

The Watchtower
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

December 1, 1988

**WHAT
TRADITIONS
PLEASE GOD?**

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as they fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in the now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

Worshiping God in Truth?

“SALGA, salga, salga” (“Come out, come out, come out”). The plaintive cry emanates from a darkened cemetery on the island of Janitzio in Lake Pátzcuaro, Mexico. There a devout Tarascan Indian beseeches his dead relative with the aid of a written prayer. “Let the Holy Rosary break the chains that bind you,” he implores.

It is the Day of the Dead. From the early hours, women and children have bedecked their family burial places with flower petals and decorated wooden frames. They have placed offerings of fruit and pastries in front of the graves. And now they brave the chill of night to chant prayers or keep a silent vigil in the pale light of thousands of flickering candles lighted on behalf of the dead.

What seems strange or even bizarre to an outside observer is for these people a

time-honored religious tradition: the Catholic celebration of All Souls’ Day. In many Latin American lands, tradition dictates that thousands of believers flock to the graveyards and offer written prayers and gifts for their dead.

Latin America also has numerous traditions regarding religious images. Images of Christ and of Mary are ubiquitous, adorning most homes and shops. Get on a bus and you will invariably see small pictures of Mary displayed above the driver’s seat. Statues of Mary, adorned with flashing colored lights instead of candles, are even affixed facing the center aisle of the bus.

In Colombia immense figures of Christ and of Mary stare down from lofty mountain heights above many cities. The famous peak of Monserrate is topped by a church that is full of highly revered

images. During special holy weeks, thousands of Bogotá's inhabitants climb to this rocky summit, some crawling on cut and bleeding knees.

Images, crucifixes, festivals—these are part of the religious traditions that have become an established way of life for people all over the world. These traditions have been handed down from generation to generation, and people tend to view them as sacred.

Worshiping in Truth?

While perhaps most are content to follow traditions unquestioningly, for many professed Christians these traditions pose a disturbing dilemma. After all, it was Jesus Christ himself who said: "The true worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth." (John 4:23) Yet, many religious traditions are plainly derived from, or at least astonishingly similar to, non-Christian religious rites. For example, All Souls' Day virtually parallels the Bud-

dhist festival of "Ullambana," a day set aside for "the expression of filial piety to deceased ancestors and the release of spirits from bondage to this world." (*The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1976 edition, Micropædia, Volume 1, page 260) Are followers of such traditions really worshiping in truth?

Some argue that the mere acceptance of traditions into the church justifies them. Said the Second Vatican Council in 1965: "It is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence."

What, though, if there are fundamental conflicts between man-made tradition and God-inspired Scripture? In answer, let us take a hard look at traditions in the light of the Bible's counsel.

RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

and the Bible

"YOU make the word of God invalid by your tradition." These were the words of no one else but Jesus Christ. (Mark 7:13) Like many people today, the Jews in Jesus' day faithfully adhered to a complicated pattern of precepts and customs. And like many of today's clergymen, their religious leaders viewed these traditions as more important than the Bible.

To illustrate: God's Word specifically commanded that children honor their parents. (Exodus 20:12) This obviously included assisting parents who fell into dire financial straits. However, a Jewish tradition developed that provided a convenient way to evade this Biblical obligation. A selfish individual merely had to pledge that his personal property was later to be donated to the temple, setting the proper-

ty aside by declaring it "corban." This word meant "a gift dedicated to God." Although the Jewish worshiper was evidently free to continue to use this corban for his own personal gain, he could piously deny it to his parents.—Mark 7: 9-12.

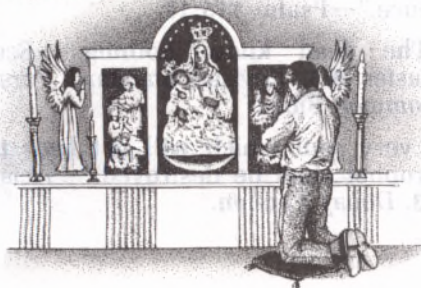
Jesus, though, challenged this and other Jewish 'sacred traditions,' saying: "You hypocrites, Isaiah aptly prophesied about you, when he said, 'This people honors me with their lips, yet their heart is far removed from me. It is in vain that they keep worshipping me, because they teach

commands of men as doctrines.'"—Matthew 15:3-9.

In view of what Jesus said, can a Christian really regard any religious tradition as being on a par with the Bible? Hardly. No matter how much sentiment or emotion may be tied up with a custom, a Christian's concern is whether it harmonizes with God's Word or not. As a case in point, consider some traditional religious acts described in the Catholic book *Liturgy—An Elementary Course*, by María A. Lombillo Clark, T.D. How do these traditions compare with what the Bible actually says?

LITURGY

"We manifest our worship to God through religious acts."



"We should render religious acts to the Most Holy Virgin Mary, to the angels, and to the saints. But [such] religious acts of veneration . . . finally come to God, in the same way that a king is honored when honor is given to his ministers."



GOD'S WORD

"Little children, guard yourselves from idols."—1 John 5:21.

"God is a Spirit, and those worshipping him must worship with spirit and truth."—John 4:24.

"We are walking by faith, not by sight."—2 Corinthians 5:7.

"I am Jehovah. That is my name; and to no one else shall I give my own glory, neither my praise to graven images."—Isaiah 42:8.

"You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth . . . You must not bow down to them nor be induced to serve them."—Exodus 20:4, 5.

"I John . . . fell down to worship before the feet of the angel . . . But he tells me: 'Be careful! Do not do that! . . . Worship God.'"—Revelation 22: 8, 9.

"There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus."—1 Timothy 2:5.

LITURGY

"The Crucifix is indispensable on the altar; without this the Holy Mass cannot be celebrated. Three altar cloths, two candelabra, and the sacramental tablets are also necessary."



"November 1 . . . the celebration of All Saints Day. It is the Holy Day of all the souls that live happily in heaven, and that one day will be ours."



"In aid of these souls [the Church] established the 'Commemoration of the faithful deceased' on November 2nd. On this day the priests celebrate the Mass three times to relieve the torments of these blessed souls of purgatory and to hasten their entrance into heaven."

"In the final analysis, the Catholic doctrine on purgatory is based on tradition, not Sacred Scripture."—*New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 11, page 1034.

GOD'S WORD

"The God that made the world and all the things in it, being, as this One is, Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in handmade temples."—Acts 17:24.

"We keep our eyes, not on the things seen, but on the things unseen."
—2 Corinthians 4:18.

"The dead themselves do not praise Jah, nor do any going down into silence."—Psalm 115:17.

"The dead know nothing."—Ecclesiastes 9:5, *Revised Standard Version Common Bible*.

"Every soul which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed."—Acts 3:23, *Douay Version*.

"Neither work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge, shall be in hell, whither thou art hastening."—Ecclesiastes 9:10, *Douay Version*.

"Put not your trust in [man;] . . . he shall return into his earth: in that day all their thoughts shall perish."
—Psalm 145:2-4, *Douay Version*.

Freed From Harmful Traditions

Many popular religious traditions are therefore not pleasing to God and thus are harmful. Interestingly, though, the apostle Paul wrote: "Now I commend you because in all things . . . you are holding fast the traditions just as I handed them on to you." (1 Corinthians 11:2) These traditions, however, were wholesome, beneficial practices based on God's Word—not empty, man-made rituals. They replaced the "fruitless form of conduct received by tradition" that many in the first century practiced before becoming Christians.—1 Peter 1:18.

Likewise today, a God-fearing person must scrutinize and reject any tradition that proves unscriptural. Surely, one's relationship with God is of far more value than any man-made forms of worship! Of course, rejecting unscriptural traditions is by no means easy. It often requires adjusting long-established patterns of conduct. One young man in Colombia, for example, was steeped in religious tradition. From childhood he had a burning desire to be a Catholic priest. He would often play at 'saying Mass' with his sisters, even receiving "confessions" from them. Years later he gained entrance to a preseminary school, eventually enrolling in a Catholic university. There, religious traditions were embedded yet deeper in his life.

One day, one of Jehovah's Witnesses visited his home. While his parents would hardly allow the Witness to express himself, the little that was said impressed this religiously minded youth. Later he arranged to study the Bible secretly with this Witness. "My genuine desire," he recalls, "was to get to know the Bible from a different point of view without changing my religion. I had an intense desire to serve God as a priest, to try to effect changes in people's hearts. After studying the Bible for a month, a conflict arose

within me, inasmuch as the traditions and rites of my religion fought against the pure standards of the Scriptures."

His family pressured him to desist from studying the Bible, and finally he was forced to leave home. Nevertheless, he says: "After two months of studying the Bible, I became convinced that I was in great error, and I left the university and my work as a teacher in a religious college and devoted myself to preaching from house to house. Now my life has changed and also my customs. I felt especially happy that unforgettable day that I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by baptism." This young man now serves full-time in helping others free themselves from God-dishonoring traditions.

