

JUNE 15, 1993

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Why Test the Bible's Accuracy?



THE WATCHTOWER[®]

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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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Why Test the Bible's Accuracy?

How do you view the Bible? Some firmly believe that it is God's revelation to man. Others believe that it is just an ordinary book. Still others are undecided.

If you have any doubt about the Bible's origin, there are compelling reasons why you should examine it and settle the issue.

UNTIL the 18th century, the Bible was widely respected as the Word of God in lands of Christendom. But from the 19th century onward, a growing number of educators, scientists, and even theologians and church leaders began publicly expressing doubt about the Bible's accuracy.

As a result, Bible criticism has become so widespread that many pass judgment without even knowing the Bible's contents. In place of the Bible, many people in Christendom now look to philosophies of men. Still, modern philosophy has not produced a safer or happier world. That is one good reason to examine the Bible and see whether its guidance leads to happiness and success.

Another reason for testing the Bible's accuracy is the wonderful prospect it holds out for mankind. For example, Psalm 37:29 states: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." (Revelation 21:3-5) What effect do such promises have on you? Surely they are reason enough to examine the Bible and see if it can be trusted.

This magazine has always upheld the truthfulness of the Bible and has often set forth proof of its accuracy. There are a number of areas in which the Bible's accuracy can be tested. Various issues of *The Watchtower* will help you answer these questions: Do the known facts of ancient history match

the Bible? Are its predictions accurate? Is its advice practical, or have modern educators and philosophers proved that the Bible is out-of-date?

Geography is another area in which you can test the Bible's accuracy. Pagan myths often conflict with geographic facts. For instance, many ancient peoples told stories of journeys to the so-called world of the dead. Regarding the ancient Greeks, the book *A Guide to the Gods* explains: "The earth was seen as a flat surface surrounded by a vast tract of water

called Ocean. Beyond this lay the Afterworld, a gloomy wasteland dotted with dark and fruitless plants." When this proved to be a myth, pagan philosophers had to relocate their so-called afterworld. "A suitable place was found, under the earth, connected to this world by various



**"There is One who is dwelling
above the circle of the earth."**

—Isaiah 40:22

**"He is . . . hanging the earth
upon nothing."**

—Job 26:7

caverns,” explains author Richard Carlyon. Today, we know that this also is a myth. No such underworld or passage exists.

Unlike myths of ancient peoples, the Bible does not contain the mistaken view that the earth is flat. Instead, it states the scientific truth that the earth is a circular object

resting on nothing. (Job 26:7; Isaiah 40:22) What about the other geographic descriptions mentioned in the Bible? Are they mythological, or is it possible to visualize with accuracy Biblical events when visiting present-day Egypt, including the Sinai Peninsula, and modern-day Israel?

Bible Geography *Is It Accurate?*

THE sun has just set in Palestine. The year is 1799. After a hot day on the march, the French Army has set up camp, and Napoléon, the commander in chief, is resting in his tent. By the flicker of candlelight, one of his servants is reading aloud from a French Bible.

Apparently this happened often during Napoléon's military campaign in Palestine. "When camping on the ruins of those ancient towns," he later recalled in his memoirs, "they read aloud Scripture every evening . . . The analogy and the truth of the descriptions were striking: they still fit this country after so many centuries and changes."

Indeed, travelers to the Middle East find it easy to fit Bible events with present-day sites. Before the French Army conquered Egypt, little was known by foreigners about that ancient land. Then scientists and scholars, whom Napoléon had brought to Egypt, began revealing to the world details of Egypt's former grandeur. This has made it easier to visualize the "hard slavery" that the Israelites were once subjected to.—Exodus 1:13, 14.

On the night of their release from Egypt, the Israelites gathered at Rameses and then marched to "the edge of the wilderness." (Exodus 12:37; 13:20) At this point, God commanded them to "turn back" and "encamp by the sea." This strange move was interpreted as a "wandering in confusion," and Egypt's king went forth with his army and 600 war chariots to recapture his former slaves.—Exodus 14:1-9.

The Exodus

According to Josephus, a historian of the first century C.E., the Egyptian army drove the Israelites "into a narrow place" and trapped them "between inaccessible precipices and the sea." The exact place where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea is not known with certainty today. However, it is easy to visualize the event from atop a mountain range overlooking the northern end of the Red Sea. Interestingly, the mountain is called Jebel 'Ataqah, meaning "Mountain of Deliverance." Between this range and the Red Sea is a small plain that narrows to a point where the foothills jut almost into the sea. On the opposite side of

the Red Sea is an oasis, with many fountains, called 'Ayun Musa', which means "wells of Moses." The seabed between these two points descends very gradually, whereas elsewhere it drops suddenly to a depth of between 30 and 60 feet.

Faithless theologians of Christendom have attempted to explain away the miracle that God performed when he parted the waters of the Red Sea and enabled the Israelites to escape on dry land. They relocate the event to a shallow swamp or marsh north of the Red Sea. But that does not fit the Bible record, which repeatedly states that the crossing took place in the Red Sea at a place where there was ample water to drown Pharaoh and his entire army, yes, to swallow them up.—Exodus 14:26-31; Psalm 136: 13-15; Hebrews 11:29.

The Wilderness of Sinai

The harsh conditions found in the Sinai Peninsula are vividly portrayed in the Bible account of Israel's wanderings. (Deuteronomy 8:15) So, could a whole nation assemble

at the base of Mount Sinai to receive God's Law and later withdraw to stand "at a distance"? (Exodus 19:1, 2; 20:18) Is there a place large enough to allow for such movement of a crowd estimated to have numbered three million?

A 19th-century traveler and Bible scholar, Arthur Stanley, visited the area of Mount Sinai and described the sight that confronted his party on climbing Ras Safsafa: "The effect on us, as on every one who has seen and described it, was instantaneous. . . . Here was the deep wide yellow plain sweeping down to the very base of the cliffs . . . Considering the almost total absence of such conjunctions of plain and mountain in this region, it is a really important evidence to the truth of the narrative, that one such conjunction can be found, and that within the neighbourhood of the traditional Sinai."

The Promised Land

In the 40th year of Israel's wandering in the wilderness, Moses gave this description

Israel received the Law at Mount Sinai



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

of the characteristics of the land they were about to enter: "Jehovah your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of torrent valleys of water, springs and watery deeps issuing forth in the valley plain and in the mountainous region."—Deuteronomy 8:7.

The accuracy of this promise was soon experienced when the entire nation gathered together—men, women, little ones, and aliens—in the well-watered valley of Shechem between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. At the foot of Mount Gerizim stood six tribes. The other six tribes gathered on the opposite side of the valley at the foot of Mount Ebal to hear the divine blessings that the nation would enjoy if they obeyed Jehovah's Law and the curses that would come if they failed to keep God's Law. (Joshua 8: 33-35) But was there enough space for the nation to fit into this narrow valley? And how did all of them hear without modern amplifying equipment?

Jehovah God could have miraculously amplified the voices of the Levites. However, such a miracle does not appear to have been necessary. The acoustics in this valley are excellent. "All travellers," wrote 19th-century Bible scholar Alfred Edersheim, "are agreed on two points: 1. That there could be no difficulty whatever in distinctly hearing both from Ebal and Gerizim anything that was spoken in the valley. 2. That these two mountains afforded sufficient standing-ground for all Israel."

Another 19th-century Bible scholar, William Thomson, described his experience in that valley in his book *The Land and the Book*: "I have shouted to hear the echo, and then fancied how it must have been when the loud-voiced Levites proclaimed . . . 'Cursed be the man that maketh any graven image, an abomination unto Jehovah.' And then the tremendous AMEN! tenfold louder,

