

The **Watchtower** September 1, 1987
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

Spiritism
How Viewed by God?

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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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Spiritism

Why the Growing Interest?

FRANS is a pillar of the local Protestant church. If there is church work to do, he is the first one to lend a helping hand. Wilhelmina is God fearing too. "You have to go to church," she says, and she goes. Esther likewise attends church regularly and does not let one day pass by without saying her prayers. All three have one more thing in common: They are also spirit mediums.

These three inhabitants of Suriname are not alone. Worldwide, there is a mushrooming interest in spiritism. Consider: In the United States alone, about 30 magazines with a combined circulation of over 10,000,000 are devoted to different fields of psychic phenomena. An estimated 2,000,000 people in England are interested in the same subject. A recent poll in the Netherlands showed that believers in supernatural occurrences are found among big-city dwellers, highly educated persons, and young people. Moreover, as inhabitants of Africa, Asia, and Latin America can testify, in numerous lands spiritism has become an integral part of daily life. No wonder authors John Weldon and Clifford Wilson conclude in their book *Occult Shock and Psychic Forces*: "A wide variety of commentators seem to feel we are in a time of unprecedented occult revival."

Yes, spiritism and the occult—in the forms of astrology, hypnotism, parapsychology, extra-sensory perception, mag-

ic, interpretation of dreams, and so forth—are attracting people from all walks of life. Why?

For one thing, some of Christendom's churches condone and even sanction spiritism. They suggest that coming in touch with spirits is just another way of drawing closer to God.

As an example, take Izaak Amelo, a 70-year-old merchant in Suriname. For seven years he was a respected church-council member and a well-known spirit medium at the same time. He recalls: "Every Saturday our entire church council gathered outside the village to consult the spirits. We continued the whole night. When the next morning came, the deacon kept an eye on his watch, and about five o'clock, he signaled us to stop. We then took a bath, changed clothes, and headed for church—just in time for Sunday morning worship. All those years the pastor never said one disapproving word."

After studying the link between spiritism and the churches in Suriname, Dutch Professor R. van Lier confirms that many



**Izaak Amelo
recalls
participation of
an entire church
council in
spiritistic
séances**

view spiritism as a "supplementary religion." In a study recently published by Leiden University, he also notes that spiritism is recognized as "a part of a broad religious constitution in which it stands alongside Christianity."

Spiritism

But you may wonder, 'Is acceptance of spiritism by churches of Christendom an assurance that it is approved by God? Will coming in touch with spirits draw you closer to him? What does the Bible actually say about spiritism?'

How Viewed by God?

"TO LIKE and dislike the same things, this is what makes a solid friendship," said the Roman historian Salust. Indeed, a friend is one with whom you have the most in common, a person you can trust. Likewise, God looks at us as friends and allows us to draw closer to him if we like and dislike the same things he does. This means that we are attracted to such qualities of God as love, peace, kindness, and goodness, and that we are making earnest efforts to imitate these traits in our life.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

To find out if spiritism is approved by God, we might first examine its fruitage. (Matthew 7:17, 18) Does it help us to develop appealing godly qualities? To find out, let us look at two real-life examples.

Divination, Harassment, and Death

Asamaja Amelia, a middle-aged woman in Suriname, was 17 years old when she first became involved in divination, a form of spiritism. Since her predictions came true and inquirers benefited from her advice, she was highly esteemed in her community. (Compare Acts 16:16.) But one thing troubled her.

"The spirits that spoke through me were kind to those who sought their help," she says, "but at the same time they made my life miserable. After each sitting, I felt beaten up and could hardly move. When

night fell, I hoped for some rest, but the spirits did not leave me alone. They kept disturbing me, talking to me and keeping me awake. And the things they said!" She sighs and looks down, shaking her head in aversion. "They loved to talk about sex and insisted on having relations with me. It was shocking. I was married. I did not want to be unfaithful and told them so. It did not help. Once an invisible force overpowered me, touched and squeezed my body, and even bit me. I felt wretched."

'Spirits encouraging sexual immorality? That is farfetched!' you may exclaim. Are those spirits really that debased?

"It's even worse!" says Izaak, mentioned earlier. "One night we were called to help a sick woman troubled by a spirit. The leader of the group—the medium of a stronger spirit—tried to chase the spirit away. For a whole day we pleaded for his spirit's help. We danced and played the drums, and gradually the woman improved. He ordered her spirit out, and this worked. 'We gained the victory,' beamed the leader. Then we sat down and relaxed."

Izaak's gesticulating arms rest for a moment while he pauses meaningfully. Then he continues: "For a while all looked well, but then a scream broke the silence. We rushed to the house where it came

from and saw the leader's wife. She was crying hysterically. Inside the house, we found her little daughter—her head facing backward! Some force had wrung and broken her neck, killing her like a chicken—apparently, the revenge of that ousted spirit. Sickening! Those spirits are sadistic murderers.”

Spiritism and “the Works of the Flesh”

Uncleanness, sexual immorality, and murder—as encountered in these two experiences with spiritism—are traits squarely opposed to God's personality. And that helps to identify who those spirits truly are. They may pretend to be messengers of God, but their immoral and murderous works give them away as imitators of God's enemy and history's first murderer, Satan the Devil. (John 8:44) He is their leader. They are his helpers—wicked angels, or demons.—Luke 11:15-20.

But you may ask: ‘Do these satanic traits show up in spiritism only on rare occasions? Could spiritism as a rule put me in contact with good spirits that would help bring me closer to God?’ No, the Bible lists the “practice of spiritism” with the other “works of the flesh” that are directly opposed to Christian qualities.—Galatians 5:19-21.

At Revelation 21:8 “those practicing spiritism” (“those conversing with demons,” *The Living Bible*) are put in the same category as “those without faith and those who are disgusting in their filth and murderers and fornicators . . . and idolaters and all the

liars.” How does Jehovah regard willful liars, fornicators, murderers, and practitioners of spiritism? He hates their deeds!—Proverbs 6:16-19.

Exploring spiritism, therefore, amounts to loving what Jehovah God hates. It is like rejecting Jehovah, being in Satan's camp, and siding with God's archenemy and his helpers. Now think of this: Would you want to be close to a person who takes sides with your enemies? Of course not. Rather, you would stay clear of that individual. Obviously, then, we can expect the same reaction from Jehovah God. Says Proverbs 15:29, “Jehovah is far away from the wicked ones.”—See also Psalm 5:4.

Spiritism Leads to Death

Dabbling in spiritism is also life threatening. God viewed it as a reason for capital punishment among his people in ancient Israel. (Leviticus 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:9-12) So it should come as no surprise that practitioners of spiritism “will not inherit God's kingdom.” (Galatians 5:20, 21) Instead, “their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire,” which denotes “the second death,” or eternal destruction. (Revelation 21:8) True, today some of Christendom's churches may



Asamaja Amelia relates: “The spirits . . . made my life miserable. . . . And the things they said!”

tolerate spiritism, but the Bible's viewpoint has not changed.

What if you have already taken the first steps on the road to spiritism? Then you will do well to stop immediately and make a turnabout. Follow the divinely inspired advice that God's prophet Isaiah gave to the Israelites of old. Their situation resembles that of people today who engage in unclean practices but think they are worshiping God at the same time. Hence, there are vital lessons in their experience. What lessons?

Heed Isaiah's Warning

A look at the first chapter of Isaiah shows that the Israelites had "left Jehovah" and had "turned backwards." (Verse 4) Although they had gone astray, they continued presenting sacrifices, holding religious observances, and offering prayers. But to no avail! Since they lacked an inward desire to please their Creator, Jehovah said: "I hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I am not listening." Those Israelites had revolted against him by taking up unclean practices, even to the point of 'filling their hands with bloodshed.'—Verses 11-15.

Under what circumstances would Jehovah accept them back? Note the requirements spelled out at Isaiah 1:16. He says: "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean." So if we take that counsel seriously, we will quit or refrain from unclean practices, including spiritism, one of "the works of the flesh." Since we know that the evil mind behind spiritism is that of Satan the Devil, we will develop a hatred for it.

Then we should remove all objects connected with spiritism. Izaak did so. He says: "One day I gathered all my spiritistic belongings in front of my house, grabbed an ax, and chopped them to pieces. My neighbor screamed that I would regret what I had done. While she was

screaming, I poured gasoline over the pieces and burned every single item. Nothing was left."

That was 28 years ago. Did Izaak regret his action? On the contrary. Today, he is serving Jehovah happily as a Christian minister in one of the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Isaiah 1:17 gives this further counsel: "Learn to do good." That requires studying Jehovah's Word, the Bible, so as to find out what is "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) And applying that newly found knowledge will lead to refreshing blessings. That is what Asamaja found out.

Despite bitter opposition from relatives and neighbors, Asamaja courageously studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and shortly thereafter broke with spiritism. Then she dedicated her life to Jehovah God and was baptized during an assembly. Now, some 12 years later, she says gratefully: "Since my baptism, I have not been troubled by spirits." And she recalls with a smile: "The night following my baptism, my sleep was so deep and undisturbed that I was late for the next morning's assembly program."

