

The **Watchtower**
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

November 15, 1988

A NEW WORLD
NEAR

In This Issue

A New World—Very Near!	3
The New World—Paradise Regained!	4
Insight on the News	7
Further Attempts to Kill Jesus	8
Who Will Become Approved by Jehovah?	10
Helping Others to Worship God	15
"Spiritual Words" for the Mentally Distressed	21
Pioneering Along the Amazon	25
Evidence of Divine Preservation	30

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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THIS world is in its death throes! Can that really be true? Well, consider world conditions carefully.

There are enough nuclear weapons to destroy the entire population of the earth several times over. Civil war is raging in many countries, such as Angola and Mozambique. There are ethnic conflicts in South Africa, Sri Lanka, and other countries. Terrorism and famine are also taking a terrible toll in human lives.

A New World **VERY NEAR!**

What about the AIDS epidemic? The South African *Sunday Times* of October 25, 1987, termed it the “new black death” and said: “Now the full horror of African Aids is revealed: In some countries six people out of every ten are likely to die by 1994.”

Fear prevails because of such conditions. As Nobel prize winner Harold C. Urey said some years ago: “We will eat fear, sleep fear, live in fear and die in fear.” Significantly, Jesus Christ, the greatest prophet ever on earth, foretold that in the last days of this world, men would become “faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth.”—Luke 21:26.

But many are not fearful. Instead, they rejoice. Why? Because they know that this world system (not the planet Earth) is near its end, but a new world is very near. How can they be so sure? Because of the fulfillment of so many Bible prophecies.

For example, when Jesus Christ was asked what would be the sign of his pres-

ence and of the end of the world, he said: “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.” In 1914, World War I exploded. It caused the greatest loss of life from warfare up to that time. The cost in combatants? Some 9,000,000 died, besides millions of civilians! But World War II was far more devastating, taking some 55,000,000 lives! Jesus pointed out that all of this would be accompanied by food shortages, earthquakes, pestilences, and lawlessness.—Matthew 24:7-13; Luke 21:10, 11.

The Christian apostle Paul also accurately foretold present world conditions. He wrote: “In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power; and from these turn away.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Paul could foretell present-day conditions so accurately because God inspired him to write those words.

As to his own words regarding the time of the end, Jesus said: “When you see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near.” (Luke 21:31) Millions use Jesus’ model prayer and ask for God’s Kingdom to come. (Matthew 6:9, 10) But when asked, “What will this Kingdom actually do?” they have no answer. In contrast, millions who study the Bible diligently have learned that the Kingdom will bring an end to this old world and firmly establish a new world that will bring countless blessings to mankind. But how? When?

A NEWLY married couple had a very lovely home—a large park full of flowers, trees, birds, and animals. It was Paradise, a generous gift from their loving Father! Did they “live happily ever after”? No. Before long, they lost their home. But why?

That Paradise home was lost because the couple did not appreciate what their Father had done for them. Worse still, they were disobedient. To test their integrity, their Father had told them that they could eat the fruit of every tree but one, but they rebelliously disobeyed and partook of it.—Genesis 2:15-17; 3:6, 7.

The New World **PARADISE REGAINED!**

Why such a penalty for what may seem to have been a small crime? Perhaps an illustration will help to answer that question. A store owner hires a manager having the necessary credentials. To make sure that this new employee can be trusted, the owner hands him the keys but says that under no circumstances is he to unlock a certain drawer. If the employee does so, he will be dismissed. Left on his own, curiosity overcomes the manager and he opens the drawer. The owner catches him in the act and dismisses him.

Paradise Lost

How does this relate to the young couple? Because they ate the forbidden fruit, their Father dismissed them from their beautiful home. Outside the Paradise of Eden,

thorns and thistles confronted that married couple, Adam and Eve. Instead of being perfect, they were now imperfect. And instead of living forever, they began to die. Their children inherited their imperfection, sinfulness, and death.—Romans 5:12.

Eventually, “Jehovah saw that the badness of man was abundant.” Accordingly, in the days of Noah, God used the Flood to cleanse the earth. Were there any human survivors? Only eight—Noah and his three sons along with their four wives. In preparation for what might be called their voyage into a different world, they had complied with God’s instructions and had built a huge ark capable of carrying them, many kinds of animals, and adequate food supplies. (Genesis 6:5-7, 13-22) The garden once enjoyed by Adam and Eve was wiped out by the Flood. Thus, Paradise was lost—but not forever!

Paradise Regained

Centuries later, God sent his only-begotten Son to earth to redeem mankind from sin and death. This made it possible for those exercising faith in Jesus Christ to gain everlasting life. (John 3:16) Jesus also foretold that Paradise would be regained. Indeed, when Jesus was dying on the torture stake, he told a criminal impaled next to him: “You will be with me in Paradise.”—Luke 23:43.

The regaining of Paradise will follow what is often called the end of the world, foretold by Jesus when his disciples asked: “What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?” In reply, Jesus pointed to warfare, food shortages, earthquakes, pestilences, increasing lawlessness, and a worldwide campaign of Kingdom preaching. These and other features of the sign have been in evidence since 1914. (Matthew 24:3-14) They are harbingers of the end of this

system and the restoration of Paradise on this earth.

In the same prophecy, Jesus also said: "Now learn from the fig tree as an illustration this point: Just as soon as its young branch grows tender and it puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. Likewise also you, when you see all these things, know that he is near at the doors. Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." (Matthew 24:32-35) Other Bible prophecies also indicate that the regaining or restoration of Paradise is very near, that a new world is on the horizon. But what will it be like?

The New World—Really Different!

Present-day governments will be replaced by God's Kingdom. (Daniel 2:44) There will be justice and lasting peace for all in the new world under Kingdom rule by Jesus Christ, the "Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9: 6, 7) Since he will destroy the wicked and lawless elements that now dominate mankind, only peace-loving "blameless" ones will remain. (Proverbs 2:21, 22; Revelation 19:11-21; 16:14-16) Yes, the survivors will be meek, peace-loving people. What a relief that will be!

Racial and other forms of prejudice will disappear in the new world. In fact, a vast crowd of people already have come a long way in overcoming such things. Who are they? Jehovah's Witnesses. And why are they so different? Because they study the Bible diligently, apply it in life, and have love among themselves. (John 13: 34, 35; Acts 10:34, 35) The Witnesses now number millions worldwide, but the Bible foretells that Jehovah's earthly worshippers will eventually be "a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language."—Revelation 7:9, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

War will no longer claim human lives. No

more will billions be spent on nuclear weapons, other armaments, and military forces. Revolutions, ethnic conflicts, and all other kinds of violence will not exist. (Isaiah 2:4) Military training and conscription will cease, for they will be unnecessary. What a happy day when God puts an end to wars!—Psalm 46:8, 9.

True peace will prevail. "Just a little while longer," said the psalmist, "and the wicked one will be no more . . . But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:10, 11.

Food shortages will give way to abundance. In many places, poor peasants now struggle with thorns and thistles, poor soil, encroaching deserts, drought, and devastating locust invasions. All of this will be reversed. (Isaiah 35:1, 6, 7) The result? A huge increase in productivity! (Psalm 72: 16) Eliminating shortages of food and drink, Jehovah will provide "a banquet"!—Isaiah 25:6.

Rewarding work will be enjoyed by all. How satisfying it will be to build homes, plant fruit trees, and tend gardens! And how delightful to sit in the shade of your own fig tree and eat its delicious fruit!—Micah 4:4.

Housing of the finest quality will be provided for everyone. Today, millions live in slums or in shantytowns. What an unhappy life! In Africa, for instance, millions of the black population are leaving the rurals, but they often have to live in homes of mud or clay with corrugated iron roofs, poor hygienic conditions, and little privacy. In the new world, however, people will build fine houses and inhabit them.—Isaiah 65:21, 22.

Perfect health will flourish in place of sickness and such diseases as deadly AIDS. The inspired prophet foretold that no one will say: "I am sick." Moreover, in the new world near at hand, "the eyes of the blind



ones will be opened, and the very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped. At that time the lame one will climb up just as a stag does, and the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness.”—Isaiah 33:24; 35:5, 6.

Death, tears, and funeral parlors will disappear. (Revelation 21:4) But what about the billions already dead? As a man on earth, Jesus resurrected several persons. For instance, he once met a funeral cortege accompanying the bier of a young man who had just died in the city of Nain. After a word of comfort to the bereaved mother, a widow, Jesus said: “Young man, I say to you, Get up!” And he did! (Luke 7:11-17) On another occasion, Jesus gave this assurance: “The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will . . . come out.” (John 5:28, 29) Since God created quintillions of stars and other heavenly bodies and calls them “even by name,” surely the resurrection of billions of human dead will pose no problem.—Isaiah 40:26.

Is It for You?

Jehovah God originally purposed that mankind should never die but should eternally enjoy the good things he lovingly provides. So just imagine the blessings of life in the new world with happy families! Think of children able to play safely with animals now so dangerous. (Isaiah 11:6-9) Consider the blessings of peace, good housing, rewarding work, abundant food. Yes, and think of living eternally in an earthly paradise.

Can you be there? Yes, if you take in and act upon accurate knowledge of God’s Word. Jehovah’s Witnesses stand ready to help you build faith in God’s unfailing purposes. You can be confident that Paradise will soon be regained, for a new world is very near!

Insight on the News



Worthy of Imitation

A recent letter published in the *New Haven Register*, a Connecticut newspaper, offered some objective views on conventions held by Jehovah's Witnesses. Addressed to the editor, the letter stated: "Jehovah's Witnesses have just held their annual conferences at the Coliseum. Of all the groups appearing, none are more welcome or sought after than they. The Coliseum will never be as clean, before they congregate, or as immaculate when they leave as it was since their last visit."