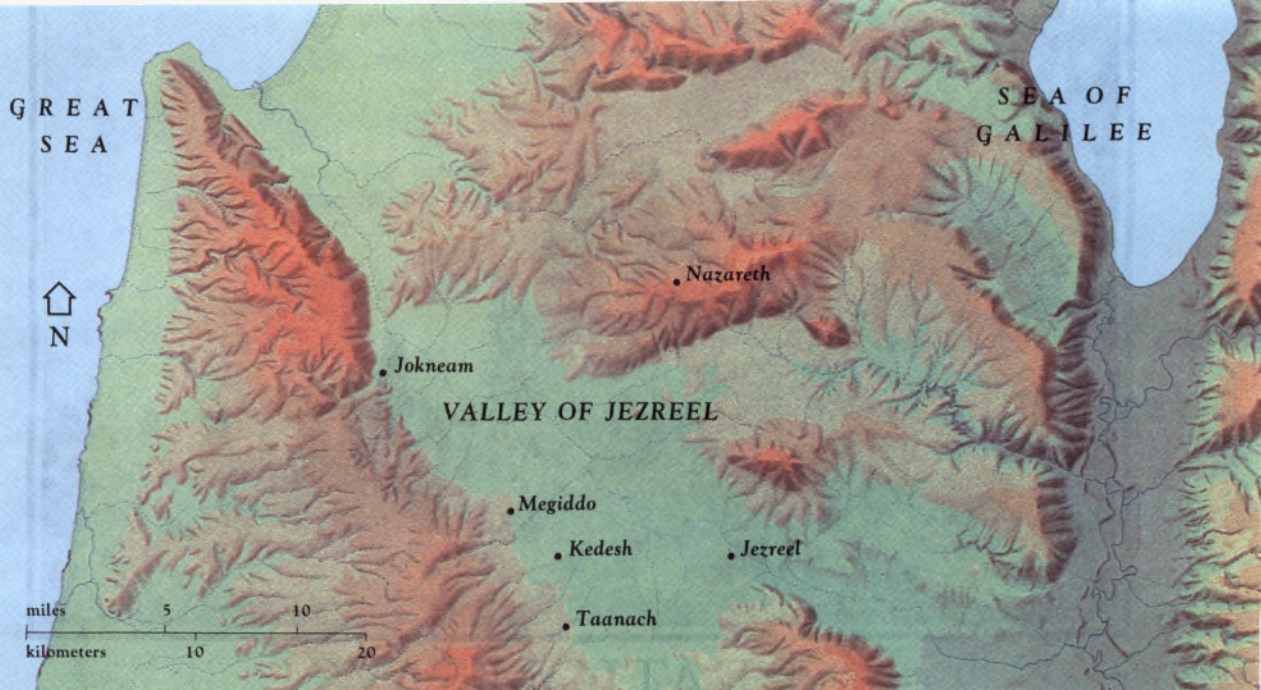
from the mighty congregation, rising, and swelling, and re-echoing from Ebal to Gerizim, and from Gerizim to Ebal."—Compare Deuteronomy 27:11-15.

The Valley of Jezreel

To the north of Shechem lies another fertile valley, one that ascends from below sea level and opens into a vast plain. This entire region is called the Valley of Jezreel, named after the city of Jezreel. To the north of the valley are the hills of Galilee where Jesus' hometown, Nazareth, was situated. "Nazareth," explains George Smith in his book *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, "rests in a basin among hills; but the moment you climb to the edge of this basin, . . . what a view you have! [The Valley of Jezreel] lies before you, with its . . . battle-fields . . . It is a map of Old Testament history."

In this valley plain, archaeologists have excavated the ruins of city-kingdoms conquered by Israel in the days of Joshua, namely, Taanach, Megiddo, Jokneam, and possibly Kedesh. (Joshua 12:7, 21, 22) In this same region, in the days of Judge Barak and Judge Gideon, Jehovah miraculously delivered his people from overwhelming powerful enemy nations.—Judges 5:1, 19-21; 6:33; 7:22.

Centuries later, King Jehu rode up the valley to the city of Jezreel to execute Jehovah's judgment on Jezebel and the apostate house of Ahab. From the watchtower in Jezreel, it would have been easy to see toward the east the approach of Jehu's troops at a distance of 12 miles. Hence, there would have been plenty of time for King Jehoram to send out a first and then a second messenger on horseback and, finally, for kings Jehoram of Israel and Ahaziah of Judah to hitch up their chariots and meet Jehu before he reached the city of Jezreel. Jehu promptly executed Jehoram. Ahaziah fled but was



Based on a map copyrighted by Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est. and Survey of Israel.

later wounded, and he died at Megiddo. (2 Kings 9:16-27) Regarding battle sites such as the above, George Smith writes: "It is striking that in none of the narratives . . . is there any geographical impossibility."

No doubt Jesus often looked down upon the Valley of Jezreel and meditated on the thrilling victories that had taken place there, knowing that he, the promised Messiah, was destined to fulfill the role of a Greater Joshua, Greater Barak, Greater Gideon, and Greater Jehu in vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty. Indeed, the Bible uses Megiddo, the most strategic city in this valley plain, as a symbol of the location of God's war of Har-Magedon (meaning "Mountain of Megiddo"). That will be an earth-wide battle in which Jesus Christ, as King of kings, will destroy all enemies of God and of the Christian congregation, God's true people.—Revelation 16:16; 17:14.

The Bible relates that angry Jews of Nazareth once attempted to throw Jesus to his death from "the brow of the mountain upon which their city had been built." (Luke 4:29)

Interestingly, to the southwest of the modern city of Nazareth is a 40-foot cliff where this incident may have occurred. Jesus escaped from his enemies, and the Bible adds that "he went down to Capernaum." (Luke 4:30, 31) Indeed, Capernaum, on the Sea of Galilee, is at a much lower elevation.

These and many other details have caused others besides Napoléon to express amazement at the accuracy of Bible geography. "The [Bible's] references to topography are very numerous, and entirely satisfactory," wrote Thomson in *The Land and the Book*. "It is impossible not to be struck by the constant agreement between the recorded history and the natural geography both of the Old and New Testament," comments Stanley in *Sinai and Palestine*.

The amazing accuracy of the Bible regarding geographic matters is just one evidence that it is not a book of mere human origin. The preceding three issues of *The Watchtower* contained related articles on the Bible. We invite you to obtain and to enjoy the other three parts in this series.



CREATION SAYS, “THEY ARE INEXCUSABLE”

“His invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world’s creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable.”—ROMANS 1:20.

JOB, a man of ancient times who possessed unbreakable integrity to Jehovah God, had been put to a terrible test by Satan. The Devil had caused Job to lose all of his material possessions, had brought the death of his sons and daughters, and had afflicted him with a loathsome disease. Job thought it was God bringing these calamities upon him, and he complained bitterly to Jehovah: “Is it good for you that you should do wrong, . . . that you should try to find my error and for my sin you should keep looking? This in spite of your own knowledge

1, 2. (a) What bitter complaint did Job make to Jehovah? (b) What retraction did Job subsequently make?

that I am not in the wrong?”—Job 1:12-19; 2:5-8; 10:3, 6, 7.

² Some time after this, Job’s words to God reflected a complete reversal: “I talked, but I was not understanding things too wonderful for me, which I do not know. In hearsay I have heard about you, but now my own eye does see you. That is why I make a retraction, and I do repent in dust and ashes.” (Job 42:3, 5, 6) What had happened to change Job’s attitude?

³ In the interim, Jehovah had confronted Job out of the windstorm. (Job 38:1) He had plied Job with questions. ‘Where were you

3. What new viewpoint did Job acquire concerning creation?

when I founded the earth? Who barricaded the sea with doors and set limits on where its waves could come? Can you cause the clouds to drop their rain on the earth? Can you cause the grass to grow? Can you bind together the constellations and guide them in their courses?' Throughout chapters 38 to 41 of the book of Job, Jehovah rained down on Job these questions and many more about His creation. He made Job see the tremendous gulf between God and man, forcefully reminding Job of the wisdom and power reflected in God's creation, things far beyond the power of Job to perform or even to understand. Job, overwhelmed by the awesome power and incredible wisdom of the almighty God as revealed through His creations, was appalled to think that he had had the audacity to argue with Jehovah. So he said: "In hearsay I have heard about you, but now my own eye does see you."—Job 42:5.

⁴ Many centuries later an inspired Bible writer confirmed that Jehovah's qualities could be seen through his creations. The apostle Paul wrote at Romans 1:19, 20: "What may be known about God is manifest among them, for God made it manifest to them. For his invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable."

⁵ Man was created with an inborn need to worship a higher power. Dr. C. G. Jung, in his book *The Undiscovered Self*, referred to this need as "an *instinctive attitude* peculiar to man, and its manifestations can be fol-

lowed all through human history." The apostle Paul spoke of man's inborn urge to worship, which explained why the Greeks in Athens made images and altars to many gods, known and unknown. Paul also identified the true God to them and showed that they should satisfy this innate urge correctly by seeking Jehovah the true God, "if they might grope for him and really find him, although, in fact, he is not far off from each one of us." (Acts 17:22-30) As near as we are to his creations, just that near we are to perceiving his qualities and attributes.

The Amazing Water Cycle

⁶ What qualities of Jehovah do we perceive, for example, in the ability of fluffy clouds to hold tons of water? We see his love and wisdom, for he thus provides rain showers for earth's blessing. He does this by means of the wonderful design involved in the water cycle, mentioned at Ecclesiastes 1:7: "All the winter torrents are going forth to the sea, yet the sea itself is not full. To the place where the winter torrents are going forth, there they are returning so as to go forth." The Bible book of Job is specific on how it happens.

⁷ When the winter torrents flow to the sea, they do not stay there. Jehovah "draws up drops of water from the sea and distills rain from the mist he has made." Because the water is in the form of water vapor and ultimately a fine mist, "the clouds hang poised overhead, a wonderful work of his consummate skill." (Job 36:27; 37:16; *The New English Bible*) The clouds float as long as they are mist: "He fastens up the waters in his clouds—the mists do not tear apart

6. What qualities of Jehovah do we see in the water cycle?

7. How does water get from the ocean to the clouds, and how can fluffy clouds hold tons of water?

4. What should we perceive from Jehovah's creations, and what is the situation with those who fail to see it?

5. (a) What inborn need do humans have, and how is it improperly filled by some? (b) What was Paul's recommendation to the Greeks in Athens?

under their weight." Or as another translation says: "He keeps the waters penned in dense cloud-masses, and the clouds do not burst open under their weight."—Job 26:8, *The Jerusalem Bible*; NE.

