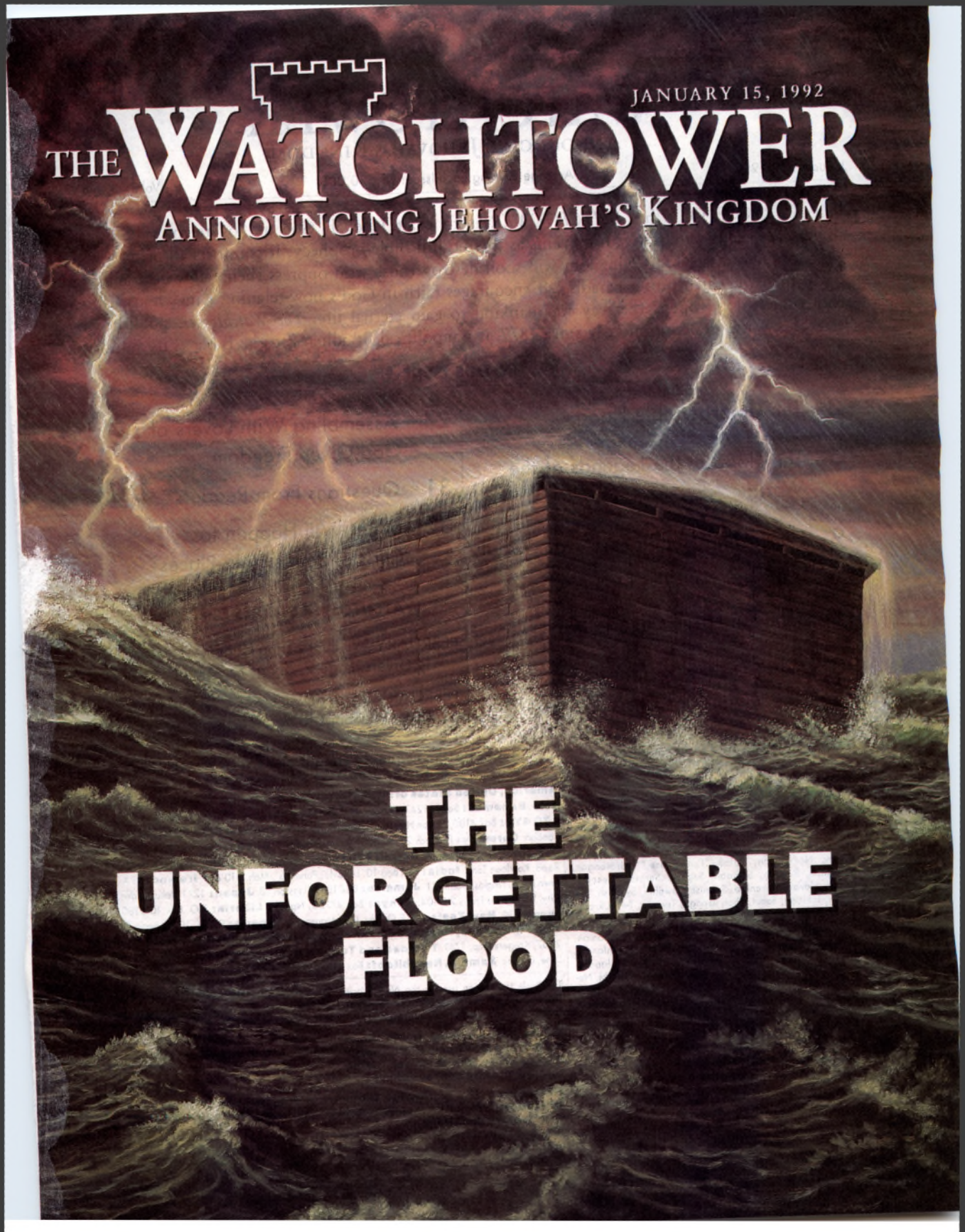
JANUARY 15, 1992
THE WATCHTOWER
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM
THE UNFORGETTABLE FLOOD

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these 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 God's 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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The Unforgettable Flood

ABOUT 4,300 years ago, a catastrophic deluge inundated the earth. In one gigantic sweep, it wiped out nearly every living thing. It was of such magnitude that it left an indelible impression on mankind, and each generation passed the story on to the next.

Some 850 years after the Flood, the Hebrew writer Moses put the account of the earth-wide Deluge into writing. It has been preserved in the Bible book of Genesis, where we can read the graphic details in chapters 6 to 8.

Bible Account of the Flood

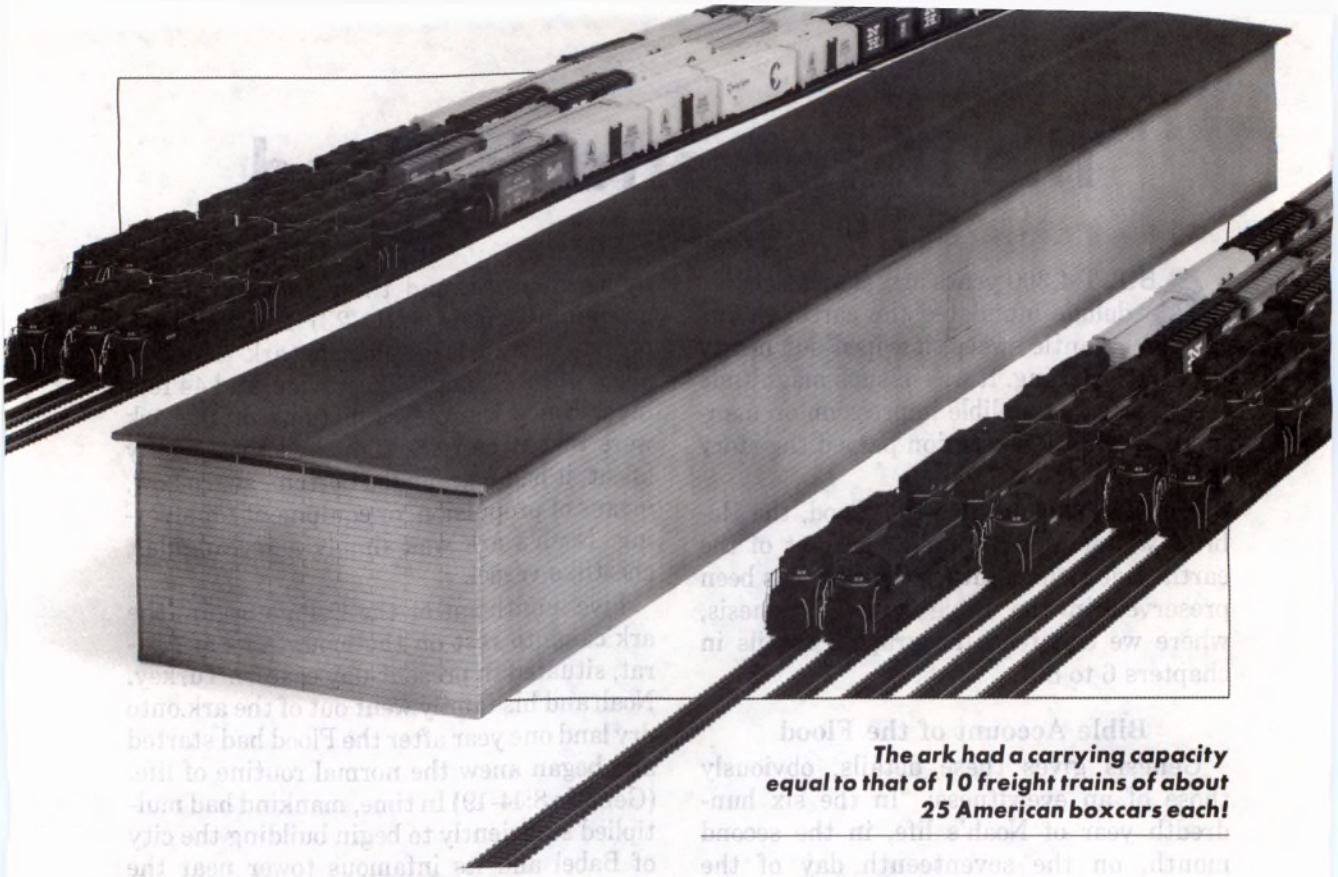
Genesis gives these details, obviously those of an eyewitness: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this day all the springs of the vast watery deep were broken open and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And the deluge went on for forty days upon the earth, and the waters kept increasing and began carrying the ark and it was floating high above the earth. And the waters overwhelmed the earth so greatly that all the tall mountains that were under the whole heavens came to be covered."—Genesis 7: 11, 17, 19.

Concerning the Flood's impact on living things, the Bible says: "All flesh that was moving upon the earth expired, among the flying creatures and among the domestic animals and among the wild beasts and among all the swarms that were swarming upon the earth, and all mankind." However, Noah and seven other persons survived, along with a sampling of every beast, flying creature, and thing moving on the ground. (Genesis 7:21, 23) All had been preserved in a large floating ark that was about 437 feet long, 73 feet wide, and 44 feet high. Since the only functions of the ark were that it be watertight and that it stay afloat, it had no rounded bottom, sharp bow, means of propulsion, or equipment for steering. Noah's ark was simply a rectangular, chestlike vessel.

Five months after the Deluge began, the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat, situated in present-day eastern Turkey. Noah and his family went out of the ark onto dry land one year after the Flood had started and began anew the normal routine of life. (Genesis 8:14-19) In time, mankind had multiplied sufficiently to begin building the city of Babel and its infamous tower near the Euphrates River. From there people were gradually scattered to all parts of the earth when God confused the language of mankind. (Genesis 11:1-9) But what became of the ark?

