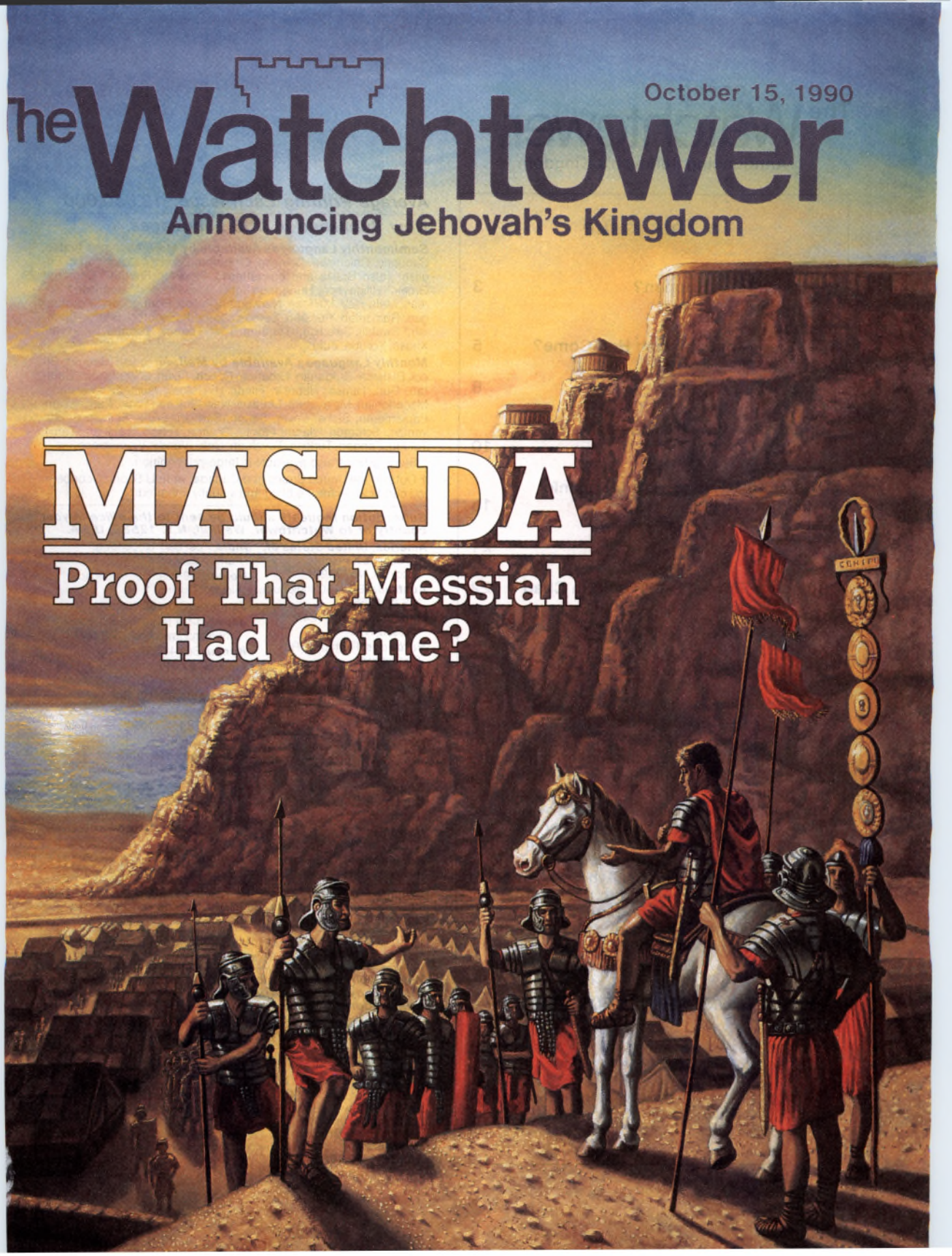
October 15, 1990

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



MASADA

Proof That Messiah Had Come?

The Watchtower®
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

October 15, 1990
Vol. 111, No. 20

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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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MASADA
Why Did It Happen?

"LONG since, my brave companions, we determined to serve neither the Romans nor anyone else but only God . . . Come, while our hands are free to hold the sword . . . Let us die before we become slaves under our enemies, and leave this life together as free men with our children and wives!"

This desperate exhortation reportedly was given by Eleazar, son of Jair (or Ben Ya'ir), to the defenders of Masada. It was recorded by the first-century historian Josephus in his work *The Jewish War*. Why did that Jewish leader urge his companions to commit mass murder and suicide, contrary to God's law? (Exodus 20:13) More important, how can a knowledge of the circumstances help you survive in today's violent world?

The Dagger Men of Masada

Prior to the outbreak of the Jewish revolt in 66 C.E., a Roman garrison was stationed at Masada, a fortified hilltop near the Dead Sea. Although Masada was in an isolated spot, Herod the Great had had a beautiful winter palace constructed there. He had a water system built so that even hot baths could be enjoyed. More critically, though, under Roman occupation the fortress housed a large cache of arms. When sentiments against the Roman occupiers of Palestine ran high, the arms were in danger of falling into the hands of Jewish revolutionaries. One such group was the Sicarii, meaning "dagger men," mentioned in the Bible as being involved in an uprising.—Acts 21:38.

A Jewish coin of 67 C.E., mentioning "Year 2" of the war with Rome

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

In 66 C.E. the dagger men captured Masada. With their newly acquired weapons, they marched to Jerusalem in support of the revolt against Roman rule. The Jewish revolutionaries' massacre of Roman garrisons at both Masada and Jerusalem brought upon their countrymen the wrath of the Roman Empire. Before 66 C.E. ended, the Roman Twelfth Legion under Cestius Gallus marched into Judea and encamped outside Jerusalem. The Romans attacked the city from all sides and went so far as to undermine the northern foundations of the temple. Suddenly Gallus withdrew his troops and for no clear reason left Judea. "If only he had persevered with the siege a little longer he would have captured the City at once," wrote eyewitness Josephus.

But the Romans were not finished. Four years later the Roman general Titus marched to Jerusalem with four legions.* This time the entire city was destroyed, and Judea was brought back under the iron rule of Rome. All except Masada.

Determined to crush this last pocket of resistance, the Romans encircled the fortress with a thick stone wall and eight stone-walled camps. They eventually built a ramp of earth leading to the top—a man-made incline stretching 645 feet and rising 180 feet! Upon it they built a tower and positioned a battering ram for breaching Masada's wall. It was only a matter of time before the Roman army would flood through and capture this last Judean fortress!

Today the clear outline of the Roman camps, the encircling siege wall, and the vast ramp testify to how the Jewish revolt ended. An intensive archaeological excavation of Masada was completed in 1965. Commenting on the finds, *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* (1987) states: "The descriptions of the Roman-Jewish historian Josephus, until then the only detailed source of Masada's history, were found to be extremely accurate."

But with the Romans about to break through the walls, how did the dagger men react to the suicide speech of Eleazar, son of Jair? Josephus records: "One and all disposed of their families; . . . then, having chosen ten men by lot to be the executioners of the rest, each laid himself down beside his wife and children, and, flinging their arms around them, exposed their throats to those who had to perform the painful office.* The latter unflinchingly slaughtered them all, then followed the same mode for each other, . . . but an old woman, along with another . . . escaped . . . The victims numbered nine hundred and sixty, including the women and children."

Why did the Jewish revolt end so tragically? Did it have something to do with the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth?

* At Masada, archaeologists found hundreds of coins with Hebrew inscriptions celebrating the revolt, such as "For the freedom of Zion" and "Jerusalem the Holy." Dr. Yigael Yadin in his book *Masada* explains: "The shekels in our finds represent all the years of the revolt, from the year one to the very rare year five, the last year the shekel was struck, corresponding to the year 70 AD when the Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed." Note the coin above.

* At a strategic spot near one of Masada's gates, 11 fragments of pottery were found, with a short Hebrew nickname written on each. Several scholars suggest that these may be the lots referred to by Josephus. Inscribed on one was "Ben Ya'ir," meaning "son of Jairus." "Yadin's discovery of lots, including one with the name Ben Jair on it, is uncanny confirmation of Josephus' account," states Louis Feldman in *Josephus and Modern Scholarship.*

MASADA
Proof That Messiah Had Come?

BLOODSHED in the name of religion has been a recurring plague in history. Masada was no exception, for its defenders had strong religious motivations. If you visit the excavations at Masada, you can see the ruins of a synagogue where the dagger men met for worship and the ritual baths used for religious cleansing.

Fragments of the Bible have also been found at Masada. How, you may wonder, did the Biblical message available to the dagger men compare with what we read in the Bible today? Dr. Yigael Yadin, in his book *Masada,* wrote about the first such discovery:

"A quick examination on the spot showed us immediately that here was a fragment from the *Book of Psalms,* and we could even identify the chapters: the section ran Psalm 81 to Psalm 85. . . . It was possible to date it without the slightest doubt. It could not possibly be later than the year 73 AD, the year Masada fell. . . . This section from the *Book of Psalms,* like the other biblical scrolls which we found later, is almost exactly identical . . . to the text of the biblical books which we use today."

Evidently, the dagger men believed that the Divine Author of the Hebrew Scriptures would bless their uprising against Rome. As *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* explains: "The fanatic zeal of the Jews in the Great War against Rome (66-73 C.E.) was strengthened by their belief that the Messianic era was near at hand. The loss of the Temple only increased the speculations as to the coming of the Messiah."

The Coming of the Messiah

"Jewish messianic enthusiasts," states *The Encyclopedia of Religion,* "would often base their calculations on the *Book of Daniel.*" True, the Hebrew prophet Daniel foretold the coming of "Messiah the Leader." (Daniel 9:25) In two other accounts, Daniel said that the Messiah would become Ruler of the world and that His Kingdom would destroy all opposing human governments.—Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14.

First-century Jewish revolutionaries felt that the time had arrived for the fulfillment of these prophetic visions. "What more than all else incited them to the war," states Josephus, "was [the belief] that at that time one from their country would become ruler of the world." But Daniel foretold that the Messianic Leader must first be "cut off" and that after his death Jerusalem and its temple would be brought to ruin by 'the people of another leader who was coming.'—Daniel 9:25, 26.

Jewish Views of Gentile Rule

First-century Judea was divided between a few rich and many poor. Some rich Jews, especially among the Sadducees and Pharisees, treasured the authority that Rome allowed them to have in the land, and they despised the common

people. Thus, they opposed any thought of revolution, working instead for peaceful relations with Rome.—Luke 16:14; 19: 45, 46; John 2:14; 7:47-49; 11:47, 48.

