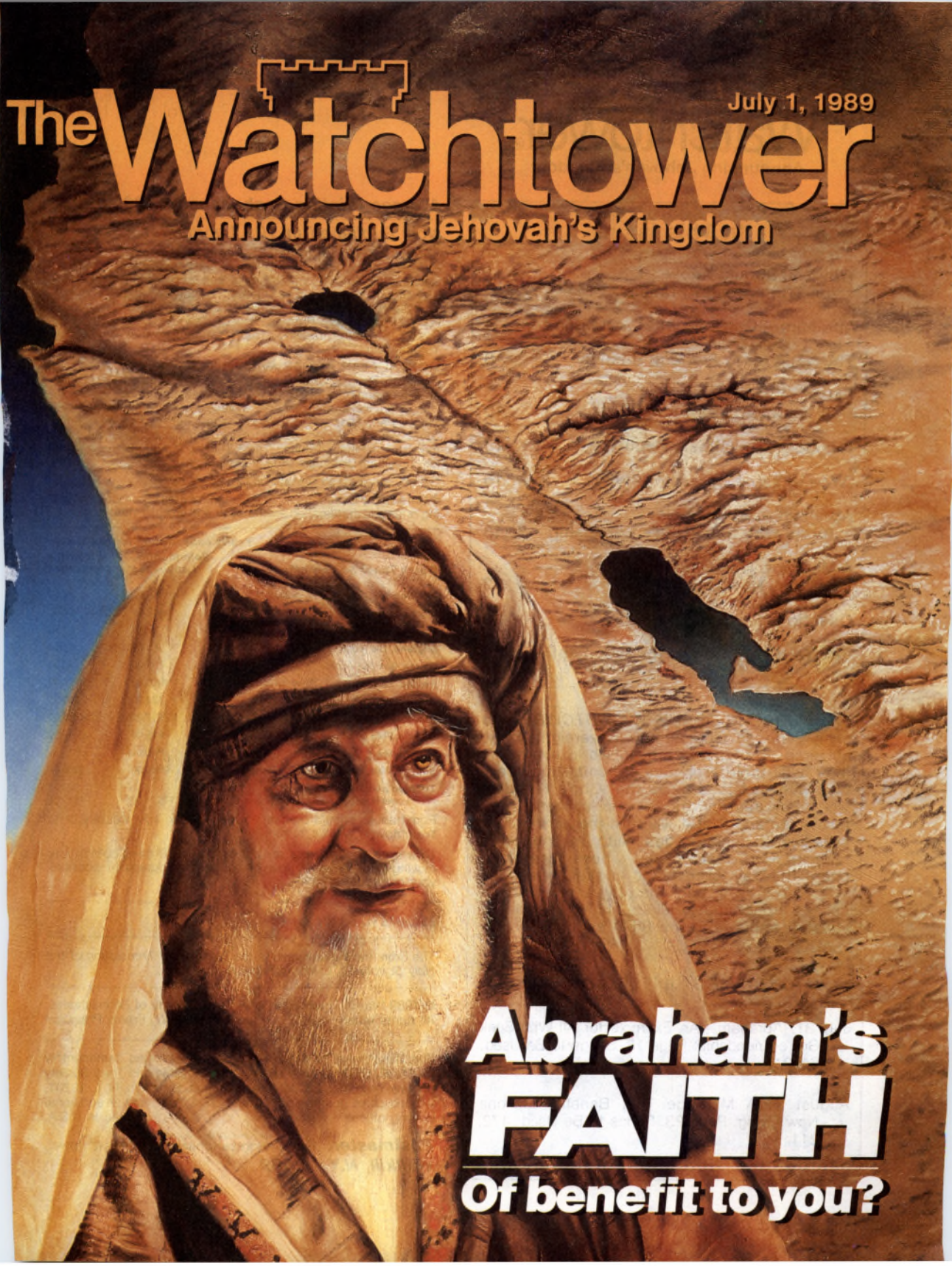
July 1, 1989

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



Abraham's FAITH

Of benefit to you?

The Watchtower®
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

July 1, 1989
Vol. 110, No. 13

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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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Why you should know the truth about
ABRAHAM

ABRAHAM — a mythological hero or a true prophet? How important is the answer to that question? According to Bible chronology, Abraham lived some 4,000 years ago. Some may therefore reason, 'What difference does it make whether he really existed or not?'

Well, half the world's population belong to religions that claim to believe in Abraham. The *1988 Britannica Book of the Year* lists 32.9 percent of the world as Christian, 17.2 percent Muslim, and 0.4 percent Jewish, and Abraham is a prominent figure in all three of these religions. Surely, sincere believers from these faiths should want to make sure that what they have been taught about Abraham is the truth. Even those who belong to other religions or those who profess no religion at all should be interested. Why?

Because the Bible says that Abraham was *a prophet.* (Genesis 20:7) That is a Biblical word used to describe a spokesman of God with a message for other humans. If Abraham was a true prophet, *all* stand to benefit. Why? Because the message he received contained good news for all mankind. (Galatians 3:8) According to the Bible, God promised Abraham: "All the families of the ground will certainly bless themselves by means of you."—Genesis 12:3.

That is a staggering promise, and Abraham heard it uttered on at least two other occasions. (Genesis 18:18; 22:18) In order to fulfill it, God will even resurrect from the dead representatives of families that have died out. Life for such resurrected ones will truly be a blessing, since most of them will come back to an earthly situation resembling the Paradise that man originally lost. Thereafter, they will be taught how to gain the blessing of everlasting life.—Genesis 2:8, 9, 15-17; 3:17-23.

If, on the other hand, Abraham were just a mythological character, there would be no basis for believing the marvelous promise he received. Furthermore, if Bible promises cannot be relied upon, some might argue for devoting themselves entirely to the pleasures of the present life. As one of the early Christians wrote: "If the dead are not to be raised up, 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die.' "—1 Corinthians 15:32.

Therefore, you have every reason to examine the question, Was Abraham just a mythological hero or was he a true prophet? It may shock you to know what prominent 19th-century clergymen have said about this. Meanwhile, archaeologists have made amazing discoveries that challenge those clergymen's views.

A B R A H A M

God's Prophet and Friend

THE combined armies of four Eastern kings cross the Euphrates River. Their line of march is the King's Highway to the east of the Jordan River valley. En route they conquer the Rephaim, the Zuzim, the Emim, and the Horites. Then, the invaders turn around and defeat all the inhabitants of the southern Negeb.

What is the purpose of this military campaign? Between the invaded regions of Transjordan and the Negeb lies the prize. It is a coveted valley called the District of the Jordan. (Genesis 13:10) Here, the inhabitants of five city-states, Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela, live a carefree life of material ease. (Ezekiel 16:49, 50) Once they were subject to the apparent leader of the combined armies, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam. But they have rebelled against him. Now, without neighboring support, they face an accounting. Chedorlaomer and his allies win the resulting battle and begin their long march home with much spoil.

Among the captives is a righteous man, Lot. He is the nephew of Abraham, who is tenting in the nearby mountains of Hebron. When Abraham hears the distressing news, he immediately summons 318 of his men. Courageously, with the support of some neighbors, they chase after the four kings and surprise their armies by night. The invaders flee. Lot and his household are recovered, together with the other captives and goods.

What reason do we have to believe this record in the 14th chapter of Genesis? Was the story invented to make a national hero of the forefather of a number of nations, including the Jews? What about other events in the life of Abraham?

What Clergymen Have Said

In the early 19th century, Lutheran theologian Peter von Bohlen claimed that Abraham was a myth and that the account of Chedorlaomer's invasion had no historical foundation. Another, Professor Julius Wellhausen, stated: "We attain to no historical knowledge of the patriarchs." He suggested: "[Abraham] might with more likelihood be regarded as a free creation of unconscious art."

English theologians followed the lead of their German colleagues. "The great patriarchal tales in the book of Genesis are prehistoric, no more historically true than the tales of . . . King Arthur," wrote clergyman Stopford Brooke in his book *The Old Testament and Modern Life.* "From . . . Genesis . . . we obtain but a broken and distorted view of the life and character of any one of the patriarchs," wrote John Colenso, Anglican bishop of the former British colony of Natal. "It is impossible," he added, "to place implicit confidence in *any* of these records."

Such criticism spread like gangrene. (2 Timothy 2:17) Today, millions of churchgoers no longer take the life of the patriarchs seriously. Yet, to the shame of Christendom's theologians, atheists now state that Bible criticism has gone too far. For example, *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia* (Great Soviet Encyclopedia) states: "In recent years, a series of

contentions of biblical criticism were re-examined in the light of new research, especially on the basis of the data of so-called biblical archaeology. Some biblical traditions that had been regarded as myth . . . seem to have a historic core." Consider how archaeology has thrown light on the record about Abraham.

Ur of the Chaldeans

According to the Bible, Abraham was raised in "Ur of the Chaldeans." (Genesis 11:27-31; 15:7) For centuries, Ur's location was a mystery. Critics believed that if it existed at all, it was an insignificant, backward place. Then, to their embarrassment, ruins that lie between Babylon and the Persian Gulf were identified unmistakably to be those of Ur. Thousands of clay tablets unearthed at the site revealed that Ur was a center of world trade, with a large cosmopolitan population. In the time of Abraham, the city even had schools where boys were taught to write and do arithmetic.

Furthermore, excavations at Ur revealed that its architects used the column, the arch, the vault, and the dome. Ur's craftsmen produced exquisite jewelry, elaborately designed harps, and daggers with blades of pure gold. In several homes, archaeologists unearthed sewage pipes, made of baked clay, that descended into large drainage pits up to 40 feet deep.

These discoveries gave many scholars a fresh view of Abraham. "We had been accustomed to think of Abraham as a simple dweller in tents, and find him a possible occupant of a sophisticated brick house in a city," wrote Sir Leonard Woolley in his book *Digging Up the Past.* "Abraham," stated archaeologist Alan Millard in his book *Treasures From Bible Times,* "left the sophisticated city, with all its security and comfort, to become one of the despised nomads!"

Chedorlaomer's Invasion

What about Abraham's victory over Chedorlaomer, king of Elam? In the early 19th century, little was known about the Elamites. Bible critics rejected the idea that Elam ever had influence over Babylonia, let alone Palestine. Now, the Elamites are viewed differently. Archaeology reveals them to have been a powerful warfaring nation. *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Reference Encyclopedia* states: "The Elamites destroyed the city of Ur about 1950 B.C. . . . Subsequently they exerted considerable influence on the rulers of Babylonia."

