

The **Watchtower**
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

July 15, 1988

JESUS CHRIST
God, Man, or Myth?

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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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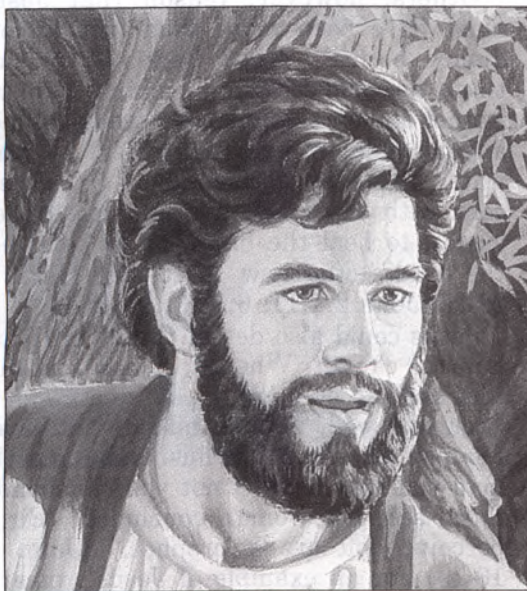
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JESUS CHRIST

*God, Man,
or Myth?*



A ROCK musical that opened on Broadway in New York City in 1971 proved to be controversial, dealing as it did with a religious subject. But probably the subject was no more controversial than was the identity of its main character.

One of this musical's hit songs asked: "Jesus Christ Superstar, do you think you're what they say you are?" Who did people back in the first century say Jesus was? Jesus himself asked his disciples that question and received several different answers. (Matthew 16:13, 14) Today, almost 2,000 years later, the identity of Jesus Christ is still controversial.

Does it really matter who Jesus was? What effect can his identity have on us? Well, prominent people of bygone days shaped world history, thus affecting all of us, if only indirectly. But today they are dead. Thus, although they have affected us by what they did, in no way can they affect us by what they are doing.

In the case of Jesus Christ, however, the situation is entirely different. Millions believe, and have conclusive evidence for such belief, that Jesus is very much alive today, not as a human on earth but as a powerful spirit in heaven. What Jesus has been doing, especially in this 20th century, has had a profound effect on all humans. Moreover, Jesus' effect on our lives is not limited to what he has done in the past. It reaches out to include what he is doing at present and, happily, what he will do in the future.

Returning to our theme: Jesus Christ—God, man, or myth? What do you think? A mythical Jesus Christ would mean that he was neither God nor man, making further consideration pointless. On the other hand, we should be eager to learn about a Jesus who is alive and who is empowered by God to bring lasting benefits to mankind.

JESUS

Who Is He?

SECULAR records that speak of Jesus are few. However, some do exist, and of them *The Encyclopædia Britannica* says: "These independent accounts

prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds by several authors at the end of the 18th, during the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th centuries."

Now ask yourself, If Jesus' existence were a myth, is it likely that it would have taken until the 18th century for this to be discovered? Also consider the fact that over a billion people now claim to be Jesus' followers. The influence that his teachings have had upon culture, education, and government—upon the entire course of world history—cannot be denied. Does it seem reasonable that all of this has been the result of something no more substantial than a myth?

If the founder of Islam, the Arabian prophet Muhammad, was a real person, what sound reason do we have to believe that Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, was not? He may have lived some 600 years before Muhammad, but note that the founder of Buddhism, Siddhārtha Gautama—the Buddha, or "Enlightened One"—lived even earlier, over 500 years before Jesus. Yet, if the Buddha was a real person, what sound reason do we have to believe that Jesus was not?

German historian and archaeologist

Hans Einsle writes that Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, Roman writers Suetonius and Pliny, and especially Roman historian Tacitus "all confirm the his-

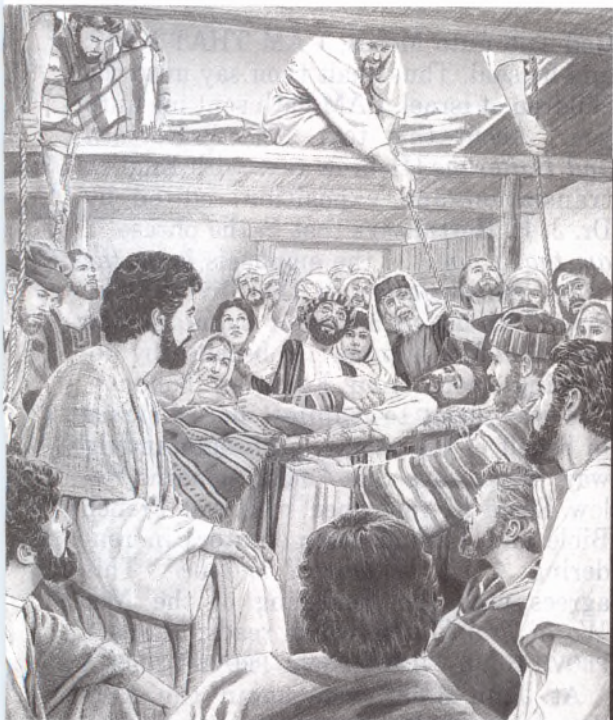
toricity of Jesus and the main facts of his life."

More Than Just an Ordinary Man?

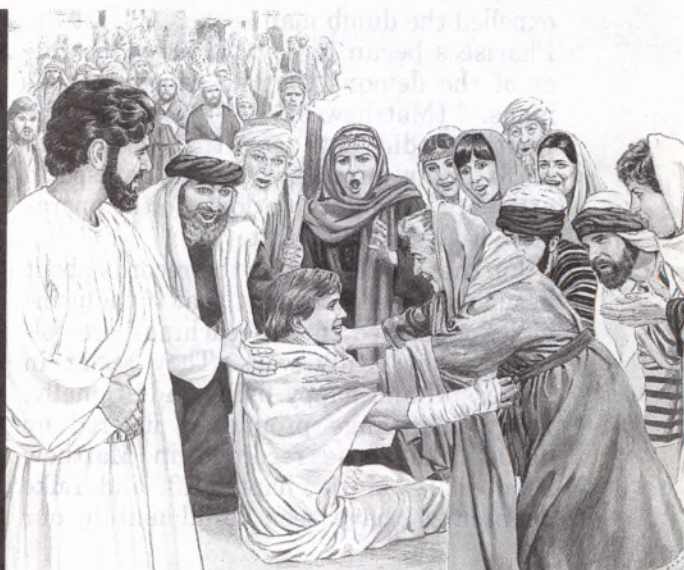
Jesus existed—but as what? Some people contend that he was just an ordinary human, although they admit that he must have been a very wise man, given to speaking the truth. Even his enemies of the first century conceded as much, saying: "Teacher, we know . . . you do not look upon men's outward appearance, but you teach the way of God in line with truth." —Mark 12:13, 14.

Others, however, reason that Jesus must have been more than just an ordinary human. Why? Because, for one thing, he could do things ordinary humans cannot do. For example, have you ever met anyone able to walk on water, to turn water into wine, to feed about 5,000 persons with two small fish and five barley loaves, to heal the blind, or to resurrect the dead?—Matthew 14:25, 26; Mark 8:22-25; John 2:1-11; 6:1-13; 11:30-44.

Jesus could also detect things ordinary humans cannot. When a woman told him that she had no husband, Jesus answered: "You said well, 'A husband I do not have.' For you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband." Surprised, the woman concluded: "Sir, I perceive you are a prophet." (John 4:16-19) For an example of Jesus' remark-



Jesus' miracles proved that he was more than just an ordinary human



able foresight regarding the denial of him by Peter, see Luke 22:31-34, 54-62.

Jesus possessed unusual authority. People were "astounded at his way of teaching, for there he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." (Mark 1:22) Moreover, Jesus was able to give "his twelve disciples . . . authority over unclean spirits, in order to expel these and to cure every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity."—Matthew 10:1.

Can We Believe the Reports?

'But just a minute,' you may say. 'Could it not be that the details about what Jesus did have been exaggerated?' Not according to F. F. Bruce, a retired professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester, who writes: "It is not usually possible to demonstrate by historical arguments the truth of every detail in an ancient writing, whether inside or outside the Bible. It is sufficient to

have reasonable confidence in a writer's general trustworthiness; if that is established, there is an *a priori* likelihood that his details are true. . . . The New Testament is not *less* likely to be historically reliable because Christians receive it as 'sacred' literature."

Everything speaks for the Gospel writers' trustworthiness. Although they differ at times in their presentation of details, they do not contradict one another, even as two witnesses to a traffic accident do not contradict each other when one says that a red car coming from the left hit a green car coming from the right, whereas the other says that a Mercedes driving south hit a Renault going north. The fact that the Gospels differ in minor details strongly indicates that they are true. Had their writers wanted to deceive people into believing a myth, they would certainly have coordinated their stories very closely.