On the other hand, ordinary Judeans suffered under the burden of Roman taxation and their own oppressive countrymen. They took no comfort in being under the so-called *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace) but wanted a change. This conflict of interests resulted in terrible civil strife. "One group was bent on domination," wrote Josephus, "the other on violence and on robbing the rich."

The dagger men, for example, plundered and killed fellow Jews and justified these terrorist acts as punishment of Jews who supposedly collaborated with Rome. A second-century rabbi, Johanan ben Torta, gave this reason for the calamity that came upon first-century Jews: "They lusted after money and hated one another."

It is no wonder that those Jews who were truly God-fearing longed for the appearance of the Messiah, who they hoped would overthrow Roman rule and establish a just Kingdom of God. But unscrupulous men played on these hopes.

False Messiahs

About the year 33 C.E., a Jewish leader named Gamaliel reminded fellow rulers of Jerusalem: "Before these days . . . Judas the Galilean rose in the days of the registration, and he drew off people after him. And yet that man perished, and all those who were obeying him were scattered abroad."—Acts 5:36, 37.

"The registration" that resulted in Judas' uprising was organized in 6 C.E. for the purpose of raising taxes for Rome. Josephus tells us that Judas proclaimed that the Jews "were cowards if they submitted to paying taxes to the Romans." The name Judas comes from the name Judah, suggesting that he belonged to the tribe from whom the Messiah was expected. (Genesis 49:10) "His fiery eloquence and the popularity of his doctrines drew vast numbers to his standard, by many of whom he was regarded as the Messiah," states McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopædia.*

Notice that Acts 5:37 reports that the followers of this Judas did not perish with him. His movement, according to Jewish scholar Gaalya Cornfeld, "struck deep roots and messianic hopes." In fact, two leaders of the dagger men, Menahem and Eleazar, descended from that Judas the Galilean. At the start of the Jewish revolt in 66 C.E., Menahem armed his followers with weapons that had been stored at Masada. Then, "he returned like a king to Jerusalem" and "became the leader of the revolution." "It is almost certain," adds the *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* "that Menahem [son of] Judah was considered a Messiah."

However, in that very year, Menahem was assassinated by members of a rival Jewish revolutionary movement. His followers fled back to Masada, where Eleazar took command of the dagger men until 73 C.E. Eleazar's suicide speech echoes the mistaken teachings of his forefather Judas: "Long since, my brave companions, we determined to serve neither the Romans nor anyone else but only God."

Neutrality of Judean Christians

Prior to the Jewish revolt in 66 C.E., Christian congregations had been established in Judea, including, of course, the congregation of Jerusalem. (Acts 9:31) These were made up of Jews who believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah whose death and resurrection had been foretold. (Acts 2:22-36) The Jewish Christians zealously spread their beliefs, while peacefully awaiting the Messiah's second

coming, as world ruler. Jesus had indicated that he would return "after a long time." —Matthew 25:19, 31; 28:19, 20; Acts 1: 8-11.

But once the Jewish revolt broke out in 66 C.E., what protected those Judean Christians from being carried away by its initial success? They no doubt recalled their Master's warning: "All those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52) Jesus also had given them a balanced view of Gentile governmental authority. "Pay back Caesar's things to Caesar," he said, "but God's things to God." (Mark 12:17) Furthermore, Jesus had foretold that messianic pretenders would come, saying, "'I am he,' and, 'The due time has approached,'" but he warned: "Do not go after them."—Luke 21:8.

Jesus had even predicted the outcome of the Jewish revolt, saying: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her; . . . for there will be great necessity upon the land and wrath on this people; and they will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive into all the nations."—Luke 21:20-24.

The terrible flood of destruction that followed the Jewish revolt was a dramatic fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy! Yet, Judean Christians escaped by obediently "fleeing to the mountains." "Prior to Jerusalem's siege by Titus [in 70 C.E.]," states the *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* "its Christian community moved to Pella." Interestingly, Pella was to the north, in the foothills of a mountain range across the Jordan River and so was completely separated from Judea by the Jordan Valley. "It is hard to account for this escape if [Jesus'] prophecy was written after the event," states G. A. Williamson in his introduction to *Josephus—The Jewish War.*

Indeed, the successful escape of Judean Christians is powerful evidence that they were followers of the true Messiah. This raises important questions. What was the purpose of Messiah's first coming? And what warning does the disastrous Jewish revolt sound for us today, especially the sector of humanity that is labeled "Christian"? These questions will be discussed further in this magazine.

Betrayal and Arrest

IT IS well past midnight as Judas leads a large crowd of soldiers, chief priests, Pharisees, and others into the garden of Gethsemane. The priests have agreed to pay Judas 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus.

Earlier, when Judas was dismissed from the Passover meal, he had evidently gone directly to the chief priests. These immediately assembled their own officers, as well as a band of soldiers. Judas had perhaps first led them to where Jesus and his apostles had celebrated the Passover. Discovering that they had left, the large crowd bearing weapons and carrying lamps and torches followed Judas out of Jerusalem and across the Kidron Valley.

As Judas leads the procession up the Mount of Olives, he feels sure he knows where to find Jesus. During the past week, as Jesus and the apostles traveled back and forth between Bethany and Jerusalem, they often stopped in the garden of Gethsemane to rest and to converse. But, now, with Jesus possibly concealed in the darkness beneath the olive trees, how will the soldiers identify him? They may never have seen him before. Judas provides a sign, saying: "Whoever it is I kiss, this is he; take him into custody and lead him away safely."

Judas leads the great crowd into the garden, sees Jesus with his apostles, and goes straight up to him. "Good day, Rabbi!" he says and kisses him very tenderly.

"Fellow, for what purpose are you present?" Jesus retorts. Then, answering his own question, he says: "Judas, do you betray the Son of man with a kiss?" But enough of his betrayer! Jesus steps forward into the light of the burning torches and lamps and asks: "Whom are you looking for?"

"Jesus the Nazarene," comes the answer.

"I am he," Jesus replies, as he stands courageously before them. Astonished by his boldness and not knowing what to expect, the men draw back and fall to the ground.

"I told you I am he," Jesus calmly continues. "If, therefore, it is I you are looking for, let these go." Shortly before in the upper room, Jesus had told his Father in prayer that he had kept his faithful apostles and not one of them had been lost "except the son of destruction." So, in order that his word might be fulfilled, he asks that his followers be let go.

As the soldiers regain their composure, stand up, and start to bind Jesus, the apostles recognize what is about to happen. "Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" they ask. Before Jesus replies, Peter, wielding one of the two swords the apostles have brought, attacks Malchus, a slave of the high priest. Peter's blow misses the slave's head but cuts off his right ear.

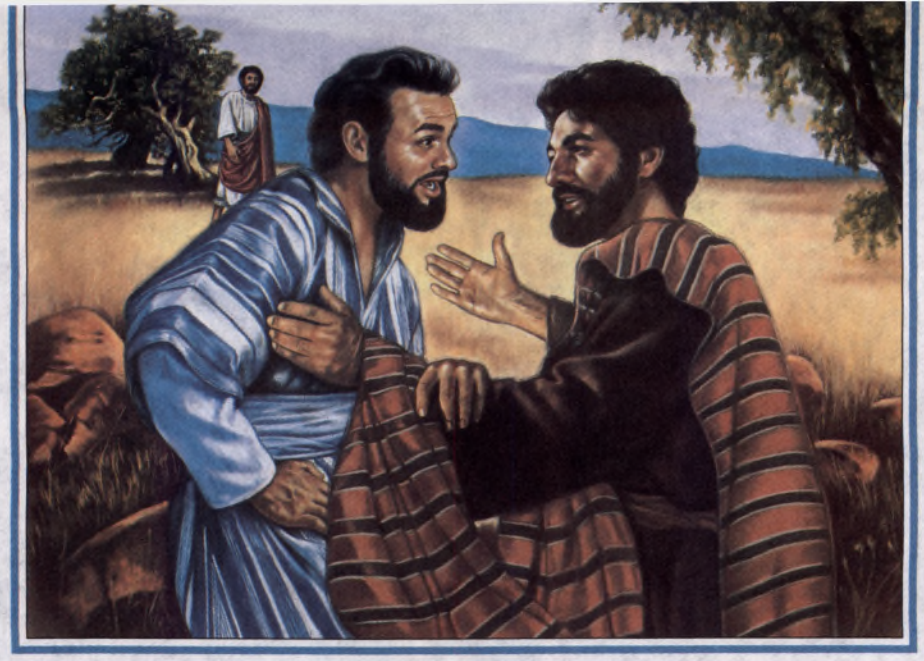
"Let it go as far as this," Jesus says as he intervenes. Touching the ear, he heals the wound. Then he teaches an important lesson, commanding Peter: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father to supply me at this moment more than twelve legions of angels?"

Jesus is willing to be arrested. For he explains: "How would the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must take place this way?" And he adds: "The cup that the Father has given me, should I not by all means drink it?" He is in complete agreement with God's will for him!

Then Jesus addresses the crowd. "Have you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber to arrest me?" he asks. "Day after day I used to sit in the temple teaching, and yet you did not take me into custody. But all this has taken place for the scriptures of the prophets to be fulfilled."

At that the soldier band and the military commander and the officers of the Jews seize Jesus and bind him. On seeing this, the apostles abandon Jesus and flee. However, a young man—likely it is the disciple Mark—remains among the crowd. He may have been at the home where Jesus celebrated the Passover and afterward followed the crowd from there. Now, however, he is recognized, and an attempt is made to seize him. But he leaves behind his linen garment and gets away lightly clad. **Matthew 26: 47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 17:12; 18:3-12.**

- Why did Judas feel sure he would find Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane?
- How does Jesus manifest concern for his apostles?
- What action does Peter take in Jesus' defense, but what does Jesus say to him?
- How does Jesus reveal that he is in complete agreement with God's will for him?
- When the apostles abandon Jesus, who remains, and what happens to him?



APPRECIATING WHY THE MESSIAH WAS TO COME

"We have found the Messiah."—JOHN 1:41.

A JEW named Andrew made the above startling announcement to his brother over 1,950 years ago. Can you sense the excitement in his words, recorded by the Christian apostle John? That unforgettable year was pinpointed by a Christian historian, Luke, as "the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar." Tiberius' 15th year, from the time he was proclaimed Roman emperor, began in September 28 C.E. and ended in September 29 C.E.—Luke 3:1-3, 21, 22; John 1:32-35, 41.