If you are a fervent devotee of religious tradition, you may also find it necessary to make some changes. Recall again what Jesus once said to the Samaritan woman at the well. She and her people had the time-honored custom of worshiping God on Mount Gerizim. Jesus, however, showed her that this was a worthless tradition, saying: "Believe me, woman, The hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you people worship the Father. . . . The true worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him."—John 4:19-23.

Are you one that "the Father is looking for"? Do you have a burning desire to worship God in truth? Then the apostle Paul's warning at Colossians 2:8 is most appropriate: "Take care not to let anyone cheat you with his philosophizings, with empty phantasies drawn from human tradition." (*The Holy Bible*, Ronald A. Knox) Follow, instead, the teachings of true Christianity, which can lead you to everlasting life!—John 17:3.

Jesus Again Heads for Jerusalem

SOON Jesus is on the road again, teaching from city to city and from village to village. Evidently he is in the district of Perea, across the Jordan River from Judea. But his destination is Jerusalem.

The Jewish philosophy that only a limited number will merit salvation is what perhaps prompts a man to ask: "Lord, are those who are being saved few?" With his answer, Jesus forces the people to think of what is needed for salvation: "Exert yourselves vigorously [that is, struggle, or agonize] to get in through the narrow door."

Such a vigorous effort is urgent "because many," Jesus continues, "will seek to get in but will not be able." Why will they not be able? He explains that "once the householder has got up and locked the door and people stand outside and knock, saying, 'Sir, open to us,' he will say: 'I do not know where you are from. Get away from me, all you workers of unrighteousness!'"

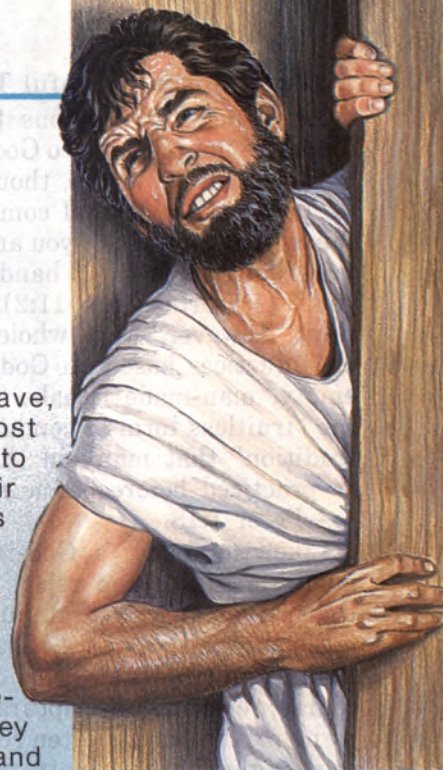
The ones locked out apparently come at a time convenient only to themselves. But by then the door of opportunity is shut and bolted. To get in they should have come earlier, even though at the time it may have been inconvenient to do so. Indeed, a sad outcome awaits those who put off making the worship of Jehovah their chief purpose in life!

The Jews to whom Jesus is sent to

minister have, for the most part, failed to seize their marvelous opportunity of accepting God's provision for salvation. So Jesus says they will weep and gnash their teeth when they are thrown outside. On the other hand, people from "eastern parts and western, and from north and south," yes, from all nations, "will recline at the table in the kingdom of God."

Thus, as Jesus continues: "There are those last [despised non-Jews, as well as downtrodden Jews] who will be first, and there are those first [the materially and religiously favored Jews] who will be last." Being last means that such slothful, ungrateful ones will not be in the Kingdom of God at all.

Pharisees now come to Jesus and say: "Get out and be on your way from here, because Herod [Antipas] wants to kill you." It may be that Herod himself started this rumor to cause Jesus to flee from the territory. Her-



od may have been afraid of becoming involved in the death of another prophet of God as he was in the killing of John the Baptizer. But Jesus tells the Pharisees: "Go and tell that fox, 'Look! I am casting out demons and accomplishing healing today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be finished.'"

After finishing his work there, Jesus continues his journey toward Jerusalem because, as he explains, "it is not admissible for a prophet to be destroyed outside of Jerusalem." Why is it to be expected that Jesus would be killed in Jerusalem? Because Jerusalem is the capital city, where the 71-member Sanhedrin high court is located and where the animal sacrifices are offered. Therefore, it would be inadmissible for "the

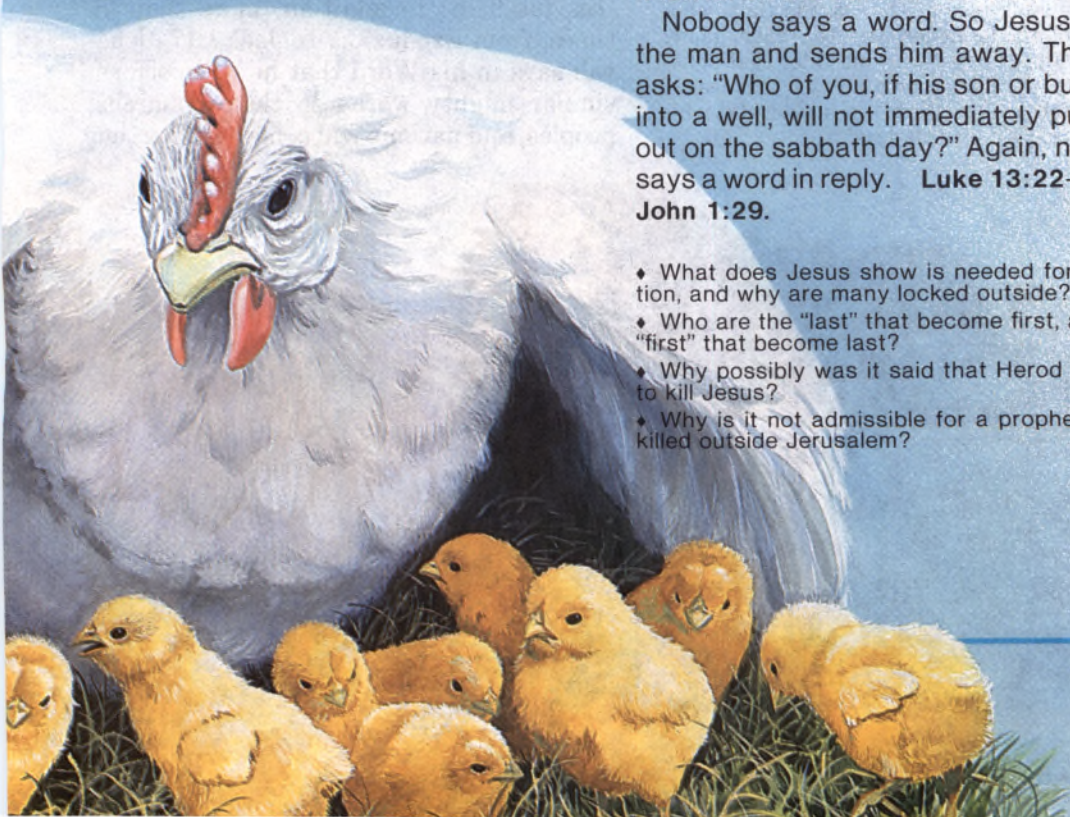
Lamb of God" to be killed anywhere but in Jerusalem.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her," Jesus laments, "how often I wanted to gather your children together in the manner that a hen gathers her brood of chicks under her wings, but you people did not want it! Look! Your house is abandoned to you." For rejecting the Son of God, the nation is doomed!

As Jesus continues toward Jerusalem, he is invited to the house of a ruler of the Pharisees. It is a Sabbath, and the people are closely watching him, since there is a man present who is suffering from dropsy, an accumulation of water probably in his arms and legs. Jesus addresses the Pharisees and the experts in the Law who are present, asking: "Is it lawful on the sabbath to cure or not?"

Nobody says a word. So Jesus heals the man and sends him away. Then he asks: "Who of you, if his son or bull falls into a well, will not immediately pull him out on the sabbath day?" Again, nobody says a word in reply. **Luke 13:22-14:6; John 1:29.**

- ♦ What does Jesus show is needed for salvation, and why are many locked outside?
- ♦ Who are the "last" that become first, and the "first" that become last?
- ♦ Why possibly was it said that Herod wanted to kill Jesus?
- ♦ Why is it not admissible for a prophet to be killed outside Jerusalem?



When Jehovah Taught Monarchs Lessons

"All his works are truth and his ways are justice, and . . . those who are walking in pride he is able to humiliate."—DANIEL 4:37.

LOOK! God himself acts exaltedly with his power; who is an instructor like him?" Those words of Elihu directed to suffering Job call attention to one of the unique characteristics of the Creator, Jehovah God. No one can be compared with him when it comes to instructing, or teaching, others.—Job 36:22.

² Among the things that it has been necessary for God to teach men and nations is their proper relationship to him. This is highlighted by the words of the psalmist

1. To what characteristic of Jehovah does Elihu call attention?
- 2, 3. (a) What is one of the lessons that Jehovah has found it necessary to teach men?
(b) Who in Moses' time was one ruler that Jehovah had to teach this lesson, and by what means?
(c) How often in his Word does God state his purpose to teach men this lesson?

