

The Watchtower

May 15, 1988

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY
ABOUT DIVORCE?



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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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Should Divorce Be Allowed?



IN JUNE 1986 voters in the Irish Republic voted by a margin of 3 to 2 to uphold their ban on divorce. This made the Republic the only country in Western Europe in which divorce is still illegal.

Evidently, in spite of the wave of liberal attitudes and thinking, most people's view on the emotionally charged issue of divorce is still heavily influenced by their background. Race, education, and social factors all play a role. But of all things, religion, or the lack of it, remains the single most important influence.

What is your view of divorce? If a married couple feel miserable living together and are clearly incompatible, should they be allowed to end their misery by obtaining a divorce? How would you answer this question? More importantly, on what would you base your answer?

Varied and Conflicting Views

For the millions who hold to Roman Catholic standards, there is simply no divorce. "In Christian marriage," explains *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, "there can never be an absolute divorce [with the right to remarry], at least after the marriage has been consummated." However, the Roman Catholic Church grants annulment on certain conditions, and this procedure

is widely used. For example, in April 1986 *The Denver Post* reported: "Local Catholics are asking for so many marriage annulments that the Denver Archdiocese is spending \$250,000 on increased staff and a computer to keep up with the workload." The report further said that "in the Denver Archdiocese, there is a three-year backlog of 700 annulment cases."

Protestants in hundreds of denominations around the world are faced with a vast array of church laws and regulations on divorce. In general, however, Protestant authorities allow divorce only on serious grounds. But what is considered serious can vary greatly from one church to another. Offenses such as adultery, cruelty, and desertion are generally accepted, but they are by no means the only ones. Some denominations now have divorce ceremonies and services with hymns and prayers as in weddings. In one such ceremony, "marriage vows are repealed. The couple hand their wedding rings to the minister. The service ends with a pronouncement from the minister that the marriage is dissolved, and the couple shake hands," reports *The New York Times*.

Jews have a tradition enforced by religious courts. Rabbinic laws allow divorce

either on mutual agreement by the spouses or on grounds of physical defects or intolerable conduct. The divorce is considered legal, however, only when the husband issues a "get," or certificate of divorce, and this can be a source of contention. Out of resentment some husbands refuse to issue the document, or they use it as a bargaining chip. "This problem has left thousands of devout Jewish women in a painful marital limbo," said New York City Council President Andrew Stein in an address to a gathering of rabbis, lawyers, and others. Without the get, the woman's remarriage is considered illegal, and any offspring is stigmatized as a mamzer, or bastard, in the modern State of Israel.

As for the nonreligious and the atheists, who presumably go by the law of the land, the issue is still not a simple one. This is because divorce legislation differs from country to country and even from area to area within the same country. One authority lists some 50 grounds on which a legal divorce may be obtained in various parts

of the United States. These include "gross misbehavior and wickedness," "no reasonable likelihood of marriage being preserved," and "refusal by wife to move with husband to this state." In recent times, even the last trace of the sense of right and wrong has been removed by what is commonly called no-fault divorce.

Still a Perplexing Situation

Even though many of these varied and conflicting laws and regulations on divorce are said to be based on the Bible, have they been successful in strengthening the institution of marriage or bolstering human happiness? The rising divorce rate—one divorce for every two marriages in some countries—provides a clear answer. Not only have these laws been unsuccessful in strengthening the marriage bond but they have also added to the misery and suffering in the lives of millions.

In view of this, it is important for those who are genuinely concerned with doing what is right to find out what the Bible *really* says on this subject.

Divorce

What Does the Bible *Really* Say?

“WHAT God has yoked together let no man put apart.” (Matthew 19:6) We often hear those well-known words by Jesus Christ quoted as the final pronouncement in a marriage ceremony.

By those words, though, did Jesus mean that all marriages are to be permanent and that there is not to be any divorce whatsoever? Taking the words by themselves, that would appear to be the case. However,

what prompted Jesus to make such a statement? Was he setting out something new?

‘Not the Case From the Beginning’

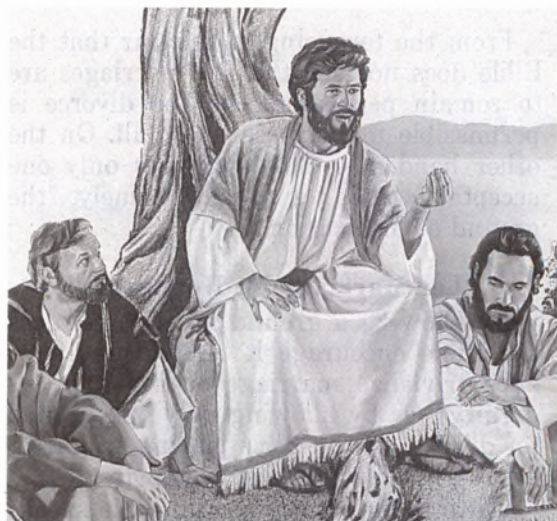
Jesus’ statement quoted above was part of his answer to the Pharisees’ question: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on every sort of ground?” (Matthew 19:3-6) Not being satisfied with the answer, the Pharisees questioned him further by

asking: "Why, then, did Moses prescribe giving a certificate of dismissal and divorcing her?" Thereupon, Jesus said: "Moses, out of regard for your hardheartedness, made the concession to you of divorcing your wives, but such has not been the case from the beginning." Then he added: "I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of fornication, and marries another commits adultery." —Matthew 19:7-9.

We must note that Jesus' statement, "such has not been the case from the beginning," was made in reference to divorce that was accomplished by "giving a certificate of dismissal." In other words, when God instituted the first marriage between Adam and Eve, he did not provide them with "every sort of ground" for dissolving their marriage. As a perfect couple, they had every reason to make their marriage a success. It would be successful if they continued to live according to God's law and direction.

When mankind lapsed into sin and imperfection, so did the institution of marriage. (Romans 5:12) Since humans were no longer perfect, human relations became strained and tainted by selfishness, greed, and self-interest. That was what Jesus referred to as "hardheartedness," because of which the Mosaic Law made room for divorce. Yet, Jesus reminded the Pharisees: "Such has not been the case from the beginning." Now, under imperfect conditions, mates should put forth the effort needed to resolve any difficulties and problems instead of using them as grounds or excuses for breaking up their marriage. However, Jesus pointed out that there is one exception, namely, fornication. Marital infidelity *can* be grounds for breaking up a marriage.

It is interesting to note how various explanations of the clause "except on the ground of fornication" have been put forth



What did Jesus say about divorce?

to uphold certain views on divorce. Catholic authorities generally dismiss this clause on the ground that parallel accounts in Mark and Luke do not contain it. However, McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia* explains: "The plain reconciliation of the passages must be found in the principle that an exception in a fuller document must explain a briefer one, if this can be done without force. Now, as divorce for that one reason was admitted by all, Mark and Luke might naturally take this for granted without expressing it."

Some argue that since Jesus used the word "fornication" (Greek, *por-nei'a*) and not "adultery" (Greek, *moi-khei'a*), he must have meant some improper act before the marriage that would make the marriage null and void. This is unnecessarily restricting the meaning of the word. Various authorities recognize that *por-nei'a* means "unchastity, harlotry, prostitution, fornication," and that at Matthew 19:9 "it stands for, or includes, adultery." Others argue that Jesus was citing fornication merely as one example among many grounds for divorce. Clearly, this is forcing an opinion on the text.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Bible does not say that all marriages are to remain permanent and no divorce is permissible for any reason at all. On the other hand, the Bible provides only one acceptable basis for divorce, namely, "the ground of fornication."

"Let Marriage Be Honorable"

By allowing a ground for divorce, does the Bible encourage it? Does this allowance trivialize marriage or rob it of its dignity? Or by allowing only one ground for divorce, is the Bible placing an unreasonable burden on those who marry?

Quite to the contrary, the Bible speaks of marriage as one of the closest and most intimate bonds that two people can enjoy. "A man will leave his father and his mother and he must stick to his wife and they must become one flesh," says the Genesis account of the first marriage. (Genesis 2:24) And mates are to guard this "one flesh" relationship as something precious. "Let marriage be honorable among all, and the marriage bed be without defilement," counsels the Bible.—Hebrews 13:4.

It has often been said, in one manner or another, that the foundation of a lasting and happy marriage is not romantic love but unselfishness. That is just what the Bible indicates. It says: "Husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, for no man ever hated his own flesh; but he feeds and cherishes it, as the Christ also does the congregation. . . . On the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband." (Ephesians 5:28-33) And in frank language, the Bible counsels: "Let the husband render to his wife her due; but let the wife also do likewise to her husband. The wife does not exercise authority over her own body, but her husband does; likewise, also, the husband does not exercise authority over his own body,

but his wife does. Do not be depriving each other of it."—1 Corinthians 7:3-5.

When both mates are willing to abide by such wise counsel, it is very unlikely that their marriage will deteriorate to the point where one of them would resort to extra-marital affairs, thus, in effect, destroying the "one flesh" relationship. Even if one of the mates does not accept such Bible principles, the believing mate can have confidence that God's way is still the best, and many marital problems can thus be solved or avoided.

Rather than recommending divorce as a means of ending an unhappy marriage, then, the Bible urges Christians to work hard to hold their marriage together and to make it a happy one. "Rejoice with the wife of your youth," says a Bible proverb. "With her love may you be in an ecstasy constantly."—Proverbs 5:18, 19.

Is Divorce the Answer?

What if one's marriage mate does become unfaithful? To be sure, marital infidelity creates a severe crisis. The adulterous mate has brought much pain and suffering upon the innocent one, who has the Scriptural right to divorce the guilty party and remarry. But must there be a divorce? Is that the only recourse?