Lasting Benefits

Today, both Izaak and Asamaja can heartily say with the psalmist Asaph: "The drawing near to God is good for me." (Psalm 73:28) Indeed, drawing near to Jehovah has brought them physical and emotional benefits. But most of all, it has given them an inner peace and a close relationship with Jehovah.

Such blessings far outweigh the pain and struggle required to shake off the yoke of spiritism. Breaking away, though, can be an ordeal. Lintina van Geenen, a woman in Suriname, had that experience. Next, we will see how she wrestled for years but finally succeeded.

Shaking Off the Yoke of Spiritism

CALAMITY struck my family when I was a girl of 14. At that time, a vicious murderer began to eliminate my relatives. His first victims were my sister's children—all nine of them. Then he turned against her husband. Shortly thereafter, he killed one of my sisters too. Four more of my brothers and sisters followed, until only my mother and I were left. Oh, was I frightened!

During the years that followed, I ate, worked, and slept in daily dread. I wondered: 'When will he strike? And who will be next—Mother or I?'

My Background

To help you understand what happened afterward, let me tell you about my background. In 1917, I was born as a member of the Paramaccaner Bush-Negro tribe on an island in the Maroni River in Suriname. My forefathers were *den lowenengre*, or runaway slaves, who had fled into the jungle to eke out a hard but free life. Well, actually it was a life free from slavery to men but not free from the demons.

Everyday life in our village was ruled by demon and ancestor worship. To bind others with a spell and bring sickness and death upon their fellowman, some people

used *wisi*, black magic, or they enlisted the help of a *koenoe* (pronounced koo noo), a teaser. These teasers are believed to be persons who were mistreated by a family member. After their death, they supposedly return to the family to wreak vengeance. Actually, however, these teasers are debased demons that force people to worship them.

As a member of the Evangelical Brother Community, a Protestant church, I also learned something about God. Although I was left in the dark about how to worship him, the rain forest around me gave abundant proof that he is a good Provider. 'I want to worship a good God but not an evil spirit that causes suffering,' I reasoned. I knew that teasers enjoy torturing their unwilling victims until death.

Imagine how shocked I was to find out



In breaking free from spiritism, Lintina van Geenen learned that "the name of Jehovah is a strong tower"

that enemies of our family had sent a *koenoe* to us. I was 14 years old when he set out on his deadly mission. Twenty-six years later, only Mother and I were left.

The First Encounter

Mother was a hard worker. One day, while walking to her farm, she was knocked down and could not get up. The *koenoe* had chosen my mother. Her health weakened and she became paralyzed. She needed help—my help. But I was torn between love for her and fear of the demon that possessed her. During the attacks of the *koenoe*, however, poor Mother cried out in so much pain that I could not bear it any longer and laid her head in my lap for comfort. She then calmed down, but I felt “hands” squeezing my body.

When I wanted to flee, Mother cried again. So for her sake I stayed and endured my first shivering encounter with this killer. I was 40 years old.

Intensified Attacks

Mother died. Only three days later, I heard a friendly voice saying: “Lintina, Lintina, don’t you hear me? I’m calling you.” That was the beginning of a misery so great that I wished for a quick death.

First the demon troubled me only when I was going to sleep. As I was about to doze off, the voice would awaken me, talking about burial places and death. Losing sleep made me feel weak, although I continued caring for my children.

Later the demon stepped up his attacks. Several times I felt as if he were strangling me. Though I tried to run away, I could not because a heavy weight seemed to press on my body. I wanted to scream but could not produce a sound. Still, I refused to worship my attacker.

Upon recuperating after each attack, I resumed farming, growing cassava and sugarcane and selling them at the market

in a small coastal town. It became easier to make a living, but my worst sufferings were ahead.

Searching for a Cure

One day I heard the foreboding voice of the demon say, “I will make your belly swell like a ball.” Some time later, there was a hard lump in my belly that grew bigger until I looked pregnant. Really frightened, I wondered: ‘Can God, the Creator, help me to get rid of the *koenoe*? Can He send a good and stronger spirit to chase him away?’ To find out, I went to a *bonoeman*, a witch doctor.

The first witch doctor gave me *tapoes*, or amulets, but the swelling remained. Determined to find a cure, I traveled from one *bonoeman* to another—all to no avail. Between those visits, I continued farming to get funds to buy the beer, wine, champagne, and loincloths to pay the witch doctors. Many times they advised: “Kneel down for the *koenoe*. Beg him as your master. Worship him, and he will leave you.” But how could I kneel for a spirit that tortured me and wanted to kill me? I could not.

However, in desperation I did everything else that the witch doctors told me to do. One of them treated me for five months. He bathed me with herbs and pressed the juice of 11 different plants into my eyes—“to purify them,” he said as I screamed from pain. But at the end of the treatment, I went home penniless, abused, and sicker than ever.

“This Is Your End”

One of my sons, who lives in the Netherlands, sent me money to continue the search for help. So I went to a medical doctor in the capital. After an examination, he said: “I cannot help you. Go and see a *bonoeman*.” So I tried a spirit medium of East Indian origin—but again no

**Suriname
hinterland
where many
people are
captive to
spiritism**



help. I headed home but got only as far as the capital, where I reached the house of one of my daughters. There I collapsed—broke and sick. In vain, I had spent 17 years and 15,000 guilders (\$8,300, U.S.) searching for a cure. I was 57 years old.

Next, the demon threatened: "I'm finished with you. This is your end."

"But you are not God, you are not Jesus," I cried.

"Even God cannot stop me," the demon answered. "Your days are numbered."

The Final Struggle

Some weeks passed. Meena, a neighbor lady who was a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses, asked my daughter about my condition and said: "Your mother can be helped but only with the Bible." Overhearing the conversation, I walked toward them. Before I reached them, however, I was thrown to the ground. Meena hurriedly came and said: "That demon will not leave you alone. The only one that can help you is Jehovah, no one else." Then she prayed with me to Jehovah God and began to visit me. But the more she visited me,

the fiercer were the demon's attacks. During the night, my body shook so violently that no one in the house could sleep. I stopped eating and had moments when I completely lost my mind.

My condition became so serious that my sons came from the interior to take me back to my village to die. Being too weak to travel, I refused. But feeling death approaching, I called the Witness to say farewell. Meena explained from the Bible that even if I died, there is the resurrection hope.

"Resurrection? What do you mean?"

"God can raise you to life in Paradise," she answered. A ray of hope!

But that very night the demon possessed me. In a trance, I seemed to see the *koenoe* followed by a crowd of people. He ridiculed: "She thinks she is going to get a resurrection." Then the crowd laughed and laughed. But then I did something I had never done before. I called: "Jehovah! Jehovah!" That is all I knew to say. And the demon left!

My sons came again and begged: "Mama, don't die in the city. Let us take

you to your village." I refused, for I wanted to learn more about Jehovah. "All right, perhaps I will still die," I told them, "but I will at least have served the Creator."

Like a Strong Tower

Meena and other Witnesses continued visiting me. They taught me to pray to Jehovah. Among other things, they told me about the issue between Jehovah and Satan and how the Devil brought suffering upon Job to get him to renounce God. Learning these things strengthened my conviction never to worship the demon. The Witnesses read a scripture that became dear to me: "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Into it the righteous runs and is given protection."—Proverbs 18:10.

Slowly my strength came back. When my son returned, I told him to wait outside. I dressed and tucked a blouse into my skirt to show that the swelling was almost gone. Then I walked outside.

"Is this Mama Lintina?" my son blurted out.

"Yes, it is—thanks to Jehovah, my God!"

Taking My Stand

From the moment I could walk a bit, I went to the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. There I received so much encouragement from the friends that I never stopped attending meetings. A few months later, I accompanied the Witnesses in the public preaching work. Shortly thereafter, I was baptized and became a servant of Jehovah, my loving Rescuer. I was 58 years old.

However, something remained to be done. Years earlier, back in my hut in the village, I had built an altar on which to offer sacrifices to my ancestors. To be spiritually clean, I had to destroy it. I asked Jehovah for help, since my action could cause an uproar among the villagers.

When I reached my hut and opened the door, someone yelled: "*Pingos!*" (Wild hogs!) A herd was crossing the island and jumping into the river to swim across. Immediately, both young and old deserted the village for this easy catch. Thrilled, I knelt and thanked Jehovah for this development. Quickly, I dragged the altar outside, poured kerosene over it and set it on fire. The altar was gone before the crowd returned. Of course, they found out, but nothing could be done about it anymore. Thus, with peace of mind, I returned to the capital.

From Misery to Happiness

More blessings came my way. My son in the Netherlands did not believe the stories he had heard about me and boarded a plane for Suriname to see for himself. He was so happy to see me healthy that he bought a fine house for me in the capital, where I now live. What a change I have experienced—from a penniless slave of demons to a well-cared-for servant of Jehovah!

