9-11; Hebrews 6:1-3.

¹³ And finally, you may feel that you are yet too young to make a dedication with understanding. For many, this may be true, since there are thousands of young children associated with Jehovah's Witnesses—which to us is a cause for joy. (Matthew 19:13-15) While growing to be sufficiently mature, mentally and physically, to take upon themselves the full responsibility of dedication and baptism, we can have confidence that God 'marks' such children as "holy," as long as they are responsive and obedient to believing parents. (1 Corinthians 7:14) But time does not stand still. If you have responded to your parents' bringing you up "in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah," and you have applied yourself in learning, both in the home and in the congregation, has the time now come for you to make your dedication to Jehovah? If so, after talking this over with your parents and the elders in your congregation, we encourage you to follow through on your decision to dedicate your life to Jehovah and get baptized.—Ephesians 6:1-4; 2 Timothy 1:5-7.

Serving Where Jehovah Places You

¹⁴ In getting baptized now, is there hope that God will call you to be a part of the bride of Christ? God, of course, is the

13. (a) What is recognized about young children in our midst? (b) When should one of young age get baptized?

14. What factors should be noted now as to the 'harvesting' of anointed ones?

judge, not humans. A person's feelings and inclinations, such as may have been instilled while in some sect of Christendom, should not govern. (Romans 8:28-30; 9:16) It is important to remember that the 'harvesting' of the anointed ones is fast drawing to a close. (Compare Matthew 13:36-43.) For 19 centuries there was only the one calling, the heavenly one, with Jehovah being very selective as to who would serve with his Son to make up the Kingdom government. Many would be invited but only a precious few chosen. (Matthew 22:2, 14) In time the prescribed but limited number of 144,000 would be reached. After this no more would be anointed by holy spirit as witness that they had the heavenly hope, unless, in a rare occurrence, the unfaithfulness of one of the remaining 'chosen ones' made a replacement necessary.—Romans 8:16; 11:19; Revelation 7:1-8; 14:1-5.

¹⁵ When we consider how Jehovah has been dealing with his people during the 'harvest period,' it seems evident that the heavenly calling in general was completed about the year 1935, when the hope of the "great crowd" of Revelation 7:9-17 was properly understood to be an earthly one. This has worked out just as Jehovah foreknew that it would. As Revelation 7:3, 4 shows, there would be a final 'sealing' of the remaining ones of spiritual Israel. But, during this time just before the "great tribulation," a "great crowd" without any limitation as to number would manifest itself. They would retain their natural hope of living on earth, not being "born again" with heavenly life in view.—Psalm 115:16; John 3:1-8.

¹⁶ As to the possibility of being a "born again" replacement at this late hour, un-

15, 16. (a) What seems evident as to the ending of the heavenly calling and the gathering of the "great crowd"? (b) At this late hour, what would seem logical as to any replacements? (c) However, how should any personal claim to the heavenly calling be viewed?

derstandably only a very few of these remaining anointed ones are likely to forfeit their heavenly calling by becoming unfaithful. Their ranks have by now been thinned by death to only a few thousand. If it becomes necessary to replace one, whom would Jehovah call? Jesus said of those invited to be his apostles: "You are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials." (Luke 22:28) Logically, Jehovah would select someone who had been associated for many years and who had displayed endurance and loyalty under trial, rather than someone who had only recently become a baptized disciple of Jesus and perhaps was yet unproved in many respects. This is not said dogmatically or to provide a basis for judging anyone's personal claim, but to help newly associated ones to avoid being presumptuous and to be sure of Jehovah's manner of dealing with them.

¹⁷ Whether one is of the "little flock" of Kingdom heirs or has the grand hope of living forever in perfection and happiness on the earth, such relationship begins with our coming into favor with our Father, Jehovah. (Luke 12:32) And how do we gain an approved standing before God? It is by taking in knowledge, exercising faith in Christ's sacrifice, repenting of our former course in the world, positively converting to do God's will, dedicating our lives to Jehovah and getting baptized in symbol thereof. Then, if we preserve our precious relationship with God, he is faithful in that he will reward us with eternal life, a priceless possession whether it be in the heavens or in the realm of the Kingdom here on earth.—Hebrews 11:6; Romans 6:23.

17. What relationship does dedication and baptism begin, leading to what reward?

¹⁸ Just ahead the separating of the "sheep" from the "goats" will come to a conclusion. None will be left on middle ground when God brings the "great tribulation" to sweep away "those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus." (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9) Only those 'marked' for salvation will survive into his new order. (Revelation 7:3, 4, 9, 14; Ezekiel 9:2-6) How happy will be those who have submitted to this 'marking' for survival because of being accepted into a dedicated relationship with Jehovah God, as symbolized by water baptism, and continuing in integrity on the narrow road that leads to life!—Matthew 7:13, 14.

18. In what way is a 'marking' work going on now, and how do individuals show that they have been 'marked' for salvation?

CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS IN REVIEW?

- ☐ How did the Ethiopian eunuch set an example in getting baptized?
- ☐ Why should one not delay in setting aside the attractions of this system in favor of accepting Jehovah's loving invitation?
- ☐ How will trust in Jehovah help a person when there is a lingering doubt or question?
- ☐ How should youth view dedication and baptism?
- ☐ Whom, logically, might Jehovah select if replacement of a spiritual Israelite became necessary?

It Brings It All Together

In a letter of appreciation for the new book ***“Let Your Kingdom Come”*** one reader wrote:

“Proceeding from one chapter to the next, it reminded me of a riverboat going down river picking up cargo from first the right bank and then the left one, headed for its destination with a full load. How beautifully it was written! Weaving in first one key point and then another, always beckoning to the reader to be included.”



***“Let your
Kingdom come”***