[2] The year of Messiah's appearance had been accurately foretold. Exactly 483 years had passed since the command was given by Persian king Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem, that being in the 20th year of his reign, 455 B.C.E.* (Nehemiah 2:1-8) The prophet Daniel foretold "that from the

1. What startling announcement is recorded in the Bible, and when was it made?
2. How did the prophecy of Daniel focus on the year 29 C.E.?

* Both *The Encyclopedia Americana* and the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* agree that Artaxerxes' reign ended in 424 B.C.E. When did it begin? In 474 B.C.E. In support of this, one archaeological inscription is dated in Artaxerxes' 50th year; another indicates that he was succeeded in his 51st year. Counting back 50 complete years from 424 B.C.E., we come to the date 474 B.C.E. as the start of his reign. Therefore, Artaxerxes' 20th year, when the command was given, would be 19 complete years into his reign, that is, 455 B.C.E. For further details, see *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, page 616, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

going forth of the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Leader, there will be seven weeks, also sixty-two weeks." (Daniel 9:25) Thus, a period of 7 + 62 = 69 prophetic weeks would separate these two important events. Sixty-nine literal weeks equals 483 days. According to the prophetic rule of "a day for a year," the Messiah would appear 483 years later, in 29 C.E.—Ezekiel 4:6.

[3] Justifiably, in the year 29 C.E., "the people were in expectation" of the Messiah. (Luke 3:1, 15) The title "Messiah" has the same meaning as "Christ" in Greek; both mean "Anointed One." (John 1:41) The burning question among many Jews was, 'Whom will Jehovah God *anoint* as king to rule not only Israel but all mankind?' By means of prophecy, the choice had been narrowed down to a descendant of Abraham's great-grandson Judah. Furthermore, the Messiah was to be heir to the throne of the Judean king David and was to be born in David's hometown of Bethlehem.—Genesis 17:5, 6; 49:10; Psalm 132:11; Daniel 7:13, 14; Micah 5:2; John 7:42.

Unmistakable Identification

[4] In that key year, 29 C.E., this is what happened: "God's declaration came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. So he came into all the country around the Jordan, preaching baptism in symbol of repentance for forgiveness of sins." (Luke 3:2, 3) John's ministry prepared repentant Jews to accept the imminent coming of the Messiah. Furthermore, Jehovah gave John a sign. He was to look out for one "upon whom [he would] see the spirit coming down and remaining." —John 1:33.

[5] After baptizing Jesus of Nazareth, John saw this unmistakable anointing. Jesus was not anointed with oil, as his earthly forefather David had been, but with Jehovah God's holy spirit. (1 Samuel 16:13; Acts 10:38) At the same time, God's own voice said: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved." (Matthew 3:16, 17) As John later testified: "I viewed the spirit coming down as a dove out of heaven, and it remained upon him. And I have seen it, and I have borne witness that this one is the Son of God." —John 1:32, 34.

[6] With such words, John the Baptizer faithfully introduced his disciples to Jesus, also calling him "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) Two disciples were quick to respond. After one day spent in Jesus' company, they were thoroughly convinced. The name of the one was Andrew, who eagerly searched out his brother, Simon Peter. The other disciple is understood to be John the son of Zebedee, who became Jesus' beloved apostle. After witnessing about the Messiah for nearly 70 years, this John was moved to write the above information for our benefit. Does his example and that of Andrew touch your heart? Are you as eager as they and the other "apostles of the Lamb" were to proclaim the thrilling truths about the Messiah?—Revelation 1:9; 21:14; John 1:35-41; Acts 5:40-42.

Anointed as King and High Priest

[7] Being born into the Jewish nation, Jesus "came to be under law." (Galatians 4:4) Therefore, being of the tribe of Judah,

3. (a) What is the meaning of the title "Messiah"? (b) What prophecies did the Messiah have to fulfill?

4, 5. (a) What happened in the key year 29 C.E.? (b) In what unmistakable way was the one chosen as Messiah identified?

6. What fine example did Andrew and John set for us?

7. Why could Jesus not serve as a priest in Jerusalem's temple?

he could not serve as a priest in Jehovah's typical temple, whose priests were descendants of Aaron of the tribe of Levi. "Our Lord has sprung up out of Judah, a tribe about which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests," the apostle Paul reminded fellow Christians.—Hebrews 7:14.

[8] The apostle John wrote: "The true light that gives light to every sort of man was about to come into the world." (John 1:6-9) With Jesus' baptism, it was as if a great spiritual temple came into existence, there now being a spiritual high priest who could save mankind from bondage to Satan's world of spiritual darkness. —Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:24.

[9] Jesus was praying at the time of his baptism. The Bible records some of his significant words, as later quoted by the apostle Paul: "'Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but you prepared a body for me. You did not approve of whole burnt offerings and sin offering.' Then I said, 'Look! I am come (in the roll of the book it is written about me) to do your will, O God.'"—Hebrews 10:5-7; Luke 3:21.

[10] Thus, Jesus applied to himself the prophecy at Psalm 40:6-8, which foretold Jehovah's purpose to bring an end to animal sacrifices offered by Aaronic priests at Jerusalem's temple. Jehovah did not "delight" in those offerings, in that they were only typical and unable to atone completely for human sin. Hence, Jehovah prepared a perfect human body for Jesus to sacrifice. God transferred the life of his heavenly Son to the womb of a Jewish virgin. Jesus was thus born uncontaminated by the sin of Adam. He was a perfect human Son of God, whose life could atone for the sin of mankind. (Luke 1: 30-35) As Psalm 40:8 foretold, it was Jesus' heartfelt desire to do his Father's will. "By the said 'will' we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all time."—Hebrews 10:10, 11.

[11] The sacrifice of Jesus' human life once for all time canceled the need for additional offerings at the typical temple in Jerusalem. Furthermore, his death took place on Passover Day 33 C.E. That was about three and a half years after his baptism. The three and a half years would amount to half a prophetic week. (Numbers 14:34) So matters turned out exactly as Daniel had foretold concerning the cutting off of the Messiah: "At the half of the week he will cause sacrifice and gift offering to cease." (Daniel 9:26, 27) Although the typical priesthood in Jerusalem functioned until the temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., the sacrifices that the priests offered during those years ceased to have any value, having been replaced by Jesus' superior sacrifice.—Matthew 23:37, 38.

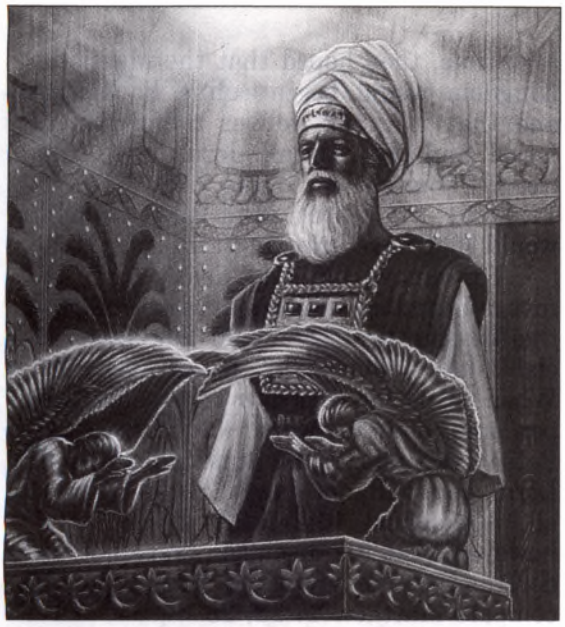
[12] Aaron had been the first in a long succession of Israelite high priests. After his being anointed with holy oil, he had to wait in the tabernacle for seven days before being empowered to serve as high priest. (Leviticus 8:12, 33) Similarly, Jesus had a waiting period before being empowered to intercede in behalf of mankind. That was from the time of his anointing as High Priest until his resurrection. Unlike Aaron, the immortal Son of God needs no successors, and he serves as both Priest and King "according to the manner of Melchizedek."—Psalm 110:1-4; Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 6:20; 7:1-3, 11-17, 23-25.

8. What did Jehovah's earthly temple foreshadow?

9, 10. (a) What was meant by Jesus' words, "Sacrifice and offering you did not want" and, "You prepared a body for me"? (b) How did Jesus personally feel about this?

11. What prophecy did the Messiah's death fulfill, and how did it cause 'sacrifice to cease'?

12. In what way is Jesus' priesthood superior to that of Aaron?



The high priest's first entry into the Most Holy foreshadowed something more important than mankind's salvation

[13] In ancient Israel, the main responsibility for correct religious teaching fell upon the high priest. (Leviticus 10:8-11; Malachi 2:7) Jesus accordingly made known Jehovah's righteous requirements for all who want to inherit the Kingdom and everlasting life. (Matthew 6:9, 10, 33; 7:28, 29; 11:12; 25:34, 46) When he was in a synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read and applied to himself the prophecy: "Jehovah's spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to declare good news." Then, after spending time in Capernaum, he said: "Also to other cities I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this I was sent forth." (Luke 4:18, 19, 43; Isaiah 61:1, 2) Jesus also trained 70 of his followers to expand this *Kingdom*-preaching work, and he foretold that they would do greater works than he himself had done. (Luke 10:1-9; John 14:12) This laid the foundation for a worldwide Bible educational campaign that Jesus would direct through 'the faithful slave,' consisting of his anointed followers.—Matthew 24:45-47; 28:19, 20.

13. (a) What heavy responsibility fell upon the high priests of Israel? (b) How has Jesus Christ shouldered an even greater responsibility?

Chief Vindicator of Jehovah's Sovereignty

[14] The most important reason why God's Son came to earth was not to save mankind. Rather, it was to settle the slanderous issues raised by Satan with regard to Jehovah's sovereignty. We can gain insight into this by reflecting on Israel's annual Day of Atonement, when the typical high priest had to enter the Most Holy several times. The first entry was made with fragrant incense, which was poured upon an incense holder of burning coals. (Leviticus 16:12-16) This well represented what the antitypical High Priest was to do on earth before he ascended to heaven to appear before Jehovah with the value of his human sacrifice.* (Hebrews 9:24) As indicated by the use of the incense, Jesus' course of faithfulness was marked by sincere prayers, a burning zeal for pure worship, and a deep love for Jehovah. (Psalm 141:2; Mark 1:35; John 2:13-17; 12:27, 28; 14:30, 31; Hebrews 5:7) Jesus succeeded in keeping flawless integrity in the face of all the subtle temptation, ridicule, and vicious persecution heaped upon him by Satan and his agents.—Proverbs 27:11; Matthew 22:15-18; Mark 14:60-65; 15:16-32; Luke 4:13, 29; John 8:44, 59.

