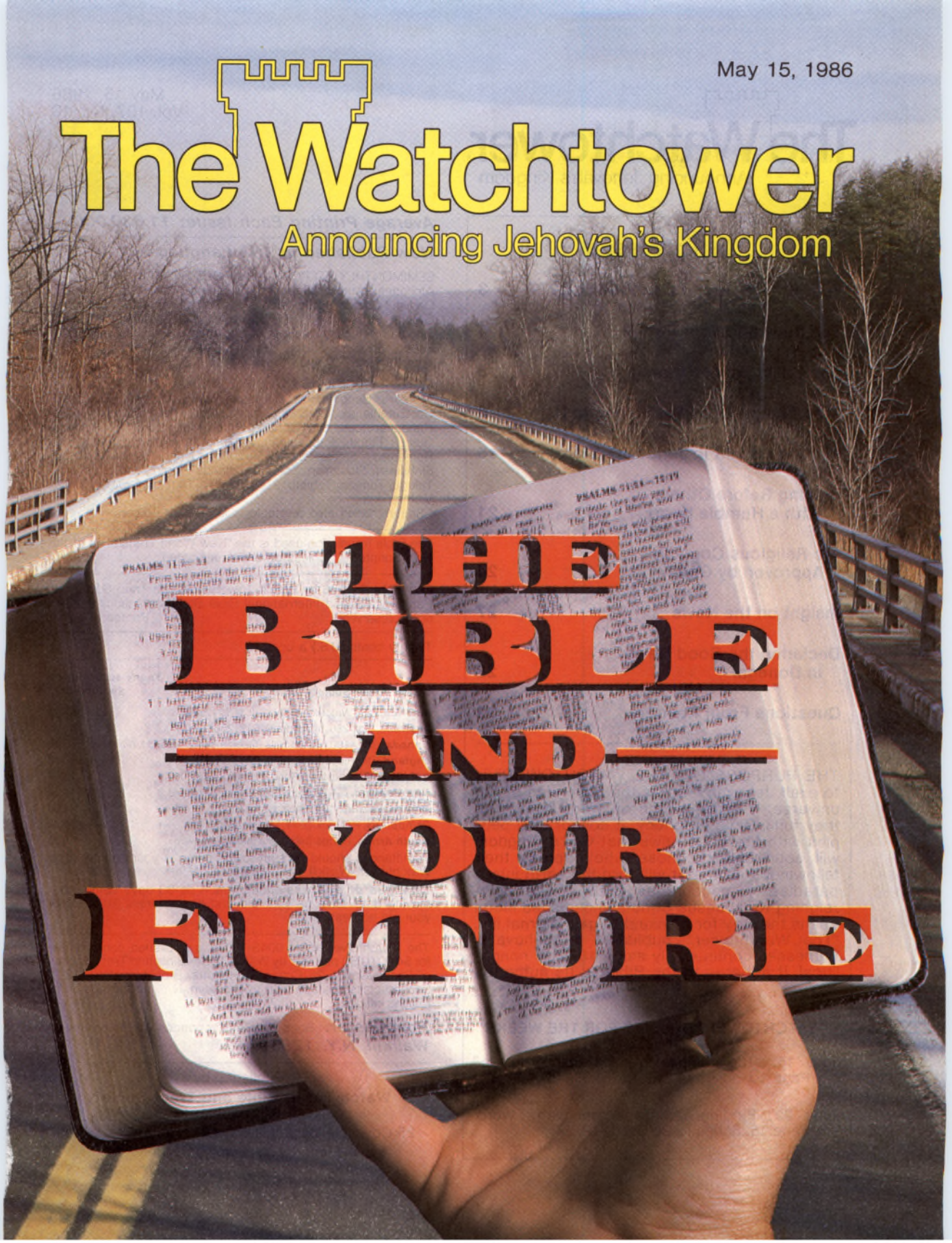
May 15, 1986

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



THE BIBLE AND YOUR FUTURE

May 15, 1986
Vol. 107, No. 10

The Watchtower®

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

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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 continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible."—Lord Kelvin, British mathematician, physicist, and President of the British Royal Society, c. 1895.*

"If we are to begin to try and understand life as it will be in 1960, we must begin by realizing that food, clothing and shelter will cost as little as air."—John Langdon-Davies, British journalist and Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1936.

U.S. National Archives

"This is the biggest fool thing we have ever done. . . . The bomb will never go off, and I speak as an expert in explosives."—Admiral William Leahy, advising U.S. President Harry Truman on the U.S. atom-bomb project, 1945.

Your Future
Who Can Predict It?

ATTEMPTING to predict the future is easy. Being accurate is not. It becomes an exercise in futility when predictions boomerang, as the accompanying examples plainly indicate.

Since ancient times, man has tried to discover what the future holds. Even today, most of us share a desire to peer into tomorrow. This pursuit of knowledge about coming events has led man to try a profusion of methods. For example, the human body has been examined for clues in facial characteristics, contours on the skull, and lines on the palm of the hand. Man has studied animals—the movements of mice or snakes, the flight of birds, even the manner in which a rooster snaps up kernels of wheat placed on the ground. Some have used objects such as crystal balls, playing cards, dice, tea leaves, or coffee grounds. The techniques are as varied as the people, customs, and time periods, but the results are all the same: failure.

Yet, there is One who can accurately predict the future. Who? Jehovah God. Jehovah is unique because he is "the One telling from the beginning the finale." Even though events have not yet run their full course, God can foretell what the climax will be. Yes, Jehovah can unfold the future before man's eyes not just a few days in advance but centuries ahead of time!—Isaiah 46:10.

Therefore, the quest for knowledge of the future does not have to end in futility. God's Word, the Bible, has outlined the most important aspects for us. Just what does it show to be in store for mankind?

* These quotations are from the book *The Experts Speak,* by Christopher Cerf and Victor Navasky.

The Bible and Your Future

WHY can the Author of the Bible, Jehovah God, accurately predict the future while man cannot? For two reasons. Jehovah is omnipotent. He is also omniscient. Man is not.

"I am God Almighty," said Jehovah to Abram (Abraham) almost 4,000 years ago.* "Walk before me and prove yourself faultless. And I will give my covenant between me and you, that I may multiply you very, very much." When Abraham was 99 years old and his barren wife Sarah 10 years younger, Jehovah predicted that Abraham would become the father of "a crowd of nations." (Genesis 17:1-4) Being almighty —omnipotent—Jehovah used his power to overcome any obstacle that could block fulfillment of his promise to Abraham, enabling that patriarch to become the father of Isaac. In time, Abraham did, indeed, become the progenitor of the Israelites and others. —Genesis 21:1-3; 25:1-4.

Jehovah is also all-knowing, all-wise —omniscient. He can foresee whatever he wishes to foresee. Of him it is said: "There is not a creation that is not manifest to his sight, but all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of him with whom we have an accounting."—Hebrews 4:13.

God's omnipotence and omniscience make it impossible for him to fail. He always predicts the future accurately. Hence, he could say: "Surely just as I have figured, so it must occur; and just as *I have counseled*, that is what will come true." (Isaiah 14:24) Let us examine a few of the many Bible prophecies that have come true.

Prophecies Fulfilled in the Past

Babylon was once a mere satellite of the Assyrian Empire. By the seventh century B.C.E., however, the city had become the seemingly impregnable capital of the Babylonian Empire. But what would become of her? "Babylon . . . must become as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited, nor will she reside for generation after generation." So prophesied God's Word nearly 100 years before Babylon became a mighty world power and some 200 years prior to her fall to the Medes and the Persians. No one today can deny the fulfillment of those words. For many centuries, the city of Babylon has been nothing but heaps of stone. Babylon simply is no more. —Isaiah 13:19, 20.

Jerusalem of the first century C.E. was the site of a glorious temple built for the worship of Jehovah. Yet, the Bible records these words of Jesus Christ concerning Jerusalem and the generation hearing his words: "The days will come upon you when your enemies will build around you a fortification with pointed stakes and will encircle you and distress you from every side, and they will dash you and your children within you to the ground, and they will not leave a stone upon a stone in you." (Luke 19:43, 44) Jesus said that in 33 C.E., but it was not until 66 C.E. that Roman armies marched against Jerusalem. Although victory seemed imminent, strangely the Romans withdrew. In 70 C.E., however, the Roman army again laid siege to the city, crowded at the time with Passover celebrants, and encircled it with a fence of stakes. Some five months later, Jerusalem lay demolished, with an estimated 1,100,000 of its citizens dead.

* In the Hebrew Scriptures, Jehovah is referred to as "Almighty" (*Shad·dai'*) 48 times, including 7 times as "God Almighty" (*'El Shad·dai'*), and in the Greek Scriptures 10 times as "Almighty" (*Pan·to·kra'tor*).

Prophecies Now Being Fulfilled

Would you prefer present-day examples of fulfilled Bible predictions? Well, Jesus foretold events that would identify a time period known as "the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1) These prophecies form a composite "sign"—the sign of the last days of the present wicked system of things. (Matthew 24:3) Evidence of the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy has been mounting since 1914. In fact, you have personally seen the fulfillment. Following are a few outstanding features of "the sign."

"Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom." (Matthew 24:7) World War I began in 1914 and eventually involved an estimated 93 percent of the world's population. Today, the world's military forces number 106,000,000, or one soldier per 43 people. One report said: "There is nothing in past history to compare with the present buildup of destructive power in the world, and with the threat to humanity that it poses."—*World Military and Social Expenditures 1985.*

U.S. Army photo

FAO photo/B. Imevbore

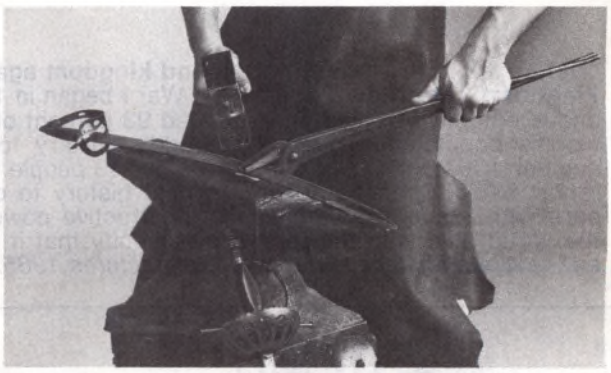
"There will be food shortages . . . in one place after another." (Matthew 24:7) Concerning famine, a 1985 report for the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues states: "At the time of the last major African famine in the early 1970s, it was thought that chronic hunger and malnutrition were the regular condition of eighty million Africans. That number is now 100 million."

"There will be great earthquakes." (Luke 21:11) This certainly has proved true since 1914. For example, the Kanto earthquake in Japan claimed 142,800 lives in 1923. There were some 60,000 quake victims at Quetta, Pakistan, in 1935. Earthquake deaths numbered 66,700 in Northern Peru in 1970. And in 1976 some 800,000 were earthquake casualties in Tangshan, China.

"In all the nations the good news has to be preached first." (Mark 13:10) In 1985, Jehovah's Witnesses tallied over 590,000,000 hours preaching the good news of God's Kingdom in 205 lands and island groups. They conducted 2,379,000 home Bible studies and left with interested people upwards of 350,000,000 Bibles and publications explaining the Bible.

Earth's Future—Will You Be There?

What lies ahead? The Bible contains other prophecies still to be fulfilled. Among them are those concerning an earth wiped clean of evil and left shining with righteousness. Does that future appeal to you? Do you believe that Jehovah has the wisdom and the power to make things right on this planet? If so, you will want to consider what the Bible predicts for earth's future.



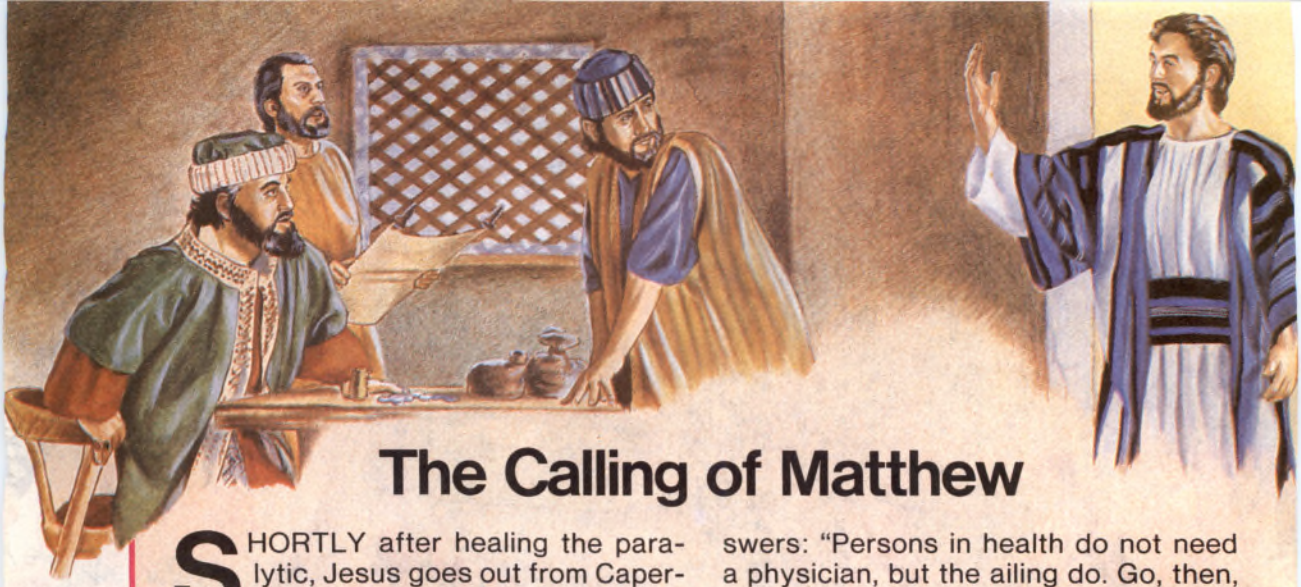
"They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4) God's heavenly Kingdom will provide the basis for total disarmament on earth. Peace will reign!

"Jehovah of armies will certainly make for all the peoples . . . a banquet of well-oiled dishes, a banquet of wine kept on the dregs, of well-oiled dishes filled with marrow." (Isaiah 25:6) Under God's direction and blessing, the earth will produce in rich abundance. Hunger will be no more!

"He will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces." "And no resident will say: 'I am sick.'" (Isaiah 25:8; 33:24) No illness or health problem will resist God's cure. He even purposes to empty gravedom of its victims. How delightful to welcome resurrected loved ones!

Make This Your Future

For this to be your future, you must act now. Soon, before the foregoing prophecies have their complete fulfillment, Jehovah will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:18) At Zephaniah 2:3 the Bible advises: "Seek Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth, who have practiced His own judicial decision. Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger." Therefore, spend your time wisely now in gaining an accurate understanding of the Bible and its prophecies so as to act with benefit to yourself and your loved ones. Jehovah's Witnesses stand ready to help you to gain further knowledge about the future as revealed in God's Word, the Bible.



The Calling of Matthew

SHORTLY after healing the paralytic, Jesus goes out from Capernaum to the Sea of Galilee. Again crowds of people come to him there, and he begins teaching them. As he walks on, he sees Matthew, who is also called Levi, sitting at the tax office. "Be my follower," is Jesus' invitation.

Likely, Matthew is already familiar with Jesus' teachings, even as were Peter, Andrew, James, and John when they were called. And like them, Matthew immediately responds to the invitation. He gets up, leaves his responsibilities as a tax collector behind, and follows Jesus.

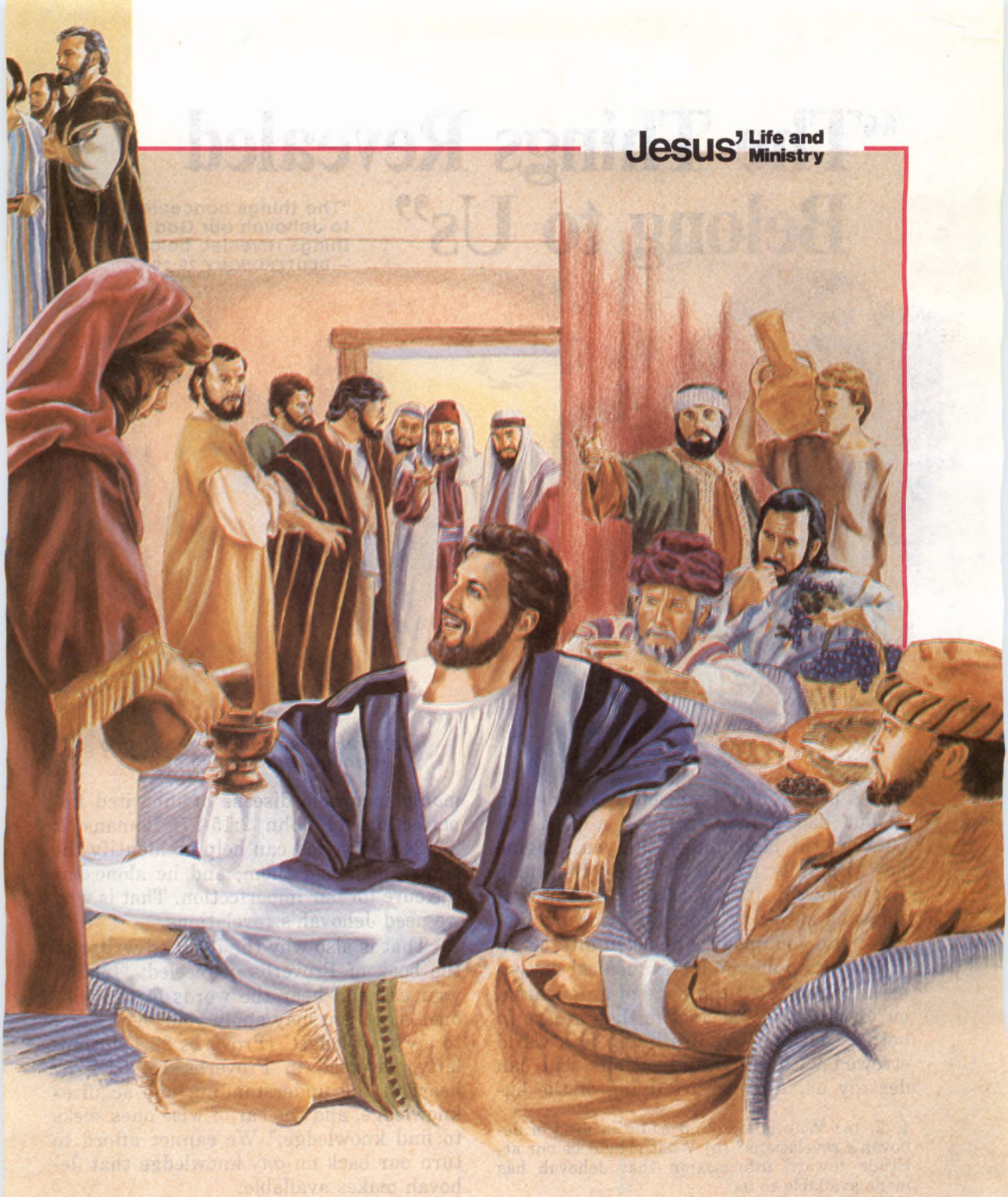
Later, perhaps to celebrate the receiving of his call, Matthew holds a big reception feast in his house. In addition to Jesus and His disciples, former associates of Matthew are present. These men are generally despised by their fellow Jews because they collect taxes for the hated Roman authorities. Moreover, they often dishonestly exact more money from the people than the regular tax rate.