David at Psalm 9:19, 20: "Do arise, O Jehovah! Let not mortal man prove superior in strength. Let the nations be judged before your face. Do put fear into them, O Jehovah, that the nations may know that they are but mortal men."

³ The Pharaoh of Moses' time was among earth's rulers to whom Jehovah God found it necessary to teach this lesson. God did so by means of the plagues that he sent upon the Egyptians. Moreover, Jehovah told that haughty Pharaoh: "In fact, for this cause I have kept you in existence, for the sake of showing you my power and in order to have my name declared in all the earth." (Exodus 9:16) In addition, more than 70 times, from Exodus 6:7 to Joel 3:17, Jehovah says in his Word that he will perform similar mighty works so that monarchs, peoples, and nations will come to know that



he is Jehovah, the Most High over all the earth.

⁴ A number of striking examples of how Jehovah taught monarchs are recorded in the book of Daniel. These rulers were Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius. When did he teach them? Most likely between 617 B.C.E. and 535 B.C.E. And how? By means of dreams and their interpretation and by displays of his power. Jehovah taught these human rulers that he is the Supreme Sovereign of the universe and that they were but puny men—lessons that present-day world rulers will also have to learn.

⁵ But is not the authenticity of the book of Daniel questioned by many modern critics? In answering these critics, one Bible scholar well stated: "The miracles it implies, the prophecies it avers, to have been recorded by Daniel a contemporary. Either then we have true miracles and true prophecy, or we should have nothing but untruth." (*Daniel the Prophet*, by E. B. Pusey, page 75) Why, time and again the writer of the book identifies himself, such as by saying, "I myself, Daniel"! (Daniel 8:15; 9:2; 10:2) Was all of this a forgery? The fact is that before the early part of the 18th century, the authorship of the book of Daniel was questioned by neither Jews nor Christians. However, carrying more weight than the opinion of any modern Bible scholar is the Scriptural testimony regarding the book of Daniel. Thus, we find Daniel mentioned three times in the book of Ezekiel. (Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3) Most conclusive of all are the words of Jesus, the Son of God, as recorded at Matthew 24:15, 16: "When you catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation, as spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in a holy

4. In the time of Daniel, what three rulers were taught by Jehovah, and by what means?

5. By what testimony can those who doubt the authenticity of the book of Daniel be refuted?

place, (let the reader use discernment,) then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains."*

Nebuchadnezzar Learns Who the True God Is

⁶ As the prophet Isaiah shows, the kings of Babylon were very proud men. (Isaiah 14:4-23) Nebuchadnezzar was also a very religious man. In his writings he told of "his building projects and his attention to the gods of Babylonia." No doubt it went to his head that he succeeded in taking Jerusalem and all Judea after Sennacherib had so disastrously failed in his attempt to do this.

⁷ After Daniel and his three Hebrew companions appeared before Nebuchadnezzar, he certainly had reason to respect their God, for "as regards every matter of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired about from them, he even got to find them ten times better than all the magic-practicing priests and the conjurers that were in all his royal realm." Yes, the wise men who had Jehovah for their God greatly excelled all those who worshiped other gods. Nebuchadnezzar could not have failed to note that fact.—Daniel 1:20.

⁸ Jehovah had more to teach King Nebuchadnezzar. The next lesson was recorded in Daniel chapter 2. God caused the king to have a terrifying dream and then made him forget it. This dream greatly agitated Babylon's monarch, and he called for all his wise men to tell him the dream and its

* See *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1986, pages 3-7.

6. What may have fed the king of Babylon's pride, and what did he say about himself in his writings?

7. What experience related in Daniel chapter 1 should have taught Nebuchadnezzar to respect the God of the Hebrews?

8. By what means did Jehovah expose the wise men of Babylon as being without any special knowledge?

interpretation. Of course, they could not reveal the dream, let alone give its interpretation, thereby tacitly admitting that they had no special knowledge. This made the king so furious that he ordered the execution of all of them. When Daniel and his companions were told of the king's decree, Daniel asked for some time, which he was granted. Then he and his three companions made it a subject of earnest prayer, with the result that Jehovah revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel.—Daniel 2:16-20.

⁹ When Daniel was brought before the king, Nebuchadnezzar asked him: "Are you competent enough to make known to me the dream that I beheld, and its interpretation?" After reminding the proud monarch that his wise men were not able to tell him the secret of his dream and its interpretation, Daniel said: "However, there exists a God in the heavens who is a Revealer of secrets, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what is to occur in the final part of the days." Proceeding, Daniel told the king about the gigantic image he had dreamed about and what it meant. The king was so greatly impressed that he declared: "Truly the God of you men is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a Revealer of secrets, because you were able to reveal this secret." Thus Jehovah taught King Nebuchadnezzar that He is the one true God.—Daniel 2:26, 28, 47.

¹⁰ Although King Nebuchadnezzar was doubtless impressed by the knowledge and wisdom of the God of the Hebrews, he still had much more to learn. In his pride, he

9. (a) Who alone was able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and what interpretation of it did that One give? (b) As a result, to what conclusion did the king come?

10, 11. (a) In his great pride, what did King Nebuchadnezzar make, followed by what command? (b) By refusing to heed the king's command, what issue did the three Hebrews raise, and with what result?

had a great image of gold set up on the plain of Dura. The image was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits wide, calling to our minds the number 666 that is the mark of Satan's "wild beast" mentioned at Revelation 13:18. (A cubit being almost 1 1/2 feet, the image was about 90 feet high and about 9 feet wide.) The king ordered all the officials of his realm "to come to the inauguration of the image" and commanded that when an orchestra played, all were to fall down and worship the image. Some envious Chaldean officials, noticing that the three Hebrews then present did not share in the ceremony, reported them to the king.—Daniel 3:1, 2.

¹¹ This was a most serious matter to Nebuchadnezzar, for he had once boasted that he was "the one who set in the mouth of the people reverence for the great gods." Thus, both Nebuchadnezzar's imperial majesty and his religious ardor were greatly offended. Reacting in rage and fury, the haughty monarch gave the three Hebrews another opportunity but with this ultimatum: "If you do not worship, at that same moment you will be thrown into the burning fiery furnace. And who is that god that can rescue you out of my hands?" Well, Nebuchadnezzar had to find out that their God was indeed able to deliver His servants out of a puny monarch's hand and that there does not exist another god that can deliver like the God of the Hebrews.—Daniel 3:15.

The Tree Dream

¹² How would learning those lessons have affected you? Seemingly, these three lessons did not suffice to make King Nebuchadnezzar know his place. So Jehovah had to teach him still another lesson. Again, a

12, 13. (a) What interpretation did Daniel give Nebuchadnezzar regarding his dream of the tree? (b) How did Nebuchadnezzar show that the interpretation of the dream had not had a sobering effect upon him?

dream was involved, and again, none of the wise men of Babylon were able to interpret it. Finally, Daniel was summoned, and he was able to apprise the king of the meaning of the dream, namely, that for seven years he would live like "the beasts of the field," and then he would return to his sanity.—Daniel 4:1-37.

¹³ From what followed, it is quite apparent that the dream failed to have a sobering effect upon Nebuchadnezzar. Thus, about a year later, while the king was walking about in his royal palace, he proudly boasted: "Is not this Babylon the Great, that I myself have built for the royal house with the strength of my might and for the dignity of my majesty?" What conceit! So it was that at that very moment a voice from heaven was heard telling the haughty ruler that his kingdom would be taken away from him and he would dwell with the beasts of the field for seven times, "until you know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind."—Daniel 4:30-32.

¹⁴ After Nebuchadnezzar had lived like an animal for those seven times, or years, Jehovah restored his understanding and he had to admit "that no one can stay the hand of the Most High or say to him: What have you been doing?" More than that, the Babylonian ruler showed he had further learned his lesson, by saying: "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, am praising and exalting and glorifying the King of the heavens, because all his works are truth and his ways are justice, and because those who are walking in pride"—as the king had done—"he is able to humiliate." Is not all such testimony regarding the way Jehovah repeatedly settled the issue of sovereignty of itself strong circumstantial evidence that these accounts are not the figment of someone's

14. How was the dream about the tree fulfilled, and with what effect upon Nebuchadnezzar?

imagination but are the work of a writer inspired by God to record actual history?—Daniel 4:35, 37.

Belshazzar Sees the Handwriting on the Wall

¹⁵ Another monarch whom Jehovah had occasion to teach was Belshazzar. He was the son and coregent of King Nabonidus, himself a successor of Nebuchadnezzar. On the occasion of a great banquet, Belshazzar had the temerity to order that the golden vessels his grandfather had taken from Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem be brought in so that he, his grandees, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. So "they drank wine, and they praised the gods of gold and of silver, copper, iron, wood and stone."—Daniel 5:3, 4.

¹⁶ God's time had come to end Babylon's rule. Hence, he had strange handwriting appear on the wall. This miracle so greatly unnerved the king that he at once called for all his wise men to interpret it. None of them could. Then his mother reminded him that Daniel, who had interpreted dreams for Nebuchadnezzar, would be able to interpret the handwriting. (Daniel 5:10-12) When summoned and asked if he could do this, Daniel reminded the monarch of how God had humbled his proud grandfather so that he would know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind.—Daniel 5:20, 21.