We must bear in mind that although Jehovah God has provided a just ground for divorce, the Bible also says of him: "He has hated a divorcing." (Malachi 2:16) Rather than quickly jumping to the conclusion that divorce is the only solution, one might consider the possibility of extending mercy and forgiveness. Why?

A divorce will not necessarily remove the hurt and bitterness, but mercy and forgiveness will, especially when the offender truly regrets the wrongdoing. Love shown at such a critical time may actually strengthen the marriage. Viewing the matter in this light will help the innocent

*In the new world,
there will be no
marital problems
that lead to
divorce*



mate to evaluate what may be the best course to follow, remembering Jesus' words: "Happy are the merciful, since they will be shown mercy."—Matthew 5:7; compare Hosea 3:1-5.

Also to be weighed in the balance are the problems that may result in connection with children in a single-parent home. The loneliness of a divorced person, too, merits consideration. For a woman, the problems are compounded by the fact that in most parts of the world today, women are still disadvantaged economically. After being a homemaker for a number of years, it is hard for a single mother to get back into the job market and compete with others.

Some women feel that while they are married, they should prepare themselves for the possibility of divorce. They may enroll in special schools or keep up their careers in order to maintain their financial independence. Whether an individual should pursue such a course or not is a personal decision. However, instead of spending time and energy preparing for a possibility, would it not be a wiser investment to put time and energy into building a happy and lasting marriage? By working hard at developing the fruitage of God's

spirit and maintaining a healthy spiritual outlook, the Christian woman is likely to enjoy the love and praise of her husband. She can also have confidence in God's promise that he cares for the needs of those who seek first the Kingdom.—Matthew 6:33; Proverbs 31:28-30; Galatians 5:22, 23.

The Ultimate Solution

As long as we live in this imperfect system of things, we can expect that there will be marital problems. However, by following the Bible's wise counsel, these can be minimized or dealt with effectively. Furthermore, men and women who are willing to live by Jehovah's standards in marriage and in other areas of life are blessed with the prospect of entering a new system in which "righteousness is to dwell."—2 Peter 3:13.

In that system, mankind will become free of the ravages and all the sad consequences of sin and imperfection. As long as the marriage arrangement continues here on earth, 'what was the case from the beginning' will be the standard. Indeed, what God has yoked together, no man will put apart.

The Question of Fatherhood

DURING the Festival of Tabernacles 32 C.E., Jesus' discussion with the Jewish leaders grows more intense. "I know that you are Abraham's offspring," Jesus acknowledges, "but you are seeking to kill me, because my word makes no progress among you. What things I have seen with my Father I speak; and you, therefore, do the things you have heard from your father."

Although not identifying their father, Jesus makes clear that their father is different from his. Unaware of whom Jesus has in mind, the Jewish leaders respond: "Our father is Abraham." They feel that they have the same faith as Abraham, who was God's friend.

However, Jesus shocks them with the reply: "If you are Abraham's children, do the works of Abraham." Indeed, a real son imitates his father. "But now you are seeking to kill me," Jesus says, "a man that has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do this." So Jesus again says: "You do the works of your father."

Still they do not comprehend whom Jesus is talking about. They maintain that they are legitimate sons of Abraham, saying: "We were not born from fornication." Hence, claiming to be true worshipers like Abraham, they assert: "We have one Father, God."

But is God really their Father? "If God were your Father," Jesus responds, "you would love me, for from God I came forth and am here. Neither have I come of my own initiative at all, but that One sent me forth. Why is it you do not know what I am speaking?"

Jesus has tried to show these reli-

gious leaders the consequences of their rejection of him. But now he pointedly says: "You are from your father the Devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father." What kind of father is the Devil? Jesus identified him as a man-slayer and also said: "He is a liar and the father of the lie." So Jesus concludes: "He that is from God listens to the sayings of God. This is why you do not listen, because you are not from God."

Angered by Jesus' condemnation, the Jews answer: "Do we not rightly say, You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" The term "Samaritan" is used as an expression of contempt and reproach, the Samaritans being a people hated by the Jews.

Ignoring the contemptuous slur about



Jesus' Life and Ministry

being a Samaritan, Jesus responds: "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me." Going on, Jesus makes the startling promise: "If anyone observes my word, he will never see death at all." Of course, Jesus does not mean that all those who follow him will lit-

erally never see death. Rather, he means that they will never see eternal destruction, or "second death," from which there is no resurrection.

However, the Jews take Jesus' words literally. Hence, they say: "Now we do know you have a demon. Abraham died, also the prophets; but you say, 'If anyone observes my word, he will never taste death at all.' You are not greater than our father Abraham, who died, are you? Also, the prophets died. Who do you claim to be?"

In this whole discussion, it is obvious that Jesus is pointing these men to the fact that he is the promised Messiah. But rather than directly answering their question as to his identity, Jesus says: "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father that glorifies me, he who you say is your God; and yet you have not known him. But I know him. And if I said I do not know him I should be like you, a liar."

Going on, Jesus refers again to faithful Abraham, saying: "Abraham your father rejoiced greatly in the prospect of seeing my day, and he saw it and rejoiced." Yes, with eyes of faith, Abraham looked forward to the arrival of the promised Messiah. In disbelief, the Jews respond: "You are not yet fifty years old, and still you have seen Abraham?"

"Most truly I say to you," Jesus answers, "before Abraham came into existence, I have been." Jesus is, of course, referring to his pre-human existence as a mighty spirit person in heaven.

Enraged by Jesus' claim to have existed before Abraham, the Jews pick up stones to hurl at him. But he hides and goes out of the temple unharmed. **John 8:37-59; Revelation 3:14; 21:8.**

- ♦ How does Jesus show that he and his enemies have different fathers?
- ♦ What is the significance of the Jews' calling Jesus a Samaritan?
- ♦ In what sense does Jesus mean that his followers will never see death?



God Is Not Partial

"God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him."

—ACTS 10:34, 35.

"GOD who made the world and all that is in it, being Lord of both Heaven and earth, does not live in man-made temples . . . From one ancestor he has created every race of men to live over the face of the whole earth." (Acts 17:24-26, *Phillips*) Who spoke those words? The Christian apostle Paul, during his famous speech on Mars' Hill, or the Areopagus, in Athens, Greece.

² Paul's statement may well make us think about the wonderful variety that exists in creation. Jehovah God created humans, animals, birds, insects, and plants of so many different kinds. How dull life would be if they were all alike! Their variety helps to make life colorful

1. In ancient Athens, what important statement did Paul make concerning race?
2. What helps to make life colorful and interesting, and with what was one Japanese visitor to South Africa impressed?

and interesting. For example, a visitor from Japan attending a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in South Africa was impressed with the diversity of race and color he observed there. He remarked how different it is in Japan, where the vast majority have the same racial characteristics.

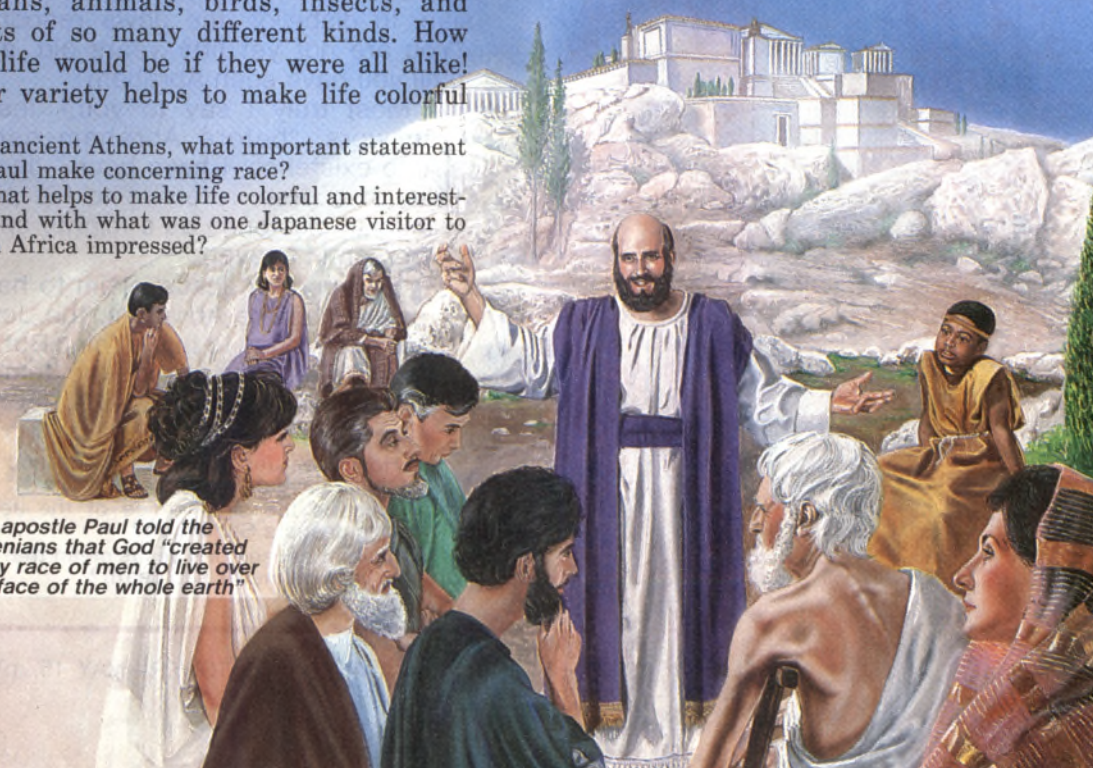
³ But diversity of color among the races often causes serious problems. Many consider those of a different skin color to be inferior. This gives rise to animosity, even hatred and the scourge of racial prejudice. Did our Creator intend this? Are some races superior in his eyes? Is Jehovah partial?

