

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

SEPTEMBER 1, 1992

**Christendom's
Harvest in Africa**

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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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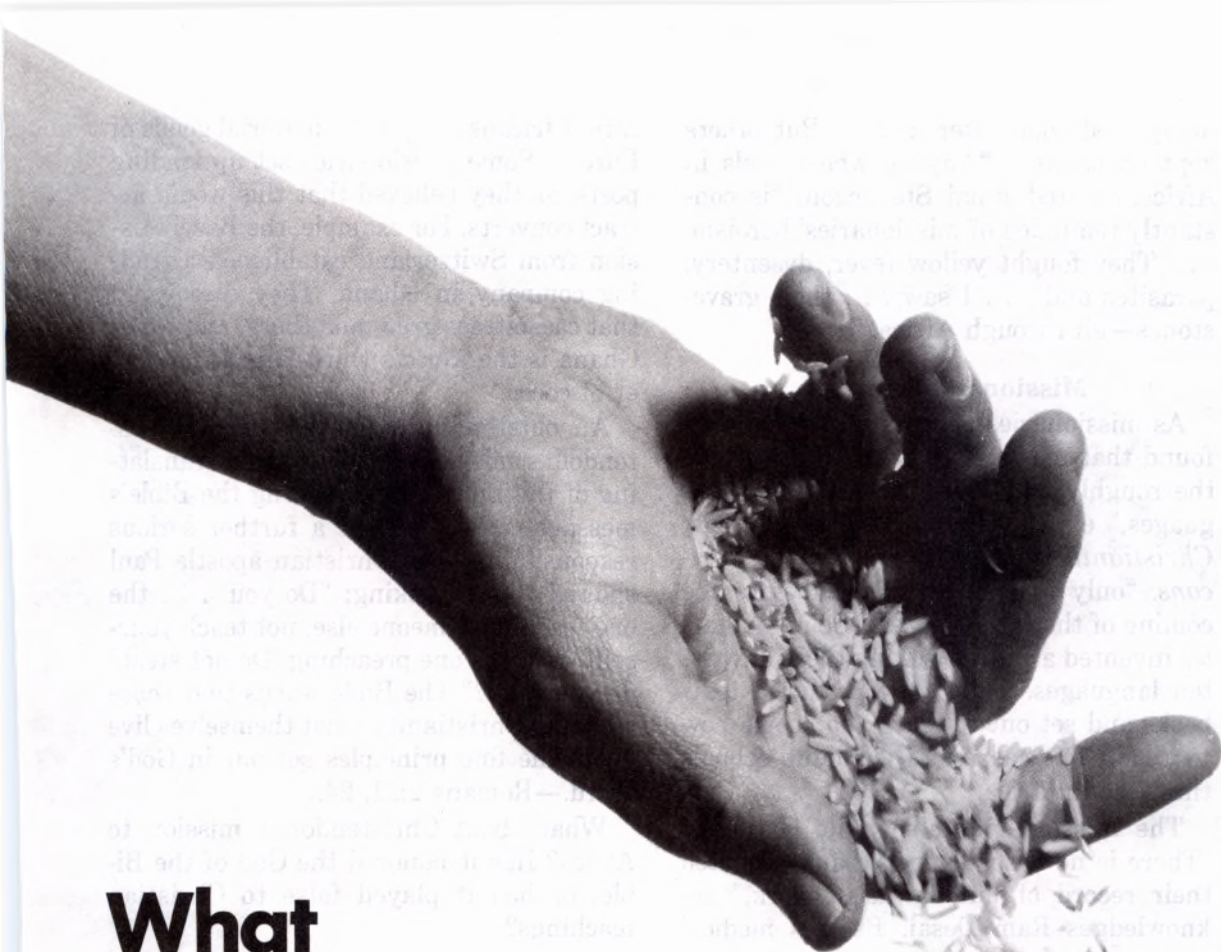
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What Christendom Has Sown in Africa

IN 1867, Charles Lavigerie, a French Catholic, came to Africa as the newly appointed archbishop of Algiers. "God has chosen France," he said, "to make of Algeria the cradle of a great and Christian nation."

Lavigerie's dream extended beyond Algeria. In fact, he sent missionaries across the desert with the goal of "uniting Cen-

tral and Northern Africa to the common life of Christendom."

Meanwhile, in the western, southern, and eastern parts of the continent, Protestant missionaries were already at work. They braved many hardships, such as recurrent attacks of malaria, with its symptoms of shivering, sweating, and delirium. Quickly weakened by tropical sicknesses,

many died soon after arrival. But others kept on coming. "Anyone who travels in Africa," stated Adlai Stevenson, "is constantly reminded of missionaries' heroism. . . . They fought yellow fever, dysentery, parasites and . . . I saw . . . their grave-stones—all through Africa."

Missionary Fruitage

As missionaries penetrated Africa, they found that most tribes were illiterate. "Of the roughly eight hundred [African] languages," explains Ram Desai in his book *Christianity in Africa as Seen by Africans*, "only four were written before the coming of the missionaries." So missionaries invented a way of writing these unwritten languages. Then they produced textbooks and set out to teach the people how to read. To that end they built schools throughout Africa.

The missionaries also built hospitals. "There is no other agency that can match their record of humanitarian work," acknowledges Ram Desai. Besides medical

care, Africans sought the material goods of Europe. Some missionaries set up trading posts, as they believed that this would attract converts. For example, the Basel Mission from Switzerland established a trading company in Ghana. They discovered that cacao trees grew well there, and today Ghana is the world's third-largest producer of cocoa.

An outstanding achievement of Christendom's missionaries was their translating of the Bible. Yet spreading the Bible's message carries with it a further serious responsibility. The Christian apostle Paul showed this by asking: "Do you, . . . the one teaching someone else, not teach yourself? You, the one preaching 'Do not steal,' do you steal?" The Bible warns that those teaching Christianity must themselves live up to the fine principles set out in God's Word.—Romans 2:21, 24.

What about Christendom's mission to Africa? Has it honored the God of the Bible, or has it played false to Christian teachings?

AFRICAN BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

The earliest translations of the whole Bible into an African language were done in Egypt. Known as the Coptic versions, they are believed to date from the third or fourth century C.E. About three centuries later, the Bible was translated into Ethiopic.

The hundreds of unwritten languages spoken south of Ethiopia and the Sahara had to await the arrival of missionaries in the 19th century. In 1857 a milestone was reached when Robert Moffat completed a translation of the Bible into Tswana, a language of southern Africa. He also printed it in sections on a handpress. This was the first complete Bible to be printed in Africa and was also the first complete translation into a formerly unwritten African language. Interestingly, Moffat used the divine name Yehova in his translation. In the 1872 version published by the British and Foreign Bible Society, the name Yehova is used in key statements made by Jesus as recorded at Matthew 4:10 and Mark 12:29, 30.

By 1990 the entire Bible had been translated into 119 African languages, with portions of it available in an additional 434.

Christendom's Harvest in Africa



CHARLES LAVIGERIE'S dream of converting Algeria into a "Christian nation" proved to be just that—a dream.

Today, 99 percent of Algeria's population are Muslims, and Christendom has lost ground in large parts of North Africa. But what about the rest of the continent?

"Christianity," claims Dr. J. H. Kane, in *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission*, "has made more converts in Black Africa than in all the rest of the Third World combined." However, are these converts really Christians? "One great danger in the African church," admits Dr. Kane, "is Christopaganism." Also, his expression "African church" is a misnomer. There are literally thousands of African churches, each with its own way of worship. Why?

Sowing Seeds of Disunity

The seeds of disunity were sown even before missionaries set sail for Africa. The London Missionary Society drew members from different churches, and heated doctrinal disputes took place between the missionaries on the voyage to their assignments. Conflict was bound to worsen after they settled down in their mission stations.

"The missionaries," writes Professor Robert Rotberg in his book *Christian Missionaries and the Creation of Northern Rhodesia 1880-1924*, "fought bitterly with one another and with their overseas directors, usually to the detriment of their evangelical objectives. . . . Missionaries seemed to spend as much time and energy committing these quarrels to paper as they did in seeking to accomplish conversions."

Sometimes, missionary quarrels resulted in the formation of rival missions. Catholic and Protestant missions fiercely competed for converts. This same lack of unity was bound to be reflected among their converts. In time millions of Africans left the mission churches and formed churches of their own.

"The African Independent Churches," writes missionary historian Dr. Kane, "are to be found all over Africa . . . Altogether there are some seven thousand separate groups in this movement." Competition among missionaries with conflicting beliefs was not the only cause of this. In his book *The Missionaries*, Geoffrey Moorhouse explains that another cause of the "black reformation" was "a resentment against white superiority."

Missionary leaders of the last century, such as John Philip, believed that European civilization and Christianity were one and the same

Christians or European Racists?

"The missionaries," admits Dr. Kane, "had a superiority complex." They "believed that the Christian religion must go with a European culture and European leadership," says Adrian Hastings in his book *African Christianity*.