¹⁷ Daniel further told Belshazzar: "The God in whose hand your breath is and to whom all your ways belong you have not glorified." (Daniel 5:23) So the handwriting served notice upon the Babylonian

15. How did Belshazzar show contempt for the true God, Jehovah?

16, 17. (a) By what means did Jehovah instill fear in Belshazzar? (b) What interpretation did Daniel give regarding the handwriting on the wall, and how was it proved true?

ruler that the days of his kingship had come to an end, that he had been weighed and found wanting, and that his kingdom was to be given to the Medes and the Persians. And that very night, after Jehovah had taught that haughty monarch this much-needed lesson, Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was killed.—Daniel 5:30.

¹⁸ Even as Jehovah taught the proud monarchs Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar lessons about his sovereignty and saving power, so at Armageddon God will make all earth's rulers know that he is the Supreme Ruler, the almighty Universal Sovereign. Your life will be affected. How? Because at that time Jehovah will also deliver his faithful servants, even as he delivered the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace.—Daniel 3:26-30.

Darius Learns About Jehovah's Saving Power

¹⁹ Daniel chapter 6 tells of another instance in which Jehovah taught a monarch, Darius, a lesson—that of God's saving power. A conspiracy had resulted in the king's having Daniel thrown into a pit of lions, much against that monarch's will. He was not one who had proudly raised himself up against the true God. Interestingly, although Darius assured Daniel that his God would deliver him, he actually did not seem to believe this fully. Otherwise, why would he have spent a sleepless night and worried until the break of dawn, when he hurried to the lions' pit? He then called out: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you are serving with constancy been able to rescue you from the lions?"—Daniel 6:18-20.

18. By what means will Jehovah teach the world rulers of today similar lessons concerning his sovereignty and saving power?

19, 20. What event in the life of Daniel taught Darius about Jehovah's saving power?

²⁰ Yes, God had been able to protect Daniel. King Darius was so joyful that he issued this decree: "In every dominion of my kingdom, people are to be quaking and fearing before the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and One enduring to times indefinite, and his kingdom is one that will not be brought to ruin . . . He is rescuing and delivering and performing signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, for he has rescued Daniel from the paw of the lions."—Daniel 6:26, 27.

²¹ The first six chapters of the book of Daniel truly give us striking examples of how Jehovah, being zealous—yes, jealous—for his name taught powerful monarchs of this world that he is indeed the omnipotent One, the Universal Sovereign, able to humble proud rulers while he delivers his loyal servants. These accounts should instill in us a wholesome fear of God and respect for Jehovah's omnipotence and sovereignty. At the same time, this inspired record is most faith-strengthening because it provides sterling examples of servants of Jehovah God who manifested great faith and courage, as the succeeding article will clearly show.

21. (a) Of what do the first six chapters of the book of Daniel give striking examples? (b) What effect should the record of these things have upon us?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What lesson has it been necessary for Jehovah to teach world rulers?
- ☐ What can be said about the authenticity of the book of Daniel?
- ☐ What was the lesson that further humbled King Nebuchadnezzar?
- ☐ What effect should Jehovah's teaching monarchs lessons have on us?



Jehovah Rewards Faith and Courage

"Our God whom we are serving is able to rescue us. Out of the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king, he will rescue us."—DANIEL 3:17.

JEHOVAH GOD, the Universal Sovereign, has taught world rulers important lessons concerning his supremacy. In the preceding article, we saw how this was true of incidents recorded in the first six chapters of the book of Daniel. These same accounts can now be reexamined to see what we can learn from them in keeping with the inspired words of the apostle Paul: "All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruc-

tion, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope."—Romans 15:4.

² It was in the year 617 B.C.E., during the brief reign of Jehoiachin, the son of King Jehoiakim, that King Nebuchadnezzar ordered some of the finest and wisest Jewish youths to be brought to Babylon. Among these were Daniel, Haniah, Mishael, and Azariah.—Daniel 1:3, 4, 6.

1. What lesson was highlighted in the previous article, and why can a reexamination of the events be beneficial?

2, 3. Who were among those taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar, and what conclusions can we reach from the meaning of their names?

³ Judging by the meaning of their names, it is quite apparent that in spite of the wicked conditions prevailing in Judah at the time, these four Hebrew youths had God-fearing parents. "Daniel" means "My Judge Is God." Hananiah's name means "Jehovah Has Shown Favor; Jehovah Has Been Gracious." Mishael's name possibly means "Who Is Like God?" or "Who belongs to God?" And Azariah's name means "Jehovah Has Helped." No doubt their very names were an incentive for them to be faithful to the one true God. In the place of these names, the Chaldeans named the four Hebrew youths Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Of course, being slaves to a foreign power, they had no choice as to what names their captors used in referring to them.—Daniel 1:7.

Faith and Courage Put to the Test

⁴ Not only did their God-fearing parents give the four Hebrews a good start in life by the names they gave them but they also must have brought them up strictly according to the Law of Moses, including its dietary features. Jehovah God himself considered these so important that it was after listing many similar prohibitions that he stated: "You must prove yourselves holy, because I am holy."—Leviticus 11:44, 45.

⁵ This fine rearing of these four Hebrew youths was soon put to the test. How so? Because they were "appointed a daily allowance from the delicacies of the king and from his drinking wine." (Daniel 1:5) They knew that among things forbidden by the Law of Moses were such foods as pigs, rabbits, oysters, and eels. Even meats that the Law allowed were ques-

tionable in the Babylonian court, since there was no way of knowing whether they had been properly bled. Besides, such meats may well have been defiled by pagan rituals.—Leviticus 3:16, 17.

⁶ What could the four Hebrews do? We read that Daniel, and no doubt also the other three, determined in his heart not to pollute himself with such foods. Hence, he "kept requesting" plain vegetables instead of the delicacies of the king and water instead of his wine. The matter of which tasted better did not enter their minds. It certainly took faith and courage to press this issue. Well, since Jehovah was interested in these four youths, he saw to it that the principal court official was favorably disposed toward Daniel. However, this official was afraid to grant Daniel's request for fear of the effect such a diet would have on Daniel's health. So Daniel asked that they be permitted to try out this diet for ten days. He had strong faith that obeying God's Law not only would give him a good conscience but would also prove beneficial healthwise. As a result of their stand, the four Hebrews no doubt had to endure much ridicule.—Daniel 1: 8-14; Isaiah 48:17, 18.

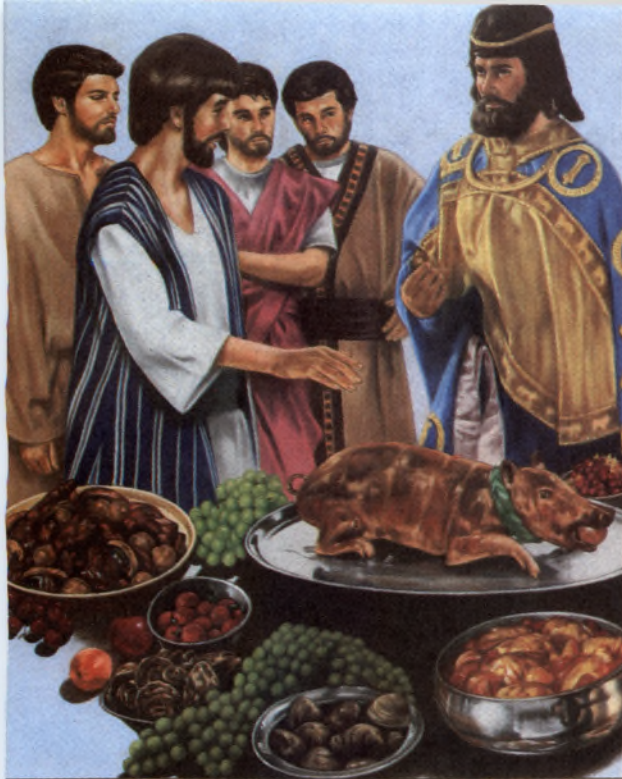
⁷ It had taken faith and courage for the four Hebrews to make an issue of their food. But how they were rewarded for doing so, for at the end of the ten days, they looked comelier and healthier than any of the others! Jehovah was giving them knowledge, insight, and wisdom, so that when they appeared before the king at the end of their three-year training period, he found them "ten times better than all the magic-practicing priests and the conjurers that were in all his royal realm."—Daniel 1:20.

4. What indicates that Jehovah wanted his people to take seriously his laws regarding clean and unclean animals?

5. How was the fine rearing of the four Hebrew youths put to the test?

6. How did the four Hebrews respond to the test?

7. How were those Hebrew youths rewarded for their brave stand?



***Daniel and his companions
learned to say no***

⁸ There is a lesson in this for all servants of Jehovah God today. Those Hebrew youths might have reasoned that the dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law were not so important, at least not when compared with the Ten Commandments or the laws concerning sacrifices or the annual festivals. But no, the loyal Hebrews were concerned with living up to all features of God's Law. This calls to mind the principle that Jesus stated, as recorded at Luke 16:10: "The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and the person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much."—Compare Matthew 23:23.