Our Creator—Partial?

⁴ We can get some idea of our Creator's

3. How do some view a different skin color, giving rise to what?

4-6. (a) What did King Jehoshaphat say about partiality? (b) How did both Moses and Paul confirm Jehoshaphat's statement? (c) What questions may some raise?



The apostle Paul told the Athenians that God "created every race of men to live over the face of the whole earth"

view of all mankind by stepping back in history. King Jehoshaphat, who ruled Judah from 936 to 911 B.C.E., made many improvements and arranged for the proper functioning of the judicial system based on divine law. He gave this fine counsel to the judges: "See what you are doing, because it is not for man that you judge but it is for Jehovah . . . Be careful and act, for with Jehovah our God there is no unrighteousness or partiality."—2 Chronicles 19:6, 7.

⁵ Hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Moses had told the tribes of Israel: "Jehovah your God . . . treats none with partiality." (Deuteronomy 10:17) And in his letter to the Romans, Paul admonished: "There will be trouble and distress for every human being who is an evil-doer, for the Jew first and for the Greek also . . . For God has no favourites."—Romans 2: 9-11, *The New English Bible*.

⁶ But some may ask: 'What about the Israelites? Were they not God's chosen people? Was he not partial toward them? Did not Moses say to all Israel: "It is you Jehovah your God has chosen to become his people, a special property, out of all the peoples"?'—Deuteronomy 7:6.

⁷ No, God was not partial in using the Israelites for a special purpose. In selecting a people through whom to produce the Messiah, Jehovah chose the descendants of the faithful Hebrew patriarchs. But when the Jews rejected the Messiah, Jesus Christ, and had him put to death, they lost God's favor. Today, however, those of any race or nation who exercise faith in Jesus can enjoy marvelous blessings and have the prospect of everlasting life. (John 3:16; 17:3) Surely, this proves that there

7. (a) What resulted when the Jews rejected the Messiah? (b) Today, who can enjoy marvelous blessings from God, and how?

is no partiality on God's part. Moreover, Jehovah commanded the Israelites to "love the alien resident" and "not mistreat him," regardless of his race or nationality. (Deuteronomy 10:19; Leviticus 19:33, 34) Truly, then, our loving Father in heaven is not partial.

⁸ It is true that the Israelites enjoyed special privileges. But they also had a heavy responsibility. They were under obligation to keep Jehovah's laws, and those failing to obey them came under a curse. (Deuteronomy 27:26) In fact, the Israelites had to be punished repeatedly for disobeying God's Law. Hence, Jehovah did not treat them with favoritism. Rather, he used them to make prophetic patterns and to furnish warning examples. Happily, it was through Israel that God produced the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, for the blessing of all mankind.—Galatians 3:14; compare Genesis 22:15-18.

Was Jesus Partial?

⁹ Since there is no partiality with Jehovah, could Jesus be partial? Well, consider this: Jesus once said: "I seek, not my own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 5:30) Perfect unity exists between Jehovah and his beloved Son, and Jesus does his Father's will in every respect. In fact, they are so alike in view and purpose that Jesus could say: "He that has seen me has seen the Father also." (John 14:9) For over 33 years, Jesus had actual experience living as a man on earth, and the Bible reveals how he treated fellow humans. What was his attitude toward other races? Was he prejudiced or partial? Was Jesus a racist?

8. (a) What proves that Jehovah did not show favoritism toward Israel? (b) How did Jehovah make use of Israel?

9. (a) How are Jehovah and Jesus alike? (b) What questions arise concerning Jesus?



Because Jesus was not partial, he witnessed to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's fountain near Sychar

¹⁰ Jesus spent most of his earthly life with Jewish people. But one day he was approached by a Phoenician woman, a Gentile, who begged him to cure her daughter. In response Jesus said: "I was not sent forth to any but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Yet, the woman pleaded: "Lord, help me!" At that, he added: "It is not right to take the bread of the children and throw it to little dogs." To the Jews, dogs were unclean animals. So by alluding to Gentiles as "little dogs," was Jesus showing prejudice? No, for he had just mentioned his special commission from God to care for 'the lost sheep of Israel.' Moreover, by likening non-Jews to "little dogs," not wild dogs, Jesus softened the comparison. Of course, what he said tested the woman. Humbly, though determined to overcome this objection, she tactfully replied: "Yes, Lord; but really the little dogs do eat of the crumbs falling from the table of their masters." Impressed with the woman's faith, Jesus healed her daughter immediately.—Matthew 15:22-28.

10. (a) How did Jesus reply to a Phoenician woman's request for help? (b) By alluding to Gentiles as "little dogs," was Jesus showing prejudice? (c) How did the woman overcome the objection, and with what result?

¹¹ Consider, too, Jesus' encounters with certain Samaritans. Deep animosity existed between Jews and Samaritans. On one occasion, Jesus sent messengers to make preparations for him in a certain Samaritan village. But those Samaritans "did not receive him, because his face was set for going to Jerusalem." This upset James and John to the point that they wanted to call down fire from heaven and annihilate them. But Jesus rebuked the two disciples, and all of them went to a different village.—Luke 9:51-56.

¹² Did Jesus share the feeling of animosity existing between Jews and Samaritans? Well, notice what happened on another occasion. Jesus and his disciples were on their way from Judea to Galilee and had to pass through Samaria. Tired out from the journey, Jesus sat down beside Jacob's fountain to rest while his disciples went to the city of Sychar to buy food. Meanwhile, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Now, Jesus himself had on another occasion classified Samaritans as being "of another race." (Luke 17:16-18, *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*) But he said to her: "Give me a drink." Since Jews had no dealings with Samaritans, the surprised woman replied: "How is it that you, despite being a Jew, ask me for a drink, when I am a Samaritan woman?"—John 4:1-9.

¹³ But Jesus ignored the woman's objection. Instead, he seized the opportunity to give her a witness, even acknowledging that he was the Messiah! (John 4:10-26)

11. As illustrated by an incident involving Jesus, what attitude did Jews and Samaritans have toward one another?

12. Why was a certain Samaritan woman surprised at Jesus' request?

13. (a) How did Jesus respond to the Samaritan woman's objection, and what was her reaction? (b) What was the final result?

The amazed woman left her water jar at the fountain, ran back to the city, and began telling others what had happened. Although she had lived an immoral life, she revealed her interest in spiritual matters by saying: "This is not perhaps the Christ, is it?" What was the final result? Many of the local people put faith in Jesus on account of the fine witness the woman had given. (John 4:27-42) Interestingly, in his book *A Biblical Perspective on the Race Problem*, Congregational theologian Thomas O. Figart made this comment: "If our Lord thought it important enough to supersede an errant racial tradition with a gracious gesture, then we should take heed that we are not swallowed up in the river of racism today."

¹⁴ Jehovah God's impartiality allowed for people of various races to become Jewish proselytes. Consider also what happened 19 centuries ago on the desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza. A black man in the service of Ethiopia's queen was riding in his chariot while reading the prophecy of Isaiah. This officer was a circumcised proselyte, for "he had gone to Jerusalem to worship." Jehovah's angel appeared to the Jewish evangelizer Philip and told him: "Approach and join yourself to this chariot." Did Philip say: "Oh, no! He is a man of another race"? Far from it! Why, Philip was delighted to accept the Ethiopian's invitation to get into the chariot, sit down with him, and explain Isaiah's prophecy about Jesus Christ! When they approached a body of water, the Ethiopian asked: "What prevents me from getting baptized?" Since nothing prevented this, Philip happily baptized the Ethiopian, and Jehovah accepted that happy man as an anointed follower of His impartial Son, Jesus Christ. (Acts 8:26-39) But fur-

ther evidence of divine impartiality soon manifested itself.

A Great Change

¹⁵ The death of Christ did not eliminate worldly racial prejudice. But by means of that sacrificial death, God did change the relationship of Jesus' Jewish disciples to his Gentile followers. The apostle Paul indicated this when he wrote to Gentile Christians at Ephesus and said: "Keep bearing in mind that formerly you were people of the nations as to flesh; . . . that you were at that particular time without Christ, alienated from the state of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, and you had no hope and were without God in the world. But now in union with Christ Jesus you who were once far off have come to be near by the blood of the Christ. For he is our peace, he who made the two parties one and destroyed the wall in between that fenced them off." That "wall," or symbol of separation, was the Law covenant arrangement that acted as a partition between Jews and Gentiles. It was abolished on the basis of Christ's death so that through him both Jews and Gentiles could "have the approach to the Father by one spirit." —Ephesians 2:11-18.

¹⁶ Furthermore, the apostle Peter was given "the keys of the kingdom of the heavens" so that people of any race could learn about God's purposes, be "born again" from holy spirit, and become spiritual heirs with Christ. (Matthew 16:19; John 3:1-8) Peter used three symbolic keys. The first was for Jews, the second for Samaritans, and the third for Gentiles. (Acts 2:14-42; 8:14-17; 10:24-28, 42-48)

15. What change took place after Jesus' death, and how does Paul explain this?

16. (a) Why was Peter given the keys of the Kingdom? (b) How many keys were there, and what resulted from their use?

