



APRIL 1, 1993

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**WHY BE
BAPTIZED?**

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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Baptize! Baptize! Baptize!

But Why?

"IN THE space of a few months I have baptized more than ten thousand men, women, and children." So wrote Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier regarding his work in the kingdom of Travancore, India. "I went from village to village and made Christians of them. And everywhere I went I left behind a copy of our prayers and commandments in the native language."



motive. The slaves of the Arabs and Hindus hope to gain their freedom by it or gain protection from an oppressive master or simply to get a new robe or a turban. Many do so to escape some punishment. . . . Any who are driven by their own convictions to seek salvation in our teachings are regarded as madmen. Many apostasize and return to their former pagan practices not long after being baptized."

Greatly impressed with Francis Xavier's letters, King John of Portugal ordered that they be read aloud from every pulpit throughout his kingdom. The letter of January 1545 just quoted was even approved for publication. The result? "Before long half the students in Europe, 'falling to their knees and pouring forth hot tears,' were clamoring to go to India and convert the heathen," writes Manfred Barthel in his book *The Jesuits—History & Legend of the Society of Jesus*. He added: "The idea that it might take more than a couple of holy-water sprinklers and a satchelful of tracts to convert an entire kingdom does not seem to have occurred to many at the time."

What was actually accomplished by such mass conversions? Jesuit Nicolas Lancillo to realistically reported to Rome: "Most of those who are baptized have some ulterior

The desire to convert and baptize the heathen was shared also by the European explorers of that era. It is said that Christopher Columbus baptized the first "Indians" he encountered in the Caribbean. "The official policy of the Spanish Crown put the conversion of the native population as first priority," says *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*. "By the end of the sixteenth century, the 7,000,000 Indians of the Spanish empire were, in name at least, Christians. Where we have statistics of conversions (Pedro de Gante, a relative of the Emperor Charles V, who had joined the missionaries, told of baptizing 14,000 with the help of a single companion in one day), it is evident no serious preliminary instruction had been possible." Such superficial conversions were often accompanied by harsh, brutal, oppressive treatment of the natives.

The importance placed on baptism spurred these explorers and missionaries on. In 1439, Pope Eugenius IV issued a decree at the Council of Florence that said: "Holy Baptism holds the first place among the sacraments, because it is the door of the spiritual life; for by it we are made members of Christ and incorporated with the Church. And since through the first man death entered into all, unless we be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, we cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

Contention arose, though, as to just whose baptism was valid. "Because it was also the fundamental rite of entry into the church community, baptism was quickly claimed as a prerogative by several rival churches, each of which called itself orthodox and accused the others of heresy and schism. Modifications of baptismal rites by the various sects

were inevitable," notes *The Encyclopedia of Religion*.

The practice of baptism, however, predates the Christian faith. It was employed in Babylonia and in ancient Egypt, where the cold waters of the Nile were thought to increase strength and bestow immortality. The Greeks also believed that baptism could bring regeneration or could procure immortality for the initiate. The Jewish sect at Qumran practiced baptism for initiation into their community. It was required that Gentile converts to Judaism be circumcised and seven days later be baptized by immersion before witnesses.

Obviously, much importance has been placed on baptism down through the ages. But what about today? Is it necessary in these modern times? If so, why? Indeed, should you be baptized?

Should You Be Baptized?

CLOSE to a million people were baptized by Jehovah's Witnesses in the last three years. This comes to an average of 824 per day, or 4 persons baptized every 7 minutes. Is this just a copy of the religious fervor of the 15th and 16th centuries?

No, these individuals were not baptized by force, as part of a mass conversion, or as a result of an emotional appeal by some religious orator. They were baptized because Jesus Christ, the Master and Leader of Christians, commanded that this be done. They had followed the steps and procedures that Jesus outlined and that were put into practice by the apostles that he himself had chosen and trained.

After Jesus' resurrection and prior to his ascension to heaven, he gave his followers this farewell commission: "Go therefore 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, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 28:19, 20) From that time forward, this was the only water baptism having God's approval.

Accordingly, the Bible tells us that those early followers of Christ became "witnesses of [Jesus] both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) As Jesus had foretold,

their preaching and teaching work would result in the baptism of believers who would also be followers of Christ.

The first recorded example of this took place in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E. At that time the apostle Peter "stood up with the eleven" and spoke to the gathered multitude about Jesus the Messiah. The account tells us that his speech 'stabbed them to the heart,' and they asked what they should do. "Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins," said Peter. The result was that "those who embraced his word heartily were baptized, and on that day about three thousand souls were added." (Acts 2:14-41) Subsequent accounts confirm that baptism of disciples was preceded by their hearing the Christian message, believing the good news, and repenting.—Acts 8:12, 13, 34-38; 10:34-48; 16:30-34; 18:5, 8; 19:1-5.

In What Manner?

But how were these new disciples to be baptized in water? Was it to be by aspersion (sprinkling), affusion (pouring on the head), or immersion (complete submersion)? What does the Bible record show? Since Jesus left us a model for us "to follow his steps closely," in what manner was he baptized? —1 Peter 2:21.

The Bible shows that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, a sizable river. After being baptized, he came "up out of the water." (Mark 1:10; Matthew 3:13, 16) So Jesus had actually been immersed in the Jordan River. He was baptized by John, who, in looking for a suitable place to perform baptisms, chose a location in the Jordan Valley near Salim "because there was a great quantity of water there." (John 3:23) The fact that complete submersion in water was the standard baptismal practice among Jesus' followers is seen by the words of the Ethiopian eunuch.

Responding to the teaching of Philip, he exclaimed: "Look! A body of water; what prevents me from getting baptized?" Then we note that "they both went down into the water" and afterward came "up out of the water."—Acts 8:36-39.

Does secular history also point to the practice of baptism by immersion among Christians? Indeed it does. And it is interesting to note that many large baptismal basins suitable for immersions still exist in a number of lands. "The archaeological evidence overwhelmingly testifies to immersion as the usual mode of baptism during the first ten to fourteen centuries," says the journal *Ministry*. It adds: "Among the ruins of early Christian structures, and also in ancient churches still in use, the history of Christian baptism can be traced. Paintings in catacombs and churches, mosaics on floors, walls, and ceilings, sculptured reliefs, and drawings in ancient New Testament manuscripts add details to this history . . . This is in addition to the evidence found throughout the writings of the church fathers that immersion was the early church's common mode of baptism."

Admits the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*: "It is evident that Baptism in the early Church was by immersion." Not surprisingly, then, we find newspaper headlines like these: "Catholics Bring Back Immersion Baptism" (*The Edmonton Journal*, Canada, September 24, 1983), "Baptism by Immersion Catches On With Catholics Here" (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 7, 1985), "Many Catholics Choosing Baptism by Immersion" (*The New York Times*, March 25, 1989), and "Immersion Baptisms Enjoying Revival" (*The Houston Chronicle*, August 24, 1991).

For What Purpose?

Why did Jesus require that his disciples be baptized? Well, it was a fitting symbol of

their wholehearted dedication to God. The "good news" was to be preached earth wide, and disciples were to be made of "people of all the nations." (Matthew 24:14; 28:19) This meant that God was no longer dealing exclusively with the Jewish nation, made up of people who were dedicated to him from birth. Cornelius and his family were the first Gentiles, or non-Jews, to accept the truth about Jesus Christ and be baptized.

Being dipped under the water showed that those being baptized had died to a life course that had centered on themselves. Their being raised up out of the water symbolized that they were now alive to the doing of God's will and were putting it first in their lives, as Jesus had done. (Matthew 16:24) Being baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit" indicated that they had learned and accepted the truth about each of these and recognized them for what they are. (Matthew 28:19; compare Acts 13:48.) Baptism was simply an initial step of obedience to God and submission to his will.

The Scriptures do not support the widely held religious view that baptism is a sacrament, that is, a religious ceremony imparting merit—grace, holiness, or spiritual benefit—to the one baptized. For instance, the papal bull of Pope Eugenius IV quoted in the preceding article went on to say regarding baptism: "The effect of this sacrament is the remission of all sin, original and actual; likewise of all punishment which is due for sin. As a consequence, no satisfaction for past sins is enjoined upon those who are baptized; and if they die before they commit any sin, they attain immediately to the kingdom of heaven and the vision of God."

However, Jesus was baptized although he "committed no sin." (1 Peter 2:22) Moreover, according to the Scriptures, remission

of sins comes only through the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Ananias urged Saul of Tarsus: "Rise, get baptized and *wash your sins away by your calling upon [Jesus'] name.*" (Acts 22:12-16) Yes, salvation is possible only by means of the shed blood of Jesus and by "calling upon his name" in faith. —Hebrews 9:22; 1 John 1:7.