Observing Jesus at the feast with such persons, the Pharisees ask his disciples: "Why is it that your teacher eats with tax collectors and sinners?" Overhearing the question, Jesus answers: "Persons in health do not need a physician, but the ailing do. Go, then, and learn what this means, 'I want mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came to call, not righteous people, but sinners."

Apparently, Matthew has invited these tax collectors to his home so that they can listen to Jesus and receive spiritual healing. So Jesus associates with them to help them attain a healthy relationship with God. Jesus does not despise such ones, as do the self-righteous Pharisees. Rather, moved with compassion he, in effect, serves as a spiritual physician to them.

Thus Jesus' exercise of mercy toward sinners is not a condoning of their sins but an expression of the same tender feelings he manifested toward the physically ill. Recall, for example, when he compassionately reached out and touched the leper, saying: "I want to. Be made clean." May we likewise show mercy by helping persons in need, especially assisting them in a spiritual way. **Matthew 8:3; 9:9-13; Mark 2: 13-17; Luke 5:27-32.**

- Where is Jesus when he sees Matthew?
- What is Matthew's occupation, and why are such persons despised by other Jews?
- What complaint is made *against* Jesus, and how does he respond?
- Why does Jesus associate with sinners?



"The Things Revealed Belong to Us"

"The things concealed belong to Jehovah our God, but the things revealed belong to us."
—DEUTERONOMY 29:29.

Jehovah revealed vital knowledge through faithful men of old

IF A person found himself in a minefield but had a map showing a path out between the land mines, can you imagine how carefully he would study that map and follow all its directions? Or think of someone suffering from an incurable disease. Can you imagine his keen interest in following up all the latest medical discoveries that offered the hope of an eventual cure? Well, the sad fact is that we are in both situations. We are living in a world strewed with traps and pitfalls that can destroy us. And we are dying of the human incurable disease of inherited imperfection. (1 John 2:15-17; Romans 7: 20, 24) Only God can help us identify the traps and avoid them, and he alone has the cure for our imperfection. That is why we need Jehovah's revelations.

[2] That is also why the inspired writer of the book of Proverbs counseled: "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise ones, that you may apply your very heart to my knowledge." (Proverbs 22:17) Similarly, we read in Proverbs 18:15: "The heart of the understanding one acquires knowledge, and the ear of wise ones seeks to find knowledge." We cannot afford to turn our back on *any* knowledge that Jehovah makes available.

1, 2. (a) Why is mankind badly in need of Jehovah's revelations? (b) What should be our attitude toward information that Jehovah has made available to us?

Jehovah's Revealed Secrets

[3] Happily, Jehovah has been very liberal in revealing knowledge. From the time of creation, God has gradually given to his worshipers all the information necessary for them under varying circumstances. (Proverbs 11:9; Ecclesiastes 7:12) Originally, he explained that the earth and its animal inhabitants would be subject to Adam and Eve and their descendants. (Genesis 1:28, 29) However, Satan influenced Adam and Eve to sin, and it became difficult to see how the divine purpose could be worked out to God's glory. Quickly, though, Jehovah began to explain matters. He revealed that, in time, there would appear a righteous offspring, or "seed," that would counteract the works of Satan and his followers.—Genesis 3:15.

[4] God-fearing men and women must have had many questions about that Seed. Who would he be? When would he arrive? How would he benefit mankind? As the centuries passed, Jehovah gave further revelations about his purposes, and eventually he answered all these questions. Before the Flood, he inspired Enoch to prophesy about the coming destruction of Satan's seed. (Jude 14, 15) About 2,400 years before our Common Era, he entrusted Noah with the revelation that human life and blood are sacred—a truth that would be of prime importance when the promised Seed arrived.—Genesis 9:1-7.

[5] After Noah's day, Jehovah revealed vital knowledge by means of other faithful patriarchs. In the 20th century B.C.E., Abraham learned that the promised Seed would be one of his descendants. (Genesis 22:15-18) This promise became the priceless possession of Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob (later named Israel). (Genesis 26:3-5; 28:13-15) Then, through Jacob, Jehovah revealed that this Seed, "Shiloh," would be a powerful ruler born in the line of his son Judah.—Genesis 49: 8-10.

[6] In the 16th century B.C.E., Jehovah formed the children of Israel into a nation. To whom did the continuing revelation of truth then belong? Moses answered this question in these words to that young nation: "The things concealed belong to Jehovah our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons to time indefinite." (Deuteronomy 29:29) Yes, after its birth in 1513 B.C.E., the nation of Israel became the channel "entrusted with the sacred pronouncements of God." (Romans 3:2) And what a flood of pronouncements! God took the Israelites into the Law covenant, which held out the possibility of their becoming a nation of priests and kings. (Exodus 19:5, 6) The Law included a code of conduct that helped them to identify and avoid the pitfalls of sin and also a system of sacrifices that used the sacred blood of animals to cover their sins in a token way.

[7] As time passed, Jehovah made more revelations about the Seed. Through the psalmist, God revealed that the nations would reject his Seed but that the Seed would triumph with Jehovah's help. (Psalm 2:1-12) Through Isaiah, he revealed that the Seed would be the "Prince of Peace" but also that he would suffer for the sins of others. (Isaiah 9:6; 53:3-12) In the eighth century B.C.E., Jehovah even revealed the place of the Seed's birth and,

3. What revelations of his purpose did Jehovah make to Adam and Eve?
4, 5. What further revelations did Jehovah make, and who were the channels he used?
6. In the 16th century B.C.E., who became the channel for "the things revealed," and what were some of the new things that they learned?
7, 8. (a) What additional information did Jehovah reveal about the coming Seed? (b) How were "the things revealed" preserved, and who revealed the proper understanding of such things?

The anointed Christian congregation became the new custodian of Jehovah's revelations

in the sixth century B.C.E., the timetable for his ministry.—Micah 5:2; Daniel 9: 24-27.

[8] Eventually, "the things revealed" were compiled into the 39 books of the Hebrew Scriptures. But in many cases, that was only the first step. The things written were often difficult to understand, even for the ones used to write them! (Daniel 12:4, 8; 1 Peter 1:10-12) However, when enlightenment finally came, it did not depend on some human interpreter. As in the case of prophetic dreams, "interpretations belong to God."—Genesis 40:8.

A New Channel

[9] When Jesus Christ was on earth, Israel was still God's channel. Any who wished to serve Jehovah had to do so in association with his chosen nation. (John 4:22) But Moses had shown that the privilege of being stewards of "the things revealed" also carried responsibilities. He said: "The things revealed belong to us and to our sons to time indefinite, *that we may carry out all the words of this law.*" (Deuteronomy 29:29) That "time indefinite" came to an end in 33 C.E. Why? Because, as a nation, the Jews failed to 'carry out all the words of the law.' Particularly, they failed to welcome the Seed, Jesus Christ, even though the Law had been, in effect, a "tutor leading to Christ." (Galatians 3:24) Because of this failure, Jehovah chose another channel for "the things revealed."

9. Why did fleshly Israel lose the privilege of being the channel for "the things revealed," and when did this happen?

[10] What was this new channel? Paul identified it to the Ephesians when he wrote that "there might be made known *through the congregation* the greatly diversified wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose that he formed in connection with the Christ, Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:10, 11) Yes, it was the Christian congregation, born at Pentecost 33 C.E., that was entrusted with the new "things revealed." As a group, anointed Christians served as "the faithful and discreet slave" appointed to provide spiritual food at the proper time. (Matthew 24:45) Christians were now "stewards of sacred secrets of God."—1 Corinthians 4:1.

[11] The central fact of these new "sacred secrets" was that Jesus Christ, the promised Seed, had appeared. (Galatians 3:16) Jesus was "Shiloh," the one with the right to rule mankind, and Jehovah appointed him King of the Kingdom that would eventually restore Paradise to this earth. (Isaiah 11:1-9; Luke 1:31-33) Jesus was also Jehovah's appointed High Priest, who gave his untainted, perfect life as a ransom for mankind—a most marvelous application of the principle of the sacredness of blood. (Hebrews 7:26; 9:26) Henceforth, believing mankind had the hope of regaining that perfect human life that Adam had lost.—1 John 2:1, 2.

[12] This promised Seed was also a mediator, effecting between his followers and his heavenly Father a new covenant that replaced the old Law covenant. (Hebrews 8:10-13; 9:15) On the basis of this new covenant, the fledgling Christian congregation replaced the nation of fleshly Israel, becoming a spiritual Israel, a spiritual "Abraham's seed" along with Jesus, and

10. What was the new channel for Jehovah's revelations?

11, 12. What were some of the wonderful revelations made through this new channel?

stewards of "the things revealed." (Galatians 3:29; 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9) Moreover —something unthinkable to Jews—Gentiles were invited to become part of that new spiritual Israel! (Romans 2:28, 29) Together, Jewish and non-Jewish spiritual Israelites were commissioned to make disciples of Jesus all around the earth. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Thus, "the things revealed" took on an international aspect.

13 In time, these "things revealed" through the Christian congregation were recorded in the 27 books of the Christian Greek Scriptures that completed the canon of the inspired Bible. But once again, embedded in these books were many prophecies regarding Jehovah's purpose *that* only many centuries later would be fully understood. Once again, the writers of the Scriptures were in reality ministering to generations as yet unborn.

"The Things Revealed" Today

14 After the death of the apostles, the great apostasy developed among professing Christians, as had been prophesied. (Matthew 13:36-42; Acts 20:29, 30) There followed long centuries during which understanding of "the things revealed" grew dim, although Jesus did not abandon those who sought to remain faithful. (Matthew 28:20) However, Jesus had promised that this situation would not last forever. At the conclusion of the system of things, the wicked and the righteous would again be visibly separated, and 'the righteous ones would shine as brightly as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' (Matthew 13:43) Just as Daniel had prophesied, in 'the time of the end, true knowledge would become abundant.' (Daniel 12:4) Light would again be shed on "the things revealed."