14. What evidence of Jehovah's impartiality manifested itself during the ministry of Philip the evangelizer?

Thus the impartial God, Jehovah, opened to chosen ones of all races the privilege of being Jesus' spiritual brothers and joint heirs of the Kingdom.—Romans 8:16, 17; 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

¹⁷ In order to prepare Peter to use the third key—for the Gentiles—he was given an unusual vision of unclean animals and was told: “Rise, Peter, slaughter and eat!” The lesson was: “Stop calling defiled the things God has cleansed.” (Acts 10:9-16) Peter was in great perplexity over the meaning of the vision. But soon three men arrived to take him to the home of Cornelius, a Roman army officer stationed at Caesarea. Since that city was the main headquarters of Roman troops in Judea, it was the natural place for Cornelius to have his home. Waiting for Peter in that very Gentile setting was Cornelius, along with his relatives and intimate friends. The apostle reminded them: “You well know how unlawful it is for a Jew to join himself to or approach a man of another race; and yet God has shown me I should call no man defiled or unclean. Hence I

17. (a) What unusual vision was Peter given, and why? (b) To whose home did certain men conduct Peter, and who were waiting for him there? (c) Of what did Peter remind those Gentiles, and yet what had God clearly taught him?

How Would You Respond?

- ☐ Why would you say that Jehovah was not partial in using the Israelites?
- ☐ What proof is there that Jesus Christ was not racially prejudiced or partial?
- ☐ How was Peter helped to see that “God is not partial”?
- ☐ Despite the lack of racial harmony in this world, what prophecy denoting unity is now being fulfilled?

came, really without objection, when I was sent for.”—Acts 10:17-29.

¹⁸ After Cornelius explained God's direction of matters, Peter said: “For a certainty I perceive that *God is not partial*, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:30-35) Then, as the apostle proceeded to give a witness concerning Jesus Christ, something dramatic happened! “While Peter was yet speaking about these matters the holy spirit fell upon all those hearing the word.” Peter's Jewish companions “were amazed, because the free gift of the holy spirit was being poured out also upon people of the nations. For they heard them speaking with tongues and magnifying God.” Peter responded: “Can anyone forbid water so that these might not be baptized who have received the holy spirit even as we have?” Who could object, since the holy spirit of the impartial God of heaven had been poured out upon those believing Gentiles? Therefore, Peter commanded that they be “baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”—Acts 10:36-48.

“From Every Nation”

¹⁹ We now find ourselves in “the last days,” and “critical times hard to deal with” are a fact of life. Among other things, people are lovers of themselves, self-assuming, haughty, without natural affection, not open to any agreement, without self-control, fierce, headstrong, and puffed up with pride. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) In such a social climate, it is not surprising that racial animosity and conflict are increasing worldwide. In many

18. (a) What momentous announcement did Peter make to Cornelius and his guests? (b) While Peter was witnessing concerning Jesus, what dramatic event took place? (c) What step was then taken in connection with those believing Gentiles?

19. Why is racial animosity increasing, and to what extent?

countries, people of different races or colors despise or even hate one another. This has led to actual fighting and even horrible cruelties in some lands. Even in so-called enlightened societies, many people have difficulty in overcoming racial prejudice. And this "disease" seems to be spreading into areas where one would least expect it, such as islands of the sea that were once almost idyllic in their peacefulness.

²⁰ Despite the lack of racial harmony in various parts of the world, however, the impartial God, Jehovah, foretold the bringing of honesthearted people of all

20. (a) What inspired vision did John see? (b) To what extent is this prophetic vision being fulfilled? (c) What difficulty do some still have to overcome fully, and where should they seek a solution?

races and nations into remarkable international unity. By divine inspiration, the apostle John saw "a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb," praising Jehovah. (Revelation 7:9, *The Jerusalem Bible*) This prophecy is already in course of fulfillment. Today, in 210 lands over 3,300,000 witnesses of Jehovah, of all nations and races, are enjoying unity and racial harmony. But they are still imperfect. Even some of these have difficulty in fully overcoming racial prejudice, although they may be unaware of this. How can this problem be overcome? We will discuss this matter in the next article, based on helpful counsel from the inspired Word of the impartial God, Jehovah.

Serve Jehovah With One Accord

"Then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve him with one consent."—ZEPHANIAH 3:9, *American Standard Version*.

JEHOVAH GOD is doing something today that humans alone could never achieve. Some 3,000 languages are spoken in this divided world, but God is now bringing about the fulfillment of this prophecy: "I shall give to peoples the change to a pure language, in order for them all to call upon the name of Jehovah,

1, 2. (a) Jehovah is now bringing about the fulfillment of what prophecy? (b) This prophecy raises what questions?

in order to serve him shoulder to shoulder."—Zephaniah 3:9.

² What is this "pure language"? Who speak it? And what does it mean to 'serve God shoulder to shoulder'?

They Speak the "Pure Language"

³ On the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., God's holy spirit was poured out upon Jesus

3. What is the "pure language," and why are those speaking it not divided?

Christ's disciples, empowering them to speak in languages they had not learned. This enabled them to tell people of many tongues "about the magnificent things of God." Jehovah thus began to bring people of all ethnic backgrounds into unity. (Acts 2:1-21, 37-42) When believing Gentiles later became Jesus' followers, God's servants were indeed a multilingual, multi-racial people. They have never been torn apart by worldly barriers, however, because they all speak the "pure language." This is the mutual language of Scriptural truth foretold at Zephaniah 3:9. (Ephesians 4:25) Those speaking the "pure language" are not divided but "speak in agreement," being "fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought."—1 Corinthians 1:10.

⁴ The "pure language" was to enable people of all nations and races to serve Jehovah "shoulder to shoulder," literally, 'with one shoulder.' They would serve God "with one consent" (*The New English Bible*); "with one accord" (*The New American Bible*); or "with one unanimous consent and one united shoulder." (*The Amplified Bible*) Another version reads: "Then I will turn the lips of all the peoples clean, that they may all call on Jehovah's name and cooperate in his service." (*Byington*) Such multilingual and multi-racial cooperation in God's service is found only among Jehovah's Witnesses.

⁵ Since all of Jehovah's Witnesses speak the "pure language" of Scriptural truth, they are able to put any human language to the most exalted use—praising God and declaring the good news of the Kingdom. (Mark 13:10; Titus 2:7, 8; Hebrews 13:15) How splendid that the "pure language"

thus enables people of all ethnic groups to serve Jehovah with one accord!

⁶ When Peter was witnessing to Cornelius and other Gentiles, he said: "I perceive to a certainty that God is not partial, but in every nation he who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35, *By*) According to other versions, Jehovah "is not a Respector of persons," "does not discriminate between people," and "does not show favoritism." (*The Emphatic Diaglott*; *Phillips*; *New International Version*) As Jehovah's servants, we should view people of all ethnic groups as he does. But what if a degree of partiality lingers in the heart of a certain Christian? Then it will be helpful to note how our impartial God deals with his servants of every nation, tribe, people, and tongue.—See also *Awake!* of November 8, 1984, pages 3-11.

They Are Desirable

⁷ If you are a baptized witness of Jehovah, most likely at one time you were 'sighing and groaning over the detestable things' taking place in this wicked system. (Ezekiel 9:4) You were 'dead in your sins,' but God mercifully drew you to himself through Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:1-5; John 6:44) In these respects, you did not differ from others who are now your fellow believers. They too were distressed by wickedness, were 'dead in their sins,' and became recipients of God's mercy through Jesus Christ. And regardless of our race or nationality, it is only by faith that any of us now have a standing with Jehovah God as his witnesses.—Romans 11:20.

6. How does Jehovah view people, but what will be helpful if a degree of partiality lingers in the heart of a certain Christian?

7. As regards a relationship with God, how does one Christian not differ from another of any nation or race?

4. How did Zephaniah 3:9 point to multilingual and multiracial cooperation, and where is it found today?

5. To what use are Jehovah's Witnesses able to put any human language?

⁸ The prophetic words of Haggai 2:7 help us to see how we should view fellow believers of different nationalities. There Jehovah declared: "I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory." This foretold exaltation of pure religion is taking place at God's true temple, the realm of his worship. (John 4: 23, 24) But what are "the desirable things of all the nations"? They are the thousands of lovers of righteousness who react favorably to the Kingdom-preaching work. From all nations and races, they are streaming to 'the mountain of Jehovah's house,' becoming his baptized witnesses and part of the international "great crowd." (Isaiah 2:2-4; Revelation 7:9) Those praising Jehovah as part of his earthly organization are clean, moral, godly persons—most desirable indeed. Surely, then, every true Christian should want to show brotherly love to all these desirable ones acceptable to our mutual Father in heaven.

Their Personality Is New

⁹ Our spiritual brothers and sisters around the earth are also desirable because they have heeded the counsel to 'strip off the old personality with its practices and clothe themselves with the new personality.' "Through accurate knowledge [it] is being made new according to the image of the One who created it, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, foreigner, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all things and in all." (Colossians 3:9-11) If an individual formerly did not think well of a Jew, a Greek, or others foreign to him, things should be different now

8. How is Haggai 2:7 now being fulfilled?

9. Even if we in the past did not think well of foreigners, why should things be different now that we are Christians?



People of every race and nation are praising Jehovah with one accord



that he is a Christian. Regardless of race, nationality, or culture, those possessing "the new personality" cultivate and demonstrate the fruitage of God's holy spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22, 23) This endears them to fellow worshipers of Jehovah.

¹⁰ Unlike Jehovah's servants, some worldly persons make disparaging remarks about people of ethnic backgrounds other than their own. Why, concerning his own people, a Cretan prophet once said: "Cretans are always liars, injurious wild beasts, unemployed gluttons"! The apostle Paul was reminded of those words when it became necessary to silence false teachers among Christians on the island of Crete. But Paul certainly was not saying: 'All Cretan Christians lie and are injurious, lazy, and gluttonous.' (Titus 1:5-12) No, for Christians do not speak disparagingly of others. Moreover, the majority of those Cretan Christians had put on "the new personality," and some were spiritually qualified for appointment as elders. This merits serious thought if we are ever tempted to make sweeping unfavorable remarks about our spiritual brothers and sisters of a particular race or nationality.