What, then, of Peter's words at 1 Peter 3:21? There he says: "That which corresponds to this is also now saving you, namely, baptism, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the request made to God for a good conscience,) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Peter was comparing baptism to Noah's experience of passing through the waters of the Flood. (Verse 20) Noah, showing full faith in God, built the ark for the preservation of his family. (Hebrews 11:7) Similarly, by exercising faith in Jehovah God and his provision for salvation through Christ Jesus, people today can be saved from this present wicked world. They must also act on that faith. By repenting of sins, turning around from a wrong course, and making an unreserved dedication to Jehovah God in prayer, the request is made to God for a good conscience. But it is on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice, and his resurrection by which he presented the value of that sacrifice to God in heaven, that sins are forgiven and salvation is possible. —1 Peter 3:22.

What Will You Do?

Are you one who has been associating with Jehovah's Witnesses for some time? Perhaps you have already made the necessary changes in your life in accordance with Bible principles but have not taken the steps of dedication and baptism. You may want to do God's will, yet you may fear that baptism will obligate you. Consequently, you may prefer to avoid such responsibility and ac-



countability for a time. Almost 11.5 million people attended the celebration of the Lord's Evening Meal last year. However, the peak number of those sharing in the work of preaching the good news throughout the year was less than 4.5 million. This means that about seven million people are showing some appreciation for God's truth, though they are not baptized Witnesses of Jehovah. Of course, some of these are younger children and newly interested ones. But some of those sharing in the preaching work also are still not baptized. There are many people who have taken in an accurate knowledge of the Bible but have not yet fully availed themselves of God's provision for salvation by being baptized.

An important point to remember is that it is the *knowledge* of what God requires of you that brings accountability. "If one knows how to do what is right and yet does not do it, it is a sin for him," says James 4:17. Ezekiel 33:7-9 shows that a person who is told God's commandments and instruc-

Like the Ethiopian eunuch, do you ask yourself: "What prevents me from getting baptized?"

tions is responsible to carry them out. So the question is whether one has a sincere love for God and a real desire to please him. A person who truly has such love and wants a special relationship with Jehovah God would not hold back from freely dedicating his life to him. Baptism is but an outward symbol of that dedication. It is a necessary step toward salvation. Genuine believers get baptized.—Acts 8:12.

The grand prospects that God holds out for faithful, dedicated individuals in the coming new world greatly outweigh any temporary advantages this wicked old system of things may seem to offer. Fear of fellow humans melts away when we consider the mighty hand of God. (1 Corinthians 10:22; 1 Peter 5:6, 7) Truly, this is the time to ask yourself, as the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip: "What prevents me from getting baptized?"

FOLLOW THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

"He that follows me . . . will possess the light of life."—JOHN 8:12.

WHAT would we do without light? Imagine waking up every day of the year to 24 hours of darkness. Imagine a world without color, for without light there is no color. Indeed, if light did not exist, neither would we! Why not? Because, in the process of photosynthesis, green plants use light to make the food we eat—grains, vegetables, and fruits. True, sometimes we eat the meat of animals. But those animals ate plants or other animals that lived off plants. Thus, our physical lives totally depend on light.

² Our light comes from the sun, which is a star. While our sun gives off a tremendous amount of light, it is still only a medium-size star. Many are much larger. And the star grouping that we live in, the Milky Way galaxy, contains more than a hundred billion stars. In addition, there are countless billions of galaxies in the universe. What a tremendous array of stars! What enormous quantities of light emanate from them! What a powerful source of light is Jehovah, who created all of that! Isaiah 40:26 declares: "Raise your eyes high up and see. Who has created these things? It is the One who is bringing forth the army of them even by number, all of whom he calls even by name. Due to the *abundance of dynamic energy*, he also being *vigorous in power*, not one of them is missing."

1. How vital is light?
2. What powerful sources of light are there, and what does this tell us about Jehovah?

Another Kind of Light

³ Jehovah is also the Source of another kind of light, one that enables us to have *spiritual* vision, spiritual enlightenment. One dictionary defines "enlighten" this way: "To furnish knowledge to; instruct; to give spiritual insight to." It defines "enlightened" as: "freed from ignorance and misinformation." Spiritual enlightenment from Jehovah is supplied by means of the accurate knowledge of his Word, the Bible. That is what enables us to know who God is and what his purposes are. "God is he who said: 'Let the light shine out of darkness,' and he has shone on our hearts to illuminate them with the glorious knowledge of God by the face of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6) Thus, the truths in God's Word free us from ignorance and misinformation. Jesus said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."—John 8:32.

⁴ Jehovah, the Source of true spiritual enlightenment, is "perfect in knowledge." (Job 37:16) Also, Psalm 119:105 declares of God: "Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway." So he can spiritually light up not only the next step of our lives but also the road ahead. Without that, life would be like driving a car along a winding mountain road on a dark night with no lights on the car or anywhere else. Spiritual light from

3. How important is spiritual light from Jehovah?
- 4, 5. How does knowledge from Jehovah serve as light in our lives?

God may be compared to the light provided by the headlights of the car. The light illuminates the roadway so that we can see exactly where we are going.

⁵ The prophecy at Isaiah 2:2-5 shows that in our time God is gathering out of all nations people who want spiritual enlightenment so that they can learn and practice true worship. Verse 3 says: "He will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths." Verse 5 invites truth seekers: "Come and let us walk in the light of Jehovah."

⁶ Thus, Jehovah is the source of two kinds of light vital for life: the physical and the spiritual. The physical light helps our physical bodies to stay alive now, perhaps some 70 or 80 years or so. But the spiritual light leads to eternal life on a paradise earth. It is as Jesus said in prayer to God: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3.

World in Spiritual Darkness

⁷ Today we need spiritual light as never before. Prophecies such as Matthew chapter 24 and 2 Timothy chapter 3 show that we are near the end of this system of things. These and other prophecies foretold the dreadful things that have taken place in our time, letting us know we are in "the last days." True to such prophecies, this century has experienced calamity upon calamity. Crime and violence have grown to fearful proportions. Wars have taken more than a hundred million lives. Diseases, such as the dreaded AIDS, stalk millions, some 160,000 having already died from AIDS in the United States alone. Family life has broken down and sexual morality is viewed as old-fashioned.

6. Where will the light from Jehovah eventually lead us?

7. Why do we need spiritual enlightenment now as never before?

⁸ Former secretary-general of the United Nations Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said: "The world situation offers overwhelming evidence that poverty [is undermining] the cohesion of societies." He noted that "over one billion people now live in absolute poverty" and that "this has fed the forces leading to violent strife." These "grave afflictions," he said, "defy the remedies that governments can administer." And the head of an influential organization affirmed: "The central problem facing society is that it has become ungovernable." How true the words of Psalm 146:3: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs."

⁹ The situation today is as Isaiah 60:2 foretold: "Look! darkness itself will cover the earth, and thick gloom the national groups." This darkness covering the vast majority of earth's inhabitants is due to their not absorbing the spiritual light from Jehovah. And the root cause of the spiritual darkness is Satan the Devil and his demons, the chief enemies of the God of light. They are "the world rulers of this darkness." (Ephesians 6:12) As 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, the Devil is "the god of this system of things," who "has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, that the illumination of the glorious good news about the Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine through." No human rule can rid the world of Satan's influence. Only God can.

"A Great Light"

¹⁰ Yet, while gross darkness covers most of mankind, God's Word also prophesied at Isaiah 60:2, 3: "Upon you Jehovah will shine

8. What situation now faces humankind, and why?

9. Who are most responsible for the darkness engulfing mankind, and who can rid us of this influence?

10. How did Isaiah foretell that in our day light would be shed on mankind?



forth, and upon you his own glory will be seen. And nations will certainly go to your light." This is in harmony with Isaiah chapter 2, which promised that the enlightened, true worship of Jehovah would be established in these last days and, as verses 2 and 3 say, "to it all the nations must stream. And many peoples will certainly go and say: 'Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah,'" that is, to his exalted true worship. So although the world is controlled by Satan, light from God is being shed and is freeing multitudes from darkness.