The Frenchman Charles Lavigerie was one missionary leader who held this view. Another was John Philip, superintendent of the missions of the London Missionary Society in southern Africa. "Our missionaries," he boasted in 1828, "are . . . extending British interests, British influence, and the British empire. Wherever the missionary places his standard among a savage tribe, their prejudices against the colonial government give way; their dependence upon the colony is increased by the creation of artificial wants; . . . industry, trade, and agriculture spring up; and every genuine convert from among them . . . becomes the ally and friend of the colonial government."

Is it any wonder that European governments saw such missionaries as useful agents for colonial expansion? For their part, missionaries welcomed the colonial conquest of Africa. As they declared at the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh: "It would . . . be impossible always to draw a dividing line between the aim of the missionary and the aim of the Government."

Ruled as Kings in Africa

To assert their authority, some missionaries relied on colonial military might.



Coastal towns were sometimes demolished by British naval gunships because the villagers had refused to accept missionary authority. In 1898, Dennis Kemp, a Wesleyan missionary to West Africa, expressed his "firm conviction that the British Army and Navy are today used by God for the accomplishment of His purpose."

After establishing themselves, missionaries sometimes took over the secular power of tribal chiefs. "The London missionaries," writes Professor Rotberg, "frequently used force to maintain their theocratic law. A favorite instrument by which they made known their disapproval was the *cikoti*, a long whip made of cured hippopotamus hide. With it, Africans were freely flogged on almost any pretext." "One African convert," notes David Lamb in his book *The Africans*, "recalls an Anglican missionary in Uganda known as Bwana Botri who fre-

quently descended from his pulpit during service to cane African latecomers.”

Shocked by such acts, a missionary, James Mackay, lodged a complaint with the directors of the London Missionary Society. “Instead of being regarded as the white men who carry to them the good tidings of God’s love,” he warned, “we are known and feared.”

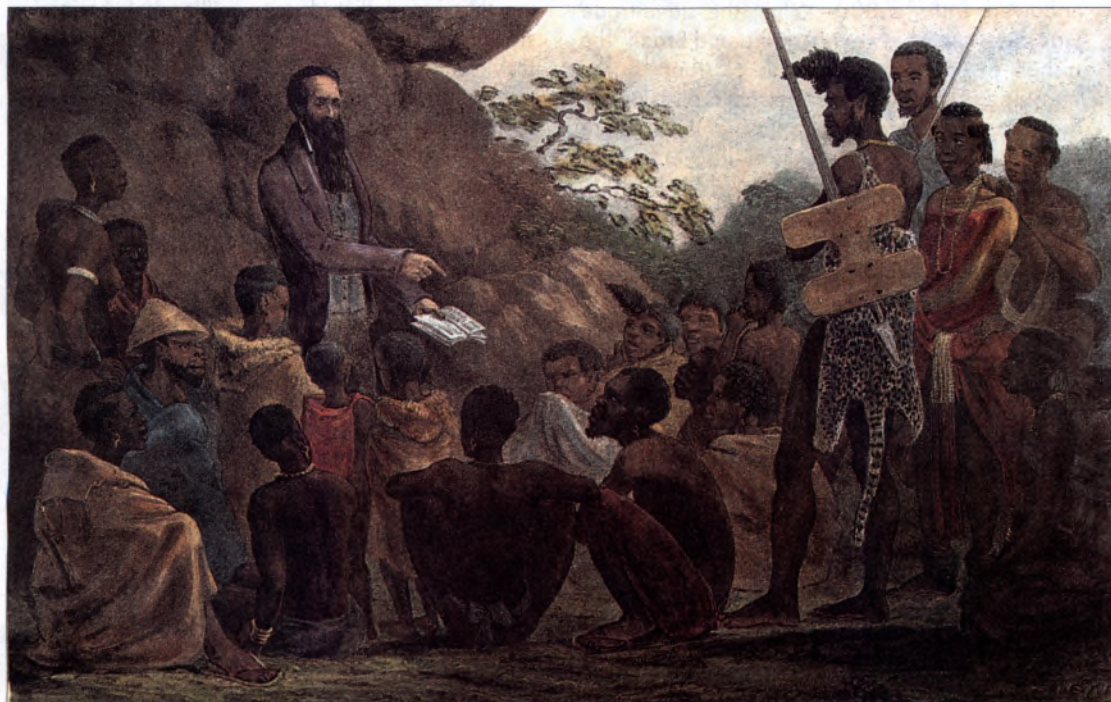
The World Wars

“For a century and more,” states the book *The Missionaries*, “[Africans] had been told persistently and vehemently that fighting and all the savage instincts which it released were both fruitless and wicked.”

Christendom’s missionaries encouraged African ancestral beliefs by spreading unbiblical teachings, such as the immortality of the soul

Then, in 1914, World War I erupted between the so-called Christian nations of Europe.

“The missionaries of almost every nationality were sucked into the Great War,” explains Moorhouse. To their shame, missionaries urged their African converts to take sides. Some missionaries even led African troops into battle. The effect of the war is well expressed by Professor Stephen Neill in his *History of Christian Missions*: “The European nations, with their loud-voiced claims to a monopoly of Christianity and civilization, had rushed blindly and confusedly into a civil war which was to leave them economically impoverished and without a shred of virtue.” “The Second World War,” continues Neill, “only finished off what the first had already accomplished. The moral pretensions of the West were shown to be a sham; ‘Christendom’ was exposed as being no more than a myth. It was



Courtesy Africana Museum, Johannesburg

CHRISTENDOM AND THE SLAVE TRADE

DURING the 19th century, Catholic and Protestant missionaries were united in their opposition to the slave trade. However, that had not always been their position. In previous centuries, they approved of and participated in the slave trade despite the horrendous suffering this produced.

Missionaries started coming to the east coast as well as the west coast of Africa when the trade route by sea around the Cape of Good Hope was discovered in the 15th century. After three centuries, however, missionary work in Africa had almost come to an end. There were few African converts. One reason for this failure was Christendom's involvement with the slave trade. C. P. Groves explains in *The Planting of Christianity in Africa*:

"The active pursuit of the slave-trade accompanied the Christian mission and was not thought amiss. Indeed, the very mission possessed slaves of its own; a Jesuit monastery at Loanda [now Luanda, the capital of Angola] was endowed with 12,000. When the slave-trade was developed between Angola and Brazil, the bishop of Loanda, on a chair of stone by the quayside, bestowed his episcopal blessing on the departing cargoes, promising them future felicity when the stormy trials of life were over."

Jesuit missionaries raised no "objection against Negro slavery," confirms C. R. Boxer as quoted in the book *Africa From Early Times to 1800*. In Luanda, before slaves boarded ships bound for Spanish and Portuguese colonies, adds Boxer, "they were taken to a nearby church

. . . and there baptised by a parish priest in batches of hundreds at a time." Then, after being sprinkled with "holy water," the slaves were told: "Look you people are already children of God; you are going to the land of the Spaniards where you will learn things of the Faith. Don't think any more about where you came from . . . Go with a good will."

Of course, Christendom's missionaries were not alone in approving the slave trade. "Until the last half of the eighteenth century," explains Geoffrey Moorhouse in his book *The Missionaries*, "it was but the way of the world at large." Moorhouse cites the example of an 18th-century Protestant missionary, Thomas Thompson, who wrote a tract entitled *The African Trade for Negro Slaves Shown to Be Consistent With the Principles of Humanity and With the Laws of Revealed Religion*.

Nevertheless, by her participation Christendom shares responsibility for the terrible suffering that was inflicted upon millions of African slaves. "Exclusive of the slaves who died before they sailed from Africa," states *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, "12 1/2% were lost during their passage to the West Indies; at Jamaica 4 1/2% died whilst in the harbours or before the sale and one-third more in the 'seasoning.'"

Soon Jehovah God will call to account both Christendom and other forms of false religion for all the terrible acts of bloodguilt that they have condoned and even blessed.—Revelation 18: 8, 24.

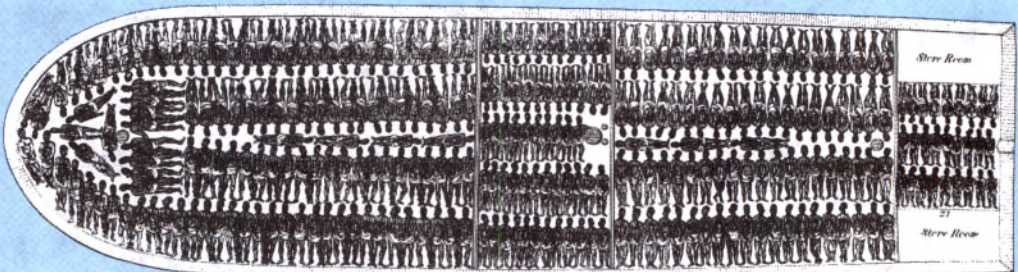


Diagram of the way slaves were packed into a slave ship

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture / The New York Public Library / Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

no longer possible to speak of 'the Christian West.'"

Understandably, the black reformation accelerated after World War I. But what about Africans who stuck to Christendom's churches? Were they thereafter taught the truth from the Bible?

African Ancestral Beliefs

Christendom's missionaries condemned African religious practices, such as the consulting of diviners to appease their deceased ancestors. At the same time, the missionaries insisted that all humans possess an immortal soul. They also promoted the veneration of Mary and the "saints." These teachings confirmed the African belief that their dead ancestors were alive. Also, by venerating religious images, such as the cross, missionaries gave justification to the African use of amulets as a means of protection from evil spirits.