Consider Others Superior

¹¹ On the other hand, if a Christian was partial to one race or nationality, he would probably betray this by words or actions. In turn, this could cause injured feelings, especially in a congregation made up of people of various ethnic backgrounds. Surely, no Christian would want to place such a strain on the unity of God's people. (Psalm 133:1-3) So if any partiality exists

10. If we are tempted to make sweeping unfavorable remarks about fellow believers of any race or nation, how can Titus 1:5-12 help us?

11. If partiality of any kind exists in a Christian's heart, what can he do?

in a Christian's heart, he can well pray: "Search through me, O God, and know my heart. Examine me, and know my disquieting thoughts, and see whether there is in me any painful way, and lead me in the way of time indefinite."—Psalm 139:23, 24.

¹² It is good to take the realistic view that all of us are imperfect humans who could have no standing with God at all were it not for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:8-2:2) What, then, makes us differ from others? Since we have nothing that we did not receive, why should we boast in ourselves or in others of our ethnic background?—Compare 1 Corinthians 4:6, 7.

¹³ We can contribute to the unity of the congregation if we acknowledge and show

12. Why should we not boast in ourselves or in others of our ethnic background?

13. How can we contribute to the unity of the congregation, and what can be learned from Philippians 2:1-11?



Listen carefully and be observant. You will be moved by the love and faith evident in the words and deeds of other witnesses of Jehovah

appreciation for the good qualities of others. The Jewish apostle Paul gave all of us food for thought when he told the Gentile Philippians: "Make my joy full in that you are of the same mind and have the same love, being joined together in soul, holding the one thought in mind, doing nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with lowliness of mind considering that the others are superior to you." The proper attitude for us to display toward fellow humans of any race or nationality was exemplified in Jesus Christ. Though he was a mighty spirit creature, he "came to be in the likeness of men" and humbled himself to the point of death on a torture stake for sinful humans of every race and nation. (Philippians 2:1-11) As Jesus' followers, then, should we not be loving, humble, and compassionate, acknowledging that others are superior to us?

Listen and Observe

¹⁴ We may be helped to consider others as superior to us if we really listen when they speak and carefully observe their conduct. For example, we may honestly have to admit to ourselves that a fellow elder—perhaps of another race—has surpassed us in ability to give effective counsel in the Theocratic Ministry School. We may discern that it is his spirituality, not necessarily his diction or way of speaking, that enables him to get good results in helping fellow believers to become competent Kingdom proclaimers. And it is obvious that Jehovah is blessing his efforts.

¹⁵ When we converse with our brothers and sisters or listen to their comments at meetings, we may perceive that some of them have a better grasp of certain Scriptural truths than we do. We may discern

14. How may we be helped to consider others as superior to us?

15. What may we note when we listen to the statements of fellow worshippers?

that their brotherly love appears stronger, they seem to have more faith, or they give evidence of greater trust in Jehovah. So whether they are of our ethnic background or not, they incite us to love and fine works, help to strengthen our faith, and motivate us to trust more fully in our heavenly Father. (Proverbs 3:5, 6; Hebrews 10:24, 25, 39) Jehovah has obviously drawn close to them, and so should we. —Compare James 4:8.

Blessed and Sustained

¹⁶ Jehovah is not partial in blessing his servants of any nationality or race. For instance, consider the country of Brazil. It was not from foreign missionaries but from the lips of eight Brazilian sailors that people in Brazil first heard the Kingdom message in about the year 1920. God's blessing has been evident, for by the 1987 service year, there was a peak of 216,216 Kingdom proclaimers in that land of 141,302,000 inhabitants—a ratio of one publisher to 654.

¹⁷ Consider another example of divine blessing. In April 1923 two black witnesses of Jehovah from the Caribbean island of Trinidad were sent to declare the Kingdom message in West Africa. So it was that Brother and Sister W. R. Brown served there for years, he becoming known as "Bible Brown." They "planted" and "God kept making it grow" as others also worked in that vast area. (1 Corinthians 3:5-9) Today, Kingdom proclaimers number over 32,600 in Ghana and more than 133,800 in Nigeria alone.

¹⁸ Jehovah not only blesses his servants of all nations and races but also sustains

16, 17. Illustrate the fact that Jehovah is not partial in blessing his servants of any nationality or race.

18, 19. Give examples of how our impartial God sustains his servants of all races and nations.

them. For instance, consider the case of two Japanese witnesses of Jehovah. On June 21, 1939, Katsuo Miura and his wife were unjustly arrested, jailed, and separated from their five-year-old boy, who had to be cared for by his grandmother. Sister Miura was released after eight months, but Brother Miura was detained for more than two years before he was brought to trial. He suffered mistreatment, was found guilty, and received a five-year sentence. In prison in Hiroshima, God sustained him by means of the Scriptures, which provided unfailing comfort and strength. By a seeming miracle, Brother Miura survived on August 6, 1945, when the atom bomb blast demolished his prison. Two months later, he was able to rejoin his wife and son in the north of Japan.

¹⁹ During World War II, intense persecution was experienced by Jehovah's Witnesses in many lands. For instance, Robert A. Winkler was one German brother who suffered in Nazi concentration camps in Germany and the Netherlands. Because he would not betray his fellow Witnesses, he was so brutally beaten that he could not be recognized. But he wrote: "The thoughts of Jehovah's promises to help one in all kinds of trouble gave me the comfort and strength to endure all this. . . . Saturday I had been beaten by the Gestapo, and on the following Monday I was to be interrogated by them again. What would happen now and what was I to do? I turned to Jehovah in prayer, trusting in his promises. I knew this meant the use of theocratic war strategy for the sake of the Kingdom work and the protection of my Christian brothers. It was a great trial for me to endure and the seventeenth day I was completely worn out, but I thanked Jehovah that in his strength I was able to endure this trial

and keep my integrity."—Psalm 18:35; 55:22; 94:18.

Grateful for Our Brotherhood

²⁰ Unquestionably, Jehovah blesses and sustains his witnesses of every nation and race. He is not partial, and as his dedicated servants, we have no excuse or reason to show partiality. Moreover, our respect for our brothers and sisters of every race and nation will increase if we consider ways in which they are superior to us. They too apply heavenly wisdom, which does not make partial distinctions but yields excellent fruitage. (James 3:13-18) Yes, and their kindness, generosity, love, and other godly qualities provide us with fine examples.

²¹ How thankful we should be, then, for our multiracial, multinational brotherhood! With the help and blessing of our heavenly Father, let us "serve him shoulder to shoulder" in brotherly love and with mutual respect. Indeed, it should be our earnest desire and firm intention to serve Jehovah with one accord.

20. How can our respect for fellow believers of every race and nation be increased?

21. What should we be determined to do?

What Are Your Comments?

- ☐ What does the "pure language" enable Jehovah's servants of all ethnic backgrounds to do?
- ☐ How is Haggai 2:7 being fulfilled today, and how should this affect our view of other servants of God?
- ☐ How can Philippians 2:3 affect our relationship with people of every race and nation?
- ☐ If we listen and observe, what will we discern about fellow believers of other national backgrounds?

Has Anyone Seen God?

THE renowned patriarch Abraham, who lived more than 1,900 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, was so warmly viewed by our Creator that he was called "God's friend." (James 2:23, *Byington*) If anyone would be given the privilege of seeing God, surely Abraham would be that person. Well, on a certain occasion, three visitors came to him with a divine message. Abraham addressed one of them as Jehovah. Does this mean that Abraham actually saw God?

This account is found at Genesis 18:1-3. There we read: "Jehovah appeared to him among the big trees of Mamre, while he was sitting at the entrance of the tent about the heat of the day. When he raised his eyes, then he looked and there three men were standing some distance from him. When he caught sight of them he began running to meet them from the entrance of the tent and proceeded to bow down to the earth. Then he said: 'Jehovah, if, now, I have found favor in your eyes, please do not pass by your servant.'"

Later, when Abraham and his three visitors were viewing Sodom from an elevated location, two left to visit the city. Verse 22 then says: "But as for Jehovah, he was still standing before Abraham." It would appear from this that God was present with Abraham in a materialized fleshly body. This is what some persons contend who believe that God and Jesus Christ are one and the same person.

Regarding Genesis 18:3, Bible scholar Melancthon W. Jacobus wrote: "Here God appears for the first time on record as *man* among men, to show the reality of His Being, and of His affinity with men, and by this typical act to assure the patriarch

of the Divine communion and fellowship." Those having this point of view could conclude that Abraham actually saw Jehovah with his physical eyes and that persons who saw Jesus Christ also saw God. But is this conclusion in harmony with the Bible?

What Jesus Said

Instead of announcing that he was God in the flesh, Jesus Christ said: "I am God's Son." (John 10:36) As Jehovah God's perfect Representative, Jesus also said: "I cannot do a single thing of my own initiative; just as I hear, I judge; and the judgment that I render is righteous, because I seek, not my own will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 5:30) When Jesus was on the torture stake, he prayed to the great Creator in the heavens, addressing him as "My God, my God." (Matthew 27:46) After his resurrection, Jesus told Mary Magdalene: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God." (John 20:1, 17) Since Jesus Christ was not God incarnate, no one who saw Jesus could say that he had thus seen God.

John, the apostle whom Jesus especially loved, confirmed the fact that the apostles were not seeing God when they looked at Jesus. Under inspiration John said: "No man has seen God at any time." (John 1:18) Whom, then, did Abraham see? The experience of Moses helps us to find the answer.