Even Jesus' foes supported the reports about him as being true. We read: "People brought him a dumb man possessed of a demon; and after the demon had been expelled the dumb man spoke. . . . But the Pharisees began to say: 'It is by the ruler of the demons that he expels the demons.'" (Matthew 9:32-34) Note that the Pharisees did not deny that Jesus had performed a miracle. They just refused to attribute his ability to do so to the operation of God's holy spirit.

Further evidence that the records about Jesus are true is the fact that if the principles embodied in his teachings are followed, they really work. They result in successful and happy living. Additionally, many long-range prophecies uttered by Jesus, like those recorded in Matthew chapter 24, Mark chapter 13, and Luke chapter 21, have seen fulfillment in our day.

Jesus—"Jehovah of the Old Testament"?

Obviously, Jesus was not an ordinary human. He was unique because, as the Bible tells us, he enjoyed life in heaven before coming to the earth. (John 6: 38, 62) He thus had knowledge and abilities beyond those of ordinary humans. This helps to explain his miracles and his outstanding wisdom.

But does Jesus' prehuman existence mean that he was God? A teacher's manual makes that claim, saying: "Whenever Jesus referred to Himself as 'I Am' . . . , He identified Himself as the Jehovah of the Old Testament." Is this true?

According to the *King James Version* rendering of Exodus 3:13, 14, Moses asked: "When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And

God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." About this text, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs* (Hebrew text with English translation and exposition, edited by Dr. J. H. Hertz) says that in the phrase "*I am that I am* . . . the emphasis is on the active manifestation of the Divine existence." Its use as a title or name for God was therefore appropriate because by delivering them from Egyptian bondage, God was about to manifest his existence in behalf of his people in an outstanding way. Hertz says that "most moderns follow Rashi [a renowned medieval French Bible and Talmud commentator] in rendering '*I will be what I will be*.'" This agrees with the rendering of the *New World Translation*, which reads: "I SHALL PROVE TO BE WHAT I SHALL PROVE TO BE."

At John 8:58, once again the *King James Version* has Jesus using the expression "I am" in connection with himself, saying, "Before Abraham was, I am." But here the expression is quite different from the one used at Exodus 3:14. Jesus did not use it as a name or title but simply as a means of explaining his prehuman existence. Thus, according to the *New World Translation*, the more correct rendering of John 8:58 is: "Before Abraham came into existence, I have been."

Clearly, no Scriptural basis exists for the claim that Jesus is the same as Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures. Even the teacher's manual previously quoted admits: "That Christ existed before His birth in Bethlehem does not in itself prove He was God (He could have existed as an angel)." In fact, this is what the Bible teaches. In his prehuman existence, Jesus was "a god," or divine one, but not *the* God, the almighty God Jehovah.—John 1: 1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Since he is not God, just who is Jesus?

"CHRIST, *the Son of* **the Living God"**

AFTER his disciples reported who men were saying that he was, Jesus asked: "‘You, though, who do you say I am?’ In answer Simon Peter said: ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’"—Matthew 16:15, 16.

Was Peter alone in reaching this conclusion? By no means! Notice who else did so, and note their basis for this identification.

EARLY SUPPORTERS: John the Bap-

Peter identified Jesus as "Christ, the Son of the living God." So do over 3,000,000 witnesses of Jehovah today

tizer, the disciples Nathanael and Martha, and Saul of Tarsus, among others, all called Jesus God's Son. (Matthew 14:33; John 1:33, 34, 49; 11:27; Acts 9:20) Their

conviction was strengthened as they saw how prophecies designed to identify the promised Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus.

EARLY OPPOSERS: Jews who wanted to kill Jesus referred to him as God's Son, as did soldiers present at his impalement.



Millions once unsure about Jesus' identity are now united in supporting him as the Ruler of God's Kingdom

(Matthew 27:54; John 19:7) Although this does not necessarily indicate belief on the part of such opposers, at least it shows that they were familiar with what others were claiming about Jesus; and the supernatural events surrounding his impalement evidently caused some of them to reconsider the question of his identity.

ANGELS: When announcing Jesus' birth, the angel Gabriel called him God's Son. (Luke 1:32, 35) Even demon-possessed persons under the influence of wicked angels cried out: "What have we to do with you, Son of God?" (Matthew 8:28-32) Because of Jesus' prehuman existence in heaven, it is obvious that both good and bad angels would know who he was.

JESUS HIMSELF: Jesus never boasted of being God's Son in an attempt to gain favor with others or to revel in the prestige that this relationship offered. On the contrary, in most cases he humbly referred to himself as "the Son of man." (Matthew 12:40; Luke 9:58) But on several occasions he did admit to being God's Son.—John 5:24, 25; 10:36; 11:4.

JEHOVAH GOD: Who could identify Jesus Christ with greater authority than Jehovah God himself? Twice Jehovah testified from heaven: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved."—Matthew 3:17; 17:5.

God Approved of Jesus—Do You?

In the first century, thousands of people accepted Jesus for what he was: the promised Messiah, or Christ, sent to earth to vindicate Jehovah's sovereignty and to of-

fer his life as a ransom for mankind. (Matthew 20:28; Luke 2:25-32; John 17:25, 26; 18:37) In the face of bitter opposition, people would hardly have been motivated to become Jesus' followers if they had been unsure of his identity. Zealously and courageously, they embraced the work he gave them, to "make disciples of people of all the nations."—Matthew 28:19.

Today, millions of Christian disciples know that Jesus is no myth. They accept him as the heavenly enthroned King of God's established Kingdom, who is now progressively taking control of the earth and its affairs. This incoming divine government is welcome news because it promises relief from world problems. These true Christians demonstrate their wholehearted support of God's chosen Ruler by declaring "this good news of the kingdom" to others.—Matthew 24:14.

Those who support the Kingdom arrangement through "Christ, the Son of the living God," will live to enjoy eternal blessings. These blessings can be yours too!

In Our Next Issue

- **How Do You View Images?**
- **Youths—Guard Against Leading a Double Life**
- **God's Undeserved Kindness —Do Not Miss Its Purpose!**

Do Not Give Up in Doing What Is Fine

"Let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out."
—GALATIANS 6:9.



WHAT a fine activity Christians perform as part of their worship! It is embodied in the clear command: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them . . . , *teaching* them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 28:19, 20) It was Jesus Christ himself who gave

to his disciples the commission to carry out that worldwide teaching work.

² Since the disciple-making commission was one of the last statements Jesus made to his first disciples before ascending to heaven, was it not a most important assignment? Yes, because fulfilling it would save lives. (1 Timothy 4:16) That makes it a fine work. It provides sound Bible education for those heeding the Kingdom message, and the preaching work puts on notice any unresponsive ones. (Luke 10:10, 11) Hence, their doing this work identifies true Christians as much as does their compliance with any other teachings of Jesus.—John 8:31.

1. What commission did Jesus give to his followers?

2. (a) Why can we say that disciple making was an important work and a fine one? (b) What purposes does the disciple-making work serve?



³ As the Great Teacher, Jesus set a superb example for his followers. He taught publicly and made disciples by “preaching the good news of the kingdom.” (Matthew 9:35) In imitation of him, new followers themselves became disciple makers, for a true disciple is “one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another.” Initially, their disciple-making work was confined to Jews and proselytes. Despite adverse reaction in that field, however, did Jesus’ followers carry out his command to “go continually” “without letup”? Why, yes, they went “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” until the first Gentiles became believers in 36 C.E. (Matthew 10:5, 6; Acts 5:42) It was said that the disciples “filled Jerusalem with [their] teaching.” (Acts 5:28) They did not give up their fine work. Instead, they faithfully saw it through.

3. (a) How did Jesus’ disciples respond to his personal example and command? (b) What attitude did Jesus build in his disciples?

“The Field Is the World”

⁴ Jesus indicated that the field would include “people of all the nations.” (Matthew 28:19) In a parable about the sowing of Kingdom seed, he had said: “The field is the world.” (Matthew 13:38) Thus, Christians would be Kingdom “witnesses” of him everywhere. They would again “go continually,” this time “to the most distant part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) The apostle Paul was “intensely occupied with the word,” and we can be sure that other Christians were too.—Acts 18:5.

⁵ Jesus expected witnessing activity to occupy Christians intensely until the end of the present system of things. This is shown in what he predicted about the Christian ministry and the territory it would cover. Jesus said: “This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come.”—Matthew 24:14.

⁶ When Jesus gave the com-

4. With what attitude did Jesus’ followers pursue their extended assignment?

5. How did Jesus show that he expected his disciples to be intensely occupied with the witnessing work until the end of the present system?