Searching for the Ark

Since the 19th century, there have been numerous attempts to find the ark on the mountains of Ararat. These mountains have two prominent peaks, one 16,950 feet high and the other 12,840 feet. The higher of the two is perpetually covered by snow. Because of the climatic changes that followed the Flood, the ark would soon have been buried by snow. Some investigators firmly believe that the ark is still there, buried deep in a glacier. They claim that there have been periods when the ice melted sufficiently to permit part of the ark to be exposed temporarily.



The ark had a carrying capacity equal to that of 10 freight trains of about 25 American boxcars each!

The book *In Search of Noah's Ark* quotes George Hagopian, an Armenian, who claimed that he climbed Mount Ararat and saw the ark in 1902 and again in 1904. On the first visit, he said, he actually climbed on top of the ark. "I stood up straight and looked all over the ship. It was long. The height was about forty feet." Regarding his observation on his subsequent visit, he said: "I didn't see any real curves. It was unlike any other boat I have ever seen. It looked more like a flat-bottomed barge."

From 1952 to 1969, Fernand Navarra made four efforts to find evidence of the ark. On his third trip to Mount Ararat, he worked his way to the bottom of a crevasse in a glacier, where he found a piece of black wood embedded in the ice. "It must have been very long," he said, "and perhaps still attached to other parts of the ship's framework. I could only cut along the grain until I split off a piece about five feet long."

Professor Richard Bliss, one of several experts who examined the wood, said: "The Navarra wood sample is a structural beam and impregnated with bituminous pitch. It has mortise and tenon joints. And it's definitely hand-hewn and squared." The estimated age of the wood was set at about four or five thousand years.

Although efforts have been made to find the ark on Mount Ararat, the definite proof that it was used to survive a cataclysmic deluge exists in the written record of that event in the Bible book of Genesis. Confirmation of that record can be seen in the great number of flood legends among primitive peoples all over the world. Consider their testimony in the following article.

The Flood in the Legends of the World

THE Flood of Noah's day was such a devastating cataclysm that mankind could never forget it. Over 2,400 years later, Jesus Christ spoke of it as a fact of history. (Matthew 24:37-39) This awesome event left such an indelible impression on the human race that it has become legendary all over the world.

In the book *Myths of Creation,* Philip Freund estimates that over 500 Flood legends are told by more than 250 tribes and peoples. As might be expected, with the passing of many centuries, these legends have been greatly embellished with imaginary events and characters. In all of them, however, some basic similarities can be found.

Striking Similarities

As people migrated from Mesopotamia after the Flood, they carried accounts of the catastrophe to all parts of the earth. Thus, inhabitants of Asia, the islands of the South Pacific, North America, Central America, and South America have tales of this impressive event. The many Flood legends existed long before these people were exposed to the Bible. Yet, the legends have some basic points in common with the Biblical account of the Deluge.

Some legends mention violent giants living on the earth before the Flood. Comparably, the Bible indicates that before the Deluge disobedient angels materialized fleshly bodies, cohabited with women, and produced a race of giants called Nephilim.—Genesis 6:1-4; 2 Peter 2:4, 5.

Flood legends usually indicate that one man was warned about a coming deluge of divine origin. According to the Bible, Jehovah God warned Noah that He would destroy wicked and violent ones. God told Noah: "The end of all flesh has come before me, because the earth is full of violence as a result of them; and here I am bringing them to ruin together with the earth."—Genesis 6:13.

Legends concerning the Flood generally indicate that it brought about global destruction. Similarly, the Bible says: "The waters overwhelmed the earth so greatly that all the tall mountains that were under the whole heavens came to be covered. Everything in which the breath of the force of life was active in its nostrils, namely, all that were on the dry ground, died."—Genesis 7:19, 22.

Most Flood legends say that a man survived the Deluge along with one or more other persons. Many legends have him taking refuge in a boat he had built, and they have it land on a mountain. Comparably, the Scriptures say that Noah built an ark. They also state: "Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark kept on surviving." (Genesis 6:5-8; 7:23) According to the Bible, after the Deluge "the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat," where Noah and his family disembarked. (Genesis 8:4, 15-18) Legends also indicate that Flood survivors started to repopulate the earth, as the Bible shows that Noah's family did.—Genesis 9:1; 10:1.

Ancient Flood Legends

With the foregoing points in mind, let us consider some Flood legends. Suppose we begin with the Sumerians, an ancient people who inhabited Mesopotamia. Their version of the Deluge was found on a clay tablet

unearthed in the ruins of Nippur. This tablet says that the Sumerian gods Anu and Enlil decided to destroy mankind with a giant flood. Being warned by the god Enki, Ziusudra and his family were able to survive in a huge boat.

The Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh contains many details. According to it, Gilgamesh visited his ancestor Utnapishtim, who had been granted eternal life after surviving the Flood. In the ensuing conversation, Utnapishtim explained that he was told to build a ship and take cattle, wild beasts, and his family into it. He built the ship as a huge cube 200 feet on each side, with six floors. He tells Gilgamesh that the storm lasted six days and six nights, and then he says: "When the seventh day arrived, the hurricane, the Deluge, the shock of battle was broken, which had smitten like an army. The sea became calm, the cyclone died away, the Deluge ceased. I looked upon the sea and the sound of voices had ended. And all mankind had turned to clay."

After the vessel grounded on Mount Nisir, Utnapishtim released a dove that returned to the boat when it could not find a resting-place. This was followed by a swallow that also returned. A raven was then released, and when it did not return, he knew that the water had subsided. Utnapishtim then released the animals and offered a sacrifice.

This very old legend is somewhat similar to the Biblical account of the Flood. However, it lacks the graphic details and simplicity of the Bible account, and it does not give reasonable dimensions for the ark nor supply the time period indicated in the Scriptures. For instance, the Epic of Gilgamesh said that the storm lasted six days and six nights, whereas the Bible says that "the downpour upon the earth went on for forty days and forty nights" —a continuing heavy rain that finally covered the entire globe with water.—Genesis 7:12.

Though the Bible mentions eight Flood survivors, in Greek legend only Deucalion and his wife, Pyrrha, survived. (2 Peter 2:5) According to this legend, before the Flood the earth was inhabited by violent individuals called the men of bronze. The god Zeus decided to destroy them with a great flood and told Deucalion to build a large chest and get into it. When the flood subsided, the chest came to rest on Mount Parnassus. Deucalion and Pyrrha descended from the mountain and started mankind again.

Legends of the Far East

In India there is a Flood legend in which Manu is the human survivor. He befriends a small fish that grows to a large size and warns him of a devastating flood. Manu builds a boat, which the fish pulls until it is grounded on a mountain in the Himalayas. When the flood subsides, Manu descends from the mountain and with Ida, the personification of his sacrifice, renews the human race.

According to the Chinese flood legend, the thunder god gives a tooth to two children, Nuwa and Fuxi. He instructs them to plant it and to take shelter in the gourd that would grow from it. A tree promptly grows from the tooth and produces a huge gourd. When the thunder god causes torrential rainfall, the children climb into the gourd. Though the resulting flood drowns all the rest of earth's inhabitants, Nuwa and Fuxi survive and repopulate the globe.

In the Americas

Indians of North America have various legends that carry the common theme of a flood that destroys all but a few people. For example, the Arikara, a Caddo people, say that the earth was once inhabited by a race of people so strong that they ridiculed the gods. The god Nesaru destroyed these giants by means of a flood but preserved his people, the animals, and maize in a cave. The Hava-

The Babylonian flood legends were passed on from one generation to another

supai people say that the god Hokomata caused a deluge that destroyed mankind. However, the man Tochopa preserved his daughter Pukeheh by sealing her in a hollow log.

Indians in Central and South America have flood legends with basic similarities. The Maya of Central America believed that a great rain serpent destroyed the world by torrents of water. In Mexico the Chimalpopoca version tells that a flood submerged the mountains. The god Tezcatlipoca warned the man Nata, who hollowed out a log where he and his wife, Nena, found refuge until the water subsided.

In Peru the Chincha have a legend of a five-day flood that destroyed all men except one whom a talking llama led to safety on a mountain. The Aymara of Peru and Bolivia say that the god Viracocha came out of Lake Titicaca and created the world and abnormally large, strong men. Because this first race angered him, Viracocha destroyed them with a flood.

The Tupinamba Indians of Brazil spoke of a time when a great flood drowned all their ancestors except those who survived in canoes or in the tops of tall trees. The Cashinaua of Brazil, the Macushi of Guyana, the Caribs of Central America, and the Ona and Yahgan of Tierra del Fuego in South America are among the many tribes that have flood legends.

South Pacific and Asia

Throughout the South Pacific, legends of a flood with few surviving are common. For example, in Samoa there is a legend of a flood in early times that destroyed everyone except Pili and his wife. They found safety on a rock, and after the flood they repopulated the earth. In the Hawaiian Islands, the god Kane became annoyed with humans and sent a flood to destroy them. Only Nu'u escaped in a large boat that finally grounded on a mountain.

On Mindanao in the Philippines, the Ata say that the earth was once covered by water that destroyed everyone except two men and a woman. The Iban of Sarawak, Borneo, say that only a few people escaped a deluge by fleeing to the highest hills. In the Igorot legend of the Philippines, only a brother and sister survived by taking refuge on Mount Pokis.

The Soyot of Siberia, Russia, say that a giant frog, which was supporting the earth,

moved and caused the globe to be flooded. An old man and his family survived on a raft he had made. When the water receded, the raft grounded on a high mountain. The Ugrians of western Siberia and Hungary also say that flood survivors used rafts but drifted to different parts of the earth.

Common Origin

What can we conclude from these many Flood legends? Though they differ greatly in details, they have some common features. These indicate an origin in some gigantic and unforgettable cataclysm. Despite vivid colorations over the centuries, their underlying theme is like a thread that ties them to one great event —the global Deluge related in the simple, uncolored Bible account.