Eleven years after my baptism, I have even more reason to be grateful. Moved by the many blessings I received, three of my children and one son-in-law also became interested in Bible truth and eventually dedicated their lives to Jehovah God. And time and again, I have related my experience with demonism when brothers and sisters have taken me along to see their Bible students who lack the courage to break free from the demons. In that way even those dreadful years have been of some use in the Kingdom-preaching activity.

I lack sufficient words to express my gratitude to Jehovah, my God. Surely, I have seen his almighty hand in my behalf. Indeed, Jehovah has been good to me! —Compare Psalm 18:17-19.

Kingdom Proclaimers Report

Bible Truth Frees From Spiritism

JEHOVAH'S view of spiritism was well expressed to Israel in these words: "You must not look for omens, and you must not practice magic." (Leviticus 19:26) But how can one who is involved in magic and spiritism be liberated from the power of the demons? Jesus said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32) This was proved true, as seen in the following experience of a Witness in France.

"When I moved to my new home, I had just settled in when a friendly neighbor came around and offered to cast my horoscope. I immediately decided to have nothing more to do with her, which was no small undertaking, for she really was of a very sociable nature.

"In November 1980 I fell sick,

and around she came to offer help. I came to appreciate her kindheartedness. I was all the more drawn to her when she confided that she would often wake up choking from anguish. I then realized that she was not as happy as I had imagined. But how could this problem of spiritism be tackled? Feeling that I could wait no longer, I resolved to talk to her about the truth.

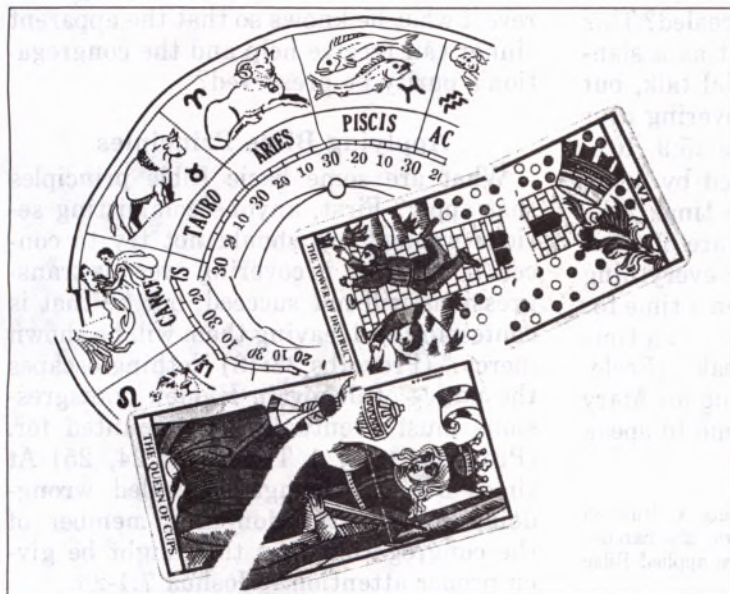
"We started out discussing the financial problems peculiar to us single women. She then said: 'I have a solution. I make money reading tarot cards.' So I took out my Bible and showed her how dangerous it was to get involved with powerful evil forces.

"This set off a serious discussion on spiritism. She explained

that everything she foretold came to pass. I tried to help her reason things out. I went on to show her Moses' words at Deuteronomy 18:10, 11: 'There should not be found in you anyone who . . . employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who looks for omens . . . or anyone who consults a spirit medium or a professional foreteller of events or anyone who inquires of the dead.' As I was leaving, she said: 'To think I believed I'd found the solution to my problems.' How these words encouraged me, for here she was, after just one discussion, talking about spiritism in the past tense! To me it meant that deep down she had really grasped the point.

"Having an insatiable appetite for spiritual food, she would read the Bible until three or four o'clock in the morning. To start with, we had two studies a week. She attended meetings and made rapid progress. Of course, we thoroughly delved into the subject of spiritism, using the Bible and the Watch Tower publications, and she made a personal decision to burn everything she possessed pertaining to demonism.

"The lady persevered and was soon out preaching the 'good news' to others. From time to time she received telephone calls from ex-customers, and after explaining that she had given up her spiritistic activities, she invited them over to hear about something much more interesting. She was baptized and now is our sister."



“A Time to Speak” —When?

MARY works as a medical assistant at a hospital. One requirement she has to abide by in her work is confidentiality. She must keep documents and information pertaining to her work from going to unauthorized persons. Law codes in her state also regulate the disclosure of confidential information on patients.

One day Mary faced a dilemma. In processing medical records, she came upon information indicating that a patient, a fellow Christian, had submitted to an abortion. Did she have a Scriptural responsibility to expose this information to elders in the congregation, even though it might lead to her losing her job, to her being sued, or to her employer's having legal problems? Or would Proverbs 11:13 justify keeping the matter concealed? This reads: “The one walking about as a slanderer is uncovering confidential talk, but the one faithful in spirit is covering over a matter.”—Compare Proverbs 25:9, 10.

Situations like this are faced by Jehovah's Witnesses from time to time. Like Mary, they become acutely aware of what King Solomon observed: “For everything there is an appointed time, even a time for every affair under the heavens: . . . a time to keep quiet and a time to speak.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7) Was this the time for Mary to keep quiet, or was it the time to speak about what she had learned?*

* Mary is a hypothetical person facing a situation that some Christians have faced. The way she handles the situation represents how some have applied Bible principles in similar circumstances.

Circumstances can vary greatly. Hence, it would be impossible to set forth a standard procedure to be followed in every case, as if everyone should handle matters the way Mary did. Indeed, each Christian, if ever faced with a situation of this nature, must be prepared to weigh all the factors involved and reach a decision that takes into consideration Bible principles as well as any legal implications and that will leave him or her with a clear conscience before Jehovah. (1 Timothy 1:5, 19) When sins are minor and due to human imperfection, the principle applies: “Love covers a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:8) But when there seems to be serious wrongdoing, should a loyal Christian out of love of God and his fellow Christian reveal what he knows so that the apparent sinner can receive help and the congregation's purity be preserved?

Applying Bible Principles

What are some basic Bible principles that apply? First, anyone committing serious wrongdoing should not try to conceal it. “He that is covering over his transgressions will not succeed, but he that is confessing and leaving them will be shown mercy.” (Proverbs 28:13) Nothing escapes the notice of Jehovah. Hidden transgressions must eventually be accounted for. (Proverbs 15:3; 1 Timothy 5:24, 25) At times Jehovah brings concealed wrongdoing to the attention of a member of the congregation that this might be given proper attention.—Joshua 7:1-26.

Another Bible guideline appears at Leviticus 5:1: "Now in case a soul sins in that he has heard public cursing and he is a witness or he has seen it or has come to know of it, if he does not report it, then he must answer for his error." This "public cursing" was not profanity or blasphemy. Rather, it often occurred when someone who had been wronged demanded that any potential witnesses help him to get justice, while calling down curses—likely from Jehovah—on the one, perhaps not yet identified, who had wronged him. It was a form of putting others under oath. Any witnesses of the wrong would know who had suffered an injustice and would have a responsibility to come forward to establish guilt. Otherwise, they would have to 'answer for their error' before Jehovah.*

This command from the Highest Level of authority in the universe put the responsibility upon each Israelite to report to the judges any serious wrongdoing that he observed so that the matter might be handled. While Christians are not strictly under the Mosaic Law, its principles still apply in the Christian congregation. Hence, there may be times when a Christian is obligated to bring a matter to the attention of the elders. True, it is illegal in many countries to disclose to unauthorized ones what is found in private records. But if a Christian feels, after prayerful consideration, that he is facing a situation where the law of God required

* In their *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Keil and Delitzsch state that a person would be guilty of error or sin if he "knew of another's crime, whether he had seen it, or had come to the certain knowledge of it in any other way, and was therefore qualified to appear in court as a witness for the conviction of the criminal, neglected to do so, and did not state what he had seen or learned, when he heard the solemn adjuration of the judge at the public investigation of the crime, by which all persons present, who knew anything of the matter, were urged to come forward as witnesses."

him to report what he knew despite the demands of lesser authorities, then that is a responsibility he accepts before Jehovah. There are times when a Christian "must obey God as ruler rather than men." —Acts 5:29.

While oaths or solemn promises should never be taken lightly, there may be times when promises required by men are in conflict with the requirement that we render exclusive devotion to our God. When someone commits a serious sin, he, in effect, comes under a 'public curse' from the One wronged, Jehovah God. (Deuteronomy 27:26; Proverbs 3:33) All who become part of the Christian congregation put themselves under "oath" to keep the congregation clean, both by what they do personally and by the way they help others to remain clean.

Personal Responsibility

These are some of the Bible principles Mary likely considered in making her personal decision. Wisdom dictated that she should not act quickly, without weighing matters very carefully. The Bible counsels: "Do not become a witness against your fellowman without grounds. Then you would have to be foolish with your lips." (Proverbs 24:28) To establish a matter conclusively, the testimony of at least two eyewitnesses is needed. (Deuteronomy 19:15) If Mary had seen only a brief mention of abortion, she might have decided conscientiously that the evidence of any guilt was so inconclusive that she should not proceed further. There could have been a mistake in billing, or in some other way the records may not have properly reflected the situation.