⁹ Many times Jehovah's Witnesses display similar faith and courage, such as

8. What lesson is there in this for Jehovah's servants today?

9. How have some Witnesses displayed similar courage today?

when it comes to asking their employers for time off to attend a district convention. And time and again, an exception is made in their case. Witnesses wanting to enter the pioneer ranks or to become auxiliary pioneers have pressed their desire for part-time employment and repeatedly have been granted this privilege.

¹⁰ What a fine lesson God-fearing parents of today can learn from the evident training of the four Hebrew youths! When Christian parents really have the spiritual interests of their children at heart, they will put these first in their own lives, in keeping with Matthew 6:33. Then they can expect that their children will be able to resist the temptations and pressures of peers and schoolteachers to celebrate birthdays or holidays or to violate Scriptural principles in other ways. These God-fearing parents thereby prove Proverbs 22:6 to be true.

Fearlessly Interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams

¹¹ The second chapter of Daniel gives us another example of faith and courage. When Daniel heard of the king's edict to destroy all the wise men of Babylon because they could not tell him his dream and its meaning, did Daniel and his three companions become panicky? Absolutely not! Rather, with supreme faith that Jehovah would give him the information the king wanted, Daniel appeared before that monarch and asked for time to provide the answer. This request was granted. Then Daniel and his three friends made the matter a subject of earnest prayer. Jehovah rewarded their faith by giving the information needed. Thereupon, Daniel offered a heartfelt prayer of thanksgiving to

10. What lesson is there for Witness parents in all of this?

11. How may we today follow the examples of Daniel and his three friends?

Jehovah. (Daniel 2:23) And Daniel's interpreting the dream of chapter 4 required that he tell King Nebuchadnezzar that he would spend seven years living as a beast with wild animals. This called for faith and courage of the kind that God's people must show today in proclaiming the strong message of His vengeance against Satan's world.

'Staying the Force of Fire'

¹² Daniel chapter 3 gives one of the most outstanding instances of Bible record showing how Jehovah rewarded amazing faith and courage on the part of three Hebrew servants. Imagine the scene. All the dignitaries of Babylon are assembled on the plain of Dura. Before them stands a golden image some 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. To appeal to their emotions, the king has an orchestra on hand. At the sound of the music, those assembled are to 'fall down and worship the image of gold that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. And whoever does not fall down and worship will at the same moment be thrown into the burning fiery furnace.'—Daniel 3:5, 6.

¹³ There is no question about it: Refusing to obey

12, 13. Chapter 3 of Daniel relates what test facing Daniel's three friends?



that order called for great faith and courage. But having been 'faithful in what was least' prepared them to be 'faithful in what was much.' The fact that their stand might put other Jews in jeopardy was beside the point. They would not bow down and worship the image. Their conspicuous refusal was noticed by some of their envious associates, who lost no time in reporting this to the king.

¹⁴ In "rage and fury," Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the three Hebrews be brought to him. His question, "Is it *really* so?" shows that it was incomprehensible to him that they should refuse to bow down and worship the golden image. He was willing to give them another chance, but if they still refused, they would be thrown into the burning fiery furnace. "And," said Babylon's haughty monarch, "who is that god that can rescue you out of my hands?" With true courage and faith in Jehovah, the three Hebrews respectfully answered the king: "We are under no necessity in this regard to say back a word to you. If it is to be, our God whom we are serving is able to rescue us. Out of the burning fiery furnace . . . , O king, he will rescue us. But if not, let it become known to you, O king, that your gods are not the ones we are serving, and the image of gold that you have set up we will not worship."—Daniel 3:13-18.

¹⁵ If Nebuchadnezzar had been angry before, he was furious now, for we read that "the very expression of his face was changed toward" the three Hebrews. (Daniel 3:19) Indicative of his rage was his command to heat the furnace seven times hotter than usual. Then certain strong men in his army took the three Hebrews and pitched them into the fiery

furnace. The flames were so great that they killed the men who carried out this task.

¹⁶ But what a surprise the king got when he saw not just three but four men walking about in the midst of the fire wholly unharmed! When the king summoned the three Hebrews to come forth, he found that not a hair of their heads had been singed and the smell of smoke was not even on their garments. How greatly Jehovah had rewarded their faith and courage! No doubt their example was the one the apostle Paul had in mind when he listed among the great cloud of witnesses those who "stayed the force of fire." (Hebrews 11:34) What a fine example they have been for all servants of Jehovah since then!

¹⁷ Today, Jehovah's servants are not faced with the threat of a literal fiery furnace. But ever so many have had their integrity severely put to the test when it comes to showing worshipful reverence for national symbols. Others have had their loyalty tested when it comes to buying political party cards or joining the military forces. Jehovah has sustained all such persons, enabling them to meet the challenge to their integrity successfully and thus prove the Devil to be a liar and Jehovah to be the true God.

Another Example of Faith and Courage

¹⁸ Yet another example of faith and courage is recorded in the book of Daniel, in chapter 5. Belshazzar, king of Babylon, was enjoying a sumptuous sacrilegious feast with a thousand of his

14. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to their refusal to bow down, and how did they answer his ultimatum?

15. What action did Nebuchadnezzar take?

16. How was the faith of the three Hebrews rewarded?

17. What fine similar examples do we have today?

18. How did Belshazzar display contempt for Jehovah, the God of the Jews, as recorded at Daniel chapter 5, verses 3, 4?

grandeess, concubines, and secondary wives. Suddenly, strange handwriting appeared on the wall. This so unnerved the king that his hip joints were unloosened and his knees knocked. Again, Daniel, the servant of the true God, was called upon for an interpretation because all the wise men of Babylon were baffled.

¹⁹ Standing all alone there in that splendorous and hostile environment did not overawe Daniel or cause him to water down his message or to lose sight of the issue. Poised and calm, with clear, dignified speech, he gave a witness concerning his God. Not content with simply interpreting the handwriting, Daniel reminded the king that Jehovah God had humbled his grandfather by causing him to live as a wild beast until he came to recognize that the Most High God is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind. "Although you knew all this," Daniel told Belshazzar, 'you did not humble yourself but desecrated the vessels of Jehovah's temple and praised the gods of gold, silver, copper, iron, wood, and stone that neither see, hear, nor know anything. But the God to whom all your ways belong, you did not glorify. Therefore, this decree has gone forth from him. You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting, and your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians.' Yes, again Daniel set a splendid example in faith and courage for God's servants today.—Daniel 5:22-28.

²⁰ Coming to chapter 6 of Daniel, we have one more fine example of faith and courage. King Darius was now the ruler and made Daniel one of the three chief rulers of the kingdom. Others, envious of Daniel, persuaded the monarch to enact a

19. What was outstanding when Daniel interpreted the handwriting on the wall?

20. During the reign of Darius, what further example of great faith did Daniel set?

law that for 30 days no one could make a petition to anyone except the king. They realized that this was the only way they could get a pretext against Daniel. He ignored the law and continued to pray in his roof chamber with his window open, facing Jerusalem. Being found guilty of violating the king's decree, Daniel was consigned to the lions' pit in keeping with the penalty prescribed by the law. Again God rewarded Daniel for his faith and courage. How? As Hebrews 11:33 puts it, Jehovah "stopped the mouths of lions."

²¹ What faith-strengthening events Daniel chapters 1 to 6 relate! How greatly Jehovah God rewarded those manifesting faith and courage! On the one hand, this occurred by their being exalted and on the other hand, by their experiencing miraculous deliverances. Truly, we can draw comfort and hope from the experiences of these faithful witnesses when faced with trials. Why, for this very purpose these things were recorded! May we, therefore, resolve to be fine imitators of such faith and courage.—Romans 15:4; Hebrews 6:12.

21. In view of the fine examples of faith and courage recorded in the first six chapters of the book of Daniel, what should be our firm resolve?

Questions in Review

- ☐ The names of the four Hebrew youths suggest what as to their rearing?
- ☐ The Hebrews' meeting of the test regarding food has what lesson for us?
- ☐ How have Jehovah's servants today had their integrity tested as did the three Hebrews?
- ☐ How did Daniel manifest faith and courage in witnessing to Belshazzar?

Graduation of the 85th Gilead Class

A JOYFUL OCCASION

FOLLOWING the inauguration of the temple some 3,000 years ago, Solomon "sent the people away to their homes, joyful and feeling good at heart." (2 Chronicles 7:10) Those words well describe the feelings of over 4,000 people as they were leaving the Jersey City Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses on September 11, 1988. The occasion? The graduation of the 85th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead.

After a song, the program opened with a heartfelt prayer by W. L. Barry, a member of the Governing Body. T. Jaracz, also of the Governing Body, acted as chairman for the day. 'For this occasion to be truly spiritually refreshing and upbuilding,' said Jaracz, 'Jehovah's spirit and his blessings are needed.' Indeed, such were evident as the program unfolded.