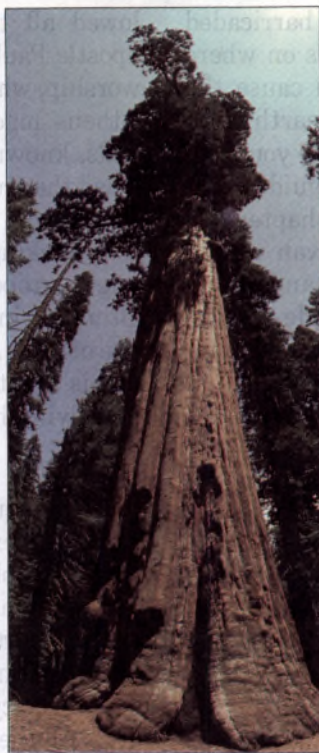
⁸ These "water jars of heaven—who can tip them over" to cause rain to fall to earth? (Job 38:37) The One whose "consummate skill" put them there in the first place, who "distils rain from the mist he has made." And what is needed to distill raindrops from the mists? There must be microscopic solid matter, such as dust or salt particles—from thousands to hundreds of thousands of them in each cubic inch of air—to act as nuclei for droplets to form around. It is estimated that it takes a million of the tiny cloud droplets to make up an average raindrop. Only after all this development can the clouds drop their torrents to earth to form the streams that return the water to the sea. Thus the water cycle completes itself. And all of this by blind chance? "Inexcusable," indeed!

One Source of Solomon's Wisdom

⁹ In the ancient world, the wisdom of Solomon was unparalleled. Much of that wisdom concerned Jehovah's creation: "[Solo-

8. By what different steps are "the water jars of heaven" tipped over and the water cycle completed?

9. What did Solomon find remarkable about one species of ant?



mon] would speak about the trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that is coming forth on the wall; and he would speak about the beasts and about the flying creatures and about the moving things and about the fishes." (1 Kings 4:33) It was this same King Solomon who wrote: "Go to the ant, you lazy one; see its ways and become wise. Although it has no commander, officer or ruler, it prepares its food even in the summer; it has gathered its food supplies even in the harvest."—Proverbs 6:6-8.

¹⁰ Who taught the ants to store food in summer to see them through the cold of winter? For centuries the accuracy of Solomon's account of these ants that harvested seeds and stored them for use in winter was doubted. No one had found any evidence of their existence. In 1871, however, a British naturalist discovered their underground granaries, and the Bible's accuracy in reporting on them was vindicated. But how did these ants acquire the foresight to know in summer that winter's cold lay ahead and the wisdom to know what to do about it? The Bible itself explains that many of Jehovah's creations have a wisdom programmed into them for their survival. The harvester ants are recipients of this blessing from their Creator. Proverbs 30:24 speaks of it: "They are instinctively wise." To say that such wisdom could just happen by chance is un-

10. How was Solomon's illustration about harvester ants vindicated?

reasonable; to fail to perceive a wise Creator behind it is inexcusable.

¹¹ A man at the foot of a giant sequoia tree, amazed at its massive grandeur, understandably feels like a small ant. The tree's size is awesome: 300 feet tall, 36 feet in diameter, bark 2 feet thick, roots spreading out over three or four acres. Yet, far more awesome is the chemistry and physics involved in its growth. Its leaves take water from the roots, carbon dioxide from the air, and energy from the sun to manufacture sugars and give off oxygen—a process called photosynthesis that involves some 70 chemical reactions, not all of which are understood. Amazingly, the first reaction depends upon light from the sun that is just the right color, the right wavelength; otherwise it would not be absorbed by the chlorophyll molecules to initiate the process of photosynthesis.

¹² Also amazing is the fact that the tree can draw up columns of water from the roots to the top of this 300-foot-high colossus. Much more water is drawn up than is needed for photosynthesis. The excess is given off through the leaves by transpiration into the air. It makes the tree water-cooled, somewhat like our being cooled by perspiration. To form protein for growth, nitrogen needs to be added to the sugars, or carbohydrates. The leaf cannot use gaseous nitrogen taken from the air, but soil organisms can turn the gaseous nitrogen in the earth into nitrates and nitrites soluble in water, which then travel from the roots up to the leaves. When plants and animals that have used this nitrogen in their proteins die

and decompose, the nitrogen is released, completing the nitrogen cycle. In all of this, the complexity involved is staggering, hardly a task for chance to perform.

Without Speech or Words or Voice, They Speak!

¹³ What an awesome reflection of the Creator it is that comes from a star-packed night sky that fills viewers with reverence! At Psalm 8:3, 4, David expressed the awe he felt: "When I see your heavens, the works of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have prepared, what is mortal man that you keep him in mind, and the son of earthling man that you take care of him?" To those who have eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to feel, these starry heavens speak, as they did to David: "The heavens are declaring the glory of God."—Psalm 19:1-4.

¹⁴ The more we know about stars, the louder they speak to us. At Isaiah 40:26, we are invited to note their tremendous energy: "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." The force of gravity and the dynamic energy of one of them, our sun, hold the earth in place in its orbit, make plants grow, keep us warm, and make all life possible here on the earth. The apostle Paul under inspiration said: "Star differs from star in glory." (1 Corinthians 15:41) Science knows of yellow stars like our sun, also blue stars, red giants, white dwarfs, neutron stars, and exploding supernovas that unleash incomprehensible power.

11. (a) Why is the giant sequoia tree so awesome? (b) What is so amazing about the first reaction in photosynthesis?

12. (a) What is remarkable about the sequoia tree's use of water? (b) Why is nitrogen needed in plant growth, and how is its cycle completed?

13. What did the starry heavens declare to David, and what do they continue to say to us?

14. Why is the dynamic energy of one of the stars so vital to us?

¹⁵ Many inventors have learned from creation and have attempted to copy the abilities of living creatures. (Job 12:7-10) Note just a few outstanding aspects of creation. Seabirds with glands that desalt seawater; fish and eels that generate electricity; fish, worms, and insects that produce cold light; bats and dolphins that use sonar; wasps that make paper; ants that build bridges; beavers that build dams; snakes that have built-in thermometers; pond insects that use snorkels and diving bells; octopuses that use jet propulsion; spiders that make seven kinds of webs and make trapdoors, nets, and lassos and that have babies who are balloonists, traveling thousands of miles at great heights; fish and crustaceans that use flotation tanks like submarines; and birds, insects, sea turtles, fish, and mammals that perform amazing feats of migration—abilities beyond science's power to explain.

¹⁶ The Bible recorded scientific truths thousands of years before science knew

15. What have many inventors learned from creation and tried to imitate?

16. What scientific truths did the Bible record thousands of years before science discovered them?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ What did Job learn when Jehovah spoke to him out of the windstorm?
- ☐ Why did Paul say that some were inexcusable?
- ☐ How does the water cycle work?
- ☐ What important things does sunlight do for us?
- ☐ What scientific truths did the Bible reveal before science discovered them?

of them. The Mosaic Law (16th century B.C.E.) reflected awareness of disease germs thousands of years before Pasteur. (Leviticus, chapters 13, 14) In the 17th century B.C.E., Job stated: "He is . . . hanging the earth upon nothing." (Job 26:7) A thousand years before Christ, Solomon wrote about the circulation of the blood; medical science had to wait until the 17th century to learn about it. (Ecclesiastes 12:6) Before that, Psalm 139:16 reflected knowledge of the genetic code: "Your eyes saw even the embryo of me, and in your book all its parts were down in writing, as regards the days when they were formed and there was not yet one among them." In the 7th century B.C.E., before naturalists understood about migration, Jeremiah wrote, as recorded at Jeremiah 8:7: "The stork in the sky knows the time to migrate, the dove and the swift and the wryneck know the season of return."—NE.

The "Creator" That Evolutionists Are Choosing

¹⁷ One scripture says concerning some who refuse to perceive an intelligent Creator behind the created wonders: "They became empty-headed in their reasonings and their unintelligent heart became darkened. Although asserting they were wise, they became foolish and turned the glory of the incorruptible God into something like the image of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed creatures and creeping things." They "exchanged the truth of God for the lie and venerated and rendered sacred service to the creation rather than the One who created." (Romans 1:21-23, 25) It is similar

17. (a) What does Romans 1:21-23 say about some who refuse to see an intelligent Creator behind created wonders? (b) In a sense, what are evolutionists choosing as their "creator"?

with evolutionary scientists, who, in effect, glorify an imaginary ascending chain of protozoa-worms-fish-amphibians-reptiles-mammals-“ape-men” as their “creator.” They know, however, that there is no truly simple one-celled organism to start the chain. The simplest known organism contains a hundred billion atoms, with thousands of chemical reactions occurring within it simultaneously.

¹⁸ Jehovah God is the Creator of life. (Psalm 36:9) He is the great First Cause. His name, Jehovah, means “He causes to become.” His creations are beyond our num-

18, 19. (a) Who is the rightful One to be credited with originating life? (b) How much of Jehovah’s creation can we see?

bering. Certainly there are millions more than man is aware of. Psalm 104:24, 25 hints at this: “How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made.” Job 26:14 is explicit on this: “Look! These are the fringes of his ways, and what a whisper of a matter has been heard of him! But of his mighty thunder who can show an understanding?” We see a few fringes, we hear a few whispers, but to catch the full import of his mighty thunder is beyond us.