In this instance, however, Mary had some other significant information. For example, she knew that the sister had paid the bill, apparently acknowledging that she had received the service specified.

Also, she knew personally that the sister was single, thus raising the possibility of fornication. Mary felt a desire lovingly to help one who may have erred and to protect the cleanness of Jehovah's organization, remembering Proverbs 14:25: "A true witness is delivering souls, but a deceitful one launches forth mere lies."

Mary was somewhat apprehensive about the legal aspects but felt that in this situation Bible principles should carry more weight than the requirement that she protect the privacy of the medical records. Surely the sister would not want to become resentful and try to retaliate by making trouble for her, she reasoned. So when Mary analyzed all the facts available to her, she decided conscientiously that this was a time to "speak," not to "keep quiet."

Now Mary faced an additional question: To whom should she speak, and how could she do so discreetly? She could go directly to the elders, but she decided to go first privately to the sister. This was a loving approach. Mary reasoned that this one under some suspicion might welcome the opportunity to clarify matters or, if guilty, confirm the suspicion. If the sister had already spoken to the elders about the matter, likely she would say so, and Mary would not need to pursue matters further. Mary reasoned that if the sister had submitted to an abortion and had not confessed to this serious transgression of God's law, she would encourage her to do this. Then the elders could help her in accord with James 5:13-20. Happily, this is how matters worked out. Mary found that the sister had submitted to an abortion under much pressure and because of being spiritually weak. Shame and fear had moved her to conceal her sin, but she was glad to get help from the elders toward spiritual recovery.

If Mary had reported first to the body of elders, they would have been faced with a similar decision. How would they handle confidential information coming into their possession? They would have had to make a decision based on what they felt Jehovah and his Word required of them as shepherds of the flock. If the report involved a baptized Christian who was actively associated with the congregation, they would have had to weigh the evidence as did Mary in determining if they should proceed further. If they decided that there was a strong possibility that a condition of "leaven" existed in the congregation, they might have chosen to assign a judicial committee to look into the matter. (Galatians 5:9, 10) If the one under suspicion had, in effect, resigned from being a member, not having attended any meetings for some time and not identifying herself as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, they might choose to let the matter rest until such time as she did begin to identify herself again as a Witness.

Thinking Ahead

Employers have a right to expect that their Christian employees will 'exhibit good fidelity to the full,' including observing rules on confidentiality. (Titus 2:9, 10) If an oath is taken, it should not be taken lightly. An oath makes a promise more solemn and binding. (Psalm 24:4) And where the law reinforces a requirement on confidentiality, the matter becomes still more serious. Hence, before a Christian takes an oath or puts himself under a confidentiality restriction, whether in connection with employment or otherwise, it would be wise to determine to the extent possible what problems this may produce because of any conflict with Bible requirements. How will one handle matters if a brother or a sister becomes a client? Usually such jobs as working with doctors,



It is the right and loving course to encourage an erring Witness to speak with the elders, confident that they will handle the problem in a kind and understanding way

hospitals, courts, and lawyers are the type of employment in which a problem could develop. We cannot ignore Caesar's law or the seriousness of an oath, but Jehovah's law is supreme.

Anticipating the problem, some brothers who are lawyers, doctors, accountants, and so forth, have prepared guidelines in writing and have asked brothers who may consult them to read these over before revealing anything confidential. Thus an understanding is required in advance that if serious wrongdoing comes to light, the wrongdoer would be encouraged to go to the elders in his congregation about the matter. It would be understood that if he did not do so, the counselor would feel an obligation to go to the elders himself.

There may be occasions when a faithful servant of God is motivated by his personal convictions, based on his knowledge of God's Word, to strain or even breach the requirements of confidentiality because of the superior demands of divine law. Courage and discretion would be needed. The objective would not be to spy on another's freedom but to help erring ones and to keep the Christian congregation clean. Minor transgressions due to sin should be overlooked. Here, "love covers a multitude of sins," and we should forgive "up to seventy-seven times." (Matthew 18: 21, 22) This is the "time to keep quiet." But when there is an attempt to conceal major sins, this may be the "time to speak."



Jesus Miraculously Feeds Thousands

THE 12 apostles have enjoyed a remarkable preaching tour throughout Galilee. Now, shortly after John's execution, they return to Jesus and relate their wonderful experiences. Seeing that they are tired and that so many people are coming and going that they don't even have time to eat, Jesus says: 'Let us go off by ourselves to a lonely place where you can rest up.'

Boarding their boat, probably near Capernaum, they head for an out-of-the-way place, evidently east of the Jordan beyond Bethsaida. Many people, however, see them leave, and others learn about it. These all run ahead along the shore, and when the boat lands, they are there to meet them.

Getting out of the boat and seeing the great crowd, Jesus is moved with pity because the people are as sheep without a shepherd. So he heals their sick and begins teaching them many things.

Quickly the time passes, and Jesus' disciples come to him and say: "The

place is isolated, and the hour is already late. Send them away, that they may go off into the countryside and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat."

However, in reply Jesus says: "You give them something to eat." Then, since Jesus already knew what he was going to do, he tested Philip by asking him: "Where shall we buy loaves for these to eat?"

From Philip's viewpoint the situation is impossible. Why, there are about 5,000

men, and probably well over 10,000 people counting also women and children! "Two hundred denarii [a denarius was then a day's wage] worth of loaves is not enough for them, so that each one may get a little," Philip responds.

Perhaps to show the impossibility of feeding so many, Andrew volunteers: "Here is a little boy that has five barley loaves and two small fishes," adding: "But what are these among so many?"

Since it is springtime, just before the Passover of 32 C.E., there is a lot of green grass. So Jesus has his disciples tell the people to recline on the grass in groups of 50 and of a 100. He takes the five loaves and two fishes, looks to

heaven, and says a blessing. Then he begins breaking the loaves and dividing up the fishes. He gives these to his disciples, who, in turn, distribute them to the people. Amazingly, all the people eat until they have had enough!

Afterward Jesus tells his disciples: "Gather together the fragments that remain over, so that nothing is wasted." When they do, they fill 12 baskets with the leftovers from what they have eaten! **Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13.**

♦ Why does Jesus seek a place of privacy for his apostles?

♦ Where does Jesus take his disciples, and why does their need for rest go unfulfilled?

♦ When it becomes late, what do the disciples urge, but how does Jesus care for the people?



On Guard Against “Peace and Security” as Devised by Nations

“Whenever it is that they are saying:
‘Peace and security!’”—1 THESSALONIANS 5:3.

NEVER has the whole world of mankind been as insecure as it is today. There is a feeling of dread of a third world war involving highly militarized nations possessing what now appears to be the ultimate of weapons—the nuclear bomb. The nations’ ability to put the very nucleus of atoms to work in the pursuit of war has carried them about as far as they can go in mass human slaughter. Hence, peace has become the better part of wisdom.

² Yes, indeed, for in our era a third world war using such weapons would signify nothing less than world suicide, with people exploded into virtual nothingness or perishing from the aftereffects of a nu-

1, 2. (a) Why has peace become the better part of wisdom? (b) Thus, what will opposed political systems agree upon?

clear holocaust. Keen-sighted politicians and military commanders painfully sense that fact. They do not want to become responsible for such a global disaster. Thus, diametrically opposed political systems will find it convenient to come to an accord, yes, to follow the worldly-wise philosophy of “live and let live.”

³ Nevertheless, the nations do not fully trust one another. As a precaution, they maintain their military establishments at full strength. Hence, will it be because of a sincere, genuine love for one another as members of the same human family that rulers will unite in making the proclama-

3. For what reason will the nations proclaim “Peace and security?”

*No doubt the UN will be in the
forefront of the coming proclamation
of “Peace and security!”*



tion of "Peace and security" for all the world of humankind? No, but it will be to allay the justifiable fears of the people.—1 Thessalonians 5:3.

Clergy and Public Reaction to the Coming Proclamation

⁴ When this proclamation is finally made, the public reaction to it should be favorable all around the earth. No doubt the world's religious leaders, including the clergymen of Christendom, Catholic and Protestant, will hail this international gesture. In whichever way the wind blows, the clergy go in order to remain in popular favor and to have political assistance and consideration.

⁵ However, the clergy's backing of the loudly proclaimed political arrangement does not mean that the God of the universe, including our earth, will support it. In their religious edifices, the clergy may offer up long and loud prayers in the hearing of their religious patronizers and ask the divine blessing upon the measures taken by the political element for international peace and security. But are all such solemn prayers, to which listening congregations append a vigorous "Amen," acceptable to the God of this universe? Can he be at peace with a religiously divided world, the prayers of which for peace and security are modeled according to the disagreeing religious sects and denominations?

⁶ Nowhere are the claims for God's backing louder than in the nations of Christendom. But the God of the universe is not the

4, 5. (a) What public reaction to the coming proclamation may we expect? (b) Despite the clergy's backing of the coming proclamation, what questions arise as to whether God will support it?