Furthermore, the names of Elamite kings have been found on archaeological inscriptions. Some of them begin with the expression "Kudur," similar to "Chedor." An important Elamite goddess was Lagamar, similar to "laomer." Thus, Chedorlaomer is now accepted by some secular sources as a historical ruler, his name possibly meaning "Servant of Lagamar." One set of Babylonian inscriptions has names similar to three of the invading kings—Tudhula (Tidal), Eri-aku (Arioch), and Kudur-lahmil (Chedorlaomer). (Genesis 14:1) In the book *Hidden Things of God's Revelation,* Dr. A. Custance adds: "Besides these names were details which seemed to refer to the events which transpired in Babylonia when the Elamites established their sovereignty over the country. . . . So confirmatory of Scripture were these tablets that the Higher Critics jumped on them and did everything in their power to deliberately suppress the significance of them."

What about the invasion by the four kings? Is there any archaeological evidence in Transjordan and the Negeb to support this? Yes. In his book *The Archaeology of the Land of Israel,* Professor Yohanan Aharoni refers to the disappearance of a pre-Israelite civilization that had

"impressive" settlements in Transjordan and the Negeb, "around 2000 B.C.E." Other archaeologists say this happened about 1900 B.C.E. "The pottery of both the Negeb and Transjordan for this period are identical and both show sudden, catastrophic termination of the civilization," states Dr. Harold Stigers in his *Commentary on Genesis.* Even Bible critics, such as John Van Seters, accept the evidence for this. "One unsolved problem is where these people went, if anywhere, at the end of the period," he states in his book *Abraham in History and Tradition.*

Genesis chapter 14 provides a possible solution to the problem. According to Bible chronology, Abraham arrived in Canaan in 1943 B.C.E. Chedorlaomer's destructive invasion must have taken place shortly after that. Later, in that same century, God brought fiery destruction upon the immoral cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. This forever changed the ecology of the once fertile lower Jordan Valley. (Genesis 13:10-13; 19:24, 25) It was no longer the prize of foreign invaders.

There are many other examples of how archaeology dovetails with the Scriptures in throwing light on events in the life of Abraham. But archaeology has its limitations. The evidence it provides is often indirect and subject to the interpretations of imperfect humans.

The Most Reliable Testimony

The strongest proof that Abraham really existed is the testimony of man's Creator, Jehovah God. At Psalm 105:9-15, God spoke approvingly of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as his "prophets." Over a thousand years after Abraham's death, Jehovah God referred to Abraham through the mouth of at least three prophets, even calling him his "friend." (Isaiah 41:8; 51:2; Jeremiah 33:26; Ezekiel 33:24) Likewise, Jesus Christ held Abraham up as an example. During his prehuman existence in heaven, God's Son had personally witnessed his Father's dealings with the patriarch. Thus, he could say to the Jews:

"'If you are Abraham's children, do the works of Abraham. But now you are seeking to kill me, a man that has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. Abraham your father rejoiced greatly in the prospect of seeing my day, and he saw it and rejoiced.' Therefore the Jews said to him: 'You are not yet fifty years old, and still you have seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them: 'Most truly I say to you, Before Abraham came into existence, I have been.'"—John 8:39, 40, 56-58.

With the testimony and encouragement of the two greatest Persons in the universe, we have the very best reasons to accept everything the Bible states about Abraham. (John 17:5, 17) Though the Bible presents Abraham as an example, it does not unduly elevate him as a national hero. This can be seen by examining the account of his victory over the four allied kings. When Abraham returned from the battle, he was greeted by Melchizedek, king of Salem, who said: "Blessed be the Most High God, who has delivered your oppressors into your hand!" It was Jehovah that he praised for that deliverance. —Genesis 14:18-20.

However, a far grander victory is at hand! Soon, this same glorious God will defeat "the kings of the entire inhabited earth" at the global war called Armageddon. (Revelation 16:14, 16) Then, God's promise to Abraham, his prophet and friend, will have complete fulfillment: "By means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves." Millions are enjoying a foretaste of such blessings. You can be included among them, as the articles appearing on pages 18-28 in this magazine will show.—Genesis 22:18.

Abraham obeyed, moving out of Ur, a very prosperous city

Sample artifacts from Ur:
1. *Gold dagger and sheath*
2. *The 'Standard' of Ur*
3. *Gold bull's head from sounding box of a harp*
4. *Jewelry*
5. *Jeweled headdress*

Photos: Courtesy of the British Museum

Damascus
Dan
REPHAIM
ZUZIM
Shechem
Bethel
District of the Jordan
King's Highway
Salt Sea
Hebron
EMIM
Gomorrah
Sodom
THE NEGEB
HORITES

The Need for Prayer and Humility

EARLIER, when he was in Judea, Jesus told an illustration regarding the importance of being persistent in prayer. Now, on his final trip to Jerusalem, he again emphasizes the need not to give up in praying. Jesus is probably still in Samaria or Galilee when he tells his disciples this further illustration:

"In a certain city there was a certain judge that had no fear of God and had no respect for man. But there was a widow in that city and she kept going to him, saying, 'See that I get justice from my adversary at law.' Well, for a while he was unwilling, but afterward he said to himself, 'Although I do not fear God or respect a man, at any rate, because of this widow's continually making me trouble, I will see that she gets justice, so that she will not keep coming and pummeling me to a finish.'"

Jesus then makes the application of his story, saying: "Hear what the judge, although unrighteous, said! Certainly, then, shall not God cause justice to be done for his chosen ones who cry out to him day and night, even though he is long-suffering toward them?"

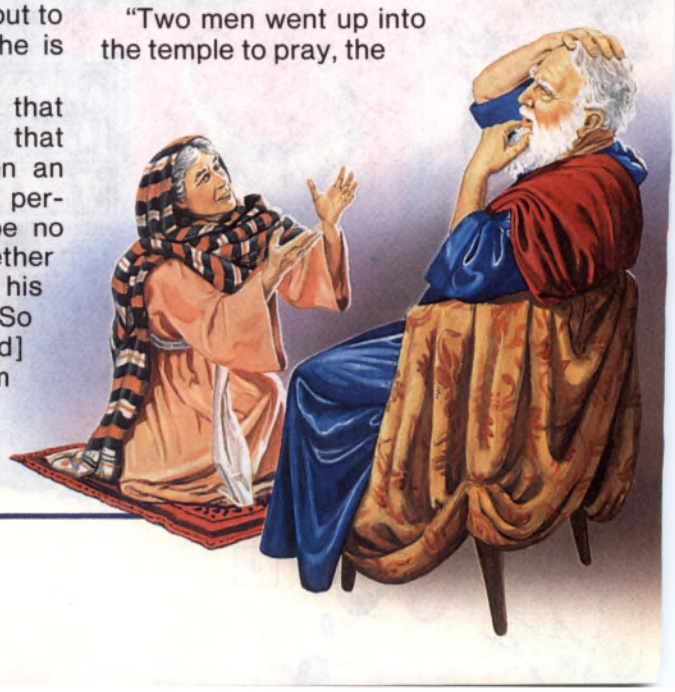
Jesus does not mean to imply that Jehovah God is in any way like that unrighteous judge. Rather, if even an unrighteous judge will respond to persistent entreaties, there should be no question that God, who is altogether righteous and good, will answer if his people do not give up in praying. So Jesus continues: "I tell you, [God] will cause justice to be done to them speedily."

Justice is frequently denied the lowly and the poor, whereas the powerful and the rich are often favored. God, however, will not only see to it that the wicked are justly punished but also ensure that his servants are treated justly by giving them everlasting life. But how many people firmly believe that God will cause justice to be done speedily?

Referring especially to faith related to the power of prayer, Jesus asks: "When the Son of man arrives, will he really find the faith on the earth?" Although the question is left unanswered, the implication may be that such faith would not be common when Christ arrives in Kingdom power. Yet, we cannot conclude that it would not exist. Are you exercising it?

Among those listening to Jesus are some who feel quite self-assured in their faith. They trust in themselves that they are righteous, and they look down on others. These may even include certain ones of Jesus' disciples. So he directs the following illustration to such ones:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, the



one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and began to pray these things to himself, 'O God, I thank you I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give the tenth of all things I acquire.'"

The Pharisees are noted for their public displays of righteousness to impress others. The usual days for their self-imposed fasts are Mondays and Thursdays, and they scrupulously pay the tenth of even the small herbs of the field. A few months earlier, their contempt for the common people had been manifest during the Festival of Tabernacles when they said: "This crowd that does not know the Law [that is, the Pharisaical interpretation given to it] are accursed people."

Continuing his illustration, Jesus tells of such an "accursed" person: "But the tax collector standing at a distance was not willing even to raise his eyes heavenward, but kept beating his breast, saying, 'O God, be gracious to me a sinner.'" Because the tax collector has humbly acknowledged his shortcomings, Jesus says: "I tell you, This man went down to his home proved more righteous than that man; because everyone that exalts himself will be humiliated, but he that humbles himself will be exalted."

Thus Jesus again emphasizes the need to be humble. Being reared in a society in which the self-righteous Pharisees are so influential and position and rank are always stressed, it is not surprising that even Jesus' disciples are affected. Yet, what fine lessons in humility Jesus teaches! **Luke 18:1-14; John 7:49.**

- Why does the unrighteous judge grant the widow's request, and what lesson is taught by Jesus' illustration?
- What faith will Jesus look for when he arrives?
- To whom does Jesus direct his illustration about the Pharisee and the tax collector?
- What attitude of the Pharisees is to be avoided?

Finding Racial Harmony in Troubled South Africa

As told by Merlyn Mehl

I AM a South African, or, as quaintly described in this country, a South African of color. I am also a professor at the University of the Western Cape, the largest predominantly black university in the country. I have a doctorate in physics education. For the past 20 years, I have also been one of Jehovah's Witnesses. So which of these two situations has helped me experience racial harmony in this land of friction and conflict?

Growing Up in South Africa

Cape Town, at the southern tip of Africa, has been described as 'the fairest Cape in all the earth.' Looking at the stars on a clear night in Cape Town is a moving experience. Once, while doing so, I recall saying to a friend: "What's the point of all of this? Surely it must mean something; yet, down here things are so pointless. How can people discriminate so much against others? Why are things so unfair?"

To be born in South Africa is to be aware of discrimination at an early age. The problems of race seem to be omnipresent. From early childhood, people are separated and classified by race. Our family is classified "colored" by South African laws. As children, we were taught that whites were the oppressors while we were among the oppressed. And since, as we grew up, interracial contact at school or socially was practically nil, it is understandable that persons of another race were viewed with suspicion. To us it seemed that whites had the best of everything —including houses, facilities, and schools. "Apartheid," the legal separation of races, became the most hated word in our vocabulary.