¹¹ The prophecy at Isaiah 9:2 foretold that

11. Who would be most prominent in reflecting Jehovah's light, and how did Simeon identify him?

Simeon called Jesus "a light for removing the veil from the nations"

God would send someone into the world to reflect his light. It states: "The people that were walking in the darkness have seen a great light. As for those dwelling in the land of deep shadow, light itself has shone upon them." This "great light" is Jehovah's Spokesman, Jesus Christ. Jesus said: "I am the light of the world. He that follows me will by no means walk in darkness, but will possess the light of life." (John 8:12) This was known by some even when Jesus was a young child. Luke 2:25 says that a man named Simeon was "righteous and reverent" and that "holy spirit was upon him." When Simeon saw the young child Jesus, he

said in prayer to God: "My eyes have seen your means of saving that you have made ready in the sight of all the peoples, a light for removing the veil from the nations." —Luke 2:30-32.

¹² Jesus began removing the veil of darkness from mankind shortly after his baptism. Matthew 4:12-16 tells us that this fulfilled Isaiah 9:1, 2, which spoke about the "great light" that would begin to shine on people walking in spiritual darkness. Matthew 4:17 says: "From that time on Jesus commenced preaching and saying: 'Repent, you people, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" By preaching about the good news of God's Kingdom, Jesus enlightened people about God's purposes. He "shed light upon life and incorruption through the good news."—2 Timothy 1:10.

¹³ Jesus faithfully reflected God's light. He said: "I have come as a light into the world, in order that everyone putting faith in me may not remain in the darkness. . . . I have not spoken out of my own impulse, but the Father himself who sent me has given me a commandment as to what to tell and what to speak. Also, I know that his commandment means everlasting life."—John 12:44-50.

"By Means of Him Was Life"

¹⁴ Yes, Jehovah sent his Son to earth to be a light to show people the way to everlasting life. Note how this is featured at John 1:1-16. Verses 1 and 2 read: "In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god. This one was in the beginning with God." Here John calls the prehuman Jesus by the title "Word." This identifies the function he performed as Je-

hovah God's Spokesman. And when John states that "in the beginning the Word was," it means that the Word was the beginning of Jehovah's creative works, "the beginning of the creation by God." (Revelation 3:14) His preeminent position among God's creatures gives real basis for his being called "a god," a mighty one. Isaiah 9:6 calls him "Mighty God," though not Almighty God.

¹⁵ John 1:3 states: "All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence." Colossians 1:16 says that "by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and upon the earth." John 1:4 says that "by means of him was life, and the life was the light of men." So by means of the Word, all other forms of life were created; also by means of his Son, God makes it possible for sinful, dying mankind to gain everlasting life. Certainly Jesus is the mighty one whom Isaiah 9:2 calls "a great light." And John 1:5 says: "The light is shining in the darkness, but the darkness has not overpowered it." Light stands for truth and righteousness, in contrast with darkness, which stands for error and unrighteousness. Thus John shows that the darkness will not conquer the light.

¹⁶ John now argues at verses 6 to 9: "There arose a man that was sent forth as a representative of God: his name was John [the Baptizer]. This man came for a witness, in order to bear witness about the light, that people of all sorts might believe through him. He [John] was not that light, but he was meant to bear witness about that light [Jesus]. The true light that gives light to every sort of man was about to come into the world." John pointed to the coming Messiah and turned his followers toward Him. In time, all sorts of people were given the

12. When and how did Jesus begin removing the veil of darkness covering people?

13. How did Jesus describe himself, and why could he do so with such certainty?

14. How is Jesus identified at John 1:1, 2?

15. What additional information does John 1:3-5 give us about Jesus?

16. How did John the Baptizer point to the scope of Jesus' work?

opportunity to accept the light. So Jesus did not come just for the benefit of Jews but for the benefit of all mankind—rich or poor, regardless of race.

¹⁷ Verses 10 and 11 continue: "He was in the world, and the world came into existence through him, but the world did not know him. He came to his own home, but his own people did not take him in." Jesus, in his prehuman existence, had been the one through whom the world of mankind was created. When on earth, though, he was rejected by most of his own people, the Jews. They did not want their badness and hypocrisy exposed. They preferred darkness rather than light.

¹⁸ John says in verses 12 and 13: "However, as many as did receive him, to them he gave authority to become God's children, because they were exercising faith in his name; and they were born, not from blood or from a fleshly will or from man's will, but from God." These verses show that to begin with, the followers of Jesus were not sons of God. Before Christ's coming to earth, neither such sonship nor a heavenly hope had been open to humans. But by the merit of Christ's ransom sacrifice in which they exercised faith, some humans were adopted to sonship and were able to have the hope of life as kings with Christ in God's heavenly Kingdom.

¹⁹ Verse 14 reasons: "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." On earth, Jesus reflected God's glory as

only God's firstborn Son could. Hence, in a unique way, he was best qualified to reveal God and His purposes to the people.

²⁰ Next, the apostle John writes in verse 15: "John [the Baptizer] bore witness about him, yes, he actually cried out—this was the one who said it—saying: 'The one coming behind me has advanced in front of me, because he existed before me.'" John the Baptizer was born some six months before Jesus' birth as a human. But Jesus did far more works than John, so that he advanced in front of John in every way. And John acknowledged that Jesus existed before him, since Jesus had a prehuman existence.

Gifts From Jehovah

²¹ John 1:16 reasons: "We all received from out of his fullness, even undeserved kindness upon undeserved kindness." Although humans are born in sin because of inheriting it from Adam, Jehovah purposes the destruction of this wicked system, the survival of millions into the new world, the

20. As recorded at John 1:15, what does John the Baptizer tell us about Jesus?

21. Why does John 1:16 say that we have received "undeserved kindness upon undeserved kindness"?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What two kinds of light flow from Jehovah?
- ☐ Why is spiritual enlightenment so important today?
- ☐ In what way was Jesus "a great light"?
- ☐ What does John chapter 1 tell us about Jesus?
- ☐ What gifts flow to those who follow the light of the world?

17. What does John 1:10, 11 tell us about the spiritual condition of the Jews in Jesus' day?

18. How does John 1:12, 13 show that some could become children of God with a special inheritance?

19. Why is Jesus in the best position to reflect God's light, as shown at John 1:14?

resurrection of the dead, and the removal of sin and death, resulting in eternal life on a paradise earth. All these blessings are undeserved, unearned by sinful humans. They are gifts from Jehovah through Christ.

²² What is the greatest gift that makes all of this possible? "God 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." (John 3:16) Thus, accurate knowledge of God and his Son, "the Chief Agent of life," is vital for those who want spiritual light and everlasting life.

22. (a) What does God's greatest gift make possible? (b) What invitation is extended to us in the final book of the Bible?

(Acts 3:15) That is why the final book of the Bible extends the following invitation to all who love the truth and who want life: "'Come!' And let anyone hearing say: 'Come!' And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free." —Revelation 22:17.

²³ Humble, sheeplike people not only will come to the light of the world but will follow that light: "The sheep follow him, because they know [the ring of truth in] his voice." (John 10:4) Indeed, they delight "to follow his steps closely" because they know that doing so will mean eternal life for them. —1 Peter 2:21.

23. What will sheeplike people do when they come to the light?

WHO ARE FOLLOWING THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD?

"You are shining as illuminators in the world."—PHILIPPIANS 2:15.

THE Bible clearly identifies Jesus as "a great light," "the light of the world." (Isaiah 9:2; John 8:12) Yet, relatively few followed him when he was on earth. The majority chose to follow counterfeit lights who were, in reality, bearers of darkness. Of these God's Word says: "Such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light. It is therefore nothing great if his ministers also keep

transforming themselves into ministers of righteousness. But their end shall be according to their works." —2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

² Thus, not all people want the light, as marvelous as it is. Jesus said: "This is the basis for judgment, that the light has come into the world but men have loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were wicked. For he that practices vile things hates the light and does not come to the light, in order that his works may not be reproved." —John 3:19, 20.

1. What does the Bible say about counterfeit religious lights?

2. What did Jesus say would be the basis for judging people?

Lovers of Darkness

³ Consider how that was the case when Jesus was on earth. God had empowered Jesus to perform thrilling miracles as a way to establish that he was the Messiah. For example, on a Sabbath day, he restored the sight of a man born blind. What a wonderful act of mercy! How appreciative the man was! He could see for the very first time! What, though, was the reaction of the religious leaders? John 9:16 relates: "Some of the Pharisees began to say [about Jesus]: 'This is not a man from God, because he does not observe the Sabbath.'" How perverted their hearts were! Here a marvelous healing had taken place, but instead of expressing joy for the formerly blind man and appreciation for the healer, they condemned Jesus! By doing so, they doubtless sinned against the manifestation of God's holy spirit, an unforgivable sin.—Matthew 12:31, 32.