6, 7. (a) Like the Jews of ancient times, what course of action has Christendom taken? (b) What will result from clergy support of the proclamation of "Peace and security"?

One reigning over Christendom. She has taken a course of action similar to that of the ancient Israelites. When they became discontented with Jehovah's arrangement for their government and got to thinking that the political setup of the pagan nations around them was preferable, they went to Jehovah's prophet Samuel and asked him to set up a king over them. Samuel was highly displeased and grieved at this. No less so was the God of whom he was the prophet.

⁷ Jehovah rightly felt hurt at this request for a departure from his theocratic setup over Israel. As he said to his prophet Samuel: "It is not you whom they have rejected, but it is I whom they have rejected from being king over them." (1 Samuel 8:4-9) This prefigured the course that Christendom has taken in this 20th century. So the clergy's future hailing of the proclamation of "Peace and security" will have no favorable result, no divine blessing.

Throwing Mankind Off Guard

⁸ The United Nations may boast of 159 members today, embracing virtually all nations. No doubt in due time the United Nations will be at the forefront with regard to the coming proclamation of "Peace and security!" Sad to say, that world organization is throwing the billions of mankind off guard. Why so? Because such peace, even though backed by all the religious organizations of this world, including those of Christendom, does not mean peace with the Creator of the universe, who has the power to give life and to take it away according to his determination of vital matters in the heavens and on the earth.

8. What role will the United Nations likely play in the coming proclamation, and why is this organization throwing mankind off guard?

⁹ In the prophecy of Isaiah, the Creator explicitly says: "The heavens are my throne, and the earth is my footstool." (Isaiah 66:1) The nations down here on his footstool are not adorning it by their United Nations organization. They are striving politically to maintain global peace and security and thereby keep the United Nations in existence. Jehovah's dedicated Witnesses on earth cannot join with the world in depending upon the man-made measures that are being undertaken for the peace and security of the worldly nations. They take to heart the words of James 4:4: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God."

¹⁰ Although not actively opposing the peace and security devised by nations, Jehovah's Witnesses cannot recommend it to the millions of people who are seeking a place of safety when the world's greatest trouble erupts and puts an end to this system of things. (Matthew 24:21) For it is God's new system of things that will bring in worldwide security under the "Prince of Peace," Jesus Christ.—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

¹¹ History bears testimony to the failure of man-made schemes for peace. We recall that at the close of World War I in 1918, the League of Nations was proposed as a preventive of world war. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America hailed the proposal and said: "Such a League is not a mere political expedient; it is rather the political expression of the Kingdom of God on earth." But did that so-called political expression of God's

earthly kingdom bring lasting peace and security for the earth?

¹² Like the symbolic "scarlet-colored wild beast" of Revelation chapter 17, upon which the old harlot, "Babylon the Great," has seated herself, the League of Nations went into "the abyss" at the outbreak of World War II in 1939. This obliged its harlot rider to hop off. After the close of World War II in 1945, the United Nations was set up as the successor to the ill-fated League of Nations. It has far more members than the League had, so it should be a stronger organization and deserving of more confidence on the part of the world of mankind. Thus it was in 1945 that the symbolic "scarlet-colored wild beast" ascended "out of the abyss," and the symbolic harlot, "Babylon the Great," again climbed onto its back, where she shamelessly sits to this day. (Revelation 17:3, 5, 8) But not for long now, according to what Revelation 17:16-18:24 foretells. Why not?

¹³ The United Nations is actually a worldly confederacy against Jehovah God and his dedicated Witnesses on earth. It is really a conspiracy, with the worldly nations getting their heads together and scheming up what they may do against the visible organization of Jehovah God on earth. During this "conclusion of the system of things," it was foreshadowed by the conspiracy referred to at Isaiah 8:12.—Matthew 24:3.

Look to Jehovah for Peace and Security

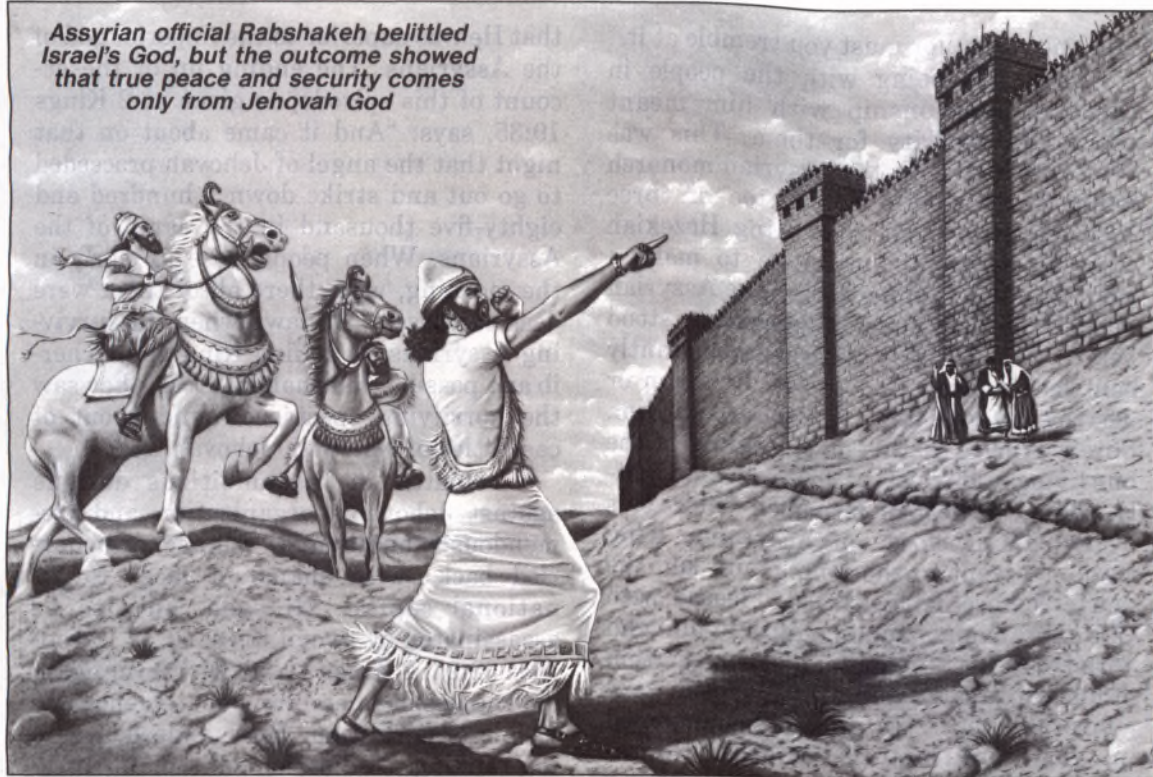
¹⁴ Before Isaiah's time the nation of the

12. (a) How has Revelation 17:8 been fulfilled?
(b) Who continues her ride on the back of the "scarlet-colored wild beast," and for how long?
13. (a) What is the United Nations? (b) How was it long ago foreshadowed?
14. Why did the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel enter into a confederacy with Syria, and what question confronted the kingdom of Judah?

9, 10. What is the stand of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding the "Peace and security" as devised by nations, and why so?

11. How did the clergy view the proposal to set up the League of Nations after World War I?

Assyrian official Rabshakeh belittled Israel's God, but the outcome showed that true peace and security comes only from Jehovah God



12 tribes of Israel had split up over the issue of kingship. This was after the glorious reign of King Solomon. The seceding ten tribes to the north established what came to be called the kingdom of Israel, with its capital at Samaria. The two remaining tribes, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, remained loyal to the royal dynasty of King David at the capital city of Jerusalem. The ten-tribe kingdom of Israel turned in hostility against the two-tribe kingdom of Judah. In time, the kingdom of Israel leagued up with the kingdom of Syria, which had its capital at Damascus. The idea was to overthrow the kingdom of Judah and bring it into subjection. Should the kingdom of Judah therefore enter into a confederacy with another strong nation in order to withstand the onslaught of the nation of Israel confederated with the pagan nation of Syria?—Isaiah 7:3-6.

¹⁵ There were those in the small kingdom of Judah that lost faith in the national God Jehovah. These favored a confederacy, or conspiracy, with a mighty pagan kingdom of this world. Advocating such an unfaithful yoking of Jehovah's kingdom of Judah with a kingdom of the ungodly world, some were saying, "A conspiracy!" to undecided ones in the kingdom of Judah. Thus they betrayed their lack of faith and confidence in the God whose temple was in Jerusalem. The prophet Isaiah was inspired to speak against such a conspiracy, saying in chapter 8, verse 12: "You men must not say, 'A conspiracy!' respecting all that of which this people keep saying, 'A conspiracy!' and the object of their fear you men

15. (a) What did some people in the kingdom of Judah favor, and what did this attitude betray? (b) How did the prophet Isaiah speak out against such an attitude?

must not fear, nor must you tremble at it.”