Before I finished primary school, our family was obliged to leave the home in the racially mixed neighborhood where my sister and I were born. Why? Because of the Group Areas Act, which permitted a particular area to be zoned for one racial group only. We moved to another area, where we lived for a number of years until it too was proclaimed a "white area." Then, off we went again.

Because of the obvious inequities, my parents as well as our teachers urged us to study hard at school. "You must show the white man that you are better than he is," was the message. This affected my attitude toward school. Although painfully shy, I loved to learn. Reading anything and everything occupied most of my time. Hence, I finished school among the top students in the country. So it was natural that I should go to university. Because I enjoyed science and mathematics, it was easy to decide to pursue a degree in

science, with physics and mathematics as major subjects.

Since in 1960 (the very year I started university) the Separate Universities Act went into operation, I was obliged to attend a university for my racial group. There was much publicity surrounding the students at these separate universities. I graduated each year with distinction and finally achieved a Master of Science degree in nuclear physics, and that drew much attention, especially as I was then appointed to the faculty of the University of the Western Cape—the first colored student to be so appointed.

Yet, at this stage I felt very frustrated. I lacked the answer to the essential question of life: What is the purpose of it all? The comment to my friend, mentioned earlier, was made about this time.

My Questions Are Answered

Up to this point, religion had played a very small part in my life. As a child, I had attended the Anglican Church and was confirmed at the age of 16. But there were never any answers to my questions. So as I got older, my church attendance decreased and finally stopped.

Then one day I visited the home of a university colleague. His wife, Julia, used the Bible to show that there was an answer to the political and racial problems not only of South Africa but also of the whole world. I was surprised and skeptical. But I accepted the booklet *Basis for Belief in a New World,* went home, and started reading it out of curiosity.

At two o'clock the next morning, I was still reading! Here were reasoned arguments as to why the Bible is true, why its prophecies are reliable, why mankind is in so much trouble, why 1914 is such a significant date, and why we can hope for a righteous new system here on earth. This must surely be the truth!

The next day I returned to the home of my colleague. "Do you have more literature like this?" I asked his wife. I walked away with a pile of books dealing with basic Bible doctrines, explanations of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, the nature of the six days of creation, and much, much more. Very important, they showed that nowhere in the Bible is there any justification for racial discrimination, since "God is not partial." (Acts 10:34) I devoured all the literature. Here were the answers to the questions that had always plagued me. After about a year filled with concerted Bible study, I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. That was on November 21, 1967.

As an organization, Jehovah's Witnesses are truly nonracial and nonpolitical. They give allegiance to one government, God's Kingdom. To them social status is genuinely unimportant. But in South Africa, there are always problems concerning racial issues. Because of the Group Areas Act, congregations reflect the racial composition of the areas they are in. So in the Claremont Congregation where I attended, most persons were colored. The few white persons attending were either missionaries or men in positions of oversight.

I still remember, after all these years, two incidents that show how difficult it is to rid oneself of racial attitudes. At assemblies, the whites present used to go to the front of cafeteria lines, collect their food, and go off to eat separately, while the rest of us stood waiting. That irked me. The white Witnesses also had a tendency to introduce their wives like this: "My dear, meet Merlyn. He is studying the Bible." "Merlyn, this is my wife, Sister So-and-so." They addressed me by my first name, but I had to use "Sister" or "Brother." I was outraged!

But then I started reflecting. The problem is that you always feel it is the other person who is racist. And yet a racially polarized society like South Africa must affect everybody that lives here. True, some white Witnesses needed to work at their relationships with persons of a different color. But then, so did I. On this point the Bible gives this good advice: "Do not be quick to show resentment; for resentment is nursed by fools." (Ecclesiastes 7:9, *The New English Bible*) Yes, I had to work at being less sensitive and not to see perceived slights in racial terms.

I should also mention that the general situation in the country has changed somewhat since then. In former years, only a limited number of whites were allowed to attend religious gatherings of other races, and they had to eat separately. This is no longer the case.

Most important, though, here was an organization of people who mixed freely, who were welcome in one another's homes, and who called one another brother and sister and really meant it! These convictions were firmly held and based on Bible principles. So when racial incidents arise —and in South Africa they are almost inevitable—reflecting on these facts always tempers my feelings. As the years pass, I learn to apply Bible principles better and thus have greater peace within myself on racial matters. But one has to work at it!

The Full-Time Ministry

Soon after my baptism, I felt the need to increase my ministry. I was single and had few responsibilities, so on October 1, 1968, I started as a regular pioneer. This caused quite a stir, since it meant my leaving the university and abandoning what many regarded as a glittering career. A newspaper article about my move was headlined: "Top Scientist Goes Bible-Punching." Soon I was conducting ten or more Bible studies with different persons or families. At one assembly two of these people were baptized, at the next, four; then seven, and so on.

On September 17, 1969, I married Julia, the Witness who had introduced the truth to me. She had obtained a divorce on legal and Scriptural grounds some time before our marriage. This meant that I inherited an instant family, since she had two boys, John and Leon. We resolved to continue in the pioneer service for as long as possible, which proved to be a good grounding for the boys and helped me make a success of our stepfamily.

The early '70's was a very exciting time to be in the full-time service, as these experiences show. While preaching from house to house, we met a lady named Annabel. She immediately accepted the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* and a Bible. (We learned later that she paid for the literature with the last money she had—the milkman was obliged to return the next week for his money!) From the start, she prepared well for her weekly Bible study in spite of a restless baby. She also started telling her family what she was learning. Soon her husband, Billy, accompanied her to meetings. Annabel's parents had named their five children alphabetically. Her sister Beattie started to study. Charlie and his wife would not be left out. Daphne also showed interest, and Edna and her husband joined in. Today that entire family has been serving faithfully for many years. The men are elders or ministerial servants, and many of the women have served as pioneers.

And then there is Stanley. We contacted him in the house-to-house work, the last call on a cold Monday afternoon. But what a reception! His wife invited us in, and it was clear at once that we were dealing with a reverent man. In fact, he

had just been praying for help to understand the Bible. Our first discussion centered around the Trinity doctrine. After an hour's discussion, he seemed convinced. The next week, he greeted us with these words: "You people are right. I've read the whole 'New Testament' through, and there is no Trinity. I went to see the minister to ask why he has been misleading me. He refused to see me, so I handed back the collection envelopes that I used to collect money from other church members." And all of this without having obtained a single publication from us! He wished to attend meetings, and we promised to fetch him. But that Sunday we came five minutes later than we had promised. We met him riding his bicycle to the meeting! "I thought you had forgotten me," he said. We studied three times a week, and he was baptized three months after our first contact. Stanley has served for many years with the same zeal he had at first.

Julia and I calculated that over the years, we have been privileged to help some 50 persons to become Jehovah's Witnesses.

A Return to Secular Work

After four years in the pioneer service, our money was almost gone. The cost of living had gone up, and the boys were getting bigger. So, painfully and reluctantly, we decided to leave the full-time ministry. That was in September 1972. What next? Just over a year later, on January 1, 1974, I returned to lecturing at the university when a post became available in physics. This meant considerable readjustment and also guarding against becoming despondent. But with solid support from Julia, I managed to make the adjustments. It proved very helpful to remain extremely active in the ministry and the congregation—really continuing to 'seek first the kingdom.'—Matthew 6:33.

Since all university instructors are expected to do research, the question of returning to nuclear physics arose. I found it extremely difficult to imagine doing this esoteric type of research when my time outside the university was spent trying to teach people the truth from the Bible. It seemed so futile to be engaged in research simply for its own sake. And, of course, nuclear-physics research could just possibly have military applications, and this could bring problems with regard to Christian neutrality.—Isaiah 2:2-4.

In South Africa a university such as that of the Western Cape has many students who are termed "disadvantaged." They come to the university underprepared because of poor schooling and other socioeconomic factors. In many cases they do not lack potential—they have simply not had the opportunity. For the last 13 years, as part of my university work, I have been researching the learning difficulties of such students and arranging alternative teaching methods. This research has brought me a doctorate in physics education and resulted in my promotion to professor. Cooperative research programs are now being conducted with universities in the United States and Israel. It is interesting to compare the findings of this research with the teaching methods of Jehovah's Witnesses.

A theory developed by Professor Reuven Feuerstein and his coworkers in Israel is called Mediated Learning Experience. The essence of the theory is that children develop thinking ability not only from external stimuli reaching them through their senses but also from a human mediator interpreting the stimuli to them. If this is not done, children do not develop their thinking ability as much as they could.

Jehovah's Witnesses place strong

emphasis on the role of the parent as the primary instructor of the child. Witness parents spend many hours examining illustrated Bible study aids with their children, questioning them about what they see and helping them to grasp the significance of Bible stories. They stress the need not only for weekly Bible study but also for constant instruction, especially in Bible principles. (Deuteronomy 6:6-8) The above research seems to indicate that in so doing, parents are actually developing the intelligence of their children.

Constructivism is another theory that holds that teaching is not a simple transfer of information from the mind of the instructor to the mind of the learner. Rather, each person forms his or her own constructions from what is seen or heard or experienced. That is why two persons can listen to the same information and draw different conclusions. For persons to learn effectively, they must deal with the information themselves.

The meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses encourage exactly this. Everyone is expected to prepare beforehand the information to be discussed from the literature available. During the meeting itself, comments are drawn from the audience on the prepared material. In this way people are encouraged not only to express what they have learned but to benefit from the preparation others have made.

The advent of computer-based education has been hailed as the means to personalize instruction. Yet, the Bible study work that the Witnesses have pursued for many years in the homes of the people has excelled at that! One instructor helps one, two, or three persons (seldom more) to consider printed material on a Bible subject that the student has reviewed in preparation. The student is encouraged to explain what he understands, paragraph by paragraph, and then this is discussed —truly a personal Bible study. Given the application of such sound instructional principles, it is no wonder that Jehovah's Witnesses flourish as they do. Of course, they do not have to learn these principles from a university. They acquire them from a superior source—the Bible.—Matthew 28:19, 20; John 6:45.