[15] For vindicating Jehovah's sovereignty, Jesus was rewarded with resurrection

* See *The Watchtower* of April 1, 1974, page 222.

14. (a) Why did Israel's high priest enter the Most Holy on the annual Day of Atonement? (b) What was pictured by the fragrant incense?
15. How can we show our gratitude to Jehovah for providing such an excellent high priest? (Hebrews 10:21-26)

to immortal life in heaven. How grateful we should be to Jehovah for providing us with such an excellent High Priest! "Seeing, therefore, that we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold onto our confessing of him." (Hebrews 4:14) Is it your earnest desire to follow Jesus' example of integrity, regardless of what the Devil may do? If so, you can count on help, and you can succeed. That is because the very best of help is available. "We have as high priest, not one who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tested in all respects like ourselves, but without sin. Let us, therefore, approach with freeness of speech to the throne of undeserved kindness, that we may obtain mercy and find undeserved kindness for help at the right time."—Hebrews 4:15, 16; 5:7-10; Philippians 4:13; 1 John 2:1, 2.

The Need for Adjustment

[16] Andrew and John were quick to identify the true Messiah, but they and other early disciples had much to learn. (John 16:12, 13) Like many religious Jews at that time, they hoped that the Messianic Kingdom would begin ruling back then and that it would deliver the nation of Israel and its capital, Jerusalem, from Gentile domination. (Luke 2:38; 3:15; 19:11; 23:51; 24:21) Yet, what lasting benefit would that have brought sinful mankind?

[17] To remove sin and death from his future Kingdom subjects, it was vital that the Messiah first be cut off like a sacrificial lamb. (John 1:29; Isaiah 53:7, 12) When Jesus foretold how this would happen and how he would be resurrected, Peter responded: "Be kind to yourself, Lord; you will not have this destiny at all." (Matthew 16:21, 22) Jesus knew, however, that his disciples "were not understanding the saying."—Mark 9:31, 32; compare Matthew 17:22, 23.

[18] On his last trip to Jerusalem, Jesus became even more explicit. (Matthew 20:18, 19) He also showed the great benefit his death would bring, saying: "The Son of man came . . . to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many." (Matthew 20:28) Wrong expectations prevented his disciples from grasping this. Luke records: "He was near Jerusalem and they were imagining that the kingdom of God was going to display itself instantly." To adjust their thinking, Jesus gave an illustration in which he likened himself to "a certain man of noble birth" who first had to travel "to a distant land to secure kingly power." (Luke 19:11, 12) That "land" referred to heaven, to which Jesus ascended after his death and resurrection.

[19] However, just before Jesus' ascension, his disciples asked: "Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?" (Acts 1:6) Did Jesus reject them for ask-

16. What expectations did the Messiah's early disciples have with respect to his Kingdom rule?

17, 18. Why did Jesus give the illustration about "a certain man of noble birth"?

19. (a) What wrong expectation did Jesus' disciples express after his resurrection? (b) What change in God's relationship with humans took place at Pentecost 33 C.E.? (Hebrews 8:7-9, 13)

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What is meant by the title "Messiah"?
- ☐ What significant event took place in the year 29 C.E.?
- ☐ How did Messiah 'cause sacrifice to cease at the half of the week'?
- ☐ Since his anointing, what responsibility has Jesus shouldered?
- ☐ What was the main purpose of Messiah's first coming, and how should this affect us?

ing this? No, he explained that it was not yet the time and that they were to busy themselves with the important work of witnessing about the true Messiah. (Acts 1:7, 8) God's covenant relationship with natural Israel was to cease before long. Therefore, the future Messianic Kingdom would not be restored to that unfaithful earthly nation. Jesus told his Jewish opposers: "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits." (Matthew 21:43) Ten days after Jesus ascended to heaven, that nation was born. Holy spirit was poured out upon 120 of Jesus' disciples, and thus they were anointed to be God's "holy ones" and "joint heirs with Christ" in the coming Messianic Kingdom.—Daniel 7:13, 14, 18; Romans 1:7; 8:1, 16, 17; Acts 2:1-4; Galatians 6:15, 16.

[20] Even after their anointing, the first-century Christians had mistaken expectations. (2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2) But instead of becoming disgruntled quitters, they humbly accepted correction. Empowered by God's holy spirit, they joyfully accepted the assignment to witness and "make disciples of people of all the nations."—Matthew 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8; Colossians 1:23.

[21] What about our 20th century? Were Jehovah's modern-day servants alert to the establishment of Jehovah's Messianic Kingdom? And like their first-century counterparts, did they need to have their expectations adjusted in some ways?

20. In spite of having some wrong expectations, what did faithful first-century Christians do?
21. What questions will be considered in our next article?

BE THANKFUL—JEHOVAH'S MESSIANIC KINGDOM RULES

"We thank you, Jehovah God, the Almighty, . . . because you have taken your great power and begun ruling as king."—REVELATION 11:17.

EARLY in 1911, the president of the Watch Tower Society, C. T. Russell, gave a series of Bible lectures in major cities of Europe. Commenting on that tour, Russell wrote the following in *The Watch Tower,* May 15, 1911: "We were surprised to find so many evidences of prosperity everywhere . . . Our readers know that for some years we have been expecting this Age to close with an awful time of trouble, and we expect it to break out with suddenness and force not long after October, 1914, which, so far as we can understand the Scriptures, is the date at which the Times of the Gentiles—the lease of earth's dominions to the Gentiles—will expire; the time, therefore, when Messiah's kingdom will be due to begin its exercise of power." Was this expectation fulfilled?

1. What did the president of the Watch Tower Society state after his tour of Europe in 1911?

[2] During the first half of 1914, the world seemed secure and safe from war. But peace was suddenly shattered with the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne by a Serb on June 28, 1914. Austria-Hungary soon declared war against Serbia. Russia took sides with Serbia, so Germany declared war against Russia on August 1. Then Germany declared war against France on August 3; Great Britain against Germany on August 4; Montenegro against Austria-Hungary on August 7; Japan against Germany on August 23; Austria-Hungary against Belgium on August 28. Many believed that the war would soon be over. Instead, it escalated into the worst war of history up till that time, with 19 more countries taking sides in an international bloodbath that cost over 13,000,000 military and civilian lives, with over 21,000,000 maimed and wounded.

[3] On Friday morning, October 2, 1914, Russell announced to the headquarters staff of the Watch Tower Society in Brooklyn, New York: "The Gentile times have ended; their kings have had their day." This was greeted with enthusiastic applause by the family at Bethel, "the house of God."

[4] What justification did C. T. Russell and his associates have for being so joyful on that October morning? Where does the expression "Gentile Times" originate? What evidence is there that the Gentile Times ended in October 1914? And how should that affect you?

Jerusalem and the Gentile Times

[5] The expression "Gentile Times," or "appointed times of the nations," comes from Jesus' great prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. (Luke 21:5-36, *King James Version*) Two days prior to giving it, Jesus presented himself to the

2. How was peace shattered in 1914, and with what sad consequences?

3, 4. What happened at the Society's headquarters on Friday morning, October 2, 1914?

5. Where does the expression "Gentile Times" originate?

Jerusalem and its temple lost their honored status, but God continued to bless his Son, the Messiah, even speaking to him directly from heaven

inhabitants of Jerusalem as their Messiah. While he humbly rode upon an ass toward the city, crowds of Jews shouted in triumph, just as Zechariah 9:9 foretold. "Blessed is the One coming as the King in Jehovah's name," they cried aloud.—Luke 19:28-40.

[6] But Jesus knew that public opinion would soon be swayed against him because of the murderous hatred by Jerusalem's religious leaders under the influence of their father, the Devil. (Genesis 3:15; John 8:44) Shortly thereafter, on Nisan 14, a crowd of Jews clamored for Jesus' death. "His blood come upon us and upon our children," they cried to the reluctant Roman governor. (Matthew 27:24, 25) Instead of accepting Jesus as Messianic King, the chief priests declared: "We have no king but Caesar." (John 19:15) The true Messiah was then nailed to a torture stake to die, having been falsely charged as a seditionist against Rome and a blasphemer against the God of the Jews.—Mark 14: 61-64; Luke 23:2; John 18:36; 19:7.

[7] Divine wrath was certain to come upon the inhabitants of Judea because of their terrible bloodguilt. Jerusalem, with its magnificent temple, could no longer be called "the city of the great King," Jehovah. (Matthew 5:35; Luke 13:33-35) Some days before Jesus' death, his disciples spoke admiringly of that city's temple buildings. In response, Jesus predicted: "As for these things that you are beholding, the days will come in which not a stone upon a stone will be left here and not be thrown down."—Luke 21:5, 6.

[8] Jesus' disciples asked in surprise: "Teacher, when will these things actually be, and what will be the sign when these things are destined to occur?" (Luke 21:7) In reply Jesus accurately predicted the events that led up to Jerusalem's destruction, and he added this significant phrase: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:8-24, *KJ*) Jesus thus pointed ahead to something beyond Jerusalem's destruction—something that had to wait "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." With reference to "the sign," Jesus said: "When you see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near." (Luke 21:31) Therefore, the sign was to have a dual fulfillment. The first, or small-scale, fulfillment would indicate that 'the desolating of Jerusalem had drawn near.' (Luke 21:20) The second, and larger, fulfillment would come when the Gentile Times had ended, and it would indicate that "the kingdom of God is near."—Compare Matthew 24:3.

Earthly Jerusalem Replaced by a Superior City

[9] By saying *"Jerusalem* will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled," was Jesus suggesting that the earthly city would eventually be restored to divine favor? No. After the murder of God's beloved Son, earthly Jerusalem lost its special status forever and has been replaced by a far superior "city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem."—Hebrews 12:22; Matthew 23: 37, 38; 27:50, 51.

[10] The expression "heavenly Jerusalem" is used in the Bible to describe the indestructible heavenly Kingdom to which anointed Christians have been called.*

6, 7. What terrible bloodguilt did first-century Judeans bring upon themselves, and with what consequences?