⁴ Later, when those hypocrites questioned the formerly blind man about Jesus, the man said: "This certainly is a marvel, that you do not know where he [Jesus] is from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to this one. From of old it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of one born blind. If this man [Jesus] were not from God, he could do nothing at all." How did the religious leaders respond? "In answer they said to him: 'You were altogether born in sins, and yet are you teaching us?' And they threw him out!" How lacking in compassion! They had stones for hearts. So Jesus told them that while they could see with their physical eyes, they were spiritually blind.—John 9:30-41.

⁵ That these religious hypocrites were sin-

3, 4. How did the religious leaders in Jesus' day show that they did not want to follow the light?
5, 6. What did first-century religious leaders do that showed they loved the darkness?



ning against God's spirit is readily seen on another occasion, when Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the dead. Because of that miracle, many of the common people put faith in Jesus. Note, however, what the religious leaders did. "The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Sanhedrin together and began to say: 'What are we to do, because this man performs many signs? If we let him alone this way, they will all put faith in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.'" (John 11:47, 48) They were worrying about their positions and prominence. At all costs they wanted to please the Romans, not God. So, what did they do? "From that day on they took counsel to kill [Jesus]."—John 11:53.

⁶ Was that all? No. What they did next



The hardhearted Pharisees threw out the man whose eyes had been opened by Jesus

shows how much they loved the darkness: "The chief priests now took counsel to kill Lazarus also, because on account of him many of the Jews were going there and putting faith in Jesus." (John 12:10, 11) What incredible wickedness! Although they did all of this to protect their positions, what happened? In that very generation, they revolt-

ed against the Romans, who came against them in 70 C.E. and took away their place, their nation, and their lives as well! —Isaiah 5:20; Luke 19:41-44.

The Compassion of Jesus

⁷ So too in our time, not all want spiritual enlightenment. But those who love the truth do want to come to the light. They want God as their Sovereign, and they eagerly turn to Jesus, whom God has sent to explain what the light is, and follow him. That is what humble people did when Jesus was on earth. They flocked to him. Even the Pharisees had to admit that. They complained: "The world has gone after him." (John 12:19)

Sheeplike people loved Jesus because he was the opposite of the selfish, arrogant, power-hungry religious leaders of whom Jesus said: "They bind up heavy loads and put them upon the shoulders of men, but they themselves are not willing to budge them with their finger. All the works they do they do to be viewed by men."—Matthew 23:4, 5.

⁸ In contrast, note the compassionate attitude of Jesus: "On seeing the crowds he felt pity for them, because they were

7. Why did lovers of truth flock to Jesus?

8. In contrast to the religious hypocrites, what attitude did Jesus have?

skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matthew 9:36) And what did he do about it? He said to those who had been exploited by Satan’s system: “Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30) Jesus did what was foretold of him at Isaiah 61:1, 2, which reads: “Jehovah has anointed me to tell good news to the meek ones. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to those taken captive and the wide opening of the eyes even to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of goodwill on the part of Jehovah and the day of vengeance on the part of our God; to comfort all the mourning ones.”

Gathering the Light Bearers

⁹ After his ascension to heaven, Jesus was to wait until the time came for God to give him Kingdom power. Then he would separate “the sheep” from “the goats.” (Matthew 25:31-33; Psalm 110:1, 2) That time came when “the last days” began in 1914. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Jesus, empowered as King of God’s heavenly Kingdom, began to gather to his right hand of favor those who wanted to follow the light. After World War I, that gathering work proceeded with increasing momentum.

¹⁰ Under the leadership of Christ Jesus, the ingathering work has been crowned with great success. Never in history have there been so many people from all nations gathered together in enlightened true worship. And who today are the ones following the light coming from God and Christ? Who

are doing what Philippians 2:15 says, “shining as illuminators in the world,” inviting others to ‘come and take life’s water free’? —Revelation 22:17.

¹¹ Is Christendom doing that? Christendom, with her divisive religions, certainly is not shining as an illuminator. In fact, the clergy are like the religious leaders in Jesus’ day. They are not reflecting the true light from God and Christ. Thirty-three years ago, the magazine *Theology Today* said: “Regretfully it must be acknowledged that this light does not shine in the Church with commanding brilliance. . . . The Church has tended to become more and more like the communities with which it is surrounded. It is not so much the light of the world as rather a reflector of lights which shine in the world itself.” And Christendom’s condition is even worse today. The so-called light that she reflects from the world is in reality darkness because that is all Satan and his world have to offer. No, there is no light of truth coming from the conflicting and thoroughly worldly religions of Christendom.

¹² It can confidently be said that the new world society of Jehovah’s Witnesses is the true, light-bearing organization today. Unitedly, all its members—men, women, and young ones alike—let their light from Jehovah and Christ shine before all mankind. Last year, in nearly 70,000 congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses all over the world, well over four million light bearers were actively telling others about God and his purposes. And each year now, we see a continuing huge ingathering of people who also want to be spiritually enlightened. Hundreds of thousands are being baptized after studying the Bible and coming to an

11. What is Christendom’s position in relation to spiritual light?

12. Who make up the true light-bearing organization today?

9. What momentous events took place in 1914?
10. What question may be asked about those Jesus is using in the gathering work?

accurate knowledge of the truth. Truly, God's "will is that all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth."—1 Timothy 2:4.

¹³ We might compare the enlightenment now coming from Jehovah to what happened when God's people of ancient times left Egypt: "Jehovah was going ahead of them in the daytime in a pillar of cloud to lead them by the way, and in the nighttime in a pillar of fire to give them light to go in the daytime and nighttime." (Exodus 13: 21, 22) The cloud by day and the fire by night from God were dependable guides. They were as dependable as the sun that God created to provide us with the daylight hours. So, too, we can depend on Jehovah to continue to light the way spiritually for truth seekers in these evil last days. Proverbs 4:18 assures us: "The path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established."

Reflecting Kingdom Light

¹⁴ While Jehovah is the Source of enlightenment, and Christ the Chief Reflector of that light, the followers of Jesus must reflect it too. He said of them: "You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens." (Matthew 5:14, 16) And what was the central theme of this light that his followers were to let shine before mankind? What were they to teach at this climax of world history? Jesus did not say that his followers would preach democracy, dictatorship, union of Church and State, or any other worldly ideology. Instead, at Matthew 24:14

13. With what may we compare the light coming from Jehovah?

14. What must be the central purpose of light bearers?

he foretold that in the face of worldwide opposition, "*this good news of the kingdom* [would] be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end [would] come." Thus, light bearers today tell others about God's Kingdom, which will bring Satan's world to its end and will usher in the righteous new world.—1 Peter 2:9.

¹⁵ Those who love the light will not be sidetracked by this world's claims and goals. All those claims and goals will evaporate soon, since this world is nearing its finish. Instead, lovers of righteousness will want to turn to the good news being heralded by those who are letting the light of God's Kingdom shine to the far corners of the earth. These are the ones foretold at Revelation 7:9, 10, which says: "I saw, and, look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne [of God] and before the Lamb [Christ] . . . And they keep on crying with a loud voice, saying: 'Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.' " Verse 14 says: "These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation." Yes, they survive this world's end into the endless new world under God's Kingdom.

The Enlightened New World

¹⁶ The new world will be bathed in the bright light of truth. Indeed, consider what the situation will be the day after God brings this system of things to its end. Satan, his demons, and his political, commercial, and religious systems will be gone—every one of them! Satan's entire propaganda apparatus will be gone too. Thus, after the great tribulation, there will never

15. Those who want the light will turn where?

16. What will happen to Satan's world at the great tribulation?

again be printed a single newspaper, magazine, book, booklet, or leaflet that supports this wicked world. There will be no corrupting influences broadcast from worldly television or radio stations. The entire poisonous environment of Satan's world will be cleared away in one mighty stroke!—Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14; 16:14-16; 19:11-21.

¹⁷ What an enormous relief that will be! From that day on, only the wholesome, uplifting spiritual light coming from Jehovah and his Kingdom will influence mankind. Isaiah 54:13 foretells: "All your sons will be persons taught by Jehovah, and the peace of your sons will be abundant." With God's rule dominating the entire earth, his promise is that, as Isaiah 26:9 says, "righteousness is what the inhabitants of the productive land will certainly learn."

¹⁸ Quickly, the entire mental and spiritual environment will change for the better. Upbuilding things will be the order of the day instead of the depressing, immoral things now so widespread. Everyone living then will be taught the truth about God and his purposes. In the completest sense, the prophecy of Isaiah 11:9 will be fulfilled, which states: "The earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."