Racial Harmony Replaces Racial Tension

More than 20 years have flown by since I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. John and Leon, my stepsons, now grown, are both baptized and serve faithfully. In 1976 our son Graeme was born. It is a privilege to raise him also in the way of the truth. Our family has been blessed because Julia is again able to pioneer, while I auxiliary pioneer at least three times a year. Around us in South Africa, there has been a dramatic escalation in racial tension. One sees it in the graffiti on buildings and feels it in the air. Yet, amid all the racial polarization, a modern miracle is taking place. With the relaxation by the State of laws on association, Jehovah's Witnesses are now able to meet together fairly freely, especially at large assemblies. I have been privileged to share in organizing some of these assemblies for all racial groups. There we see nonracialism at work, people educated by the lofty standards of the Bible to be truly colorblind! Here are people who see what others are inside, not just the color of their skin.

Jehovah's Witnesses today form the only true global brotherhood of mankind. Soon, in his new system of things, Jehovah will "wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." Along with millions of my brothers and sisters worldwide, I look forward to that delightful, righteous, nonracial new world.—Revelation 21:3-5.

Kingdom Proclaimers Report

Kingdom Good News From Down Under

AS IN 211 other lands, the good news of the Kingdom is being proclaimed zealously by Jehovah's Witnesses down under in Australia. The more than 49,000 Witnesses there are enjoying rich blessings. Many people of different nationalities have migrated there over the years, so that now 58 ethnic congregations report field service. Encouraging experiences are related by the Watch Tower Society's branch office.

Vietnamese Refugee

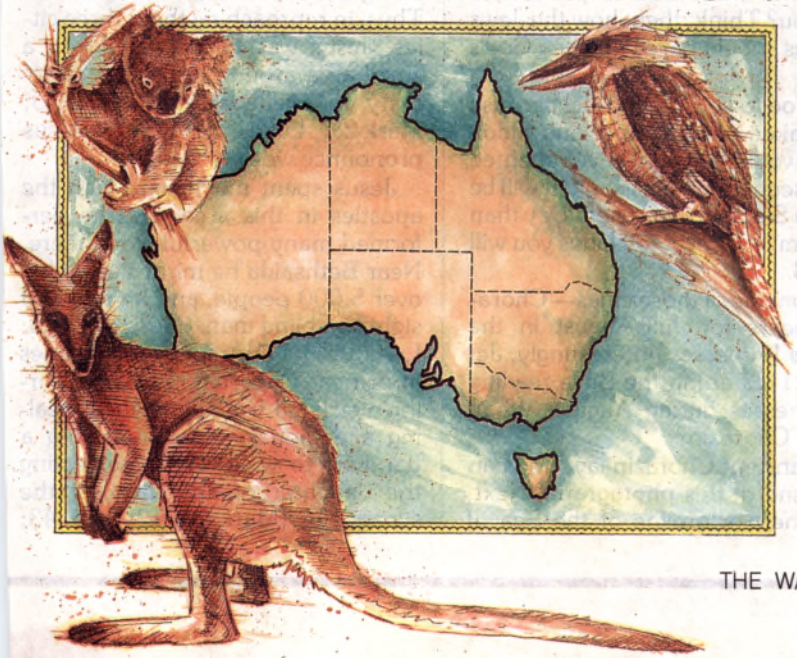
A Vietnamese refugee, now living in Australia, grew up with ancestor worship, Confucianism, and Buddhism, along with Eastern and Western philosophy. Until 1975 he was a soldier in the South Vietnamese army. In 1979 he had to have his left arm amputated because of a tumor in his wrist. Longing for freedom, he fled Vietnam in 1983, together with 24 other people, on a small boat. After a frightening encounter with pirates, their boat drifted aimlessly in the South China Sea for six torrid days, until they finally reached Malaysia. After spending five months in a refugee camp, he was permitted to enter Australia. Three months later he came in contact with the truth. The words of Jesus at John 8:32 answered his deep longing for freedom: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." The brothers showed him much love. Today he is a Witness of Jehovah and instrumental in helping many other Vietnamese-speaking people learn the truth that sets one free.

An Aboriginal Responds to the Truth

In northwestern Australia a young pioneer brother and his partner called on an Aboriginal woman in a tribal area called the woolshed. After hearing why they had called, the woman took a key from around her neck and unlocked a large steel chest. Much to their surprise, they saw inside among her few belongings two Watch Tower brochures and an old copy of the Bible. Sitting on the ground, they were able to start a study using one of the brochures. Although the woman neither reads nor writes, she truly valued the brochures she had previously obtained. A regular study is now being conducted, to her delight.

Accidental Telephone Dialing

In the city of Sydney, with a population of three million, a little three-year-old girl was playing with the telephone and dialed a number at random. The number happened to be that of a Witness. A sister answered, and at first she thought the caller was her grandchild. Then she heard an adult's voice. It was the little girl's mother, who apologized for her daughter. A conversation ensued, during which our sister gave a witness. The lady exclaimed: "I was hoping the Witnesses would come to my door again. I want to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses!" She went on to say that just two months previously, she had visited Peru and was impressed by her aunt and family who are now Jehovah's Witnesses. She said: "My relatives' children were little devils, but now they are little angels!" Arrangements were made for a Bible study, and the interested lady continues to make good progress—all because of an accidental telephone call by her little girl.



Scenes From the Promised Land

"WOE TO YOU, CHORAZIN!" —WHY?

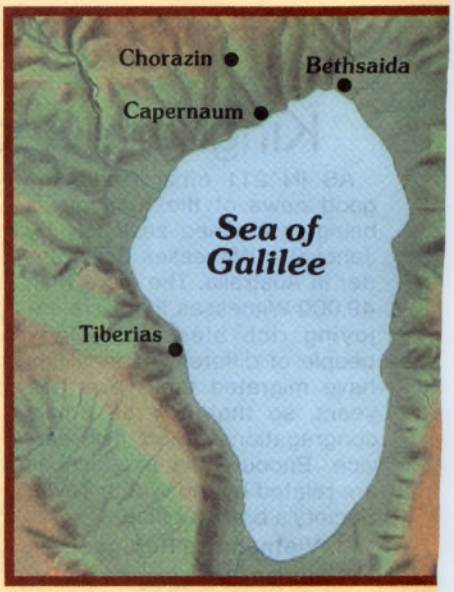
Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

YOU certainly would not want God to pronounce woe on you, would you? Think, then, how the Jews of three Galilean cities should have felt when God's Son and Judge proclaimed:

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! because if the powerful works had taken place in Tyre and Sidon that took place in you, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Consequently I say to you, It will be more endurable for Tyre and Sidon on Judgment Day than for you. And you, Capernaum, . . . down to Hades you will come."—Matthew 11:21-23.

The scene above focuses on one of those cities—Chorazin. This picture also appears for July/August in the *1989 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses*. Interestingly, Jesus' words at Matthew 11:21-23 are in the Bible reading program of Jehovah's Witnesses during August. What, then, should we know about Chorazin?

Well, take note of where ancient Chorazin lay. You can see its ruins in the foreground of this photograph. Next, note the trees on the northern shoreline of the Sea of



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Galilee. That is where Capernaum was, about two miles away. The perspective of this aerial photograph might suggest a rather flat terrain, yet Chorazin is actually situated in hills some 885 feet above the shore.

It also helps to know that at about the same distance from Capernaum, along the shoreline, was Bethsaida. Thus, in reproaching these three cities, Jesus was concentrating on a small area around his center of activity in Galilee. (Matthew 4:13; Mark 2:1; Luke 4:31) Why did Jesus pronounce woe on them?

Jesus spent much time with the apostles in this area, and he performed many powerful works here. Near Bethsaida he miraculously fed over 5,000 people, and he restored sight to a blind man. (Mark 8:22-25; Luke 9:10-17) Among his miracles in or near Capernaum was his curing a sick lad from a distance, healing a demonized man, enabling a paralytic to walk, and resurrecting the daughter of an officer of the synagogue. (Mark 2:1-12; 5:21-43;

Luke 4:31-37; John 4:46-54) While the Bible does not specify for us what "powerful works" are linked with Chorazin, Matthew 11:21 indicates that Jesus performed miracles in or near there. Yet, the people would not repent and put faith in him as the Messiah who had God's backing.

Looking at the accompanying scene of Jesus performing such works, you might ask, 'How could the people of Chorazin be so unresponsive?' Perhaps a clue is to be found among the black basalt stones that archaeologists have unearthed among these ruins, which date from the third century C.E. These remains include a synagogue in the city center and residential areas nearby. Some of the stones from the synagogue had unusual carvings. Of what? Figures from Greek mythology, such as a snake-haired Medusa and a centaur, half man and half horse. Since Judaism should have strongly opposed such idolatrous sculptures, why would Jewish leaders in Chorazin have allowed them on their synagogue?

One theory is that "a liberal attitude might have been traditional in the locality," giving Jesus reason to hope for a good response in the city.* But if these synagogue friezes suggest anything about an attitude in Jesus' day, it could be that the majority in Chorazin were not particularly concerned with worshiping "the Father with spirit and truth." (John 4:23) They showed that by their not accepting the miracle-working Messiah.

When Jesus sent out the 70 disciples, he again used hyperbole involving the unresponsiveness of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. If Jesus' fellow Galileans of Chorazin who were acquainted with his powerful works did not respond favorably, the disciples should not be surprised if inhabitants in some other cities in which they preached did not receive them.—Luke 10:10-15.

So as we contemplate the lifeless black ruins of Chorazin, we should take to heart the warning implicit in Jesus' "woe." Failure to repent, to respond to God's work being done by his people, can lead to debasement and a desolate future.

* *The World of the Bible,* Volume 5, page 44, published by Educational Heritage, Inc., New York, 1959.

ABRAHAM

An example for all who seek God's friendship

"He did not grow weak in faith, . . . being fully convinced that what [God] had promised he was also able to do."—ROMANS 4:19-21.

THE divine word set forth in the Scriptures is "alive and exerts power." (Hebrews 4:12) Thus, the account of Jehovah's dealings with Abraham, though written over 3,500 years ago, is a source of encouragement to all who seek God's friendship. (Romans 15:4) The archenemy, Satan, knows this and has used religious leaders to try to discredit that record as a myth.—2 Corinthians 11: 14, 15.

[2] As part of "all Scripture . . . inspired of God," the history of Abraham is truthful and "beneficial for [Christian] teaching." (2 Timothy 3:16; John 17:17) Jesus' early disciples certainly appreciated this, Abraham being mentioned 74 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. In the faith-inspiring 11th chapter of Hebrews, more space is devoted to him than to any other pre-Christian servant of God.

[3] Abraham was no ordinary "prophet," for Jehovah used him to enact a grand "symbolic drama" in which the patriarch was greatly honored in acting as a prophetic type of God himself. (Genesis 20:7; Galatians 4:21-26) Thus, Jesus spoke of "the bosom position of Abraham" when illustrating a position of favor with God.—Luke 16:22.