Following these welcoming remarks, the graduates received parting counsel in a series of short, practical talks. R. L. Rains of the Bethel Committee spoke first. Basing his comments on Genesis 12:1, 2, Rains admonished the students: 'Prove to be a blessing in your missionary assignment.' And how can they do so? 'It is by your life course once you get there,' he stressed. He next highlighted two factors that will greatly help: (1) They should realize that they will need to make some changes in order to adjust to their new assignments; and (2) they should maintain peaceful relations with others.

In a warm, encouraging manner, J. E. Barr of the Governing Body talked next, addressing the graduates on the theme "Give Us More Faith," based on

Luke 17:5. 'Do remember daily,' Barr exhorted, 'to ask Jehovah to give you more faith.' They must always keep in mind the real reason why Jehovah has sent them to their assignments. 'Sense the power of God's invisible as well as his visible organization backing you up always, day and night,' urged Barr. 'You can never ask too often in your prayers, "Jehovah, please give me more faith."'

Curiosity was aroused when the chairman announced the theme of the next speaker, F. D. Songer of the Factory Committee: "A Unique Trust and a Special Key." Songer drew his comments from 1 Chronicles 9:26, 27 and what is said there about the Levite gatekeepers. 'Their office was one of unique trust,' explained Songer. They had the key—the implement expressing the very power of control over entrance to the holy areas of the temple. They were reliable, opening the gates dependably each morning. In conclusion, Songer told the graduates: 'You have been given a unique trust and a special key, as it were, with which to open up, morning by morning, to those seeking entrance to the courtyards of true worship. Guard that trust well and use that key dependably.'

Next, M. G. Henschel of the Governing Body spoke on the theme "Keep Holding the Pattern of Healthful Words."

Class Statistics:

Average age:	29.1
Average years in the truth:	13.4
Average years in full-time ministry:	9.1
Number of single brothers:	2
Number of married couples:	10

Referring to 2 Timothy 1:13, 14, Brother Henschel explained that Paul's parting counsel to Timothy was: 'Use this pattern of healthful words that you have received from me, and guard this like a treasure, a trust.' The graduates, too, have received a treasure. For the previous five months, they had studied the Bible and matters concerning the ministry. 'This instruction, this pattern of healthful words,' explained Henschel, 'is something God has put in your hands to use, not just for yourself, no, but for others.'

What parting counsel would the school's two instructors have for their students? J. D. Redford spoke first on the theme "Admit Your Mistakes." Redford noted that although we know that "we all stumble many times," if we are charged with making a mistake, we are prone to justify ourselves. (James 3:2) 'Refusing to admit our mistakes is like claiming infallibility,' said Redford. Admitting our mistakes is the course of wisdom. How so? The speaker explained: 'No one can maintain the respect of others if he insists that he is right even when confronted with an obvious mistake. How can anyone have confidence in a person who he knows from experience will even sacrifice the truth just to give the appearance that he is right? Admitting a mistake builds in us strength, self-respect. But a failure to do so is cowardly, and it serves to weaken us morally.' Applying such practical counsel will no doubt help the graduates to get along well with others.

U. V. Glass, the other instructor and the registrar of the school, based his final ad-

monition on the Bible account of Gideon, whom Jehovah used to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Midianites. (Judges, chapters 6-8) Gideon demonstrated that Jehovah's confidence in him was not misplaced, for when the people wanted to make him a king, he refused, saying: "Jehovah is the one who will rule over you." (Judges 8:23) 'You too,' said Glass, 'do not want to get lifted up. You have proved yourselves. But this does not mean that you are the ones who are doing the fighting. It is Jehovah who is backing you up.'

The final speaker of the morning was A. D. Schroeder of the Governing Body, and it was evident as he spoke that Gilead School is close to his heart. And for good reason—he was the registrar when the school was established in 1943. Brother Schroeder developed the theme "Be Found Faithful," based on 1 Corinthians 4:2. What does being faithful involve? 'It describes one's being full of faith in the declarations and precious promises of Jehovah God,' explained Schroeder. 'It also means that one is true, constant, loyal to Jehovah.' Are there any examples of those who have already been found faithful? There were the pre-Christian men and women mentioned at Hebrews chapter 11; Jesus Christ; and the apostles and other anointed disciples of the first century C.E. After calling attention to some modern-day examples, Brother Schroeder asked: 'What about us?' He added: 'Either you are faithful or you are not faithful. Whether we are of the anointed or of the great crowd, all of us, both classes, must be equally faithful to our calling.'

Established in 1943, the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead trains and sends out missionaries to all parts of the earth. For the first 35 classes, the school was located at the Watchtower Society's Kingdom Farm, near South Lansing, New York. With the 36th class, starting February 6, 1961, the school was moved to the Society's headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, where it has operated until now. However, with the commencement of the 86th class on October 17, 1988, the school is being moved to Watchtower Farms, near Pine Bush, New York.



85th Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row. (1) Johnston, Y.; Kuismis, S.; Ugarte, Z.; Williams, Z.; Grischkewitz, G. (2) Powers, E.; D'Angelo, L.; Honsberger, J.; Williams, J.; James, J. (3) Kuismis, V.; Grischkewitz, U.; Ugarte, R.; Rogerson, A.; Lantunen, K.; James, D. (4) Rogerson, M.; Johnston, R.; D'Angelo, T.; Honsberger, T.; Powers, T.; Danielson, M.

Following Brother Schroeder's remarks, the chairman conveyed the greetings received from various countries. The moment now arrived for the students to receive their diplomas. The 22 students came from six countries—Canada, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, and the United States. Their assignments, though, will take them to 11 different lands—Belize, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Hong Kong, Lesotho, Pakistan, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, Senegal, and Taiwan. And what did the graduates have to say on their graduation day? One of the students read a letter addressed to the Governing Body and the Bethel family, which said in part: "We thank you all once again for making these five months the most memorable of our entire lives."

After an intermission, W. L. Van De Wall of the Service Department Committee began the afternoon program by conduct-

ing an abbreviated *Watchtower* Study. Following this, the students put on a brief program, reenacting a few of the interesting—and sometimes humorous—experiences they had had while witnessing in New York City. Then, all in attendance, including the 85th class, enjoyed a special program entitled "Getting Better Acquainted With Our Zealous Missionaries." By means of slides and recordings, the audience was able to see—and hear—some longtime missionaries.

As a fitting conclusion, the students put on a costumed Bible drama emphasizing the need to do God's will with zeal. After a final song, one and all were deeply touched as F. W. Franz, the Watchtower Society's 95-year-old president, offered a fervent closing prayer. Following this, all went "away to their homes, joyful and feeling good at heart."

Kingdom Proclaimers Report

Maintaining Faith in a Divided Household

THE apostle Paul admonished Christians: "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) In one Oriental land, 'staying' by Bible teachings resulted in marvelous blessings to Mrs. L—— after she became one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Mrs. L—— and her husband both came from Hindu families. She was visited by Jehovah's Witnesses in 1959, and after studying the Bible with them, she accepted the truth of God's Word. Then she witnessed to her husband and other relatives. (Compare John 1:40, 41.) Her husband showed no interest, but her fleshly sister R—— joined the study. In 1961 she and her sister were baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah. As Sister L——'s children grew up, she studied with them and took them to meetings. When the oldest daughter, S——, left school, she dedicated her life to Jehovah, was baptized, and married a Witness.

Sister L—— kept on witness-

ing to her relatives. Another fleshly sister became interested, but her husband opposed her bitterly, even destroying her Bible and books. She was not allowed to take her three children to meetings, but she studied with them at home. In time she too made a dedication and was baptized, in the face of strong opposition from her husband. Eventually, all three of her children became dedicated and baptized Witnesses.

Meanwhile, Sister L—— continued witnessing to her fleshly relatives. When she spoke with her brother and his wife, the brother showed no interest, but his wife listened. After gaining sufficient Bible knowledge, she dedicated herself to God and symbolized this by water baptism.

Sister L—— witnessed to another fleshly brother, who opposed the truth. But his wife, along with their daughter, began to study. The daughter was sent to Canada for further secular studies but continued her Bible study and association with the Witnesses there. Eventually, she also took her stand for the truth and was baptized.

Results of Witnessing to Her Family

The faithful efforts of Sister L—— were blessed by Jehovah. In time her youngest daughter gave up her well-paying job, took part-time work, and started serving Jehovah as a full-time minister. The youngest son also became dedicated and was baptized and then took his stand on the neutrality issue. (Isaiah 2:4) He was sentenced to three years in a military prison, but through it all he gave a powerful witness before the tribunal of judges. His father, Sister L——'s husband, was so impressed by the stand that his son took that he now became interested and began attending meetings.

Indeed, how satisfying and rewarding have been Sister L——'s 29 years of faithful service in a divided household! She now rejoices to count some 18 family members and fleshly relatives who have been baptized. May this experience be a source of encouragement and comfort to many of our brothers and sisters who, under similar circumstances, have to endure and maintain faith in divided households.—1 Peter 2:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 7:12-16.

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How shall we repay Jehovah?