Urgent to Follow the Light

¹⁹ Now, in the final years of this evil system, it is urgent to follow the light of the world. And we need to be on guard, for there is an intense war being waged to keep us from walking in the light. This opposition comes from the powers of darkness—from Satan, his demons, and his earthly organi-

17, 18. How would you describe the spiritual environment after the end of Satan's world?
19, 20. Why do those who want to follow the light need to keep their guard up?

zation. That is why the apostle Peter warns: "Keep your senses, be watchful. Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone."—1 Peter 5:8.

²⁰ Satan will place every hindrance in the path of those coming in contact with the light, because he wants to make them continue in darkness. It may be pressure from relatives or former friends who oppose the truth. It may be doubts about the Bible because of one's being blinded by the teachings of false religion or the propaganda of faithless atheists and agnostics. It may be one's own sinful inclinations that make it hard to live up to divine requirements.

²¹ Whatever hindrances there may be, do you want to enjoy life in a new world free from poverty, crime, injustice, and war? Do you want to enjoy perfect health and eternal life on a paradise earth? Then accept and follow Jesus as the light of the world and listen to the message of those who are holding fast to "the word of life" and who are "shining as illuminators in the world."—Philippians 2:15, 16.

21. What action should be taken by all who want to live in God's new world?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ How do religious leaders show they are lovers of darkness?
- ☐ What attitude did Jesus have toward people?
- ☐ How has the ingathering of light bearers proceeded?
- ☐ What momentous changes will soon take place?
- ☐ Why is it urgent to follow the light of the world today?

Growing up with Jehovah's organization in South Africa

As told by Frans Muller

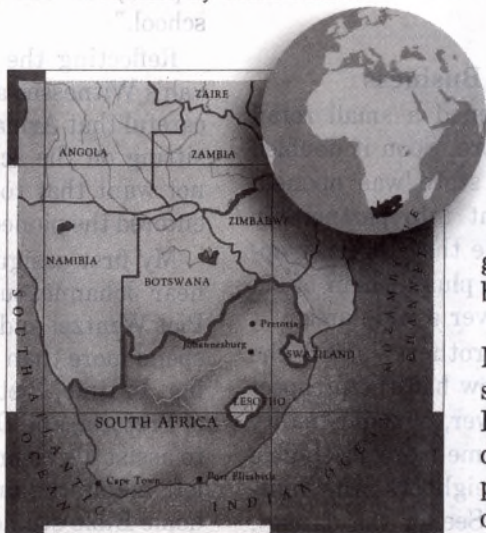
WHEN my brother David and I approached the evening train that we usually took out of the Cape Town central station, we were surprised to see the sign "Whites Only." The Nationalist Party had won the election in 1948 and had introduced the policy of apartheid.

Of course, racial segregation had long been practiced in South Africa, as it had been in most countries in Africa during colonial times. But now it was being enforced by law, and we were no longer allowed to share a coach with South Africans of darker skin color. Forty-five years later, apartheid is being dismantled.

During the whole period of legalized apartheid, which presented challenges to carrying on our ministry in the way we would have liked, I served as a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses. Presently, at the age of 65, I can look back over the marvelous growth of Jehovah's organization in southern Africa, and I am grateful for the privilege of growing up with it.

A Christian Heritage

When my father was a youth, early each morning he was required to read the Bible aloud to my grandfather. In time Father developed a deep love for God's Word. When I



was born in 1928, my father was serving on the church council of the Dutch Reformed Church in Potgietersrus. That year my uncle gave him a copy of the book *The Harp of God*.

Father, however, told Mother to burn the book, saying it was from a sect. But she kept it, and one day when Father happened to pick it up, it opened at the heading "Does God Torment Any-

one?" Although he felt sure that the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called, were wrong, his curiosity got the better of him, and he started reading. He could not put the book down. In the early hours of the morning, as he got into bed, he said: "Ma, I'm afraid they have the truth."

The next day, Father cycled 30 miles to get more books from the nearest Bible Student. Regularly, he would read deep into the night. He even tried to convince the Dutch Reformed minister about the Bible truths he was learning, hoping the church would make adjustments. His efforts were to no avail, so he resigned from the church and started preaching zealously. Bible truth became his life and the most important thing in our home. It was in this environment that I grew up.

Later, Father became a pioneer, or full-time minister. He traveled great distances in

an old Model T Ford to preach. After a couple of years, the needs of our growing family forced him to stop pioneering, but he remained very active in the preaching work. Some Sundays we would travel up to 60 miles to preach with him in the town of Pietersburg.

A Successful Business

Father eventually opened a small retail general merchandise store. Soon it doubled in size, and a second store was opened. Some rich farmers went into partnership with Father, and in time they together operated a wholesale store plus a chain of six retail stores scattered over a wide area.

Some of my older brothers joined the business venture and now had the prospect of becoming rich. However, our spirituality began to suffer. We became more acceptable to worldly friends and neighbors, who invited us to their parties. Seeing the danger, Father called a family conference and decided to sell the business and move to Pretoria so that we could do more in Jehovah's service. He kept only one store, which was cared for by hired help.

My brothers Koos and David began pioneering, thus joining my older sister, Lina. During one month in 1942, our family of ten spent a total of 1,000 hours in the preaching work. That year I symbolized the dedication of my life to Jehovah by water immersion.

Piet Wentzel and Frans Muller (left) in the pioneer work in 1945



Why I Left School Early

In 1944, while World War II was at its height, Gert Nel, a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses, asked me whether I was planning to enter the pioneer ranks. "Yes," I replied, "in two years, when I finish high school."

Reflecting the outlook of many of Jehovah's Witnesses at the time, he warned: "Be careful that Armageddon does not catch you sitting on the school benches." Since I did not want that to happen, I quit school and entered the pioneer work on January 1, 1945.

My first assignment was in Vereeniging, near Johannesburg, and my partners were Piet Wentzel and Danie Otto. Often I would spend more than 200 hours a month preaching. In time, Piet was reassigned to the city of Pretoria, and Danie had to stop pioneering to assist his elderly father on the farm. This left me as the only Witness to care for 23 home Bible studies in Vereeniging.

Shortly afterward, I received from the branch office a letter that assigned me to Pretoria. Although I did not understand the reason for the new assignment at the time, I later realized that it would not have been wise to leave an inexperienced 17-year-old on his own. I still needed a lot of training and might have become discouraged.

After serving in Pretoria and getting needed experience, I was invited to become a special pioneer. Piet Wentzel and I then arranged to give practical ministerial training to

young ones who came to Pretoria to pioneer. By then Piet had been assigned as the traveling overseer in the area. He later married my sister Lina, and they now serve together at the South Africa branch office.

Among those who came to pioneer in Pretoria was Martie Vos, an attractive young woman who had been reared in a Witness family. We were romantically attracted to each other, but we were still teenagers, too young to get married. However, when we received assignments to other places, we kept in touch by correspondence.

Bethel Service and Gilead School

In 1948, I was invited to serve at the Watch Tower Society's branch office in Cape Town. At the time, there was no common residence for the 17 of us who worked in three rented offices and a small factory nearby. Some of us were accommodated with families, and others lived in boarding houses.

Each workday the 17 members of the Bethel family came together for morning worship in the changeroom of the small factory. Many of us had to arrange for our own lunch. Then, after a full day's work, we would travel to our living quarters in different parts of Cape Town. It was on one of these trips, as already mentioned, that my brother David and I were surprised by the sign announcing, "Whites Only."

When I first arrived at the Cape Town office, I realized I still had much to learn, so I asked Brother Phillips, our branch overseer: "What must I do to catch up?"

"Frans," he answered, "don't worry about catching up. Just keep up!" I have always tried to do that, and I have learned that by keeping up with what Jehovah's organization provides in the way of spiritual food and direction, a person will keep growing with it.

In 1950, I was invited to attend the 16th class of the Watchtower Bible School of

Gilead for missionary training. The school was then located at South Lansing, New York, about 250 miles north of Brooklyn, New York. While working temporarily at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, I observed the very heart of Jehovah's visible organization firsthand. The whole-souled devotion of those taking the lead there filled me with deep appreciation for Jehovah's organization.

My Continued Ministry

After returning to South Africa, I was appointed to serve as a traveling overseer in northern Transvaal, where I had grown up. After corresponding for six years, Martie and I were married in December 1952, and she joined me in the traveling work. The appreciation our Christian brothers had for our visits was heartwarming.