1. Why has Satan tried to discredit the record concerning Abraham?
2. What view did Jesus' disciples have of Abraham?

3. How was Abraham greatly honored?

His First Act of Faith

[4] Abram, as he was originally named, was raised in "Ur of the Chaldeans." While he was dwelling there, Jehovah God appeared to him and said: "Go your way out of your country and from your relatives and from the house of your father to the country that I shall show you; and I shall make a great nation out of you and I shall bless you and I will make your name great; and prove yourself a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and him that calls down evil upon you I shall curse, and all the families of the ground will certainly bless themselves by means of you."—Genesis 12:1-3; 15:7; Acts 7:2, 3.

[5] What a challenging call! For Abram, obeying it meant leaving choice surroundings and his relatives for a life far away in a strange land. But Abram's heart was deeply touched by God's loving promise. As a childless old man with a barren wife, his name seemed destined soon to be forgotten. God's promise assured the opposite: "A great nation" would descend from him. Moreover, God's promise included a wonderful declaration of good news for all mankind, pointing forward to a time when all the nations would be blessed. (Galatians 3:8) Abram exercised faith in Jehovah's promise and left a center of advanced civilization. "He went out," the Bible tells us, "although not knowing where he was going."—Hebrews 11:8.

[6] Abram's faith affected others. His household, as well as Terah, his father, and Lot, his nephew, departed with him. However, because Terah was the patriarchal family head, he is credited with making the move. (Genesis 11:31) Worthy of note is the support Abram received from his wife, Sarai, later called Sarah. She put up with a lower standard of living for the rest of her life. (Genesis 13:18; 24:67) Understandably, upon her death, "Abraham came in to bewail Sarah and to weep over her." (Genesis 23:1, 2) Because of her strong faith and wholehearted wifely submission, she is set forth as an example of true spiritual beauty for Christian women. —Hebrews 11:11, 13-15; 1 Peter 3:1-6.

[7] Many Christians today have shown a like faith by volunteering to spread God's message in places where there is a great need for Kingdom preachers and for the construction and operation of new facilities for printing and shipping out Bible literature. (Matthew 24:14) These Christians have shared in obeying the command, "Go . . . make disciples of people of all the nations." In moving to an unknown country, they have often had to adjust to a different standard of living. Others have made notable material sacrifices in order to make disciples in their own area.—Matthew 28:19, 20.

Other Acts of Faith

[8] Abram stopped in the city of Haran until the death of his father, Terah. (Genesis 11:31, 32) Then his household crossed the Euphrates River and headed south. Eventually they reached "the site of Shechem" in the middle of the land of Canaan. What a pleasant sight this must have been! Shechem lies in a fertile valley between two mountain ranges that peak at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. It has

4. According to the Bible, how did God's dealings with Abram begin?
5. (a) How must God's promise have touched Abram's heart? (b) How did Abram respond to the promise?
6. (a) Why does Genesis 11:31 credit Terah with making the move? (Acts 7:2-4) (b) In what ways was Sarah an example for Christian women today?
7. In what ways have Christians today demonstrated a faith like that of Abraham and Sarah?
8. What led to Jehovah's second appearance to Abram?

been described as the "paradise of the Holy Land." Fittingly, Jehovah here reappeared to Abram and said: "To your seed I am going to give this land."—Genesis 12:5-7.

[9] Abram responded with another act of faith. As the account says: "He built an altar there to Jehovah." (Genesis 12:7) Likely, this included offering up an animal sacrifice, for the Hebrew word for "altar" means "place of sacrifice." Later, Abram repeated these acts of faith in other parts of the land. In addition, he 'called on the name of Jehovah.' (Genesis 12:8; 13:18; 21:33) The Hebrew phrase "call on the name" also means "declare (preach) the name." Abram's household as well as the Canaanites must have heard him boldly declare the name of his God, Jehovah. (Genesis 14:22-24) Likewise, all who seek God's friendship today must call upon his name in faith. This would include sharing in public preaching, "always offer[ing] to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name."—Hebrews 13:15; Romans 10:10.

[10] Abram's faith in Jehovah was exercised in many other ways. He made sacrifices for the sake of peace and yet tackled crises with courage. (Genesis 13:7-11; 14:1-16) Though rich, he was not materialistic. (Genesis 14:21-24) Rather, he was hospitable and generously supported Jehovah's worship. (Genesis 14:18-20; 18:1-8) Most important, he was an exemplary family head and followed Jehovah's instruction by commanding his sons and his household after him so that they kept "Jehovah's way to do righteousness." (Genesis 18:19) In this, Abram's household took a course contrasting sharply with that of the Canaanite sex perverts in neighboring Sodom and Gomorrah. Abram would certainly not have tolerated such gross sins in his household. That he presided over his household in a fine manner is reflected in the way members thereof imitated him by calling upon Jehovah's name in faith.—Genesis 16:5, 13; 24:26, 27; 25:21.

9. (a) In what outstanding way did Abram continue to demonstrate faith? (b) What lesson do we learn from this?

10. (a) In what other ways did Abram exercise faith? (b) What example did he set for Christian family heads? (1 Timothy 3:12)

"He Did Not Grow Weak in Faith"

[11] Abram's strong faith helped him endure hardships as he lived for a hundred years among people who claimed the land as their own. (Genesis 12:4; 23:4; 25:7) The Bible says: "He resided as an alien in the land of the promise as in a foreign land, and dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the very same promise. For he was awaiting the city [God's Kingdom] having real foundations, the builder and maker of which city is God. And yet, if [he] had indeed kept remembering that place from which [he] had gone forth, [he] would have had opportunity to return."—Hebrews 11:9, 10, 15; compare Hebrews 12:22, 28.

[12] Abram had not been long in Canaan when a severe famine presented him with an "opportunity to return." Ur, being supplied with the abundant waters of the Euphrates River, was not dependent on direct rainfall. Instead of returning there, however, Abram put faith in Jehovah and headed in the opposite direction—Egypt. That was risky. Having a beautiful wife, the foreigner, Abram, was in danger of his life in that strange land. Nevertheless, he took precautions by asking Sarai to conceal their marriage relationship. Jehovah

11. How was Abram able to endure as "an alien . . . in a foreign land" for a hundred years?

12. What early opportunity did Abram have to return to Ur, and how did he handle the crisis?

blessed Abram for his faith, and soon he was able to return to the Promised Land with greater wealth than ever.—Genesis 12:10–13:2; 20:12.

13 This too formed part of the prophetic drama that Abram unknowingly enacted for our instruction. Sarai, who was still barren, pictured Jehovah's heavenly wife-like organization of loyal angels. This beautiful figurative wife had to wait over 4,000 years before being able to provide the true seed of the Greater Abraham, Jehovah God. The outright persecution of faithful servants of God during all those years of waiting sometimes made it seem as if Jehovah had hidden his husbandly relationship to her.—Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 54:1-8; Galatians 3:16, 27, 29; 4:26.

14 After enduring as an alien for ten years, Abram still had no son as heir. In desperation, Sarai begged him to produce offspring from her slave woman, Hagar. Abram agreed and Ishmael was born. (Genesis 12:4; 16:1-4, 16) But the promised seed of blessing was to come through someone else. In Abram's 100th year, his name was changed to Abraham because, as God said, "father of a crowd of nations I will make you." Sarai's name was changed to Sarah with the promise that she would bear a son.—Genesis 17:1, 5, 15-19.

15 Abraham (and later Sarah) laughed at the thought because both his and Sarah's powers of reproduction had ceased. (Genesis 17:17; 18:9-15) But this was not the laughter of faithless disbelief. As the Bible explains: "He did not grow weak in faith . . . But because of the promise of God he . . . became powerful by his faith, giving God glory and being fully convinced that what he had promised he was also able to do." (Romans 4:18-21) On that same day, Abraham gave proof of his strong faith. As a sign of God's covenant with him, Jehovah told Abraham to get circumcised along with every male in his large household. (Genesis 15:18-21; 17:7-12, 26) How did he react to this painful command? "He went to circumcising the flesh of their foreskins *in this very day,* just as God had spoken with him."—Genesis 17:22-27.

16 Isaac, whose name means "Laughter," was born to Sarah the following year. (Genesis 21:5, 6) Soon the time came for him to be weaned. During the feast, jealous Ishmael persecuted Isaac. At this, Sarah strongly urged Abraham to expel the slave woman, Hagar, and her son from the household. Jehovah God backed up Sarah's request. Though pained, Abraham was prompt to obey. (Genesis 21:8-14) According to Galatians 4:21-30, this pictured how the Greater Abraham would end his relationship with the nation of natural Israel. Like the rest of mankind, they were born as slaves of sin. (Romans 5:12) But they also rejected Jesus Christ, the true Seed of Abraham, who came to set them free. (John 8:34-36; Galatians 3:16) And as Ishmael persecuted Isaac, they persecuted the newly formed Christian congregation of spiritual Israel, who were the secondary part of Abraham's seed.—Matthew 21:43; Luke 3:7-9; Romans 2:28, 29; 8:14-17; 9:6-9; Galatians 3:29.

His Greatest Test of Faith

17 It is unlikely that any human father

13. What is pictured by the barrenness of Sarai and by Abram's hiding his marriage relationship to her?
14. (a) How did Sarai finally react to her barrenness? (b) What happened in Abram's 100th year, and why?
15. (a) Why did Abraham laugh at the thought of Sarah's bearing him a son? (b) What further proof did Abraham give of his strong faith?
16. (a) What happened on the day of Isaac's being weaned? (b) What did the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael picture?
17. How was Abraham's faith next severely tested?

has had more love for a son than the aged Abraham had for Isaac. What a terrible shock it must have been, then, when he received this command: "Take, please, your son, your only son whom you so love, Isaac, and make a trip to the land of Moriah and there offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall designate to you."—Genesis 22:1, 2.

[18] It must have been hard for Abraham to understand the reason for this grievous command. Yet he displayed his usual prompt obedience. (Genesis 22:3) It took him three agonizing days to reach the selected mountain. There he built an altar and placed firewood on top. By this time, he must have explained God's command to Isaac, who could easily have run away. Instead, Isaac permitted his aged father to bind his limbs and lay him upon the altar. (Genesis 22:4-9) To what can we attribute such obedience?

[19] Abraham had faithfully carried out his responsibilities with respect to Isaac, as outlined at Genesis 18:19. No doubt he had impressed upon Isaac Jehovah's purpose to resurrect the dead. (Genesis 12:3; Hebrews 11:17-19) Isaac, for his part, was the object of Abraham's deep love and would have wanted to please his father in everything, especially when it involved doing God's will. What a fine lesson this is for Christian families today!—Ephesians 6:1, 4.