WHEN somebody takes a genuine, warm interest in us, perhaps doing something for our benefit, how do we react? Kindness and generosity usually bring forth a response, do they not? What, then, are our feelings toward our God, Jehovah, for his constant loving-kindness to us?

It is so easy, hurried along as we are by the everyday pressures of life, to take Jehovah's beneficence for granted, sometimes even acting as if we were not truly grateful. We do well, therefore, to pause and reflect on the psalmist's question: "What shall I repay to Jehovah for all his benefits to me?" (Psalm 116:12) In what ways shall we respond?

Benefits From Jehovah

Without Jehovah's gift of his Word, the Bible, how lost we would be! Courageous men and women in past centuries risked their lives to possess and read this book, and we have grown to understand why. Men of God have always been grateful for inspired Scripture, knowing how beneficial it is "for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness."—2 Timothy 3:16.

We know, however, that to be "completely equipped for every good work," we need more than mere head knowledge of the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:17) It is through the power of God's holy spirit that benefit is brought to our lives, and this fact is drawn to our attention by Jehovah's appealing expressions through his prophet Isaiah: "And now the Sovereign Lord Jehovah himself has sent me, even his spir-

it. This is what Jehovah has said, your Repurchaser, the Holy One of Israel: 'I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk. O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.'" (Isaiah 48:16-18) By his holy spirit, in conjunction with his Word, Jehovah directs us to benefit ourselves, and the result is peace and righteousness.

Furthermore, Jehovah's active force works effectively for our benefit because a framework has been set up, an earthly organization, through which the holy spirit operates. At 1 Corinthians chapter 12, Paul likens the Christian congregation to a body and states in verse 7: "But the manifestation of the spirit is given to each one for a beneficial purpose." He goes on to show how we benefit from being part of God's earthly organization.

Five years or so after he wrote those words, he penned his letter to the congregation in Ephesus in which he enlarged on the benefits of being connected with that earthly arrangement. Although what he said applied initially to anointed Christians, are not those of the "great crowd" today also 'readjusted for ministerial work,' becoming 'full-grown men' spiritually, stabilized in the faith, 'no longer babes,' and 'by love growing up in all things into him who is the head, Christ'? (Revelation 7:9; Ephesians 4:12-16) All of us have good reason to be grateful.

Identified with the Christian congregation is the faithful and discreet slave, whose work, to feed us spiritually, is yet another evidence that Jehovah is benefiting us. (Matthew 24:45, 46) Here we are now in the foretold time of the Master's presence. Is the "slave" doing his work? Despite the bleakness of these "last days," are we filled with hope? Do we have a worthwhile purpose in life? (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Romans 5:5; 1 Timothy 4:10) Yes! And our hope is not a mere probability but a sure conviction built on faith, which in turn is based on solid evidence.—Hebrews 11:1.

Manifestly, then, Jehovah, our Great Benefactor, has given us so much for which to be grateful. The question reasonably follows:

What Will I Repay to Jehovah?

First, we must acknowledge that Jehovah needs nothing from us. He is the one who says, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine," likewise "the beasts upon a thousand mountains." (Haggai 2:8; Psalm 50:10; Job 41:11) This means we can in no way "buy"

Jehovah's favor; yet we are encouraged to make voluntary offerings to him. (Compare 1 Chronicles 29:14.) There are *certain* conditions, however, to our being allowed to offer gifts to Jehovah.

"With what shall I confront Jehovah? With what shall I bow myself to God on high? Shall I confront him with whole burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of torrents of oil? Shall I give my firstborn son for my revolt, the fruitage of my belly for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O earthling man, what is good. And what is Jehovah asking back from you but to exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with your God?"—Micah 6:6-8.

We learn from this that Jehovah's requirements are always reasonable, always attainable. Additionally, Jesus pointed out the prerequisite that our relationship with both Jehovah and our fellowman must be right in order for our offerings to be acceptable. (Matthew 5:23, 24) Having laid the right basis, we can now see that all of us

HOW SOME CONTRIBUTE TO THE KINGDOM WORK

- GIFTS: Voluntary donations of money may be sent directly to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201, or to the Society's local branch office. Property such as real estate, as well as jewelry or other valuables, can also be donated. A brief letter stating that such is an outright donation should accompany these contributions.
 - CONDITIONAL-DONATION ARRANGEMENT: Money may be given to the Watch Tower Society to be held in trust, with the provision that in case of personal need, it will be returned to the donor.
 - INSURANCE: The Watch Tower Society may be named as the beneficiary of a life-insurance policy or in a retirement/pension plan. The Society should be informed of any such arrangements.
 - TRUSTS: Bank savings accounts can be placed *in trust* for the Society. If this is done, please inform the Society. Stocks, bonds, and property can also be donated under an arrangement to benefit the donor during his or her lifetime. This method eliminates the expense and uncertainties of probate of will, while ensuring that the Society receives the property in the event of death.
 - WILLS: Property or money may be bequeathed to the Watch Tower Society by means of a legally executed will. A copy should be sent to the Society.
- For more information and advice regarding such matters, write to the Treasurer's Office, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York 11201, or to the Society's local branch office.

have something to give Jehovah, in appreciation for his goodness to us.

How Can We Use What We Have?

It takes time, effort, and to some extent money, but what a privilege it is to represent Jehovah in the preaching work! This sacrifice of praise is something all of us can give to Jehovah. Here is how one pioneer elder with three small children feels about it:

“To share in the privilege of full-time service is worth any personal sacrifice—and more—because it is the most effective way to give praise to our heavenly Father. Also, it enables me in some measure to thank him for his undeserved kindness shown to me personally.”

His wife adds: “It is a real privilege to help my husband to pioneer. It enables the whole family to have a greater share in the ministry, and seeing Jehovah’s loving hand providing for us in a spiritual and material way makes us want to praise him all the more.”

The Watch Tower Society has distributed Bibles and Bible literature on a voluntary basis for well over a hundred years and printed these on its own presses since 1920. The time and effort of volunteers working at Bethel to produce all the publications we have today, along with that of congregation publishers and pioneers to circulate them, become, in effect, an additional donation to the vital preaching work.—Matthew 24:14.

Also, Christians in the more economically stable countries are pleased to know that their kind gifts of money, sent to the branch office of the Watch Tower Society in their country, enable many of their brothers in other parts of the world to spend their whole time in preaching and disciple making. Missionaries from the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, circuit and district overseers, and special pioneers are all helped to continue in their full-time service by these voluntary contributions.

Perhaps it is impossible for you to serve at Bethel or as a member of the International Volunteer Construction Worker Program. But maybe you have funds that can support those who are engaged in this activity but who lack a “surplus” of funds to maintain themselves in it. A helpful equalizing can therefore take place, as described at 2 Corinthians 8:14. Letters accompanying such donations have included the following from one elderly sister who wrote:

“I am very grateful for all the blessings Jehovah gives me, and I pray for the building projects and the organization continually.”

Another sister said: “I’d rather this small sum do some good theocratically than remain in a bank that is going to collapse before long!”

A brother expressed himself in these words: “Jehovah’s counseling us to use our belongings to glorify him is a means of real protection from greedy commerce, the ‘third wing’ of Satan’s wicked system of things. May I take this opportunity to say how glad I am to contribute something to the speeding up of the increase Jehovah is giving us, and I thank him for making it possible for me to be used.”

Gifts From Old and Young

It is encouraging to read of the faithful determination of elderly ones who, though hoping to survive to the end of this system, make sure, by making an appropriate will, that the Kingdom work benefits in the event of their death. Some expressions received from executors, commenting on the fine attitude of such testators, include:

“A very kind person to everyone, all her life . . . she loved Jehovah and his creation.”

“Always, the interests of the Kingdom were her first concern.”

“He achieved his heavenly reward after 70 years of faithful service . . . he always

wanted to further the truth with his assets.”

We also enjoy hearing from young ones, intent on using their material things for Jehovah’s work. One letter received at the Society’s office in Britain came from a school-age publisher. She related that she had won first prize in an essay competition. She enclosed the entire prize money. The Society’s publications were the sole source of material for her essay on “Christian Commitment,” so she felt the money rightly belonged to Jehovah.

After asking what he will repay to Jehovah, the writer of Psalm 116 continues in

verses 13 and 14 to say: “The cup of grand salvation I shall take up, and on the name of Jehovah I shall call. My vows I shall pay to Jehovah, yes, in front of all his people.” Appreciating the precious gift of salvation from Jehovah through his Son, we feel moved, as did the psalmist, to call on Him and keep our promises to Him.

Jehovah has benefited us so much, and whatever we can do in return seems little in comparison. How appropriate, then, that as an expression of gratitude, we do all we can, in every way! “To you I shall offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and on the name of Jehovah I shall call.”—Psalm 116:17.

We Turned to the Source of True Righteousness

As told by Erwin Grosse

A FEW years ago, early morning would have found me at the gates of a huge shipyard in Kiel, Germany, distributing leaflets and selling *Rote Fahne*, the magazine of the KPD/ML.* At the same time I would have been trying to draw workers and apprentices into debates. Trying to convince them of my communist opinions was a thankless task.