Professor C. G. Baëta explains in his book *Christianity in Tropical Africa*: "It is possible for an African to sing lustily in Church, 'Other refuge have I none', while still carrying an amulet somewhere on his person, or being able to go out of Church straight to his diviner, without feeling that he is betraying any principle."—Compare Deuteronomy 18:10-12 and 1 John 5:21.

Many missionaries told Africans that their pagan forefathers were being tormented in a fiery hell and that the same fate would befall them if they refused to accept missionary teachings. But the doctrine of eternal torment conflicts with plain statements in the very Bible that the missionaries went to such pains to translate into African languages.—Genesis 3:19; Jeremiah 19:5; Romans 6:23.

In fact, the Bible states that sinful human souls die and that "the dead . . . are

conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Ezekiel 18:4) As for Africans who did not get an opportunity to hear Bible truth, they have the prospect of being included in the coming "resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) Such resurrected ones will be taught about God's provision for salvation. Then, if they respond appreciatively to God's love, they will be rewarded with everlasting life on a paradise earth.—Psalm 37:29; Luke 23:43; John 3:16.

Instead of teaching these wonderful Bible truths, Christendom has misled Africans by false teachings and religious hypocrisy. Certainly, the role played by Christendom's missionaries in the colonial conquest of Africa finds no support in the Bible. On the contrary, Jesus said that his Kingdom "is no part of this world" and that his true followers would likewise be "no part of the world." (John 15:19; 18:36) Early Christians were ambassadors of Jesus Christ, not of worldly governments.—2 Corinthians 5:20.

Hence, Christendom's African harvest as a whole is an unhappy one, characterized by shocking disunity, distrust, and "Christopaganism." The violence that has marked many "Christian" parts of Africa is certainly not in harmony with the teachings of the "Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) The fruitage of Christendom's work in Africa stands in direct contrast with Jesus' words about his true followers. In prayer to his heavenly Father, Jesus requested that "they may be perfected into one, that the world may have the knowledge that you sent me forth."—John 17:20, 23; 1 Corinthians 1:10.

Does this mean that all missionary work in Africa has been a failure? By no means. The fine fruitage of true Christian missionary work in Africa and throughout the world will be discussed in the articles commencing on page 10.



AN INSPIRED PATTERN OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY WORK

"Become imitators of me, even as I am of Christ."—1 CORINTHIANS 11:1.

WHAT an outstanding example Jesus set for his disciples! He gladly left his heavenly glory to come down to earth and live among sinful humans. He was willing to undergo great suffering for the salvation of mankind and, more important, for the sanctification of his heavenly Father's name. (John 3:16; 17:4) When on trial for his life, Jesus boldly declared: "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I

should bear witness to the truth."—John 18:37.

² Before his death, Jesus provided excellent training for his disciples so that they could continue the work of bearing witness to Kingdom truth. (Matthew 10:5-23; Luke 10:1-16) Thus, after his resurrection, Jesus was able to give the command: "Go . . . and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teach—

1. What are some ways in which Jesus set an outstanding example for his followers to imitate? (Philippians 2:5-9)

2. Why could the resurrected Jesus command his disciples to continue the work he had started?

ing them to observe all the things I have commanded you.”—Matthew 28:19, 20.

³ For the next three and a half years, Jesus’ disciples obeyed this command but restricted their disciple making to Jews, Jewish proselytes, and circumcised Samaritans. Then, in 36 C.E., God directed that the good news be preached to an uncircumcised man, Cornelius, and his household. During the next decade, other Gentiles were brought into the congregation. However, much of the work seems to have been confined to regions of the eastern Mediterranean.—Acts 10:24, 44-48; 11:19-21.

⁴ Something was needed to motivate or enable Christians to make disciples of Jews and Gentiles in more distant regions. So, about 47-48 C.E., the elders of the congregation of Syrian Antioch received this divine message: “Of all persons set Barnabas and Saul apart for me for the work to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2) Notice that Paul was then known by his original name, Saul. Notice, too, that God named Barnabas ahead of Paul, perhaps because at that time Barnabas was viewed as the senior of the two.

⁵ The detailed record of Paul and Barnabas’ missionary tour is of great encouragement to Jehovah’s Witnesses, especially to missionaries and pioneers who have moved away from their hometowns to serve God in a foreign community. Further, a review of Acts chapters 13 and 14 will surely motivate yet more to imitate Paul and Barnabas and enlarge their share in the all-important work of making disciples.

3. How did the disciple-making work expand, but in what regions was it mainly concentrated?

4. What significant development took place about 47-48 C.E.?

5. Why is the record of Paul and Barnabas’ missionary tour of great value to Christians today?

The Island of Cyprus

⁶ Without delay the missionaries sailed from the Syrian port of Seleucia to the island of Cyprus. After landing in Salamis, they were not sidetracked but “began publishing the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews.” Following Christ’s pattern, they were not content to settle down in that city and wait for the islanders to come to them. Instead, they worked their way “through the whole island.” No doubt this involved a lot of walking and many changes of accommodations, since Cyprus is a large island, and their tour took them over the length of the largest section of it.—Acts 13:5, 6.

⁷ At the end of their stay, the two men were rewarded with a wonderful experience in the city of Paphos. The ruler of the island, Sergius Paulus, listened to their message and “became a believer.” (Acts 13:7, 12) Paul later wrote: “You behold his calling of you, brothers, that not many wise in a fleshly way were called, not many powerful, not many of noble birth.” (1 Corinthians 1:26) Nevertheless, among the powerful who responded was Sergius Paulus. This experience should encourage all, especially missionaries, to have a positive attitude about witnessing to government officials, even as we are encouraged to do at 1 Timothy 2:1-4. Men of authority have sometimes given great help to God’s servants.—Nehemiah 2:4-8.

⁸ Under the influence of Jehovah’s spirit, Paul played the major part in the conversion of Sergius Paulus. (Acts 13:8-12) Also,

6. What example did the missionaries set in Cyprus?

7. (a) What outstanding event took place in Paphos? (b) This record encourages us to have what attitude?

8. (a) What changed relationship between Barnabas and Paul appears from this time onward? (b) In what way was Barnabas a fine example?

from this time onward, it appears that Paul took the lead. (Compare Acts 13:7 with Acts 13:15, 16, 43.) This was in harmony with the divine commission Paul had received at the time of his conversion. (Acts 9:15) Perhaps such a development tested Barnabas' humility. However, instead of viewing this change as a personal affront, Barnabas likely lived up to the meaning of his name, "Son of Comfort," and loyally supported Paul throughout the missionary journey and afterward when some Jewish Christians challenged their ministry to uncircumcised Gentiles. (Acts 15:1, 2) What a fine example this is to all of us, including occupants of missionary and Bethel homes! We should always be willing to accept theocratic adjustments and give our full support to those appointed to take the lead among us.—Hebrews 13:17.

The Tableland of Asia Minor

⁹ From Cyprus, Paul and Barnabas sailed north to the continent of Asia. For some undisclosed reason, the missionaries did not stay in the coastal region but made a long and dangerous journey of about 110 miles to Pisidian Antioch, situated on the central tableland of Asia Minor. This involved climbing over a mountain pass and descending to a plain some 3,500 feet above sea level. Bible scholar J. S. Howson says: "The lawless and marauding habits of the population of those mountains which separate the table-land . . . from the plains on the south coast, were notorious in all parts of ancient history." In addition, the missionaries faced danger from natural elements. "No district in Asia Minor," adds Howson, "is more singularly characterised by its 'water floods' than the mountainous . . ."
9. What do we learn from Paul and Barnabas' willingness to travel up to Pisidian Antioch?

tract of Pisidia, where rivers burst out at the bases of huge cliffs, or dash down wildly through narrow ravines." These details help us visualize the kind of journeys the missionaries were willing to undertake for the sake of spreading the good news. (2 Corinthians 11:26) Likewise today, many of Jehovah's servants brave all sorts of obstacles in order to reach people and share the good news with them.

¹⁰ Since there was a Jewish synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, the missionaries went there first in order to give those most familiar with God's Word an opportunity to accept the good news. On being invited to speak, Paul stood up and gave a masterful public discourse. Throughout the talk, he kept a common ground with the Jews and proselytes in the audience. (Acts 13:13-16, 26) After his introduction, Paul reviewed the illustrious history of the Jews, reminding them that Jehovah had chosen their forefathers and then delivered them from Egypt, as well as how he had helped them to conquer the inhabitants of the Promised Land. Then Paul highlighted Jehovah's dealings with David. Such information was close to the hearts of Jews in the first century because they were expecting God to raise up a descendant of David as a savior and everlasting ruler. At this point, Paul boldly announced: "From the offspring of this man [David] according to his promise God has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus."—Acts 13:17-23.