[20] Now came the climax of the test. Abraham took hold of the slaughtering knife. But as he was about to kill his son, Jehovah stopped him and said: "Now I do know that you are God-fearing in that you have not withheld your son, your only one, from me." (Genesis 22:11, 12) How richly Abraham was rewarded by hearing God's own declaration of his righteousness! He could now feel sure of having measured up to what God requires of an imperfect human. More important, Jehovah's prior estimation of his faith was vindicated. (Genesis 15:5, 6) After this, Abraham sacrificed a ram that was miraculously provided to replace Isaac. Then he heard Jehovah confirm, by sworn oath, the covenant promises. Later, he became known as Jehovah's friend.—Genesis 22:13-18; James 2:21-23.

[21] Abraham's sacrifice was "illustrative." (Hebrews 11:19) It typified the painful, costly sacrifice Jehovah God made when he sent his beloved Son to earth to die as "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) And Isaac's willingness to die illustrates how the Greater Isaac, Jesus Christ, lovingly submitted to the doing of his heavenly Father's will. (Luke 22:41, 42; John 8:

18. How did Abraham respond to Jehovah's command to sacrifice Isaac?
19. (a) To what can we attribute Isaac's courageous submission? (b) How is the relationship between Abraham and Isaac a lesson for Christian families today?
20. How did Abraham obey, and with what reward?
21. What prophetic illustration was here provided, and what should it encourage us to seek?

Questions for Review

- ☐ How was the faith of Abraham and his kinsfolk tested?
- ☐ How have Christians today shown a like faith?
- ☐ In what other ways did Abraham exercise faith?
- ☐ How are Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac examples for Christian families?
- ☐ What was illustrated by Abraham's greatest act of faith?

28, 29) Finally, just as Abraham received his son alive from the altar, Jehovah received his beloved Son back from the dead as a glorious spirit creature. (John 3:16; 1 Peter 3:18) How encouraging all of this is for seekers of God's friendship today!

[22] By exercising faith in this unsurpassed act of love on the part of the Greater Abraham, Jehovah God, a select group of humans have been declared righteous as sons of God. (Romans 5:1; 8:15-17) Taken first from Jews and then from Gentiles, these have indeed been blessed by means of the Seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:25, 26; Galatians 3:8, 16) In turn, they form the secondary part of Abraham's seed. (Galatians 3:29) Such ones finally number 144,000 and, like Jesus, are resurrected to heavenly life after proving themselves faithful to death.—Romans 6:5; Revelation 2:10; 14:1-3.

22. How have a select group of humans benefited from the unsurpassed love of God?

[23] Meanwhile, millions from all nations are 'blessing themselves' by their response to the loving ministry of the small remnant of Abraham's seed. (Genesis 22:18) They have been thrilled to learn how sinful humans can be declared righteous as friends of God. As a result, "a great crowd . . . out of all nations" are enjoying God's favor, having "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." With the remnant taking the lead, they too render God "sacred service day and night." Set before this great crowd is the marvelous hope of everlasting life in Paradise as earthly "children of God." (Revelation 7:9-17; 21:3-5; Romans 8:21; Psalm 37:29) However, before such blessings become a reality, events of greater importance must take place, as we shall learn in the next article.

23. (a) How are millions already being blessed through the remnant of Abraham's seed? (2 Corinthians 5:20) (b) What further blessings lie ahead for the "great crowd"?

A MARRIAGE THAT BENEFITS MILLIONS NOW LIVING

"Jehovah our God, the Almighty, has begun to rule as king. . . . Let us give him the glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has arrived and his wife has prepared herself."—REVELATION 19:6, 7.

THESE thrilling words form part of a prophetic song of victory. When will it start to be sung? After the destruction of the age-old enemy of Jehovah's worship—"Babylon the Great," the symbolic "great harlot" who represents all forms of false religion. Judgment must be executed upon her because of the way she has misrepresented God. How she has misled mankind by her involvement in politics, her materialistic greed, and her murderous hatred of Jehovah's true worshipers!—Revelation 17:1-6; 18:23, 24; 19:1, 2; James 4:4.

1. When will the prophetic song of Revelation 19:6-8 start to be sung, and why?

[2] Soon, Jehovah God will put it into the hearts of the world's political leaders to destroy her. (Revelation 17:12, 16, 17) But

2. (a) How will Jehovah bring about the destruction of Babylon the Great? (b) Instead of praising Jehovah, what will the destroyers of false religion do?

the destroyers of false religion will not join in singing the grand victory song. Instead, under the influence of Satan, alias Gog, they will attack the practicers of true religion, who live at peace and keep themselves separate from the badness of this world.—Isaiah 2:2-4; Ezekiel 38:2, 8-12; John 17:14; James 1:27.

[3] This God-defying attack by the political rulers will result in the battle of Armageddon, which will bring a complete end to the antireligious nations. Next, the wicked influence of Satan and his demons will be removed from the earth. (Revelation 16:14, 16; 19:11-21; 20:1, 2) With hearts filled with gratitude, all surviving humans will join the heavenly chorus: "Praise Jah, you people, because Jehovah our God, the Almighty, has begun to rule as king." (Revelation 19:6) Indeed, such world-shaking events will signal the start of a new epoch. Jehovah will have vindicated his sovereignty and removed from the earth all who challenge his rulership. At last the time will have come for the heavenly marriage. As the prophetic song continues: "Let us rejoice and be overjoyed, and let us give [Jehovah] the glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has arrived and his wife has prepared herself." —Revelation 19:7, 8.

3. For what reasons will Jehovah's human servants join in the heavenly song?

[4] The Lamb is none other than the glorified Jesus Christ, and his "wife" is the complete number of his 144,000 faithful anointed followers now united with him in heaven. Together these heavenly marriage partners make up the full membership of God's Kingdom, which will uplift mankind, including the resurrected dead, to human perfection. (Revelation 5:8-10; 14:1-4; 20:4, 12, 13; 21:3-5, 9, 10; 22:1-3) Will the events leading up to that blessed marriage turn out successful? How may you benefit from that marriage? To find the answers to those questions, let us examine events surrounding Isaac's marriage, as recorded at Genesis chapter 24.

4. (a) Who are pictured by the Lamb and his "wife"? (b) What questions are here asked, and how can we get the answers?

A Divinely Selected Bride for Isaac

[5] The account begins with Abraham's giving instructions to his household manager, evidently Eliezer. (Genesis 15:2; 24:2) "I must have you swear by Jehovah," said Abraham, "that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites in among whom I am dwelling, but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and you will certainly take a wife for my son, for Isaac."—Genesis 24: 3, 4.

[6] Why was Abraham so insistent that his son should not marry a Canaanite? Because the Canaanites were descendants of Canaan, who was cursed by Noah. (Genesis 9:25) Moreover, the Canaanites were known for their depraved practices, and most important, they did not worship Jehovah. (Genesis 13:13; Leviticus 18:3, 17-28) Understandably, Abraham wanted his son to marry someone from his own family, descendants of Shem, who had received Noah's inspired blessing. (Genesis 9:26) What fine guidance this is for Christians who choose to marry today! —Deuteronomy 7:3, 4.

[7] So Eliezer set out on a journey of more than 500 miles to Mesopotamia. He went well-prepared, with ten camels loaded with gifts. (Genesis 24:10) In addition, he could ponder over these faith-strengthening words of his master: "Jehovah the God of the heavens . . . will send his angel ahead of you, and you will certainly take a wife for my son from there." —Genesis 24:7.

[8] Eventually, he reached the city of Nahor in northern Mesopotamia. Eliezer let the tired camels kneel for a rest at a well outside the city. It was the time of day when women fetched water—a fine opportunity, indeed, for Eliezer to look for a potential bride! But what kind of woman should she be? The prettiest? No. Eliezer was primarily interested in a woman with a godly personality. This was revealed by the humble prayer of faith that he now uttered: "Jehovah the God of my master Abraham, cause it to happen, please, before me this day and perform loving-kindness with my master Abraham. Here I am stationed at a fountain of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. What must occur is that the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Let your water jar down, please, that I may take a drink,' and who will indeed say, 'Take a drink, and I shall also water your camels,' this is the one you must assign to your servant, to Isaac; and by this let me know that you have performed loyal love with my master."—Genesis 24:11-14.

[9] That was indeed a good test. According to *The New Encyclopædia Britannica,* an extremely thirsty camel can drink '25 gallons of water in 10 minutes.' It may be that Abraham's camels were not that thirsty, but the women of that time undoubtedly knew the animal's capacity for water. Certainly, it would take a very kind, unselfish, industrious woman to volunteer to fetch water for ten tired camels belonging to a stranger.

[10] Even before Eliezer had completed his prayer, it was answered, as the account states: "Here coming out was Rebekah . . . Now the young woman was very attractive in appearance, a virgin, and no man had had sexual intercourse with her; and she made her way down to the fountain and

5, 6. Why was Abraham insistent that Isaac not marry a Canaanite, and for whom is this fine guidance today? (1 Corinthians 7:39)

7. How did Abraham prepare Eliezer for his assignment?

8, 9. (a) What happened when Eliezer reached the city of Nahor? (b) By what test would a suitable bride be selected?

10, 11. (a) In what remarkable way was Eliezer's prayer answered? (b) How did Rebekah show desirable qualities? (c) How did Eliezer react?

began to fill her water jar and then came up. At once the servant ran to meet her and said: 'Give me, please, a little sip of water from your jar.' In turn she said: 'Drink, my lord.' With that she quickly lowered her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. When she was finished giving him a drink, then she said: 'For your camels too I shall draw water *until they are done drinking.*' So she quickly emptied her jar into the drinking trough *and ran yet again and again* to the well to draw water, and kept drawing for all his camels."—Genesis 24:15-20.

[11] Eliezer 'gazed in wonder' as he observed this miraculous answer to his prayer. When the praiseworthy virgin had finished, he rewarded her with a gold nose ring and two gold bracelets and asked: "Whose daughter are you?" On finding out that she was Abraham's grandniece, Eliezer bowed down to Jehovah in reverential worship, saying: "Blessed be Jehovah the God of my master Abraham, who has not left his loving-kindness and his trustworthiness toward my master. I being on the way, Jehovah has led me to the house of the brothers of my master."—Genesis 24:21-27.