¹⁹ We do, however, have a better source for seeing him than through his physical creations. That better source is his Word, the Bible. To that source we now turn in the following article.

KNOW JEHOVAH THROUGH HIS WORD

“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.

TO KNOW someone as a mere acquaintance or to have knowledge of something in a superficial way falls short of the meaning of the words “know” and “knowledge” as used in the Scriptures. In the Bible this involves “the act of knowing through experience,” a knowledge that expresses “a relationship of trust between persons.” (*The New International Dictionary of*

New Testament Theology) That includes knowing Jehovah through taking account of specific acts of his, such as those many cases in the book of Ezekiel where God executed judgments against wrongdoers, proclaiming: ‘And you will have to know that I am Jehovah.’—Ezekiel 38:23.

² The variety of ways in which “know” and “knowledge” may be used can be clarified with a few examples. To many claiming to have acted in his name, Jesus said, “I never knew you”; he meant he had never

1, 2. (a) What is the meaning of “know” and “knowledge” as used in the Scriptures? (b) What examples clarify this meaning?

had anything to do with them. (Matthew 7:23) Second Corinthians 5:21 says that Christ "did not know sin." That does not mean that he had no awareness of sin but, rather, that he had no personal involvement with it. Similarly, when Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ," more was involved than merely knowing something about God and Christ.—Compare Matthew 7:21.

³ Many of Jehovah's attributes may be known through his Word, the Bible. One of them is his ability to prophesy with accuracy. This is a mark of the true God: "Produce and tell to us the things that are going to happen. The first things—what they were—do tell, that we may apply our heart and know the future of them. Or cause us to hear even the things that are coming. Tell the things that are to come afterward, that we may know that you are gods." (Isaiah 41:22, 23) In his Word, Jehovah tells the first things concerning the creation of the earth and life upon it. He told far ahead of time things that were to happen later and that did come to pass. And even now he does "cause us to hear even the things that are coming," especially things to happen in these "last days."—2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13; Genesis 1:1-30; Isaiah 53:1-12; Daniel 8:3-12, 20-25; Matthew 24:3-21; Revelation 6:1-8; 11:18.

⁴ Another attribute of Jehovah is power. It is evident in the heavens where stars acting as great fusion furnaces pour out light and heat. When rebellious men or angels challenge Jehovah's sovereignty, he uses

3. What proves that Jehovah displays an identifying mark of the true God?

4. How has Jehovah used his attribute of power, and how will he yet use it?

his power as "a manly person of war," defending his good name and righteous standards. On such occasions he does not hesitate to unleash power devastatingly, as in the Flood of Noah's day, in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in the delivery of Israel through the Red Sea. (Exodus 15:3-7; Genesis 7:11, 12, 24; 19:24, 25) Shortly, God will use his power to "crush Satan under your feet."—Romans 16:20.

⁵ Yet, even with all this unlimited power, there is humility. Psalm 18:35, 36 says: "Your own humility will make me great. You will make room large enough for my steps under me." God's humility allows him to be "condescending to look on heaven and earth, raising up the lowly one from the very dust; he exalts the poor one from the ashpit itself."—Psalm 113:6, 7.

⁶ Jehovah's mercy in dealing with man is lifesaving. What mercy was shown to Manasseh when he was forgiven, even though he had committed terrible atrocities! Jehovah says: "When I say to the wicked one: 'You will positively die,' and he actually turns back from his sin and carries on justice and righteousness, none of his sins with which he has sinned will be remembered against him. Justice and righteousness are what he has carried on. He will positively keep living." (Ezekiel 33:14, 16; 2 Chronicles 33:1-6, 10-13) Jesus was reflecting Jehovah when he urged forgiving 77 times, even 7 times in one day!—Psalm 103:8-14; Matthew 18:21, 22; Luke 17:4.

A God Who Feels

⁷ Greek philosophers, such as the Epicureans, believed in gods but viewed them as

5. Along with his power, what quality does Jehovah also possess?

6. What quality of Jehovah is lifesaving?

7. How is Jehovah different from the Greek gods, and what precious privilege is open to us?



being too far from the earth to have any interest in man or be affected by his feelings. How different the relationship between Jehovah and his faithful Witnesses! "Jehovah is taking pleasure in his people." (Psalm 149:4) Wicked people before the Flood made him feel regrets and "hurt at his heart." Israel by its unfaithfulness brought Jehovah pain and hurt. Christians by their disobedience can grieve Jehovah's spirit; by their faithfulness, however, they can bring him joy. How amazing to think that puny man on earth can make the Creator of the universe feel hurt or joy! In view of all that he does for us, how wonderful that we have the precious privilege of giving him plea-

sure!—Genesis 6:6; Psalm 78:40, 41; Proverbs 27:11; Isaiah 63:10; Ephesians 4:30.

⁸ God's Word shows that Jehovah's love allows us great "freeness of speech." (1 John 4:17) Note Abraham's case when Jehovah came to destroy Sodom. Abraham said to Jehovah: "Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous men in the midst of the city. Will you, then, sweep them away and not pardon the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are inside it? . . . It is unthinkable of you. Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?" What

8. How did Abraham use his freeness of speech with Jehovah?

words to say to God! Yet Jehovah agreed to save Sodom if 50 righteous men were there. Abraham continued and got the figure lowered from 50 to 20. He became apprehensive that he might be pressing too hard. He said: "May Jehovah, please, not grow hot with anger, but let me speak just this once: Suppose ten are found there." Again Jehovah concedes: "I shall not bring it to ruin on account of the ten."—Genesis 18:23-33.

⁹ Why did Jehovah allow Abraham such freeness of speech, in order to speak in this way? For one thing, Jehovah was aware of Abraham's distressed feelings. He knew that Abraham's nephew Lot lived in Sodom, and Abraham was concerned about his safety. Also, Abraham was God's friend. (James 2:23) When someone speaks roughly to us, do we try to discern the feelings behind his words and make allowances, especially if he is a friend who is under emotional pressure of some kind? Is it not a comfort to see that Jehovah will be understanding of our use of freeness of speech, as he was with Abraham?

¹⁰ Especially when we seek him as our "Hearer of prayer" do we crave this freeness of speech to pour out our soul to him, when we are sorely distressed and emotionally distraught. (Psalm 51:17; 65:2, 3) Even at those times when words may fail us, "the spirit itself pleads for us with groanings unuttered," and Jehovah listens. He can know our thoughts: "You have considered my thought from far off. For there is not a word on my tongue, but, look! O Jehovah, you already know it." Even so, we should keep on asking, seeking, knocking.—Romans 8:26; Psalm 139:2, 4; Matthew 7:7, 8.

9. Why did Jehovah allow Abraham to speak as he did, and what can we learn from this?

10. How does freeness of speech help us in prayer?

¹¹ Jehovah cares. He provides for the life he created. "To you the eyes of all look hopefully, and you are giving them their food in its season. You are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:15, 16) We are invited to see how he feeds the birds in the bushes. See the lilies in the field, how beautifully he clothes them. Jesus added that God will do as much and more for us than he does for them. So why should we feel anxious? (Deuteronomy 32:10; Matthew 6:26-32; 10:29-31) First Peter 5:7 invites you to "throw all your anxiety upon him, because he cares for you."

"The Exact Representation of His Very Being"

¹² We can see Jehovah God through his creation; we can see him by reading of his acts in the Bible; we can also see him by the words and acts recorded concerning Jesus Christ. Jesus himself says so, at John 12:45: "He that beholds me beholds also him that sent me." Again, at John 14:9: "He that has seen me has seen the Father also." Colossians 1:15 states: "[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God." Hebrews 1:3 declares: "[Jesus] is the reflection of [God's] glory and the exact representation of his very being."

¹³ Jehovah sent his Son not only to provide a ransom but also to set an example to be copied, both in word and in deed. Jesus spoke God's words. He said at John 12:50: "The things I speak, just as the Father has told me them, so I speak them." He did not do his own thing, but he did the things God told him to do. At John 5:30 he said: "I cannot do a single thing of my own initiative."—John 6:38.

11. How is it shown that Jehovah really cares about us?

12, 13. In addition to seeing Jehovah through his creation and his acts recorded in the Bible, how else are we able to see and hear him?

¹⁴ Jesus saw people who were leprosy, disabled, deaf, blind, and demonized and those mourning their dead. Moved with pity, he healed the sick and raised the dead. He saw the crowds skinned and knocked about spiritually, and he began teaching them many things. He taught not only with correct words but also with winsome words from his heart that went directly to the hearts of others, that drew them to him, that brought them early to the temple to hear him, that caused them to hang onto him, to listen to him with pleasure. They flocked to hear him, declaring that 'never had another man spoken like this one.' They were astounded at his way of teaching. (John 7:46; Matthew 7:28, 29; Mark 11:18; 12:37; Luke 4:22; 19:48; 21:38) And when his enemies sought to trap him with questions, he turned the tables on them, silencing them.—Matthew 22:41-46; Mark 12:34; Luke 20:40.