Referring to a convention held by the Witnesses some years ago, the letter writer added that "75,000 Witnesses gathered in Yankee Stadium, with another 20,000 outside listening to loud-speakers in a festival of worship that stunned New York. Two hundred policemen were dispatched the first day, the usual number assigned to such a multitude. Only two were sent the following days to give directions. New York City sent sanitarians, caterers, police and fire authorities to study this unbelievably efficient operation and to learn from it. Not one speck of food or litter was observable

when they left, despite the feeding of their members. Whether you are a believer of some other form of theological mysticism or reject them all, . . . you have to admire their dedication, their wholesomeness, their outstanding example of human behavior and healthful living. We would all do well to follow and practice the wonderful attributes these humble and devoted people portray."

Though many view the behavior of Jehovah's Witnesses as exceptional, the Witnesses themselves know that true Christians must 'live by spirit' and must "go on walking orderly also by spirit." God's spirit is what produces in them the fruitage of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control." Such qualities are indeed worthy of imitation.—Galatians 5:22, 23, 25.

A Crown of Stumbling

Hundreds of citizens of Málaga, Spain, have supported a public collection to finance an elaborate gold crown for the popular local virgin, "Our Lady of Hope." "One gram of gold for the [virgin]" was the slogan coined two years

ago to drum up contributions. Since then, earrings, medals, wedding rings, and even gold teeth have been donated. These objects have been melted down into 3.3 pounds of pure gold, enough to make a solid gold crown for the image.

In a solemn ceremony, presided over by the papal nuncio and several prominent bishops in Spain, "Our Lady of Hope" was crowned in June 1988. Nevertheless, not a few Catholics had serious misgivings about this coronation. The Spanish newspaper *El País* reports that in an open letter some 20 seminarians were asking: "Aren't we still a scandalous stumbling stone to believers and unbelievers with our empty rituals?" Other Catholic groups referred to a recent papal encyclical recommending that the faithful "transfer their treasures to the poor." In view of this, these Catholics expressed their "inalienable conscientious objection with regard to the advertised sumptuous ceremony" and the "costly crown."

It is hardly surprising that sincere people find decorating a lifeless image to be objectionable. God himself feels the same way. Centuries ago, he castigated the Israelites for this very same practice. Jehovah said through his prophet Ezekiel: "They used to pride themselves on the beauty of their jewellery, out of which they made their loathsome images and idols." (Ezekiel 7:20, *The Jerusalem Bible*) For this reason, lovers of truth wisely heed the Bible's timely counsel to "flee from idolatry."—1 Corinthians 10:14.

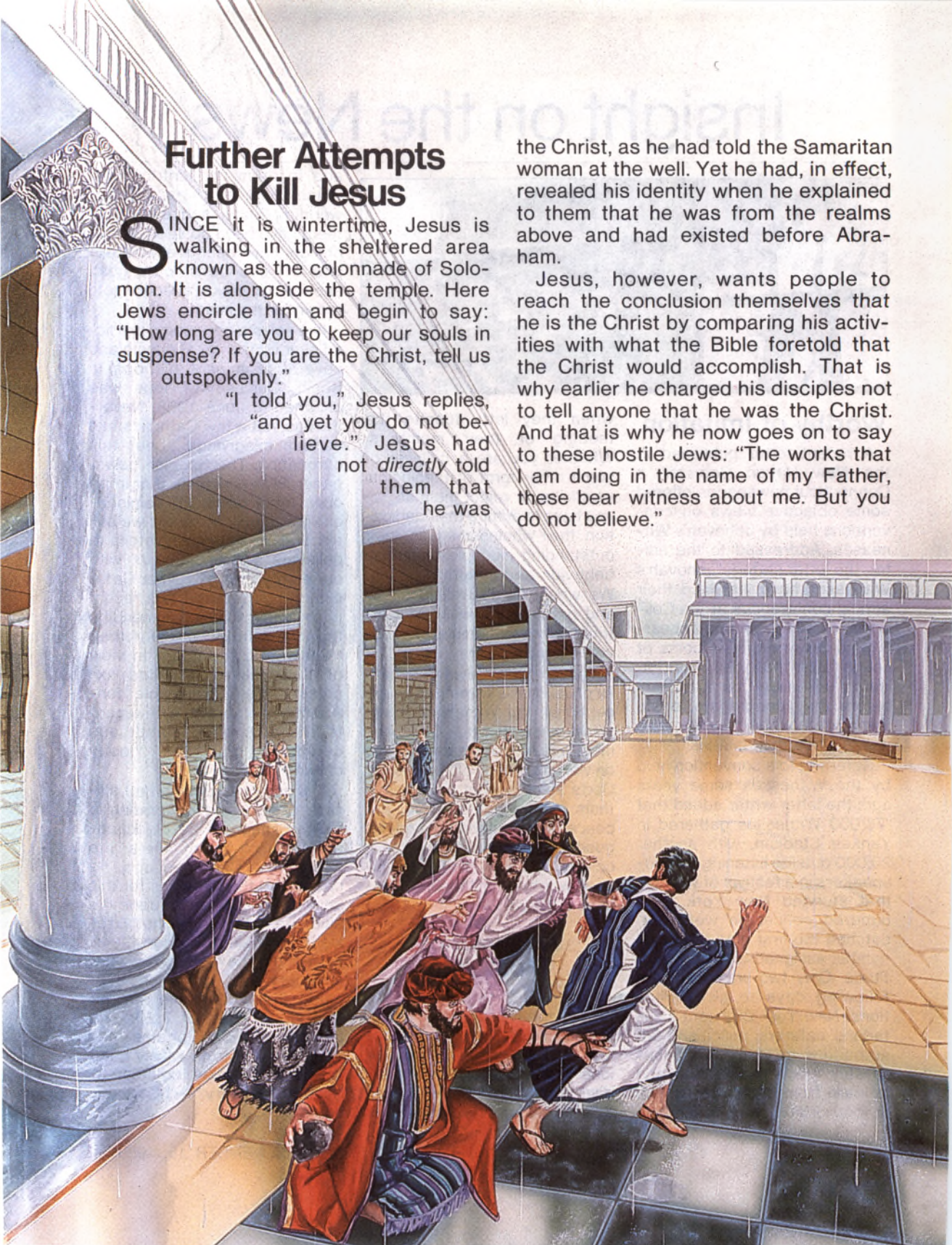
Further Attempts to Kill Jesus

SINCE it is wintertime, Jesus is walking in the sheltered area known as the colonnade of Solomon. It is alongside the temple. Here Jews encircle him and begin to say: "How long are you to keep our souls in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us outspokenly."

"I told you," Jesus replies, "and yet you do not believe." Jesus had not *directly* told them that he was

the Christ, as he had told the Samaritan woman at the well. Yet he had, in effect, revealed his identity when he explained to them that he was from the realms above and had existed before Abraham.

Jesus, however, wants people to reach the conclusion themselves that he is the Christ by comparing his activities with what the Bible foretold that the Christ would accomplish. That is why earlier he charged his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ. And that is why he now goes on to say to these hostile Jews: "The works that I am doing in the name of my Father, these bear witness about me. But you do not believe."



Why do they not believe? Because of lack of evidence that Jesus is the Christ? No, but for the reason Jesus gives when he tells them: "You are none of my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them everlasting life, and they will by no means ever be destroyed, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is something greater than all other things, and no one can snatch them out of the hand of the Father."

Jesus then describes his close relationship with his Father, explaining: "I and the Father are one." Since Jesus is on earth and his Father is in heaven, clearly he is not saying that he and his Father are literally, or physically, one. Rather, he means that they are one in purpose or are at unity.

Angered by Jesus' words, the Jews pick up stones to kill him, even as they did a couple of months earlier, during the Festival of Booths. Courageously facing his would-be murderers, Jesus says: "I displayed to you many fine works from the Father. For which of those works are you stoning me?"

"We are stoning you, not for a fine work," they answer, "but for blasphemy, even because you, although being a man, make yourself a god." Since Jesus never claimed to be a god, why do the Jews say this?

Evidently it is because Jesus attributes to himself powers that they believe belong exclusively to God. For example, he just said of the "sheep," "I give them everlasting life," which is something no human can do. The Jews, however, overlook the fact that Jesus acknowledges receiving authority from his Father.

That Jesus claims to be less than God, he next shows by asking: "Is it not written in your Law [at Psalm 82:6], 'I said: "You are gods"?' If he called 'gods' those against whom the word of God came, and yet the Scripture cannot be nullified, do you say to me whom the Father sanctified and dispatched into the world, 'You blaspheme,' because I said, I am God's Son?"

Yes, since the Scriptures call even unjust human judges "gods," what fault can these Jews find with Jesus for saying, "I am God's Son"? Jesus adds: "If I am not doing the works of my Father, do not believe me. But if I am doing them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, in order that you may come to know and may continue knowing that the Father is in union with me and I am in union with the Father."

When Jesus says this, the Jews try to seize him. But he escapes, even as he did earlier at the Festival of Booths. He leaves Jerusalem and travels across the Jordan River to where John began baptizing nearly four years earlier. This location apparently is not far from the southern shore of the Sea of Galilee, a two-day journey or so from Jerusalem.