[12] Rebekah excitedly ran home to tell her family. Later, when Rebekah's father and brother heard from Eliezer's own mouth the purpose of his journey and how Jehovah had answered his prayer, they agreed without hesitation that Rebekah should become Isaac's wife. "And it came about that when Abraham's servant had heard their words, he at once prostrated himself on the earth before Jehovah. And the servant began to bring out articles of silver and articles of gold and garments and to give them to Rebekah; and he gave choice things to her brother and to her mother."—Genesis 24:52, 53.

12. How was the matter consummated at Rebekah's home?

The Response of the Bride and Her Attendants

[13] How did Rebekah view the privilege of being divinely selected as Isaac's bride? The next day something happened to reveal her true inward feelings. Having accomplished the purpose of his journey, Eliezer desired to return to his master without delay. But Rebekah's family wanted the bride to stay with them at least ten days. So it was put to Rebekah to decide if she was prepared to leave immediately. "I am willing to go," she said. Agreeing to leave her family immediately and to journey to a distant country in order to marry a man she had never seen was an outstanding demonstration of faith in Jehovah's direction. It confirmed that she was the right choice.—Genesis 24:54-58.

[14] Rebekah had company on her journey. As the account explains: "Rebekah and her lady attendants rose and they went riding on the camels." (Genesis 24:61) So the camel train set out on a dangerous journey of more than 500 miles through foreign territory. "The average speed of laden

13. How was Jehovah's choice confirmed as being the right one?

14. (a) By whom was Rebekah accompanied? (b) What kind of journey did they face?

In Our Next Issue

- **Work That Can Make You Happy**
- **Live a Balanced, Simple Life**
- **'But I Do Not Love Jehovah!'**

camels," states the book *The Living World of Animals,* "is about 2.5 m[iles] p[er] h[our]." If Abraham's camels went at that speed for eight hours a day, it would have taken over 25 days to reach their destination in the Negeb.

15 Eliezer, Rebekah, and her lady attendants trusted fully in Jehovah's direction, a fine example for Christians today! (Proverbs 3:5, 6) In addition, the account is a faith-strengthening prophetic drama. As we have seen, Abraham typifies Jehovah God, who offered up his beloved Son, the Greater Isaac, so that sinful men might gain everlasting life. (John 3:16) The preparation for Isaac's marriage came some time after he had been spared from death on the altar of sacrifice. It was prophetic of the preparation for the heavenly marriage, which preparation began in earnest after Jesus' resurrection.

The Marriage of the Greater Isaac

16 Eliezer's name means "My God Is Helper." In name and deed, he fittingly pictures the holy spirit of the Greater Abraham, Jehovah God, which He sent to this distant land, our earth, to select a suitable bride for the Greater Isaac, Jesus Christ. (John 14:26; 15:26) The bride class is "the congregation," made up of disciples of Jesus who have been begotten by holy spirit as spiritual sons of God. (Ephesians 5:25-27; Romans 8:15-17) Just as Rebekah received expensive gifts, so the initial members of the Christian congregation on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E. received miraculous gifts in proof of their divine calling. (Acts 2:1-4) Like Rebekah, they have willingly forsaken all worldly and fleshly relationships in order eventually to be united with their heavenly Bridegroom. From the time individual members of the bride class are called until their death, they must guard their spiritual virginity while journeying through Satan's dangerous, seductive world. (John 15:18, 19; 2 Corinthians 11:3; James 4:4) Filled with holy spirit, the bride class faithfully invites others to partake of Jehovah's provisions for salvation. (Revelation 22:17) Do you follow her example by also responding to the spirit's direction?

17 The bride class highly values what is pictured by the ten camels. The number ten is used in the Bible to denote perfection or completeness as related to things on earth. The ten camels may be compared to the complete and perfect Word of God, by means of which the bride class receives spiritual sustenance and spiritual gifts. (John 17:17; Ephesians 1:13, 14; 1 John 2:5) Commenting on Rebekah's watering of the camels, *The Watchtower* of November 1, 1948, made this application to the bride class: "They lovingly consider the Word of God which bears much of his spirit to them. They take an interest in his written Word, serving it and freshening it up by attending upon it and displaying a sincere concern for its message and purpose, seeking to believe it." As an example of this, the remnant of the bride class has lovingly made available to millions the fresh, up-to-date *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.* Whether this fine translation is available in your language or not, do you show appreciation by regularly examining the Bible along with study aids provided by the bride class? —2 Timothy 3:16.

15. (a) What fine example do we see in Eliezer, Rebekah, and her attendants? (b) What does the account foreshadow?

16. (a) How, fittingly, does Abraham's servant picture God's holy spirit? (b) What question may be asked respecting the spirit and the bride?

17. (a) What do the ten camels picture? (b) What should be our attitude toward the Bible and toward Bible-based publications prepared by the bride class? (Acts 17:11)

The Lamb's Marriage Draws Near

[18] In these last days of Satan's world, the remnant of the bride class has been joined by "a great crowd," comparable to Rebekah's "lady attendants." As in the case of Rebekah, these far outnumber the numerically complete bride class of 144,000. They are the "great crowd" of Jesus Christ's "other sheep." (Revelation 7:4, 9; John 10:16) As loyal attendants of the bride, they must also keep free from contamination by Satan's wicked world. They too must respond to the leadings of Jehovah's spirit and his Word as it is explained to them by the bride class. But their reward is different. If they endure in loyal support of Christ's bride, they will survive the end of Satan's world and have the wonderful opportunity of living forever in an earthly paradise.—Revelation 21:3, 4.

[19] Did Rebekah and her "lady attendants" successfully reach their goal? Yes. As the Bible reports: "And Isaac was out walking in order to meditate in the field at about the falling of evening. When he raised his eyes and looked, why, there camels were coming! When Rebekah raised her eyes, she caught sight of Isaac and she swung herself down from off the camel." After Eliezer had explained his successful mission, Isaac accepted Rebekah as his wife and "fell in love with her." —Genesis 24:63-67.

[20] Likewise, Jehovah's purpose respecting the bride of Christ cannot fail. (Isaiah 55:11) Soon, with Babylon the Great judged and destroyed, the last ones of the bridal remnant will complete their journey. The time will have come for them to be separated from their companion attendants and united in marriage to the Greater Isaac in heaven. What a grand occasion of universal rejoicing that will be! —Revelation 19:6-8.

[21] Meanwhile, millions are blessing themselves by responding to the ministry of the dwindling bridal remnant. Before all of them finish their earthly course in death, the devastating of the harlotlike world empire of false religion will mark the start of "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning." The time left is short. If you want to survive, how important it is to share in carrying out the divine commands! (Matthew 24:14, 21; Mark 13:10; Luke 21:15; John 13:34) Such commands have special application in our critical times. So, whether of the bridal remnant or of her "great crowd" of attendants, continue to obey Jehovah to his glory and your own everlasting happiness. How grand it will be for the great crowd, already counted as friends of God, to keep on living as Jehovah 'makes all things new' and lasting benefits flow to millions in a paradise earth!—Revelation 21:5; 22:1, 2, 17.

18. Why do Rebekah's attendants fittingly picture companions of the bride today?
19. What happened when Rebekah and her attendants reached journey's end?
20. What occasion for rejoicing is foreshadowed by Isaac's marriage?
21. As the climax of the heavenly marriage draws near, what should all of us be doing?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ What thrilling events must shortly take place?
- ☐ What guarantees that the heavenly marriage will be a complete success?
- ☐ To what may Eliezer and the ten camels be compared?
- ☐ Who today parallel Rebekah and her lady attendants?
- ☐ What do we learn from events leading up to Isaac's marriage?

Questions From Readers

■ **Is there a minimum age for a Christian man to be recommended as a ministerial servant in the congregation?**

No, the Bible does not set any minimum age.

In ancient Israel, God did specify ages in some cases. Males registered for military service had to be 20 years old; mere boys were not sent to battle, as occurs in places today. Age was also a factor for Levites. The Kohathites serving at the tabernacle were to be from 30 to 50 years of age. Why? This limitation was mentioned in connection with "the laborious service and the service of carrying loads in the tent of meeting." (Numbers 4:3, 47) It seems that Levites could begin doing *lighter* tasks at 25, but they had to be 30 before sharing in the heavier tasks and more responsible privileges of dismantling, hauling, and assembling the tabernacle. (Numbers 8:24-26) Such heavy work would not be needed later at the temple, so Levites then began serving at the age of 20.—1 Chronicles 23:24.

But when Jehovah ceased using fleshly Israel and began to use spiritual Israel, did he stipulate a minimum age for ministerial servants (deacons) in the Christian congregation?

One might think so, based on the record of later centuries. In the Roman Catholic Church, a deacon is "an ordained minister, immediately below the rank of priest, in the divinely instituted hierarchy of orders in the Church." Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church* observes: "Bishops and presbyters [elders] . . . might not ordinarily be ordained before thirty; but deacons were allowed to be ordained at twenty-five, and not before. This is the term fixed both by the civil and canon law . . . We scarce meet with an instance of any one that was ordained before the age of twenty-five, in all the history of the Church."

What, though, are the qualifications found in the Bible? The only ones given are those mentioned at 1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12, 13: "Ministerial servants should likewise be serious, not double-tongued, not giving themselves to a lot of wine, not greedy of dishonest gain, holding the sacred secret of the faith with a clean conscience. Also, let these be tested as to fitness first, then let them serve as ministers, as they are free from accusation. Let ministerial servants be husbands of one wife, presiding in a fine manner over children and their own households. For the men who minister in a fine manner are acquiring for themselves a fine standing and great freeness of speech in the faith in connection with Christ Jesus."

We can see here that no minimum age for appointment as a ministerial servant is stipulated. So when the elders meet to discuss the qualifications of males in the congregation, they can bear in mind that there is no Biblical basis for requiring that a Christian man be 20, 25, or 30 years of age before he can be recommended and serve. The Bible refers to those who hold this office as being "men who minister," so we would hardly expect them to be in their early or middle teenage years. Bearing this out, the Bible says that such ministerial servants might be married and have children themselves.

Furthermore, men recommended as ministerial servants should have been "tested as to fitness," giving evidence of having a sense of responsibility. That is not to say that they serve a probational term. Rather, they must have shown Christian maturity over a reasonable period of time (having been baptized at least one year), being men who are willing and able to attend to matters assigned to them. If a "serious" young man demonstrates these qualities, and he is humble and meets the other qualifications, the elders might recommend him for appointment even if he is not yet 20 years old. Other men may be much older when they show clearly that they meet the qualifications for 'ministering in a fine manner, acquiring for themselves a fine standing and great freeness of speech.'