For example, once while serving a congregation in a farming community, we stayed with a family who apologized for not having milk for the tea or coffee. Later we learned that they had sold their only milk cow in order to have enough money to buy gasoline to take us to visit distant parts of their territory to witness to the farmers. How we loved brothers of that kind!

At times I felt inadequate for the circuit work, especially when dealing with problems involving older persons. Once I felt so emotionally drained that I told Martie that she should not be surprised if we were reassigned to the pioneer work because of my lack of experience. She assured me that she would be happy to serve in any capacity as long as we could remain in the full-time ministry.

Imagine our surprise when we arrived at the next congregation and our mail contained an assignment to serve in the district work! For nearly two years, we traveled throughout South Africa and Namibia,

then called South-West Africa. However, because of the apartheid system, our work was often difficult. Frequently we were denied permits to enter black townships and sometimes were not given permission for assemblies.

In 1960, for example, we obtained permission to have a district convention in Soweto. The black brothers from distant congregations had already bought train and bus tickets to come, but the government heard of our plans and canceled permission. Discreetly, we approached a friendly superintendent in a town 12 miles the other side of Johannesburg. He kindly provided us with even better facilities, and we had a wonderful convention, enjoyed by more than 12,000!

How the situation has changed in recent years! Now, with apartheid being dismantled, we can freely meet together anywhere in black, white, colored, or Indian areas. Everyone, regardless of race, can sit together and enjoy fellowship. Only language differences influence where a person may wish to sit.

A Painful Lesson

Back in 1947, my father made a big mistake. His store, located over 120 miles from where he and Mother were living, became unprofitable because of dishonest management, so he moved back alone to manage it himself. Long periods of separation from Mother resulted in his falling into temptation. As a result, he was disfellowshipped.

This impressed upon me in a painful, personal way that being zealous for Bible truth is not enough. All have to adhere to Bible principles. (1 Corinthians 7:5) After many years, Father was reinstated as part of the Christian congregation and served faithfully until his death in 1970. My dear mother remained faithful till she died in 1991.

Further Blessings

In 1958, Martie and I attended the biggest convention ever held by Jehovah's Witnesses, at Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds in New York. We simply overflowed with joy at being part of Jehovah's wonderful organization. Being with that large crowd of more than 253,000 on Sunday afternoon was an experience we will never forget. Here, to us, was the reality of the 'great crowd out of all nations' peacefully assembled together. (Revelation 7:9, 10) Martie stayed behind in New York to attend Gilead School, and I returned to the district work in South Africa.

In 1959, after Martie returned from attending the 32nd class of Gilead School, we were invited to serve at the South Africa branch office, which was then situated near Elandsfontein, east of Johannesburg. Over the years, I have seen the advancement of the organization in so many ways, especially its growth in love and empathy. I have learned that Jehovah directs his organization through Jesus Christ and will use those who make themselves available.

In 1962, I returned to Brooklyn, New York, to attend a ten-month branch training course. This proved helpful when, in 1967, I was appointed as the South Africa branch overseer. In 1976, Branch Committees were appointed, so now the responsibility for making important decisions in South Africa falls on the shoulders of five experienced Christian elders.

Life Under Apartheid

Apartheid laws affected the operation of our branch. When the Elandsfontein Bethel Home was constructed in 1952, the law required an additional building at the rear to accommodate the black and colored brothers. The law also required that they eat separately from whites in so-called African quarters.

Later, it was arranged for them to eat in the Bethel kitchen. This was the eating arrangement when we arrived at Bethel in 1959. Everything in me rebelled against this separation on the basis of race.

In time, the government withdrew permission for our black brothers to stay in the building at the rear of the main Bethel Home. These brothers

had to stay in a black township about 12 miles away. Some lived in rented homes and others in a hostel for single men. This disagreeable situation continued for many years.

Bethel Expansion

In the meantime, the Elandsfontein Bethel had to be enlarged. After extending it three times, we had reached the limits of our property. The Governing Body directed that we should look for new property in a locality where the local authorities would hopefully allow us to build a Bethel complex where our black brothers could also stay. Every morning the Bethel family would pray that Jehovah would somehow open the way for this.

What a day of rejoicing it was when we at last found a suitable piece of land on the outskirts of Krugersdorp, to the west of Johannesburg! However, we were again required to construct a separate building for our black brothers. We complied but could not get permission for more than 20 black persons to be accommodated there. Thankfully, by the mid-1980's, things started to change. The government eased up on its



Frans and Martie Muller

stringent apartheid laws, and more black, colored, and Indian brothers were called to serve with us at Bethel.

Now we have a happy, united Bethel family, where individuals, regardless of race or color, can live in any of the buildings they choose. Also, after years of struggling, we were at last given legal recognition as a religion. A local legal

association has been formed that is registered as "Jehovah's Witnesses of South Africa." Now we have our own marriage officers, and in black residential areas, Kingdom Halls are springing up like mushrooms.

How Jehovah's organization has advanced since the early days when I served in the Cape Town branch office! From a small family of 17 without a Bethel Home, we have now grown to a Bethel family of over 460, having a modern Bethel complex with sophisticated computers, rotary presses, and a beautiful Bethel Home! Yes, I have had the privilege of growing up with Jehovah's organization in South Africa. We have increased from about 400 Kingdom publishers when I started in the ministry some 50 years ago to almost 55,000 today!

I thank Jehovah that I have, for the past 40 years, had such a supportive wife at my side. "My cup is well filled." (Psalm 23:5) Martie and I are grateful to be part of Jehovah's spirit-directed organization and are determined to continue serving Jehovah in his house, in Bethel, and to keep up with his forward-moving organization.

“Kingdom Proclaimers” ply the many waters of

G · U · Y · A · N · A

GUYANA.*

This Amer-Indian word means “land of waters.” How appropriately it describes the terrain of this the only English-speaking country in South America.

The land is criss-crossed by many rivers and their tributaries, which snake their way from the Guiana Highlands through the tropical jungle to the Atlantic Ocean. These waterways form the lifeline for the many villages and farms scattered along their banks.

Jehovah’s Witnesses in Guyana realize that when Jesus foretold that “this good news of the kingdom [would] be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations,” that would include preaching the good news to the people living in these riverside territories. (Matthew 24:14) Thus, for years, groups of Witnesses, many of them pioneers, have used boats, large and small, to ply the waters of Guyana to bring the good news to the people.

* Formerly British Guiana, the name was changed to Guyana after the country gained independence from Britain in 1966.



To help with the work, the Watch Tower Society in Guyana has operated, to date, five wooden vessels called *Kingdom Proclaimer I* through *Kingdom Proclaimer V*. They are 24-foot, open-top, V-bottom, wooden boats called

balahoos, built and maintained by a Witness family. Affectionately referred to by the local Witnesses as *Proclaimers*, the original two were retired from duty after decades of service. Numbers *III*, *IV*, and *V*, however, are still in active service on the Pomeroon, Mahaica, and Demerara rivers.

On the Demerara

In Britain and parts of Europe, the word “demerara” may bring to mind a golden-brown, cane-sugar crystal, notably from the plantations along this muddy and silt-laden river. On the west bank, the road from the coast ends where the cane cultivation stops. Beyond that, the Witnesses depend on the *Kingdom Proclaimer* vessels to bring the sweet message of Jehovah’s Kingdom to the riverside residents—Hindus, Muslims, and nominal Christians.

Preaching campaigns on the Demerara

can be one-day trips or can last several weeks, going from landing to landing, from morn till dusk. On overnight trips, the pioneers not only cook and eat on the boat but sleep on it as well. When night falls, the *Proclaimer* is tied to a mangrove tree or moored alongside a dock if one is available. Two eight-foot staves are erected at the bow and at the stern. A rope is tautly stretched across the top of these vertical poles, and a large tarpaulin is draped over it to form a roof, or top. Wooden planks substitute for beds, and a blanket and sheet serve as a mattress. Regardless, sleep comes easily after a long day.

"Do you bathe in the muddy water?" the pioneers are asked.

"Not if we can help it!" is the answer. "Whenever we pass a freshwater creek, we fill our containers with water for cooking, drinking, and bathing."

Their endurance is rewarded with many fine experiences. On one occasion, a man came onto the landing, stood with feet apart, arms akimbo, and watched us with keen interest. "*Kingdom Proclaimer V*!" He read aloud the name on the boat's bow. "You must be Jehovah's Witnesses. Only you people use the word 'kingdom' in this way. You have your Kingdom Hall and now *Kingdom Proclaimer*."