6. How long will the Kingdom-preaching work be done, and how should this affect our attitude toward it?

mand to engage in Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making activity earth wide, he knew that such fine work would one day reach its climax, just as it did for the Jewish field. But it would accomplish its purpose. "Then," as he said, "the end will come." Thus, until the end, Jehovah's Witnesses confidently and joyfully continue in the work assigned. That helps them to continue in the work in our day until it is finished.

How to Do the Work

⁷ Jesus taught his first disciples how to perform their public ministry. They zealously responded to his order to "go." When training them for their witnessing work, Jesus said: "As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" (Matthew 10:7) That gave their message the same Kingdom theme that had marked his ministry. It would be good news for honesthearted ones. Once Jesus' followers started their work, did he quit? No, indeed, for "when Jesus had finished giving instructions to his twelve disciples, he set out from there to teach and preach in their cities."—Matthew 11:1.

⁸ Where and how were these Kingdom proclaimers to make their approach? Jesus told them: "When you are entering into the house, greet the household." (Matthew 10:12) Going to a person's house with the good news dignifies the householder, giving him an opportunity to deal with the Kingdom message on his home ground. Not only are the customary and accepted forms of greeting the polite and considerate ways to start a conversation but there

is also an advantage to be gained from having a friendly and cheerful greeting turn an uninvited call into a welcome one. (Compare Matthew 28:9; Luke 1:28.) The tone of voice and reply of the person at the door also tell you much about his or her attitude. You need to take note of that before continuing because such knowledge makes it easier to adapt your comments to the householder's needs.—Compare Acts 22:1, 2; 23:6.

⁹ Jesus let his disciples know that not all people in a territory would respond favorably. He said: "Into whatever city or village you enter, search out who in it is *deserving*." If all were to accept the Kingdom message, there would be no reason to use the expression "search out." What was to be the reaction to those who did not show interest in the message? "Wherever anyone does not take you in or listen to your words, on going out of that house or that city shake the dust off your feet," departing in peace and leaving the consequences to Jehovah's judgment.—Matthew 10:11, 14.

The Situation Today

¹⁰ In faithful compliance with the Christian commission, Jehovah's Witnesses are covering the earth with the Kingdom message. Thus, A. P. Wisse, a journalist in the Netherlands, commented: "They are different from other people. Part of this difference is the result of their zealous evangelizing. They view true Christianity not as a religion with cathedrals, with parishioners who each has his own fixed place and whose religion does not ask much more of him than to listen. They speak with Paul's outspokenness to anyone who

7. What theme marked Jesus' ministry and that of his disciples?

8. (a) Where and how were Kingdom proclaimers to make their approach? (b) Why is it appropriate to take the good news to a person's house? (c) What advantages are there in properly greeting a householder?

9. What shows that not all would hear the Kingdom message with appreciation, and what was to be the reaction to those not showing interest in it?

10. What has been said about the Kingdom-preaching activity of Jehovah's Witnesses?

will listen.” Such zeal for the ministry surely has been blessed by Jehovah God.

¹¹ Over 3,000,000 Kingdom publishers now work with zeal in 210 lands. We see a fine increase in new disciples—1,246,204 having been baptized in the last seven years. The blessing of Jehovah on diligent effort is evident. (Isaiah 60:8-10, 22) Why, in at least 40 countries and islands, there is one Witness to every 300 inhabitants or less, or one to about 100 households! Moreover, in some areas of such countries as Canada and Guadeloupe, the ratio is one Witness to 45 or 50 people in a congregation’s territory—only about 15 homes or less for each publisher to call on! Many of these territories are covered every month. Even in lands with higher ratios, some urban areas are getting very frequent coverage in our witness work. In Seoul, Republic of Korea, some city territories are worked every five days! As we grow numerically, and as more and more Witnesses take up the pioneer and auxiliary pioneer work, we will be calling at the doors of our neighbors with increasing frequency. Does that present problems?

¹² It must be admitted that there are problems in some areas, both for Jehovah’s Witnesses and for those on whom we call. Adding to the problems is the growing apathy among the people in many lands. Well, as we increase in numbers, do we slowly give up doing our fine work? Do we conclude that our work is almost done and that we have already ‘searched out’ all who will respond and become disciples? Are you personally getting tired and perhaps even frustrated at calling on the same unresponsive people? What can be

11, 12. (a) What results have been produced in the ministry in recent years? (b) As we grow in numbers, what is happening to available territory in which to preach? (c) What questions are raised?

done to keep up our excellent level of activity?

Maintaining the Right Attitude

¹³ The solution mainly involves our attitude as witnesses of Jehovah. For one thing, let us always look at the bright side. The more frequent coverage of territory because of a high ratio of publishers to population was sure to develop in many places as our work reaches its climax. But have we not prayed for this? (2 Thessalonians 3:1) What we now see should make us rejoice and should convince us that we are in the final stages of the disciple-making work! The Kingdom *is* being preached, as Jesus foretold. And even in places where people will ‘not listen to our words,’ they are being put on notice by means of our Kingdom-preaching activity. Remember, besides making disciples, we are proclaiming the good news “for a witness.”—Matthew 10:14; 24:14.

¹⁴ Furthermore, it is to be expected that a growing number will reject the Kingdom message as the end nears. The predictions are clear, and the experiences of both Jesus and Paul assure us that there would be those who would be “unresponsive” and whose hearts would be “unreceptive.” So, at this time we must be careful that *we* are not unresponsive to our commission. Even to those who are unresponsive, we are to go “again and again.” (Isaiah 6:9-11; Matthew 13:14, 15; Proverbs 10:21) True, it takes courage to go often to people who resent our calls. However, no territory situation anywhere should ever say to us, ‘Stop speaking.’ Rather, like the apostles, we should pray for boldness to “keep speaking”—despite resentment or hostility—

13, 14. (a) How should we view the developing situation of frequently worked territory? (b) Why are we not deterred by those who are “unresponsive”? (c) How can we follow the apostolic example in facing those who resent our calls?

ty—until the work is done.—Acts 4:18-20, 24-31.

¹⁵ Basically, there are only two kinds of people in all our territories—those who at the moment are interested and those who are not. Therefore, we need to keep up the work of ‘searching out the deserving ones.’ Doing this is among the many excellent works that we are to produce as Christians to show our love for Jehovah and our loyalty to him. Therefore, “let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out.” (Galatians 6:9) Since we are now so close to the end of this system, it is not the time to give up or get tired of visiting our neighbors with the good news of the Kingdom. Jehovah has not yet said that the work is finished.

Why We Need to “Keep Speaking”

¹⁶ We will also be helped to maintain a good attitude if we remember that loyalty to Jehovah is displayed by zealous Kingdom-preaching activities. Moreover, territories keep changing in various ways. People move, or their circumstances may change. They may not have been interested the last time we called, but loss of employment, the death of a loved one, a significant change in the struggle between the superpowers, a serious illness—these and other changes can mean that they will be responsive the next time we call. Others, having learned that a friend or loved one has become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, may now want to talk with us to learn what we believe that could have produced this change.

15. What encouragement is given at Galatians 6:9, and how should it affect our view of visiting our neighbors with the good news?

16. (a) What are some of the circumstances that can change the response of people in a territory? (b) What local examples of change in response can you give?

¹⁷ Remember, too, that those who have grown up in recent years now have families, are taking life seriously, and are asking questions that only God’s Word can answer. For example, one young mother invited two Witnesses into her home and said: ‘As a little girl, I could never understand why my mother turned the Witnesses away and told them she was not interested, when all you wanted to do was talk about the Bible. I made up my mind then that when I grew up, got married, and had my own home, I would ask Jehovah’s Witnesses to come in and explain the Bible to me.’

¹⁸ Have you noticed that some people who would not talk to us for years and thought they were “saved” are now asking us sincere questions? Why? A change has taken place in their religious thinking. They are saying that they have been quite disillusioned and stunned by exposures of immoral conduct, political activities, and waste of church funds by some prominent television evangelists they once trusted. Likely, there will be more of this as conditions within Babylon the Great continue to deteriorate until the time of her destruction.—Revelation 18:1-8.

¹⁹ In any case, we should not become discouraged when most people are unreceptive. After we have left them, probably we are still on their minds. In Canada one householder visited by two Witnesses made it quite clear she was not interested. Later, she started thinking about what they had said and wanted to find them so they could answer questions raised in her mind. She got into her car and went

17. How are some now reacting to the Kingdom message? Give any local examples.

18. How does the changing religious scene affect the territory in which we preach and teach?

19, 20. What shows why we should not feel discouraged about going back again and again to people who reject the message?

**WE WILL "NOT GIVE UP" IN
KINGDOM PREACHING IF WE
REMEMBER:**

- ☐ Who gave us the commission and the instruction on how to do the work
- ☐ That Jehovah's blessing is on what has already been done worldwide
- ☐ To keep the right attitude despite any "unresponsive" ones
- ☐ To pray to "keep speaking" as the apostles did

looking for them up and down the streets of her neighborhood but was unable to locate them. Did she give up? No, she stopped at a friend's house to ask if they had been there. They had not, but the friend said that there was a Witness at her place of work and she would put the interested woman in touch with the Witness. The result was a series of visits at the interested person's home, to which she invited friends, neighbors, relatives, and fellow workers. As many as 15 persons have been present at times, and some 430 books and Bibles as well as 2,015 magazines have been placed.