Many people come to Jesus at this place and begin to say: "John, indeed, did not perform a single sign, but as many things as John said about this man were all true." Thus many put faith in Jesus here. **John 10:22-42; 4:26; 8:23, 58; Matthew 16:20.**

- ♦ By what means does Jesus want people to identify him as the Christ?
- ♦ How are Jesus and his Father one?
- ♦ Why, evidently, do the Jews say that Jesus is making himself a god?
- ♦ How does Jesus' quotation from the Psalms show that he is not claiming to be equal to God?

Who Will Become Approved by Jehovah?

"Keep working out your own salvation . . . ; for God is the one that, for the sake of his good pleasure, is acting within you in order for you both to will and to act."—PHILIPPIANS 2:12, 13.

IT WAS a turning point in history. John the Baptizer had been preaching God's message and immersing repentant ones in water. Then a man approached whom John knew to be righteous; he was Jesus. He had no sin for which he needed to repent, yet he asked to be baptized 'to carry out all that was righteous.'—Matthew 3:1-15.

² After John modestly complied, and Jesus came out of the water, "the heavens were opened up, and he saw descending like a dove God's spirit." More than that, "there was a voice from the heavens that said: 'This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.'" (Matthew 3:16, 17; Mark 1:11) What a pronouncement! All of us enjoy pleasing someone whom we respect. (Acts 6:3-6; 16:1, 2; Philippians 2:19-22; Matthew 25:21) Imagine, then, how you would feel if the almighty God announced, 'I have approved you!'

³ Is it possible for a person to become approved by God today? For example, take a man who 'has no hope and is without God in the world,' being "alienated from the life that belongs to God." (Ephesians 2:12; 4:18) Can he move from that situation to the blessed state of being approved by Jehovah? If so, how? Let us see.

1, 2. In what situation did Jesus receive a declaration of divine approval, and why should this interest us?

3. What should we be concerned about as regards God's approval?

What Did His Words Mean?

⁴ The Gospel records of God's words "I have approved [Jesus]" employ the Greek verb *eu-do-ke'o*. (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22) It means "be well pleased, regard favorably, take delight in," and its noun form has the sense of "good will, good pleasure, favor, wish, desire." *Eu-do-ke'o* is not limited to divine approval. For

4. (a) What is the sense of the Greek word for "approved" in God's declaration? (b) Why is the usage in this case of special interest?



instance, Christians in Macedonia 'were pleased' to share financially with others. (Romans 10:1; 15:26; 2 Corinthians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; 3:1) Still, the approval Jesus received was expressed by God, not by men. This term is used with reference to Jesus only *after* he was baptized. (Matthew 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17) Interestingly, Luke 2:52 uses a different word—*kha'ris*—in speaking of Jesus as an unbaptized youth who received "favor" from God and men.

⁵ Is it possible also for imperfect humans like us to gain God's approval? Happily, the answer is yes. When Jesus was born, angels announced: "Glory in the heights above to God, and upon earth peace among men of goodwill [*eu-do-ki'as*]." (Luke 2:14) In the literal Greek, the angels were singing of a coming blessing to "men of well thinking" or "men whom God approves."* Professor Hans Bietenhard writes of this use of *en anthro'pois eu-do-ki'as*: "The phrase refers to the men of God's good pleasure . . . We are not, therefore, dealing here with the good will of men . . . We are dealing with God's sovereign and gracious will, which elects for itself a people for salvation." Thus, as Jehovah's Witnesses have long explained, Luke 2:14 indicates that through dedication and baptism, it is possible for imperfect humans to become men of goodwill, men approved by God![#]

⁶ You may realize, however, what a difference there is between being 'enemies of

* Compare "men-whom-he-approves," *New Testament*, by George Swann; "men with whom he is pleased," *The Revised Standard Version*.

[#] See *The Watchtower* of October 15, 1964, pages 629-33.

5. (a) How is it evident that imperfect humans can be approved by God? (b) Who are "men of goodwill"?

6. What do we still need to learn about God's approval?

God with minds on the works that are wicked' and being approved as associates of our just and wise God. (Colossians 1:21; Psalm 15:1-5) Hence, though you may be relieved to hear that humans can become approved, you may want to know what is involved. We can learn much about this from God's past dealings.

He Welcomed People

⁷ For centuries before the announcement of Luke 2:14, Jehovah welcomed people to come and worship him. Of course, God was dealing exclusively with the nation of Israel, which was dedicated to him. (Exodus 19:5-8; 31:16, 17) Recall, though, that when Israel marched out of Egyptian bondage, "a vast mixed company also went up with them." (Exodus 12:38) These non-Israelites who may have had dealings with God's people and witnessed the plagues on Egypt now chose to go with Israel. Some likely became full proselytes.

⁸ The Law covenant acknowledged the situation of non-Israelites in relation to God and his people. Some aliens were settlers who simply resided in the land of Israel, where they had to obey fundamental laws, such as those against murder and requiring observance of the Sabbath. (Nehemiah 13:16-21) Rather than embracing these settlers as brothers, an Israelite exercised reasonable caution when speaking or dealing with them, for they were not yet part of God's nation. For example, while an Israelite was not allowed to buy and eat the unbled carcass of an animal that had died of itself, such aliens who were not proselytes might do so. (Deuteronomy 14:21; Ezekiel 4:14) In time some of these alien settlers might follow

7. Exodus 12:38 gives what indication as to God's attitude?

8. What two types of aliens resided in Israel, and why was there a difference in how Israelites dealt with them?

the course of other aliens who became circumcised proselytes. Only then were they treated as brothers in true worship, accountable to keep the entire Law. (Leviticus 16:29; 17:10; 19:33, 34; 24:22) Ruth, the Moabitess, and Naaman, the Syrian leper, were non-Israelites whom God accepted.—Matthew 1:5; Luke 4:27.

⁹ In the days of King Solomon, we also see God's welcoming attitude toward non-Israelites. When inaugurating the temple, Solomon prayed: "To the foreigner, who is no part of your people Israel and who actually comes from a distant land by reason of your name . . . and prays toward this house, may you yourself listen from the heavens, . . . in order that all the peoples of the earth may get to know your name so as to fear you the same as your people Israel do." (1 Kings 8:41-43) Yes, Jehovah welcomed the prayers of sincere foreigners who searched for him. Perhaps these too would learn his laws, submit to the act of circumcision, and become accepted members of his blessed people.

¹⁰ One man who did this in later times was the treasurer for Queen Candace in distant Ethiopia. Likely, when he first heard of the Jews and their worship, his life-style or religious ways were unacceptable to Jehovah. So the Jews would have had to show a measure of tolerance while this foreign man among them was studying the Law to learn God's requirements. He evidently progressed and made the needed changes to qualify for circumcision. Acts 8:27 tells us that "he had gone to Jerusalem to worship." (Exodus 12:48, 49) This would indicate that he was then a full proselyte. He thus was in position to accept the Messiah and become his

9. How did Solomon confirm God's attitude toward foreigners?

10. How would the Jews have dealt with the Ethiopian eunuch, and why did circumcision benefit him?

baptized disciple, thereby coming in line with God's progressive will.

Unbelievers and the Christian Congregation

¹¹ Jesus told his followers: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19, 20) The Ethiopian proselyte just mentioned already had knowledge of Jehovah and of the holy spirit. So once Philip helped him to understand and accept Jesus as the messianic Son of God, he could be baptized. He would thus become an approved member of Jehovah's people who were following Christ. Naturally, he would be accountable to God, required 'to observe all the things commanded' for Christians. But with this accountability came a marvelous prospect: salvation!

¹² Later, Paul wrote that all Christians need to 'keep working out their own salvation with fear and trembling.' Yet, it was possible to do that, "for God is the one that, for the sake of his good pleasure [*eu-do-ki'as*], is acting within you in order for you both to will and to act."—Philippians 2:12, 13.

¹³ Not all who came in contact with true Christians were as ready and qualified as that Ethiopian to move quickly to baptism. Some, not being Jews or proselytes, had little or no knowledge of Jehovah and his ways; nor were their morals guided by his standards. How would they be dealt with? Christians were to follow Jesus' example. He certainly did not encourage or

11, 12. (a) What further change occurred when the Ethiopian got baptized? (b) How was this in accord with Philippians 2:12, 13?

13. How would Christians have dealt with those who were not as quick to get baptized as the Ethiopian eunuch?

even condone sin. (John 5:14) Still, he was tolerant toward sinners who were drawn to him and who desired to bring their ways into line with those of God.—Luke 15:1-7.

¹⁴ That Christians dealt tolerantly with those who were learning about God is clear from Paul's comments about meetings in Corinth. In discussing the use of miraculous gifts of the spirit that initially marked Christianity as having God's blessing, Paul mentioned "believers" and "unbelievers." (1 Corinthians 14:22) "Believers" were those who accepted Christ and were baptized. (Acts 8:13; 16:31-34) "Many of the Corinthians that heard began to believe and be baptized."—Acts 18:8.

¹⁵ According to 1 Corinthians 14:24, 'unbelievers or ordinary people' also came to the meetings in Corinth and were welcomed there.* Likely, they varied as to their progress in studying and applying God's Word. Some might still have been committing sin. Others might have gained a measure of faith, already made some changes in their lives, and, even before baptism, have begun telling others what they had learned.

¹⁶ Of course, none of such unbaptized ones were "in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39) If their past involved serious moral and spiritual faults, it understandably could have taken them time to conform to God's standards. Meanwhile, as long as

* "The ἀπιστος (*apistos*, 'unbeliever') and ἰδιώτης (*idiōtēs*, 'one without understanding,' the 'inquirer') are both in the unbeliever class in contrast to the saved of the Christian church."—*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 10, page 275.