¹¹ However, the type of savior many Jews were awaiting was a military hero who would deliver them from Roman domination and elevate the Jewish nation above

10, 11. (a) How did Paul maintain common ground with his audience? (b) Why were many Jews likely astounded to hear of the sufferings of the Messiah? (c) What kind of salvation did Paul hold before his hearers?

all others. Hence, they were doubtless astounded to hear Paul say that the Messiah had been handed over for execution by their own religious leaders. "But God raised him up from the dead," Paul boldly declared. Toward the end of his talk, he showed his audience that they could attain a wonderful kind of salvation. "Let it . . . be known to you," he said, "that through this One a forgiveness of sins is being published to you; and that from all the things from which you could not be declared guiltless by means of the law of Moses, everyone who believes is declared guiltless by means of this One." Paul concluded his talk by urging his audience not to be classed among the many who God foretold would neglect this wonderful provision of salvation.—Acts 13:30-41.

¹² What a well-delivered Scripture-based discourse! How did the audience respond? "Many of the Jews and of the proselytes who worshiped God followed Paul and Barnabas." (Acts 13:43) How encouraging for us today! May we likewise do our very best to present the truth effectively, whether in our public ministry or in comments and talks at our congregation meetings.—1 Timothy 4:13-16.

¹³ The newly interested ones in Pisidian Antioch could not keep this good news to themselves. As a result, "the next sabbath nearly all the city gathered together to hear the word of Jehovah." And soon the message spread beyond the city. In fact, "the word of Jehovah went on being carried throughout the whole country." (Acts 13:44, 49) Instead of welcoming this fact, jealous Jews succeeded in having the mission-

aries thrown out of the city. (Acts 13:45, 50) How did this affect the new disciples? Did they become discouraged and give up?

¹⁴ No, because this was God's work. Also, the missionaries had laid a solid foundation of faith in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. Evidently, then, the new disciples viewed Christ, and not the missionaries, as their Leader. Thus, we read that they "continued to be filled with joy and holy spirit." (Acts 13:52) How encouraging this is to missionaries and other disciple makers today! If we humbly and zealously do our part, Jehovah God and Jesus Christ will bless our ministry.—1 Corinthians 3:9.

Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe

¹⁵ Paul and Barnabas now traveled about 90 miles southeast to the next city, Iconium. Fear of persecution did not hinder them from following the same procedure as in Antioch. As a result, the Bible says: "A great multitude of both Jews and Greeks became believers." (Acts 14:1) Again, the Jews that did not accept the good news stirred up opposition. But the missionaries endured and spent considerable time in Iconium helping the new disciples. Then, after learning that their Jewish opposers were about to stone them, Paul and Barnabas wisely fled to the next territory, "Lystra and Derbe and the country round about."—Acts 14:2-6.

¹⁶ Courageously "they went on declaring the good news" in this new, virgin territo-

12. What resulted from Paul's discourse, and how should this encourage us?

13. Why did the missionaries have to leave Pisidian Antioch, and what questions arise concerning the new disciples?

14. Why could opposers not stamp out the work that the missionaries had started, and what do we learn from this?

15. What procedure did the missionaries follow in Iconium, with what results?

16, 17. (a) What happened to Paul in Lystra? (b) How did God's dealings with the apostle affect a young man from Lystra?

ry. (Acts 14:7) When Jews in Pisidian Antioch and Iconium heard of this, they came all the way to Lystra and persuaded the crowds to stone Paul. With no time to escape, Paul was pelted with stones, so that his opposers were convinced he was dead. They dragged him outside the city.—Acts 14:19.

¹⁷ Can you imagine the distress this caused the new disciples? But wonder of wonders, when they surrounded Paul, he stood up! The Bible does not say whether a young man named Timothy was one of these new disciples. Certainly God's dealings with Paul at some time became known to him and made a deep impression on his young mind. Paul wrote in his second letter to Timothy: "You have closely followed my teaching, my course of life, . . . the sort of things that happened to me in Antioch, in Iconium, in Lystra, the sort of persecutions I have borne; and yet out of them all the Lord delivered me." (2 Timothy 3:10, 11) About one or two years after Paul's stoning, he returned to Lystra and found that young Timothy was an exemplary Christian, "well reported on by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium." (Acts 16:1, 2) So Paul chose him as a traveling companion. This

helped Timothy to grow in spiritual stature, and in time he was qualified to be sent by Paul to visit different congregations. (Philippians 2:19, 20; 1 Timothy 1:3) Likewise, today, zealous servants of God are a wonderful influence on young ones, many of whom grow up to be valuable servants of God, like Timothy.

¹⁸ The morning following his escape from death in Lystra, Paul left with Barnabas for Derbe. This time, no opposers followed, and the Bible says 'they made quite a few disciples.' (Acts 14:20, 21) Having established a congregation in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas had to make a decision. A well-traveled Roman road continued from Derbe to Tarsus. From there it was a short journey back to Syrian Antioch. Possibly that was the most convenient way to return, and those missionaries could have felt that they now deserved a rest. In imitation of their Master, though, Paul and Barnabas sensed a greater need.—Mark 6:31-34.

Fully Performing God's Work

¹⁹ Instead of taking the short route home, the missionaries courageously turned back and revisited the very cities where their lives had been in danger. Did Jehovah bless them for this unselfish concern for the new sheep? Yes, indeed, for the account says they succeeded in "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to remain in the faith." Appropriately, they told those new disciples: "We must enter into the kingdom of God through many tribula-

18. (a) What happened to the missionaries in Derbe? (b) What opportunity was now open to them, but what course did they choose?

19, 20. (a) How did Jehovah bless the missionaries for returning to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch? (b) What lesson does this provide Jehovah's people today?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ Why is Jesus the outstanding example to imitate?
- ☐ In what way was Barnabas an example?
- ☐ What do we learn from Paul's discourse in Pisidian Antioch?
- ☐ How did Paul and Barnabas fully perform their assignment?

The apostle Paul's endurance of persecution made a lasting impression on the young man Timothy

tions." (Acts 14:21, 22) Paul and Barnabas also reminded them of their calling as joint heirs in the coming Kingdom of God. Today, we should give similar encouragement to new disciples. We can strengthen them to endure trials by holding before them the prospect of everlasting life on earth under the rule of that same Kingdom of God concerning which Paul and Barnabas preached.

²⁰ Before leaving each city, Paul and Barnabas helped the local congregation to get better organized. Evidently, they trained qualified men and appointed them to take the lead. (Acts 14:23) No doubt this contributed to further expansion. Likewise today, missionaries and others, after helping inexperienced ones to progress until they can shoulder responsibility, sometimes move away and continue their good work in other places where the need is greater.

²¹ When the missionaries finally returned to Syrian Antioch, they could feel deeply satisfied. Indeed, the Bible record states that they had "fully performed" the work that God had entrusted to them. (Acts 14:26) Understandably, the relating of their experiences caused "great joy to all the brothers." (Acts 15:3) But what about the future? Would they now sit back and rest on

- 21, 22. (a) What happened after Paul and Barnabas had completed their missionary journey?
(b) What questions does this raise?



their laurels, as the saying goes? By no means. After visiting the governing body in Jerusalem to get a decision on the circumcision issue, the two set out again on missionary journeys. This time they went in different directions. Barnabas took John Mark and went to Cyprus, while Paul found a new partner, Silas, and journeyed through Syria and Cilicia. (Acts 15:39-41) It was on this trip that he chose young Timothy and took him along.

²² The Bible does not disclose the results of Barnabas' second journey. As for Paul, he continued on to new territory and established congregations in at least five cities—Philippi, Beroea, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus. What was the key to Paul's outstanding success? Do the same principles work for Christian disciple makers today?



ALL TRUE CHRISTIANS MUST BE EVANGELIZERS

"Do the work of an evangelizer [or, missionary]."—2 TIMOTHY 4:5, footnote.

WHAT does it mean today to be an evangelizer? Are you one? The word "evangelizer" comes from the Greek word *eu-ag-geli-stes*, which means "a preacher of the good news." From the establishment of the Christian congregation in 33 C.E., the Christian good news highlighted God's means of salvation and proclaimed that Jesus Christ would return at a later time to commence his Kingdom rule over mankind.—Matthew 25:31, 32; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 10:12, 13.

² From 1914 onward, evidence began to

1. What was the good news that was preached by evangelizers in the first century?
2. (a) How has the content of the good news been enriched in our day? (b) What obligation rests on all true Christians today?

mount that the sign that Jesus had given respecting his return and invisible presence was undergoing fulfillment. (Matthew 24: 3-13, 33) Once again, the good news could include the expression "the kingdom of God is near." (Luke 21:7, 31; Mark 1:14, 15) Indeed, the time had come for Jesus' prophecy recorded at Matthew 24:14 to undergo a grand fulfillment: "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." Therefore, evangelizing now includes zealously announcing the established Kingdom of God and the blessings that it will soon bring to obedient mankind. All Christians are under command to do this work and to "make

disciples.”—Matthew 28:19, 20; Revelation 22:17.

³ In addition to the preaching of the good news in general, the Bible uses the term “evangelizer” in a special sense respecting those who leave their home territory to preach the good news in unworked regions. In the first century, there were many missionary evangelizers, such as Philip, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy. (Acts 21:8; Ephesians 4:11) But what about our special time since 1914? Have Jehovah’s people today made themselves available as local as well as missionary evangelizers?