13. How were these new "things revealed" preserved for future generations?
14. Following the great apostasy, when would Jehovah once again shed light on "the things revealed"?

Jehovah's "slave" class of anointed witnesses has served well as custodian of the Word of God

15 Since 1914, we have been living in the time of the conclusion of this system of things. Hence, it is important to know whom Jehovah is using today as a channel for this new spiritual light. Certainly, he is not using the established religions of Christendom. These have proved disinclined to shake off the wrong teachings accumulated during the great apostasy. Today, most of their leaders are either so entrenched in traditions and creeds that they are not open to new knowledge, or they are so affected by skepticism that they doubt even the inspiration of the Bible and the validity of its moral standards.

16 Jesus said that the Kingdom of God would be taken from the Jews and "given to a nation producing its fruits." (Matthew 21:43) In the first century, this proved to be the young Christian congregation of spiritual Israel. Today, there is only one group producing fruitage anything like that of the early congregation. These spiritual Israelites are the members of "the faithful and discreet slave" class of Matthew 24:45-47. Like the first Christians, these latter-day Christians have not been afraid to 'let their light shine.' (Matthew 5:14-16) Starting in 1919, they courageously undertook the work of

15. Why have the religions of Christendom proved unworthy to serve as the channel for the latest understanding of "the things revealed"?
16. Who have proved to be Jehovah's modern-day channel?

preaching the good news of the Kingdom in all the world for a witness. (Matthew 24:14) Since they have produced the fruits of God's Kingdom, Jehovah has blessed them richly by bringing them up to date in "the greatly diversified wisdom of God." —Ephesians 3:10.

17 Thus, in 1923 Jesus' great prophecy about the sheep and the goats was properly understood, and it was discerned that the whole world was under judgment. (Matthew 25:31-46) In 1925 God's earthly servants became possessors of an accurate understanding of Revelation chapter 12 and discerned exactly what had happened in the marked year of 1914. In 1932 their understanding was deepened still further. Jehovah revealed that the prophecies related to the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem did not refer to fleshly Israel, which had long since proved unfaithful and been cast off, but rather to spiritual Israel, the Christian congregation. (Romans 2:28, 29) Then, in 1935 a corrected understanding of John's vision of the "great crowd" in Revelation chapter 7 opened the eyes of anointed ones to the huge gathering work that still lay ahead of them.—Revelation 7:9-17.

18 This triggered a surge in the global preaching work, as the gathering of "the things on the earth" finally got under way in earnest. (Ephesians 1:10) In 1939, as war clouds gathered over Europe, the issue of neutrality was made clearer than ever before. In 1950 the "princes" of Isaiah 32:1, 2 were more precisely identified. In 1962 a correct identification of "the superior authorities" and the Christian's proper relationship to them was also understood more clearly from "the things revealed." (Romans 13:1, 2) And in 1965 there came a clearer understanding of the earthly resurrection and who might benefit from it.—John 5:28, 29.

19 Additionally, the anointed Christian congregation in this 20th century has proved to be a fitting custodian of the Word of God, the written compilation of "the things revealed." Representative members of this congregation undertook a translation of the Bible into modern English, and, up to today, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* has appeared in 11 languages, with 40,000,000 copies having been printed. The "slave" class of anointed Christians also spearheads international teaching programs and publishes Bible-based textbooks and magazines. It organizes weekly meetings, regular assemblies, and various schools —all designed to help truth seekers to gain accurate knowledge of "the things revealed." Truly, "the righteous ones" now "shine as brightly as the sun" in a spiritual sense, proving worthy of their stewardship.—Matthew 13:43.

17, 18. What progressive understanding has Jehovah made possible through his modern-day channel?

19. How has Jehovah's "slave" class today proved to be a fitting custodian of the Word of God?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ Before Jesus' time, what were some of the channels for "the things revealed"?
- ☐ To whom did "the things revealed" belong after 33 C.E.?
- ☐ What were some of the vital revelations made through this new channel?
- ☐ Why is it that spiritual Israelites must be the ones to whom "the things revealed" belong today?
- ☐ How has the anointed Christian congregation proved to be the worthy custodian of Jehovah's Word?

Our Responsibility

[20] So Jehovah has not left us stranded in the minefield of this world. Rather, he has given us his Word to illuminate our path and help us to avoid spiritual danger. (Psalm 119:105) Neither has Jehovah abandoned us to die of sin and imperfection. Instead, he has opened up the opportunity of everlasting life on a paradise earth and made knowledge about this opportunity readily available. (John 17:3) No wonder the psalmist, speaking of "the things revealed" in his day, exclaimed: "How I do love your law! All day long it is my concern."—Psalm 119:97.

[21] Is this the way you feel about "the things revealed" by Jehovah and understood in our day? Do you deeply appreciate the truths that you have learned? Do you see the need for these truths in helping you to make decisions, avoid temptations, and serve Jehovah? How much time do you spend actually reading and studying these "things revealed"? Is there any way that you can improve your study habits? These matters will be taken up in the next article.

20, 21. (a) How was the psalmist moved to react to Jehovah's revealed Word? (b) What matters will be taken up in the next article?

Finding Delight in Jehovah's Word

"Happy is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of Jehovah."
—PSALM 1:1, 2.

SINCE "the things revealed" are so vital for our salvation, Jehovah has often assigned responsible ones to be teachers of revealed truth. (Deuteronomy 29:29) In Israel, the priests and Levites fulfilled this role. (Leviticus 10:8-11; 2 Chronicles 35:3) Israelite parents, too, taught their own children. (Deuteronomy 11:19; Proverbs 6:20) In the first century C.E., duly appointed elders served as teachers in the congregation of anointed Christians, and Christian parents were urged to instruct their children. (Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:2) Additionally, each individual Christian was responsible to make known Jehovah's revealed things to those yet outside the Christian congregation.—Acts 1:8.

[2] But is it enough to rely on others to teach us God's Word? No. Each of us is also personally responsible to study "the things revealed" by Jehovah. Thus, the psalmist wrote to fellow Israelites: "Happy is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night." (Psalm 1: 1, 2) The apostle Peter, too, encouraged fellow worshipers, writing: "Form

1. Who have been assigned to teach others "the things revealed" by Jehovah?

2. Is it enough to rely on others to teach us Jehovah's Word? Explain.

a longing for the unadulterated milk belonging to the word, that through it you may grow to salvation."—1 Peter 2:2.

[3] How do you view Bible study? If you regularly attend Christian meetings, you doubtless get to hear many fine Bible-based discussions. And if you were 'brought up in the truth,' as some say, doubtless your parents taught you many of "the things revealed" by Jehovah. But apart from that, do you study the Bible personally? The psalmist evidently enjoyed that kind of study, but perhaps you personally do not find it easy. If so, you are not alone. The fact that Peter was inspired to urge fellow believers to *"form* a longing for the . . . word" suggests that personal study would not come naturally to many. But we can learn to enjoy it. How?

[4] Well, what if you were told to dig a deep hole in the ground? Unless you were naturally inclined to do hard, physical work, you would not look forward to the task. But suppose you were told that there was treasure buried in the ground? Now the work of digging would not seem so arduous! It might even be exciting, as you anticipated uncovering the buried treasure. Similarly, even if you are not studious by nature, study can be interesting and even exciting if you have the right attitude. And there are ways to develop this attitude.

Cultivate the Right Attitude

[5] First, we should constantly reflect on what a treasure we have in the Bible. The apostle Paul exclaimed: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge!" (Romans 11:33) Jehovah's purposes, gradually revealed over thousands of years, are awe-inspiring, opening up for us a hope that is as wonderful as it is sure. The counsel for living that Jehovah has had recorded in the Bible will always bring success when applied. (2 Timothy 3:16) No wonder the psalmist sang: "The very disclosure of your words gives light, making the inexperienced ones understand"! —Psalm 119:130.

[6] Moreover, the Bible contains God's thoughts, and by taking in these thoughts, we draw closer to him. (James 4:8) Also, we are commissioned to teach others to be disciples of Jesus. (Matthew 28:19, 20) Since the Bible is our chief tool in this work, we need to study it *in order* to use it well. (Ephesians 6:17; 2 Timothy 2:15) Finally, filling our mind with Bible-based thoughts protects us, helping us to walk in our integrity and avoid faith-weakening doubts and wrong ideas. —Proverbs 4:5, 6; 20:7; Philippians 4:8.

[7] Consider, too, that today we are able "to grasp mentally with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth" of the truth in a way that God's servants could not do in the past.

3. The natural inclination of many toward study calls for what?
4. What illustration shows that personal study can be made more appealing?
5, 6. Describe some of the incomparable blessings we get through Jehovah's revealed Word.
7, 8. With regard to "the things revealed," why are we more blessed today than God's servants were in times gone by?

In Our Next Issue

- **The Key to True Religion**
- **Can Anything Separate You From God's Love?**
- **Keep a Positive Attitude**

(Ephesians 3:14-18) But remember, Abraham abandoned his home city and lived out his life in tents although he would never in his lifetime see the fulfillment of God's promises. (Hebrews 11:8-10) And Daniel pleaded for an understanding of the visions he had witnessed but was told: "The words are made secret and sealed up until the time of the end." (Daniel 12:8, 9) Today, the Seed that Abraham looked forward to has long since appeared. Now, we are living in "the time of the end" when the meaning of much of what Daniel saw has been added to our understanding of "the things revealed."

8 The apostle Peter wrote: "Concerning this very salvation a diligent inquiry and a careful search were made by the prophets who prophesied about the undeserved kindness meant for you. It was revealed to them that, not to themselves, but to you, they were ministering the things that have now been announced to you . . . Into these very things angels are desiring to peer." (1 Peter 1:10, 12) Since Jehovah has now shed light on so many things that those early prophets were longing to know, let us truly value these truths and not take them for granted.