²⁰ Many appreciate our calls. In a letter to a branch office of the Watch Tower Society, one woman said: "Thank you for having instilled a great dedication in the hearts of those of your faith. Thank you for coming around . . . and sharing the love of the Lord with others. That simple act does so very much for others. . . . Even though some may be cruel, others indifferent, and others receptive, . . . it truly does a world of good to have someone come by to remind you of spiritual things. I find this thing good, to speak of the Lord one with another." In another letter, a householder asked us 'not to give up on people,'

no matter how they treat us. "So let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out." (Galatians 6:9) This work has Jehovah's approval and blessing, and our participating in it proves our love for him and our neighbor. (Matthew 22:37-39) So let us carry the work to completion.—Compare Philippians 1:6.

²¹ We must face the fact that it may not always be the people that make it seem hard to work territory frequently. Sometimes it is we ourselves. Do we start out with negative ideas, feeling that we know all the people and what their reactions will be? That can affect our attitude and likely our tone of voice and facial expression. Are we still using the same methods and wording we have used for years? Now that the territory is changing, what once had success may not reach other 'deserving ones.' Perhaps we need a fresh approach and a new look at our work. Next, let us see what we can do so that we 'do not give up but may reap in due season.'

21. (a) Where, likely, is at least part of the challenge in going again to frequently worked territories? (b) What will we discuss in the next article?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ Why should we not "give up" in going to our neighbors with the good news?
- ☐ Who told us to make disciples the way we do, and what are the basic features of that method?
- ☐ What situation has developed in many territories, and what will help us maintain the right attitude about that situation?
- ☐ Why should we "keep speaking" the good news "without letup"?

Pay Constant Attention to Your Teaching

“Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.”—1 TIMOTHY 4:16.



JEHOVAH is now speeding up the ingathering of sheeplike ones. Surely, then, this is no time for his people to slow down in their Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. (Isaiah 60:8, 22; Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) We need to act in accord with the spirit of what God is doing in our time. As the end draws nearer, we will be getting back to our

1. Why is this no time for us to slow down in our Kingdom-preaching work?

neighbors more often. Indeed, increased witnessing activity by so many more publishers and pioneers is now stirring up the world field. And the momentum of this joyous ingathering will yet grow.—Isaiah 60:11; compare Psalm 126:5, 6.

² Rather than succumb to any feeling of being ‘tired out’ because some territory is being covered frequently, we should recognize that this is the time for us to pray to Jehovah for the needed “dynamic energy” to finish the work. (Isaiah 40:28-31; 1 John 5:14) True,

2. (a) According to Isaiah 40:28-31, what source of energy can we draw upon for the needed strength to finish the Kingdom-preaching work? (b) What is a good reason for paying extra attention to the quality of our ministry at this time?

millions of the "great crowd" of "other sheep" have already been gathered. But what was once successful in assisting certain people may no longer be effective in helping others still in our territories. (Revelation 7:9, 10; John 10:16) Hence, the quality of our ministry needs extra attention.

³ With renewed determination, we can concentrate on improving our effectiveness in the ministry. This can inject fresh enthusiasm into our field service. But how can it be done? By 'paying *constant* attention to ourselves and our teaching,' not just performing our ministry routinely. (1 Timothy 4:16) Our lips must offer more than a perfunctory "sacrifice of praise." (Hebrews 13:15) We should be skillful at our work. (Proverbs 22:29) What is needed, then, is the skillful working of our territory. Here are some aspects of our ministry to which we need to "pay *constant* attention."

How to Develop "New" Territory

⁴ Let us look at the situation in a practical way. In many places, there is no new or rarely worked territory. So why not develop "new" territory within the congregation's assignment? How? Well, when we call frequently, we cannot act as if we have never called at that home before by saying only what we have usually said at the doors. Likely, the householder will recognize us anyway if we have repeatedly covered the territory. The book *Reasoning From the Scriptures* gives over 40 introductions that we can use in our ministry. We must prepare them well as something fresh and appealing by tying them in with matters of local and current interest. Rather than feel apologetic about calling

3. How can fresh enthusiasm be injected into our field ministry?

4. In what way can we develop "new" territory in our congregation's assignment?

often, we need to have a positive attitude and make our territory "new" with good-quality presentations. But will this help if householders are unfriendly?

⁵ Knowing a householder's past attitude could result in negative feelings about calling again. But why not make that knowledge work to your advantage? How? Perhaps by alluding to it first and then building on what was said during the previous call. You might say: "Good morning, Mr. Harris!" If it seems fitting, you could add: "How have you been?" Then you might say: "When I was here last week, you told me that your church looked after all your spiritual needs and that you are an involved member." As a neighbor who also takes religion seriously, may I ask what your church is saying about the hope for survival in the nuclear age?" Then, let him tell you. Commend the householder when you honestly can. Listening to him and commending him may change his attitude. Often, people will allow another visit if they themselves can do some of the talking. Of course, you will want to adapt your message to what the householder says.

⁶ By what you say, you can train householders to expect us to call regularly. Try saying: "Hello, Mrs. Fredericks! How are you today? On this visit to our neighbors, we are discussing . . ." Or you might say: "Good morning! We are making our regular weekly calls. It's good to be back. Your neighbors have enjoyed the new subject we are discussing on this visit." Then continue. This also serves to make the territory "new" for you. The actual wording may differ somewhat in your land, but this

5. (a) How can we make a previously unfriendly attitude work to our advantage? (b) What have you found to work well locally? (c) Why are listening and honest commendation helpful?

6. (a) How can we train householders to expect us to call regularly? (b) What key expressions can help us to succeed? (c) What works well in the local territory?

gives the main idea. Why not make the most of it, to your advantage?

⁷ So as to prepare the householder for the next call, some Witnesses have success with a conclusion like this: "We look forward to visiting you again soon." To those who were somewhat reluctant to talk to you at first, you might say: "I've enjoyed our discussion. You surely made some good points. This took a few minutes, but at least we did not talk about bad news, which we can hear at any time. It was truly wholesome." Doubtless, you will develop other appropriate ways to speak with householders. At any rate, by positive expressions, good-quality presentations, and friendliness, endeavor to help the public not to resent our regular calls.

Bear Thorough Witness

⁸ Another thing we can pay attention to that will keep our enthusiasm high is thoroughness in searching out deserving ones. (Acts 8:25; 20:24) For instance, a brother might ask for the man of the house if a woman or a child should come to the door on weekends or in the evening. Probably, it

7. (a) When leaving, how do some Witnesses prepare the householder for another visit? (b) In this regard, what works well in the local territory?

8, 9. What suggestions are given for thoroughly searching out deserving ones?



is the wife that we have talked to most of the time. So we can make a fresh start with a household by speaking with the family head. We can then adapt the message to him, saying such things as, "What do you think will assure your family of a happy future?" or, "Note how the Bible promotes family unity." Commend the man for good ideas he may express.

⁹ Another way to find "new" territory is to seek out other family members living under the same roof—a grandmother, a nephew or a cousin going to school, a sister-in-law who works during the week. It has also been practical to note how many electric meters or mailboxes there are at a dwelling. These may indicate where people have renovated a basement, an attic, or other area to rent out. Try to contact those renting

—students, single workers, widows, and others. This too helps to stretch available territory.

¹⁰ One more way to stretch house-to-house territory is to give it a rest at times as we participate in other features of our ministry. For variety, we might work territory with a direct offer of a free family home Bible study. Some people who are not at home when we call can be found at their place of business or employment. And witnessing in business areas can be very fruitful. Some of these people may also be contacted if we do street witnessing at appropriate, productive hours. In Canada pioneers have had good results from late-evening calls on employees at all-night gasoline stations, stores, and hotels where desk clerks are not usually busy at that time and often appreciate having something to read. Of course, sisters especially would need to avoid certain areas during late hours.

¹¹ What about those not at home when we call? Here again, we must be thorough. Some Witnesses use their well-kept house-to-house records right after their door-to-door work and go back to places where people were not at home earlier that day. Often, householders have returned home, or night workers are awake by that time. In many areas, 50 percent or more are not at home during the day. So we can, in effect, double that territory by making not-at-home calls at different hours until we do find someone at home. Pioneers and experienced publishers agree that diligence in working not-at-homes often yields better results than does our initial

10. What is another way to stretch our house-to-house territory, and what have some done to contact night workers?

11. (a) What are some Witnesses doing where many are not at home on the first call? (b) What effect can diligence in making not-at-home calls have on our territory, with what results in the ministry?

coverage of territory. By paying attention to this aspect of our ministry, we will likely reap many blessings.—Proverbs 10:22.