14, 15. Aside from anointed Christians, what types of persons attended meetings in Corinth, and how might they have varied as to spiritual progress?

16. How could such persons benefit from being among Christians at congregation meetings?

they did not maliciously try to subvert the faith and cleanness of the congregation, they were welcome. What they saw and heard at the meetings could 'reprove them' as the 'secrets of their hearts became manifest.'—1 Corinthians 14:23-25; 2 Corinthians 6:14.

Staying Approved by God for Salvation

¹⁷ Through the public preaching by baptized Christians in the first century, thousands heard the good news. They put faith in what they heard, repented of their past course, and were baptized, making "public declaration for salvation." (Romans 10:10-15; Acts 2:41-44; 5:14; Colossians 1:23) There was no doubt that baptized ones back then had Jehovah's approval, for he anointed them with holy spirit, adopting them as spiritual sons. The apostle Paul wrote: "He foreordained us to the adoption through Jesus Christ as sons to himself, according to the good pleasure [*eudokian*] of his will." (Ephesians 1:5) Thus, within that century what was predicted by the angels at Jesus' birth began to prove true: "Peace among men of goodwill [or, men having God's approval]."—Luke 2:14.

¹⁸ To maintain that peace, it was necessary for those "men of goodwill" to "keep working out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling." (Philippians 2:12) That was not easy, for they were still imperfect humans. They would face temptations and pressures to do wrong. If they gave in to wrongdoing, they would lose God's approval. Thus, Jehovah lovingly arranged for spiritual shepherds who would both help and protect the congregations.—1 Peter 5:2, 3.

17. Luke 2:14 had what fulfillment in the first century?

18. Why could anointed Christians not take for granted their approved standing with God?

¹⁹ Such congregation elders would take to heart Paul's advice: "Even though a man takes some false step before he is aware of it, you who have spiritual qualifications try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness, as you each keep an eye on yourself, for fear you also may be tempted." (Galatians 6:1) As we can understand, a person who took the important step of baptism would have greater accountability, even as was true of an alien who became a circumcised proselyte in Israel. Nonetheless, if a baptized Christian erred, he could find loving help within the congregation.

²⁰ A group of elders in the congregation could offer help to one who fell into serious wrongdoing. Jude wrote: "Continue showing mercy to some that have doubts; save them by snatching them out of the fire. But continue showing mercy to others, doing so with fear, while you hate even the inner garment that has been stained by the flesh." (Jude 22, 23) A baptized member of the congregation who was helped in

19, 20. What provisions did God make so that baptized Christians could continue to be his approved servants?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ According to the Scriptures, since when and in what way can humans be approved by God?
- ☐ What was God's view of foreigners among his people, but why did the Israelites need to balance caution with tolerance?
- ☐ What can we conclude from the fact that "unbelievers" came to Christian meetings in Corinth?
- ☐ How has God made provision to help baptized Christians remain his approved servants?

this way could continue to enjoy Jehovah's approval and the peace of which the angels had spoken at Jesus' birth.

²¹ Though uncommon, there were some instances where the wrongdoer was not repentant. Then the elders would have to expel him to protect the clean congregation from contamination. That occurred with a baptized man in Corinth who persisted in an immoral relationship. Paul advised the congregation: "Quit mixing in company with fornicators, not meaning entirely with the fornicators of this world or the greedy persons and extortioners or idolaters. Otherwise, you would actually have to get out of the world. But now I am writing you to quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even eating with such a man." —1 Corinthians 5:9-11.

²² Since the Corinthian man had taken the important step of baptism, becoming approved by God and a member of the congregation, his being expelled was a serious matter. Paul indicated that Christians were not to keep company with him, for he had rejected his approved standing with God. (Compare 2 John 10, 11.) Peter wrote of such expelled ones: "It would have been better for them not to have accurately known the path of righteousness than after knowing it accurately to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. The saying of the true proverb has happened to them: 'The dog has returned to its own vomit.'" —2 Peter 2:21, 22.

²³ Jehovah obviously could no longer

21, 22. What would result if someone became an unrepentant sinner, and how would loyal members of the congregation react?

23. In the first century, what was the general situation among Christians as to retaining God's approval?

view such individuals as approved, for they had been expelled for being unrepentant wrongdoers. (Hebrews 10:38; compare 1 Corinthians 10:5.) Evidently, only a minority was disfellowshipped. Most who gained “undeserved kindness and peace from God” and were ‘adopted as sons according to the good pleasure of his will’ stayed faithful.—Ephesians 1:2, 5, 8-10.

²⁴ That is basically so in our time too. Let us consider, though, how ‘unbelievers or ordinary people’ can be helped to become approved by God today and what can be done to help them if they err along the way. The following article will deal with these matters.

24. What aspect of this subject merits our further attention?

Helping Others to Worship God

“If . . . any unbeliever or ordinary person comes in, . . . the secrets of his heart become manifest, so that he will fall upon his face and worship God.”

—1 CORINTHIANS 14:24, 25.

ON HIS second missionary tour, the apostle Paul stayed in the city of Corinth for a year and a half. There he was “intensely occupied with the word, witnessing.” With what result? “Many of the Corinthians that heard began to believe and be baptized.” (Acts 18:5-11) They became “sanctified . . . , called to be holy ones.”—1 Corinthians 1:2.

² Apollos later visited Corinth. Earlier, Priscilla and Aquila had helped him to understand “the way of God more correctly,” including the matter of baptism. He thus became a Christian having God’s goodwill, or approval. (Acts 18:24-19:7) Apollos, in turn, helped Corinthians who once ‘had been led away to voiceless idols.’ (1 Corinthians 12:2) These people likely were given Bible instruction in their homes; they could also learn by attending Christian meetings.—Acts 20:20; 1 Corinthians 14:22-24.

1-3. How were many in Corinth helped to gain God’s approval?

³ The result of such teaching was that many former ‘unbelievers and ordinary persons’ were drawn to true worship. How satisfying it must have been to see men and women progress toward baptism and God’s approval! This is still satisfying.

Helping ‘Unbelievers and Ordinary Persons’

⁴ Jehovah’s Witnesses today also are obeying Jesus’ command to “make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them.” (Matthew 28:19, 20) After planting seeds of truth in receptive hearts, they return and water these. (1 Corinthians 3:5-9; Matthew 13:19, 23) The Witnesses offer free weekly home Bible studies so that persons can have their questions answered and can learn Bible truths. Such individuals are also invited to attend the local

4. In what ways are many today being helped as were those in Corinth?

meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses, even as first-century "unbelievers" attended in Corinth. But how should Jehovah's Witnesses view persons who are studying the Bible and coming to meetings?

⁵ We are delighted to see them approaching God. Still, we keep in mind that they are not yet baptized believers. Bear in mind also two lessons based on the previous article. (1) Israelites showed caution toward alien settlers who, though being around God's people and obeying some laws, were not circumcised proselytes, brothers in worship. (2) Corinthian Christians dealing with 'unbelievers and ordinary persons' were on the alert because of Paul's words: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have?"—2 Corinthians 6:14.

⁶ So while we welcome 'unbelievers and ordinary persons,' we are aware that they do not yet meet God's standards. As the Bible indicates at 1 Corinthians 14:24, 25, such ones may need to be "closely examined," even "reproved," by what they are learning. Such reproof is not of a judicial sort; they are not called before a judicial committee of the congregation inasmuch as they are not yet baptized members of it. Rather, as a result of what they are learning, these new ones become convinced that God condemns any selfish and immoral ways.

⁷ Many unbaptized ones in time may want to go beyond merely attending meetings as interested learners. These words of Jesus show why: "A pupil is not above his

teacher, but everyone that is perfectly instructed will be like his teacher." (Luke 6:40) The Bible student can see that his teacher views the field ministry as vital and derives happiness from it. (Matthew 24:14) So, with growing faith, the one who has been learning Bible truths and attending meetings may take to heart the words: "How comely upon the mountains are the feet of the one bringing good news, the one publishing peace, the one bringing good news of something better, the one publishing salvation." (Isaiah 52:7; Romans 10:13-15) Though unbaptized, he may want to become a Kingdom publisher adhering himself to the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Becoming a publisher, though yet unbaptized, is an important and responsible step toward gaining God's approval



5. What Scriptural basis is there for caution in dealing with certain individuals?

6. How can "unbelievers" be "reproved" by the meetings, and what is the nature of such reproof?

7. What added progress will many pupils want to make and why?

⁸ When the Witness conducting the Bible study finds that the student desires to share in the field service, he can discuss the matter with the presiding overseer, who will arrange for two elders to meet with the Bible student and his teacher. The elders are pleased when a new one wants to serve God. They will not expect him to have the degree of knowledge possessed by those who are baptized and further advanced in the truth, of whom more is required. Still, the elders will want to see that before the new one shares in the field ministry with the congregation, he has some knowledge of Bible teachings and has conformed his life to God's principles. Thus it is for good reasons that two elders meet with the prospective publisher and the Witness conducting the study.*

⁹ The two elders will inform the student that when he qualifies for and shares in the field service, he may turn in a field service report and a Congregation's Publisher Record card will be made out in his name. This will demonstrate his affiliation with the theocratic organization of Jehovah's Witnesses and his submission to it. (This would also be true of all others turning in field service reports.) The discussion should also cover Bible counsel, such as is outlined on pages 98 and 99 of *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*.[#] Hence, this would be an appropriate time for the student to obtain a personal copy of that book.

* One of the elders should be a member of the congregation's Service Committee. The other might be the elder most familiar with the student or his teacher, such as the Congregation Book Study conductor.