¹⁵ He proclaimed that "the kingdom of the heavens [had] drawn near" and urged listeners to keep "seeking first the kingdom." He sent others out to preach that "the kingdom of the heavens [had] drawn near," to "make disciples of people of all the nations," to be witnesses of Christ "to the most distant part of the earth." Today nearly four and a half million Witnesses of Jehovah are walking in his steps, doing those things.—Matthew 4:17; 6:33; 10:7; 28:19; Acts 1:8.

¹⁶ "God is love," we are told at 1 John 4:8. This outstanding attribute of his was put to the most excruciating test imaginable when he sent his only-begotten Son to earth to die. The agony this beloved Son suffered

and the pleas he voiced to his heavenly Father must have cost Jehovah dearly, even though Jesus proved false Satan's challenge that Jehovah could not have people on earth who would hold fast their integrity to Him under severe test. We should also appreciate the magnitude of Jesus' sacrifice, for God sent him here to die for us. (John 3:16) This was not an easy, quick death. To appreciate the cost to both God and Jesus and thereby realize the magnitude of their sacrifice for us, let us examine the Bible's record of the proceedings.

¹⁷ At least four times, Jesus described to his apostles what lay ahead. Just a few days before it took place, he said: "Here we are, advancing up to Jerusalem, and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and will deliver him to men of the nations, and they will make fun of him and will spit upon him and scourge him and kill him."—Mark 10:33, 34.

¹⁸ Jesus felt the pressure of what was ahead of him, understanding the horrors of the Roman scourging. The leather thongs of the whip used for flogging had bits of metal and sheep bones embedded in them; so as the flogging continued, back and legs

17-19. How did Jesus describe the ordeal ahead of him?

In Our Next Issue

How Christendom Became
a Part of This World

Walking in Wisdom
With Regard to the World

Printing Bible Literature
While Under Ban

14. (a) What sights caused Jesus to be moved with pity? (b) Why did Jesus' manner of speaking cause people to flock to hear him?

15. What was the central theme of Jesus' preaching, and to what extent did he involve others in spreading it?

16. How was Jehovah's attribute of love put to a severe test, but what did it accomplish for mankind?

became ribbons of bleeding flesh. Months before, Jesus indicated the emotional stress the ordeal ahead was creating for him, saying, as we read at Luke 12:50: "Indeed, I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and how I am being distressed until it is finished!"

¹⁹ The pressure mounted as the time drew closer. He spoke about it to his heavenly Father: "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me out of this hour. Nevertheless, this is why I have come to this hour." (John 12:27) How Jehovah must have been affected by this plea from his only-begotten Son! In Gethsemane, just hours before his death, Jesus became sorely troubled and said to Peter, James, and John: "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death." Minutes thereafter he voiced his final prayer on the subject to Jehovah: "Father, if you wish, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, let, not my will, but yours take place." But getting into an agony he continued praying more earnestly; and his sweat became as drops of blood falling to the ground." (Matthew 26:38; Luke 22:42, 44) This may have been what is known medically as hematomatosis. It is rare but can occur in highly emotional states.

²⁰ Concerning this time in Gethsemane, Hebrews 5:7 says: "In the days of his flesh Christ offered up supplications and also petitions to the One who was able to save him out of death, with strong outcries and tears, and he was favorably heard for his godly fear." Since he was not saved from death by the "One who was able to save him out of death," in what sense was his prayer favorably heard? Luke 22:43 answers: "An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him." The prayer was answered in that the angel God sent did strengthen Jesus to bear up under the ordeal.

20. What helped Jesus get through his ordeal?

²¹ This was evident from the outcome. When his inner struggle was over, Jesus got up, went back to Peter, James, and John, and said: "Get up, let us go." (Mark 14:42) In effect he was saying, 'Let me go to be betrayed with a kiss, to be arrested by a mob, to be illegally tried, to be wrongfully condemned. Let me go to be mocked, spit on, scourged, and nailed to a torture stake.' For six hours he hung there, in excruciating pain, enduring to the end. As he died, he cried out in triumph: "It has been accomplished!" (John 19:30) He had remained steadfast and had proved his integrity in upholding Jehovah's sovereignty. Everything Jehovah had sent him to earth to do he had accomplished. When we die or when Armageddon strikes, will we be able to say concerning our commission from Jehovah: "It has been accomplished"?

²² In any case, we can be sure that in Jehovah's fast-approaching due time, all "the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."—Isaiah 11:9.

21. (a) What shows that Jesus came through the ordeal triumphant? (b) When our trials intensify, how will we want to be able to speak?

22. What shows the extent of the spread of the knowledge of Jehovah?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ What does it mean to know and to have knowledge?
- ☐ How have Jehovah's mercy and forgiveness been shown to us in his Word?
- ☐ How did Abraham make use of freedom of speech with Jehovah?
- ☐ Why can we look at Jesus and in him see Jehovah's qualities?

She Fought for Her Faith

THREE years ago Caridad Bazán Listán, one of Jehovah's Witnesses in Cádiz, Spain, urgently needed an operation. Gallstones were causing fever and were poisoning her bloodstream. When she was admitted to the local hospital, she explained her Bible-based position of refusing to accept a blood transfusion. The doctors agreed to perform the operation without blood. However, just before she was taken into the operating room, the doctors asked her to sign a document. It indicated that they were willing to respect her decision regarding blood but that if an emergency occurred, they wanted her permission to administer whatever treatment might be deemed necessary.

A congregation elder who was present at the hospital and Caridad's son, also a Witness, advised Caridad of the implications of signing such a form. Her signature would have authorized the doctors to transfuse blood in the event of an emergency. When the medical personnel came to take her into the operating room, she explained that she was not going to sign the paper. She was summarily returned to her room and put under intense pressure to change her mind.

After several conversations they decided to call the forensic judge so that he could convince her, but it was to no avail. Caridad explained that she felt she would

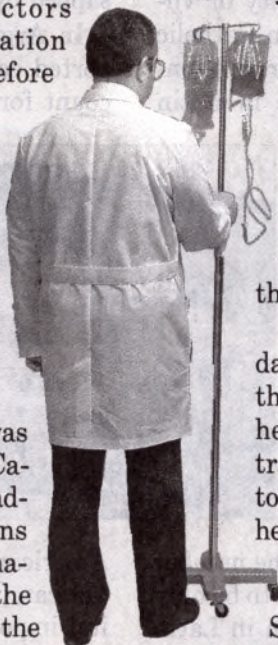
be guilty before God if she allowed them to give her blood. She pointed out that under the Mosaic Law, if a woman was raped, she was not considered guilty if she resisted by screaming for help. (Deuteronomy 22:23-27) "The doctors are ignoring my wishes and are attempting to violate my conscience," she said, "so I must resist just as if they were raping me."

Several hours passed, and finally the doctors agreed to operate on her without blood. In the operating room, Caridad asked permission to pray to Jehovah. This she did, and the operation was a success.

Nevertheless, afterward Caridad's condition worsened, and the doctors decided to disregard her wishes and force a blood transfusion on her. Thus, a doctor and a nurse prepared to give her a transfusion. Despite her weak condition, Caridad resisted with all her strength.

She even managed to bite the tube through which the blood was to pass. Finally, the doctor felt so ashamed of what they were doing that he desisted. "I can't go through with this. I'm throwing in the towel!" he said.

Caridad survived the crisis and recovered without further complications. Both the doctors and the nurses could not fail to be deeply impressed by her faith and courage. All of this occurred when Caridad was 94 years old.



Latin-American Church in Anguish

Why Are Millions Leaving?

FROM the northern border of Mexico to the southern tip of Chile, there is hardly a Latin-American city or village that does not boast a Roman Catholic church in its main plaza. However, a “monumental change is taking place in Latin America,” acknowledges Joseph E. Davis, the program director of an institution that promotes Catholic activities. He also admitted that Latin America, a region that for more than three centuries has been under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, is now on the verge of a vast transformation.

It is no secret that the dominance of the Catholic Church is weakening rapidly. Recently, the number of active Catholics was estimated to be only 15 percent of the total population in Latin America. The 1991 *Britannica Book of the Year* reported: “Roman Catholic Bishops and the pope himself expressed fear that historically Catholic Latin America was turning dangerously from the old faith.” Why is this happening? Why are so many leaving the Catholic fold? What has become of those who stray?

The Search for an Explanation

Catholic leaders blame their problems on the proliferation of “the sects.” A European

priest working in Bolivia complained: “The church is like a tree whose strength is being sapped by weedlike sects.”

In Argentina, 140 new religions are reported each year, which might help to account for a drop in Catholic Church membership from 90 percent to 60 or 70 percent since the mid-1970’s. In Tijuana, Mexico, 10 percent of the two million inhabitants have gone over to the 327 non-Catholic religions there. *Time* magazine reported: “Astonishingly, there are almost certainly more Brazilian Protestants in church on Sundays than Catholics.” It is no wonder that, as one newspaper stated, when “the Latin-



American cardinals met with the pope in Vatican City to discuss two subjects of capital importance for the church today,” one of them was “the problem of the sects.”