Since the Flood legends are generally found among people who did not come in touch with the Bible until recent centuries, it would be a mistake to contend that the Scriptural account influenced them. Moreover, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says: "The universality of the flood accounts is usually taken as evidence for the universal destruction of humanity by a flood . . . Moreover, some of the ancient accounts were written by people very much in opposition to the Hebrew-Christian tradition." (Volume 2, page 319) So we can confidently conclude that the Flood legends confirm the reality of the Biblical account.

Living as we do in a world filled with violence and immorality, we do well to read the Biblical account of the Flood, as recorded in Genesis chapters 6 through 8. If we meditate on the reason for that global Deluge—the practicing of what was wicked in God's sight—we will see in it a vital warning.

Are you heeding Peter's warning by keeping Jehovah's day in mind?

Soon the present wicked system of things will experience God's adverse judgment. Happily, though, there will be survivors. You may be among them if you heed the apostle Peter's words: "The world of [Noah's] time suffered destruction when it was deluged with water. But by the same word the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men. . . . Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah."—2 Peter 3:6-12.

Will you keep the presence of Jehovah's day close in mind? If you do so and act in harmony with God's will, you will enjoy great blessings. Those who thus please Jehovah God can have faith in the new world to which Peter refers when he adds: "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to [God's] promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell."—2 Peter 3:13.

EVERLASTING HAPPINESS AWAITS GODLY GIVERS

"God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—JOHN 3:16.

JEHOVAH GOD is the greatest Giver of all. It was with regard to him, the Creator of heaven and earth, that the Christian disciple James wrote: "Every good gift and every perfect present is from above, for it comes down from the Father of the celestial lights, and with him there is not a variation of the turning of the shadow." (James 1:17) Jehovah is also the Giver of the greatest gift that could ever be given. Concerning his greatest gift to mankind, it was said: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." —John 3:16.

[2] The speaker of those words was no one else but that only-begotten Son of God himself. An only-begotten son of a father would naturally appreciate and love such a father as his source of life and of all the good things provided for his enjoyment of life. But God's love was not confined to this one Son alone. To extend such a gift to others of his creatures would manifest God's exercising of love to an extraordinary degree. (Compare Romans 5:8-10.) This is all the more evident when we examine what the word "gave" really means in this context.

1, 2. (a) Who is the greatest Giver, and what is his greatest gift to mankind? (b) In giving his greatest gift, what quality did God manifest?

God's Gift of "the Son of His Love"

[3] For an unstated period of time, God had enjoyed personal association with this only-begotten Son—"the Son of his love"—in the heavenly realm. (Colossians 1:13) During all that time, the Father and the Son had grown in love and affection for each other so much that there came to be no other mutual love like theirs. The other creatures whom God brought into existence by means of his only-begotten Son were also loved as members of the divine family of Jehovah. Thus, love reigned over the entire family of God. It is correctly stated in the sacred Scriptures that "God is love." (1 John 4:8) The divine family would, therefore, be made up of those loved by the Father, Jehovah God.

[4] So close were the ties between Jehovah and his firstborn Son that depriving themselves of such intimate association would be a great loss in itself. (Colossians 1:15) But the 'giving' of this only-begotten Son meant more than God's depriving himself of the personal association with "the Son of his love." It went even to the extent of Jehovah's permitting his Son to undergo death and thus be temporarily put out of

3. Besides "the son of his love," who else enjoyed the love of the heavenly Father?

4. How did God's giving of his Son involve more than loss of personal association, and in whose behalf?

existence as a member of God's universal family. This was a death in behalf of those who never had been members of God's family. Jehovah could make no greater gift in behalf of needy humankind than his only-begotten Son, whom the Scriptures also identify as "the beginning of the creation by God."—Revelation 3:14.

[5] The first human couple, Adam and Eve, failed to maintain their place as members of God's family. That is the state in which they found themselves after being driven out of the garden of Eden because of sinning against God. Not only were they no longer members of God's family but they were also under the sentence of death. Therefore, the problem was not merely that of restoring their offspring to God's favor as members of his family but also that of lifting from them the divine sentence of death. According to the operation of divine justice, this would require that one of Jehovah God's faithful sons experience death as a substitute, or a ransom. Hence, the big question was: Would the one chosen be willing to undergo such a substitutionary death in behalf of human sinners? Moreover, bring-

Do you appreciate God's gift of his Son as a ransom sacrifice?

ing this about would require a miracle on Almighty God's part. It would also require an expression of divine love to an unparalleled degree. —Romans 8:32.

[6] Only Jehovah's firstborn Son could measure up to the special needs of the situation involving sinful mankind. He is such an image of his heavenly Father in showing affection for members of the divinely produced family that he is without equal among the sons of God. Since all other intelligent creatures were brought into existence by means of him, his affection for them would certainly be abundant. Furthermore, love is a dominant quality of Jehovah's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, because "he is the reflection of [God's] glory and the exact representation of his very being." (Hebrews 1:3) Showing his willingness to express this love to the greatest degree by giving his life in behalf of sinful mankind, Jesus told his 12 apostles: "The Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many."—Mark 10:45; see also John 15:13.

5. (a) What was the plight of Adam's offspring, and what did God's justice require on the part of one of His faithful sons? (b) What would God's greatest gift require on his own part?

6. How was God's Son able to measure up to the needs of the situation involving sinful mankind, and what did he say in this regard?

[7] Jehovah God had a special reason for sending Jesus into this impoverished world of mankind. Divine love was the motivation for this, for Jesus himself said: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life. For God sent forth his Son into the world, not for him to judge the world, but for the world to be saved through him."—John 3:16, 17.

[8] It was on a mission of salvation that Jehovah lovingly sent his only-begotten Son. God did not send his Son here in order to judge the world. If God's Son had been sent on such a judicial mission, the outlook for all mankind would have been hopeless. The sentence of adverse judgment that would have been pronounced by Jesus Christ upon the human family would have been condemnation to death. (Romans 5:12) Thus, by this unique expression of divine love, God counterbalanced the death sentence that sheer justice would have required.

[9] In all things, Jehovah God expresses and demonstrates love as the excelling feature of his personality. And it may correctly be said that God lovingly gives his faithful worshipers on earth more than enough as far as good things are concerned. The psalmist David felt that way about the matter when he said to God: "How abundant your goodness is, which you have treasured up for those fearing you! Which you have rendered to those taking refuge in you, in front of the sons of men." (Psalm 31:19) During David's kingship over the nation of Israel—yes, throughout his life as a member of that nation specially selected by God—he often experienced the goodness of Jehovah. And David found it to be abundant.

7, 8. (a) What was Jehovah's motive in sending Jesus Christ into the world of mankind? (b) On what kind of mission did God send his only-begotten Son?

9. How did the psalmist David feel about Jehovah's giving?

Israel's Loss of a Great Gift From God

[10] In having Jehovah as its God, ancient Israel was unlike any other nation on earth. By means of the prophet Moses as a mediator, Jehovah brought the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob into a covenant relationship with himself. He had not dealt with any other nation according to this pattern. Therefore, the inspired psalmist could exclaim: "He is telling his word to Jacob, his regulations and his judicial decisions to Israel. He has not done that way to any other nation; and as for his judicial decisions, they have not known them. Praise Jah, you people!"—Psalm 147:19, 20.

[11] The nation of natural Israel continued in this favored relationship with God until it rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah in the year 33 of our Common Era. It was indeed a sad day for Israel when Jesus gave way to this mournful exclamation: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her,—how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings! But you people did not want it. Look! Your house is abandoned to you." (Matthew 23:37, 38) Jesus' words indicated that the nation of Israel, though previously favored by Jehovah, had lost out on a special gift from God. How so?

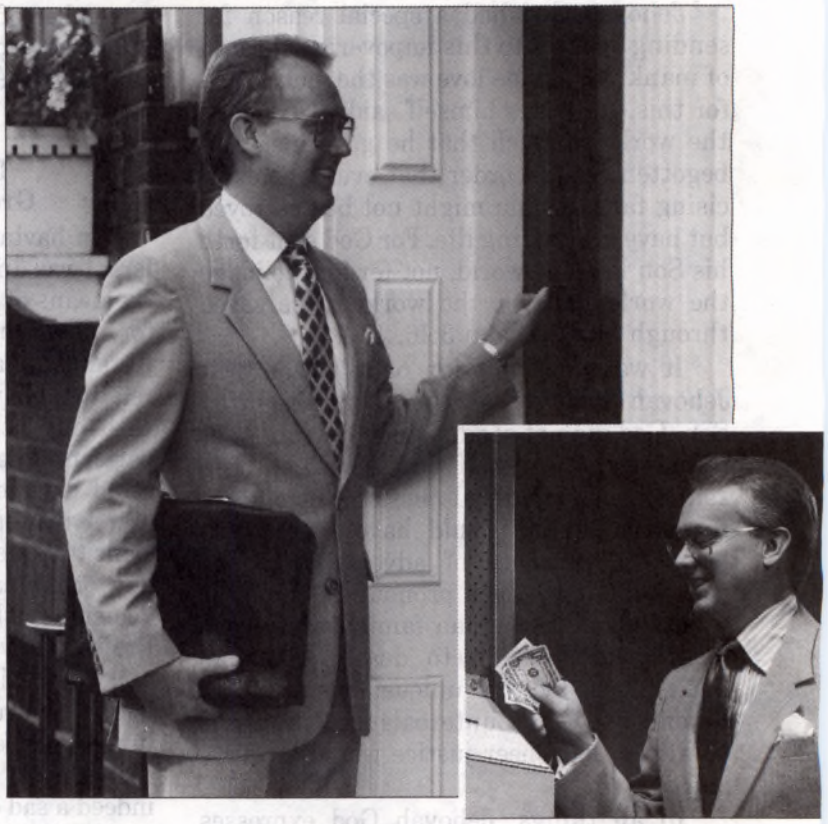
[12] By using the term "children," Jesus

10. Why was ancient Israel unlike any other nation on earth?

11. Until when did Israel enjoy its favored position with God, and how did Jesus express the change in their relationship?