However, I did not let this get me down. I had discovered a goal in life: helping to bring about righteous conditions by means of world revolution. How did I come to that point of view? Would such a goal in life satisfy my hunger for righteousness?

* *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands/Marxisten-Leninisten* (German Communist Party/Marxists-Leninists).

Searching for Righteousness

My parents’ way of life was to go all out for material prosperity, and this did not appeal to me at all. We young folks were searching for something better. New lifestyles were being tried out and new purposes in life proclaimed. At that time, the Vietnam war and student unrest were making the headlines. It seemed to us that innocent people were paying with their lives for the megalomania of the politicians and the capitalists. This situation weighed on my mind, and I began to hate the capitalist system.

I also turned my back on established religion. An experience I had while serving in the West German armed forces helped me to make this decision. The military maneuvers we were engaged in were interrupted for a camp service, and the soldiers

were divided into Catholic and Protestant groups. At the conclusion of the service, the clergymen of both denominations blessed the heavy artillery! I was shocked. Were these weapons not constructed to kill? And when I was religiously instructed at school, had I not been taught: "Thou shalt not kill"?—Exodus 20:13, *King James Version*.

I felt that Karl Marx was right when he called religion "the opium of the people" because it rendered people powerless in the face of the interests of capitalism. So after leaving the army, I resigned from the church and took regular lessons in Marxism-Leninism. I also read the works of Mao Tse-tung. All of this strengthened my conviction that only world revolution could uproot evil. Only by such means, I thought, could a new human society characterized by righteousness appear.

The KPD/ML trained me to win workers for Lenin's teachings and to offer them leaflets and *Rote Fahne*. I also carried banners and drove loudspeaker cars at demonstrations. Nevertheless, I was viewed only as a sympathizer of the party. Before the central committee would admit me as a member, I had to prove myself, serving the party for some time and supporting it financially.

Different in Practice— Bitter Disappointment!

I had been trained as an engineering draftsman, but I was more interested in the art of the socialist painters, and I wished I could busy myself as creatively as they did. Therefore, I applied for a place at the West Berlin College of Art. I was accepted and commenced my art study in February 1972.

Here I again contacted the party and was soon standing in front of factory gates selling *Rote Fahne*. I also designed placards and painted portraits of Marx, Eng-

els, Lenin, and Mao Tse-tung on red flags.

I was determined never to marry—that is, until I met Linda. I found that she possessed a rare quality, faithfulness, and this made me change my mind. Five months later we were man and wife, starting out on what was to be a harmonious marriage.

Formerly, I had lived with a group of young people who held various leftist sentiments. We had wide-ranging discussions, but there was also friction and animosity. It was much the same in the different communist parties. Each maintained that all others had misunderstood the communist idea and should join the "true" party. Battle lines were drawn!

Within my own party, struggles between the left and the right wings were commonplace. Prominent members tried to depose one another. I grew tired of the fights and insults, and this led to my gradually breaking off all connection with the party. I saw no sense in being involved with something that in reality could bring no change. The communist ideal had proved itself unattainable in practice! But in my heart I remained a Marxist.

Linda Tells Me About God

One night, while driving from Kiel to Berlin, Linda shocked me. She said: "I'm

In Our Next Issue

■ **Is the Bible Open to Just
Any Interpretation?**

■ **Angelic Messages for
Our Day**

■ **The Three Magi
—Fact or Fiction?**

convinced that there is a God, and deep down, I believe in him." That was the last thing I expected to hear! Linda had supported my Marxist ideals.

A heated dispute about dialectical materialism and Marxism followed. Marxism presents the thesis that man derives the whole of his spiritual, intellectual, and moral life from his social environment. As a consequence, the "new" man emerges as a result of education in communist ideology and by a positive change in environment. Linda, however, was a trained laboratory technician, and she knew better! She could prove that man's behavior is also influenced by his genetic makeup. We broke off our discussion to avoid a quarrel.

During a later trip, Linda again felt a desire to talk with me about God. In my view, the theory of evolution confirmed that everything had its origin in material things and was the result of pure chance. Linda brought up the principles of thermodynamics, the law of inertia, and other physical laws in order to prove that an intelligent originator of life must exist. I stuck to my opinions. My philosophy of life and my ideals were, however, already in shreds!

A year went by. One Sunday morning Linda suddenly got out a thick book and began to read to me from it. It was the story of a man who felled a tree, used half of it to make a lifeless idol and then beseeched it: "Deliver me." This striking description of religion impressed me very much. Imagine my surprise to learn that it came from the Bible.—Isaiah 44:14-20.

I asked my wife to tell me more. She did so for five hours—starting with the fall of man in Eden and finishing with the restoration of Paradise described in the book of Revelation. This left Linda completely exhausted, but I felt as if scales had fallen from my eyes and that I was able to see clearly for the first time. Naturally,

I wanted to know where Linda had learned all of this.

She told me that when she was 14 years old, she had studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses in Berlin and later was even baptized. When she was 18, she had to move far away because of her employment, and sad to say, she abandoned the way of the truth. Then when she returned to Berlin, she got involved in leftist politics. The happiness that she now experienced in our marriage moved her to seek God anew. But would he forgive her for her mistakes? She knew that the only way to preserve our lives and the happiness of our marriage was repentantly to turn back to God. But I was not at that point yet. I needed more time.

A Turn in the Right Direction

One summer evening, we watched a golden sunset over the city. Linda said: "Maybe we can enjoy such things for a while, Erwin. But will God keep us alive when he intervenes? What reason are we giving him to do so?" This brought me to my senses. I had learned something about Jehovah but clearly not enough. So I definitely decided to turn to him.

Shortly after this, we were in the marketplace when we saw an elderly woman in a wheelchair holding *The Watchtower*. We asked her to tell us the times of meetings at the local Kingdom Hall, and her eyes began to shine. She grasped our hands: "I'm happy that young people like you want to know the Bible," she said repeatedly. Overwhelmed with joy, she sat upright in her wheelchair and gave Linda a hug. We accepted some magazines and promised to come to the next meeting.

We arrived shortly before it began. I had long hair and a beard and was dressed in jeans and T-shirt. Linda was wearing her aunt's 30-year-old navy-blue wedding dress. I saw a man in a jacket and tie standing at the entrance and thought: 'A

real square! What a great beginning! He was friendly, however, and said: "We've been expecting you." I was taken aback but said to him: "We would like a Bible study." Even that did not surprise him. "It's already been arranged," he replied. A little bit irritated, we entered.

During the meeting, I felt several times as if the speaker were addressing me personally. And some in the congregation were surprised when Linda took out *The Watchtower* that she had prepared in advance for the study. After the two hours, the elderly sister came and embraced us, her face radiant with joy. She was the one who had spread the news of our coming. Arrangements were made for a regular Bible study with the brother who had welcomed us, and nine months later, on April 4, 1976, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by water immersion.

How glad I was to get to know the One who promised: "Look! I am making all things new"! (Revelation 21:5) And how will the Creator bring about true righteousness? Proverbs 2:21, 22 provides the answer: "For the upright are the ones that will reside in the earth, and the blameless are the ones that will be left over in it. As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth; and as for the treacherous, they will be torn away from it."

Whereas I formerly stood with *Rote Fahne* in front of factory gates, I now stood on Saturdays on Karl Marx Street in Berlin-Neukölln with *The Watchtower*. Now I could speak about something that no man-made system can offer: everlasting life. (John 17:3) I learned how "the upright" are even now be-

ing trained to clothe themselves with "the new personality, which through accurate knowledge is being made new." (Colossians 3:10) This education for a new world will not fail!

As for Linda, she was now determined never again to turn away from the Source of true righteousness. Peter and Reni, who taught us Jehovah's ways, recognized what she needed spiritually and helped her to make progress.

New Goals on the Path of Righteousness

At college, there was open disapproval of the beliefs that I now embraced so zealously. My class professor, a renowned painter, indicated that I would have to decide between art and my new faith. So I gave up painting and looked for work that would help us reach our new goal: pioneer service. With this in mind, Linda and I repeatedly made mention of our desire to Jehovah in prayer. We sent off our applications a half year in advance of our planned starting date, September 1, 1977.

Well, it was not easy, but with Jehovah's help we reached our goal. Meanwhile, since January 1, 1985, Linda and I have been serving as special pioneers—so another burning desire has come to fulfillment. Using our whole strength to help people to learn the path of true righteousness satisfies us very much.

And what about my longing for righteousness? Has it been satisfied? Yes. Today I know the real meaning of Jesus' words at Matthew 5:6: "Happy are those hungering and thirsting for righteousness, since they will be filled."



Stories Children Love

LAST year the Watch Tower Society's headquarters in Brooklyn received the following letter from Sherwood, Oregon:

"Sirs:

"I recently checked a book out from the library entitled *My Book of Bible Stories* for my 4- and 6-year-olds. The stories are told in such a way that they can comprehend, and they have thoroughly enjoyed reading the stories of the Bible. We would like to add this book to our personal library."

*My Book
of
Bible Stories*