In a meeting with the bishops of Mexico, the pope stated that the success of the many new religions “is due to the lukewarmness and indifference of the sons of the church that are not up to their evangelist mission.” Why are “the sons of the church” indifferent to filling the spiritual needs of Latin Americans when so many of these respect the Bible? An editorial in *Última Hora*, of La Paz, Bolivia, explains: “The church has entered the world to such an extent that

each day it appears to be further abandoning its own sphere. It should not be surprising for us to find, as is in fact happening, that priests are more sociologists, economists, journalists, or politicians than they are clergymen."

More Politicians Than Preachers?

The church's political meddling during the '70's and '80's undoubtedly contributed to the disgust many Latin Americans now feel for Catholicism. A study published in 1985 made the following observation concerning Maryknoll, the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America, with its many Latin-American missions: "Maryknoll has successfully brought the Marxist-Leninist message of violent revolution into public acceptance precisely because it has been allowed to operate as an arm of the Catholic Church. Its message has reached not only the average churchgoer, but leading American policymakers, as well."

Consider also the so-called dirty war in which, astonishingly, from 10,000 to 30,000 Argentineans were abducted and killed without trial in the late '70's. An editorial in the *National Catholic Reporter*, under the headline "Blood Taints Church in Argentina," stated: "The Argentine experience so closely resembles the performance of the Catholic church in Nazi Germany, it again raises the question of whether power is more important to the church than the Gospel imperative to be a witness to the truth."

The church's desire for power in the world's governments clearly marks it as no friend of God. The Bible says: "Don't you realise that making the world your friend is

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES IN SOME LATIN-AMERICAN COUNTRIES

Country	1971 Publishers	1992 Publishers
Argentina	20,750	96,780
Bolivia	1,276	8,868
Brazil	72,269	335,039
Chile	8,231	44,067
Colombia	8,275	55,215
Costa Rica	3,271	14,018
Dominican Republic	4,106	15,418
Ecuador	3,323	22,763
El Salvador	2,181	20,374
Guadeloupe	1,705	6,830
Guatemala	2,604	13,479
Honduras	1,432	6,583
Mexico	54,384	354,023
Panama	2,013	7,732
Paraguay	901	4,115
Peru	5,384	43,429
Puerto Rico	8,511	25,315
Uruguay	3,370	8,683
Venezuela	8,170	60,444
TOTAL	212,156	1,143,175

making God your enemy? Anyone who chooses the world for his friend turns himself into God's enemy." (James 4:4, Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*) Little wonder, then, that many no longer look to the Catholic Church for spiritual guidance. But what has happened to the people who have left the Catholic fold?

Sheep Without a Shepherd

They are much like the people that the first-century spiritual leaders of Judaism failed to care for. The Bible says that Jesus "felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd." (Matthew 9:36, *JB*) Many have defected from the Catholic Church to so-called evangelistic religions. Have these cared for the stray sheep any better? Are Protestants more inclined to be as Jesus stated of his true followers: "They are no

part of the world, just as I am no part of the world"?—John 17:14.

Many non-Catholic religions try to project the image of being obedient to the Bible rather than followers of religious tradition. Often this is merely a veneer. The basic doctrines of the Protestant organizations are so similar to those of the Catholic Church that many observers could easily use the Andean saying: "*Es la misma cholita con otra pollera*" (It is the same little Indian woman with a different skirt).

For example, nearly all Protestant groups teach that God is a Trinity, yet this is not a Bible teaching. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* acknowledges: "Exegetes and theologians today are in agreement that the Hebrew Bible does not contain a doctrine of the Trinity . . . The New Testament also does not contain an explicit doctrine of the Trinity."*

Protestants are clearly linked to this world and its politics as much as are Catholics. *The Encyclopedia of Latin America* says: "Protestantism in Latin America has also adapted itself to . . . populist electoral politics. Native pastors often become clients of political patrons and provide votes in return for government favors to their churches." *The Latin American Research Review* says: "Protestantism has been wed to politics in Guatemala ever since it first arrived in the country," adding that it "has been as much a vehicle for conveying political and social behaviors as a form of religion."

Protestant participation in politics has often led to Protestant participation in war. The late Harry Emerson Fosdick, considered one of the most influential Protestant clergymen in American history, admitted:

* See the booklet *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

"Our Western history has been one war after another. We have bred men for war, trained men for war; we have glorified war; we have made warriors our heroes and even in our churches we have put the battle flags . . . With one corner of our mouth we have praised the Prince of Peace and with the other we have glorified war."

What Should You Do?

After describing false religion as a symbolic prostitute that commits fornication with the governments of the earth, the Bible book of Revelation says: "Come out, my people, away from her, so that you do not share in her crimes and have the same plagues to bear."—Revelation 18:4, *JB*.

Many realize that there is much corruption in the church, still they hesitate to leave because the Roman Church has such an ancient history. Remember, however, that the Jewish system of worship was very old; yet God rejected the Jews as his chosen people when they apostatized from his true teachings. Faithful servants of God left Judaism when they realized that God was now using the Christian congregation instead. How can you recognize the true Christian congregation today?

Nearly a million Latin Americans have become Jehovah's Witnesses in the last two decades. Why did they make this change? A newspaper in Martínez de la Torre, Veracruz, Mexico, examined this question. It said: "These Bible students are made up almost 100 percent of former activists of different religions, mostly Catholics, that have noticed religion's drifting toward politics and its acceptance and approval of unbiblical practices like interfaith, immorality, and violence. It has been a source of satisfaction for them to conform to Scriptural principles of conduct without resorting to idolatry or traditions of obscure origin. This

has given them a praiseworthy unity of faith that seems to distinguish them wherever they are found.”

Another Latin-American newspaper put it this way: “Jehovah’s Witnesses are hard-working, honest, God-fearing people. They are conservative and tradition-loving and

their religion is based on the teachings of the Bible.” We invite you to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses wherever you live. You will learn that their hope and their whole way of life are based on the Bible. Yes, you will learn how to worship God “with spirit and truth.”—John 4:23, 24.

Jehovah Changes Times and Seasons in

R · O · M · A · N · I · A

WINDS of change swept through Eastern Europe in 1989. In a matter of months, governments that once stood like invincible fortresses toppled like dominoes. Along with political transformation came social, economic, and, of greatest interest to Jehovah’s Witnesses, religious changes. In country after country, Jehovah’s Witnesses were given official recognition, and freedom to carry on their religious activity was restored to them.

But it appeared that things would be different in Romania. The government had such a tight grip on the people that it seemed that the winds of change would have little effect. As Jehovah’s Witnesses there heard of what was taking place in the other Eastern European countries, they asked themselves, ‘Will we ever be able to enjoy freedom of worship before Armageddon?’ Their hearts longed for the time when they



could assemble at Christian meetings with their spiritual brothers and sisters, preach the good news publicly, and study their Bible publications openly, without having to hide them all the time. All of that seemed like just a dream.

Then the dream came true! It happened in December 1989. To everyone’s surprise, Ceaușescu’s regime fell overnight. Suddenly those Christians found relief. On April 9, 1990, Jehovah’s Witnesses were legally recognized as a religious organization in Romania. Jehovah had changed times and seasons for the 17,000 active Witnesses there.—Compare Daniel 2:21.

A Long History

In 1911, Carol Szabo and Josif Kiss returned to Romania from the United States, where they had learned the Bible’s truth



1. About 700 Witnesses gathered in the woods in 1947

2. Handbill for a public talk in 1946

3. A recent assembly in Romania



and had dedicated their lives to Jehovah to do his will. They wanted to share the good news with their countrymen. Once in Romania, they immediately started to preach. When World War I broke out, they were arrested for what they were doing. Still, the Kingdom seeds they had sown began to produce results. By 1920, when the work was reorganized, there were about 1,800 Kingdom publishers in Romania.

By that time the revolutionary spirit that blazed in the Balkans was being felt more and more in Romania, and disturbances were rampant. Despite the difficult times, our spiritual brothers continued the work. In 1924 the Watch Tower Society opened an office at 26 Regina Maria Street in Cluj-Napoca to look after the work in Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Albania.

The political situation grew very tense, though, and besides troubles from the au-

thorities, there was trouble within the organization. The *1930 Year Book* reports: "Because of the unfaithfulness of the one whom the Society sent there, the friends have been scattered and their confidence greatly shaken. The Society has been watching for some opportunity to again revive the work in that land, but the local authorities forbid everything, and we must wait until the Lord opens a more favorable way." Then, in 1930, Martin Magyarosi, a Romanian Witness baptized in 1922, was appointed as the new branch servant, and the office was later moved to 33 Crișana Street, Bucharest. After a long struggle, the Society was finally registered as a legal corporation in Romania in 1933.

Difficulties Continued

Severe trials continued to come upon the Witnesses in Romania. The *1936 Year Book* reports: "Doubtless in no part of the earth



4

4. Witnessing in Cluj-Napoca today



5

5. Kingdom Hall near Turda



6

6. Bethel family in Bucharest

do the brethren work with greater difficulties than in Rumania." Despite all the adversity, the 1937 service reports mentioned 75 congregations with 856 publishers in Romania. At the Memorial, there were 2,608 present.