9 To get the right attitude, we should appreciate how hard some have had to fight in order to study the Bible. In William Tyndale's day, it was a crime for any Englishman to sell, buy, or read a translation of the Greek Scriptures in his own language. John Foxe, the 16th-century Puritan preacher, reported what happened when a newly converted Protestant smuggled some Bibles into Spain. He was betrayed and burned at the stake, and 800 of those who purchased the Bibles were arrested. Twenty were roasted on spits. Others were imprisoned for life, publicly whipped, or sent to the galleys. A small number were acquitted.

People have died for reading the Bible

10 In modern times, too, Jehovah's Witnesses have sometimes had to study the Bible in the face of grave dangers. When in concentration camps or prisons, they have risked punishment or death to get ahold of a Bible. One missionary, thrown into solitary confinement because of his faith, wrote down all the scriptures he could remember and then scoured the "religion" columns in newspapers for the isolated Bible verses that would appear. For years, that was his only access to a Bible. Yes, when the Bible is banned, Christians go to great lengths to read it. Should we be less diligent when, in most cases, all we have to do is reach out and take it down from a bookshelf?

9, 10. What examples should make us appreciate the freedom most of us have to engage in personal Bible study?

We should find time to consider God's Word* somewhere *in our busy lives

[11] Some have said that they can answer the questions in the *Watchtower* magazine without too much difficulty because some material is repeated. Hence, they do not see the need for personal study. Such ones underestimate the value of repetition. The psalmist loved Jehovah's *reminders,* and so should we. (Psalm 119:119) Remember, the world keeps deluging us with the same immoral, materialistic propaganda. So we need to fortify our minds against it with repeated Biblical reminders.

Work to Overcome Problems

[12] A person with the right attitude toward Bible study will usually find a way to study, but this may not be easy. There may be problems to overcome. For example, where in today's busy life do we find time for personal study? The first step in solving this problem is to recognize that Bible study is a necessity, like the field ministry and meeting attendance. (1 Timothy 4:15) Then we can examine our daily routine to find a place for it. Some manage to study while traveling by public transportation. Others listen to recordings of Bible readings while driving or when working around the house. There are those who study during their lunch break at work. Others get up a little earlier in the morning and study a while before the day's routine begins or spend time studying in the evenings after the children are in bed. Often we have to buy out time from other activities—perhaps even from periods of relaxation—for study. (Colossians 4:5) But many find that soon they do not need those other forms of relaxation

11. Should the fact that some information is discussed repeatedly make us less concerned about Bible study?
12. Give some practical suggestions for overcoming the problem of finding time for Bible study.

quite so much because study itself relaxes them.

[13] Some find concentration to be a problem. It is difficult for them to stop thinking about their day-to-day problems and to concentrate on Bible study. Prayer can help overcome this. Before starting to study, why not thank Jehovah for the things he has revealed and ask for his help to concentrate on them and discern their value? (Philippians 4:6; 2 Timothy 2:7) Such a prayer is fully in harmony with Jehovah's will for us. (1 John 5:14) Self-discipline, too, is indispensable, especially at first. (1 Corinthians 9:25) The Beroeans examined God's Word daily. (Acts 17:10, 11) Theirs is a good example. Regular study will soon become interesting, and likely you will come to look forward to it, not having to force yourself to do it.

[14] Concentration is also helped by an appropriate environment. Isaac went out into the fields when he wanted to meditate —away from the hustle and bustle of the tents. (Genesis 24:63) True, not all of us can find a place to study in that is as free of distractions as an open field, but we can usually reduce the distractions around us. Studying in front of a switched-on television or with a noisy stereo in the background will be far less productive—or interesting—than studying in a place that is quieter. We cannot always escape distractions, but most of us can surely find a relatively quiet corner for study.

[15] There may be another problem: Some may not know *how* to study. These days especially, it cannot be taken for granted that children learn to study at school, and those who left school some time ago may have lost the study habit. But, really, study is not that difficult. It can be as simple as reading articles that interest you in the book *Aid to Bible Understanding* or reading the *New World Translation Reference Bible.* Listening to the Bible recordings on cassette tapes or following up personal research projects are other ways to study. Have you tried just browsing through past issues of the *Watchtower* or *Awake!* magazine and reading articles that catch your interest? True, this is not concentrated study, but it will help to build up your delight in Jehovah's Word.

[16] But what about more formal study, as, for example, when you are preparing for the weekly *Watchtower* Study? For such study, the student needs to have an objective in mind. What kind of objective? In the case of preparing for the *Watchtower* Study, he should want to get the maximum benefit from the "food at the proper time" that has been provided through "the faithful and discreet slave" and should also desire to help others by his comments at the meeting. (Matthew 24: 45) How can he go about this? There are no rules, but here is a suggestion:

[17] First, read the whole article through, perhaps soon after you get your copy of *The Watchtower.* Such a preliminary reading may take only 20 minutes, but it will give you a general idea of the main points and the thrust of the article. When the time comes to study the article in earnest, sit down with a Bible and a pen or some kind of marker. Then, read the first paragraph carefully, noticing the arguments and the way the thoughts are developed. Check any scriptures that are cited but

13. How can we be helped to concentrate on what we study?
14. Why is a quiet environment desirable when we engage in personal study?
15. What are some informal ways of gaining Bible knowledge?

16. What should be our purpose in studying for the weekly *Watchtower* Study?
17, 18. (a) Give some suggestions as to how a student could prepare for the weekly *Watchtower* Study. (b) Give other suggestions that you have found helpful in personal study. (See footnote.)

not quoted in the paragraph and see if you can discern why they are listed there. Next, read the question for the paragraph and see if you know the answer. Having identified the answer, underscore a few words in the paragraph that will remind you of the answer when you attend the *Watchtower* Study. In the margin, you may also wish to make short notes about the scriptures you looked up, points you want to do more research on, and so forth.

18 When you have finished the whole article in this way, look through the questions in the teaching box at the end of the article and see if you have grasped the main points. If there are any questions you cannot answer, check back into the article to find the answer for yourself. If you do this a few days before the weekly *Watchtower* Study, you may find it good to glance over the article on the day of the study to refresh your mind on the material.*

The Need to Meditate

19 Remember that study should include meditation. Study without meditation is like eating without digesting. Hence, ponder over what you study. Try to relate it to other things that you know. How does it affect your life? How can you use it to help others? (Proverbs 15:28) Learn to pay attention to details. Talk to others about what you learn. Share your new discoveries. (Proverbs 27:17) This, too, will build up the delight you find in the Bible.

20 King David had outstanding appreciation of Jehovah's Word. He wrote: "The law of Jehovah is perfect, bringing back the soul. The reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making the inexperienced one wise. The orders from Jehovah are upright, causing the heart to rejoice; the commandment of Jehovah is clean, making the eyes shine. The fear of Jehovah is pure, standing forever. The judicial decisions of Jehovah are true; they have proved altogether righteous. They are more to be desired than gold, yes, than much refined gold; and sweeter than honey and the flowing honey of the combs." —Psalm 19:7-10.

21 By following the counsel of the first psalm, and studying the Bible on a regular basis, you, too, will develop this kind of appreciation for "the things revealed" by Jehovah. And this, in turn, will lead to your enjoying the blessing promised in that psalm for one whose delight is in Jehovah's Word: "He will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither, and everything he does will succeed. . . . Jehovah is taking knowledge of the way of righteous ones." —Psalm 1:3, 6.

21. What blessings will we reap if we develop a real love for "the things revealed" by Jehovah?

How Would You Explain?

- ☐ Why is it not enough merely to rely on others to teach us God's Word?
- ☐ What blessings will we receive from studying the Bible?
- ☐ How can time be found to study the Bible?
- ☐ What are some aids to concentration when we are studying?
- ☐ What should be our objective when preparing for the *Watchtower* Study?

* For suggestions on other aspects of study and how to go about preparing talks, see the Watch Tower publication *Theocratic Ministry School Guidebook.*

19. How can meditation help to build up a love for Jehovah's Word?
20. Describe the deep appreciation that King David had for Jehovah's revealed Word.

Praying Before Others With a Humble Heart

IT WAS a delightful day in Israelite history. King David had arranged for the Ark of Jehovah to be brought into the new capital city, Jerusalem. Joyfully, he praised Jehovah before all the people, concluding a heartfelt prayer with these words: "Blessed be Israel's God Jehovah from eternity to eternity." With full hearts, those listening "said 'Amen' and gave praise to Jehovah." —1 Chronicles 16:36, *The Bible in Living English.*

In ancient times, it was not uncommon for a qualified person among God's people to represent others in prayer in this way. And Jehovah's servants today have the same practice. Congregation meetings, assemblies, family mealtimes, and home Bible studies are some of the occasions when Christian men—and sometimes women—have the privilege of representing others in prayer. (1 Corinthians 11:4, 5) The result? As in David's day, those who listen and say "Amen" are upbuilt and feel that their relationship with Jehovah is strengthened.

Representing others in prayer is a weighty responsibility. The one praying must express thoughts that properly reflect what is in the hearts of those listening. His prayer affects their spirituality. Hence, those who enjoy this privilege do well to echo the request of David: "May my prayer be prepared as incense before you."—Psalm 141:2.

How can we prepare our prayers so that they are as sweet-smelling as incense before Jehovah? By giving forethought to what we are going to say in the light of the guidance Jehovah has provided. The Bible contains numerous exemplary prayers as well as much fine counsel on the subject of prayer. Considering this information will teach us important principles that are especially helpful when we pray in the hearing of others and on their behalf.