Progress Since 1919

⁴ When World War I drew to an end in 1918, God’s servants experienced increasing opposition from both apostates and the clergy of Christendom and their political allies. In fact, genuine Christian evangelizing almost came to a standstill in June 1918 when leading officials of the Watch Tower Society in the United States were sentenced to 20 years’ imprisonment under false charges. Had God’s enemies succeeded in bringing an end to the preaching of the good news?

⁵ Unexpectedly, in March 1919 the Society’s officials were released and later exonerated of the false charges that had landed them in prison. With their newfound freedom, these anointed Christians realized that there was still plenty of work to be done before they would be gathered to their heavenly reward as joint heirs in the

3. (a) What additional meaning does the word “evangelizer” have? (See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, page 770, column 2, paragraph 2.) (b) What questions does this raise?
4, 5. What were the prospects for the evangelizing work shortly after 1914?

Kingdom of God.—Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:12; 4:18.

⁶ Back in 1919 there were fewer than 4,000 who reported sharing in spreading the good news. During the next two decades, a number of men offered themselves as missionary evangelizers, and some were sent to countries of Africa, Asia, and Europe. By 1939, after 20 years of Kingdom preaching, Jehovah’s Witnesses had increased to over 73,000. This outstanding increase, accomplished in the face of much persecution, was

6. How did the evangelizing work progress between 1919 and 1939?





similar to what took place in the early years of the Christian congregation.—Acts 6:7; 8:4, 14-17; 11:19-21.

⁷ Nevertheless, the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses at that time were concentrated in English-speaking Protestant countries. In fact, over 75 percent of the 73,000 Kingdom proclaimers were from Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. As was the case about 47 C.E., something was needed to encourage evangelizers to give more attention to the less worked countries of the earth.

⁸ Wartime restrictions and persecutions could not stop Jehovah's powerful holy spirit from motivating his servants to prepare for

7. In the years 47 C.E. and 1939, what similar situation existed regarding the Christian evangelizing work?

8. By 1992, what had Gilead School accomplished?

greater expansion. In 1943, while World War II was at its height, God's organization set up the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead with a view to spreading the good news more widely. By March 1992, this school had sent out 6,517 missionaries to 171 different countries. In addition, men were trained to care for branches of the Watch Tower Society in foreign lands. As of 1992, of the 97 Branch Committee coordinators, 75 were trained at Gilead.

⁹ Besides Gilead School, other training programs have equipped Jehovah's people to expand and improve their evangelizing work. For example, the Theocratic Ministry

School operates in the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the earth. This arrangement, along with the weekly Service Meeting, has trained millions of Kingdom publishers to be effective in the public ministry. There is also the Kingdom Ministry School, which provides valuable training to elders and ministerial servants so that these can better care for the growing congregations. The Pioneer Service School has helped many full-time evangelizers to become more effective in their preaching activity. More recently, the Ministerial Training School has operated in different countries to help unmarried elders and ministerial servants to become modern-day Timothy's.

9. What training programs have played a part in the progress of the evangelizing and discipling work?

EXPANSION SINCE 1939

Consider examples from three continents where Gilead-trained missionaries were sent. Back in 1939 there were only 636 Kingdom proclaimers who reported from West Africa. By 1991 this number had increased to over 200,000 in 12 countries of West Africa. Missionaries have also contributed to phenomenal increases in countries of South America. One is Brazil, which increased from 114 Kingdom proclaimers in 1939 to 335,039 in April 1992. Similar growth followed the arrival of missionaries in countries of Asia. During World War II, the small number of Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan were severely persecuted, and their work came to a standstill. Then, in 1949, 13 missionaries arrived to help reorganize the work. That service year, fewer than ten native publishers reported field service for the whole of Japan, whereas in April 1992 the grand total of publishers reached 167,370.

¹⁰ What has been the result of all this training? In 1991, Jehovah's Witnesses had reached a peak of well over four million Kingdom proclaimers active in 212 countries. However, unlike the situation that existed in 1939, over 70 percent of these are from Catholic, Orthodox, non-Christian, or other lands, where English is not the predominant language.—See box "Expansion Since 1939."

Why Successful

¹¹ Jehovah's Witnesses do not take the credit for this expansion. Instead, they view their work in the way the apostle Paul did, as he explained in his letter to the Corinthians. "What, then, is Apollos? Yes, what is Paul? Ministers through whom you became believers, even as the Lord granted each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God kept making it grow; so that neither is he

that plants anything nor is he that waters, but God who makes it grow. For we are God's fellow workers. You people are God's field under cultivation, God's building."
—1 Corinthians 3:5-7, 9.

¹² There is no doubt that the phenomenal growth experienced by Jehovah's Witnesses is due to God's blessing. It is God's work. In realization of this fact, they continue to apply themselves in regularly studying God's Word. They base everything they teach in their evangelizing work upon the Bible. (1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 Timothy 3:16) Another key to their successful evangelizing is their full recognition of the One whom God appointed as the Head of the congregation, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 5:23) First-century Christians showed this by cooperating with the ones Jesus appointed as apostles. These men, together with other elders of the Jerusalem congregation, formed the

10. What has been the result of all the excellent training provided through God's organization? (Include information in box.)

11. To whom did the apostle Paul attribute his success as a minister?

12. (a) What role does God's Word play in successful Christian evangelizing? (b) Who has been appointed as Head of the Christian congregation, and what is one important way to demonstrate our submission to his headship?

first-century Christian governing body. From heaven the Lord Jesus Christ used this group of mature Christians to settle issues and give direction to the work of evangelizing. Paul's zealous cooperation with this divine arrangement resulted in increases in the congregations he visited. (Acts 16:4, 5; Galatians 2:9) Likewise today, by holding firmly to God's Word and zealously cooperating with the direction that comes from the Governing Body, Christian evangelizers are assured of success in their ministry.—Titus 1:9; Hebrews 13:17.

Considering Others Superior

¹³ The apostle Paul showed genuine love for truth seekers and did not display a superior or racist attitude. Thus, he could counsel fellow believers to 'consider that the others are superior.'—Philippians 2:1-4.

¹⁴ In like manner, true Christian evangelizers today do not have a superior attitude when dealing with people of different races and backgrounds. One of Jehovah's Witnesses from the United States, assigned to work as a missionary in Africa, says: "I just know that we're not superior. Maybe we have more money and what is called formal education, but they [the local people] have qualities that surpass ours."

¹⁵ Certainly, by displaying genuine respect for those with whom we share the good news, we will make it easier for them to accept the Bible's message. It also helps when a missionary evangelizer shows he is happy to live among the people whom he has

13, 14. (a) What counsel did the apostle Paul give as recorded at Philippians 2:1-4? (b) Why is it important to remember this counsel while sharing in the evangelizing work?

15. How can those assigned to work in foreign lands display genuine respect for prospective disciples?

been assigned to help. A successful missionary who has spent the last 38 years in Africa explains: "I feel deep within myself that this is my home, and the ones in the congregation where I am assigned are my brothers and sisters. When I've been back to Canada on vacation, I don't really feel at home. The last week or so in Canada, I'm just itching to get back. I always feel that way. I tell my Bible students and the brothers and sisters how happy I am to be back again, and they appreciate that I *want* to be with them."—1 Thessalonians 2:8.

¹⁶ When they find a large foreign-language enclave in their local territories, some have made an effort to learn the language, showing by this that they consider the others to be superior. "In southern Africa," observes one missionary, "there is sometimes a feeling of distrust between people of African background and people of European background. But our speaking in the local language quickly dispels this feeling." Speaking the language of those with whom we share the good news is a great aid in reaching their hearts. It requires hard work and humble persistence. A missionary in an Asian country explains: "To keep on blundering away while constantly being laughed at for your mistakes can be a test. It may seem easier to give up." However, love of God and neighbor helped this missionary to persevere.—Mark 12:30, 31.

¹⁷ Understandably, people are moved when a foreigner strives to share the good news in their language. Sometimes it results in unexpected blessings. A missionary in the African country of Lesotho was

16, 17. (a) What challenge have many missionaries and local evangelizers accepted in order to be more effective in their ministry? (b) What experience did one missionary have because of speaking in the local language?

CHRISTENDOM AND THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

Some of Christendom's missionaries made an earnest effort to learn a foreign tongue, but many expected the local people to speak their European language. As Geoffrey Moorhouse explains in his book *The Missionaries*:

"The trouble was that the acquisition of a native language was seen far too frequently as nothing more than a means of translating Scripture. Comparatively little effort was spent, either by individuals or by the societies employing them, in ensuring that a missionary could speak to a native in his own tongue with the fluency that alone can produce deep understanding between two human beings. Every missionary would pick up a smattering of local vocabulary . . . Beyond that, communication was generally made in the appalling and stultifying cadences of so-called pidgin English, with its implicit assumption that the African native must submit himself to the norms of the English visitor. At its worst, this was yet another manifestation of racial superiority."

In 1922 the School of Oriental and African Studies in London published a report on the language problem. "We are of the opinion," the report said, "that the average level of proficiency attained by missionaries in the vernacular . . . is regrettably and even dangerously low."