As World War II got under way, Romania did not remain unaffected. In September 1940, General Ion Antonescu seized power in the government and began a rule similar to Hitler's. Acts of terror were the order of the day. Hundreds of our brothers were arrested, beaten, and tortured. Brother Magyarosi was arrested in September 1942, but he was still able to coordinate the work for Transylvania from prison.

Persecution continued when Hitler's troops swept through the country in 1944. A report from Bucharest described conditions under the Nazi regime: "Jehovah's Witnesses in this country were terribly persecuted. Bound in fetters with Commu-

nists, accused by the Hitlerite clergy as being worse than Communists, many of us were sentenced either to 25 years imprisonment, to life sentences, or to death."

Finally the war ended, and on June 1, 1945, the office of the Society in Bucharest resumed activity. Despite difficulties in obtaining paper, devoted workers printed over 860,000 booklets and over 85,000 copies of *The Watchtower* in Romanian and Hungarian. Jehovah richly blessed their hard work. By 1946 some 1,630 new ones had been baptized. A highlight of that year was the national convention held in Bucharest on September 28 and 29. The clergy tried their best to interfere and to stop this convention, but they did not succeed, and about 15,000 people attended the public talk. It was the first time the brothers in Romania were able to have such a convention.

The Society sent Brother Alfred Rütimann from the Swiss branch to Romania. In

August 1947 he was able to speak to upwards of 4,500 brothers in 16 locations, building them up for what was ahead. Soon pressures were again to come upon the Witnesses, this time from the Communist regime. In February 1948 the authorities prohibited our printing and preaching activity. Then, in August 1949, the office at 38 Alion Street was raided. Subsequently many brothers, including Brother Magyarosi, were arrested. This time, accused of being imperialists, they were sent to prisons or labor camps. For the next 40 years, the work was banned, and Jehovah's Witnesses suffered greatly. Enemy-instigated troubles within the organization added to the distress. Finally, Ceaușescu's regime toppled in 1989, and they were free! What would they now do with their freedom?

Preaching Publicly Again

The Witnesses did not waste any time. They immediately started preaching from house to house. But this was not easy for ones who for years had courageously carried on the work underground by informal witnessing. They were nervous now that they could preach publicly. Most of them had never done this before, and the last time any of them had preached from house to house was in the late 1940's. What kind of results are they having? Let us see.

A good place to start is in the capital, Bucharest, which has 2.5 million inhabitants. Two years ago, there were just four congregations in the city. Now there are ten congregations, and over 2,100 came to the 1992 Memorial celebration. With many progressive home Bible studies being conducted, some new congregations may soon be formed.

Craiova is a city with about 300,000 inhabitants, in the southwestern part of the country. Up till 1990, there were only about

80 Witnesses in the entire city. Then the pioneer spirit caught on, and the work surged ahead. In 1992 alone, 74 persons were baptized, and over 150 Bible studies are being conducted. With over 200 publishers, they are eagerly looking for a suitable place for a Kingdom Hall.

In Tirgu-Mures, a Witness sister and two brothers went to the Orthodox priest to have her name taken off the church rolls. Upon learning the purpose of their visit, the priest invited them in, and they had a fine discussion. The priest then said: "I envy you but not in a bad way. We should be doing the work that you are doing. It's too bad that the Orthodox Church is a sleeping giant"! He accepted the brochure *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* and a copy of *The Watchtower*. The sister is happy that she no longer belongs to the "sleeping giant."—Revelation 18:4.

It is significant that the majority of those learning the truth today are young people. Why? Apparently they expected much from the change in government, but they were disillusioned. They are happy to learn that only Jehovah's Kingdom can bring a lasting solution to our problems.—Psalm 146:3-5.

Big Things Happening in Small Places

Ocoliș is a small village in northern Romania. In 1920 a man by the name of Pinte Moise returned from the Russian front, where he had been taken as a prisoner of war. He had once been a Catholic, but before his return he had become a Baptist. Three weeks later, the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known, called on him. After that visit, he declared: "Now I've found the truth about God!" By 1924 there was a group of 35 in Ocoliș.

Today, among a local population of 473, there are 170 Kingdom publishers there.

Each publisher has about two houses assigned as his territory, and they also work the surrounding villages. Still, they are optimistic. They just built a beautiful Kingdom Hall that seats 400. All the work was done by the local Witnesses.

Valea Largă is where Brothers Szabo and Kiss had settled in 1914. In 1991, among its 3,700 inhabitants, there were eight congregations and 582 Kingdom publishers. At the 1992 Memorial, there were 1,082 present—nearly 1 out of 3 persons in this valley.

Special Pioneers Pave the Way

Special pioneers play a large role in taking the good news to people in the more remote areas. As soon as freedom to preach was granted, Ionel Alban started to work in two cities, spending two days each week in Orșova and five days in Turnu-Severin.

There were no Witnesses in Orșova when Ionel arrived. The first week, he started a Bible study with a 14-year-old boy. The lad made so many changes in two months that a friend and a neighbor also began to study. The neighbor, Roland, who was a Catholic, made amazing progress. After only a month and a half, he accompanied Ionel in the preaching work, and in five months he was baptized. He entered the full-time service right away. His mother also began to study and was baptized at the 1992 "Light Bearers" District Convention. Now there are ten publishers in Orșova, and they conduct 30 home Bible studies.

The first one to accept the truth in Turnu-Severin was a receptionist at the hotel where Ionel stayed. After two months the man became an unbaptized publisher, and in three months he was baptized. Now he is one of 32 publishers there who conduct a total of 84 home Bible studies.

Another special pioneer, Gabriela Geica, served as a regular pioneer even when our

work was under ban. Her desire was to work where the need was greater. She was assigned a vast territory. Sometimes she traveled from 60 to 100 miles to call on interested persons. One city where she worked was Motru, where there were just four Witnesses. "Because of the increased activity in Motru, the priests and other religious groups started opposing us," she relates. "They influenced the mayor and the police to put pressure on the families that gave me accommodations. They threw me out, so just about every other month, I had to look for a place to stay."

Gabriela started a study with an atheist in Orșova, who said that she was not interested in religion or the Bible. But after just four months of study, the woman started defending the Bible. Although her husband locked her out at night and threatened to divorce or kill her, she maintained her integrity. Even before she was baptized, she conducted ten Bible studies.

Marvelous Prospects Ahead

In August 1992, Romania reached a peak of 24,752 publishers in 286 congregations. The Memorial attendance was over 66,000. At the small branch office in Bucharest, 17 workers are doing their best to look after the spiritual needs of their brothers. They are looking forward shortly to starting construction on a bigger branch.

Jehovah's Witnesses in Romania cannot help but be amazed by all the rapid changes in the last few years. They are grateful to Jehovah God that they are a part of the international congregation that bears his name and guides people to accurate knowledge of him and his unchangeable purpose. After so many years of hardship and persecution, how thankful they are to Jehovah that he has indeed changed times and seasons in Romania!

Do You Respect Your Place of Worship?

“From the very infancy of the gospel, the Christians always had their settled and determinate place of divine worship.”

—“Primitive Christianity,” by William Cave.

GOD’S people have always taken pleasure in gathering together for worship. This was as true in the first century as it is now. Early authors and theologians, such as Lucian, Clement, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian, all agree that Christians had specific places where they gathered to worship together on a regular basis.

The Bible establishes the same point, making numerous references to regular meetings held by groups of Christians. These groups were known as congregations. This was appropriate because the word “congregation” in the original languages of the Bible denotes a group of people gathered together for a particular purpose or activity.

Early Places of Christian Worship

What did the first-century Christians do when they gathered together? The Bible describes a number of such meetings and shows that teaching was an important feature. (Acts 2:42; 11:26; 1 Corinthians 14:19, 26) Educational programs were arranged, with discourses, the relating of encouraging experiences, and the careful consideration of letters received from the governing body in Jerusalem or from an apostle.

At Acts 15:22-35, we read that after one such letter to a group of Christians in An-

tiocch was read, Judas and Silas “encouraged the brothers with many a discourse and strengthened them.” Another account states that when Paul and Barnabas arrived at Antioch “and had gathered the congregation together, they proceeded to relate the many things God had done by means of them.” Praying to Jehovah was also an important feature of Christian meetings. —Acts 14:27.

The places where first-century congregations gathered for worship were not elaborate structures like many of Christendom’s churches today. For the most part, early Christians met in private homes. (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2) Often the roof chamber or the upper room of a private home was used. It was in an upper room that the Lord’s Evening Meal was held. It was also in an upper room that the 120 disciples were anointed with holy spirit at Pentecost. —Luke 22:11, 12, 19, 20; Acts 1:13, 14; 2:1-4; 20:7, 9.

Today Jehovah’s Witnesses follow the pattern established by the apostles. They use meeting places known as Kingdom Halls. There they are trained as preachers of the good news of God’s Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) At the Kingdom Hall, they also study the Scriptures, pray, and encourage one another. This is in harmony with the

Bible admonition at Hebrews 10:24, 25: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near."