With a Humble Heart

One such principle is that Jehovah listens to prayers offered by humble people. (2 Chronicles 7:13, 14) The psalmist tells us: "For Jehovah is high, and yet the humble one he sees; but the lofty one he knows only from a distance." (Psalm 138:6) As an example of this, consider the humility of King Solomon in his public prayer at the dedication of the temple. He had just completed construction of one of the most magnificent buildings ever to be seen on this earth, but this did not make him haughty. Rather, he prayed: "Will God truly dwell with mankind upon the earth? Look! Heaven, yes, the heaven of the heavens themselves, cannot contain you; how much less, then, this house that I have built?" —2 Chronicles 6:18.

We too should be humble, especially when praying on behalf of others. In part, humility is shown by the tone of voice. Of course, Christians should avoid false humility or sanctimoniousness. But humble prayers do not sound bombastic or theatrical. (Matthew 6:5) Humility is shown, too, by what we say. If we pray in humility, we will not demand that Jehovah do certain things. Rather, we will petition that he consent to act in a certain way in harmony with his will.—Compare Psalm 118:25.

Humility, too, will lead us to avoid using

Is it appropriate for listeners to say an audible "Amen" at the end of public prayer?

Yes, if they desire or feel impelled to do so. Paul spoke of the "Amen" said by those listening to a prayer, although he did not specifically say whether this was audible, or silent in their hearts. (1 Corinthians 14:16) However, under the Mosaic Law, there was an occasion when the Israelites were specifically instructed to say "Amen!" out loud. (Deuteronomy 27:14-26) Hence, when the person praying indicates the end of his prayer by saying "Amen," it is appropriate for the listeners to say "Amen" in their hearts or audibly with a low voice. Parents should train their children to show proper appreciation in the way they express any subdued "Amen."

prayers to prove a point or to give personal counsel to individuals. Otherwise, we will be showing the spirit manifested by the Pharisee in one of Jesus' parables. Jesus spoke of a Pharisee and a tax collector who were praying at the same time in the temple. The Pharisee said: "O God, I thank you I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give the tenth of all things I acquire." But the tax collector kept beating his breast, saying: "O God, be gracious to me a sinner." Jesus' conclusion? "This man [the tax collector] went down to his home proved more righteous than that man [the Pharisee]." —Luke 18:9-14.

Jehovah's servants who are truly humble also recognize their position before him. They are a little lower than the angels, while Jehovah is the everlasting, supreme Sovereign of the universe. (Psalm 8:3-5, 9; 90:1-4) When individuals have the opportunity to speak to kings or rulers of this world, they usually do so respectfully and with dignity, highly appreciating the privilege. Should we be less respectful and appreciative when speaking to "the living God and the King to time indefinite"? (Jeremiah 10:10) Of course not. Thus, such expressions as, "Good afternoon, Jehovah" or, "We want to talk to you, Jehovah" are out of place in prayer, as are conversational remarks such as, "How are you today?" "Give our love to Jesus," or, "Have a nice day."—Compare Ecclesiastes 5:1, 2.

Did not the apostle Paul say, though, that we should approach Jehovah "with freeness of speech"? (Hebrews 4:16; compare 1 John 3:21, 22.) Does that not give us the freedom to speak as we see fit? Not really. Paul's expression referred to the fact that because of Jesus' sacrifice we can approach Jehovah in spite of our sinful condition. We can approach him in prayer at any time and on any subject. But even while praying with freeness of speech, we must humbly recognize our own insignificance. Thus, Jehovah said: "To this one, then, I shall look, to the one afflicted and contrite in spirit and trembling at my word."—Isaiah 66:2.

Warning Counsel

Jesus Christ gave further counsel on prayer in his Sermon on the Mount. In it he warned that when praying we should not "say the same things over and over again, just as the people of the nations do." (Matthew 6:7) This does not mean that we should not repeatedly pray about the same subject (as long as we are sure it is the right thing for which to pray). We are told: "Keep on asking, and it will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7) Rather, Jesus' warning meant that we should not repeat things to the point of their being meaningless. In other words, "Do not utter empty repetitions."—Matthew 6:7, *Ref. Bi.*, footnote.

Certain people have the custom of repeating prayer formulas over and over again without giving any thought to the words. Sometimes the formulas are in a language that the one praying does not understand. This is one type of 'empty repetition.' Here

is another: Imagine a Christian who negligently falls into the habit of automatically using the same expressions every day when offering thanks to Jehovah. Eventually, the phrases become meaningless. Even the divine name, Jehovah, can be used in this way. True, we are urged to call upon Jehovah's name. (Psalm 105:1) But if we use that name at the end of almost every sentence in our prayer, then it becomes like a mannerism or an 'empty repetition.'

Paul touched on another important principle when he wrote: "If I am praying in a tongue, it is my gift of the spirit that is praying, but my mind is unfruitful. . . . If you offer praise with a gift of the spirit, how will the man occupying the seat of the ordinary person say 'Amen' to your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying?" (1 Corinthians 14:14-16) In Paul's day certain Christians received the miraculous gift of tongues, and evidently some among them prayed in these tongues before the congregation. But as Paul showed, the rest of the congregation did not understand them.

Today, we do not have such a miraculous gift. But Christians praying in behalf of others should pray in a way that will be understood. For example, at the beginning of a public talk, we invite members of the public to join with us in prayer. In such a prayer, surely it is reasonable to avoid vocabulary or subject matter that the visitors would have difficulty in understanding.

How Long Should Prayers Be?

Private prayers can be as long as we want them to be. Before Jesus chose his 12 apostles, he prayed all night. (Luke 6:12) How long, though, should a public prayer be? Well, before handing around the emblems when instituting the Memorial of his death, Jesus 'said a blessing' and 'gave thanks,' evidently doing so in brief prayers. (Matthew 26:26-28) On the other hand, Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple was quite long. So was Jesus' prayer the night before he died.—2 Chronicles 6: 14-42; John 17:1-26.

If a baby starts crying, a telephone rings, or some other disturbance occurs during a congregation prayer, is it disrespectful for a listener to handle the emergency?

No. In fact, it would be an expression of love for a ministerial servant to leave the praying congregation quietly and handle the emergency in an orderly fashion. (1 Corinthians 14:40) Thus, the rest of the congregation can continue praying undisturbed. Whoever handles the emergency can join again in the prayer when the emergency is over.

Hence, there is no rule about how long a public prayer should be. But there is no special virtue in long prayers. In fact, Jesus criticized the scribes who 'devoured the houses of the widows and for a pretext made long prayers.' (Luke 20:46, 47) Prayers on behalf of others should clearly mention their circumstances or needs and should be of a length appropriate to the occasion. We do not need to offer long, rambling prayers covering many unrelated points. When giving thanks for a meal, a prayer could be quite short. A prayer opening a Christian meeting does not have to be long either. The one representing a family at the beginning or the end of the day, or the one concluding an assembly in prayer, may wish to cover more points that are appropriate to the occasion.

Prayer offered on behalf of others will have a fine effect if it comes from a humble heart and is expressed with due balance and consideration. It will build up the spirituality of those listening and will strengthen their relationship with Jehovah. As a result, like those who shared that heartfelt prayer of David when the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem, all listening will be moved 'to say "Amen" and to praise Jehovah.'—1 Chronicles 16:36.

Are Religious Councils Approved by God?

THE word "council" brings to mind a well-known feature of local government. Terms such as "city council" or "town council" are readily understood. Less familiar, however, may be the term "religious council" or "church council." Such an ecclesiastical council has been defined as "a representative church assembly with deliberative and often legislative authority in questions of faith, morals, and church discipline."

Of the many religious councils held through the centuries, the Roman Catholic Church regards 21 as being ecumenical, and these range from the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. to the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65. According to *The Encyclopedia Americana,* "ecumenical councils are called by the pope, who presides, determines the agenda, closes the council, and promulgates its decrees. . . . Together with the pope the ecumenical council is the collegiate organ of the church, and in union with him represents the infallible teaching authority of the church in matters of faith and morals."—Volume 8, page 85.

In Search of Their Origin

Many ecclesiastical leaders believe that the religious councils of Christendom are comparable to the first-century meeting of the apostles and older men in Jerusalem. Thus, the later church councils are said to have similar authority to decide matters of faith and morals. (Acts 15:2, 6, 22) But have such religious councils been authorized by God? Has he approved of them?

Interestingly, at Mark 3:6 the expression "holding council" comes from a Greek word meaning 'a meeting of people who express their opinions and counsel.' In that verse, we read that the Pharisees 'held council' with Herod's party followers in order to destroy Jesus. Surely God did not approve of that council! And Jesus warned his disciples against trusting such men. (Mark 8:15) Is similar distrust warranted in the case of Christendom's religious councils?

Jesus also said: "By their fruits you will recognize those men." (Matthew 7:20) Therefore, let us examine the fruits of various church councils.

Dominated by What?

According to *The Encyclopedia Americana,* regional councils instrumental in organizing Catholic churches in Spain, Britain, and elsewhere were "often called and dominated by the secular power." General councils of religious leaders from the whole Roman empire "were unknown before the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.)," called by Emperor Constantine. British historian H. G. Wells suggested that Constantine brought politics and autocracy into an already deeply divided Christendom. Wells wrote: "Not only was the council of Nicæa assembled by Constantine the Great, but all the great councils, the two at Constantinople (381 and 553), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451) were called together by the imperial power." But how could God approve of that, since true Christians do not try to mix their religion with politics but, rather, maintain strict neutrality?—John 17:16; James 1:27.

"Later general councils were frequently overshadowed by imperial church politics and the rivalry of the major patriarchal sees [areas controlled by a bishop or an archbishop]," adds *The Encyclopedia Americana.* Since such church councils were marked by ecclesiastical politics and rivalries, they bore no fruits of God's spirit such as love and peace. Rather, they were marred by fleshly works that included "hostilities, bickering, jealousy, . . . selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions." With reference to works of the flesh, the apostle Paul warned: "Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!" (Galatians 5:19-23, the Catholic *New American Bible*) Therefore, how can it be said that Christendom's church councils have been approved by God?