¹⁶ Jehovah's being with the people in covenant relationship with him meant peace and security for them. This was demonstrated when the Assyrian monarch Sennacherib sent a committee of three high officers to call upon King Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem to make a capitulation to Sennacherib. The Assyrian official and spokesman, Rabshakeh, stood before the walls of Jerusalem and blatantly belittled Jehovah God so as to weaken or destroy the confidence of the Jews in Him. Sorely grieved at this downgrading of the one living and true God Jehovah and rightly feeling the peril of Jerusalem before this overwhelming horde of Assyrians, King Hezekiah went to the temple and laid the matter before Jehovah God. Pleased with this expression of sublime faith in him and with this resort to him for a demonstration of his universal sovereignty, Jehovah gave a favorable reply. His prophet Isaiah joined in with confirmatory remarks. No response at all was given to the intimidating Assyrian Rabshakeh, just as King Hezekiah had ordered.—2 Kings 18:17-36; 19: 14-34.

¹⁷ Doubtless greatly amazed at this, Rabshakeh returned to the camp of Sennacherib, who was then fighting against Libnah. (2 Kings 19:8) After hearing Rabshakeh's report, Sennacherib sent threatening letters to Hezekiah, warning: “Do not let your God in whom you are trusting deceive you, saying: ‘Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’” (2 Kings 19:9, 10) After nightfall, Jehovah God did his own talking back to the Assyrian mouthpiece, Rabshakeh, and He himself answered Sennacherib's threatening letters to prove

16, 17. What meant true peace and security for Jehovah's ancient people, and how was this demonstrated when Assyrian King Sennacherib threatened Jerusalem?

that He was superior to the imperial god of the Assyrians. The ending up of the account of this episode, as given at 2 Kings 19:35, says: “And it came about on that night that the angel of Jehovah proceeded to go out and strike down a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians. When people rose up early in the morning, why, there all of them were dead carcasses.” At dawn when the surviving Assyrians, including King Sennacherib and possibly Rabshakeh, arose, they saw the horrifying spectacle round about of casualties of war with Jehovah God.

¹⁸ Defeated in his ambitious designs against Jehovah's organization and tremendously humiliated, Sennacherib hurried back “with shame of face” to his national capital, Nineveh, only to be assassinated by two of his sons. (2 Chronicles 32:21; 2 Kings 19:36, 37) Never again did the Assyrian empire menace Jehovah's visible organization. Here, indeed, was a top-ranking vindication of the universal sovereignty of the Most High God. Moreover, Jerusalem's safekeeping is an excellent example showing to whom Jehovah's Witnesses of today should in full confi-

18. (a) What was the outcome with regard to the ambitious Sennacherib? (b) What example should this historical account furnish to Jehovah's Witnesses of today?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What will likely be the public reaction to the proclamation of “Peace and security”?
- ☐ What was foreshadowed by the “conspiracy” of Isaiah 8:12?
- ☐ How is the UN throwing mankind off guard?
- ☐ Why will Jehovah's Witnesses not be caught off guard?

dence look for continual, imperturbable peace and security—not a political conspiracy but Jehovah God.

Keeping on Guard

¹⁹ To help you keep on guard, the Watch Tower Society will continue issuing in its publications timely warnings to the reading public, so that you will not be caught off guard by the coming pretentious proclamation “Peace and security,” as devised by the nations of this old system of things.

²⁰ Jehovah’s dedicated Witnesses can by no means promote reliance on the “Peace and security” confidently to be proclaimed

19. What will the Watch Tower Society keep on doing?

20. Why will Jehovah’s Witnesses by no means promote reliance on the coming “Peace and security,” and so now is the time for what?

by the worldly nations; nor can they congratulate the devisers of such international “Peace and security” and, at the same time, have Jehovah God with them. They guard against leaguings up with the nations of this old system of things. They unflinchingly remind themselves that a new “nation,” separate and distinct from the League of Nations, was brought to birth in the postwar year of 1919. This new “nation” continues to grow and expand in all the earth, just as foretold at Isaiah 60:22: “The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time.” Yes, now is the time for all to be on guard against the forthcoming “Peace and security” as devised by nations.

Trust in Jehovah

—Not in “a Conspiracy!”

DURING World War I, the ranks of Jehovah’s people had been considerably reduced by outright apostasies. Persecution incited by religious enemies also raged against them. Their Brooklyn, New York, headquarters was shut down. Furthermore, they were without the assistance of the Society’s president, the secretary-treasurer, the office manager, an editorial staff writer, and four other representatives of the Society—all of whom were imprisoned in the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia. It appeared as if the end had come for the spirit-begotten Bible Students and

that their heavenly glorification was at hand. But not so!

² In fact, in the spring of 1919 the questions posed by the prophet Isaiah could be voiced again in a modern application of Isaiah 66:6-8: “There is a sound of uproar out of the city, a sound out of the temple! It is the sound of Jehovah repaying what is deserved to his enemies. Before she began to come into labor pains she gave birth. Before birth pangs could come to her, she even gave deliverance to a male child. Who has heard of a thing like this? Who has seen things like these?

1. What was the state of Jehovah’s visible organization during World War I?

2. What prophecy of Isaiah had a modern application in 1919?

Will a land [condition of glorious spiritual prosperity] be brought forth with labor pains in one day? Or will a nation be born at one time? For Zion has come into labor pains as well as given birth to her sons.”

³ As if resurrected from the dead, the International Bible Students held their first postwar convention at Cedar Point, Ohio, on September 1-8, 1919. The Society’s president, the secretary-treasurer, the office manager, and the other former prisoners, exonerated from all charges, were present for this gladsome occasion. To the joy of the conventioners, President Rutherford announced the publication of a new magazine, *The Golden Age*—known today as *Awake!* Also, a baptism of over 200 newly dedicated persons was performed. Jehovah’s theocratic organization brought forth her sons to an active life in the postwar era. That called for new, yes, daring, pioneering procedures on the part of the “nation” born, as it were, at one stroke and settled down on “a land” brought forth at once.

⁴ The situation was a challenging one. It caught “Babylon the Great,” the world empire of false religion, by surprise. Her membership, particularly Christendom, became highly disturbed. She felt that her peace was being trespassed upon. Her security as an incontestable claimant to the field of religious activity was now put in jeopardy. She was going to be exposed as to her real relationship with superhuman heavenly powers, not with the God of the Holy Bible, but with “the god of this system of things”—Satan,

3. What evidence was there in 1919 that Zion had brought forth her sons and that a new “nation” had been born “at one time”?

4. (a) What effect was all of this to have on “Babylon the Great”? (b) Exposure of the real status of “Babylon the Great” with superhuman heavenly powers is the precursor of what?

the promoter of the Antichrist foretold in Bible prophecy. (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 2:18) This exposure was merely the precursor of her death throes. Then the Supreme Judge of the universe will take her directly in hand and execute her, granting her no escape from the now highly incensed former lovers of hers, her political paramours.

⁵ Even Christendom, which possesses the Bible that foretells all of this, will be caught off guard. She will trust in the coming cry of “peace and security” as devised by the nations in which she has carried on her religious formalism. At the same time, her churches pass the collection plate, enriching themselves by the contributions deposited therein. To the God of the Holy Scriptures, however, she is “poor and blind and naked.” She does not trust in Jehovah, nor does she avail herself of the real spiritual values that he provides. (Revelation 3:17, 18) She does not see the handwriting on the wall. What do we mean by this?