Those Who Complain

¹² What can be said to people who complain that we are calling too frequently? Above all, we must display understanding. (Matthew 7:12) To them, it seems that we have returned quite soon. But it is good to remember that even years ago people were saying, 'You were here last week,' when we knew very well that it had been six months or more since we had called. Besides, frequent calls can spur interest. In Guadeloupe a man ran after a Witness to say: "I have observed you now for many weeks. Usually, I do not listen to the Witnesses, but I have to know why you visit the people so often!" A new Bible study resulted.

¹³ Some brothers have kindly told complainers the exact date of the previous call and have offered the latest magazines, making it clear that the articles differ from those in the journals we had the last time we called. Reasoning with such householders, we might say that perhaps they have received many newspapers and magazines since our last visit, but these have not always contained good news. We could explain that we are bringing good news and that our visits are not lengthy. But if a householder is too busy, we could say: "If this is not the best time to speak with you, I can see you on our next call in a week or so."

¹⁴ What else might be said? This depends on the householder's attitude and the usual courtesy expected where we live. One sister in Japan explains our frequent calls this way: "Television news will report on the course of a typhoon again and again,

12. How should we react when people complain that we are calling too frequently? Why?

13, 14. How are some fellow believers handling matters when householders complain?

repeating the information frequently for the benefit of those who might have missed previous broadcasts. This is done because lives are involved. The frequency of the reports increases as the storm draws closer. So, as the storm of Armageddon draws near, the warning message must be declared as often as possible to save lives.' Of course, we would make such a statement kindly and with sincerity, hoping to reach the heart of the listener.

Meeting the Challenge of Apathy

¹⁵ As the frequency of our visits increases, a growing challenge is the apathy we often encounter. But an examination of some of the causes of apathy can encourage us to note that it may yet be possible to reach the hearts of some of these people. Their apathy may mirror their frustration and hopelessness. They may feel that there is no way out of the present world situation, reasoning that they will just live out their lives in the best way they can. Others are disgusted because some religious leaders get involved in politics, are guilty of immoral behavior, or fail to take a firm stand against sexual immorality. So these householders are disillusioned and just live for today.

¹⁶ We know that early Christian ministers successfully coped with the same attitude, for some people then said: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die." (1 Corinthians 15:32) Hence, we know that we have just what such persons need to hear. Still, how can we reach their heart? One way is to put away our Bible literature for the moment, letting them see us do so. Then we might ask them such well-thought-out questions as these: "Do you

15. (a) What can be a growing challenge when we work our territory often? (b) Why are some people apathetic?

16. How might the heart of an apathetic person be reached?

think there is some solution to present-day problems? Is it that most people simply have not yet found solutions? Do you think we should be positive and keep searching?" To others, we could say: "Surely you agree that it is better to live with hope than without any prospect of better things. What do you hope to see?" We might ask: "What do you yourself feel is the biggest obstacle to world unity and peace?" Still others could be asked: "Do you think all religions are like what you have described?" Many times such questions will cause householders to express their views. Then, when they respond, be sure to listen. Yes, let them pour their heart out to you. Many of them are 'sighing and groaning over all the detestable things now being done.'—Ezekiel 9:4.

¹⁷ Another approach to apathy is to take note of a point or objection made by the householder and return with a magazine or other Watch Tower publication dealing with the matter. At first, it might even be a nonreligious subject, such as an article on sudden infant death or the dying off of the forests. Explain that you were thinking of what interested the householder and recalled this article. Then point out key ideas in the material. One woman who had just rejected our literature accepted a magazine only seconds later. Why? Because the Witness asked if the woman knew that there were 55 million abortions annually. Shocked to learn this, she asked for the magazine containing that information.

Seeing It to Completion

¹⁸ Above all, we need to be patient with

17. How may our publications be used to reach some even when they at first insist that they are not interested?

18, 19. (a) To what additional points should we 'pay attention' as we perform our ministry? (b) What prejudiced ideas do some people have about us and our beliefs, and how can we answer them?

AS TERRITORY COVERAGE INCREASES,

"Pay constant attention" to:

- ☐ Positive approaches and presentations
- ☐ More thorough searching out of the deserving ones
- ☐ Dealing patiently with complaining ones
- ☐ Meeting the challenges of apathy and misunderstanding

people. Talk slowly and with warmth. Manifest love and kindness. (Galatians 5: 22, 23) Before going to the next door, think over what took place at the previous one to see where improvement is possible. Be understanding, for many people have wrong ideas about Jehovah's Witnesses. They may say: 'You avoid politics and civic duties,' 'You refuse military service,' or, 'You break up families.' But this attitude is like that of the world toward our fellow believers of the first century. Show householders this, perhaps using quotations under the heading "Neutrality" in the *Reasoning* book.

¹⁹ Concerning the early Christians, historian Will Durant wrote: "To a Christian his religion was something apart from and superior to political society; his highest allegiance belonged not to Caesar but to Christ. . . . The detachment of the Christian from earthly affairs seemed to the pagan a flight from civic duty, a weakening of the national fiber and will. Tertulian advised Christians to refuse military service; . . . Christians were exhorted by their leaders to avoid non-Christians, to shun their festival games as barbarous, and their theaters as stews of obscenity. . . . Christianity [when making con-

verts] was charged with breaking up the home."—*Caesar and Christ*, page 647.

²⁰ Some people will not listen, no matter what we say. But that should be because of their rejection of the Kingdom message, not because of our failure to make good-quality presentations in our ministry. (Luke 10:8-11; Acts 17:32; Ezekiel 3: 17-19) We should do our best with God's help, and Jehovah will see the work through to its completion.—Compare Philippians 1:6.

²¹ With full confidence, then, continue to have "plenty to do in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:58) "Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you." (1 Timothy 4:16) Above all, "let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out." —Galatians 6:9.

20, 21. (a) What do we want to be sure of when people do not respond? (b) Why should we "not give up" but continue our fine work of Kingdom preaching?

Can You Recall?

- ☐ What are some ways to maintain a positive attitude in frequently worked territory?
- ☐ How can we more thoroughly search out deserving ones?
- ☐ How can we try to deal with those who complain that we call too often?
- ☐ In what ways can we meet the challenge of apathy?
- ☐ What will improve the quality of our ministry?

MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR OLDER ONES—A CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE

THREE months have gone by. Yet none of the elderly woman's children have bothered to visit her. She is a lonely resident of a home for the aged in Cape Town, South Africa. Her children live nearby.

In an old-age home in Johannesburg, an aged woman spends most of her time on the balcony of her room. She is often seen crying.

Poignant scenes like these are becoming more and more common, even in countries where elderly ones were traditionally well cared for. In Soweto, the huge black-populated complex near Johannesburg, "old people [have] lost the traditional respect, authority and care from their families," according to one press report. A similar situation has developed among the large Indian population in South Africa. Although Indians have traditionally been solicitous of their old folks, an official recently explained that younger Indian couples "do not want to be burdened with their parents."

True Christians, however, heed the Bible's command: "Honor your father and your mother." (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:2) This obligation does not cease when their parents become old. Says 1 Timothy 5:8: "Certainly if anyone does not provide

for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith." Aged parents are among those a Christian would have to provide for, even if this involved considerable sacrifices—emotionally and financially.

By and large, members of the Christian congregation today have done an admirable job of caring for the emotional and physical needs of their parents. What happens, though, when elderly Christians do not have God-fearing children or grandchildren to care for them? How are their needs met?

A Congregation Responsibility

The disciple James wrote: "The form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation." James also stated: "If a brother or a sister is in a naked state and lacking the food sufficient for the day, yet a certain one of you says to them: 'Go in peace, keep warm and well fed,' but you do not give them the necessities for their body, of what benefit is it? Thus, too, faith, if it does not have works, is dead in itself."—James 1:27; 2:15-17.

So if an elderly Christian is in need of assistance, this is a matter of concern for the whole congregation. The elders can take the lead in this regard. As Paul directed at 1 Timothy 5:4, they should first determine if the elderly one has children or grandchildren who are willing to "keep paying a due compensation to their parents and grandparents, for this is acceptable in God's sight." If not, the elders might investigate to see what insurance or government-sponsored provisions are available. It may even be that some in the congregation are in a position to help out financially on a personal basis.

However, if no such arrangements can be made, the elders can consider if the individual qualifies to receive assistance from the congregation itself. Said Paul: "Let a widow be put on the list who has become not less than sixty years old, a wife of one husband, having a witness borne to her for fine works."—1 Timothy 5:9, 10.