[#] Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 1983.

8, 9. (a) What should be done when a Bible student wants to share in the public ministry? (b) When two elders meet with a prospective publisher and his teacher, what will they do? (c) What responsibility is a new publisher assuming?

¹⁰ A person who has qualified as an unbaptized publisher of the good news has moved in the direction of becoming a 'man of goodwill.'* (Luke 2:14) Although he is not dedicated and baptized, now he can report his witnessing activity along with the millions of active ones earth wide who are "publishing the word of God." (Acts 13:5; 17:3; 26:22, 23) An announcement that he is a new unbaptized publisher can be made to the congregation. He should continue studying the Bible, participating in the meetings, applying what he learns, and sharing it with others. Before long, he will want to take the step of Christian baptism, thus becoming approved by God and 'marked' for salvation.—Ezekiel 9:4-6.

Help for One Who Errs

¹¹ In the previous article, we discussed the congregation's provisions to help any baptized Christian who commits serious sin. (Hebrews 12:9-13) And we saw from the Bible that if a baptized wrongdoer is unrepentant, the congregation may need to expel him and thereafter avoid any fellowship with him. (1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 2 John 9-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12) What steps, though, can be taken if an unbaptized publisher seriously errs or sins?

¹² Jude urged that mercy be shown to

* Previously, an unbaptized person who qualified to share in the field ministry was termed an "approved associate." However, "unbaptized publisher" is a more accurate designation, especially in view of the Biblical indication that God's approval results from a valid dedication and Christian baptism.

10. (a) How can an unbaptized publisher continue to progress, and with what goal? (b) Why is an adjustment being made as to the term "approved associate"? (See footnote.)

11. How does the congregation deal with baptized wrongdoers?

12. (a) Why is merciful help also available for unbaptized publishers who sin? (b) How can the principle at Luke 12:48 relate to accountability for wrongdoing?

anointed Christians who had developed doubts or had fallen into sins of the flesh, provided they were repentant. (Jude 22, 23; see also 2 Corinthians 7:10.) Would it not, then, be even more fitting that mercy be shown to an erring unbaptized person who demonstrates repentance? (Acts 3:19) Yes, for his spiritual foundation is not as solid, and his experience in Christian living is more limited. He may not have learned God's thinking on some matters. He has not gone through the series of prebaptism Bible discussions with elders, and he has not submitted to the serious step of water immersion. Moreover, Jesus said that "everyone to whom much was given, much will be demanded of him." (Luke 12:48) So, much is expected of baptized ones who, along with increased knowledge and blessings, have special accountability.—James 4:17; Luke 15:1-7; 1 Corinthians 13:11.

¹³ Consistent with Paul's advice, spiritually qualified brothers want to assist any unbaptized publisher who takes a false step before being aware of it. (Compare Galatians 6:1.) The elders could ask two of their number (perhaps those who earlier met with him) to try to readjust him if he wants to be helped. They would do so, not out of a desire to reprove with severity, but in a merciful way and in a spirit of mildness. (Psalm 130:3) In most cases, Scriptural exhortation and practical suggestions will suffice to produce repentance and put him on the right path.

¹⁴ The two elders will provide directions appropriate to the unbaptized wrongdoer's situation. In some cases, they may arrange that for a time the erring one not be in the

13. If an unbaptized publisher errs, what will the elders do to help?

14, 15. (a) What may be done if the wrongdoer is genuinely repentant? (b) What limited clarifying comment might be made in some cases?

Theocratic Ministry School or be allowed to comment at meetings. Or they may instruct him not to share in the public ministry with the congregation until he has made more spiritual progress. Then they can tell him that he may again participate in the field ministry. If the wrongdoing did not bring notoriety and did not pose a danger to the cleanness of the flock, it is not necessary to alert the congregation by any announcement.

¹⁵ What, though, if the two elders find that the person is genuinely repentant, but the wrong is widely known? Or what if the wrongdoing becomes widely known later? In either case, they can inform the Congregation Service Committee, who will arrange for a simple announcement, as follows: "A matter involving . . . has been handled, and he [she] continues to serve as an unbaptized publisher with the congregation." As in all such matters, the body of elders can determine whether it would be advisable at some future point to give a Scriptural talk with counsel about the sort of wrongdoing involved.

¹⁶ Occasionally, an unbaptized publisher who is a wrongdoer will not respond to loving assistance. Or an unbaptized publisher may determine that he does not want to continue progressing toward baptism, and he informs the elders that he does not want to be recognized as a publisher. What is to be done? Disfellowshipping action is not taken regarding such ones who actually have not become approved by God. The arrangement of disfellowshipping unrepentant wrongdoers applies to those 'called brothers,' to baptized ones. (1 Corinthians 5:11) Does this mean, though, that the wrongdoing is ignored? No.

¹⁷ The elders are responsible to 'shepherd

16, 17. (a) What two situations might be the basis for a different announcement? (b) What is the nature of this announcement?

the flock of God in their care.' (1 Peter 5:2) If two elders offering help determine that an unbaptized wrongdoer is unrepentant and unqualified to be a publisher, they will inform the individual.* Or if some unbaptized one tells the elders that he no longer wishes to be recognized as a publisher, they will accept his decision. In either case, it is appropriate for the Congregation Service Committee to have a simple announcement made at an appropriate time, saying "... is no longer a publisher of the good news."

¹⁸ How will Witnesses thereafter view the person? Well, at an earlier point he was an 'unbeliever' attending meetings. Then he both wanted to be and qualified to be a publisher of the good news. This is no longer the case, so he again is a person of the world. The Bible does not require that Witnesses avoid speaking with him, for he is not disfellowshipped.[#] Still, Christians will exercise caution with regard to such a person of the world who is not worshiping Jehovah, even as Israelites did regarding uncircumcised alien settlers. This caution helps to protect the congregation from any "little leaven," or corrupting element. (1 Corinthians 5:6) If at some later time he expresses a genuine desire for a Bible study to be held with him, and this seems in order to the elders, perhaps it will help him come to appreciate again what a privilege it is to worship Jehovah with His people.—Psalm 100.

* If the individual is dissatisfied with this conclusion, he may request (within seven days) to have the matter reviewed.

[#] Previously, unbaptized ones who unrepentantly sinned were completely avoided. While, as adjusted above, this is not required, the counsel at 1 Corinthians 15:33 should still be observed.

18. (a) After such an announcement, what will Christians bear in mind in personally deciding how to act? (b) Is it necessary completely to avoid unbaptized ones guilty of wrongdoing in the past?

¹⁹ If the elders see that a certain person of this sort is an unusual threat to the flock, they can privately warn those endangered. For example, the former publisher may be a youth who has given in to drunkenness or immorality. Despite the announcement that he is no longer an unbaptized publisher, he might attempt to socialize with youths in the congregation. In that situation, the elders would speak privately to the parents of the endangered ones, and maybe to those youths also. (Hebrews 12:15, 16; Acts 20:28-30) In the rare case of a person who is disruptive or violently dangerous, he can be told that he is not welcome at the meetings and that any attempt to enter will be considered trespassing.

Helping Minors to Worship God

²⁰ The Bible gives parents the responsibility to instruct their children in the way of divine truth. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 31:12, 13) Thus, Jehovah's Witnesses have long encouraged Christian families to have a weekly Bible study. Christian parents should encourage their little ones to progress toward dedication and baptism and so gain God's approval. (Proverbs 4:1-7) We see in the congregations the delightful result—hundreds of thousands of exemplary young ones who love Jehovah and want to worship him forever.

²¹ Christian parents also have the primary responsibility to discipline and reprove their children, imposing whatever restrictions or loving punishments they deem necessary. (Ephesians 6:4; Hebrews 12:8, 9; Proverbs 3:11, 12; 22:15) If, though, a

19. How can the elders privately provide further aid in some cases?

20. Christian parents provide what help for their children, and with what result?

21-23. (a) Primarily, how is a minor's wrongdoing handled? (b) What role do congregation elders play in such situations?

minor child who has been associating as an unbaptized publisher becomes involved in serious wrongdoing, it is of concern to the elders who are 'watching over the souls' of the flock.—Hebrews 13:17.

²² Basically, such wrongdoing should be cared for as outlined earlier in this article. Two elders can be assigned to look into the matter. They might, for example, first discuss with the parents (or parent) what has occurred, what the child's attitude is, and what corrective steps have been taken. (Compare Deuteronomy 21:18-21.) If the Christian parents have the situation in hand, the elders can simply check with them from time to time to offer helpful counsel, suggestions, and loving encouragement.

²³ Sometimes, though, the discussion with the parents shows that it would be best for the elders to meet with the wayward minor and the parents. Bearing in mind the limitations and inclinations of youths, the overseers will endeavor to instruct the young, unbaptized publisher with mildness. (2 Timothy 2:22-26) In some cases, it may be clear that he no longer qualifies to be a publisher and that an appropriate announcement should be made.

²⁴ Thereafter, what would parents do in behalf of their erring minor child? They are still responsible for their child, though he is disqualified as an unbaptized publisher or even if he is disfellowshipped because of wrongdoing after baptism. Just as they will continue to provide him with food, clothing, and shelter, they need to instruct and discipline him in line with God's Word. (Proverbs 6:20-22; 29:17) Loving parents may thus arrange to have a home Bible

24. (a) Even if a minor has shared in serious wrongdoing, what is it appropriate for parents to do, and how may they accomplish this? (b) How would this apply to a minor who has been disfellowshipped?

study with him, even if he is disfellowshipped.* Maybe he will derive the most corrective benefit from their studying with him alone. Or they may decide that he can continue to share in the family study arrangement. Though he has gone astray, they want to see him return to Jehovah, as did the prodigal son in Jesus' illustration.—Luke 15:11-24.