8. When Jesus gave "the sign" of events leading up to Jerusalem's destruction, what else was involved?

* See *The Watchtower* of March 15, 1983, page 22.

9. When did earthly Jerusalem lose its favored status, and by what has it been replaced?

10. What is meant by the expression "heavenly Jerusalem"?

(Hebrews 11:10; 12:22, 28) When the apostle Paul wrote this, the earthly city with its temple was still very much admired by Jews. Thus, Paul reminded Hebrew Christians that "we do not have here a city that continues, but we are earnestly seeking the one to come."—Hebrews 13:14.

Why Called Heavenly Jerusalem

[11] Jerusalem was long the capital of the nation of Israel, whose kings were said to "sit upon Jehovah's throne." (1 Chronicles 29:23) Also, Jehovah made a covenant with David that the kingship would remain in his family forever. Just as modern-day capitals, such as Washington, Moscow, Canberra, and Pretoria, are used to identify their respective governments, so Jerusalem is used in the Bible to represent the Davidic kingdom.—2 Samuel 7:16; Luke 1:32.

[12] David's kingdom had a limited domain, extending only to the God-defined boundaries of ancient Israel. Earthly Jerusalem was therefore only a type of the real Messianic Kingdom that would rule from heaven and have the whole earth as its domain. (Psalm 2:2, 7, 8; Daniel 7:13, 14; 2 Timothy 4:18) Thus, the book *The Time Is At Hand,* published by the Watch Tower Society in 1889, clearly stated: "The term 'Times of the Gentiles' was applied by our Lord to that interval of earth's history between the removal of the typical Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Israel (Ezek. 21:25-27), and the introduction and establishment of its antitype, the true Kingdom of God."

Gentile Times—How Long?

[13] The typical kingdom of God was overthrown by Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in 607 B.C.E. By the seventh Jewish month, about the middle of October, the land lay desolate.* (2 Kings 25:8, 9, 22, 25, 26) In proof that this happened by divine permission, Jehovah God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream. It involved a tree that was chopped down and allowed to grow again after a period of "seven times." The dream had an initial fulfillment when Nebuchadnezzar was restored to his throne after a temporary state of madness.—Daniel 4:10-17, 28-36.

[14] However, the theme of Nebuchadnezzar's dream showed that its main fulfillment involved God's typical kingdom, which that Gentile king had been permitted to 'chop down.' The dream concluded with this statement of purpose: "That people living may know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind and that to the one whom he wants to, he gives it and he sets up over it even the lowliest one of mankind."—Daniel 4:17.

[15] Only one person came to be qualified in all respects to be called "the lowliest one of mankind." The only-begotten Son of God proved himself to be such by willingly leaving his heavenly glory to be born as a human, as Jesus, who suffered the most humiliating and cruel death at Satan's hand. (Philippians 2:3, 5-11) After his resurrection back to heavenly glory, Jesus had to wait until the period of seven times of Gentile rule ended before being enthroned as the Messianic King over mankind.—Hebrews 10:12, 13.

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11. Until earthly Jerusalem lost Jehovah's favor, what did it represent?
12. How is the term "Gentile Times" to be applied?
13. When did the Gentile Times begin, and why do you so answer?

* For more information as to why this marks the start of the Gentile Times, see *"Let Your Kingdom Come,"* chapter 14, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

14. What was the main point of Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
15. How did Jesus Christ qualify as "the lowliest one of mankind"? (Matthew 11:29)

[16] But how did Jehovah's Witnesses come to understand the length of the seven times? The Bible reveals that "a time and times and half a time," or three and a half times, equals 1,260 days. (Revelation 12: 6, 14) Therefore, double that number, or seven times, would amount to 2,520 days. On the basis of the prophetic guide of "a day for a year," the seven times would equal 2,520 years. (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6) By this calculation, the Gentile Times, which started in October 607 B.C.E., ended 2,520 years later in October 1914.

[17] In October 1914, Jehovah God set his beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the throne in the heavenly Kingdom. At last, the Revelation vision of the Christian apostle John started to become a reality, and the announcement could be made: "The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ, and he [Jehovah] will rule as king forever and ever." (Revelation 1:10; 4:1; 11:15) What glorious news this is and what reason for the greatest happiness on the part of all joint heirs and subjects of that Kingdom!—Revelation 11:17.

[18] True, for most of mankind, there has not been much happiness on earth since 1914. But the woeful conditions on earth are proof that Satan's rule is about to end. How do we know this? The book of Revelation indicated that the establishment of God's Kingdom would result in a war in heaven. Satan and his demons were to be cast out of heaven and limited to the vicinity of our earth. After seeing this victory in a prophetic vision, John heard a loud voice say: "Be glad, you heavens and you who reside in them! Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time."—Revelation 12:1-12.

[19] Worsening world conditions since 1914 are proof that John's vision has become a reality and that the end of all humans who refuse to submit to God's sovereignty is drawing perilously near. (Luke 21:10, 11, 25-32) How thrilling it is to be alive at this wonderful time when Jehovah God, the Almighty, will settle the great issue of his sovereignty over the earth! Then, earth will be transformed into a beautiful paradise, and righteous human survivors will be uplifted to perfection. Even the dead will be raised and given the opportunity to qualify for everlasting life. —Revelation 20:1-3, 12, 13; 21:3-5.

A Modern Need for Adjustment

[20] For 38 years prior to 1914, the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called, pointed to that date as the year when the Gentile Times would end.* What outstanding proof that is that they were true servants of Jehovah! Yet, like first-century servants of God, they also had some wrong expectations. For example, they expected that the full number of anointed Christians would be raised to heaven by October 1914. They also thought that the war that started in 1914 would lead directly on to the end of Satan's world.

16. How does the book of Revelation help Christians to calculate when the seven times ended?
17. What happy announcement was due to be made known in 1914?
18. Why have sorrowful conditions afflicted mankind since 1914?

* C. T. Russell wrote an article entitled "Gentile Times: When Do They End?," which was published in the magazine *Bible Examiner*, October 1876. On page 27, the article said: "The seven times will end in A.D. 1914."

19. Why are true Christians so grateful to be alive at this time?
20. (a) On earth, who proved to be Jehovah's true servants before 1914? (b) What adjustments were faithful anointed Christians willing to make?

[21] In time, though, anointed Christians realized that there was much work for them to do on earth. Because of their persistence in public witnessing during World War I, they experienced vicious persecution from the political authorities, urged on by Christendom's clergy. (Psalm 2:1-6) The activity of true Christians was dealt a severe blow on June 21, 1918, when leading officials of the Watch Tower Society in the United States were sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment under false charges.

[22] World War I came to a sudden end in November 1918. Then, on March 25, 1919, the officials of the Watch Tower Society were released from prison. They were later fully exonerated. An unexpected period of peace opened up for those faithful anointed Christians, similar to the opportunities that presented themselves to Christ's early disciples after they were empowered by holy spirit in 33 C.E.—Acts 2:17-21, 41.

[23] Ever since 1919, faithful anointed Christians as a group have zealously obeyed the command involved in Jesus' words at Matthew 24:14: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." As a result, nearly four million of Christ's "other sheep" have devoted their lives to serving Jehovah in unity with the anointed remnant. (John 10:16) Christendom, under the influence of its clergy, continues to reject the Kingdom message. Its preference for human political schemes and its persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses parallel the shocking treatment of Christ by the first-century inhabitants of Judea. Just as Jehovah executed his judgment upon Jerusalem, so he will do to antitypical unfaithful Jerusalem, namely, Christendom. And as the generation that heard Christ's judgment message lived to experience the destruction he foretold, so the present generation since 1914 "will by no means pass away" before the foretold "great tribulation" comes.—Matthew 24:21, 22, 34.

[24] What must we do to survive the great tribulation and live on into God's new world? Regardless of wrong expectations any of us may have had, we must guard against falling asleep as to our Christian duties. (Habakkuk 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6) Those able to recall events from 1914 are becoming ever fewer. Thus, we need to be alert; there is no time to lose. (Matthew 24:42) All who want to survive the end of Satan's wicked world must act now in a way that shows agreement with the inspired words: "We thank you, Jehovah God, the Almighty, . . . because you have taken your great power and begun ruling as king."—Revelation 11:17.

21. What discipline did true Christians experience during World War I?

22, 23. (a) What have faithful anointed Christians done since 1919, and with what twofold response? (b) What is antitypical unfaithful Jerusalem?

24. To survive into God's new world, what must we do?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What did ancient Jerusalem represent, but how did it lose its honored status?
- ☐ When did the Gentile Times begin and end, and with what foretold result?
- ☐ What did the destruction of unfaithful Jerusalem prefigure?
- ☐ How do we know that the great tribulation is close, and what must we do to survive it?

Insight on the News

Homosexuals —Equal Before God?

In the Australian state of Queensland, homosexual acts —even in private by consenting partners—are illegal. Recently, a major church group in that state came out strongly against such laws; they want homosexuality decriminalized.

According to the newspaper *The Courier-Mail,* this Joint Church Social Justice Group is made up of members of the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist, and Uniting churches and Quakers (Society of Friends). Claiming that existing laws against homosexuals are based on ignorance and prejudice, the group stated: "Our support for this position is based on the belief that all people are equal before God and should be equal before the law. We believe a homosexual person is no more or less a human person than a heterosexual person."

While it is true that all men are born equal, what is God's view of homosexuality? In the Bible, all homosexual acts are condemned as unnatural and as meriting God's disapproval, leading to death. This was true not only in ancient Israel but also in Christian times. (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26, 27) The condemnation is clear and needs no interpretation: "Neither fornicators, . . . nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men . . . will inherit God's kingdom."—1 Corinthians 6: 9, 10.

Rather than clamoring for the decriminalizing of homosexuality, true Christians urge those enslaved to this God-dishonoring practice to break free of it by turning to God's Word of truth.

Blood Risks Continue

A recent investigation revealed that hundreds of mistakes have been made by the American Red Cross in the handling of contaminated blood. Nearly half of the 12 million to 15 million units of blood used in the United States annually are supplied by the American Red Cross. When any units of blood get released that are found to be contaminated, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration), an agency of the federal government, is to be notified. However, *The New York Times* states that a federal inspector contends that the Red Cross often failed to do this. He claims that a search of their records revealed 380 instances in which the mishandling of contaminated blood was never reported to the government. In addition, out of 228 cases of AIDS that may have been caused by blood transfusions, the inspector discovered that the Red Cross reported only 4 to the FDA.