Very often, though, it is not money that is needed. The elders might determine just what *is* required. Does the elderly one need help shopping? Is he lonely or in need of encouragement? Does he need transportation to the meetings? Does he need someone to read the Bible and Christian publications to him? If the elderly person is physically unable to get to meetings, could tape recordings be made so that he can hear them at home? It may take several visits and chats before the full picture emerges. But as shepherds, the elders 'ought to know the appearance of the flock.'—Proverbs 27:23.

How Congregations Have Helped

Once the needs of an elderly person are known, specific arrangements can be made. Where there is a warm, caring, and unselfish spirit in the congregation, it is not difficult to find a number of brothers and sisters willing to be of help. Thus an unfair burden is not placed upon a few individuals. For example, one congregation has worked out a schedule for publishers to visit elderly ones. The brothers and sisters are pleased to have a share in doing this, and none of the older ones are overlooked.

In another congregation, an elderly Witness was ignored by her unbelieving children. Young local Witnesses, however, did all her washing, ironing, and cleaning, also caring for her yard. The brothers helped to pay for her rent and food. They took her to assemblies and meetings. And when she died, they cared for all the funeral arrangements and expenses.

In one small South African congregation, an elderly colored brother (one of mixed racial ancestry) was completely paralyzed by a stroke. Since there was no one of his family to look after him, a sister in the congregation—a widow herself—and her son took him in. Menfolk from the congregation took turns bathing him. Additionally, a white pioneer brother would push this older brother around in a wheelchair for outings.

This sight, unusual in South Africa, caused quite a stir. The congregation gave the elderly brother loving care until he died.

This is not to say, though, that meeting the needs of elderly brothers and sisters is easy. It can take real initiative and determination to overcome the problems that can arise.

Getting the Elderly to Meetings

An elderly sister, a widow and a heart patient, was visited one day by an elder. While he was there, a neighbor called and complained, saying: "I come in here often and find her in tears because no one called to take her to the Kingdom Hall." The problem was not as serious as the neighbor made it seem, for a family in the congregation was providing regular transportation. However, on a few occasions the father had worked overtime and failed to come for the sister. Surely, other transportation arrangements could have been made.

It is, therefore, good to remember that meeting attendance is vital for older ones. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) One elder always checks to see if a certain elderly Witness is present. If she is not because the transportation arrangement has failed, the elder rushes to his car and fetches her. The lovely smile on her face amply rewards him for the extra effort.

Tactful yet Persistent

Sometimes, however, older persons can be rather independent. They may have a need for help but resist accepting it. And unless elders, or those assigned to help, are alert, such older ones may be inclined to try to 'go it on their own.'

One elderly widow was suffering from cancer but had kept her illness to herself. She needed help moving her personal belongings to a location a mile away. Instead of alerting others to her need, she recruited the help of an 84-year-old friend. Together they loaded some things on a cart and tried to push it themselves. Soon, however, they realized that the job was beyond them, and the widow's friend went to a nearby elder for assistance.

It may, therefore, take some tactful yet persistent inquiry on our part to determine just what we can do to help such persons. If we simply make a vague offer, such as: 'If there's anything you need, let me know,' there may be a brisk response: 'Thank you, but I don't need anything.' Remember, though, that when Lydia offered hospitality to the apostle Paul and others, she was not deterred by their apparent initial refusal. Rather, 'she just made them come.' (Acts 16:15) So be persistent. Find out the needs and likes of older ones before they must ask for help.



Younger ones in the congregation can often do much to help older persons

Of course, older ones should be appreciative of the efforts of others and not be sensitive, overly demanding, or critical. If transportation is being provided, for example, an offer to help pay for the travel expenses would be quite proper. One elderly sister bakes bread and crochets small items and gives these as gifts to those taking her to the meetings. In many cases, though, just a word of thanks is all that is needed.

Christians today endeavor to obey the command at Leviticus 19:32: "Before gray hair you should rise up, and you must show consideration for the person of an old man." Jehovah's servants do not follow the worldly trend of discarding old people and sidestepping filial responsibility. Instead, with time, patience, and Jehovah's help, Christians work to meet successfully the challenge of caring for our older ones.



A Neighborly Samaritan

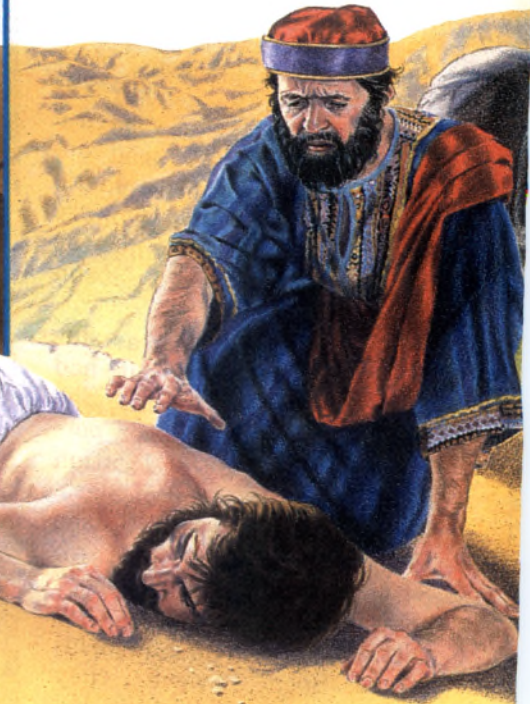
JESUS is perhaps near Bethany, a village about two miles from Jerusalem. A man who is an expert on the Law of Moses approaches him with a question, asking: "Teacher, by doing what shall I inherit everlasting life?"

Jesus detects that the man, a lawyer, is not asking simply for information but because he desires to test him. The lawyer's aim may be to get Jesus to answer in a way that will offend the sensibilities of the Jews. So Jesus gets the lawyer to commit himself, asking: "What is written in the Law? How do you read?"

In reply, the lawyer, exercising unusual insight, quotes from God's laws at Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, saying: "'You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole strength and with your whole mind,' and, 'your neighbor as yourself.'"

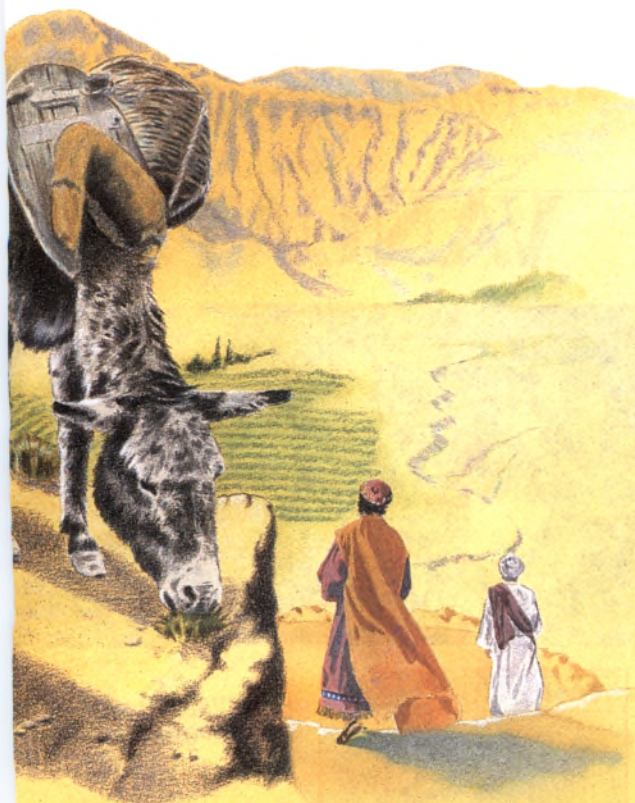
"You answered correctly," Jesus responds. "Keep on doing this and you will get life."

The lawyer, however, is not satisfied. Jesus' answer is not specific enough for him. He wants confirmation from Jesus that his own views are correct and hence that he is righteous in his treatment of others. Therefore, he asks: "Who really is my neighbor?"



The Jews believe that the term "neighbor" applies only to fellow Jews, as the context of Leviticus 19:18 seems to indicate. In fact, later even the apostle Peter said: "You well know how unlawful it is for a Jew to join himself to or approach a man of another race." So the lawyer, and perhaps Jesus' disciples too, believe that they are righteous if they treat only fellow Jews kindly, since, in their view, non-Jews are not really their neighbors.

Without offending his listeners, how can Jesus correct their view? He tells a story, possibly based on an actual happening. "A certain [Jew]," Jesus explains, "was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers,



who both stripped him and inflicted blows, and went off, leaving him half-dead."

"Now, by coincidence," Jesus continues, "a certain priest was going down over that road, but, when he saw him, he went by on the opposite side. Likewise, a Levite also, when he got down to the place and saw him, went by on the opposite side. But a certain Samaritan traveling the road came upon him and, at seeing him, he was moved with pity."