12. Who were the 'children of Jerusalem,' and what would it have meant for Jesus to gather them together?

Do you seek God's Kingdom first by preaching the good news and by supporting that work with your resources?



referred only to the natural circumcised Jews who lived in Jerusalem and represented the entire Jewish nation. For Jesus to gather together the 'children of Jerusalem' would have meant for him to bring these "children" into a new covenant with God, with himself serving as the Mediator between Jehovah and these natural Jews. (Jeremiah 31:31-34) This would have resulted in the forgiveness of sins, for such was the extent of God's love. (Compare Malachi 1:2.) This would truly have been a great gift.

[13] In harmony with his prophetic Word, Jehovah waited as long as it was reasonable before extending to non-Jews the gift of becoming partakers of the new covenant. But by rejecting God's own Son, the Messiah, the nation of natural Israel lost out on this great gift. Jehovah therefore counterbalanced the rejection of his Son by extending this gift to people beyond the Jewish nation. In that way, Jehovah's joy as the Great Giver continued undiminished.

The Happiness of Giving

[14] Jehovah is "the happy God." (1 Timothy 1:11) Giving to others is one thing that makes him happy. And in the first century C.E., his only-begotten Son said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) In harmony with this principle, Jesus has become the happiest creature of the Creator of the whole universe. How so? Well, next to Jehovah God himself, Jesus Christ has given the greatest gift of all by laying down his life for the benefit of mankind. In fact, he is 'the happy Potentate.' (1 Timothy 6:15) Jesus thus exemplifies what he said about the greater happiness of giving.

[15] By means of Jesus Christ, Jehovah God will never fail to be a generous Giver to all of his intelligent creatures and will always

13. Israel's rejection of God's Son resulted in what loss, but why was Jehovah's joy undiminished?

14. Why is Jesus Christ the happiest creature in all the universe?

15. Of what will Jehovah never cease to be an example, and how can his intelligent creatures experience a measure of his happiness?

be their best example in giving. Even as God finds pleasure in giving good gifts to others, so he has put the spirit of generosity in the hearts of his intelligent creatures on earth. In that way they reflect and imitate his personality and experience a measure of his happiness. (Genesis 1:26; Ephesians 5:1) Fittingly, Jesus told his followers: "Practice giving, and people will give to you. They will pour into your laps a fine measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing. For with the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you in return."—Luke 6:38.

[16] Jesus set his disciples an excellent example in making the course of giving a practice. He said that there would be a fine response to such giving on the part of receivers. At Luke 6:38, Jesus was not referring exclusively to the giving of material gifts. He was not telling his disciples to pursue a course that would impoverish them materially. Instead, he was directing them to a course that would give them a sense of spiritual fulfillment.

Everlasting Happiness Assured

[17] What a wonderful gift Jehovah, the Head of all creation, has bestowed upon his Witnesses in these last days! He has given us the good news of his Kingdom. We have the great privilege of being proclaimers of the established Kingdom of God in the hands of his reigning Son, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10) Being made the vocal Witnesses of the Most High God is a gift beyond compare, and the best way we can practice giving in imitation of God is to share the Kingdom message with others before the end of this wicked system of things comes.

16. To what giving did Jesus refer at Luke 6:38?
17. What wonderful gift has God bestowed upon his Witnesses in these last days?

[18] The apostle Paul referred to hardships he had to undergo when declaring the Kingdom message to others. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27) Jehovah's modern-day Witnesses also have to undergo hardships and set aside personal preferences in an effort to give others the Kingdom hope. We may not be inclined to go to people's doors, especially if we are shy. But as Christ's followers, we cannot avoid, or sidestep, the privilege of giving spiritual things to others by preaching "this good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) We need to have the same attitude that Jesus had. When faced with death, he prayed: "My Father, . . . not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39) In the matter of giving others the good news of the Kingdom, Jehovah's servants must do God's will, not their own—what he wants, not what they may want.

[19] Such giving will involve our time and resources, but by being godly givers, we make sure that our happiness will be everlasting. Why? Because Jesus said: "Make friends for yourselves by means of the unrighteous riches ["worldly wealth," *New International Version*], so that, when such

18. As Jehovah's Witnesses, what must we give to others?
19. Who are the Possessors of "the everlasting dwelling places," and how can we make friends with them?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ What would God's greatest gift require on his part?
- ☐ On what kind of mission did God send his Son?
- ☐ Who is the happiest creature in all the universe, and why?
- ☐ How will godly givers experience everlasting happiness?

fail, they may receive you into the everlasting dwelling places." (Luke 16:9) It should be our objective to use "unrighteous riches" to make friends with the Possessors of "the everlasting dwelling places." As the Creator, Jehovah owns everything, and his firstborn Son shares in that ownership as Heir of all things. (Psalm 50:10-12; Hebrews 1:1, 2) To make friends with them, we must use riches in a way that brings their approval. This includes having the right attitude in using material things for the benefit of others. (Compare Matthew 6: 3, 4; 2 Corinthians 9:7.) We can use money in a proper way to fortify our friendship with Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. For example, we do this by cheerfully using what we have to come to the aid of people in real need and in expending our resources to further the interests of God's Kingdom. —Proverbs 19:17; Matthew 6:33.

[20] Because of their immortality, Jehovah God and Jesus Christ can be our Friends forever and can usher us into "everlasting dwelling places." This is so whether these will be in heaven with all the holy angels or on this earth in Paradise restored. (Luke 23:43) God's loving gift of Jesus Christ made all of this possible. (John 3:16) And Jehovah God will use Jesus to keep on giving to all creation, to His own unique happiness. In fact, throughout eternity we ourselves will have the privilege of giving under the universal sovereignty of Jehovah God and the kingship of his only-begotten Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This will result in everlasting happiness for all godly givers.

20. (a) Why can Jehovah and Jesus usher us into "everlasting dwelling places," and where may these places be? (b) What privilege will be ours throughout eternity?

JEHOVAH LOVES CHEERFUL GIVERS

"Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."—2 CORINTHIANS 9:7.

JEHOVAH was the first cheerful giver. He joyfully gave life to his only-begotten Son and used him to bring the angels and mankind into existence. (Proverbs 8: 30, 31; Colossians 1:13-17) God gave us life and breath and all things, including rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with good cheer. (Acts 14:17; 17:25) Indeed, both God and his Son, Jesus Christ, are cheerful givers. They gladly give with an unselfish spirit. Jehovah loved the world of mankind so much that "he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." And Jesus ungrudgingly 'gave his soul a ransom in exchange for many.'—John 3:16; Matthew 20:28.

1. How have God and Christ been cheerful givers?

When the tabernacle was being constructed, the Israelites worked industriously and made generous contributions for Jehovah

[2] Servants of God and Christ should, therefore, be cheerful givers. Such giving was encouraged in the apostle Paul's second letter to Christians in Corinth, written about 55 C.E. Apparently referring to voluntary and private monetary donations made especially to help needy Christians in Jerusalem and Judea, Paul said: "Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7; Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; Galatians 2:10) How have God's people reacted to opportunities to give? And what can we learn from Paul's counsel on giving?

2. According to Paul, what kind of giver does God love?

Impelled by Willing Hearts

[3] Willing hearts impel God's people to give of themselves and their resources in support of the divine purpose. For instance, the Israelites of Moses' day joyfully supported the construction of the tabernacle for Jehovah's worship. The hearts of some women impelled them to spin goat's hair, while certain men served as craftsmen. The people cheerfully gave gold, silver, wood, linen, and other things as a voluntary "contribution for Jehovah." (Exodus 35:4-35) They were so generous that donated materials "proved to be enough for all the work to be done, and more than enough." —Exodus 36:4-7.

[4] Centuries later, King David contributed heavily toward the temple of Jehovah to be built by his son Solomon. Since David 'took pleasure in the house of God,' he gave his "special property" of gold and silver. Princes, chiefs, and others 'filled their hand with a gift for Jehovah.' With what effect? Why, "the people gave way to rejoicing over their making voluntary offerings, for it was with a complete heart that they made voluntary offerings to Jehovah"! (1 Chronicles 29:3-9) They were cheerful givers.

3. To what extent did the Israelites support the construction of the tabernacle for Jehovah's worship?

4. With what attitude did David and others contribute toward the temple?

[5] Through the centuries, the Israelites were privileged to support the tabernacle, the later temples, and the priestly and Levitical services there. For example, in Nehemiah's day the Jews resolved to make contributions to maintain pure worship, aware that they should not neglect God's house. (Nehemiah 10:32-39) Similarly today, Jehovah's Witnesses cheerfully make voluntary donations to build and maintain meeting places and to support true worship.

[6] Early Christians were cheerful givers. For instance, Gaius was doing "a faithful work" in being hospitable to those traveling in the interests of the Kingdom, even as Jehovah's Witnesses extend hospitality to traveling overseers now sent out by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. (3 John 5-8) It costs something to have these brothers travel to congregations and to extend hospitality to them, but how beneficial this is spiritually!—Romans 1:11, 12.

[7] Congregations as a whole have used their material resources to promote Kingdom interests. For example, Paul told believers in Philippi: "Even in Thessalonica, you sent something to me both once and a second time for my need. Not that I am earnestly seeking the gift, but that I am earnestly seeking the fruitage that brings more credit to your account." (Philippians 4:15-17) The Philippians gave cheerfully, but what factors prompt such cheerful giving?

What Prompts Cheerful Giving?

[8] *Jehovah's holy spirit, or active force, moves his people to be cheerful givers.* When Judean Christians were in need, God's spirit moved other believers to help them materially. To encourage Christians in Corinth to do their utmost in making such donations, Paul cited the example of the congregations in Macedonia. Though Macedonian believers were experiencing persecution and poverty, they showed brotherly love by giving beyond their actual ability. They even begged for the privilege of giving! (2 Corinthians 8:1-5) God's cause does not depend solely on the donations of the wealthy. (James 2:5) His materially poor dedicated servants have been the chief mainstay in financing the Kingdom-preaching work. (Matthew 24:14) Yet, they do not suffer because of their generosity, for God unfailingly provides for the needs of his people in this work, and the force behind its continuance and increase is his spirit.