²⁵ The goal of our preaching and teaching is to help others to become happy worshipers of the true God. 'Unbelievers and ordinary persons' in Corinth were moved to 'fall upon their face and worship God, declaring: "God is really among you."' (1 Corinthians 14:25) What a joy it is today to see more and more persons come to worship God! This is a glorious fulfillment of the angels' pronouncement: "Glory in the heights above to God, and upon earth peace among men of goodwill [or, men having God's approval]."—Luke 2:14.

* Disfellowshipped relatives living outside the home should be handled according to the Scriptural counsel discussed in *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1988, pages 26-31; September 15, 1981, pages 26-31.

25. Why is loving interest and help directed toward "unbelievers" today?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ What is the view of Christians toward "unbelievers" who attend meetings?
- ☐ When a Bible student wants to share in the field service, what steps do the elders follow, and what responsibility does the student accept?
- ☐ What is done if an unbaptized publisher commits serious sin?
- ☐ How can parents and the elders help minor children living at home, even if such youths err seriously?

“Spiritual Words” *for the Mentally Distressed*

MENTAL problems afflict even some faithful servants of God. And while at times it may be necessary and appropriate for distressed ones to seek professional help, they can also benefit from the assistance and encouragement of the Christian congregation. For example, when the faithful Christian Epaphroditus became severely depressed, fellow believers in Philippi were exhorted not to ignore his distress but to “give him the customary welcome in the Lord with all joy; and keep holding men of that sort dear.”—Philippians 2:25-29.

Jehovah’s Witnesses today are likewise under obligation to “keep comforting one another” and to “support the weak.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14) Christian elders should take the lead in this regard.—Isaiah 32:2.

Of course, elders usually are not qualified to act as physicians or to employ the concepts and terminology of psychiatry. To do so would be immodest and perhaps dangerous. (Proverbs 11:2) Like the apostle Paul, they must “speak, not

with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the spirit, as [they] combine spiritual matters with spiritual words.” (1 Corinthians 2:13) These “spiritual words” include the concepts and principles found in the Bible. Applied correctly, these can do much to comfort and upbuild distressed persons.—2 Timothy 3:16.

“Swift About Hearing”

First, though, elders must be “swift about hearing, slow about speaking.” (James 1:19) ‘Replying to a matter before hearing it’ can easily result in the giving of inappropriate advice. (Proverbs 18:13) Failing to grasp the nature of a certain brother’s depressive disorder, one group of elders passed him off as spiritually weak. “Pray more,” they told him—instruction he found hard

“Spiritual words” from loving elders can do much to help distressed persons



to apply because of his depressed state of mind.

Before offering counsel, then, elders should hear everything the sufferer has to say. Perhaps, what he needs is a good listener. Through patience and discernment, 'draw up' what is in his heart. (Proverbs 20:5) If the distressed person has difficulty putting his feelings into words, recall how Elkanah asked kind but pointed questions regarding his wife's gloomy state. "Hannah," he asked, "why do you weep, and why do you not eat, and why does your heart feel bad?" (1 Samuel 1:8) Tactful questions, gently asked, can often help a depressed brother pinpoint the source of his "anxious care." (Proverbs 12:25) For example, in one case marital problems proved to be the cause of a brother's depression.

Giving Help "Without Reproaching"

Distressed persons do not always have rational explanations for the way they feel. Writes one victim of mental illness: "When I became ill, I didn't understand it and sometimes blamed Jehovah." Afflicted ones may thus make groundless complaints that they have been mistreated or rejected by the congregation. How should elders respond?

Jehovah sets the example by 'giving generously to all without reproaching.' (James 1:5) Sufferers should not be made to feel that they are stupid or foolish for feeling the way they do. Their feelings—illogical though they may be—are quite real to them. They need "fellow feeling," not criticism. (1 Peter 3:8) Elders should also be careful not to add to a sufferer's emotional burden by accusing him of wrongdoing. The righteous man Job was so distressed that he lamented: "My soul certainly feels a loathing toward my life." (Job 10:1) But his three companions did not comfort him. One of them even said: "Is not your own badness too much already, and will there be no end to your errors?"—Job 22:5.

Sometimes, however, misconduct is the cause of emotional upheaval or is a contributor to its severity. "When I kept silent [about wrongdoing] my bones wore out through my groaning all day long," said the psalmist David. (Psalm 32:3) Similarly, one brother suffered such severe anxiety that he could no longer work. The cause of his distress? An act of adultery that he had concealed. So if there is reason to suspect that wrongdoing is involved, elders can explore this as a possibility. But they should do so in a kind way, not reproachfully accusing the person of wrong.

Healing With a Wise Tongue

After the elders have done what they can to determine the nature of a person's problem, they should act in harmony with Proverbs 12:18, which says: "The tongue of the wise ones is a healing." No, elders cannot heal the illness itself. But by using carefully chosen words, they may be able to relieve mentally distressed persons of unnecessary anxiety and stress. The elders might begin by selecting *Watchtower* and *Awake!* articles dealing with mental and emotional problems. These can be discussed with distressed ones so as to help them understand their condition better. Often they are relieved to know that their problem is the result of physical imperfection, not a loss of Jehovah's favor.

Admittedly, disturbed individuals can be difficult to deal with, some becoming quite agitated. Yet, a wise elder remembers that "an answer, when mild, turns away rage." (Proverbs 15:1) Making sure that his utterances are always gracious prevents him from needlessly aggravating the situation. (Colossians 4:6) For example, a brother suffering from schizophrenia may insist that he hears voices.* Observes, Dr. E. Fuller

* The article "Mental Distress—When It Afflicts a Christian" in *The Watchtower* of October 15, 1988, gave guidelines for handling situations where demonic influence is suspected.

Torrey: 'It is counterproductive to try to argue schizophrenics out of their delusional beliefs. Attempts to do so often result in misunderstanding and anger. Rather than argue, simply make a statement of disagreement.' In other words, the elders can patiently explain that though those voices *seem* real, likely his mind is simply playing tricks on him.

Effective use of the Bible can also yield fine results. (Hebrews 4:12) For example, if a sick person expresses irrational fears that God has abandoned him, kindly show sympathy for his fears. At the same time, however, patiently remind him of the power of the ransom, using such texts as Psalm 103:8-14 and 1 John 2:1, 2. First Peter 5:6, 7 and Romans 8:26, 27 may help him appreciate that God 'cares for him' and hears his prayers, even if he has difficulty putting his feelings into words. Following the principle at James 5:14, the elders can then pray with the distressed person.

What if a sufferer tends to become excited over trivial matters? He can be reminded of the Bible's counsel not to be "righteous overmuch." (Ecclesiastes 7:16) Another may benefit from the encouragement at Philippians 4:8, which can help him to fight immoral thoughts. Yet another may fail to accept his limitations and may be discouraged because his illness limits his Christian activity. Such texts as Matthew 13:23 and Luke 21:1-4 can be used to help him appreciate that although our circumstances may limit what we can do, Jehovah deeply appreciates our efforts.

Yes, equipped with a Bible-trained tongue, elders can do much to help and comfort distressed fellow believers. Says one sister who suffered from mental problems: "I really appreciate what Isaiah 32:2 says about the elders in the congregation. They were always there with practical advice when I needed them."

Meetings and Field Service

A mentally distressed person still has spiritual needs. (Matthew 5:3) Indeed, staying spiritually strong has meant the difference between life and death for some. Irene, who suffered because of schizophrenia for 30 years, recalls: "At times, I was very confused. But the truth was always in my mind—solid like concrete. It kept me from taking my life!"

To the extent practical, therefore, the ailing person should be encouraged to share in the preaching work and attend meetings, not "isolating himself." (Proverbs 18:1) Because of mental illness, this is how one sister felt: 'I was convinced that I had sinned unforgivably against our God, Jehovah. As a result, I took everything I heard at meetings out of context. Whatever condemned, I applied to myself.' But she persisted in attending meetings and eventually heard a talk that helped her to get over her delusion of being rejected by God.

What, though, if a severely ill person becomes agitated and disrupts congregation meetings or field service? Likely, the sufferer is not being malicious but is merely upset because of confused thinking. Still, this can be trialsome for all concerned. If the disturbance is minor or infrequent, likely the congregation will display long-suffering. (Colossians 3:12, 13) Otherwise, it may be necessary to suggest that the sufferer sit where a possible disruption will cause less distraction. Loving arrangements can also be made to keep such a person active in the preaching work, perhaps seeing to it that he is always accompanied by a mature, discerning publisher, or that he sits in on home Bible studies where his condition is understood and tolerated.

Sometimes, though, a person's conduct becomes shocking, reproachful, or dangerously uncontrolled. Perhaps the individual has stopped taking his prescribed

medication and needs strong encouragement to return to his medical routine. But if there is no response or the person's disruptive actions continue, it may be necessary to restrict him from meetings and field service so as to maintain order. (1 Corinthians 14:40) In a kind way, elders should tell the ailing person that he is not being judged unfaithful but that his illness simply limits what he can do. 'God is not unrighteous so as to forget his work,' and He understands his limitations. (Hebrews 6:10) Regular shepherding calls will help the individual to maintain his spirituality until his condition improves.