Shocking Atrocities!

H. G. Wells held that the spirit of Constantine dominated church affairs, and he observed: "The idea of stamping out all controversy and division, stamping out all thought, by imposing one dogmatic creed upon all believers, . . . is the idea of the single-handed man who feels that to work at all he must be free from opposition and criticism. The history of the Church under [Constantine's] influence becomes now therefore a history of the violent struggles that were bound to follow upon his sudden and rough summons to unanimity. From him the Church acquired the disposition to be authoritative and unquestioned, to develop a centralized organization and run parallel to the empire."

Charges of heresy proved to be a ruthless scheme to eliminate opponents who dared to defy Christendom's church councils. Any who expressed differing opinions or even attempted to present Scriptural proof refuting the dogmas and canons (church laws) of the councils were branded as heretics.

The determination to stamp out opposition led to dreadful atrocities. Most of those pronounced guilty of heresy against the popular dogma of the council were burned at the stake, suffering the agony of a slow death as a public spectacle—supposedly in the name of Christ!

For instance, the Council of Constance (1414-18) was called to end bickering over who was the legitimate pope and to deal with the heresies of Wycliffe and Hus. Thirty thousand horses are said to have carried people to Constance for this great event. During the council, John Hus was tried and condemned, then turned over to secular authorities and burned at the stake.

What About Doctrine?

It is true that all genuine Christians "speak in agreement." But this is not due to unyielding ecclesiastical pressure. Rather, it is because their beliefs and practices are soundly based on God's inspired Word. (1 Corinthians 1:10; Acts 17:10, 11; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Yet, how do church councils fare when we consider their doctrinal decisions?

Although church councils may be whitewashed as milestones of theology, in the minds of many they have been gravestones marking blows destroying pure Christian teachings. To illustrate: In 325 C.E. the Council of Nicaea introduced the doctrine of the Incarnate Christ, or God-man. This denial that Jesus was in fact a man became one of the most misleading doctrines of Christendom. (Compare 2 John 7.) Why, it has turned millions away from Jehovah God to a confusing Trinity! None of the councils held thereafter made any attempt to rectify this error. Yet the Trinity doctrine is clearly unscriptural, for Jesus said: "The Father is greater than I am." (John 14:28) Could God possibly approve of any council that obscured the truth about his identity and that of his Son?

DOCTRINE APPROVED	COUNCIL	DATE
Baptism of Infants	Carthage	253 C.E.
Celibacy	Trent	1545 C.E.
Divorce for Adultery*	Arles	314 C.E.
Divorce Forbidden	Trent	1545 C.E.
Hellfire	Lyons	1274 C.E.
	Florence	1573 C.E.
Images Rejected*	Constantinople	730 C.E.
Images Reintroduced	Constantinople	842 C.E.
	Nicaea	787 C.E.
Immaculate Conception	Avignon	1457 C.E.
Incarnation of Christ	Nicaea	325 C.E.
	Chalcedon	451 C.E.
No Pulpit Preaching by Laity	Constantinople	681 C.E.
Purgatory	Florence	1573 C.E.
	Trent	1545 C.E.
Trinity	Nicaea	325 C.E.

* Only these doctrines harmonize with the Bible

A dogma established by one council might be overturned by another. For example, as indicated on the accompanying chart, the use of images in worship was rejected during a council at Constantinople in 730 C.E. But their use was reintroduced by later council action. Of course, the Bible shows that making and using religious images is idolatrous and unchristian.—Exodus 20:4-6; 1 John 5:21.

As also noted in the chart, among the doctrines endorsed at Christendom's church councils were baptism of infants, imposed and required celibacy, purgatory, and hellfire. However, the Scriptures do not support infant baptism, such celibacy, and a fiery hell, nor do they make any reference to purgatory. (Matthew 28: 19, 20; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; Job 14:13) Since those desiring Jehovah's favor must worship him "with spirit and truth," how could he approve of councils fostering false doctrine?—John 4:23, 24.

The Jerusalem Gathering

Concerning religious councils, Otto Karrer wrote: "Except for the so-called Apostolic Council [of about 49 C.E.], whose decision is part of the tradition of the divine, apostolic proclamation, all councils are products of the post-apostolic church. They do not belong to the period of the foundation of the church."—*The Councils of the Church.*

Unquestionably, all the church councils of Christendom have differed greatly from the first-century gathering of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. No power-hungry clerics were then present to place heavy yokes upon the necks of others or to fuel the flames of execution stakes. Rather, the fruitage of God's spirit was manifested. The deliberations were spirit directed and in harmony with God's Word. And that pattern for resolving Scriptural questions is followed by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses today.

The letter that the apostles and elders of Jerusalem sent to fellow believers said in part: "The holy spirit and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to you, except these necessary things, to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication." (Acts 15:22-29) These were not laws of mere human origin but were requirements based on earlier decrees of the great Statute-Giver.—Genesis 9:3, 4; Deuteronomy 5:8-10, 18; Isaiah 33:22.

That first-century meeting of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem had Jehovah God's approval, for its decisions had his blessing, and it furthered the Kingdom-preaching work that brought many Gentiles into the Christian congregation. However, the facts of history give clear evidence that the church councils of Christendom have never been approved by God.

Insight on the News

AIDS —Paying the Price

The U.S. Federal Centers for Disease Control estimates that the average hospital cost per day for treating AIDS patients is $830 —double that of other patients. And experts estimate that the total cost of treating each patient could average over $100,000. This and an explosive growth in the number of AIDS victims seeking treatment have hospital and insurance officials concerned.

The American Hospital Association calls the rapid spread of AIDS a "time bomb" for the nation's hospitals, as dollar costs will soon reach thousands of millions annually. One life-insurance official warned: "I see it as potentially the biggest financial risk the health and life insurance business has ever faced in this country." Who will bear the enormous monetary burden?

Many AIDS victims are homosexuals and drug addicts, whose self-indulgent life-style brought the disease upon them. But they will not be the ones to pay financially. Instead, government and insurance officials indicate that policyholders and taxpayers will be forced to bear the burden through higher levies. Additionally, "education, public safety and capital needs are going to suffer," a *New York Post* editorial noted.

Formerly, AIDS victims who have contracted the disease because of their life-style may have scoffed at Bible morality to justify their form of self-gratification. How much pain to themselves and expense to others they could have avoided! However, it may not be too late for any such to turn now to the Bible's inspired moral standards that come from "the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk."—Isaiah 48:17.

Peace and Security—Soon?

A well-known inscription on the United Nations Plaza wall reads: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares. And their spears into pruning hooks: Nation shall not lift up sword against nation. Neither shall they learn war any more." Hopeful of bearing fruit toward the fulfillment of those prophetic words, the United Nations has declared 1986 to be the "International Year of Peace." Is there reason to believe that the UN will succeed in its avowed goal as the self-proclaimed caretaker of "international peace and security?"

Whatever contribution the UN may make toward the impending cry of "peace and security," any man-made peace surely rests on an explosive foundation. (1 Thessalonians 5:3) Military expenditures are now estimated to be approaching a trillion dollars annually worldwide. Since World War II, excluding conventional weapons, the cost of building nuclear arsenals has been estimated at three to four trillion dollars —hardly what would be expected at a time when the UN is calling for dedication to world peace and security! In fact, says Vernon Walters, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, "the United Nations has drifted away from its role as an institution for the resolution of conflict," dashing the hopes of those who believed that "the U.N. would do more than it has in the way of conflict resolution."

Nevertheless, the inscribed words quoted earlier from Isaiah 2:4 will find fulfillment—but not in 1986, or ever, through the efforts of a man-made organization. Rather, real peace and security will soon be brought about by a heavenly government, whose invisible leader truly is the "Prince of Peace."—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

Nuclear Retaliation —God's Vengeance?

Could the use of nuclear weapons be justified in response to a nuclear attack? Yes, says the Free Church of Scotland in a recent issue of their church magazine, *The Monthly Record*. The article stated that such *retaliation* could ultimately prove to be a "legitimate execution of the wrath of God" due to "the divine mandate to execute wrath against evil." The *Record* also claims that their witness includes proclamation of God's judgment on "that nation . . . which launches the first strike in a nuclear war."

That there will be a "day of vengeance on the part of our God" is certain. (Isaiah 61:1, 2) But God's vengeance against the militaristic nations will be expressed at the time and in the way that he chooses. Instead of an earthly nation's wrath, God's "own wrath" will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." How? By sending forth the "King of kings," the Lord Jesus Christ, 'to judge and carry on war in righteousness.' His heavenly Kingdom "will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms." —Revelation 11:18; 19:11-21; Daniel 2:44.

Declaring the Good News in Donegal

"FANTASTIC!" "It has been great." Those expressions were heard in a group of 120 people who had gone from Britain to Donegal, a county in northwestern Ireland. No, they were not tourists commenting on what they had seen. They were men, women, and children who had gone entirely at their own expense to share their hope for the future with the people of West Donegal.

Since there are only 19 of Jehovah's Witnesses among the 120,000 inhabitants of Donegal, most people in the area had not been visited by Witnesses for many years. Hence, this large group of visitors willingly took on the task of declaring the good news of God's Kingdom along the beautiful Atlantic coastline of Donegal.

The local Witnesses had done much to prepare for the arrival of the group. A few had traveled hundreds of miles mapping out the entire area, updating ordnance survey maps, and giving each road a reference number for easy location later. Then, the territory was divided into smaller sections, each with about 400 homes. Meanwhile in Britain, those who were to make the trip were busy with their own preparations—making sure that transportation, accommodations, and an ample supply of Bible literature would be available.