[9] *Cheerful giving is prompted by faith, knowledge, and love.* Paul said: "Just as you [Corinthians] are abounding in everything, in faith and word and knowledge and all earnestness and in this love of ours to you, may you also abound in this kind giving. It is not in the way of commanding you, but in view of the earnestness of others and to make a test of the genuineness of your love, that I am speaking." (2 Corinthians 8:7, 8) Contributing to Jehovah's cause, especially when the giver has limited means, requires faith in God's future provisions. Christians abounding in knowledge want to serve Jehovah's purpose, and those who abound in love for him and his people cheerfully use their resources to further his cause.

[10] *Jesus' example moves Christians to give cheerfully.* After urging the Corinthians to give out of love, Paul said: "You know the undeserved kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich he became poor for your sakes, that you might

5. How did the Israelites support true worship through the centuries?
6. Give examples of cheerful giving by Christians.
7. How did the Philippians use their material resources?
8. How would you prove that God's spirit moves his people to be cheerful givers?
9. How are faith, knowledge, and love related to cheerful giving?
10. Why can it be said that Jesus' example moves Christians to give cheerfully?

become rich through his poverty." (2 Corinthians 8:9) Richer in heaven than any other son of God, Jesus emptied himself of all of this and took up human life. (Philippians 2: 5-8) By becoming poor in this unselfish way, however, Jesus contributed to the sanctification of Jehovah's name and laid down his life as a ransom sacrifice for the benefit of humans who would accept it. In harmony with Jesus' example, should we not give cheerfully to help others and contribute to the sanctification of Jehovah's name?

[11] *Good planning makes cheerful giving possible.* Paul told the Corinthians: "Every first day of the week let each of you at his own house set something aside in store as he may be prospering, so that when I arrive collections will not take place then." (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2) In a similar private and voluntary way, those wishing to make donations to further the Kingdom work today would do well to set aside some of their earnings for that purpose. As a result of such good planning, individual Witnesses, families, and congregations can make donations to advance true worship.

[12] *Implementing plans to contribute will make us cheerful.* As Jesus said, "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) So the Corinthians could increase their joy by following Paul's counsel to carry out their year-old plan to send funds to Jerusalem. "It is especially acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what a person does not have," he said. When someone makes contributions according to what he has, they should be valued highly. If we trust in God, he can equalize things so that those having much are generous, not wasteful, and those with little do not have deficiencies that reduce their strength and ability to serve him. —2 Corinthians 8:10-15.

11, 12. How can good planning make us cheerful givers?

Careful Management of Giving

[13] Although Paul supervised the donation arrangement so that needy believers could enjoy material relief and engage more energetically in the preaching work, neither he nor others took any of the funds for their services. (2 Corinthians 8:16-24; 12:17, 18) Paul worked to meet his own material needs instead of imposing financial burdens on any congregation. (1 Corinthians 4:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:8) In turning donations over to him, therefore, the Corinthians were entrusting them to a trustworthy, hardworking servant of God.

[14] Since the incorporation of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society in 1884, contributors have had evidence that it is a trustworthy supervisor of all donations entrusted to it in behalf of Jehovah's Kingdom work. According to its charter, the Society strives to fill the greatest need of all the people, the need for spiritual things. This is done in the form of Bible literature and instruction on how to gain salvation. Today, Jehovah is speeding up the gathering of sheeplike ones into his expanding organization, and his blessing on the wise use of donations in the Kingdom-preaching work is clear evidence of divine approval. (Isaiah 60:8, 22) We are confident that he will continue to move the hearts of cheerful givers.

[15] The Society occasionally uses the columns of this journal to alert readers to their privilege of making voluntary donations to the worldwide Kingdom-preaching work. This is not solicitation, but it is a reminder to all desiring to support "the holy work of the good news" as God prospers them. (Romans 15:16; 3 John 2) The Society uses all the money donated in the most economical

13. Why could the Corinthians have confidence in Paul's supervision of donations?
14. As to the use of donations, what record does the Watch Tower Society have?
15. Why does this magazine occasionally mention donations?

way so as to make known Jehovah's name and Kingdom. All contributions are gratefully received, acknowledged, and used to spread the good news of God's Kingdom. For example, by these means missionary activities are sustained in many countries, and printing facilities vital to the dispensing of Bible knowledge are maintained and expanded. Further, contributions to the worldwide work are used to cover the mounting costs of producing Bibles and Bible-oriented publications as well as audiocassettes and videocassettes. In such ways Kingdom interests are advanced by cheerful givers.

Not Out Of Compulsion

[16] Few Witnesses of Jehovah are materially rich. Though they may give modest sums to advance Kingdom interests, their donations are nevertheless significant. When Jesus saw a needy widow drop two small coins of little value into a temple treasury chest, he said: "This widow, although poor, dropped in more than they all did. For all these [other contributors] dropped in gifts out of their surplus, but this woman out of her want dropped in all the means of living she had." (Luke 21: 1-4) Although her gift was small, she was a cheerful giver—and her contribution was appreciated.

[17] Regarding the relief work in behalf of Judean Christians, Paul said: "Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7) The apostle may have alluded to a portion of Proverbs 22:8 in the Septuagint version, which says: "God blesseth a cheerful giver; and will supply the deficiency of his works."

16. Though few of Jehovah's Witnesses are materially rich, why are their contributions appreciated?

17, 18. What is the essence of Paul's words at 2 Corinthians 9:7, and what is indicated by the Greek word rendered "cheerful"?

Donations like that of the needy widow are appreciated and are significant

(*The Septuagint Bible,* translated by Charles Thomson) Paul replaced "blesseth" with "loves," but there is a connection, for a harvest of blessings results from God's love.

[18] The cheerful giver is truly happy to give. Why, from the Greek term rendered "cheerful" at 2 Corinthians 9:7 comes the word "hilarious"! After pointing this out, scholar R. C. H. Lenski said: "God loves the lighthearted, joyous, happy giver . . . [whose] faith is wreathed in smiles when another opportunity for giving greets him." A person with such a joyful spirit does not give grudgingly or under compulsion but has his heart in his giving. Are you that cheerful about giving in support of Kingdom interests?

[19] Early Christians did not pass collection plates or practice tithing by donating a tenth of their income for religious purposes. Rather, their contributions were completely voluntary. Tertullian, who was converted to Christianity about 190 C.E., wrote: "Though we have our treasure-chest, it is not made up of purchase-money, as of a religion that has its price. On the monthly day [apparently once a month], if he likes, each puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and only if he be able; for there is no compulsion; all is voluntary."—*Apology,* Chapter XXXIX.

[20] Voluntary giving has always been customary among Jehovah's modern-day servants. At times, however, some have not taken full advantage of their privilege of supporting God's cause by making donations. In February 1883, for instance, this magazine said: "Some are bearing *so much* pecuniary [monetary] burden for the sake of others, that their financial sinews are shrinking from over-work and exhaustion, and thus their usefulness is impaired; and not only so, but those who . . . have not fully taken in the situation, have been losers from lack of exercise in that direction."

[21] As the great crowd streams into Jehovah's organization today, and as God's work expands into Eastern Europe and other previously restricted areas, there is an increasing need for expansion of printing plants and other facilities. More Bibles and other publications must be printed. Many theocratic projects are under way; however, some could proceed more quickly if there were adequate funds. Of course, we have faith that God will provide what is needed, and we know that those 'honoring Jehovah with their valuable things' will be blessed. (Proverbs 3:9, 10) Indeed, "he that sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." Jehovah will 'enrich us for every sort of generosity,' and our cheerful giving will cause many to thank and praise him.—2 Corinthians 9:6-14.

19. How did early Christians make contributions?

20, 21. (a) What did an early issue of this magazine say about the privilege of supporting God's cause financially, and how does this apply even now? (b) What happens when we honor Jehovah with our valuable things?

Show Your Gratitude for God's Gifts

[22] Moved by deep gratitude, Paul himself said: "Thanks be to God for his indescribable free gift." (2 Corinthians 9:15) As "a propitiatory sacrifice" for the sins of anointed Christians and for those of the world, Jesus is the basis and channel for Jehovah's indescribable free gift. (1 John 2:1, 2) That gift is "the surpassing undeserved kindness of God" that he has shown to his people on earth through Jesus Christ, and it abounds to their salvation and to Jehovah's glory and vindication.—2 Corinthians 9:14.

[23] Our deep gratitude goes to Jehovah for his indescribable free gift and many other spiritual and material gifts to his people. Why, our heavenly Father's goodness to us is so wonderful that it surpasses human powers of expression! And surely it should prompt us to be cheerful givers. With heartfelt appreciation, then, let us do all we can to advance the cause of our generous God, Jehovah, the first and foremost cheerful Giver!

22, 23. (a) What is God's indescribable free gift? (b) Since we appreciate Jehovah's gifts, what should we do?