From Gilead to the Pomeroon

Work along the Pomeroon River has a somewhat different character, as Frederick McAlman recalls. One year after his graduation from the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in 1970, he came to Charity, a rural river village 21 miles inland on the east bank of the Pomeroon, where there was a group of five Kingdom publishers.

"For five long years, we had the 'pleasure' of rowing *Proclaimer II* up and down the Pomeroon before we got a used, six-

horsepower outboard motor," recounts Brother McAlman. "Paddling with the tide, we would preach down the east bank until we got to Hackney, seven miles from the mouth. There, we would get a good night's sleep at the home of Sister DeCambra, the midwife serving the area at that time. Early the next morning, we would continue down to the river's mouth before crossing over to the west bank. Then we would work our way back 21 miles to Charity."

The six-horsepower motor served them well for ten years. Then, in 1986, it was replaced by a new, 15-horsepower model. After serving faithfully on the Pomeroon for more than 21 years, Brother McAlman can look with a sense of accomplishment at the newly built Kingdom Hall in Charity, now used by the congregation of 43 publishers, who come from up and down the river. The average meeting attendance exceeds 60, and at the 1992 Memorial of the death of Jesus Christ, they had a crowd of 190!

Looking for the "Watchtower Man"

Monday is market day at Charity. So it is a good time for preaching the good news, and the Witnesses are there with the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. One day in the early 1970's, Monica Fitzallen from Warimuri on the Moruka came to the market and accepted two magazines from Brother McAlman. But when she got home, she stuck the magazines on the bottom of her clothes chest.

"They stayed there for two years without my reading them," Monica recollects. "Then I got sick and was bedridden for some time. As I recovered, I started to scrutinize every scrap of reading material in the house to keep myself occupied. Finally, I remembered the two magazines in the clothes chest and began to examine them." She recognized the ring of truth right away.



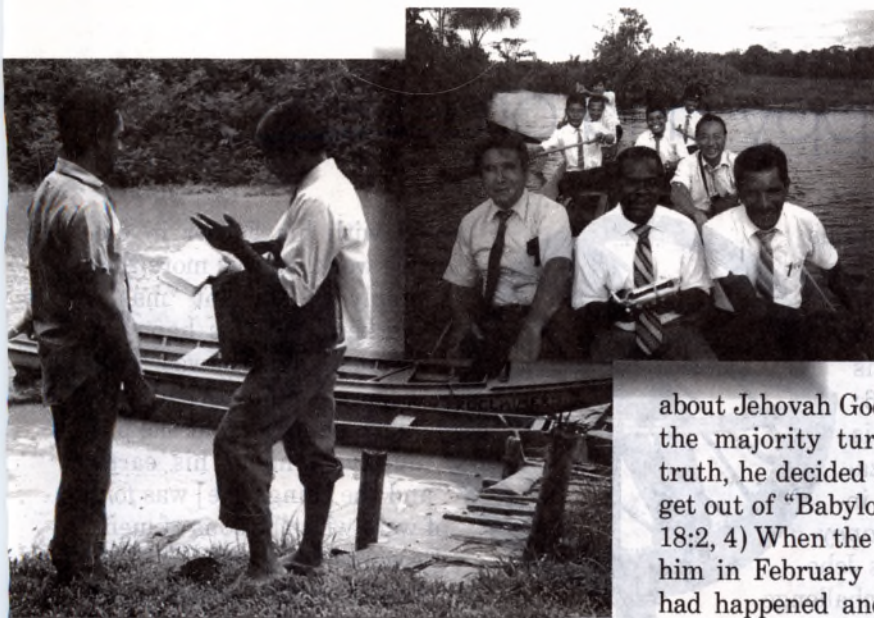
When Monica recovered, she asked her husband, Eugene, to find work along the Pomeroon so that she might locate the gentleman who gave her the magazines. Eugene consented but could only get a job on a farm in the Pomeroon area for one week, from Monday to Saturday noon.

By that Saturday, Monica still had not found the man who gave her the magazines. At about noon, she asked her husband if the tide would permit them to paddle to Charity to find the "Watchtower man." Just as she finished speaking, they heard footsteps on the walkway and saw the smiling face of a sister who was coming to offer the latest copies of the magazines. "Are you one of the Watchtower people?" asked Monica. So many questions followed that the sister had to go back to the boat to fetch reinforcements. Who did it turn out to be? Who else but Brother McAlman!

A Bible study by correspondence was arranged. A short time later, Monica sent her letter of resignation to the Anglican Church. In reply she got a note from the priest: "Don't listen to the JW's. They are shallow in their Bible understanding. I will come to discuss the matter with you." To date, the priest has not turned up. Meanwhile, Monica was baptized in 1975. A year later, her husband, now affectionately called Uncle Eugene by the brothers, was also baptized after he had carefully scrutinized the Scriptures. (Acts 17:10, 11) Though they live 12 hours by canoe from the nearest congregation in Charity, they remain active Kingdom publishers to this day.

Missionary Trips to the Interior

In recent years the Watch Tower Society has been sponsoring regular missionary expeditions deep into the interior. By means of boats equipped with outboard motors,



Left: Witnessing on market day
Above: Discussing the good news on the Demerara River
Above right: Missionary group paddling back to camp

willing volunteers have tasted the excitement of taking the good news to people living on Amerindian reservations and in isolated logging and farming communities along some of the hinterland waterways. Pioneers in the true sense of the word, they have the privilege of bringing the lifesaving “name of Jehovah” to these remote areas for the first time ever. (Romans 10:13-15) The brothers have to endure many hardships, sometimes navigating the waterways up to three full days to reach some of these places. But the rewards are well worth it.

One young man, a Pentecostal living near the logging community of Kwebanna on the Waini River, was contacted on the first missionary trip to that area in July 1991. On the follow-up visit in October, a Bible study was started. For the first time, he saw from his own Bible that God’s name is Jehovah, that Jesus is not the Almighty, and that the

Trinity doctrine is not Scriptural. (Psalm 83:18; 1 Corinthians 11:3) He was so enthusiastic that, after the brothers left, he gathered some fellow Pentecostals together and started to show them from their own Bibles the truth

about Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. When the majority turned their backs on the truth, he decided it was time to resign and get out of “Babylon the Great.” (Revelation 18:2, 4) When the brothers came back to see him in February 1992, he told them what had happened and added: “I want to join you. I want to become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. I want to teach people the truth!”

Experiences like that help to keep the brothers going in this challenging work. Those who go on the missionary trips must sacrifice the comforts of home, be exposed to diseases such as malaria, and endure the hazards of bush life. But those who stay behind make sacrifices as well. Families miss their loved ones, sometimes for weeks at a time. Congregations have to do without their elders and other young men as, in some cases, only one brother is left behind to care for the needs of the congregation. Yet, what joy and encouragement there is when the congregation hears their stimulating experiences upon their return! The cost pales into insignificance.

The Kingdom proclaimers who ply the many waters of Guyana with the good news enjoy a truly unique experience. Along with their fellow workers around the world, they courageously and willingly “offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name.” —Hebrews 13:15.

Be happy and organized

BEING organized lets us do things well. Being efficient helps us make the best use of time and resources. (Galatians 6:16; Philippians 3:16; 1 Timothy 3:2) But there is more to life than organization and efficiency. The inspired psalmist wrote: “Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah!” (Psalm 144:15) The challenge is to be happy as well as organized in all that we do.

Organized and Happy

Jehovah God is the greatest example of good organization. All his creations, from single cells to complex living creatures, from tiny atoms to immense galaxies, show order and precision. His universal laws let us plan our lives with confidence. We know that the sun will rise each morning and that summer will follow winter.—Genesis 8:22; Isaiah 40:26.

But Jehovah is more than a God of order. He is also “the *happy* God.” (1 Timothy 1:11; 1 Corinthians 14:33) His happiness is seen in his creations. Playful kittens, beautiful sunsets, appetizing food, inspiring music, stimulating work, and a host of other things show that he intended for us to enjoy life. His laws are not irksome restrictions but safeguards for our happiness.

Jesus Christ models himself after his Father. He is “the *happy* and only Potentate” and behaves exactly as his Father does. (1 Timothy 6:15; John 5:19) When he la-



Armillary sphere—an early device for representing the great circles of the heavens

bored with his Father in creative work, he was more than simply an efficient “master worker.” He was happy in what he did. He was “*glad* before [Jehovah] all the time, being *glad* at the productive land of his earth, and the things [he] was *fond* of were with the sons of men.” —Proverbs 8:30, 31.