How Moses Saw God

Moses once expressed the desire to see God. At Exodus 33:18-20, we read: "'Cause me [Moses] to see, please, your glory.' But he [God] said: 'I myself shall cause all my

goodness to pass before your face, and I will declare the name of Jehovah before you; and I will favor the one whom I may favor, and I will show mercy to the one to whom I may show mercy.' And he added: 'You are not able to see my face, because no man may see me and yet live.'"

What God permitted Moses to see was His passing glory. Verses 21-23 state: "And Jehovah said further: 'Here is a place with me, and you must station yourself upon the rock. And it has to occur that while my glory is passing by I must place you in a hole in the rock, and I must put my palm over you as a screen until I have passed by. After that I must take my palm away, and you will indeed see my back. But my face may not be seen.'"

In harmony with what Jehovah told Moses and what the apostle John said, Moses saw no materialization or material form of God. All that Moses saw was the afterglow of the divine presence passing by. Even then he had to be divinely protected. Obviously, it was not God himself that Moses saw.

When Moses spoke to God "face to face," as stated at Exodus 33:11, he was not in visual contact with Jehovah. This expression indicates the manner in which Moses communicated with God, not what he saw. Speaking with God "face to face" indicates a two-way conversation. Similarly, an individual can carry on a two-way conversation by telephone without seeing the other person.

When Moses talked with God and received instructions from him, the communication was not through visions, as was often the case with other prophets. This is noted at Numbers 12:6-8, where we read: "He went on to say: 'Hear my words, please. If there came to be a prophet of yours for Jehovah, it would be in a vision I would make myself known to him. In a dream I would speak to him. Not so my

servant Moses! He is being entrusted with all my house. Mouth to mouth I speak to him, thus showing him, and not by riddles; and the appearance of Jehovah is what he beholds.'"

In what sense did Moses behold "the appearance of Jehovah"?

Moses beheld "the appearance of Jehovah" when he, Aaron, and certain other men were on Mount Sinai. At Exodus 24:10, it is written: "They got to see the God of Israel. And under his feet there was what seemed like a work of sapphire flagstones and like the very heavens for purity." But how did Moses and the other men get to "see the God of Israel," since God had told him, "No man may see me and yet live"? Verse 11 explains, for it says: "He did not put out his hand against the distinguished men of the sons of Israel, but they got a vision of the true God and ate and drank." So the appearance of God that Moses and the others saw was by means of a vision.

Angelic Representatives

It has not been necessary for the great Creator of the universe to come down from his lofty place in the heavens in order to deliver messages to certain humans. Aside from the three recorded instances when God's own voice was heard while his Son was on the earth, Jehovah has always used angels to transmit His messages. (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; John 12:28) Even the Law that God gave to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai was transmitted by angels, although Moses was represented as talking directly with God himself. Regarding this, the apostle Paul wrote: "Why, then, the Law? It was added to make transgressions manifest, until the seed should arrive to whom the promise had been made; and it was transmitted through angels by the hand of a mediator."—Galatians 3:19.

That Moses actually spoke with an an-

gel who was personally representing God is also indicated at Acts 7:38, which states: "This is he that came to be among the congregation in the wilderness with the angel that spoke to him on Mount Sinai and with our forefathers." That angel was the personal spokesman for Jehovah God, the Creator, and so he spoke to Moses as if God himself were speaking.

The angel who delivered God's message to Moses at the burning thornbush was also a spokesman. He is identified as Jehovah's angel at Exodus 3:2, where we are told: "Jehovah's angel appeared to him in a flame of fire in the midst of a thornbush." Verse 4 says: "When Jehovah saw that he turned aside to inspect, God at once called to him out of the midst of the thornbush." In verse 6, this angelic spokesman for God said: "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." So when speaking with this personal representative of God, Moses spoke as if he were speaking to Jehovah himself.—Exodus 4:10.

In the 6th chapter of Judges, we find another example of a man speaking to God through an angelic representative. Verse 11 identifies the message bearer as "Jehovah's angel." There we read: "Later Jehovah's angel came and sat under the big tree that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, while Gideon his son was beating out wheat in the winepress so as to get it quickly out of the sight of Midian." This messenger, "Jehovah's angel," is thereafter represented as if he were Jehovah God himself. In verses 14 and 15, we read: "Upon that Jehovah faced [Gideon] and said: 'Go in this power of yours, and you will certainly save Israel out of Midian's palm. Do I not send you?' In turn he said to him: 'Excuse me, Jehovah. With what shall I save Israel?'" So

the materialized angel seen by Gideon and with whom he spoke is represented in the Biblical account as if he were God himself. In verse 22, Gideon says: "I have seen Jehovah's angel face to face!" The angel spoke precisely what God told him to speak. Therefore, Gideon spoke with God through this angelic spokesman.

Consider, too, the case of Manoah and his wife, the parents of Samson. This account also speaks of the angelic messenger as "Jehovah's angel" and "the angel of the true God." (Judges 13:2-18) In verse 22, Manoah says to his wife: "We shall positively die, because it is God that we have seen." Although he did not actually see Jehovah God, Manoah felt that way because he had seen the materialized personal spokesman for God.

"No Man Has Seen God"

Now it is possible to understand why Abraham addressed the materialized angelic spokesman of God as if he were talking to Jehovah God himself. Since this angel spoke precisely what God wanted to have said to Abraham and was there personally representing Him, the Biblical record could say that "Jehovah appeared to him."—Genesis 18:1.

Remember that an angelic spokesman for God could transmit His messages just as precisely as a telephone or a radio can transmit our words to another person. Hence, it can be understood how Abraham, Moses, Manoah, and others could speak with a materialized angel as if they were talking to God. While such individuals were able to see these angels and the glory of Jehovah reflected by them, they were not able to see God. Therefore, this in no way contradicts the apostle John's statement: "No man has seen God at any time." (John 1:18) What these men saw were angelic representatives and not God himself.

The Last of the Great World Powers

When the Bible book of Revelation was written, almost 1,900 years ago, it said that five "kings," or world powers, had already come and gone. These were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. The sixth, Rome, still 'was,' but the seventh had not yet arrived. (Revelation 17:10) What was that seventh world power? How did it come into existence? And what will follow it? The answers to these important questions are the subject of this article.

THE major outline of world history over the past 2,500 years was given in advance in the most widely circulated book that the world has ever known. Yet, relatively few people who have a copy of that book, the Bible, have any idea of the amazing information it contains.

For example, more than 500 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, the prophet Daniel recorded a divinely inspired vision in which the great world powers since his time were represented by powerful beasts. Each beast had the characteristics of the world power it represented. The mighty Roman Empire was described as a huge beast "fearsome and terrible and unusually strong." Daniel said that "it was something different from all the other beasts that were prior to it, and it had ten horns."—Daniel 7:2-7.

The 'Small Horn'

In time, the Roman Empire grew to cover an area that stretched from the British Isles down across much of Europe, all the way around the Mediterranean and beyond Babylon to the Persian Gulf. This mighty empire finally broke up into many nations—into the "ten horns" that Daniel saw.* Then Daniel saw that "another horn, a small one, came up in among them, and there were three of the first horns

*The horn, a formidable weapon, is often used in the Bible to represent rulers and ruling dynasties.—Deuteronomy 33:17; Zechariah 1:18-21; Revelation 17:3, 12.

that were plucked up from before it." (Daniel 7:8) What did this mean?

Daniel was told: "As for the ten horns, out of that [Roman] kingdom there are ten kings that will rise up; and still another one [the 'small horn'] will rise up after them, and he himself will be different from the first ones, and three kings he will humiliate." (Daniel 7:24) Who was the 'small horn,' and who were the three kings he humiliated?

An island up in the northwestern corner of the Roman Empire had long remained on the fringe of world affairs. As one historian explained: "In the sixteenth century, England had been a second-rate power. Its wealth was slight compared with that of the Netherlands. Its population was much less than that of France. Its armed forces (including its navy) were inferior to Spain's." However, England developed a naval fleet of some importance, and its pirates and privateers began raiding Spain's colonies and her heavily laden treasure ships.

The Three Horns

In 1588 Phillip II of Spain launched the Spanish Armada against his English tormentors. This fleet of 130 ships carrying more than 24,000 men sailed slowly up the English Channel, only to fall victim to contrary winds and fierce Atlantic storms. In *Modern Europe to 1870*, historian Carlton Hayes writes that this event "marked the decisive passing of naval superiority from Spain to England."

In the 17th century, the Dutch developed by far the largest merchant marine in the world. Their ships dominated the seas, and they lent their profits to governments far

and wide. But with her growing overseas colonies, England prevailed here too.

Then, in the 18th century, the British and the French fought in such widely separated places as North America and India, leading to the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Concerning it, William B. Willcox wrote in his book *Star of Empire—A Study of Britain as a World Power* that although the treaty appeared to be a compromise, “actually it recognized Britain’s new position as the predominant European power in the world beyond Europe.”

Other historians agree, saying: “From two centuries of warfare with Spaniards, Dutch, and French, Great Britain emerged in 1763 as the foremost commercial and colonial power in the world.” (*Modern Europe to 1870*) “In 1763 the British Empire bestrode the world like some revived and enlarged Rome.” “She emerged from the midcentury wars the greatest empire and the strongest—and the most thoroughly hated—power in the world.” (*Navy and Empire*, by James L. Stokesbury) Yes, this ‘small horn’ had grown to become the seventh world power of Bible history.