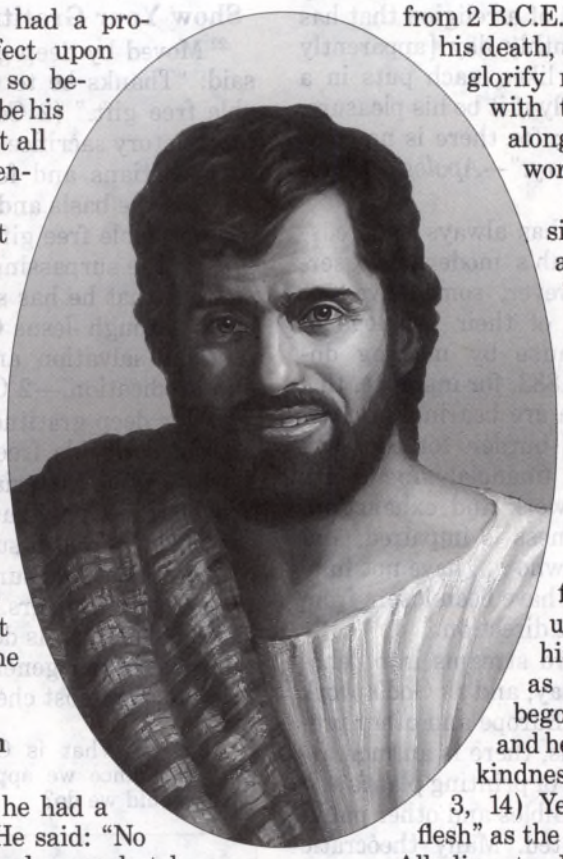
Do You Recall?

- ☐ Willing hearts have impelled Jehovah's people to do what?
- ☐ What prompts cheerful giving?
- ☐ How does the Watch Tower Society use all donations it receives?
- ☐ What kind of giver does God love, and how should we show our gratitude for His many gifts?

What Do the Scriptures Say About "the Divinity of Christ"?

JESUS CHRIST has had a profound religious effect upon mankind. This is so because millions claim to be his followers. However, not all of them agree on his identity.

Some who say that they accept Jesus' teachings view him as God's Son, not as the Creator himself. Others believe in "the divinity of Christ" and think that he is actually God. They hold that Jesus always existed and was more than a human when he was here on the earth. Are they right about this? What do the Scriptures say?



Jesus' Prehuman Existence

Jesus testified that he had a prehuman existence. He said: "No man has ascended into heaven but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man." (John 3:13) Jesus also stated: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever; and, for a fact, the bread that I shall give is my flesh in behalf of the life of the world."—John 6:51.

That Jesus was alive before coming to the earth is clear from his words: "Before Abraham came into existence, I have been." (John 8:58) Abraham lived from 2018 to 1843 B.C.E., whereas Jesus' human life ran from 2 B.C.E. to 33 C.E. Just before his death, Jesus prayed: "Father, glorify me alongside yourself with the glory that I had alongside you before the world was."—John 17:5.

Jesus' followers gave similar testimony. The apostle John wrote: "In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god. All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence. . . . So the Word became flesh and resided among us, and we had a view of his glory, a glory such as belongs to an only-begotten son from a father; and he was full of undeserved kindness and truth." (John 1:1, 3, 14) Yes, "the Word became flesh" as the man Jesus Christ.

Alluding to Jesus' prehuman existence, the apostle Paul wrote: "Keep this mental attitude in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God. No, but he emptied himself and took a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men." (Philippians 2:5-7) Paul called Jesus "the firstborn of all creation; because by means of him all other things were created."—Colossians 1:13-16.

Not Divine on Earth

The Scriptures make it clear that Jesus was entirely human from his birth until his death. John did not say that the Word was merely clothed with flesh. He "became flesh" and was not part flesh and part God. If Jesus had been human and divine at the same time, it could not have been said that he had been "made a little lower than angels."—Hebrews 2:9; Psalm 8:4, 5.

If Jesus had been both God and man when on the earth, why did he repeatedly pray to Jehovah? Paul wrote: "In the days of his flesh Christ offered up supplications and also petitions to the One who was able to save him out of death, with strong outcries and tears, and he was favorably heard for his godly fear."—Hebrews 5:7.

That Jesus was not partly a spirit when on the earth is proved by Peter's statement that Christ was "put to death in the flesh, but . . . made alive in the spirit." (1 Peter 3:18) Only because Jesus was wholly human could he have experienced what imperfect people experience and thus become a sympathetic high priest. Wrote Paul: "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."—Hebrews 4:15.

As "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world," Jesus "gave himself a corresponding ransom for all." (John 1:29; 1 Timothy 2:6) In that way, Jesus bought back exactly what Adam had lost —perfect, eternal human life. Since God's justice required 'soul for soul,' Jesus thus had to be what Adam was originally—a perfect human, not a God-man.—Deuteronomy 19:21; 1 Corinthians 15:22.

Do Not Read Too Much Into Bible Texts

Those saying that Jesus was a God-man use various scriptures in an effort to prove that he is a member of Christendom's Trinity, equal with God in essence, power, glory, and duration. But when we examine these texts carefully, we find that those arguing for "the divinity of Christ" view these verses as saying more than they really do.

Some say that Bible texts in which God uses the pronoun "us" make the prehuman Jesus (the Word) equal to Jehovah. But use of this pronoun does not mean that God was talking to an equal. At best it implies that among heavenly creatures, one occupies a preferred position in relation to God. Actually, the prehuman Jesus was God's intimate associate, Master Worker, and Spokesman.—Genesis 1:26; 11:7; Proverbs 8:30, 31; John 1:3.

The circumstances associated with Jesus' baptism do not suggest that God, Christ, and the holy spirit are coequal. As a human, Jesus underwent baptism in symbol of the presentation of himself to his heavenly Father. On that occasion "the heavens were opened up," and God's spirit descended, coming upon Jesus like a dove. Also, "from the heavens," Jehovah's voice was heard to say: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved."—Matthew 3:13-17.

So, then, what did Jesus mean when he told his followers to baptize disciples "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit"? (Matthew 28:19, 20) Jesus did not mean or say that he, his Father, and the holy spirit were coequal. Rather, those baptized recognize Jehovah as the Life-Giver and Almighty God, to whom they dedicate their life. They accept Jesus as the Messiah and the one through whom God provided a ransom for believing mankind. And they realize that the holy spirit is God's active force, to which they must submit. However, such baptismal candidates are not to view Jehovah, Jesus, and the holy spirit as one Trinitarian deity.

But do not Jesus' miracles prove that he

was a God-man? No, for Moses, Elijah, Elisha, the apostles Peter and Paul, and others performed miracles without being God-men. (Exodus 14:15-31; 1 Kings 18:18-40; 2 Kings 4:17-37; Acts 9:36-42; 19:11, 12) Like them, Jesus was a human who performed miracles with God-given power.—Luke 11:14-19.

Isaiah prophetically referred to Jesus the Messiah as "Mighty God." (Isaiah 9:6) At Isaiah 10:21, the same prophet spoke of Jehovah as "the Mighty God." Some try to use this similarity of wording to prove that Jesus is God. But we need to be careful about reading too much into these verses. The Hebrew expression rendered "Mighty God" is not limited to Jehovah as is the expression "God Almighty." (Genesis 17:1) Admittedly, there is a difference between being mighty and being almighty, with no superior.

According to Isaiah 43:10, Jehovah said: "Before me there was no God formed, and after me there continued to be none." But those words do not prove that Jesus is God. The point is that Jehovah had no predecessor, that no god existed before him, for he is eternal. There will be no god after Jehovah because he will always exist and will have no successors as the Supreme Sovereign. Yet, Jehovah did produce others that he himself called gods, as the Scriptures show by saying concerning certain humans: "I myself have said, 'You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High. Surely you will die just as men do; and like any one of the princes you will fall!'" (Psalm 82:6, 7) Similarly, the Word was a god created by Jehovah, but that did not make Jesus equal to Almighty God at any time.

Jesus' True Position

Those who claim that God took on human existence as a God-man should note that the Bible does not even hint that Jesus viewed himself in such a way. Rather, it consistently shows that Jesus has always been inferior to his Father. When on the earth, Jesus never claimed to be more than the Son of God. Moreover, Christ said: "The Father is greater than I am."—John 14:28.

Paul made a distinction between Jehovah and Jesus in saying: "There is actually to us one God the Father, out of whom all things are, and we for him; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are, and we through him." (1 Corinthians 8:6) Paul also said: "You belong to Christ; Christ, in turn, belongs to God." (1 Corinthians 3:23) Indeed, even as Christians belong to their Master, Jesus Christ, so he belongs to his Head, Jehovah God.

Making a similar point, Paul wrote: "The head of every man is the Christ; in turn the head of a woman is the man; in turn the head of the Christ is God." (1 Corinthians 11:3) This relationship between God and Christ will continue, for after Jesus' Thousand Year Reign, "he hands over the kingdom to his God and Father" and "the Son himself will also subject himself to the One who subjected all things to him, that God may be all things to everyone."—1 Corinthians 15:24, 28; Revelation 20:6.

A Look at Other Texts

Regarding Jesus' birth, Matthew wrote: "All this actually came about for that to be fulfilled which was spoken by Jehovah through his prophet [at Isaiah 7:14], saying: 'Look! The virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son, and they will call his name Immanuel,' which means, when translated, 'With Us Is God.'" (Matthew 1:22, 23) Jesus was not given the personal name Immanuel, but his role as a human fulfilled its meaning. Jesus' presence on the earth as the Messianic Seed and Heir to David's throne proved to Jehovah's worshipers that God was with them, on their side, backing

Do Angels Worship Jesus?

CERTAIN translations of Hebrews 1:6 say: "Let all the angels of God worship him [Jesus]." (*King James Version; The Jerusalem Bible*) The apostle Paul evidently quoted the *Septuagint*, which says at Psalm 97:7: "Worship Him [God] all ye His angels." —C. Thomson.

The Greek word *pro·sky·ne´o*, rendered "worship" at Hebrews 1:6, is used at Psalm 97:7 in the *Septuagint* for a Hebrew term, *sha·chah´*, meaning "to bow down." This can be an acceptable act of respect for humans. (Genesis 23:7; 1 Samuel 24:8; 2 Kings 2:15) Or it can relate to worship of the true God or that wrongly directed to false gods. —Exodus 23:24; 24:1; 34:14; Deuteronomy 8:19.