We want to reflect similar kindness, gladness, and fondness for people in all that we do. Sometimes, though, in a drive for efficiency, we may forget that “walking orderly . . . by [God’s] spirit” includes producing the fruits of God’s spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25) So we do well to ask,

How can we be both organized and happy in our own activity and in directing the work of others?

Do Not Be Cruel to Yourself

Consider the good advice recorded at Proverbs 11:17. First the inspired writer tells us that “a man of loving-kindness is dealing rewardingly with his own soul.” Then he says in contrast: “But the cruel person is bringing ostracism upon his own organism.” The *New International Version* puts it this way: “A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings himself harm.”

How might we inadvertently be cruel to ourselves? One way is by being well-intentioned but completely disorganized. With what results? Says one expert: “A slip of memory, a wrongly filed document, an

order insufficiently understood, a telephone call inaccurately recorded—these are the minutiae of failure, the worms that eat into the fabric of efficiency and lay waste the best intentions.”—*Teach Yourself Personal Efficiency*.

This agrees with the inspired writer who said: “The one showing himself slack in his work—he is a brother to the one causing ruin.” (Proverbs 18:9) Yes, disorganized, inefficient people can cause calamity and ruin to themselves and others. Because of this, others often shun them. As a result of their slackness, they bring ostracism on themselves.

A Live Dog or a Dead Lion?

But we can be cruel to ourselves also by setting excessively high standards. We can aim, says the above writer on efficiency, for “a standard of perfection impossible of full attainment.” The result, he says, is “to land ourselves ultimately in heartbreak and disillusionment.” A perfectionist may be well organized and efficient, but he will never be truly happy. Sooner or later he gets only heartbreak.

If we tend toward being a perfectionist, we do well to remember that “a live dog is better off than a dead lion.” (Ecclesiastes 9:4) We might not literally kill ourselves through an unrealistic striving for perfection, but we can seriously harm ourselves through burnout. This, says one authority, involves “physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and interpersonal exhaustion.” (*Job Stress and Burnout*) Exhausting ourselves by striving after unattainable goals is surely being cruel to ourselves and inevitably robs us of happiness.

Deal Rewardingly With Yourself

Remember: “A man of loving-kindness is dealing rewardingly with his own soul.” (Proverbs 11:17) We deal rewardingly with

ourselves when we set realistic and reasonable goals, keeping in mind that the happy God, Jehovah, knows our limitations. (Psalm 103:8-14) We can be happy if we too recognize those limitations and then “do our utmost,” within our capabilities, to fulfill our obligations well.—Hebrews 4:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 1:10.

Of course, there is always the danger of swinging to the other extreme—being too kind to ourselves. Do not forget Jesus’ reply to the apostle Peter’s suggestion, “Be kind to yourself, Lord,” when, in fact, resolute action was needed. So dangerous was Peter’s thinking that Jesus said: “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you think, not God’s thoughts, but those of men.” (Matthew 16:22, 23) Dealing rewardingly with our own soul does not allow for a careless, self-indulgent attitude. That could also rob us of all happiness. Reasonableness, not fanaticism, is what we need.—Philippians 4:5.

Deal Rewardingly With Others

The scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus’ day likely thought they were highly efficient and organized. *A Dictionary of the Bible* says of their way of worship: “Every biblical commandment was surrounded by a network of petty regulations. No allowance was made for changing circumstances; full obedience

In Our Next Issue

**Hell—Eternal Torture or
Final Destruction?**

Youths—What Are You Pursuing?

Guard Against Unwholesome Music!

to the Law in all its particulars was inexorably demanded of every Jew . . . Legal details were multiplied until religion became a trade, and life an intolerable burden. Men were reduced to moral automatons. The voice of conscience was stifled; the living power of the Divine word was neutralized and smothered beneath a mass of eternal rules."

No wonder Jesus Christ condemned them for this. "They bind up heavy loads," he said, "and put them upon the shoulders of men, but they themselves are not willing to budge them with their finger." (Matthew 23:4) Loving elders refrain from burdening the flock with a multiplicity of petty rules and regulations. They deal rewardingly with the flock of God by following the kindly, refreshing example of Christ Jesus.—Matthew 11: 28-30; Philippians 2:1-5.

Even when organizational responsibilities multiply, caring elders will never lose sight of the fact that they are dealing with people—people whom God loves. (1 Peter 5: 2, 3, 7; 1 John 4:8-10) They will never be so occupied with organizational matters or procedures that they forget their prime role as shepherds, guardians, and protectors of the flock.—Proverbs 3:3; 19:22; 21:21; Isaiah 32:1, 2; Jeremiah 23:3, 4.

An intense preoccupation with schedules and figures, for example, might crowd out concern for people. Consider a bus driver who thinks his prime duty is to stick efficiently to his schedule come what may. He is consumed with a desire to get from one end of his route to the other in exactly the time allotted. Unfortunately, from his point of view, passengers get in the way. They are slow and disorganized and always arriving at the bus stop just as he is moving away. Instead of remembering that the whole point of his job is to serve the needs of his passengers, he sees them as a hindrance to efficiency and avoids them.

Care for Each Individual

A heartless drive for efficiency often ignores the needs of individuals. Weaker, inefficient ones may be seen as liabilities. When this happens, terrible consequences can ensue. For example, in the ancient Greek city-state of Sparta, weak and sickly children were left exposed to die. They would not make strong, efficient soldiers to defend a strong, efficient state. "When a child was born," says philosopher Bertrand Russell, "the father brought him before the elders of his family to be examined: if he was healthy, he was given back to the father to be reared; if not, he was thrown into a deep pit of water."—*History of Western Philosophy*.

Rigidity and austerity, not happiness, marked such a ruthless state. (Compare Ecclesiastes 8:9.) No doubt the Spartan authorities felt that they had a good case on the grounds of efficiency, but their conduct was devoid of all compassion or kindness. Their way was not God's way. (Psalm 41:1; Proverbs 14:21) In contrast, overseers in the Christian congregation remember that *all* of God's sheep are precious in his eyes, and they deal rewardingly with each one of them. They care not just for the 99 who are healthy but also for the one who is weak or emotionally disturbed.—Matthew 18:12-14; Acts 20:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 15; 1 Peter 5:7.

Stay Close to the Flock

Elders stay close to the flock under their care. Modern research into business methods, though, might suggest that for maximum efficiency a manager or an overseer should keep his distance from those he supervises. One researcher describes the different results experienced by an air force officer when he was either close to or remote from his subordinates: "When he had very close relations with [his] officers, they seemed to feel secure and they did not worry



Garo Nalbandian

Jehovah, as a loving Shepherd, is a God not merely of order but also of happiness

overly about the efficiency of their units. As soon as he became more reserved and role-oriented, his sub-commanders began to worry whether anything had gone awry . . . and channelled their anxieties into paying more attention to their work. As a result, there was a noticeable increase in the efficiency of the base.”—*Understanding Organizations*.

The Christian congregation, though, is not a military organization. Christian elders who supervise the work of others model themselves after Jesus Christ. He was always close to his disciples. (Matthew 12: 49, 50; John 13:34, 35) He never played on their anxieties to squeeze out extra efficiency. He built strong bonds of mutual confidence and trust between himself and his followers. Close bonds of tender affection marked his disciples. (1 Thessalonians 2:

7, 8) When such closeness exists, a happy flock, motivated fully by love of God, will respond well to direction without coercion and will do their utmost in willing service to him.—Compare Exodus 35:21.

Many scriptures highlight Christian qualities like happiness and love for the brotherhood. (Matthew 5:3-12; 1 Corinthians 13: 1-13) Comparatively few highlight the need for efficiency. To be sure, there is a need for good organization. God’s people have always been organized. But think how often the writers of the psalms, for example, describe God’s servants as being happy. Psalm 119, which has much to say about Jehovah’s laws, reminders, and regulations, begins: “Happy are the ones faultless in their way, the ones walking in the law of Jehovah. Happy are those observing his reminders; with all the heart they keep searching for him.” (Psalm 119:1, 2) Can you meet the challenge to be both organized and happy?



The Most Important Event in History

Why so? The event was the death of Jesus Christ.

It served to vindicate God's sovereignty and proved that a human could keep perfect integrity to God. It opened to mankind the prospect of attaining everlasting life in paradise conditions. Jesus himself instituted a memorial of his death on the night before he died.

It was a simple ceremony. During it, Jesus told his disciples: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19, 20) Will you remember?

Jehovah's Witnesses invite you to join them in commemorating this most important event in history. This year the date is Tuesday, April 6, after sundown.