Missionaries of the Watch Tower Society have always regarded learning the local language as a *must*, which helps to explain their success in the missionary field.

speaking in Sesotho to another woman, who worked in a tapestry shop. A government minister from another African country was touring the premises and overheard the conversation. He came over and warmly commended her, whereupon she began speaking to the government minister in his own language. "Why do you not come to [my country] and work among our people, since you also know Swahili?" he asked. Tactfully, the missionary replied: "That would be very nice. But I am one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and at present our work is outlawed in your country." "Please," he replied, "do not feel that all of us are opposed to your work. Many of us are in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses. Perhaps one day you will be able to teach freely among our people." Some time later, the missionary was thrilled to learn

that Jehovah's Witnesses had been granted freedom of worship in that same country.

Willing to Forgo Rights

¹⁸ When the apostle Paul wrote: "Become imitators of me, even as I am of Christ," he had just been discussing the need to avoid stumbling others, saying: "Whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else, do all things for God's glory. Keep from becoming causes for stumbling to Jews as well as Greeks and to the congregation of God, even as I am pleasing all people in all things, not seeking my own advantage but that of

18, 19. (a) In what important way did Paul strive to imitate his Master, Jesus Christ? (b) Relate an experience (the one in the paragraph or your own) to show the importance of avoiding any cause for stumbling those with whom we share the good news.

the many, in order that they might get saved.”—1 Corinthians 10:31-33; 11:1.

¹⁹ Evangelizers like Paul, who are willing to make sacrifices in the interests of those to whom they preach, reap blessings. For example, in one African country, a missionary couple went to a local hotel for dinner to celebrate their wedding anniversary. At first they intended to order wine with the meal, since the moderate use of alcoholic beverages is not condemned in the Bible. (Psalm 104:15) But then this couple decided not to do so in case it might offend the local people. “Some time later,” recalls the husband, “we met a man who was a chef at that hotel, and we started a Bible study with him. Much later he told us: ‘Do you remember when you came to the hotel for dinner? We were all behind the kitchen door watching you. You see, the church missionaries told us that it is wrong for us to drink. Yet, when they come to the hotel, they freely order wine. We therefore decided that if you ordered something to drink, we wouldn’t listen to you when you came to preach to us.’” Today, that chef and some others who worked at the hotel are baptized Witnesses.

Still Plenty to Do

²⁰ As the end of this wicked system fast approaches, many still yearn to hear the good news, and it is more urgent than ever for every Christian to endure as a faithful evangelizer. (Matthew 24:13) Can you expand your share in this work by becoming an evangelizer in a special sense like Philip, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy? Many are doing something similar by joining the pioneer ranks and making themselves avail-

20. Why is it vital that we endure as zealous evangelizers, and what joyful privilege are many seizing?

able to serve in places where there is a greater need.

²¹ Recently, vast fields for evangelizing have opened up in countries of Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe, where the work of Jehovah’s Witnesses was formerly restricted. As was the case with the apostle Paul, “a large door that leads to activity has been opened” to Jehovah’s people. (1 Corinthians 16:9) For example, missionary evangelizers who recently arrived in the African country of Mozambique cannot handle the number of people who want Bible studies. How happy we can be that the work of Jehovah’s Witnesses was legalized in that land as of February 11, 1991!

²² In lands where we have always had freedom of worship, our brothers are also enjoying continued increases. Yes, wherever we live, there is still “plenty to do in the work of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 15:58) That being the case, let us continue to make wise use of the remaining time as we each ‘do the work of an evangelizer, fully accomplishing our ministry.’—2 Timothy 4:5; Ephesians 5:15, 16.

21. In what way has “a large door that leads to activity” been opened up to Jehovah’s people?

22. Whether our local territory is well worked or not, what must all of us be determined to do?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ What is an evangelizer?
- ☐ How was the content of the good news enriched after 1914?
- ☐ How has the evangelizing work progressed since 1919?
- ☐ What key factors have contributed to the success of the evangelizing work?

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Jesus' Sheep Listen to His Voice

AS THE preaching work expands to all parts of the earth, Jehovah through his angels directs his servants to the sheeplike ones. They hear Jesus' voice and learn to serve him with everlasting life in view. Jesus said at John 10:27, 28: "My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give them everlasting life." Notice how honesthearted ones in Madagascar listened to Jesus' voice.

One of Jehovah's Witnesses gave copies of the books *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* and *Your Youth—Getting the Best Out Of It* to the physician who came to check on his sick father.

The doctor was Protestant and very much opposed to the Witnesses, but he read the book and checked the scriptures in his own Bible. His wife, a Catholic and also a doctor, read the *Youth* book several times because she said it seemed to have been written especially for her. The Society's Bible-based explanation of the significance of 1914 impressed them both. The husband got in touch with the Witness who gave him the books. The Witness gave him *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* and made arrangements to visit him and his wife to answer their questions. When he visited them, he started a regular Bible study with the couple and their three children. Progress in Bible understanding was rapid.

After the first study, the whole family started attending the meetings at the Kingdom Hall and soon thereafter enrolled in the Theocratic Ministry School. The conduct of the children greatly improved. From their Bible study, they learned that celebrating birthdays and other religious holidays was not Christian; hence, they stopped observing them. The husband refused to give his blood to a relative, even though the subject had not yet been discussed in the Bible study. Soon his karate uniform disappeared from his wardrobe; he sent it to the tailor to have clothes made out of it for his children. He burned all his magazines and books on horoscopes. Just three months after they started studying, both the husband and his wife resigned from their respective churches and expressed their desire to share in the preaching work. They are now baptized.

□ A woman in Thailand was seeking the truth. Although a Buddhist, she had never been devoted to her religion because she had seen too much hypocrisy and greed. Besides, there were various customs that she found offensive. She felt tired of it all.

Then, a neighbor recommended that she try the Christians and took her to a Pentecostal church. During the service, however, the woman had a strong desire to leave and go home because of the noise, as all present were praying with a loud voice. That was the last time she attended that church.

Later, she tried a Roman Catholic church. However, after attending a number of times, she again became aware of hypocrisy and greed, as well as the luxurious life-style of the priest. She became disgusted and stopped going there. The priest was curious as to why she left. After learning the reason, he said in a mocking way: "If you wish to join a really strict people, go to Jehovah's Witnesses." She asked: "Where are they?" The priest replied: "They are near the waterworks." The next day she looked for them without success. Disappointed, she nevertheless constantly thought of Jehovah's Witnesses.

One day she overheard one of her neighbors mockingly say to another: "Soon you will become one of Jehovah's Witnesses!" Upon hearing that, the woman rushed over to the neighbor and asked: "Are there Jehovah's Witnesses around here?" "Yes," was the answer. "Some will come to the neighborhood preaching from house to house. You will recognize them by their clean and neat way of dressing." At that she ran out to look for them. At first she did not find them, but when walking back to her house, she noticed a couple of neatly dressed women conversing with somebody. She approached and asked if they were Jehovah's Witnesses. When they said they were, she pleaded: "Please come to my house. I want to talk to you."

A Bible study was started, and in spite of opposition and ridicule from family members, this lady has started to attend meetings and to witness to her relatives.

Jesus truly does know his sheep and is gathering them into his organization for survival into his new world of righteousness.

Scenes From the Promised Land

Eat a Meal Eat Bread



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

ON ONE occasion when Jesus and his disciples were in a house, “they were not able even *to eat a meal*” because of the crowd. (Mark 3:20) Another time Jesus entered the home of a Pharisee “*to eat a meal*.” (Luke 14:1) What sort of meal comes to your mind?

Ancient Israelites would probably think of bread because the Hebrew and the Greek expressions for “eat a meal” literally meant “eat bread.” This is understandable, since bread made from wheat or barley was a staple in their diet.

Many people today think of the Hebrew patriarchs as shepherds and of Jesus’ disciples as fishermen. And some did live that way but certainly not all. Wheat was central in the lives of many. Evidently that was so with Isaac and Jacob at times, as we may infer from Genesis 26:12; 27:37; and 37:7. And since agriculture was a major occupation in Galilee in Jesus’ time, could some who became apostles have been wheat farmers?

That possibility exists, for raising wheat was widespread in the Promised Land, and Biblical references to it abound.

(Deuteronomy 8:7-9; 1 Samuel 6:13) What was involved?

After early rains in October and November softened the soil, the wheat farmer would plow and then sow his seed. The later rains would help his crop to grow and then, in April and May, ripen to a golden brown before the heat of summer. Wheat harvest was so well-known that you read of it as an indicator of the season. (Genesis 30:14; Judges 15:1) Can you determine when during the year the photograph on the left was taken? * And what season was it when Jesus’ disciples plucked some raw kernels? —Matthew 12:1.

Harvesting wheat meant a lot of work for farmers. Reapers would cut the stalks with a hand sickle and bind them into sheaves, as you see below. Of course, some stalks might be overlooked or might drop on the ground, which is why Ruth could successfully glean. (Ruth 2:2, 7, 23; Mark 4:28, 29) The sheaves of wheat were next taken to a threshing floor, such as Araunah’s. What happened there? The Bible mentions “the threshing sledges and the

* Compare the 1992 Calendar of Jehovah’s Witnesses.