Departure day in Britain was Saturday, June 8, 1985. In the early hours of that morning, all assembled and set out for the airport. Soon, they were landing in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Then they dispersed to the ten minibuses that would be their means of transport during the next two weeks. After driving across Northern Ireland and enjoying the hospitality of the Londonderry Congregation, they crossed the border and separated, going to preassigned locations in three different parts of Donegal. How were they received?

The Local People React

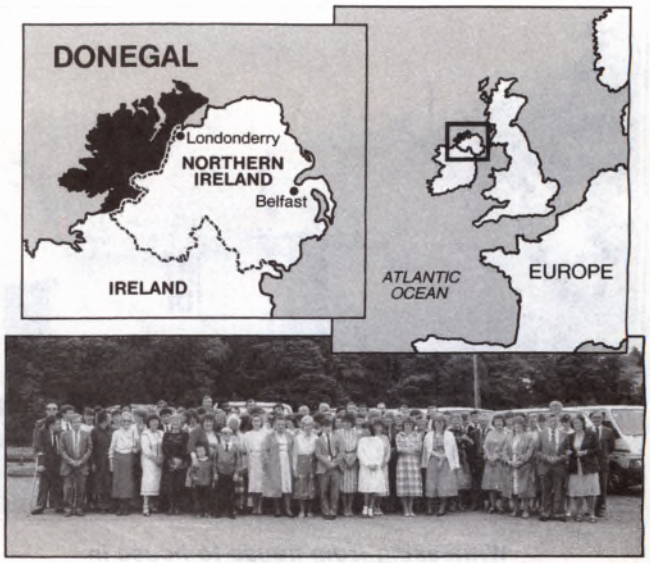
The people of Donegal are friendly and hospitable, and this made them easy to talk to. A number of them asked questions, and it was a delight to open the Bible and point out its clear answers. It was also good to be able to leave Bible literature with inquirers so that they could increase their understanding when the visitors left.

One lady living in a remote farmhouse invited two Witnesses into her home. She quickly agreed that world conditions were worsening and explained that many people in the area might be hesitant to invite strangers into their homes because of an upsurge of crime in what had been a quiet and peaceful corner of Ireland. Many older people had been beaten and robbed by gangs of criminals roaming about in the area. So why did she invite the Witnesses into her house? Because they looked "so genuine."

When this woman saw that Jesus' prophecy about the last days was being fulfilled, her eyes lit up, and they filled with tears when she heard of the resurrection hope. (Matthew, chapter 24; Luke, chapter 21) Her husband had died 20 years earlier. She happily accepted a copy

of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* and asked that someone try to call on her again.

This kind of experience was repeated time and time again. One young man expressed many doubts about the existence of God. "If God exists at all," he said, "why is there so much wickedness?" The visiting Witnesses showed that soon God would intervene in man's affairs and solve many of the problems that were troubling the young man. He asked them to call again to meet his parents. When the Witnesses did so, they left a copy of the *Live Forever* book so that the family could find answers to more of their questions.



They were delighted to declare the good news in Donegal

One young woman had suffered bereavement, for her four-year-old son had died some weeks earlier. She was very much encouraged by the information presented in the *Live Forever* book, especially by its explanation of the resurrection hope. Because of all the unhappiness caused by the death of her son, she had doubted whether there was a God at all. But when scriptures showing the condition and hope of the dead were read, her expression changed. Why? Because she realized that her son was at peace, sleeping in death with the possibility of a resurrection. —Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; John 5:28, 29.

Two of the visiting Witnesses called at a school, and the teacher invited them into a classroom filled with 30 young pupils. The teacher happily accepted a copy of the publication *My Book of Bible Stories* and told the class: "We are going to have a story from this book this afternoon." Later, as the group of Witnesses were having lunch nearby, some of the pupils came to say hello. Two other teachers came over to find out what was happening, and they, too, gladly accepted copies of the book.

Later that day, one of the Witnesses met an 11-year-old boy and asked him: "Have you ever heard of Jehovah's Witnesses?" "Yes," said the boy, "today at school." He then asked for a copy of the *Bible Stories* book. Later still, at a home where the mother had not accepted the *Live Forever* book, the young child of the house spoke about seeing the *Bible Stories* book at school. So the mother accepted a copy of that publication.

To People of Every Sort

At one home, the visiting Witnesses showed the illustrations in the *Live Forever* book to an older woman. The lady commented that what she really needed was a Bible. So the Witnesses were pleased to supply her with a copy of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.* Once she had a Bible, the lady was happy to have a copy of a Bible study publication too. She told her visitors that

Witnessing from house to house in northwestern Ireland

she had heard about the Witnesses' presence in the area and had prayed that they might call on her and bring a Bible. Now she felt that her prayer had been answered.

A young man in his 30's invited two Witnesses into his home. After a brief Scriptural discussion, he said: "You probably will not like it when you know who I am. I am a priest." The Witnesses said they would be happy to talk with him, whereupon the priest asked many questions about their beliefs. When he inquired about the use of the name Jehovah, the visitors were glad to provide him with a copy of the brochure *The Divine Name That Will Endure Forever*. He also accepted a copy of the *Live Forever* book, a publication sure to help him answer his many questions.

On another occasion, one of the Witnesses was approached by a young man who overheard her discussing the Bible with a hotel receptionist. He raised such questions as, "Why is the world in such a mess?" The Witness was very glad to share what she had learned from the Bible on this and related subjects. And who was the young man? A priest on vacation in the area.

Apart from the regular house-to-house preaching work, other opportunities were seized to talk to all sorts of people. At a place in the mountains, one of the minibuses stopped at the roadside to allow some passengers to change from town shoes to rubber boots for a trek across a peat bog and a talk with a group of men cutting and stacking the peat for winter fuel. Another group stopped at a scenic spot beside a mountain lake in the forest. Sleeping in a car nearby was a power-station worker enjoying the solitude during his lunch break. His peace was disturbed, but he enjoyed a very stimulating discussion and attended a meeting arranged for the group that evening.

Another man was driving along the road on his tractor when a Witness stopped him and asked if he had a few minutes to talk. He was eager to talk about the Bible, especially with regard to the "critical times" in which we live. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) His interest was very much enhanced when he was shown the illustrations in the *Live Forever* book. The man was delighted to hear that this publication could be used for family Bible discussions and said that he would immediately begin using it to instruct his six children.

The energetic visiting ministers of all ages, joined by the small group of local Witnesses in Donegal, have good reason to be delighted with their efforts. During the two weeks that the visitors were there, they spent 5,767 hours talking to others

about the Bible. They distributed 1,613 books and Bibles, along with 2,611 copies of the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. Especially appreciated by some householders was the Irish-language version of the publication *My Book of Bible Stories.*

No arrogant dogmatism or self-righteous feelings had brought the visiting Witnesses to Donegal. Rather, they wanted to share some good news with people who, because of living in a remote area, may not have had many opportunities to hear it. Commenting on an earlier trip of a similar nature, one local newspaper had called those taking part "swallows." Apparently, this was to suggest that they were there only for the summer and would soon fly away. But those "swallows," or others like them, will return to help honest-hearted people to get an accurate knowledge of the Bible's marvelous promises. In fact, some who took part in earlier witnessing trips have now settled permanently in Donegal.

"It has been the best trip so far." That was among the expressions of appreciation and gladness made by some who shared in the venture. They experienced the truthfulness of the Bible proverb: "The generous soul will itself be made fat, and the one freely watering others will himself also be freely watered." (Proverbs 11:25) Yes, it was a great blessing to participate in a special effort to declare the good news in Donegal. Can you share in similar rewarding service to Jehovah in your part of the world field now ripe for an abundant harvest?

Questions From Readers

■ **What did Jesus mean in saying that "the water" that he dispensed would become "a fountain of water bubbling up to impart everlasting life"?**

Jesus told a Samaritan woman: "Everyone drinking from this water [at Jacob's well] will get thirsty again. Whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty at all, but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water bubbling up to impart everlasting life."—John 4:13, 14.

Jesus here focused primarily on the spiritual benefits that come to a person who has received His words and has become a disciple of Christ. Such a person who has continued to take in accurate knowledge of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ and has acted upon this with faith would be in position to get everlasting life. (John 17:3) Jesus illustrated this process in the person's mind and heart as being like a fountain that bubbles up benefits, continually strengthening his faith and guiding his steps on the way to everlasting life.

While the emphasis at John 4:14 is on the benefits the individual himself receives, the Christian disciple who has an abundance of these spiritual waters naturally desires to share them unselfishly with others. He wants others to hear the Christian message and come to have within themselves a fountain bubbling up the same spiritual benefits leading to everlasting life. This sharing of the message with others seems to be the thought behind what Jesus said at John 7:37-39: "'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He that puts faith in me, just as the Scripture has said, "Out from his inmost part streams of living water will flow."' However, he said this concerning the spirit which those who put faith in him were about to receive."

Impelled by the activating force of God's spirit, received from Pentecost 33 C.E. onward, Jesus' apostles and disciples accomplished marvels in bringing living water to others. God's spirit also plays a vital role in equipping and motivating Jesus' disciples today, both the anointed remnant and the "great crowd" of "other sheep," to impart life-giving water to thirsting mankind, as they preach the good news of God's Kingdom worldwide. So the thirsty one must come to the one whom God is using to dispense the water of truth that leads to everlasting life.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20; John 7:37; 10:16; Revelation 7:9.

'I COULDN'T PUT IT DOWN'

ON THE Caribbean island of St. Lucia, a storekeeper in the capital city obtained a copy of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. The person from whom she received it writes:

"Before the week was out, she called me into her store three times as I would pass in front of the store. She had read portions of the book and wanted further explanations about hell, the soul, Mary's not being the mother of God, and so on. Although she was a busy storekeeper and not given to reading to any extent, she read the book in two weeks, and to quote her: 'I have never read so much in my life. Even when my head would hurt me from reading, I couldn't put the book down.'"