Britons pressed up the Nile and across the Zambezi River. They moved into Upper Burma, North Borneo, and islands of the Pacific. Moreover, they colonized Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the east coast of North America. “The Roman Empire was self-contained,” writes James Morris in *Pax Britannica*. “The British empire was broadcast across the earth.” It became the largest empire in the history of mankind, encompassing nearly a quarter of the earth’s land surface and more than a quarter of its population. It was said that the sun never set on its domain.

A Dual Power

In the book of Revelation, this seventh world power had also been described as having “two horns like a lamb.” (Revelation 13:11) Why two horns? Because the British

Empire and the new American nation, joined by common language, principles, and policies, were soon working together. They became, in many respects, a dual English-speaking world power.

William B. Willcox points out in *Star of Empire* that in the 19th century the United States was “insulated from Europe by the British fleet.” He adds: “For a century the United States was free to grow into a great power without ever possessing, except in her civil war, the army or navy by which every other great power was known.” America “had been able to afford isolation because the Royal Navy had been her buffer against European powers.” Later, the United States also became a great military power.

An outstanding example of the combined activity of Britain and America occurred on June 6, 1944, when the tide of World War II changed in northern Europe. On that day, 156,000 British, American, and other Allied troops invaded the continent of Europe. This combined force was under the supreme command of a U.S. general and the operational command of a British field marshal—Eisenhower and Montgomery respectively. Furthermore, the atom bombs that ended the war with Japan resulted from a joint effort by British and American scientists.

As the *Los Angeles Times* of May 5, 1986, pointed out, even in peacetime, Britain and America have collaborated “in such sensitive areas as intelligence and nuclear technology.” Later joined by Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, they have “divided the globe into areas of responsibility for intelligence-gathering and agreed to share even the most secret information.” This newspaper said that while the relationship “has not always been a smooth one,” it has been “more notable for its closeness than its irritations.”

Most of Britain’s colonies have gained independence and joined the Commonwealth of Nations. While the empire may be gone, the Anglo-American World Power remains.



U.S. Coast Guard photo

The Allied invasion of Europe on June 6, 1944, was an outstanding example of Anglo-American cooperation

But it will exist for only “a short while,” when compared with the many centuries that the preceding Roman power held sway. —Revelation 17:10.

New Worldwide Rulership

Daniel’s prophecy concerning the great world powers has proved true through 2,500 years of world government—from before 500 B.C.E. down through the seventh world power in our day. Thus, we can have confidence in the rest of that prophecy. The astounding fact is that it describes no more human world powers! Revelation too indicated that there would be only seven.* Then, what will happen next?

Chapter 7 of Daniel, which tells about these world powers, goes on to describe something even more astonishing—a major change in the way the earth is ruled! Failing human rulerships are to end and be replaced by a righteous heavenly one.

* Revelation 17:11 mentions a “wild beast” that is “an eighth king, but springs from the seven.” This eighth power that would exist during the lifetime of the seventh will be discussed in a later article.

Daniel’s vision permitted him to see the magnificent heavenly throne of “the Ancient of Days,” Jehovah God. Brought before this One was “someone like a son of man”—the resurrected Jesus Christ.* Daniel relates: “To him there were given rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him. His rulership is an indefinitely lasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom [unlike failing human kingdoms] one that will not be brought to ruin.”—Daniel 7:9, 10, 13, 14.

An earlier prophecy given to Daniel concerning the same world powers had said: “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. . . . It will crush and put an end to all these [human] kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite . . . And the dream is reliable, and the interpretation of it is trustworthy.”—Daniel 2:44, 45.

This Kingdom government by God is the same one for which Jesus taught us to pray. He said: “You must pray, then, this way: ‘Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.’”—Matthew 6:9, 10.

How happy earth’s inhabitants will be under that government! It will be a change from human exploitation to divine justice, from man’s imperfect way of doing things to God’s supreme standards. What the Bible says about the operation of the Kingdom will be the subject of a future article in this series.

* The expression “Son of man” is found nearly 80 times in the Gospel accounts, and in every case it refers to Jesus Christ.—See Matthew 26:63, 64.

Insight on the News

Clowns for Christ?

"Gospel Clowns on the Road" was the headline that appeared in the *Church Times*, a Church of England newspaper. It was heralding the annual visit of the Church Army Roadshow to selected seaside resorts in England and Wales. Founded just over a hundred years ago as a wing of the Church of England, the Church Army was to evangelize "among the outcasts and criminals of the Westminster slums."

Today, Church Army leaders are still concerned that "evangelism should be given its rightful place." Their Roadshow aims to present the gospel in a "humorous way to people who have little previous experience of God, and who wouldn't dream of coming to an event held in a church or church hall." The costumed "Gospel Clowns" in the roadshow hope that "their dedicated fooling about will at least make passers-by stop and listen for a while," notes the *Church Times*.

However, while their clown attire, buffoonery, and free balloons attracted many children, adults were left wondering what this approach had to do with the evangelism initiated by Jesus Christ.

True, the apostle Paul wrote: "We have become a theatrical spectacle to the world . . . We are fools because of Christ." (1 Corinthians 4:9, 10) But what did he have in mind? Clowning or "fooling about" to attract passers-by? No. Paul was illustrating how the world considers Christians to be fools, "exposed to public ridicule and shame," as *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* puts it, on account of their faith and teachings.

In contrast with the Church Ar-

my's "Gospel Clowns," Jesus taught the crowds "as a person having authority." His ministry was straightforward and without gimmickry. As he explained, "Just as the Father taught me I speak these things." What was the result? "Many put faith in him." —Matthew 7:29; John 8:28, 30.

"Burden of Conscience"

Eugene Stockwell, director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, recently admitted to the hypocritical role the clergy and churches of Christendom have played during both world wars. "It is a heavy burden of conscience for Christians that the two major world wars of this century were unleashed among nations that have long traditions of Christianity in their midst and whose military assaults were often blessed by leaders of Christian churches," he told an ecumenical gathering in Warsaw, Poland.

Stockwell added: "God was passionately declared to be on one side of the conflict or the other. . . . All too easily we Christians put our faith at the service of our violence." He said that World War II was "a massive evidence of our failure as 'Christian nations' to live out our faith, a faith so frequently expressed in words and so evidently denied in action."

But has this "heavy burden of conscience" helped so-called Christians and their clergy to learn a lesson? According to the Ecumenical Press Service, Director Stockwell conceded: "We talk of loving our enemies, and we kill them. We talk of turning the other cheek, and we arm ourselves to

the teeth. We talk of peace that passes understanding, and we engage in war that surpasses any understanding. We talk of faith in God and we place our true faith in weapons of destruction."

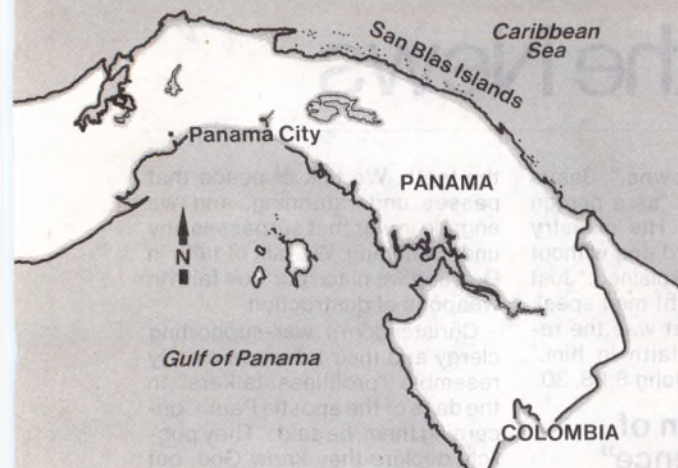
Christendom's war-supporting clergy and their followers clearly resemble "profitless talkers" in the days of the apostle Paul. Concerning them, he said: "They publicly declare they know God, but they disown him by their works." —Titus 1:10, 16.

"Offensive" Stamp

On November 19, 1987, the South African Postal Administration planned to issue four commemorative stamps on the Bible. One of the stamps contained the expressions "The Word of God" in Greek and "The Word of Jehovah" in Hebrew. There was a total printing of 1,750,000 copies of this stamp.

However, shortly before the date of release, post offices received a telegram instructing them to return their supply of this stamp. The reason? "Because it was found to be offensive by the orthodox Jewish community," reported *The Star*, a Johannesburg newspaper. It added: "Rabbi David Hazdan of Johannesburg said the name of God printed in full as it was printed on the stamp was usually reserved for special religious occasions only."

It is due to similar Jewish tradition that many modern Bible translators have avoided using the name Jehovah and have replaced it with mere titles, such as "Lord" or "God." No wonder Jesus said to religious leaders of his day: "You have made the word of God invalid because of your tradition!" —Matthew 15:6.



An Open Door to the San Blas Islands

THE twin-engined plane circled over the tiny landing strip along the beach. The pilot announced that the runway was flooded and it would not be safe to land. But making another approach, he decided to bring the plane down. As the plane hit the ground, it bounced along on the gravel strip, sending a spray of water high into the air. When it finally came to a stop, we breathed a sigh of relief. Our anxiety turned into joy when we spotted our friends waiting for us.

They had come from the island of Ustupu, about a mile off the coast. It is one of the San Blas Islands, a chain of some 350 islets dotting the northeastern coastline of Panama as far as the Colombian border. These islands are inhabited by about 50,000 native Indians of the Kuna tribe. We had come with a mission.

An Audience With the *Sahilas*

San Blas is a *comarca*, or territorial division, of the Republic of Panama. Each island is governed by its own *Sahilas*, a sort of local council made up of older male members of the community. Representatives from the *Sahilas* make up a body called *Caciques*, which rules over the entire *comarca*.