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

implements of the cattle.” (2 Samuel 24:18-22; 1 Chronicles 21:23) Wheat sheaves were spread on a flat area of stone or packed earth. A bull or other animal would go round and round, treading the wheat. The animal might be drawing a wooden sledge that would help to break down the straw and free the grain. —Isaiah 41:15.

Then it was ready for winnowing, which was done by throwing it into the air with a shovel or fork, as seen above. (Matthew 3:12) The farmer might winnow in the evening when a breeze would blow away the chaff (husks from the kernels) and carry the straw to the side. Once the grain was gathered and sifted to remove any pebbles, it was ready for storage —or for making into that food of chief importance, bread.—Matthew 6:11.

If you were a housewife with that task, each day you would use a mortar and pestle to grind the grain into flour, perhaps somewhat coarse wheat flour. Or you might grind “fine flour,” such as Sarah used to make “round cakes” for materialized angels or that Israelites used in grain offerings to Jehovah. (Genesis 18:6;

Exodus 29:2; Leviticus 2:1-5; Numbers 28:12) Sarah moistened the wheat flour with water and kneaded it into dough.

Below, you can see balls of dough and one flat, thin loaf spread out awaiting cooking. Such large, round cakes could be baked on stones or iron griddles, as the woman is doing. Does this help you to visualize what Sarah next did for the angelic visitors and what Lot’s family did thereafter? We read: “[The angels] turned aside to him and came into his house. Then he made a feast for them, and he baked unfermented cakes, and they went to eating.”—Genesis 19:3.



Garo Nalbandian

Jehovah Has Taken Good Care of Me

I BEGAN serving Jehovah in an unusual way, to say the least. I grew up in a beautiful rural area of New Zealand's far north, inhabited mainly by Maori people like me. While traveling on horseback one day, I was approached on the road by my cousin Ben. It was 1942, in the autumn (Southern Hemisphere, spring in the Northern Hemisphere). I was 27 and at the time a practicing member of the Church of England.

For many years Ben had been reading the books of Judge Rutherford, then president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, and now he had a letter in his hand from the New Zealand main office of the Watch Tower Society asking him to invite local people to a location where they could celebrate the Lord's Evening Meal together. Further, Ben was to arrange for someone to conduct the service. Looking up at me, Ben said: "You are that person." Proud to be considered qualified—and being a communicant in the church—I agreed.

On the evening in question, about 40 persons gathered in Ben's home for the celebration of our Lord's death, and not one of them was a Witness of Jehovah. Upon my arrival my cousin handed me the talk outline. I dispensed with the suggested song and called on Ben's



brother-in-law to open with prayer. Then I proceeded to present the outlined material, which consisted of a series of questions along with Scripturally based answers. A local clergyman who was present interrupted with objections, but these were answered by reading the Scripture references in the outline.

I recall that one of the questions in the outline related to the time of the year when the event was to be celebrated. How satisfying it was when all present looked out the window and saw the full moon. Clearly, the date was Nisan 14.

What a night that was! Our celebration lasted four hours! Many questions were raised and answered from the Scriptures in the Society's outline. Looking back, I know that I could not have survived the experience without Jehovah's loving care—even though at the time I was not one of his dedicated Witnesses. Nevertheless, on that Memorial night in 1942, I discovered my purpose in life.

Early Life

I was born in 1914. My father had died some four months before *my birth*, and I recall as a young child being envious of other children who had fathers to love them. I

missed that very much. For my mother life without a husband was a hard struggle, made more difficult by the far-reaching effects of World War I.

As a youth, I married a young lady named Agnes Cope, and she has been my partner in life for over 58 years. At the beginning we struggled together to make a success in life. I failed as a farmer because of severe drought. I found some escape in sports, but until that 1942 Memorial experience, I had no real purpose in life.

Witnessing to Relatives

After that Memorial, I studied the Bible in earnest, discussing with some of my cousins the Bible literature published by the Watch Tower Society. In September 1943 some Witnesses of Jehovah from a different area came to visit our isolated community. We had an intensive, four-hour discussion. Then, upon learning that they were to leave the following morning, I asked: "What prevents me from being baptized now?" Two of my cousins and I were immersed in water at one thirty in the morning.

Thereafter, I traveled extensively to witness to my relatives. Some were receptive, and for these I based my discussions on Matthew chapter 24. Others were not receptive, and in those cases I used Jesus' words to the Pharisees recorded in Matthew chapter 23. In time, though, I learned to be more tactful, in imitation of our kind and loving heavenly Father.—Matthew 5:43-45.

At first my wife opposed my desire to serve Jehovah. However, she soon joined me, and in December 1943 she became a dedicated, baptized helpmate. Joining her in baptism on that memorable day were five others from our village of Waima, bringing the total Kingdom publishers in that location up to nine.

Blessings Despite Opposition

During 1944 we were again visited by brothers from outside, and this time they provided needed training in the formal house-to-house ministry. As our presence in the community became more evident, opposition from Christendom's representatives mounted. (John 15:20) There were repeated confrontations with local clergymen, resulting in long doctrinal discussions. But Jehovah gave the victory, and other members of the community, including my sister, came under Jehovah's loving care.

A congregation was formed in Waima in June 1944. Religious persecution and hatred grew. Jehovah's Witnesses were denied burial in the local cemetery. At times the opposition became violent. There were physical confrontations. My car and the garage housing it were burned to the ground. Nevertheless, with Jehovah's blessing, in less than three months, we were able to purchase a truck. And I used a horse-drawn wagon to take my growing family to the meetings.

The increasing number of associates meant that we had an urgent need for a larger meeting place, so we decided to construct a Kingdom Hall in Waima. This was the first Kingdom Hall constructed in New Zealand. Four months after the first trees were felled on December 1, 1949, a combined assembly and dedication was held in the new 260-seat hall. In those days that was quite an accomplishment, achieved with Jehovah's help.

Further Evidences of Jehovah's Care

Since the number of Kingdom proclaimers in New Zealand's far north continued to grow, visiting traveling overseers offered encouragement to serve where the need was greater. In response, in 1956, I moved my family to Pukekohe, just south of Auckland.

**The first Kingdom
Hall built in New
Zealand, 1950**

We served there for 13 years.—Compare Acts 16:9.

Two examples of Jehovah's care during this time stand out in my memory. While I was employed by the county council as a truck driver and machine operator, I was invited to a four-week course of the Kingdom Ministry School at the Watch Tower Society's branch office in Auckland. I requested four weeks' leave for this purpose, and the chief engineer said: "By all means. I wish more people were like you. When you return, come and see me in my office." When I subsequently visited his office, I received pay for the four weeks I was away. Thus, my family's material needs were cared for.—Matthew 6:33.

That was the first example. The second occurred after my wife and I entered the regular pioneer service in 1968. Again, we relied on Jehovah for support, and he rewarded us. One morning after breakfast, my wife opened the refrigerator door and found nothing inside but a half pound of butter. "Sarn," she said, "we have nothing left to eat. Are we still going out in service today?" My reply? "Yes!"

At our first call, the householder accepted the literature we offered and kindly gave us a few dozen eggs as a donation. The second person visited gave us a gift of vegetables—*kumaras* (sweet potatoes), cauliflower, and carrots. Other food items we returned



home with that day were meat and butter. How true in our case were the words of Jesus: "Observe intently the birds of heaven, because they do not sow seed or reap or gather into storehouses; still your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they are?"—Matthew 6:26.

An Assignment Abroad

Rarotonga in the Cook Islands! This was our special pioneer assignment in 1970. It was to be our home for the next four years. The first challenge here was learning a new language. However, because of similarities between New Zealand Maori and Cook Island Maori, I was able to give my first public talk five weeks after arrival.

In the Cook Islands, there were few Kingdom publishers, and we had nowhere to meet. Again, in answer to prayer, Jehovah met our needs. A casual conversation with a shopkeeper resulted in our leasing suitable land, and within a year we had a small home and a Kingdom Hall to seat 140. From then on we received blessing after blessing, to Jehovah's praise.

Particularly appreciated was the island hospitality extended to us. Frequently, while in the ministry, we were offered refreshing drinks—most welcome in the hot, humid climate. Often we would arrive home to find bananas, papaws, mangoes, and oranges left anonymously at our doorstep.

In 1971 my wife and I, accompanied by three other publishers from Rarotonga, traveled to the island of Aitutaki, noted for its beautiful lagoon. We found lovers of God's Word among the hospitable inhabitants and started four home Bible studies, which we continued by correspondence after our return to Rarotonga. In time those students on Aitutaki were baptized, and a congregation was formed. In 1978 the second Kingdom Hall in the Cook Islands was constructed there. Jehovah kept making things grow in response to our planting and watering.—1 Corinthians 3:6, 7.

I was privileged to visit ten islands in the Cook Island group, often under trying circumstances. One boat trip to Atiu, 114 miles away, required more than six days because of high winds and rough seas. (Compare 2 Corinthians 11:26.) Even though food supplies were limited and many around me were seasick, I was grateful for Jehovah's care, which resulted in a safe arrival at my destination.

In 1974 we were refused a permit to stay in the Cook Islands and so had to return to New Zealand. By that time there were three congregations on the islands.