While many still view it as lifesaving, transfused blood is responsible for the death of thousands each year. Yet, true worshipers of God, in obeying his laws with respect to blood, are at the same time protected from transfusion dangers. God commanded: "You must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water . . . so that it may go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is right."—Deuteronomy 12:23-25, *New International Version.*

The Pope on Military Service

Last year the pope met with more than 7,000 military cadets at the Rome garrison of Cecchignola. At that time four young officers representing the garrison asked the pope whether military service is compatible with the Christian conscience. Specifically, according to the Vatican City newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano,* they asked: "Can one be a faithful Christian and, at the same time, a faithful soldier?" In response the pope said: "There is no basic difficulty or impossibility in uniting the Christian vocation with that of military service. If we look at the latter positively, it can be seen as a beautiful, worthy and fine thing."

Is such a view, however, compatible with the neutrality maintained by early Christians? In his book *An Historian's Approach to Religion,* Arnold Toynbee cites the case of Maximilianus, a third-century martyr who, when threatened with death by the Roman court for refusing recruitment into the military, said: "I won't serve. You may behead me, but I won't serve the powers of This World; I *will* serve my God." Why, in the face of certain death, did he refuse participation in military service? Because he considered true followers of Jesus to be "no part of the world" just as Jesus was no part of the world. Moreover, he regarded the Christian's warfare to be spiritual, in line with the apostle Paul's words: "We do not wage warfare according to what we are in the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly."—John 17:16; 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4.

"STANDING FIRM AS ONE FLOCK" IN CHAD

Like their fellow Christians around the world, Jehovah's Witnesses in Chad appreciate the annual assemblies that are arranged for their spiritual upbuilding. Here is the account of a trip to a series of special assembly days held in the southern part of this landlocked, central African country.

Because of distance and travel difficulties, assemblies in Chad are usually held in small groups, their timing being determined by the weather. From June to September, the rainy season renders travel difficult and in some areas impossible. The special assembly days are held after the heavy rains have passed. The end-of-year holidays are convenient for the larger district convention. And before the rains begin again in June, the two-day circuit assemblies are presented.

IT WAS a hot and sticky Sunday afternoon. The Kingdom Hall at N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, was packed with 184 persons. Despite the heat, they were paying rapt attention to the main talk, "Standing Firm in One Spirit." That morning they were happy to witness three persons symbolize their dedication to Jehovah God by water baptism. This was the first of six special assembly days that a local traveling overseer and I were privileged to serve.

The theme of the series, "Standing Firm as One Flock," was particularly appreciated by the 267 Witnesses in Chad. They live far from fellow Christians in other lands. Yet, their receiving the same spiritual food and being cared for in the same way encourages them to continue to work in unity with their brothers worldwide. The practical counsel of this program also fortified them to stand firm against the subtle influence of Satan's world and the winds of persecution or opposition.

In N'Djamena

The first congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Chad was formed in N'Djamena in 1964. Now it has over 90 publishers of the Kingdom good news. It was a pleasure to look out at the audience and see many who have been serving faithfully since the early days of the work in Chad. One brother had three wives when he first learned of the Bible's truth. Soon he saw the need to conform his life to Bible standards. He legally married his first wife and separated from the others, though making caring arrangements for them. He was baptized in 1973 and has been active in the work ever since.

One elder who participated in the program had undergone a severe test of faith. In 1975 the government of that time enforced participation in certain customs that were based on worship of the dead; anyone who failed to comply could be put to death. When the brother stood firm and would not compromise his faith, the authorities began searching for him. Only a change in government at that crucial time spared him.

On the Road to Pala

After N'Djamena, the trip south to serve the remaining five assemblies be-

gan. We had often taken the route before but only in the dry season. Now, in late September at the close of the rainy season, everything was green and luxuriant. It was an enjoyable time to travel. We passed field after field of millet. The heads on the tall stalks lining the road were now ripening. Soon they would be harvested, dried, and stored in the cone-shaped earthen granaries that dot the countryside. Millet is the staple food for most Chadians. It is pounded in a large wooden mortar with a pestle that is often taller than the person using it. Then the flour is mixed with boiling water and molded into a ball to be eaten with a sauce made with okra or peanuts as a base.

We saw more and more fields of cotton as we traveled farther south. Because the terrain is flat in this part of the country, the flowering fields seemed to reach right to the horizon. Soon whole families would be out in the fields picking the cotton by hand. Cotton is the largest cash crop in Chad, 133,000 tons being harvested in 1988. By late afternoon, we were passing Lake Léré. Here the country is hilly and very picturesque, particularly at this time of the year. Being there at just the right time, we were able to purchase freshly caught carp that was fried right along the road. It was a meal that any host would be proud to serve.

One thing that makes travel more difficult during this season is that if it should rain, barriers are put across the roads to stop the flow of traffic. Why? To preserve the roads. So our hearts sank as we saw the sky ahead suddenly turn as black as ink. We surely did not relish camping in

the rain by the side of the road. But more important, we would be late for the next special assembly day. Happily, the heaviest part of this late rain missed the road. Even though we had to wait for a while at several barriers, late that night we arrived safe and sound in Pala, a town of about 32,000 people. What a treat was in store for us! The moonless sky after the rain gave us a spectacular view of the stars and of the Milky Way, a breathtaking sight that most city dwellers never get to see. It reminded us of the reason for which we stand firm—to honor the Grand Creator of the marvelous universe.

Two small congregations and an isolated group assembled at Pala. Three young brothers had walked over 60 miles to this assembly. Since the assemblies in the south are small and there are few elders, parts of the program were recorded at the assembly in N'Djamena and replayed. This ensures a high-quality program even with a small number in attendance. We were happy to have one candidate for baptism.

The Zealous Group at Kélo

Next, there was a short trip to Kélo, where 194 were present for the program on Sunday. Many families with young children had walked over 20 miles to attend. Two newly dedicated persons were to be baptized. During the dry season, baptism is often a problem if an assembly is not held near a river; hence, a number of persons have had to be baptized in a barrel. But our being there at the end of the rainy season made things easier. Nonetheless, it was necessary to drive more than 12 miles to a suitable site.

One of the baptismal candidates was a young girl whose faith had been severely tested. Her family had promised her in marriage to a man who was not interested in studying the Bible. Moreover, he preferred to be united by tribal customs rather than by legal marriage. Because he was willing to pay a large bride-price, her family put much pressure on her. She even had to move elsewhere for a time so as to avoid the unscriptural union that her family wanted. She stood firm through all of this and made fine progress. Since her baptism, the family opposition has ceased. We thank Jehovah that we have such faithful persons among us.

The brothers here have other reasons to be grateful to Jehovah. Chad suffered a bitter civil war and then, in 1984, a severe famine. A local elder recalls that at one point during the famine, he looked around the Kingdom Hall and wondered if any of those present would still be alive in a few months. However, Jehovah's organization provided aid in the form of food, relieving their plight. Their appreciation for that is now reflected in their zealous service. There is a strong pioneer spirit in Kélo. During October 1989, over a third of the Kingdom publishers arranged their affairs so they could share in the preaching work full-time.

Their experience with the famine taught them that they too must be generous. Last year an elder in the congregation suddenly took ill and died. He left behind a family of nine children, the youngest only a few months old. His wife faced family pressure to participate in mourning rites that involved worship of the dead. The brothers gave her needed support, so that she was able to resist the intense pressure. Then the congregation worked together to build a home for her and the younger children, in addition to helping materially in various other ways. This resulted in a very fine witness to the town, demonstrating the happy result of Christianity in action. —Acts 20:35.

Koumra, Doba, and Bongor

Our next stop was Koumra. Gravel roads made the 180-mile trip much easier. On the

way, we passed through the city of Moundou, an industrial center of over a hundred thousand people. Seventy-one attended in Koumra. A young brother who had never received any formal schooling spoke from the platform. He explained how the learn-to-read-and-write program taught at the Kingdom Hall helped him and gave him the needed confidence. He now conducts studies in the Bible with four other persons.

After the special assembly day in Koumra, we headed back toward N'Djamena, with our next stop to be at Doba for the fifth assembly in our series. Some of those attending were caught in a late rain and had to spend the night along the road. Still, everyone arrived on time for the beginning of the program at Doba. Fifty-one were present, and one person presented himself for baptism.

The final stop was in Bongor. This is a rice-growing area, and we marveled at how flat the terrain was. The attendance at Bongor brought the total of those who heard the program in Chad to 630. And with two more immersed, the total number of persons baptized was nine.

Our return to N'Djamena completed a trip of nearly 1,200 miles. It was a pleasure to associate with servants of God who have stood firm for many years, as well as to meet many new ones who are making wonderful progress. Their zeal for the ministry was particularly encouraging. During October 1989, there was a new peak of 267 publishers in Chad, a 20-percent increase over the previous year.

United Though Far Away

Traveling through the country made us appreciate what a challenge it is to spread the good news in a land where over 200 languages are spoken. Although French and Arabic are the official languages of Chad, at each of the special assembly days, the program had to be translated from French into a different language. Even so, many who came to an assembly location did not speak the language of the region, so it was still a problem to help them understand the program.

In all the places we visited, our brothers and sisters treated us with hospitality. The meals generally were a millet or rice-flour ball and spiced sauce mentioned earlier. Sometimes a young girl brought the food on a tray covered with a brightly colored cloth. The tray was gracefully balanced on her head, and you had to admire her grace.

The population of northern Chad is predominantly Muslim; people in the south are mainly Catholic, Protestant, or animist. The government upholds the policy of freedom of religion, and we are happy to be able to meet together freely.

The special assembly day program helped the small band of Witnesses in Chad to appreciate that although geographically they are far away from their brothers in other parts of the world, they are truly united in one flock with them. It enabled them to 'stand firm in one spirit' despite the pressures and opposition they experience.—Philippians 1:27.

He "Fought the Fine Fight"

Brother F. E. Skinner finished his earthly course of life on July 4, 1990. Edwin Skinner was 96 years old and had served the interests of Jehovah's Kingdom full-time in India since July 1926. He was baptized in England in 1919. His life story appeared in *The Watchtower* of January 1, 1990. Brother Skinner was truly a man of faith and endurance in running the course to the finish, and he has surely gained his reward.—2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

Why Pursue Righteousness?

IN THE violent world before the Flood, one man stood out as different. That man was Noah. He and his family walked with God while the rest of mankind ignored Him. As a result, "Noah was a righteous man" in those wicked times, and to unheeding worldlings he became "a preacher of righteousness."—Genesis 6:9; 2 Peter 2:5.