Helping Their Families

Mental illness wreaks great havoc upon families. "It's been devastating," says a brother whose grown son is severely ill mentally. "Day after day you see no relief," adds his wife. "It has affected our marriage, as we sometimes find ourselves bickering with each other." Imagine, too, the pain of seeing a marriage mate succumb to mental illness. Says one brother: "My wife is labeled 'paranoid schizophrenic.' She hears voices and refuses treatment because she believes it will 'poison' her. She does not believe I am her husband and refuses to go in service or to meetings." How can we help the families of such afflicted ones?

Paul said: "Speak consolingly to the depressed souls." (1 Thessalonians 5:14) It would be cruel to shun or ignore fellow Christians who are laboring to care for a mentally ill family member. "Welcome one another," said Paul. (Romans 15:7) Christian meetings afford us an opportunity to do so warmly and to express love and appreciation for those who are 'practicing godly devotion in their households.'—1 Timothy 5:4.

On shepherding calls, the elders can further encourage such persons to keep up family study, to attend meetings, and to

stay active as Kingdom preachers. When it comes to their material and practical needs, however, the congregation should do more than say, "Keep warm and well fed." (James 2:16) Perhaps the family needs assistance in getting to the meetings. Some individuals may be in a position to assist them with their mounting medical bills. (1 John 3:17, 18) How such loving concern is appreciated! Says the husband of a mentally ill sister: "The congregation knows about our problem, and they very lovingly show that they care."

Keeping Integrity

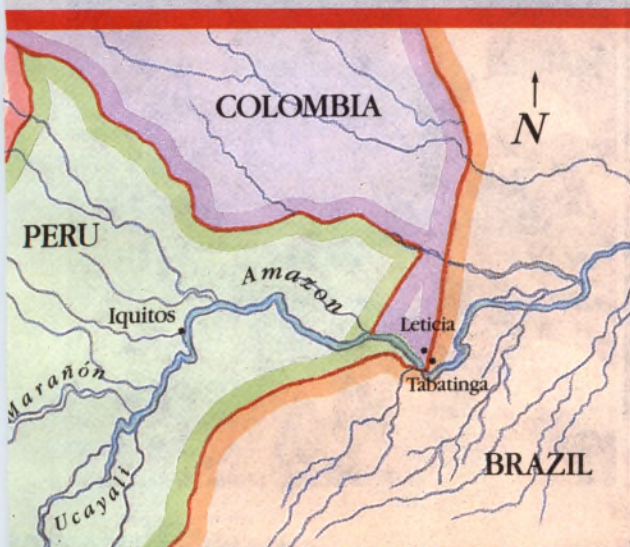
"All creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain together until now," said Paul. (Romans 8:22) And mental distress is just one of the painful legacies of imperfection. Doctors may offer a measure of relief. But many who have sought their help have had an experience like that of the woman in Jesus' day who was "put to many pains by many physicians and had spent all her resources and had not been benefited but, rather, had got worse."—Mark 5:26.

Many, then, must learn to live with their problems, looking for real relief in God's new world. (Revelation 21:3, 4) "Bless Jehovah, . . . who is healing all your maladies," cried the psalmist. (Psalm 103:2, 3) In the meantime, the main focus of our concern must be, not to have perfect mental or physical health, but to prove our integrity. (Psalm 26:11; compare 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.) Suffering from a mental disorder may make this difficult. But many servants of God, like Paul, have faithfully served with "a thorn in the flesh." (2 Corinthians 12:7) "I have learned that no doctor, not even the brothers, can cure me," says one victim of mental illness. "But I have learned to rely on Jehovah." Mentally distressed persons can also rely on loving brothers and sisters who patiently speak "spiritual words" for their comfort and support.

Pioneering Along the Amazon

THE Amazon jungle! Almost everyone has heard of it. But few have had the opportunity to go and see it. During the past decade, however, a number of pioneers, or full-time ministers, have done just that. Even more important, they have taken the good news of God's Kingdom there. Using the Watch Tower Society's boat *El Refugio* (The Refuge), they have traversed the Amazon jungle by means of the network of rivers that crisscross northeastern Peru.

What an interesting assignment this has been! Many tribes of Indians are scattered throughout this vast territory. Small *chacras*, or farms, are to be found up and down the rivers, along the banks, and far back in the dark recesses of the jungle. Although isolated, these people too must have access to the Bible's message of life.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.



Near the jungle city of Iquitos, two principal rivers—the rapid and treacherous Ucayali and the Marañón—come together to form the mighty Amazon. Continually roiling, twisting, and surging, these rivers eat away at their banks and topple giant trees into their hungry currents. Sandbanks are formed overnight, thus changing the course of the current.

While moving downriver along the Ucayali, *El Refugio* suddenly ran into a submerged sandbank. The unexpected jolt threw the crew members off balance, but grabbing hold of the boat's rails and bars kept them from toppling overboard. The captain put the boat into reverse, but to no avail. It was stuck. So the six brothers on board stripped down to their shorts, jumped onto the sandbank, and began to take off 40 boxes of literature to lighten the load. Suddenly, a crew member shouted: "Look out! A river boa is climbing aboard." Sure enough, a six-foot-long bright-green snake was slithering up the side of the boat. But with a few quick flicks of an oar, it was back in the river. Soon, with the load lightened, the boat broke free and was on its way once again.

Organized Preaching Methods

El Refugio is not a big boat, and certainly not the swiftest craft. In fact, it goes along quite slowly when pushing against the swift current. To accelerate coverage of inland territory, therefore, the pioneers have developed a plan of action. Before leaving their home base in the city of Iquitos, they try to find out what lies ahead in the particular area they wish to cover. By inquiring of persons who are native to the section, they are able to

make up a rough map of the villages and *chacras* in that territory. Small rivers or channels are noted for side trips. Thus, if the chosen area has many villages, the boat can remain stationary for a week or two. Usually, four of the six pioneers will cover the scattered farms, while the cap-

Pioneers aboard "El Refugio" bring life-giving truth to people along the Amazon



tain and the remaining pioneer travel farther into the jungle, where the boat cannot go. This is done by arranging for passage on a petroleum company's airplane that is heading out to a camp.

These camps are clearings far in the interior where exploratory drilling for oil is constantly being done. A hundred men or more may be located in such a camp. The Witnesses make arrangements to talk to the men at suppertime, after working hours. In one camp, the dining hut proved to be an excellent auditorium. The men listened, and several afterward asked questions regarding the moral problems they faced while living so far away from their families. What an excellent opportunity that was to give the Bible's viewpoint on moral cleanness! After the question-and-answer session, many men requested Bibles and Bible study aids. Names were taken, and later studies were started with some of these men and their families in Iquitos. Four petroleum camps were worked in this manner—three by means of air travel and one by a visit of *El Refugio*.

Whenever a *caserío*, or small village, was sighted along the bank, the pioneers would tie the boat to the nearest stable object capable of holding it steady. It was the wise crewman, though, who tested the bank before jumping off. The apparently hard ridge of earthen shore that the river piles up looks safe but can be full of surprises. The unsuspecting jumper may find himself waist-deep in mud!

Once safely ashore, the brothers push past the usual group of inquisitive, chattering children and look for the village chieftain. They briefly explain to him the purpose of their visit and request the use of the local school hut or village meeting center for a Bible talk. Usually, permission is granted. Announcements are made

by word of mouth as the children scatter in all directions spreading the invitation. Prior to the talk, the day is spent preaching from hut to hut. The people are friendly and hospitable and eagerly accept our Bible literature. Where money is in short supply, the books are traded for turtles, monkeys, hens, parrots, fruit, or even a lovely orchid.

As time permits, return visits are made in the afternoon. Those who show exceptional interest are asked to bring their *mecheros*, or receptacles, with kerosene and wick for light. Generally, by seven o'clock, all are seated, with their light in one hand and their Bible in the other. After the talk concludes, the questions begin. Do Jehovah's Witnesses believe in hellfire? How do the beliefs of the Witnesses differ from those of the Catholic religion? Most are pleased to find the answers in their own Bibles.

Heartwarming Experiences

After one such talk, a man and his wife came up to the pioneer with tears in their eyes. "Brothers, we have waited a long time to hear words like we have heard tonight," the man said. "We love our land and the idea of an earthly paradise where we can stay close to it. Now, who is this that you say is going to heaven?" It is truly heartwarming to be far out in the Amazon jungle, miles and miles from "civilization," and find such sheeplike ones.

The pioneers try to place the books in sets, since it may be a while before they can get back to the villages. One day, back in Iquitos, a riverboat man stopped one of the brothers and asked for another set of eight books. What had happened to his first set? One by one, his visiting relatives had borrowed the books. Reading material is scarce far back in the jungle. In this way, literature has reached places that the pioneers themselves never reach. By his

spirit, Jehovah thus sees to it that our Christian publications get into the right hands.

At one small village, two of the brothers stayed with the boat while the others followed a trail through the jungle. Huge trees closed overhead, blotting out much of the sunlight, while multicolored birds called back and forth amid the green foliage. After a 15-minute walk, the Witnesses came out into a fairly large clearing. It took about an hour to call on all the huts there. When the brothers were ready to leave, a man approached and entreated them to stay overnight, as he had many questions. So one of the pioneers stayed behind while the rest returned to the boat.

The pioneer suggested that a Bible talk be given in the evening. So off the children were sent, following trails the brothers had missed, to bring in the neighbors. Meanwhile, a Bible study was conducted in the village, using chapters of the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* that covered the questions the hospitable man asked. As the cool of the evening spread over the blanket of heat, a stand of bamboo trees suddenly exploded into a cacophony. Hundreds of parakeets all seemed to start chattering at the same time, seemingly welcoming the evening coolness.