Many priests and their Levite temple assistants live in Jericho, a distance of 14 miles on a dangerous road that descends 3,000 feet from where they serve at the temple in Jerusalem. The priest and the Levite would be expected to help a fellow Jew in distress. But they do not. Instead, a Samaritan does. The Jews hate Samaritans so much that re-

cently they insulted Jesus in the strongest terms by calling him "a Samaritan."

What does the Samaritan do to help the Jew? "He approached him," Jesus says, "and bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine upon them. Then he mounted him upon his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii [about two days' wages], gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him, and whatever you spend besides this, I will repay you when I come back here.'"

After telling the story, Jesus asks the lawyer: "Who of these three seems to you to have made himself neighbor to the man that fell among the robbers?"

Feeling uncomfortable about attributing any merit to a Samaritan, the lawyer answers simply: "The one that acted mercifully toward him."

"Go your way and be doing the same yourself," Jesus concludes.

Had Jesus told the lawyer directly that non-Jews also were his neighbors, not only would the man not have accepted this but most of the audience would probably have taken his side in the discussion with Jesus. This true-to-life story, however, made it obvious in an irrefutable way that our neighbors include people besides those of our own race and nationality. What a marvelous way Jesus has of teaching! **Luke 10: 25-37; Acts 10:28; John 4:9; 8:48.**

- ♦ What questions did the lawyer ask Jesus, and what evidently was his purpose in asking?
- ♦ Who did the Jews believe were their neighbors, and what reason is there to believe that even the disciples shared this view?
- ♦ How did Jesus get across the correct view so that the lawyer could not refute it?

Our Unforgettable Journey to **VANUATU**



*Port-Vila, capital
of Vanuatu*

*Preaching to a
local resident*

A typical village

AS OUR plane took off from Port-Vila airport to take us back to Nouméa, New Caledonia, we began to realize that much of what we experienced on our journey had been unexpected. Deeply etched into our memory were not only the sights and sounds of the beautiful islands of Vanuatu and its warmhearted people but also the harrowing experience of surviving a devastating cyclone on a tropical island.

Vanuatu is a Y-shaped group of approximately 80 islands in the southwestern Pacific, about 250 miles northeast of New Caledonia. Scattered among the islands are 84 of our fellow witnesses of Jehovah in two congregations. My wife and I were quite excited when arrangements were made for us to visit them. Naturally, many questions came to our mind. What kind of conditions would we encounter? What are the islanders like? And, most

important, how would they respond to the good news of the Kingdom?

Convention in Port-Vila

We were somewhat worried when we learned that although most of the inhabitants are Melanesian by race, there are over a hundred languages spoken throughout the archipelago. But we were relieved to find out that a kind of Pidgin English called Bislama is a common tongue. So there would be no great problem in communicating with the people.

Our first stop was Port-Vila, the capital

of Vanuatu. Here, we were to attend the "Divine Peace" District Convention. The local Witnesses worked hard to get it ready. It was heartwarming to meet delegates from remote islands who had to save for months to make the trip.

The meeting hall was packed from the first day of the convention. Over 300 people came to see the Bible dramas presented through videotapes. This was outstanding, considering that there are only 84 Kingdom publishers throughout the islands. Certainly, Jehovah is preparing a good harvest on these little specks of earth in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Meeting the "Small Nambas"

The next day, a native brother and I took a small plane and headed for the island of Malekula. After a rough and turbulent flight, we landed at South West Bay. My companion went in search of his cousin to get a boat for us. It was the only way to reach the village of Letokas, our final destination.

As we set out in our boat and followed the coastline, I was struck by the natural beauty of the island. The steep cliffs plunging straight into the ocean were simply awesome. Lush vegetation was everywhere, laced with brilliant flowers or covered with creepers, ferns, and delicate orchids. Darting from tree to tree were colorful birds, such as the coconut lorries.

From our boat we could also see the richness of the sea—the coral reef, the traditional larder of the islanders. People from all over the world come to dive and admire the beauty of the coral and the tropical fish. Shells and lobsters also abound, and the natives net and spear them for food.

Soon we noted smoke ascending from a coconut plantation in the distance. It marked our destination, a beautiful cove near Bamboo Bay. As we got close to

shore, several porpoises came by to play around us. Then we saw some men with bows and arrows making a lot of excited gestures. Among them, we spotted our brothers, rejoicing over our coming.

These were the Small Nambas of southern Malekula, one of the most isolated tribes in the South Pacific. They live in small villages high in the mountains several days' walk from the coast. The men used to wear the "namba," a loin covering made of leaves attached to a bark belt. The women wear short grass skirts. In each village, there is usually a ceremonial center where sacrificial dances and other rituals are performed. Though many of the villagers have adopted the Western way of life, superstitious and spiritistic practices are still common.

It was a pleasure to meet and greet the brothers. The men were of small stature but very strong. Their natural shyness and their kindness touched my heart. Some of the children were afraid of me because the white men they knew were mostly doctors, and the children could well remember the shots!

The village was divided in two by a small coconut plantation in the middle. One half of the village is reserved for those who have accepted the truth, and I soon learned the reason for this. In order to take a stand for the truth and to continue their Bible study, some must live separately from the other villagers.

The huts are built on top of bamboo piles. As we entered one of them, I was immediately affected by dense smoke from a fire in the middle of the room. The smoke made my eyes itch, but at least it also kept mosquitoes and flies away. Nearby, in another small hut, a woman was attending a piece of *buluk*, or beef, laid on *laplap* leaves, black with flies.

We invited the people to attend a slide program on Wednesday evening. It was a

presentation of the history of Jehovah's Witnesses entitled *Moving Ahead Worldwide Despite Persecution*. One of the publishers had gone ahead on a one-day journey to invite some villagers in the mountains. I was anxious to see if they would come. By dusk, a young man arrived with his bow and arrows. He was followed by several other persons. I was thrilled to see that the distance did not stop them from coming to this meeting.

Soon, we were surrounded by bows and arrows. About 80 people had come, and we started the program. It was amusing to listen to the sound they would make with their tongue when they were surprised by something they saw in the slides.

After the slide program, the discussion centered on the customs and practices of the native people. The villagers listened attentively and gladly accepted the Bible's warning against demonism at 1 Corinthians 10:20, 21. For some time, they had resisted the efforts of the missionaries of Christendom's churches to make them follow the so-called Christian way of life. This was partly because they did not agree with some of the doctrines taught by the missionaries and partly because they were shocked by the conduct of some who claimed to be Christians. Now, the villagers were happy to learn about God's promise to restore an earthly paradise and to resurrect the dead. I could not help thinking of Jesus' words at John 8:32: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

The faith of these people and their love for the Bible had also meant opposition for them. Some religious chiefs forced the natives to nail our brochures on their doors as a sign meaning 'we do not want these here.' But this kind of pressure had only caused some of the householders to want a Bible study in order to find out about the truth. It was very hard for me to leave

these fine friends who love the truth. I promised that I would come back and visit their village up in the mountains.

Surviving Cyclone Uma

Our journey included a stop at Espiritu Santo, another island to the north in Vanuatu. There we visited the Luganville Congregation. Though there was just one elder in that congregation, there is a fine spirit among the friends. At the Bible talk on Sunday, we were all pleasantly surprised to see 150 people, three times the number of Kingdom publishers.

We had to return to Port-Vila to catch the plane that would take us home to Nouméa, New Caledonia. While in Port-Vila, we heard news Friday afternoon that cyclone Uma was on its way. People were not too surprised, since this type of weather activity is quite common at that time of year. Then it was reported that the cyclone was due to arrive by 7:00 p.m. We quickly sent a message through the local radio station that our meetings would be postponed. And I was somewhat worried about our flight back to Nouméa on Sunday.

By 5:30 p.m., the wind had become so strong that it began smashing some windows. We realized that we had to barricade the windows and doors so that the wind would not rush in and rip off the roof. Mattresses, beds, bureaus, and tables were piled up against the windows and doors. We could feel the force of the wind lashing against the house, but happily everything held up. Later we learned that the winds were up to 150 miles per hour that night.

Soon there was a lull. We took advantage of this and rushed out to see how the Witnesses living next door were doing. We were astonished to find that the trees in their yard had been blown down and the wall of one room had caved in. The three



Glad to hear the good news

sisters were hovering in another room, waiting for help. We began to wonder how our other brothers were faring. We all prayed to Jehovah to preserve them.

By midnight, after nearly eight exhausting hours, the cyclone was heading south of the archipelago. But lightning and rain continued. By the constant flashes, we could see corrugated tin roofs flying by everywhere. And soon it began to rain inside the house. It was now 2:30 a.m., and we decided we should go and see how our brothers were doing.

The Aftermath

The streets were filled with leaves and branches, bits and pieces of furniture, tin roofs and household items. Metal lamp-posts had been twisted and thrown to the ground. We had to wade through all the rubble. A terrible sight of desolation was before our eyes. Then we found the local presiding overseer and his family shivering in their small car. The roof of their home had been blown off by the cyclone, and the house was destroyed. It was a relief to find them unharmed.