Sometime about the year 56 of our Common Era, the apostle Paul was in prison in Caesarea. When summoned from his prison to the presence of Governor Felix, Paul seized the opportunity to preach to this high Roman official. What was the gist of his words? "He talked about righteousness and self-control and the judgment to come." (Acts 24:25) Yes, Paul too was a preacher of righteousness.

The concern that these two faithful servants of God showed for righteousness was surely appropriate. Jehovah is "a righteous God and a Savior." (Isaiah 45:21) Hence, the inspired proverb tells us:

"The way of the wicked one is something detestable to Jehovah, but the one pursuing righteousness he loves." (Proverbs 15:9) All of God's servants must pursue righteousness.

Unhappily, many today have a casual attitude toward this quality. They say: 'I do no harm to my neighbor, so I am sure God is pleased with me.' Or they may maintain: 'There are many paths to righteousness. Everything will be all right as long as I am sincere about my religion.' Do you think such a relaxed attitude is acceptable to God?

Others may raise a different issue. They may be aware of Paul's statement: "We have been declared righteous as a result of faith." (Romans 5:1) In view of this, they may wonder: 'How are Christians, who are already declared righteous, supposed to keep on pursuing righteousness?' How would you answer such a question?

A God of Righteousness

According to the dictionary, righteousness is moral rightness, justice, harmony with divine or moral law. Since Jehovah is a God of righteousness, any who wish to please him must be concerned about this vital quality. "Jehovah is righteous," said the psalmist. "He does love righteous acts. The upright are the ones that will behold his face." (Psalm 11:7; Deuteronomy 32:4) The apostle Peter said: "The eyes of Jehovah are upon the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their supplication."—1 Peter 3:12.

Hence, we cannot be casual in this matter, as many of the Jews were. Many of them were no doubt decent people who did no harm to their neighbors. They were also sincere—even zealous—about their religion. But in the first century, the majority were not righteous in God's eyes. Paul said: "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge; for, because of not knowing the righteousness of God but seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."—Romans 10:2, 3.

Where did the Jews go wrong? Paul says they did not pursue righteousness according to accurate knowledge. Their warning example tells us that it is not enough just to have a pleasant personality and avoid doing harm. It also indicates that there are not many different paths to righteousness. Clearly, there was something wrong with the path chosen by most Jews in the apostles' day. We can successfully pursue righteousness only if we listen to God. The book of Proverbs says: "My son, if you will receive my sayings and treasure up my own commandments with yourself, in that case you will understand righteousness and judgment and uprightness, the entire course of what is good."—Proverbs 2:1, 9.

The Way of Righteousness

From Moses down to Jesus, righteousness was linked to obeying God's commands as stated in the Mosaic Law. Since the imperfect Israelites were unable to keep from transgressing these commands, they had to offer sacrifices and sin offerings prescribed by the Law in order to cover their guilt. Moses told the Israelites: "It will mean righteousness for us, that we take care to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, just as he has commanded us."—Deuteronomy 6:25.

For many centuries no one fulfilled the Law perfectly. Nevertheless, many sincerely tried to pursue righteousness by means of it, and the Bible speaks of some of these as being righteous. For example, the parents of John the Baptizer are described as "righteous before God because

of walking blamelessly in accord with all the commandments and legal requirements of Jehovah."—Luke 1:6.

Jesus, however, opened a new way to pursue righteousness. He kept the Mosaic Law perfectly—the only person ever to do so. Jesus died on the torture stake, and Jehovah accepted the value of his perfect life as a ransom for mankind. From then on, sacrifices under the Law covenant were no longer needed. Jesus' perfect sacrifice covered the sins of all righthearted humans.—Hebrews 10:4, 12.

True Christians Declared Righteous

Since Jesus' death and resurrection, then, righteousness has been linked with exercising faith in this righteous Son of God. (John 3:16) While the orthodox Jews of Paul's day did not attain to righteousness because they rejected accurate knowledge about Jesus, we read about *faithful* Christians: "They are being declared righteous by his undeserved kindness through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus."—Romans 3:24.

In the context, these words apply directly to anointed Christians who, *because* of their faith in Jesus' sacrifice, are declared righteous with a view to their being coheirs with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom. Today, however, as foreseen by the apostle John, a great crowd of Christians with an earthly hope have come on the scene. These also exercise faith in the ransom. They 'wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb' and so are declared righteous as friends of God with a view to their surviving the great tribulation.—Revelation 7:9, 14; compare James 2:21-26.

Keep Pursuing Righteousness

Notice, though, that the pursuit of righteousness does not end with our putting faith in Jesus. Timothy had been a dedicated, anointed Christian for many years when Paul wrote the following words to him: "Pursue righteousness, godly devotion, faith, love, endurance, mildness of temper. Fight the fine fight of the faith." (1 Timothy 6:11, 12; 2 Timothy 2:22) Why did Timothy have to "pursue righteousness" if God had already declared him righteous?

Because the word "righteous" is also used in the Bible in a more general sense to refer to one who lives an honest, moral life and does his best to obey God's commands. This is the sense in which the parents of John the Baptizer were righteous. (Luke 1:6) Jesus' adoptive father, Joseph, and Joseph of Arimathea were also righteous in this way. (Matthew 1:19; Luke 23:50) The fact that Christians have been declared righteous does not remove their responsibility to pursue righteousness in this sense. Indeed, any Christian who ceases to live an honest, moral life or fails to obey God's commands will lose his righteous standing before Jehovah.

Pursuing Righteousness—A Challenge

Pursuing righteousness is a challenge. Why? Because all of us are imperfect and have a strong tendency toward unrighteousness. (Genesis 8:21; Romans 7:21-23) Moreover, we are living in a world that encourages unrighteous thoughts and acts and is under the control of Satan the Devil, "the wicked one." (1 John 5:19; 2 Corinthians 4:4) No wonder that when writing to Timothy, Paul linked pursuing righteousness with 'fighting the fine fight of the faith'!—1 Timothy 6:11, 12.

Can we be successful in this "fine fight"? Yes, but only if we develop a heartfelt love of Jehovah's standards and a hatred of what is bad. The Bible says of

Jesus: "You loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness." (Hebrews 1:9) We should have the same attitude: an intense desire to cultivate a love for what pleases God and an aversion to anything that displeases him.

At the same time, we should remember that the pursuit of righteousness is not a competition. If we view ourselves as better than some others, or if we are proud of our own righteousness, then we are like the Jewish Pharisees. (Matthew 6: 1-4) Those who pursue righteousness successfully have a genuinely humble view of themselves, 'considering that the others are superior to them.'—Philippians 2:3.

Paul highlighted the importance of Bible study in the pursuit of righteousness when he wrote: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for *disciplining in righteousness.*" (2 Timothy 3:16) If we study the Bible and attend Christian meetings where the Bible is discussed, we will be trained in righteousness. The Bible can mold us so that we put on 'the new personality, which is created in true righteousness and loyalty.'—Ephesians 4:24.

When righteousness becomes an integral part of us, we will truly hate lawlessness. We will not be tempted to seek the bad associates of this world. (1 Corinthians 15:33) We will not be influenced to love the things of this world or to conform to this world's materialistic values. (Proverbs 16:8; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10; 1 John 2: 15-17) Certainly, we will not be attracted by the immoral and violent entertainment that is so widely available today.—Ephesians 5:3, 4.

The Blessings of Righteousness

Yes, pursuing righteousness Jehovah's way is a challenge, but the struggle is worth while. Why? Because it leads to our enjoying a personal relationship with Jehovah himself. What a remarkable privilege! The Bible tells us: "The abiding place of the righteous ones [Jehovah] blesses." "Jehovah is far away from the wicked ones, but the prayer of the righteous ones he hears." (Proverbs 3:33; 15:29) In addition, we come to a rich understanding of Jehovah's purposes. "The path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established."—Proverbs 4:18.

The Bible promises protection to seekers of righteousness when this unrighteous system of things comes to its end. "Seek Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth, who have practiced His own judicial decision. Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger." (Zephaniah 2:3) Thereafter, for those with an earthly hope, the Bible offers a truly wonderful expectation: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 37:29.

What marvelous reasons for pursuing righteousness! As God himself says: "He that is pursuing righteousness and loving-kindness will find life, righteousness and glory."—Proverbs 21:21.

In Our Next Issue

- **Can Human Nature Be Changed?**
- **The Christian's View of the Superior Authorities**
- **'Continue to Be Readjusted'**

Questions From Readers

■ **Why does the *New World Translation* render the Hebrew word *'a·rum'* at Genesis 3:1 as "cautious" since other Bible translations say "cunning" or "clever"?**

That scripture reads: "Now the serpent proved to be the most cautious of all the wild beasts of the field that Jehovah God had made. So it began to say to the woman: 'Is it really so that God said you must not eat from every tree of the garden?'"

At Proverbs 12:23 and other places, the *New World Translation* renders the Hebrew word *'a·rum'* as "shrewd," which is one basic meaning of the word when applied to humans. But as is the case with so many words, *'a·rum'* has various shades of meaning. For instance, Benjamin Davidson defines *'a·rum'* as follows: "I. *crafty, cunning, subtle.*—II. *prudent, cautious.*"—*The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon.*

Why, then, does the *New World Translation* select the secondary meaning of "cautious" at Genesis 3:1? That choice is in harmony with other translations. For instance, when Genesis 3:1 was translated into Greek in the Septuagint version of the third century B.C.E., the word *phro'ni·mos* was used—the same word later used at Matthew 10:16: "You must be as cautious as snakes and as gentle as doves."—*Today's English Version.*

Hebrew scholar Ludwig Koehler commented back in 1945: "The serpent is shy. This can be very well expressed in Greek with *phronimos,* for by this shyness or caution the serpent manifests possession and practice of *phrenes." Phre'nes* here means a kind of instinctive wisdom that other animals also manifest. —Compare Proverbs 30:24.

There is, however, a more important reason for the use of the word "cautious" instead of "shrewd" or "clever" at Genesis 3:1. To call the serpent clever here, right before it is described as seducing Eve into sin, might lead many readers to conclude that the Bible depicts a mere snake as working out this scheme by dint of its own unusual cleverness. Such an interpretation would reduce the account to the status of myth —and a rather silly myth at that.