Using Our Place of Worship Properly

Do you recall the words of the apostle Paul: "God is a God, not of disorder, but of peace" and, "Let all things take place decently and by arrangement"? If you examine the context of these words, you will discover that Paul was discussing the manner in which Christian meetings ought to be conducted. As in the apostolic era, Christians today make sure that their meetings are orderly and well organized.—1 Corinthians 14:26-40.

The October 15, 1969, issue of *The Watchtower* stated: "The spiritual atmosphere at the Kingdom Hall is genuine, springing from a real interest in true worship and Biblical instruction. And the light, natural surroundings in the hall encourage those present to be outgoing and friendly, not inhibited by a mysterious imposed solemnity." Of course, care is also exercised so that use of the Kingdom Hall always reflects respect and dignity.

Christendom has manifested gross lack of respect in this area. Some religious organizations use their places of worship as community centers for entertainment. They have live concerts of religious rock music, rooms for weight lifting, billiard tables, nurseries, and in-house cinemas. One church had a wrestling match as part of their program. This would hardly harmonize with the pattern set by the apostles.

If any first-century congregation acted improperly, correction was in order. For ex-

ample, some in the Christian congregation in Corinth were using the celebration of the Lord's Evening Meal as an occasion for eating and drinking. They would bring their supper with them to eat before or during the meeting, some even overeating and overdrinking. This was truly out of place. The apostle Paul wrote to them: "Certainly you do have houses for eating and drinking, do you not?"—1 Corinthians 11:20-29.

In harmony with Paul's counsel, Jehovah's Witnesses strive to care for personal matters at home or elsewhere rather than at the Kingdom Hall. Granted, our regular meetings provide a convenient opportunity to see a number of friends at one time. However, the Kingdom Hall is dedicated to Jehovah, so it is to be used exclusively for his worship. We do not take advantage of our attendance there to pursue secular business or to take care of personal financial transactions.

Furthermore, Kingdom Halls are not used by the congregation for recreational programs, fund-raising activities, or social services, such as child care. There are other places where one can care for such personal and business matters.

The elders in one Kingdom Hall noted that congregation members were making a practice of borrowing or returning borrowed items at meetings. Also, they were habitually exchanging videocassette movies at the Kingdom Hall. Although this activity was not commercial in nature, the elders helped them to see the wisdom of caring for these matters at home whenever possible.

To avoid situations that could give a wrong impression and to make sure that the Kingdom Hall is properly used, each one should ask himself: 'Are there any personal matters that I have been caring for at the Kingdom Hall that can be cared for at

home?' For example, when organizing outings or other social gatherings, would it not be better to discuss such arrangements at home? Could we use the telephone or visit the homes of those we wish to contact? Borrowing Paul's words, we could say: 'Certainly we do have houses for the handling of such matters, do we not?'

An Appointed Time and Place to Worship Jehovah

The Bible states at Ecclesiastes 3:1: "For everything there is an appointed time, even a time for every affair under the heavens." When attending meetings at the Kingdom Hall, we can fully immerse ourselves in activities that are related to the Christian ministry. It is an appointed time to worship Jehovah.

Jesus' half brother James gave counsel against showing favoritism within the Christian congregation. (James 2:1-9) How can we apply this counsel in our Kingdom Halls? The appearance of favoritism could be given when the conspicuous passing of written invitations for social events is done there. In one congregation the custom was to place such invitations in the book bags or Bibles of those present. Granted, this is more convenient than sending the invitations by mail or delivering them at each home. However, how do those who do not receive an invitation feel after observing that invitations are being passed out to other individuals? Could this give the appearance of favoritism?

Of course, there need not be a strict rule that says no one can hand another a personal message or package while at the Kingdom Hall; nor is it wrong to talk in the Kingdom Hall about daily activities or events, to invite someone to your home, or to ask someone to join you in some recreation. But these should be incidental and done in a

discreet and unobtrusive manner. Personal arrangements should never distract from the real purpose of our being together at the Kingdom Hall, namely, to be edified spiritually.—Matthew 6:33; Philippians 1:10.

Men Who Set the Example

Elders and ministerial servants zealously set the example in showing respect for the Kingdom Hall. Generally there are one or two elders and ministerial servants assigned to coordinate matters pertaining to the upkeep of the Kingdom Hall. Where more than one congregation uses the same hall, a committee of elders oversees these matters.

While certain ones are specifically assigned to look after such duties, all ministerial servants and elders should display a genuine interest in the hall. They recognize that the Kingdom Hall has been dedicated to Jehovah and is used for his worship.

Elders should not procrastinate when there is a need for repairs. (2 Chronicles 24: 5, 13; 29:3; 34:8; Nehemiah 10:39; 13:11) In some congregations regular inspections of the Kingdom Hall are made in order to care promptly for any necessary repairs. Inventories are kept to make sure that necessary supplies are on hand and accessible. If there is a designated area for storing supplies, tools, and cleaning equipment, all elders and ministerial servants should display an interest in its condition, making sure that it is kept neat. Those who work at the literature and magazine counters can show their interest by promptly seeing that empty cartons do not litter the hall.

By setting an example, elders and ministerial servants can help the rest of the congregation to manifest zeal for the Kingdom Hall. (Hebrews 13:7) All can show proper respect by having a part in the cleaning of

the hall and by showing genuine interest in its overall appearance.

Jesus said at Matthew 18:20: "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst." Yes, Jesus is interested in what we do when we gather together to worship Jehovah. This includes any meetings held at private homes and large meetings such as conventions or assemblies.

For millions of Jehovah's Witnesses, there is no place closer to their heart than their regular place of worship, the Kingdom Hall. They show proper respect for that place. They manifest an industrious spirit in caring for it, and they strive always to use it properly. May you too follow the admonition that Jehovah himself gives: "Guard your feet whenever you go to the house of the true God."—Ecclesiastes 5:1.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Since Christians do not wager money, may they accept tickets or participate in drawings in which they may win prizes?

This is a question that has arisen from time to time, so it has already been addressed in our publications. In some languages, we have made available indexes of our literature, such as the *Watch Tower Publications Index 1930-1985* (and a similar one covering 1986-1990). If a Christian has such indexes in his language, these can prove very useful in locating satisfying answers quickly.

The question asked above is an example. Looking in the *Index* for 1930-1985 under the heading "Questions From Readers," one finds the subheading "'drawings,' may Christian accept ticket for?" The reader is referred to the section "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of February 15, 1973, page 127.* Many Witnesses have the bound volume (or individual issues) of *The Watchtower* for 1973, or it may be consulted in the library of many Kingdom Halls.

The discussion published in 1973 pointed out that Christians rightly avoid any sweepstakes or drawings that involve buying chances (such as raffle tickets) or putting up money for a chance to

win some prize. Simply put, we avoid gambling, which certainly is an expression of greediness. —1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Ephesians 4:19; 5:3, 5.

A store or a business, though, may use drawings as a means of advertising. All a person has to do is submit his name or send in a form or a ticket, without buying anything. The drawing is part of the advertising scheme; it is designed to be an impartial method of deciding who will be given the prize or prizes. Certain Christians might feel that they could accept the prize in a drawing that did not involve gambling, just as they could accept free samples or other presents that a business or a store might use in its advertising program.

However, some Christians would shun anything of this sort, not wanting to stumble or confuse others and also seeking to keep far from any enticement to trust so-called Lady Luck. As Isaiah 65:11 shows, God's servants do not link themselves with "the god of Good Luck" or "the god of Destiny." They may also feel that they would not want to be part of any publicity that winners might be required to share in. Those who feel this way should certainly not be critical of a Christian or Christians whose conscience allows them to be involved in such drawings.—Compare Romans 14:1-4.

* The same material is indexed under the headings "Advertising," "Business," and "Gambling," so the versatility of the *Index* helps one to locate the information.

Can You Trust the Bible?

IF YOU picked up a Bible, would you expect to find a coin? What about this ancient silver coin?

Many think of the Bible as an old book offering quaint stories and admirable morals. Yet, they do not believe that Bible accounts are accurate history, so they deny that it is the Word of God. There is, though, ample evidence of the Bible's accuracy. This coin (enlarged view) is a good example. What does the writing say?

The coin was made in Tarsus, a city in the southeastern part of what is now Turkey. The coin was produced during the rule of the Persian governor Mazaeus in the fourth century B.C.E. It identifies him as governor of the province "Beyond the River," that is, the Euphrates River.

But why is that phrase interesting? Because you will find the same designa-

tion in your Bible. Ezra 5:6-6:13 sets out correspondence between the Persian king Darius and a governor named Tattenai. At issue was the Jews' rebuilding of their temple in Jerusalem. Ezra was a skilled copyist of God's Law, and you would expect him to be precise, accurate in what he wrote. You will see at Ezra 5:6 and 6:13 that he termed Tattenai "the governor beyond the River."

Ezra penned that about 460 B.C.E., some 100 years before this coin was minted. Oh, some people might feel that the designation for an ancient official is a minor detail. But if you can rely on the Bible writers in even such small details, should that not increase your confidence in what else they wrote?

In the first two articles in this issue, you will find additional reasons for such confidence.