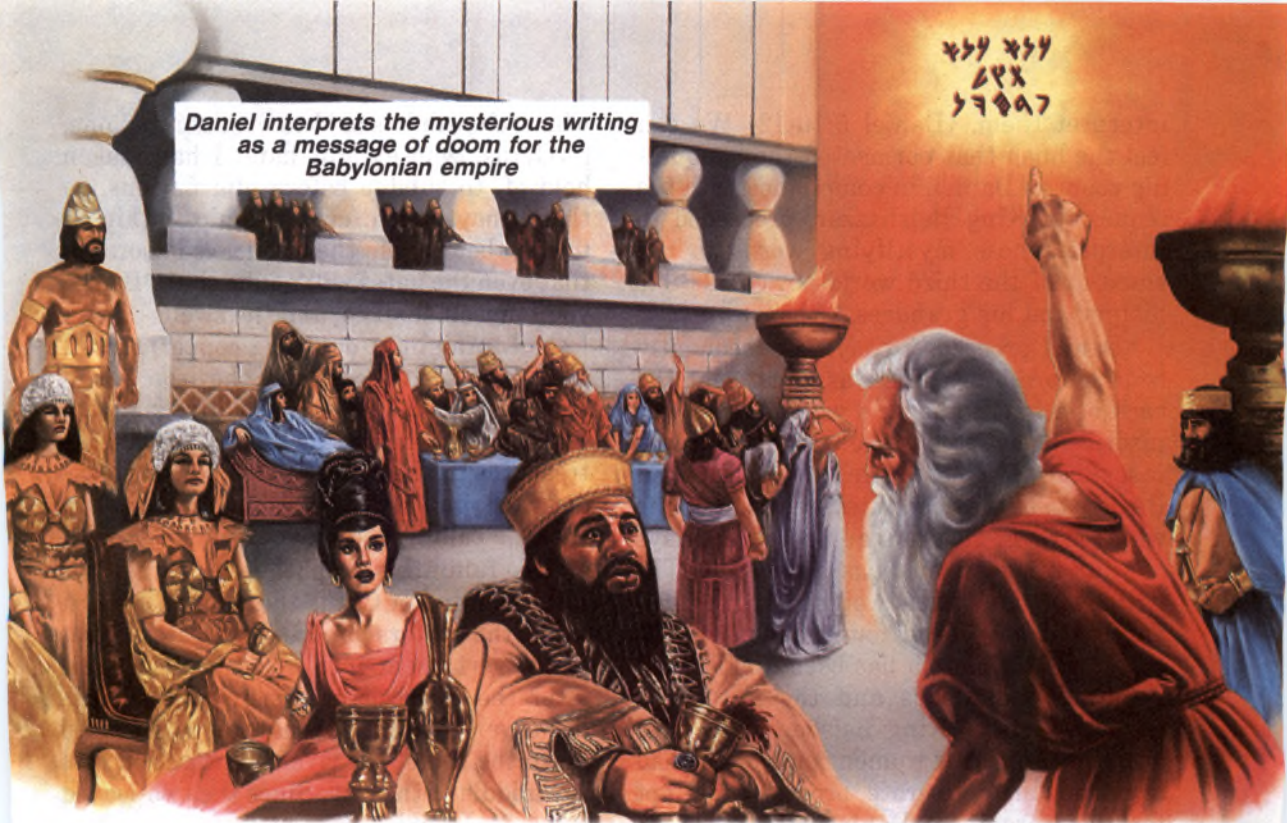
Handwriting on the Wall Appears

⁶ To understand, we must look back at the last hours of the third world power of Bible history, Babylon, on the banks of the Euphrates River. Belshazzar was the last ruler over Babylon, which included the site of the Tower of Babel, where almighty God confused the one language of the builders, scattering them. (Genesis 11:1-9) At the time of Babylon’s last hours, Jehovah’s typical people, the Jews, were captive exiles in that pagan land. But their 70 years of captivity were about to come to a close.

5. (a) Why will Christendom be caught off guard, and how is she viewed by the God of the Bible? (b) What does “Babylon the Great” not see?

6. What ancient world power now comes to mind, and how were Jehovah’s typical people then faring?

Daniel interprets the mysterious writing as a message of doom for the Babylonian empire



⁷ The united Medes and Persians, who were to make up the fourth world power of Bible history, came against the highly fortified, seemingly impregnable, walled city of Babylon. The Euphrates River flowed through the midst of the city, with quays along its banks onto which two-leaved copper doors of the city walls opened. With full confidence in the security of the city, King Belshazzar held “a big feast for a thousand of his grandees”—a feast that proved to be his last one. Suddenly, within Belshazzar’s line of vision, there appeared at the wall a moving hand. And it wrote upon the wall the fateful words “MENE, MENE, TEKEL and PARSIN.” (Daniel 5:1, 5, 25) That was on the night of October 5, 539 B.C.E. The words had a stunning impact. King Bel-

shazzar shook with fear. Wait now! Get the wise men—the magicians and astrologers who had a reputation for being able to explain signs and omens. But the deciphering of the miraculous words, which they were not even able to read, was beyond them. What now was to be done?

⁸ Send for a Jew. What? A Jew? Yes, one of those princes and nobles who had been taken away from Jerusalem in his native land and brought by Emperor Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon to be trained for governmental service. Well, as a last resort, that was the best thing that could be done. Daniel was recommended by the queen mother as being a man of wisdom—a man who was able to decipher things and to

7. (a) Why did King Belshazzar hold a feast for his grandees with full confidence? (b) What took place during the feast, and with what effect on the king?

8, 9. (a) As a last resort, what course of action was recommended to the king? (b) How did Daniel interpret the handwriting on the wall? (c) Why did King Belshazzar’s big feast result in such a dire prophecy?

interpret them. (Daniel 5:10-12) We can feel the hush that permeated the banqueting room as Daniel, in compliance with the request of King Belshazzar, proceeded to interpret those mystifying words to the emperor of the third world power of Bible history and his grandees.

⁹ Daniel proceeds to say: "Consequently from before him there was being sent the back of a hand, and this very writing was inscribed. And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL and PARSIN. This is the interpretation of the word: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and has finished it. TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and have been found deficient. PERES,* your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians." (Daniel 5:24-28) King Belshazzar and his grandees and their women companions had been showing deliberate, profane contempt for the worship of Daniel's God. How? By drinking wine from the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem at the time of the destruction of that holy city in the year 607 B.C.E. That was like adding contemptuous insult to injury.—Daniel 5:3, 4, 23.

The Foretold Cyrus Takes Over

¹⁰ At Isaiah 45:1-3 the Most High God had foretold: "This is

* "Parsin" is the plural number of the word "Peres" and means "divisions."

10, 11. (a) Whom had Jehovah foretold to be the conqueror of Babylon, and how did Isaiah describe the coming conquest? (b) How did Jehovah fulfill this prophecy and bring about condign punishment for King Belshazzar and his grandees?

what Jehovah has said to his anointed one, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of, to subdue before him nations, so that I may ungird even the hips of kings; to open before him the two-leaved doors, so that even the gates will not be shut: 'Before you I myself shall go, and the swells of land I shall straighten out. The copper doors I shall break in pieces, and the iron bars I shall cut down. And I will give you the treasures in the darkness and the hidden treasures in the concealment places, in order that you may know that I am Jehovah, the One calling you by your name.'"

¹¹ To fulfill this prophecy, Jehovah put it into the mind of Cyrus the Persian to turn aside the waters of the Euphrates River and divert them into a local lake. Then, after the riverbed had been emptied, under cover of night, Cyrus' troops marched down the bed of the river and right on into the middle of the city. Since the two-leaved



doors along the waterfront had been left open, they climbed up the riverbank and entered into the banqueting chamber, overpowering the guards. So the feast of King Belshazzar came to a tragic end as a condign punishment for him and his grantees—because of their holding up “the Lord of the heavens” to shame, contempt, and indignity by misuse of the temple vessels stolen from Jehovah’s sacred dwelling place in Jerusalem.

¹² The last verse of Daniel chapter 5 says that after the putting of King Belshazzar to death, Darius the Mede “received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.” Since Darius was the elder of Cyrus the Persian, Daniel attributed the capture of Babylon to this Median king. He reigned from 539 to 537 B.C.E. as the royal ruler over the Medo-Persian empire. He well pictures Jehovah God. Darius’ associate, Cyrus the Persian, prefigured Jesus Christ, who will be most prominently used by Jehovah to overthrow and destroy “Babylon the Great,” the world empire of false religion.

¹³ On the accession of Cyrus to the throne over Medo-Persia in 537 B.C.E., doubtless the prophet Daniel pointed out to him Jehovah’s prophecy concerning him as found at Isaiah 45. The postexilic book of Ezra opens up with these words:

¹⁴ “And in the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia, that Jehovah’s word from the mouth of Jeremiah [regarding the exile’s being 70 years in length (Jeremiah 25:12; 29:10, 14)] might be accomplished, Jehovah roused the spirit of Cyrus the king of Persia so that he caused a cry to pass

12. (a) Since Isaiah had foretold that Cyrus would conquer Babylon, why does Daniel attribute Babylon’s capture to Darius the Mede? (b) Whom did Darius and his associate, Cyrus the Persian, prefigure?

13, 14. What did Daniel doubtless point out to Cyrus the Persian, and how does the postexilic book of Ezra open up?

through all his realm, and also in writing, saying: ‘This is what Cyrus the king of Persia has said, “All the kingdoms of the earth Jehovah the God of the heavens has given me, and he himself has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God prove to be with him. So let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—he is the true God—which was in Jerusalem.”’—Ezra 1:1-3.

The Greater Cyrus Conquers “Babylon the Great”

¹⁵ The present-day antitypical Cyrus the Great began to reign in 1914 at the end of “the appointed times of the nations,” as foretold by Jesus himself at Luke 21:24. In total disregard of this world-important fact, the nations inside the United Nations settled upon the year 1986 as their International Year of Peace. But Jehovah’s Witnesses are by no means caught off guard in this connection. When the foretold proclamation of “peace and security” is finally made, they will not join political adherents and friendly associates of “Babylon the

15. (a) When did the antitypical Cyrus begin to reign? (b) What immovable position do Jehovah’s Witnesses take regarding a conspiracy with the United Nations, and why?

In Our Next Issue

■ **How You Can Make
True Friends**

■ **Breathing This World’s “Air”
Is Death-Dealing!**

■ **Is Religious History
of Any Benefit to You?**

Great" in the feasting over such a phenomenal feat at this late date in the history of the worldly nations. They advocate no conspiracy with the United Nations or other peace media. (Isaiah 8:12) As a countermeasure, they say in the words of Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn." (*New International Version*) And giving the reason for their immovable position, they say: "For God is with us!" (Isaiah 8:10) Bluntly, that means that Jehovah God is taking no part in the political measures adopted by the nations in behalf of "peace and security" but, rather, is unequivocally against them.