On the contrary, the Bible teaches that there was much more than some clever snake at work there in the garden of Eden. Revelation 12:9 clearly identifies Satan the Devil with that "original serpent." He was the unseen, superhuman power manipulating the simple reptile the way a master ventriloquist works his dummy. The natural caution of the serpent made it an ideal choice for the ruse. When it did not shy away cautiously as was its nature but instead boldly opened its mouth and began to speak to Eve, it caught Eve's attention all the more effectively.

God's inspired Word is free of myths, and by accurate rendering, the *New World Translation* helps us to appreciate this fact.—2 Timothy 3:16.

■ **Since Jehovah's Witnesses know that the dead are unconscious, why do they still feel it is important to attend funerals of fellow believers?**

Accurate knowledge from the Bible about the condition of the dead protects Jehovah's Witnesses from mistaken attitudes and resulting unwise conduct at funerals. It also gives them reason to attend Christian funerals.

God's Word shows clearly that when a person dies, he does not live on as an immortal soul. (Ecclesiastes 9:5) After death, the body returns to dust, either by natural decomposition or through cremation. The deceased is no longer alive; he will live again only if God resurrects him in the future. —John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.

Hence, Jehovah's Witnesses do not follow funeral practices that are based on the belief that a dead person had an immortal soul, which lives on somewhere. They do not share in wakes, with loud chants or moans to frighten "the spirits," nor in all-night vigils or extreme grieving intended to appease the dead.

This does not mean, however, that God's people do not mourn. The death of a relative or close friend is a saddening experience, even to true worshipers who have accurate knowledge about the dead. For example, when Jacob thought that a wild animal had killed Joseph, the patriarch "carried on mourning over his son for many days." We read that "all his sons and all his daughters kept rising up to comfort him." (Genesis 37:33-35) When faithful Jacob died, Joseph "commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father," and "the Egyptians continued to shed tears for him seventy days." While Jacob's family did not hold to the Egyptians' false views about the dead, they clearly were moved by Jacob's death. "All of Joseph's household and his brothers" wanted Jacob to be properly buried, and even outsiders could note that they were mourning.—Genesis 50:1-11.

Numerous other Bible examples can be cited wherein Jehovah's servants were truly moved by the death of a fellow worshiper or relative and so gave way to proper mourning.* When Jesus was with Lazarus' grieving relatives, Jesus was not impassively unmoved or inappropriately jolly. Though having confidence in the power of the resurrection, Jesus wept. (John 11:33-35) After Jesus himself died, his disciples mourned, even though he had told them that he would be killed and raised again to life.—Matthew 16:21, 28; John 16:17-20; 20:11.

God's servants today can and do feel the sadness that death brings. Yet, their Biblical understanding helps to temper or balance their mourning, in line with 1 Thessalonians 4:13, 14: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant concerning those who are sleeping in death; that you may not sorrow just as the rest also do who have no hope. For if our faith is that Jesus died and rose again, so, too, those who have fallen asleep in death through Jesus God will bring with him."

What, then, about attending a Christian funeral (or a memorial talk concerning a believer)? There are Biblical reasons why Witnesses feel it is beneficial to have and attend such.

Recall that when it seemed that Jacob had lost his son, "all his sons and all his daughters kept rising up to comfort him." (Genesis 37:35) In many lands it is customary for relatives to gather for a funeral. That provides an occasion for others, who may not have been as close and so are not as affected emotionally, to offer words of sympathy and consolation. After Lazarus died 'many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary in order to console them concerning their brother.' (John 11:19) This also involves Christians who want to "be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation."—2 Corinthians 1:4.

Christian overseers, even though they may be very busy, should take the lead in providing comfort to the flock. They bear in mind that their exemplar Jesus, the Fine Shepherd, was commissioned 'to bind up the brokenhearted and to comfort all the mourning ones.' (Isaiah 61:1, 2; John 10:14) Jesus did not offer such comfort only when it was convenient. He was willing to go out of his way to be with Lazarus' bereaved relatives—to share their sorrow.—John 11:11, 17, 33.

Even Christians who may be unable to say much to the bereaved at a funeral can do good simply by their presence. Mourning family members may draw considerable solace from the sympathetic presence of many—young and old—from the Christian congregation. Remember the reaction of some Jews when Jesus came to Lazarus' grieving sisters: "See, what affection he used to have for him!" (John 11:36) Unbelieving relatives, neighbors, or business associates attending the funeral of a Christian have been favorably impressed by the large number of Witnesses present and thus have been more receptive to the Biblical truths presented.

The conduct of Witnesses attending should befit the situation. Though knowing that the deceased is not suffering, and confident that a resurrection awaits all loyal ones, they take to heart the counsel: 'There is a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to wail and a time to skip about.' (Ecclesiastes 3:4) A funeral or a memorial service is not a time for loud, jocular talking. It is an occasion for empathy, consistent with the advice: "Rejoice with people who rejoice; weep with people who weep."—Romans 12:15.

There is another reason why Jehovah's Witnesses attend funerals. God's Word says: "Better is it to go to the house of mourning than to go to the banquet house, because that is the end of all mankind; and the one alive should take it to his heart. . . . The heart of the wise ones is in the house of mourning, but the heart of the stupid ones is in the house of rejoicing."—Ecclesiastes 7:2-4.

While Jehovah's Witnesses have reason for hope, those words were inspired and put in the Bible for our benefit. A funeral might be compared to "a house of mourning." As we attend, our thoughts can turn from our normal concerns or activities and focus on the brevity of life. Whether through sickness or some "unforeseen occurrence," death can strike any of us and quickly bring us to nothingness, for "man also does not know his time." (Ecclesiastes 9:11, 12) Parents who have their children with them at a Christian funeral may find that this can lead to discussing the reality of death, our need for the ransom, and the wisdom of serving "the God who raises up the dead."—2 Corinthians 1:9; Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13.

Jehovah's Witnesses do not regard funerals as sacraments, but they do recognize that these sad events offer occasion for giving consolation. By attending them, Christians can give evidence of the love and respect that they had for their fellow Christian. And they may be moved to think more seriously on the meaning of life, about how they should be using their own life before God.

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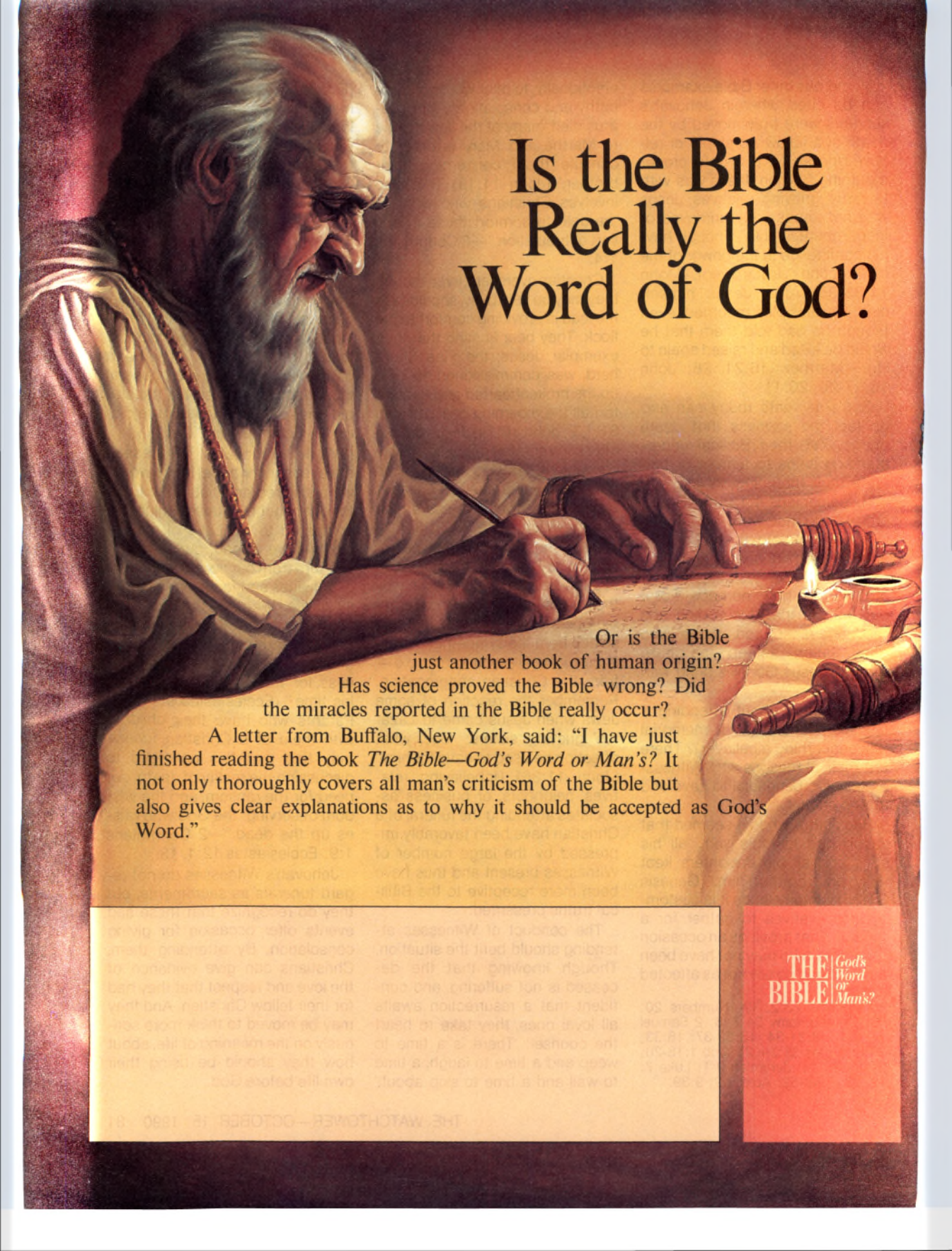
* Genesis 23:2, 19; Numbers 20:29; Deuteronomy 34:7, 8; 2 Samuel 1:11, 12; 3:31-34; 13:32-37; 18:33; 2 Chronicles 35:24, 25; Job 1:18-20; Psalm 35:14; Jeremiah 9:1; Luke 7:12, 13; 8:49-52; Acts 8:2; 9:39.



Is the Bible Really the Word of God?

Or is the Bible just another book of human origin? Has science proved the Bible wrong? Did the miracles reported in the Bible really occur?

A letter from Buffalo, New York, said: "I have just finished reading the book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?* It not only thoroughly covers all man's criticism of the Bible but also gives clear explanations as to why it should be accepted as God's Word."