That cyclone turned out to be the most devastating one Vanuatu had experienced in 25 years. The rough seas ran all the

ships aground, and we learned that 46 people had been killed or were missing, mostly among those on the ships. Nearly 4,000 people lost their homes, and the crop and property damage was put at \$200 million. We were happy to learn that none of our brothers had been killed or injured.

Quickly, a relief committee was set up. Jehovah's Witnesses in New Caledonia sent more than a thousand pounds of supplies, including food, clothing, and items to help the brothers rebuild their homes. A group of interested persons on the other side of the island embraced us when they saw us. Their crops had been destroyed, and only one old-style hut had withstood the storm. We made sure that they had enough food for two days, and then we returned to Port-Vila.

The local authorities were also beginning to provide assistance, and help from neighboring countries began to come in. As the stench of putrefaction began to rise, the government advised the people to clean up the city as quickly as possible. We offered some suggestions on the use of water so as to prevent the spread of diseases like typhoid fever and cholera.

The following Thursday, to everyone's delight, we managed to present the slide program. After the meeting, we could hear the buzzing of conversation among the friends. Many of them were still feeling the shock of having lost all their belongings. But everyone showed a marvelous spirit of willingness to help and care for the needs of others. What a demonstration of Christian unity!

Finally, it was time for us to leave our beloved brothers and sisters. We were greatly encouraged by their love and zeal. The hardship we had experienced only drew us closer to one another. As our plane took us out of Port-Vila, our heartfelt wish was that we might return and see all of them again.—*Contributed.*

Questions From Readers

■ Was Jesus referring to Judas when he told Pilate: "This is why the man that handed me over to you has greater sin"?—John 19:11.

It does not seem that Jesus was here referring to Judas or to any other particular man. A number of culpable men were involved in the events leading up to Jesus' being before Pilate and facing death.

Likely, Judas comes to mind first because that corrupt apostle turned traitor. (John 6:64, 71; 12:4-6) Judas met with the chief priests, who wanted "to get rid of" Jesus. They paid Judas 30 pieces of silver to betray him. (Luke 22:2-6) Unquestionably, then, Judas had great sin respecting Jesus' death.

But Judas alone did not bring about Jesus' death. The high priest Caiaphas had instigated others to have Jesus killed. (John 11:49, 50) Matthew relates that once "the chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin" had condemned Jesus, they acted as a group. "All the chief priests and the older men of the people held a consultation against Jesus so as to put him to death. And, after binding him, they led him off and handed him over to Pilate the governor." (Matthew 26:59-65; 27:1, 2) Furthermore, after Pilate had found Jesus innocent, "the crowds" asked that Barabbas be released. In contrast, regarding Jesus they cried: "Let him be impaled!"—Matthew 27:20-23; John 18:40.

So Jesus likely was not speaking about one specific individual when he said to Pilate: "The man that handed me over to you has greater sin." (John 19:11) Though Judas, "the son of destruction," bore particularly heavy guilt, many others shared guilt for the

sin of killing Jesus. (John 17:12) That is why on the day of Pentecost the apostle Peter called on the Jews to repent of their grave sin against the Son of God. (Acts 2:36-38) Such Jews were part of

■ What was the point of Jehovah's telling Ezekiel that his face was to be hard, like the faces of the Jews?

Ezekiel was a prophet of God, serving among the Jews who had been taken captive to Babylon. These captives evidently thought that Jehovah would somehow come quickly to their rescue because they were his chosen people. They did not accept the fact that what they had experienced came upon them because they merited his disfavor.

So when Jehovah directed Ezekiel to "speak with my words to them," it was not an easy assignment. In preparing the prophet, God warned that "they will not want to listen to you, for they are not wanting to listen to me; because all those of the house of Israel are hardheaded and hardhearted."—Ezekiel 3:4, 7.

At this point God told Ezekiel: "Look! I have made your face exactly as hard as their faces and your forehead exactly as hard as their foreheads. Like a diamond, harder than flint, I have made your forehead. You must not be afraid of them."—Ezekiel 3:8, 9.

The people were obstinate and rebellious. (Ezekiel 2:6) Would they be able to overcome or intimidate God's messenger? No. Since he had God's backing, Ezekiel was not going to be softer than they were. Flint is a very hard stone, harder than steel. If the stubborn, unresponsive Jews

a nation dedicated to Jesus' God, Jehovah. They had available to them the prophecies that identified Jesus as the Messiah. And many of them saw Jesus' miracles. So they certainly were more guilty of sin than was a non-Jewish official who pronounced Jesus innocent.—John 18:38.

could be compared to flint, so could Ezekiel. Even more, he was to be like diamond, the hardest of minerals; it is so hard that it can scratch even flint.—Jeremiah 17:1, 2.

This certainly does not mean that God's people today should consider it desirable to be tough, insensitive to another's feelings, or even ruthless in doing what they feel is right. Note what the apostle Peter urged as to interpersonal dealings: "All of you be like-minded, showing fellow feeling, having brotherly affection, tenderly compassionate, humble in mind, not paying back injury for injury or reviling for reviling, but, to the contrary, bestowing a blessing."—1 Peter 3:8, 9.

Compassion is also one of the underlying motives in our sharing the good news of the Kingdom with others. (Matthew 9:36-38) But when we encounter indifference, rejection, or outright opposition, we will not cease proclaiming God's message for our time. That includes proclaiming that soon he will bring "vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus." (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9) We must not be intimidated or hold back. In this sense we can be as diamond-hard as Ezekiel had to be.

Insight on the News

The Zebra's Stripes



"Millions of years of evolution" gave the zebra its stripes, claims the British magazine *World of Wildlife*. The reason? Some scientists say that the stripes evolved as a camouflage to protect the animal from predators. Seemingly adding credibility to this view is the fact that stripes do tend to produce a blurring effect when seen from a distance. However, not all men of science agree. Dr. Gerrie de Graaff, scientific adviser for the South African wildlife magazine *Custos*, notes: "We cannot assume that animals see things in the same way as we do." By way of explanation, de Graaff points out that the behavior of zebras does not harmonize with the camouflage theory of stripe development. Why? Because zebras do not try to conceal themselves as do animals who depend on color camouflage. They are noisy and active and make themselves conspicuous by grazing on open plains.

Other evolutionists theorize that the zebra's distinct black and white stripes create an optical illusion. According to de Graaff, one contention is that "charging lions are unable to single out an individual because it merges with others in the herd," whereas "another suggests that the lion is dazzled or miscalculates its imaginary last leap." But as he observes, "these theories founder on the observable confidence with which lions kill zebras."

In conclusion, de Graaff concedes that, "as yet, we really do not know why a zebra has stripes." The reason, however, is clear to students of the Bible. At Genesis 1:20-25 we are told that *all* the earth's creatures were created by God "according to their kinds." As a result, a natural biological process is responsible for the zebra's stripes. Such stripes are part of the marvelous variety of design in God's creation.

Working Ministers?

Some clergymen expect to see drastic changes in their profession in the near future. This was the concern expressed by one Lutheran pastor, Jean-Pierre Jornod, in *Reformiertes Forum*, a Lutheran journal published in Switzerland. He stated: "I would go so far as to predict that the pastor of the year 2000 will in most cases have a part-time job in addition to his parish." Why? He added: "Not solely for financial reasons, but first and foremost because society has an increasing need for pastors who are in touch with everyday life."

Elaborating on this need, Jornod said: "The pastor of the year 2000 will be a man or woman well versed in the art of communication. I do not claim that churches will be empty then, but the people a pastor wants to reach will keep away from church, just as is partly the case today. His message, therefore, will have to be clearer, more understandable, and more to the point."

It is noteworthy that paid shepherds were unknown in first-century Christianity. The apostle Paul, for example, provided for his own physical needs by means of a secular job—tentmaking. What is more, he reached the people in a very effective way, by teaching them "publicly and from house to house." (Acts 18:3; 20:20, 21, 33, 34) In contrast with today's paid ministers, the elders, or shepherds, among Jehovah's Witnesses still follow this Scriptural pattern of the first-century Christians.

A young woman who had attended college in Iowa, U.S.A., writes regarding one of her teachers: "I could remember her way of teaching about the human anatomy and physiology of the body. She strongly believed in a Creator, but yet the questions of evolution would be asked by students."

A Case for Creation

When this former student received a copy of the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* she thought of her teacher and sent her a copy. The teacher wrote back:

"I'm about halfway through the book, and as I suspected, it is exactly the type of reference material I have often wished I had to back up my beliefs. In my opinion, it is excellent! Very well presented plus very well documented. All the research I have often wished I had time for or an inclination to do has been done for me! Also, it pleases me that you knew it is the type of book I would want to have. Thank you very much!"