¹⁶ By adroit maneuvering, Jehovah, by means of his Greater Cyrus, will put it into the heart and mind of the political leaders of the world to turn against "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion. As with the horns of a vicious wild beast, they will gore her to death. The prophetic word at Revelation 17 will be vindicated to the full, and over this Jehovah's Witnesses on earth will jubilate.—Revelation 17: 16, 17; 19:1-3.

Keeping Up Our Proper Association With Jehovah

¹⁷ Then, although Jehovah's Witnesses are no part of "Babylon the Great" but are her avowed exposers, and although they have taken no part in the political affairs of this world, those irreligious political elements will turn against the surviving Witnesses. Determined to be dictators with totalitarian control over all segments of human society on earth, they will make

16. How will the prophetic word at Revelation 17:16, 17 be vindicated to the full, and with what effect on Jehovah's people?

17. Though Jehovah's Witnesses are no part of "Babylon the Great," what will the world's rulers do?

a full-scale lunge at the integrity-keeping Witnesses of the Supreme One, who is the Source of all righteous government.

¹⁸ Here now is where the Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth must step in and must make those destroyers of "Babylon the Great" know and understand that the One of whom there have been 20th-century Witnesses is a real God, an almighty God—a God entitled to wholehearted, undivided worship by creatures down here on his footstool, the earth. He will do this in an awe-inspiring manner that will simply make the lower jaw of the mouths of his observing Witnesses on the sidelines drop for sheer amazement. He will perform his unprecedented, glorious maneuvers of warfare to divine victory. (Revelation 16: 14, 16; 19:19-21) That will spell the end of this wicked, Devil-controlled system of things with a flourish that will outdo the world-destroying Flood of Noah's day.

¹⁹ Just as Jehovah had witnesses to

18. What awe-inspiring feat will Jehovah perform, eclipsing the Flood of Noah's day?

19. What witnesses will Jehovah have as to his vindicating of himself as the Universal Sovereign, and what will this demonstrate?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ What does "Babylon the Great" not see?
- ☐ What does the tragic outcome of Belshazzar's feast prefigure?
- ☐ Who will conquer "Babylon the Great"?
- ☐ What stand do Jehovah's Witnesses take regarding a conspiracy with the United Nations?
- ☐ Why will all who put their trust in Jehovah for peace and security be happy?

testify to the end of the old world in a Flood that drowned all humankind outside the ark, he will, on a far grander scale, have witnesses right down here on earth regarding his unrepeatable act of vindicating himself as the Universal Sovereign. (2 Peter 3:6, 7, 13, 14) These will be those who trust in *him* for peace and security amid this doomed world. Happy will you be at being counted among those miraculously favored Witnesses. Your peace and security will have been demonstrated as coming from Jehovah God and not from any confederacy, or conspiracy, with political pow-

ers of this Devil-controlled system of things.

²⁰ Jehovah God will emerge gloriously as the rightful One to be worshiped and served as the supreme Divine Being—the God of gods, the exclusive One to whom the words of the inspired psalmist were directed: “Even from time indefinite to time indefinite you are God.” (Psalm 90:2) With ever-growing appreciation, let us keep up our trust in Jehovah God and our association with him through the Greater Cyrus, Jesus Christ.

20. How will Jehovah emerge, and what are we determined to do?

Questions From Readers

■ What is God's “book of life,” and how can my name be written in it and kept there?

Various Bible texts indicate that Jehovah God has a “book,” or “scroll,” listing faithful persons who are in line to receive everlasting life, whether in heaven or on earth.

From the heavens the true God notes humans who manifest faith, meriting his approval and remembrance. We read concerning some Jews in Malachi's day: “At that time those in fear of Jehovah spoke with one another, . . . and Jehovah kept paying attention and listening. And a book of remembrance began to be written up before him for those in fear of Jehovah and for those thinking upon his name.” —Malachi 3:16.

Evidently, from the time of Abel forward, God has been noting, as if writing down in a book, those in the world of savable mankind who should be remembered as to everlasting life. (Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:50, 51) Anointed Chris-

tians, too, have their ‘names in this book of life,’ or book of remembrance for receiving everlasting life, and for them it will be heavenly life. (Philippians 3:14, 20; 4:3) In contrast, Revelation 17:8 says of those who “wonder admiringly” over “the wild beast”: “Their names have not been written upon the scroll of life from the founding of the world.”

A person's being noted with remembrance and approval (having his name “in the book of life”) does not mean that he is guaranteed eternal life, as if this were predestined or unchangeable. Concerning the Israelites, Moses asked Jehovah: “Now if you will pardon their sin,—and if not, wipe me out, please, from your book that you have written.” God replied: “Whoever has sinned against me, I shall wipe him out of my book.” (Exodus 32:32, 33) Yes, even after God listed someone with approval in his “book,”

the individual could become disobedient or abandon his faith. If that developed, God would “blot out his name from the book of life.”—Revelation 3:5.

On the other hand, if our names are now in God's “book of life,” or “book of remembrance,” we ought to continue exercising faith. In that way we will keep our names there. Similarly, as persons are raised in the coming ‘resurrection of the unrighteous,’ they will have the opportunity to exercise faith and hence qualify to have their names recorded in that book. (Acts 24:15) Finally, individuals so written down will be able to keep their names there permanently. That is true of the anointed as they prove themselves “faithful even to death.” (Revelation 2:10; 3:5) As to those with earthly prospects, by proving faithful now, down through Christ's Millennial Reign, and then through the decisive test to follow, their names will become permanently “written in the book of life.”—Revelation 20:5-15.

A Remarkable Accomplishment for Costa Rica

“YOU are doing what we’ve only studied about!” remarked an architectural engineer who had come to see the new branch being put up seven miles (11 km) outside of San José, Costa Rica.

What was so remarkable about these buildings? They were built with the tilt-up method—a first in Costa Rica. The foundation and pillars were built first. Then, right on the site, concrete sections of the walls were cast one on top of another in stacks. These precast wall sections were then tilted up and lifted by a crane and welded into their proper places. Finally, the roof went on, and all that remained to be done was the finishing details.

This project was also the Watch Tower Society’s first attempt to construct a building by the tilt-up method outside the United States. For this reason, personnel from other branches that are planning to build or expand were on hand to observe how the process worked. Present, too, were engineers and architects from other concerns. All were impressed by what they saw.

The buildings were done in the handsome Spanish-colonial style, with red tile roof and arching windows. The driveway around a circular garden leads to the main entrance and lobby. To the right is the two-story, 24-room residence building with a large family room that contains the library, study areas, and an attractive fireplace. Connected to this is a 100-seat dining room, and a modern kitchen and laundry. Across the courtyard is the office building with 13 individual offices and a

conference room laid out around an open-air tropical garden under a skylight. The large building to the left is the warehouse for storing literature and other supplies.

Everyone who had come to visit marveled at what he saw. Heard over and over again were comments like: “What quality work!” “Never have I seen anything as beautiful as this!” “This is obviously a labor of love.”

Indeed, all of this was made possible by “a labor of love.” Over 4,700 brothers and sisters, including 295 from other lands, labored for 24 months on the project. Much of the equipment and material was made on site. For example, at an early stage a two-story hoist, affectionately known by the brothers as Julio, was built. Cement mixers known as Bertha and Martha were purchased and overhauled for the project. Lamps, lighting fixtures, wrought-iron grillwork, Palladian marble steps and landings, and so on, were all made by brothers who have had no particular experience in these areas. “The enthusiasm for the project on the part of the brothers from this country was remarkable,” declared the project supervisor.

The height of enthusiasm was manifested on January 4, 1987, when a crowd of 13,111 came for the dedication. The balcony on the north side of the family room was used as a stage and the crowd gathered on the spacious grounds below. Brothers M. G. Henschel and L. A. Swingle of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses were the principal speakers on the program. Brother Swingle’s enthusias-



A precast wall section being tilted up . . . and set in place



Circular driveway leads up to Spanish-colonial-style building



Part of the enthusiastic crowd on dedication day



tic talk was on the theme "Jehovah Keeps Making It Grow," and in the dedication talk, Brother Henschel helped all to appreciate that a beautiful building is useful to Jehovah's people only if they continue to produce the fruitage of his spirit.

Brought together for this special occasion were members of the first Gilead missionary family in Costa Rica. Now well

along in years, they were deeply moved by this reunion and by the visible evidence of Jehovah's rich blessing on the Kingdom-preaching work in Costa Rica over the years. With the marvelous provision of such a spacious, comfortable, and efficient home, all present were confident that Jehovah's name will be further magnified in this tropical land.

'One of the Most Outstanding Books in History'

What publication could the writer from New Zealand have in mind? His letter explains: "We were all overjoyed to receive what must be one of the most outstanding works in the history of modern publishing, the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?*"

"The research that has preceded this outstanding and scholarly work is evident from the very start,

and the clear and concise way in which each subject is dealt with has at least one scientist at our local Horticultural research centre of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries eager to read the book through."