The True Lord Comes for Judgment

Lessons From the Scriptures: Malachi 1:1–4:6

"IT IS of no value to serve God." (Malachi 3:14) Such skepticism was voiced by God's own people when Malachi prophesied in the fifth century B.C.E. Why? Because deplorable conditions existed in Judah, especially among the priests. Selfish gain was their primary objective. In a direct and forceful manner, Malachi exposed those hypocritical religious leaders and warned that the true Lord was coming for judgment.—Malachi 1:6-8; 2:6-9; 3:1.

Malachi's prophecy has a fulfillment in our own day. Therefore, we do well to consider the lessons it contains.

Despising God's Name

Jehovah expects his people to offer him their best. God first expresses his love for his people. Nevertheless, the priests are despising his name by accepting from the people blind, sick, and lame animals for sacrifice. Jehovah has no delight in the self-serving priests or in the inferior offerings of their hands. But regardless of what they do, Jehovah's "name will be fear-inspiring among the nations."—1:1-14.

Those who are teachers have a heavy responsibility. (James 3:1) The priests

BIBLE TEXTS EXAMINED

o 1:10—The selfish, money-hungry priests were serving for personal gain. They demanded a fee for the simplest of temple services, such as shutting doors or lighting altar fires. No wonder Jehovah 'took no pleasure in offerings from their hands'!

o 1:13—The faithless priests had come to view the sacrifices as a tiresome ceremony, a burden. They sniffed at, or scorned, Jehovah's sacred things. Never should we allow "the young bulls of our lips" to be offered as a mere formality!—Hosea 14:2; Hebrews 13:15.

o 2:13—Many Jewish husbands were divorcing the wives of their youth, perhaps in order to marry younger pagan women. The altar of Jehovah became covered with tears —evidently those of the rejected wives who came to the sanctuary to pour out their grief before God.—Malachi 2:11, 14, 16.

o 3:1—"The true Lord" is Jehovah God, and "the messenger of the covenant" is Jesus Christ. The initial fulfillment of the prophecy took place when Jesus cleansed the temple. (Mark 11:15-17) This was three and a half years after he was anointed as King-Designate. Similarly, three and a half years after Jesus was enthroned as King in the autumn of 1914, he accompanied Jehovah to the spiritual temple and found God's people in need of refining and cleansing.

o 3:2, 3—The ancient process of refining took time. Therefore, the refiner would often "sit," waiting until the liquid metal reflected like a highly polished mirror and he could see his image in it. Similarly, Jehovah has continued to refine his people today, clearing away unclean teachings and practices. This has helped them to reflect more accurately his image.—Ephesians 5:1.

o 4:2—This is a description of the future blessings to be enjoyed by those in fear of God's name. They have the prospect of basking in the sunshine of God's favor when the physical, mental, and emotional ailments that have plagued the human family have been healed.—Revelation 21:3, 4.

o 4:5—The prophet Elijah lived some 500 years before this prophecy was given. In the first century C.E., Jesus Christ identified John the Baptizer as the foretold counterpart of Elijah. (Matthew 11:12-14; Mark 9: 11-13) However, "Elijah" was to be the forerunner of the "day of Jehovah," indicating a further fulfillment in this time of Christ's "presence."—2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2.

have "caused many to stumble in the law." How so? By failing to instruct the people in God's law and by showing partiality. Jehovah is rightly angry with them, "for the lips of a priest are the ones that should keep knowledge, and the law is what people should seek from his mouth."—2:1-9.

Jehovah does not view lightly those who show disregard for the marital arrangement. Contrary to God's law, the men of Judah have taken foreign wives. (Deuteronomy 7:3, 4) They have dealt treacherously with the wives of their youth by divorcing them. Jehovah "has hated a divorcing," Malachi warns.—2:10-17.

Judgment and Refining

Jehovah does not forever tolerate wrongdoing. "The true Lord" will come to his temple, accompanied by "the messenger of the covenant." He will refine and cleanse the sons of Levi. Jehovah will become a speedy witness against sorcerers, adulterers, those swearing falsely, defrauders, and oppressors.—3:1-5.

Those who withhold their offerings from Jehovah are impoverishing themselves. Jehovah is unchanging. If the wayward people return to him, he will mercifully return to them. They have been robbing God by withholding the tithes and the contributions. But if they bring in the tenth parts, Jehovah promises a blessing "until there is no more want." They will experience unfailing fruitage.—3:6-12.

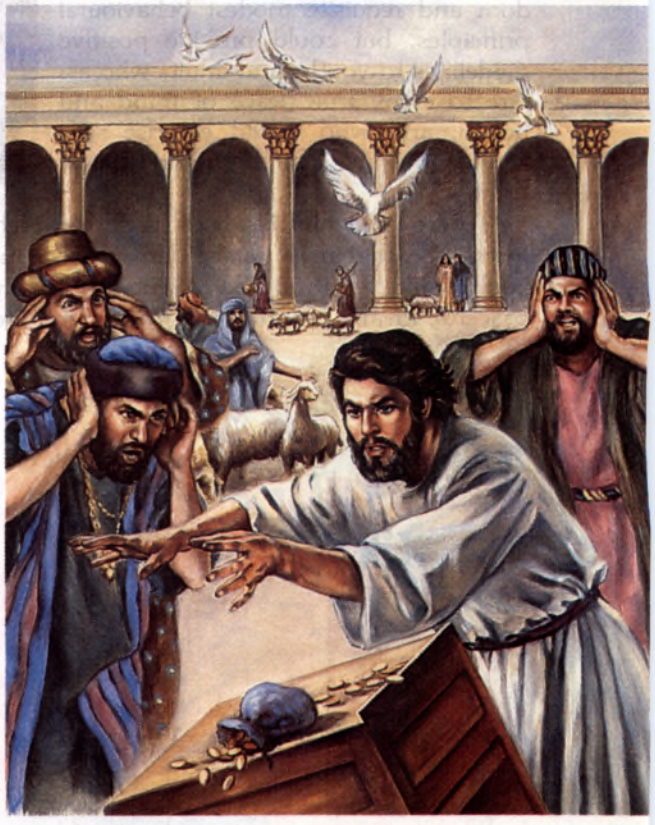
Jehovah's eyes are upon his people. God takes issue with those who have spoken strong words against him. In contrast, he pays close attention to those in fear of him. "A book of remembrance" will be written for "those thinking upon his name." His people will see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked.—3:13-18.

The Day of Jehovah Is Coming!

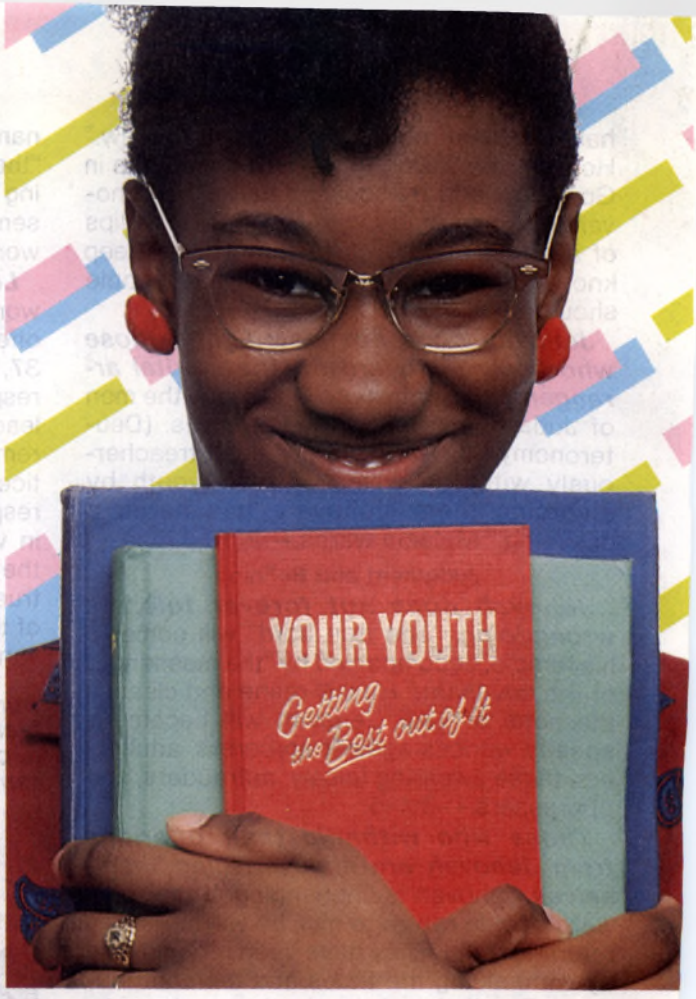
Jehovah's day will mean complete destruction for the wicked. Jehovah's day is coming, and the wicked will be consumed like stubble in a burning furnace. They will be devoured, leaving 'neither root nor bough.' As for those in fear of Jehovah's name, they will enjoy the healing benefits of "the sun of righteousness." Before the coming of this fear-inspiring day, Jehovah will send Elijah the prophet to do a restoration work.—4:1-6.

Lessons for today: When it comes to worship, Jehovah requires that his people offer him their best. (Compare Matthew 22: 37, 38.) Teachers of God's Word have a responsibility to instruct properly and to lead others in true worship. We do well to remember that the eyes of the God of justice are upon those who fail to show proper respect for marriage and those who engage in wrongdoing. May we humbly submit to the refining and cleansing process of the true Lord as we eagerly await "the coming of the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah"!

During his earthly ministry, Jesus cleansed the temple. In 1918 he accompanied Jehovah to the spiritual temple to cleanse God's people



'BASIC MORAL INSTRUCTION'



A 14-year-old girl from Nigeria, West Africa, is grateful to receive such instruction from the book *Your Youth —Getting the Best out of It*. She writes:

"This book is a most helpful, truthful, marvelous and delightful masterpiece. It will surely be of immense assistance to anyone who is inclined to be guided amicably through all those prevailing sinful oddities in life.

"I have introduced this book to my schoolmates and neighbours. Everyone who reads it commends your profound 'knowledge-building' illustrations and the topics discussed in the book. We opine that the facts portrayed in the book would not only enlighten or impart wisdom and requisite modest behavioural principles, but could provide positive guidelines to youths and adults who aspire to enjoy true peace of mind and health, and who would exercise self-control and show strength for what is right. . . .

"To crown it all, this book is so comprehensive and overstuffed with basic sexual moral instruction that may not be derived from most parents or teachers . . . How I wish that the book would be introduced to schools for daily class lessons, with a view to establishing a more peaceful, lovable, fruitful and meaningful life-style."