Usually *pro·sky·ne´o* given to Jesus corresponds with obeisance to kings and others. (Compare Matthew 2:2, 8; 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 20:20 with 1 Samuel 25:23, 24; 2 Samuel 14:4-7; 1 Kings 1:16; 2 Kings 4:36, 37.) Often it is clear that obeisance is rendered to Jesus not as God but as "God's Son" or the Messianic "Son of man." —Matthew 14:32, 33; Luke 24:50-52; John 9:35, 38.

Hebrews 1:6 relates to Jesus' position under God. (Philippians 2:9-11) Here some versions render *pro·sky·ne´o* "pay . . . homage" (*The New English Bible*), "do obeisance to" (*New World Translation*), or "bow before" (*An American Translation*). If one prefers the rendering "worship," such worship is relative, for Jesus told Satan: "It is Jehovah your God you must worship [form of *pro·sky·ne´o*], and it is to him alone you must render sacred service." —Matthew 4:8-10.

Though Psalm 97:7, which speaks about worshiping God, was applied to Christ at Hebrews 1:6, Paul had shown that the resurrected Jesus is "the reflection of [God's] glory and the exact representation of his very being." (Hebrews 1:1-3) So any "worship" the angels give God's Son is relative and is directed through him to Jehovah.

them up in their undertakings.—Genesis 28:15; Exodus 3:11, 12; Joshua 1:5, 9; Psalm 46:5-7; Jeremiah 1:19.

Addressing the resurrected Jesus, the apostle Thomas exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28) This and other accounts were "written down that [we] may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God." And Thomas was not contradicting Jesus, who had sent His disciples the message: "I am ascending to . . . my God and your God." (John 20:17, 30, 31) So Thomas did not think that Jesus was Almighty God. Thomas may have addressed Jesus as "my God" in the sense of Christ's being "a god," though not "the only true God." (John 1:1; 17:1-3) Or by saying "my God," Thomas may have been acknowledging Jesus as God's Spokesman and Representative, even as others addressed an angelic messenger as though he were Jehovah.—Compare Genesis 18:1-5, 22-33; 31:11-13; 32:24-30; Judges 2:1-5; 6:11-15; 13:20-22.

According to the Bible, then, Jesus had a prehuman existence as the Word. When on the earth, he was not a divine God-man. He was wholly human, though perfect, as Adam originally was. Since Jesus' resurrection, he has been an exalted immortal spirit ever subordinate to God. Clearly, therefore, the Scriptures do not support the idea of "the divinity of Christ."

ASSEMBLING WITH LOVERS OF GOD-GIVEN FREEDOM

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES are unique in ever so many ways. They alone speak the "pure language." (Zephaniah 3:9) Only they are united, having the distinguishing mark of love described by Jesus Christ. (John 13:35) And they alone enjoy the freedom that Jesus Christ said the truth would bring, as recorded at John 8:32: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Those words that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, directed to his disciples, have proved true. And they are appreciated now more than ever by all those Witnesses of Jehovah who attended the "Lovers of Freedom" District Conventions. The convention program has driven home to them the various aspects of their freedom, how they are to use it, the accountability that goes with their freedom, and how blessed they are to be a free people.

These timely and practical conventions began in the Northern Hemisphere on June 7, 1991, in Los Angeles, California, U.S.A. The program opened at 10:20 a.m. with a musical presentation, followed by a song and prayer. The opening talk was a hard-hitting presentation based on James 1:25. According to *The Jerusalem Bible,* this verse reads: "The man who looks steadily at the perfect law of freedom and makes that his habit—not listening and then forgetting, but actively putting it into practice—will be happy in all that he does." Just as we look in a mirror to see where we need to make improvements in our appearance, so we need to persist in peering into God's perfect law that belongs to freedom

A young delegate to the convention in Prague, Czechoslovakia

to learn where we need to make changes in our personality. And we should persist in looking into that mirror.

Next came the chairman's address, "Welcome, All You Lovers of Freedom." Jehovah's Witnesses love freedom, and they want to stay free. The speaker quoted legal authorities who showed that there can be no freedom without law. Yes, Christians are not free to do as they please but are free to do Jehovah's will. They want to make full use of their freedom but not abuse it. Especially since 1919 have Jehovah's Witnesses been enjoying increased freedom. The speaker traced the emphasis on freedom in convention themes and Christian publications. All the conventioners would learn more about God-given freedom and how to use it.

Those timely remarks were followed by interviews of lovers of freedom who rejoiced to be there at the convention. Such conventions are times of rejoicing, even as ancient Israel's three annual festivals were marked by great joy. A number of interviews proved that conventions are spiritually upbuilding times of rejoicing.

Then came the keynote address, "The Purpose and Use of Our God-Given Freedom." From this talk the conventioners learned that Jehovah alone has absolute freedom because he is the Supreme Authority and is almighty. For the sake of his name and for his creatures' benefit, however, he sometimes limits his freedom by being slow to anger and exercising self-control. All of his intelligent creatures have relative freedom, for they are subject to Jehovah and are limited by his physical and

1. Candidates proceeding to a baptismal site in Prague, Czechoslovakia

2. Undergoing baptism as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in Tallinn, Estonia

3. New publications brought joy to conventioners in Usolye-Sibirskoye, Siberia

4. Releasing the "New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures" in Czech and Slovak at the convention in Prague

moral laws. Jehovah has given them freedom for their enjoyment but especially so that they may bring him honor and joy by worshiping him. Because of making good use of their freedom, Jehovah's Witnesses have gained a worldwide reputation for good conduct and zeal in their ministry.

Friday Afternoon

"Busy—In Dead Works or in Jehovah's Service?" was the thought-provoking title of the talk that opened the Friday afternoon session. Dead works include not only

those of the flesh but also others that are spiritually dead, vain, and fruitless—such as money-making schemes. In this regard, honest self-scrutiny is essential to determine if we are putting the Kingdom first in life.

Having much the same thrust was the following talk, "Fulfilling Our Commission as God's Ministers." The speaker showed that Christians should not content themselves with mere token service or with just meeting hour quotas. They should want to be effective in all features of their Christian ministry. These points were driven home by means of a demonstration and interviews. All were exhorted to fulfill their ministry to the fullest extent possible.

In the talk "A Free People but Accountable," the speaker stressed that though Jehovah's people cherish the freedom the truth has brought them, they should remember that with it goes accountability. They should use their freedom, not as an excuse for bad conduct, but to the praise of Jehovah. As Christians, they are accountable to "the superior authorities" and should also cooperate with congregation elders. (Romans 13:1) Moreover, they are accountable for their dress, grooming, and conduct. Never should they forget that "each of us will render an account for himself to God."—Romans 14:12; 1 Peter 2:16.

Then followed a discussion of the need for all Christians to be "Fearless as This World's End Draws Near." While mankind is fearful about what the future may bring, Christians need to be fearless to carry out their ministry. Fearlessness is a result of trust in Jehovah, for the more a Christian fears to displease God, the less he will fear creatures. Memorizing comforting scriptures can strengthen a person to be fearless. To be spiritually strong and fearless, God's servants also need to make good use of all opportunities to associate with fellow believers. Each one also needs to remember the role prayer plays in being fearless. By remaining fearless, Christians will maintain a fine relationship with Jehovah God.

The first day's program concluded with the very instructive drama *Set Free to Promote True Worship.* It showed how a modern-day family learned a lesson from Ezra and his band of 7,000, who made sacrifices to return to Jerusalem. It enabled each conventioner to examine his priorities and see how he could increase his privileges of service. This drama had something for old and young alike.

Saturday Morning

After a musical program, song, prayer, and a discussion of the daily Bible text, Saturday morning's program featured a symposium entitled "Freedom With Responsibility in the Family Circle." In the first part, "How Fathers Can Imitate Jehovah," fathers were counseled on the various ways in which they can imitate our heavenly Father. First Timothy 5:8 requires that they provide not only materially but also spiritually. They imitate Jehovah by being fine teachers of their family and by administering loving discipline as needed. These points were illustrated by several interviews.

"The Wife's Supporting Role" was the next part of this symposium. It started out by stressing that a wife occupies a dignified position in the Christian family, that of being supportive. What does this require of her? That she be in proper subjection, never pressuring her husband to do something that only she wants. She needs to care well for her obligations to her husband and children, and she can derive real satisfaction from keeping her home clean and

tidy. And as a Christian minister, she may have many opportunities to engage in the field service. An interview with a family underscored the wisdom of such Scriptural counsel.

Young people received attention in the part "Children Who Listen and Learn." By training their children to listen and learn, parents bring honor to Jehovah and show love for their spiritual brothers and for their own offspring. A strong bond will exist between parents and children if they spend quality time together. Parents must be equipped to answer their children's questions and stimulate their thirst for knowledge. Again, interviews showed how this can be done.

Next came the fine counsel "Keep Yourself Free to Serve Jehovah." How is this done? By keeping free from pursuing worldly careers, time-consuming hobbies, and materialistic goals. Jesus and the apostle Paul set us fine examples by being self-sacrificing. Jehovah's people need to keep a simple eye, focused on Kingdom interests. When it comes to procuring material things, it is wiser to save now and buy later than to buy now and pay later. Youths must guard against fantasizing about sexual pleasures and worldly careers. An interview of an unmarried pioneer showed the blessings that come when one keeps free to serve Jehovah.

Saturday morning's program concluded with the talk "Enter Into Freedom by Dedication and Baptism." The baptismal candidates were reminded that while creation had been plunged into slavery by Adam's rebellion, the mighty Liberator, Jesus Christ, opened the way to freedom by his sacrifice. The speaker showed what was involved in breaking free to do God's will and highlighted the obligations and blessings that would be the lot of those being baptized.

Saturday Afternoon

Saturday afternoon's program began with the soul-searching question "Whose Advantage Are You Seeking?" The world reflects the self-seeking spirit of the Devil. However, Christians are to imitate the self-sacrificing spirit of Jesus Christ. What an example he set! He left heavenly glory and then sacrificed his human life for our benefit. Challenges as to whose advantage we are seeking surface when there are misunderstandings between Christians in business or financial matters, when there are personality clashes, and so forth. Such things test Christian love. But by seeking the advantage of others, a person is certain to realize the greater blessing of giving, and he will gain Jehovah's approval.