Since 1969, Jehovah's Witnesses have been preaching the good news of the Kingdom in San Blas, and about 50 people now attend our meetings. (Matthew 24:14) However, local authorities have denied us permission to preach on some of the islands. Recently, the *Sahilas* of Ustupu, the second-most-populated island in the group, requested an interview with Jehovah's Witnesses in order to decide whether to grant us official recognition or not. It appears that Jehovah is 'opening the door' for us.—1 Corinthians 16:9.

At a preliminary meeting, the main concern of the local authorities became clear. They pointed out that there were already four religions in the community—Catholic, Baptist, Church of God, and Mormon. Each of these has a large church building, some of which are in a state of abandonment. With land being so scarce on the island, the officials would have to be cautious about letting in another religious group.

By means of an interpreter, we explained that in over 200 lands around the world, Jehovah's Witnesses have contributed to the welfare of the community by the high moral standards they maintain. We assured the officials that meetings would now be held in the homes of the local

Witnesses, and if it should become necessary to build a special meeting place, it would not fall into disuse, for our meetings are well attended.

After about an hour's discussion, the officials decided to present the matter at the next *Sahilas* meeting, held later in the week. We would have to wait for the answer.

A Visit to Dog Island

Rather than just wait, we decided to visit Achutupu, or Dog Island, with the Kingdom message. Our boat, named *La Torre del Vigia* (The Watchtower), is brightly painted in red and blue and is fitted with an outboard motor. The boat stands out in sharp contrast with the many other *cayucos*, or dugout canoes, tied up at the wharf. A 45-minute ride through rather choppy seas brought us to Achutupu.

Achutupu is a typical small tropical island, with swaying palm trees and sandy beaches. But with a population of about 2,000, it seemed rather crowded. Rows of native huts were everywhere, separated only by narrow, unpaved alleyways. The huts all looked alike. Walls, made of rattan canes latched to a frame of slim tree branches, stood only about five feet high and were topped by a tall, thick roof of palm fronds. Inside, there was just one open space for the whole family. There were no windows, but the spaces between the canes allowed enough light and air to filter through.

Before visiting the homes with our Bible message, we decided to follow the local custom of calling on the village chiefs to obtain their permission. So we headed for the community hall, a large building in the center of town.

It was dark inside the hall, but when our eyes became adjusted, we could see rows of wooden benches set around an open space

in the center. Pictures of important *Sahilas* of the past were everywhere. Because of the darkness, the pictures, and the silence, the place was like the inside of a church. In the center of all of this were five men, some reclining in hammocks, others sitting on benches. Apparently, they were the village chiefs.

Speaking in the local language, Bolivar, one of the Witnesses who had come with us from Ustupu, explained the purpose of our visit. Right away, we were given a friendly reception and permission was granted for us to call on the villagers.

Hut to Hut in Achutupu

The Kuna Indians are a happy, friendly people. As we walked through the streets, the children ran up to us, calling out "*Mergui! Mergui!*" meaning "foreigners." They wanted to shake our hands. There were few men around, and we were told that most of them were away tending their small plots of ground on the mainland.

We were invited inside at every home. The housewife would seat us in heavy, hand-carved wooden chairs, and the rest of the family would gather around to listen attentively. Before leaving, we would be offered a drink made of cocoa, coffee, or local fruits. This was followed by a glass of water for rinsing our mouth. According to local custom, it was quite in order to spit the water on the floor. We soon learned to take just a little sip each time, remembering that there were many homes to call on.

At one hut, we saw about 50 carved wooden images of different sizes lined up alongside the entrance. Bolivar explained that these were for warding off evil spirits. When the woman came to the door and told us that her husband was not well, we understood why the images were there, for sickness is often attributed to demons.

After we were invited inside, we saw the

husband lying in a hammock. Suspended from a cord above him were dozens of miniature bows strung with red-tipped arrows aimed at the sick man. These were supposed to frighten the evil spirits. On the floor were several round gourds containing small images, tobacco pipes, and smoldering cocoa beans. These were supposed to appease the spirits. Bolivar tried to comfort the family by telling them about God's promise to wipe away all sickness, and they accepted some Bible literature. Once again, there were the traditional drink and glass of water.

Colorful Kuna Costumes

Unusual sights on the islands are the colorful costumes of the Kuna Indians. Although the men usually wear Western-style clothes today, the women still prefer their traditional dress consisting of a red shawl, a short-sleeved blouse, and a knee-length skirt. The upper part of the blouse is usually brightly colored. The mid-section is known as a *mola*, which tourists often buy and use as a wall decoration. It is a patchwork of colorful cloth in traditional designs of birds, fish, and animals. The skirt is simply a rectangular piece of dark cloth with bright patterns, wrapped around the body and tucked in at the waist. Most Kuna women wear their hair short,

although some of the younger unmarried girls let their hair grow longer.

The women seem to enjoy wearing many ornaments. Gold earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and nose rings are very popular. Often all the assets of the family, which may amount to thousands of dollars, are worn by the women in this manner. Distinctive, too, are their leg and arm bands. These are made of tiny beads of orange, yellow, and other colors and may be anywhere from two to six inches wide. The women string the beads on a long thread and then wind it tightly on their limbs. Clever designs are achieved by alternating the color of the beads on the thread. The bands are tied on tightly so that they can be worn for months at a time without being removed even for bathing. To complement their finery, a vertical black line is painted or tattooed down the center of the forehead and nose, ending at the upper lip.

Our interesting visit to Achutupu had to be cut short, as we had to return to Ustupu in time for the meeting with the *Sahilas*. At the wharf, many people were waiting to get some Bible literature from us. We were happy to leave what we had with them.

Mission Accomplished!

Back in Ustupu, the community hall was crowded with hundreds of people eager to find out whether Jehovah's Witnesses would be officially recognized or not. So were we. As the proceedings moved along, the chairman presented the motion to authorize Jehovah's Witnesses to operate as a religion on the island. When he invited the audience to express their views, our heartbeat quickened. Only two persons opposed; the majority were favorable.

Finally, the congress voted to grant official permission for us to hold meetings and preach from door to door and to have

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World Powers Nears Its End

the decision written in their records. Thus, Jehovah's Witnesses became the first religion on the island to have written authorization to function. All the others have only verbal agreements. How happy and grateful we were for this victory!

It is hoped that this decision will open the door for the good news of the Kingdom to be preached in all the islands of San Blas. There is every reason to feel as did the psalmist when he said: "Jehovah himself has become king! Let the earth be joyful. Let the many islands rejoice." —Psalm 97:1.



Questions From Readers

■ What did Jesus do "to prepare a place" in heaven for his followers?

Shortly before instituting the Lord's Evening Meal, Jesus told his faithful apostles that he had to go away. He meant, of course, that after he died later that day, he had to go his way to heaven. Peter reacted by asking to be allowed to follow him. Thereupon Jesus said: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Exercise faith in God, exercise faith also in me. In the house of my Father there are many abodes. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going my way to prepare a place for you. Also, if I go my way and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you home to myself, that where I am you also may be." —John 14:1-3.

What "abodes" needed to be prepared for the apostles? Some Bible translators have rendered John 14:2 in a way that suggests that Jesus was talking about the apostles' needing "resting-places" on their way to heaven or their finding various rooms in heaven. Yet, W. E. Vine says about the Greek

word involved: "There is nothing in the word to indicate separate compartments in Heaven; neither does it suggest temporary resting-places on the road." The word means simply a place to abide. So Jesus was promising abiding places in the spiritual heavens where he was going to be with his Father. —Ephesians 1:20; 1 Peter 1:4; 3:21, 22.

But in what way would Jesus prepare such abodes for his loyal followers? Having died a sacrificial death, Jesus went to heaven to present before God the value of his lifeblood. This would first benefit those who would be called to be joint heirs of heavenly life. The apostle Paul wrote: "Christ entered, not into a holy place made with hands, which is a copy of the reality, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God for us." (Hebrews 9:12, 24-28; Romans 6:5; 8:17) So when Jesus told the apostles that he was going to "prepare a place for" them, he certainly would have in mind his

'appearing before the person of God for' them. Only after he did that could they or other humans follow him to heaven. —Philippians 3:20, 21.

Did Jesus have to do other things to prepare a place for them? In time, he would assume kingly power and would war against Satan, casting him and his demons out of heaven. (Revelation 12:7-9) This would occur prior to the start of the heavenly resurrection of the apostles and other anointed ones sleeping in death. (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17) Whether Jesus' comment about 'preparing a place for' his followers included his casting Satan out of heaven, we cannot say.

Moreover, we do not know if Jesus had other assignments that had to do with preparing a place in heaven for anointed Christians. Yet, at least we can be sure that Jesus did prepare the way for his anointed followers by presenting to God the value of his "precious blood." (1 Peter 1:19) On the basis of that blood, the new covenant was established between Jehovah God and spirit-anointed Christians.

Not Afraid Anymore

A letter recently received by the German branch office of the Watch Tower Society reads, in part:

"Diana is seven years old and has suffered from spastic paralysis from birth. Since she must attend a specialized school many miles from home, she must go to bed evenings at seven o'clock so that she can be up by six the next morning. She was always afraid of being alone in her room. So we put a cassette recorder there and at first played music cassettes, but this did not help. Besides, I wanted her to listen to something educational that she could understand.

"Then a wonderful solution came along—the cassette recordings of *My Book of Bible Stories*. I got them for her, and suddenly Diana was no longer afraid. She has learned ten of the stories by heart—word for word—and knows the others well enough to detect any mistake you may make in reading them to her, even though she herself cannot read yet. Since learning story 69, 'A Girl Helps a Mighty Man,' she has been talking to her teachers and to the children at school about the stories she knows."