By early evening, 20 adults and many children had gathered around the speaker. A bright gas lamp gave excellent light for reading, but it also attracted hundreds of jungle insects. About halfway through the talk, the speaker swallowed one! After a bedlam of backslapping, laughter, and sympathy, he continued, bringing the talk to its successful conclusion. By then, all shyness was gone and a lively discussion ensued.

After the last neighbor had left, the interested man fixed a mosquito net in one

corner of the open-air platform of his home, which had been built on stilts about five feet above the ground. Leaving the pioneer to settle himself under the net, the man gathered his animals and tethered them under the platform for protection against jungle marauders. As the brother lay there giving prayerful thanks to Jehovah for his watchcare, the jungle sounds soon lulled him off to sleep.

It did not seem like any time at all before the brother abruptly sat up straight. A cock had crowed, and it sounded as if the bird was right under his pallet. It was. First the cock crowed, then the dog barked, next the turkey gobbled, and last the goat sounded off. Following this, all kinds of birds started their morning chatter. A new day had begun.

After a hearty breakfast, the brother took off down the trail to rejoin his companions. Just ahead he saw what looked like a big tree across the path. A closer look showed it to be a large boa constrictor, easily some 25 feet long. The pioneer cautiously walked around it and arrived safely at the boat.

Clergy Opposition Thwarted

The next village was not so receptive. As the boat nosed its way over to a landing post, the brothers were surprised to

In Our Next Issue

- Religious Traditions
—Worshiping God
in Truth?
- When Jehovah Taught
Monarchs Lessons
- How Shall We
Repay Jehovah?

see a large group gathered on shore. Headed by a Catholic priest, they waved the boat away, shouting that they did not need any Bible literature. So the brothers continued on and tied up at a point just below the village.

It was not long before a raft carrying bananas pulled out from the village. As it drifted by, the brothers called out to the three men poling the raft to pull alongside *El Refugio*. When they did, three pioneers boarded the raft and began witnessing. The owner of the raft wanted to know why the priest did not want the Witnesses to land at the village, and the pioneers answered that they could not see why a priest would not want people to understand the Bible. For instance, what bad could result from reading *My Book of Bible Stories*? Once the men looked into the book, they could not put it down.

The next day, several canoes headed for *El Refugio*. The publication *My Book of Bible Stories* had caused a sensation in the village. The brothers were told that by walking a short distance inland they would come upon a trail that would take them into the village by a back way. Once there and going from door to door, the pioneers enjoyed a much better reception. Many of the villagers took entire sets of the books, much to the chagrin of the local priest.

Remote Kingdom Hall Constructed

In time the intrepid pioneers reached the point on the Amazon where the borders of three countries come together. Three villages, all within a short distance of each other, make up a bustling commercial center there. They are Caballococha in Peru, Leticia in Colombia, and Tabatinga on the Brazilian side. Entrance into any of the towns is easily gained, as there is little passport protocol so deep in the jungle.

At Tabatinga, it was learned that two Brazilian pioneer sisters were working the town. They had a small group interested in meeting together but had no place to meet. The two sisters implored the brothers to stay and give talks in that area, which they gladly did. Subsequent discussions showed that there were sufficient contributions among the group to buy lumber to construct a small building on land that had been donated. The sisters had already located a sawmill up the river where an interested man had promised a good price on lumber. It took two trips by *El Refugio* to bring the lumber down. In 15 days, willing hands constructed a Kingdom Hall large enough to seat 80 persons. The boat crew contributed their own *atril*, or speaker's stand, and several benches to accommodate the excited group. How happy they were to have their own meeting place at last!

There is still much territory to cover along the Amazon and its connecting rivers. Those who heed the Macedonian call "to declare the good news" in these remote areas are greatly blessed. (Acts 16:9, 10) Now *El Refugio* has a new crew of pioneers. They too have complete confidence that Jehovah will guide and protect them in their sacred service.



EVIDENCE

of Divine Preservation

THE inspired Word of God has been transmitted to us accurately, and for such marvelous preservation we must thank primarily the Bible's Author. There are perhaps 6,000 manuscripts of the entire Hebrew Scriptures or portions of it and some 5,000 of the Christian Greek Scriptures.

"The saying of Jehovah endures forever." (1 Peter 1:25) But what has modern-day research brought to light concerning the preservation of his Sacred Word?

How Reliable a Text?

Just how reliable is the text of the Christian Greek Scriptures? Very reliable indeed, incomparably so when we consider other writings that have survived from antiquity. This fact was highlighted in the book *Auf den Spuren Jesu* (In Jesus' Footsteps), by Gerhard Kroll. The author showed, for example, that only six papyri are preserved of the writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle (fourth century B.C.E.), mostly dating from the tenth century C.E. or thereafter. The works of Plato (fourth century B.C.E.) fared a little better. There are ten manuscripts of his works that date from before the 13th century. In the case of Herodotus (fifth century B.C.E.), there are about 20 papyrus fragments dating from the first century C.E. and later. The first complete manuscripts of his work date from the tenth century. And the earliest manuscripts of Josephus' works date back only to the 11th century.

In contrast with this, the text of the Christian Greek Scriptures (completed in the first century C.E.) is attested to by fragments from the second century and by complete copies from the fourth century. According to Kroll, there are 81 papyri from the 2nd to the 7th century, 266 uncial manuscripts from the 4th to the 10th century, and 2,754 cursive manuscripts from

the 9th to the 15th century, as well as 2,135 lectionaries. All of these help us to establish the text of the Christian Greek Scriptures. So, yes, it is very well attested to indeed.

A Vital Fragment of John's Gospel

Who would expect to find part of a valuable Bible manuscript in a heap of rubbish? Yet, that is where a treasured fragment of chapter 18 of John's Gospel was found. Now known as the John Rylands Papyrus 457 (P⁵²), it is preserved in Manchester, England. How was it discovered, and why is it so important?

At the turn of the century, archaeologists dug up a mass of papyrus fragments, including letters, receipts, petitions, and census documents, along with many other texts, outside the town of Oxyrhynchus in the district of El Faiyûm, Egypt. Most written in Greek, they had all been preserved for centuries in the dry sand.

In the year 1920, a collection of these papyri was acquired by the John Rylands Library of Manchester. Fourteen years later, scholar C. H. Roberts, in sorting through some of the pieces, came across a few words that seemed familiar to him. Imagine his excitement when he realized that they were from John chapter 18, parts of verses 31 to 33 being on one side of the fragment and

parts of verses 37 and 38 on the other side (the verso). This papyrus fragment proved to be the earliest known portion of any Christian Greek Scripture manuscript yet discovered. Written in Greek capital letters called uncials, it originated in the first half of the second century of our Common Era.

This fragment measures only 3.5 by 2.5 inches. How is it possible to date this piece of papyrus so accurately? Mainly by examining the style of writing, a study known as paleography. All handwriting changes gradually over the years, and it is these changes that indicate the age of a manuscript, with a margin of error of some years either way. The complete manuscript of which the fragment is such a small part was therefore copied very close to the time

of writing of the original Gospel account penned by John himself. Likely, the gap was as little as 30 or 40 years. We can also be sure that John's account was not significantly altered by later scribes, for the text of the fragment agrees almost exactly with that found in much later manuscripts.

Prior to this find, critics had argued that John's Gospel was not a genuine writing of Jesus' apostle but had been penned sometime later, toward the end of the second century. On the contrary, it is now clear from this fragment that John's Gospel existed in Egypt in the first half of the second century C.E., not as a scroll, but in book form as a codex. How astonishing that such a seemingly insignificant papyrus fragment could silence the critics so effectively!

PAPYRUS

PAPYRUS is a plant that thrives in shallow, stagnant waters or marshes and along the banks of slow-moving rivers, such as the Nile. (Job 8:11) Papyrus paper may have been used as a writing material as early as the time of Abraham. Later, its manufacture was one of the main industries of the ancient Egyptians. In making it, they followed a rather simple process. Lengths of the inner pith were sliced into thin strips and laid side by side, with another layer glued on crosswise. This was then pressed and rolled into a sheet, dried in the sun, and subsequently polished with pumice, shells, or ivory. Sheets could be joined to form a scroll, the average length being between 14 and 20 feet, although one has been preserved that is 133 feet long. Alternatively, the leaves could be folded to make a booklike codex, the form of manuscript so popular among the early Christians.

PARCHMENT and VELLUM

THE fifth-century Alexandrine Codex, one that originally contained the whole Bible, is written on vellum. What is this material, and how does it differ from parchment?

From early times, parchment was made from sheepskin, goatskin, or calfskin. It was prepared by scraping the hair from washed skins, which were then stretched upon frames to dry. (Compare 2 Timothy 4:13.) By the third and fourth centuries of our Common Era, a distinction between grades of the material was accepted, the coarser continuing to be known as parchment, the finer as vellum. For vellum, only the delicate skins of calf or kid or of stillborn calves or lambs were used. They produced a thin, smooth, almost white writing material that was used for important books until the invention of printing, for which the use of paper was cheaper and better.

A Message for Today

The Watchtower and *Awake!* contain such a message, as noted by a recent reader who requested a subscription and wrote: "I have been reading your magazine with great interest. I had a chance to read the corresponding scriptures to the different articles during my leisure time.

"I am always amazed at the message of your magazine in light of today's news. It can't be emphasized enough as to how necessary your publications are for a better understanding of the Bible. Your magazine was the reason why I decided to get out my dusty Bible and look into the book of books. I really look forward to each issue."



Awake!

Child
Custo
A Painful
Issue