Then followed the closely related theme "Recognizing and Overcoming Spiritual Weakness." This talk emphasized the need to identify the symptoms of spiritual weakness and then act decisively in the fight to overcome Satan and his snares. Servants of Jehovah must cultivate deep love for him and a hatred for what is bad. This requires that they get to know Jehovah through regular, purposeful personal and family Bible study. They must avoid all forms of entertainment that glorify violence and sexual immorality. (Ephesians 5:3-5) Regular prayer and attendance at meetings are also fundamental to success in overcoming spiritual weaknesses.

Perhaps causing more discussion than any other talk given at the convention was the one entitled "Is Marriage the Key to Happiness?" So many young people think so! But the speaker made it clear that there are numberless faithful spirit creatures who are happy though not married, even as many dedicated Christians are very happy though they are not yoked in marriage. Moreover, many married couples are

not happy, as is indicated by the high divorce rate. One just needs to reflect on the many blessings that all dedicated Christians enjoy to realize that marriage, though it can be a blessing, is not the key to happiness.

This was followed by the symposium "Christian Freedom in Our Day." The first speaker discussed "Evaluating Facets of Our Christian Freedom." These include freedom from such false religious teachings as the Trinity, immortality of the human soul, and eternal torment. Then there is freedom from slavish bondage to sin. Though Christians are imperfect, they are free from such bad habits as smoking, gambling, drunkenness, and sexual promiscuity. There is also freedom from hopelessness, for they have the hope of Paradise that impels them to tell others about it.

The following speaker asked the question "Do You Personally Cherish Such Freedom?" To cherish means to hold dear, to nurture with care. To do that, a servant of God must guard against being tempted to go beyond the limits of Christian freedom. The world's freedom is a deceptive lie, for it results in slavery to sin and corruption.

The final speaker in this symposium spoke on the subject "Freedom Lovers Stand Fast." To do that, Christians must stick close to their celestial parents, Jehovah and his wifelike organization. Jehovah's people cannot allow themselves to be deflected by apostate propaganda; they must reject those who come with immoral propositions. To stand fast in godly freedom, Christians must be "living by spirit." —Galatians 5:25.

The final talk of the day was a real treat. It was entitled "The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived." Jesus Christ was the greatest man, for he affected the life of humankind more powerfully than all armies, navies, parliaments, and kings put together. He was the Son of God, who existed in heaven before coming to the earth. So well did Jesus copy his heavenly Father in what he spoke and taught and how he lived that he could say: "He that has seen me has seen the Father also." (John 14:9) How well Jesus demonstrated that "God is love"! (1 John 4:8) After dealing at length with Jesus' qualities, the speaker noted that a series of articles entitled "Jesus' Life and Ministry" had been published in *The Watchtower* since April 1985. In response to many requests, the Society was now releasing the new book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived.* It has 133 chapters and is printed in full color. The material in the series has been edited, and all of it is incorporated in the book's 448 pages. Truly, this convention day ended on an especially high note!

Sunday Forenoon

Early in the Sunday-morning session came the symposium "Serving as Fishers of Men." The talk "Catching Fish—Literal and Symbolic" laid the groundwork for the talks that followed. The speaker showed that after Jesus had caused a miraculous catch of fish, he invited the fishermen involved to become fishers of men. For some

In Our Next Issue

Beware of False Prophets!

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Jehovah's Gift of Holy Spirit

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Did the Early Church Teach That God Is a Trinity?

time, Jesus trained his disciples to become fishers of men, and beginning with Pentecost 33 C.E., they were successful in helping multitudes of men and women to become disciples.

The next speaker dealt with the parable of the dragnet recorded at Matthew 13: 47-50. He pointed out that the symbolic dragnet included both anointed Christians and Christendom, the latter because of work done in translating, publishing, and distributing Bibles, although these efforts gathered in vast multitudes of unsuitable fish. Especially since 1919 has there been a separating work, with the unsuitable fish being thrown away, whereas the suitable ones are being gathered into vessellike congregations that have helped to protect and preserve true Christians for divine service.

The third talk, "Fishing for Men in Global Waters," stressed the obligation of all dedicated Christians to share in worldwide fishing. Now over 4,000,000 are sharing in this work in more than 200 lands, and in recent years over 230,000 have been baptized annually. All of Jehovah's people were urged to improve their fishing skills, and several particularly successful "fishermen" were interviewed.

In the following talk, entitled "Keeping Awake in 'the Time of the End,'" the speaker enumerated seven aids to help God's people stay awake: fighting distractions, praying, sounding the warning about the end of this system, sticking to Jehovah's organization, making self-examination, meditating on fulfilled prophecies, and keeping in mind that their salvation is closer than when they became believers.

The morning's program concluded with a discussion of "Who Will Escape the 'Time of Distress'?" The speaker showed how the prophecy of Joel had a measure of fulfillment in apostolic times, was having further fulfillment now, and will have complete fulfillment in the near future.

Sunday Afternoon

The afternoon program began with the public talk, "Hailing God's New World of Freedom!" This talk continued the convention's theme of freedom. It was pointed out that God's Word foretells a new world where there will be freedom from oppression by false religious, political, economic, and racial elements. There will also be freedom from sin and death. Perfect health will be restored so that people will be able to live forever in happiness on a paradise earth. Thus, lovers of righteousness have every reason to laud the new world's Maker by exclaiming: "Thank you, Jehovah, for true freedom at last!"

The public talk was followed by something new for district conventions—a discussion of the week's lesson in *The Watchtower*. Then the convention came to a close with the stirring talk and admonition "Lovers of Freedom, Keep Advancing." The speaker briefly dealt with the high points of the convention's theme of freedom. He stressed how happy Jehovah's people are because of their freedom, enumerated ways in which Christians had made progress, and urged them to keep advancing unitedly so as to reap further blessings. He concluded with the words: "As we do this, may Jehovah continue to bless one and all so that we may keep advancing as lovers of freedom."

"The creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will but through him that subjected it, on the basis of hope that the creation itself also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God."—Romans 8:20, 21.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Why did Noah send out from the ark a raven and then a dove?

The Bible does not give a detailed explanation. However, there does seem to be logic in Noah's course.

For 40 days and 40 nights, the earth experienced an overwhelming rainfall, causing a deluge that covered even the tops of the mountains for five months. Then "the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat." (Genesis 7:6–8:4) Months later, after "the tops of the mountains appeared," Noah "sent out a raven, and it continued flying outdoors, going and returning."—Genesis 8:5, 7.

Why a raven? This bird is a strong flier, and it can subsist on a wide range of food items, including dead flesh. Noah may have sent out the raven to see whether it would return or would stay away from the ark, perhaps eating from the remnants of carcasses exposed as the waters receded and land appeared. However, the raven did not stay away. The Bible says that it returned, but it does not say that it returned to Noah. Perhaps it came back to rest on the ark between flights to find food floating on the still-prevailing waters.

Later, Noah chose to send out a dove. We read: "The dove did not find any resting-place for the sole of its foot, and so it returned to him into the ark." (Genesis 8:9) This suggests that in its own way, the dove could serve in determining whether the floodwaters had abated. Doves manifest considerable trust of humans. Noah could expect that the dove would return, not just to rest on the ark, but to Noah himself.

It is said that doves rest only on dry ground, are known to fly low in valleys, and feed on vegetation. (Ezekiel 7:16) *Grzimek's Animal Life Encyclopedia* notes: "As is true of all pigeons and doves eating seeds and nuts, there is difficulty in feeding when snow [or water] cover persists more than a day, most of their potential food being on the ground surface." So the dove might bring back to Noah some evidence that it had found dry ground or sprouting plants. The first time that Noah sent it out, the dove simply returned to him in the ark. The second time, the dove came back with an olive leaf. The third time, it did not return, giving evidence that it was possible and safe for Noah to leave the ark.—Genesis 8:8-12.

While some might consider these to be incidental details, the fact that the account is so specific, without any straining to give complete explanations, reflects the Bible's credibility. It gives us additional reason to accept the account to be, not contrived or fabricated, but honestly accurate. The lack of exhaustive details and explanations also suggests what interesting things faithful Christians may look forward to asking Noah when he is resurrected and can explain firsthand the whys and wherefores of his actions.—Hebrews 11:7, 39.

What Will Happen to Christendom's Holy Places?

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

A chapel inside the Church of the Holy Sepulcher

PUBLISHERS of the book *Holy Places of Christendom,* by archaeologist Stewart Perowne, ask: "Who, whatever Christian tradition he comes from, can stand on Calvary in the Church of the Resurrection [or, Church of the Holy Sepulcher] at Jerusalem without a sense of awe: for here in a place venerated and even fought over for centuries, is the very centre of Christendom."

Nobody has been able to prove that this church was built on Calvary, where Jesus Christ died. In fact, before Roman emperor Constantine decided to build a church there, a pagan temple occupied the site. Moreover, Jesus said: "God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) Such worshipers do not revere material "holy" places.

At one time, Jerusalem was the location of God's temple and thus the center of pure worship. Because of the unfaithfulness of the city's inhabitants, however, Jehovah God abandoned it, as Jesus foretold. (Matthew 23:37, 38) Jesus also foretold the desolation of that religious center, which many continued to view as a holy place. His words were fulfilled when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in 70 C.E.—Matthew 24:15, 21.

Jesus' prophecy will soon have a greater fulfillment upon the entire religious realm of Christendom, which she claims to be a holy place. Christendom and her sacred sites now face destruction by an antireligious force called "the disgusting thing that is causing desolation." (Daniel 11:31) Jehovah's Witnesses will gladly provide information about how this shocking event will take place.