Further Privileges of Service —And a Test

Back in New Zealand, new doors of opportunity opened up. (1 Corinthians 16:9) The Society needed someone who could translate *The Watchtower* and other Bible literature into Cook Island Maori. I was given the privilege, and it has remained mine to the pres-

ent day. Then I was privileged to make regular return visits on my brothers in the Cook Islands, first as a circuit overseer, then as a substitute district overseer.

On one of those visits, Brother Alex Napa, a special pioneer from Rarotonga, went with me on a 23-day ocean voyage that took us to Manahiki, Rakahanga, and Penrhyn—lands in the northern Cooks. On each island, Jehovah moved the hearts of hospitable local people to provide us with accommodations and to accept much Bible literature. (Compare Acts 16:15.) In these islands, pearl oysters are plentiful, and on many occasions the people offered pearls as a contribution toward the cost of the worldwide preaching work. So, as we gave spiritual pearls, we received some literal ones.—Compare Matthew 13:45, 46.

How beautiful that isolated part of the world is! Imagine huge sharks swimming peacefully together with children in a lagoon! What a magnificent spectacle the night skies presented! How true the psalmist's words: "One day after another day causes speech to bubble forth, and one night after another night shows forth knowledge."—Psalm 19:2.

Then, nine years ago, came a real test of integrity. My wife was hospitalized with a brain hemorrhage. Surgery was needed, but the doctor would not agree to perform it without using blood. My wife and I could not conscientiously agree to a procedure that would violate God's law. But the conscience of the surgeon dictated that every means possible, including blood, be used to save life.

My wife's health deteriorated, and she was put in an intensive care ward, with only limited visits allowed. She experienced hearing loss due to pressure on the eardrums. It became a crisis situation. After one visit a doctor followed me to my car, insisting that

my wife's only chance was surgery with blood and pleading with me to consent to it. Nonetheless, my wife and I trusted in Jehovah—even if obeying his law resulted in losing a few years in this present life.

Suddenly, there was a marked improvement in my wife's condition. I arrived one day to find her sitting up in bed reading. On subsequent days she began witnessing to patients and the nursing staff. Then I was summoned to the surgeon's office. "Mr. Wharerau," he said, "you are indeed a fortunate man! We believe your wife's problem has healed." Unexpectedly, her blood pressure had stabilized. Together, my wife and I thanked Jehovah and renewed our determination to do our utmost in his service.

Now I have been reassigned to the Cook Islands and am once again serving in Rarotonga. What a blessed privilege! In looking back my wife and I are grateful for Jehovah's care over almost five decades in his service. Materially, we have never been without life's necessities. In a spiritual

sense, the blessings have been too numerous to recount. A notable one is the number of my fleshly relatives who have embraced the truth. I can count more than 200 who are now baptized Witnesses of Jehovah, including 65 direct descendants. One grandson is a member of the New Zealand Bethel family, while one daughter with her husband and two sons are doing construction work at branches.—3 John 4.

In looking ahead, I cherish the prospect of living in a paradise where, earth wide, the beauty will exceed even that of the pretty green valley where I was born. What a privilege it will be to welcome back my mother and father in the resurrection and to inform them of the ransom, the Kingdom, and all the other evidences of Jehovah's care.

My determination, sustained by the knowledge that God cares for me, is as the psalmist stated at Psalm 104:33: "I will sing to Jehovah throughout my life; I will make melody to my God as long as I am."—*As told by Sarn Wharerau.*

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Do Jehovah's Witnesses avoid celebrating birthdays because the practice had some religious meaning in ancient times?

Celebrating birthdays is rooted in superstition and false religion, but that is not the sole or prime reason why Jehovah's Witnesses avoid the practice.

Some customs that were once religious in nature no longer are in many places. For example, the wedding ring once had religious significance, but in most places today, it no longer does. Hence, many true Christians accept the local custom of wearing a wedding ring to give evidence that a person is married. In such matters, what generally is influential is whether a practice is now linked to false religion.—See "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of January 15, 1972, and October 15, 1991.

There is no denying, though, that numerous reference works reveal the superstitious and religious antecedents of celebrating birthdays. *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1991 edition) notes: "The ancient world of Egypt, Greece, Rome, and Persia celebrated the birthdays of gods, kings, and nobles." It says that the Romans observed the birth of Artemis and the day of Apollo. In contrast, "although the ancient Israelites kept records of the ages of their male citizens, there is no evidence that they had any festivities on the anniversary of the birth date."

Other reference works go into considerable detail about the origin of birthday celebrations: 'Birthday parties began years ago in Europe. People believed in good and evil spirits, sometimes called good and

evil fairies. Everyone was afraid of these spirits, that they would cause harm to the birthday celebrant, and so he was surrounded by friends and relatives whose good wishes, and very presence, would protect him against the unknown dangers that the birthday held. Giving gifts brought even greater protection. Eating together provided a further safeguard and helped to bring the blessings of the good spirits. So the birthday party was originally intended to make a person safe from evil and to insure a good year to come.'—*Birthday Parties Around the World*, 1967.

The book explains, too, the origin of many birthday customs. For example: "The reason [for using candles] goes back to the early Greeks and Romans who thought that tapers or candles had magical qualities. They would offer prayers and make wishes to be carried up to the gods by the flames of candles. The gods would then send down their blessings and perhaps answer the prayers." Other such background information is collected on pages 69 and 70 of *Reasoning From the Scriptures*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

As mentioned, however, more is involved in this question than whether celebrating birthdays was or still is religious. The Bible brings up the matter of birthdays, and mature Christians wisely are sensitive to any indications it gives.

God's servants of old noted when individuals were born, which allowed them to figure ages. We read: "Noah got to be five hundred years old. After that Noah became father to Shem, Ham and Japheth." "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, . . . all the springs of the vast watery deep were broken open."—Genesis 5:32; 7:11; 11:10-26.

As even Jesus mentioned, among God's people childbirth was a blessed, happy event. (Luke 1: 57, 58; 2:9-14; John 16:21) Yet, Jehovah's people did not memorialize the date of birth; they kept other anniversaries but not birthdays. (John 10: 22, 23) *Encyclopaedia Judaica* says: "The celebration of birthdays is unknown in traditional Jewish ritual." *Customs and Traditions of Israel* observes: "The celebration of birthdays has been borrowed from the practices of other nations, as no mention is made of this custom among Jews either in The

Bible, Talmud, or writings of the later Sages. In fact, it was an ancient Egyptian custom."

That Egyptian connection is clear from a birthday celebration related in the Bible, one that true worshipers were not observing. It was the birthday feast of the Pharaoh who ruled while Joseph was in an Egyptian prison. Some of those pagans may have been happy over the feast, yet the birthday was linked to the beheading of the chief of Pharaoh's bakers.—Genesis 40:1-22.

A similar unfavorable light is shed on the other birthday celebration described in the Scriptures—that of Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. This birthday celebration is hardly presented in the Bible as just innocent festivity. Rather, it occasioned the beheading of John the Baptizer. Then, "his disciples came up and removed the corpse and buried him and came and reported to Jesus," who 'withdrew from there into a lonely place for isolation.' (Matthew 14:6-13) Do you imagine that those disciples or Jesus felt drawn to the practice of birthday celebrations?

Given the known origin of celebrating birthdays, and more important, the unfavorable light in which they are presented in the Bible, Jehovah's Witnesses have ample reason to abstain from the practice. They do not need to follow this worldly custom, for they can and do have happy meals any time during the year. Their gift giving is not obligatory or under the pressure of a party; it is spontaneous sharing of gifts at any time out of generosity and genuine affection.—Proverbs 17:8; Ecclesiastes 2:24; Luke 6:38; Acts 9:36, 39; 1 Corinthians 16:2, 3.

In Our Next Issue

Why Do Good People Suffer?

Jehovah Forgives in a Large Way

You Can Cope With Frustration!

The Harvest of a True Evangelizer

WILLIAM R. BROWN first went to Africa in 1923. With his wife and child, he 'did the work of an evangelizer' in The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. (2 Timothy 4:5) The fruitage of his work is extraordinary.

This native of the West Indies was not a member of one of Christendom's churches and certainly did not get involved in politics. Rather, he imitated Jesus and the apostles by publicizing the name and sovereignty of Jehovah, emphasizing the importance of the ransom, and preaching the good news of the Kingdom. (Matthew 9:35; 20:28; John 17:4-6) William R. Brown constantly used the Bible, pointing to it as the final authority in matters of doctrine and faith. (2 Timothy 3:16) So insistent was he on this that he was known as Bible Brown.

With Jehovah's blessing, the seeds sown by Bible Brown sprouted and grew. Today, in the



lands where he led the way, almost 200,000 Africans have dedicated their lives to their Creator and, in turn, preach the good news of the Kingdom to others. (Matthew 24:14; 1 Corinthians 3:6-9) These active Christians are widely known for their honesty and reliability. They are proud to be Witnesses of Jehovah and subjects of Christ, the reigning King.

Such a harvest is the result of true Christian evangelism. A similar harvest is being reaped around the world on every inhabited continent. In upwards of 200 lands, over four million meekhearted men and women have been "harvested" and are repeating to others the words of the evangelizing angel: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of the judgment by him has arrived." (Revelation 14:7) In truth, the only way to find hope in our troubled age is to turn to God and submit to his Kingdom rule.