

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

DECEMBER 15, 1993

**Was Jesus Born
in the Snow?**

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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Was Jesus Born in the Snow?

“HEAVY Snow Paralyzes Jerusalem” and “Snowy Siege Staggers the North.” Such headlines in *The Jerusalem Post* became second nature for Israeli readers in 1992, in what proved to be one of Israel’s hardest winters of the century.

By January the summit of Mount Hermon was covered with 22 to 40 feet of snow, and the winter was far from over. From the Golan Heights and Upper Galilee down past Jerusalem and nearby Bethlehem (seen on the cover), even on south into the Negeb, time and again Israeli daily life and routine were paralyzed by a graceful and delicate, yet potent, visitor. One *Jerusalem Post* article stated: “Heavy snowfalls succeeded yesterday in doing what a rain of Katyusha rockets last week failed to do, closing settlements and keeping residents firmly entrenched in their homes.”

The harsh winter brought havoc to more than city dwellers. Reports came in of hundreds of cows and calves, as well as thou-

sands of chickens, that froze to death as nighttime temperatures plummeted below freezing. As if the snow were not enough, heavy, frigid rains also took their toll. One day, two young shepherd boys, apparently trying desperately to save a number of their sheep that were caught in a flash flood, were themselves swept away and drowned in the torrent.

Although this was not a typical Middle Eastern winter, the Israeli magazine *Eretz* reported: “The meteorological data that has been collected and recorded in the land of Israel for the past 130 years reveals that snow in Jerusalem is a more common phenomenon than might be expected . . . Between 1949 and 1980, the city of Jerusalem had twenty-four snowy winters.” But is this merely of meteorological and human-interest value, or does it hold particular meaning for Bible students?

What Significance for Bible Students?

When thinking of Jesus’ birth, many people conjure up in their mind’s eye the



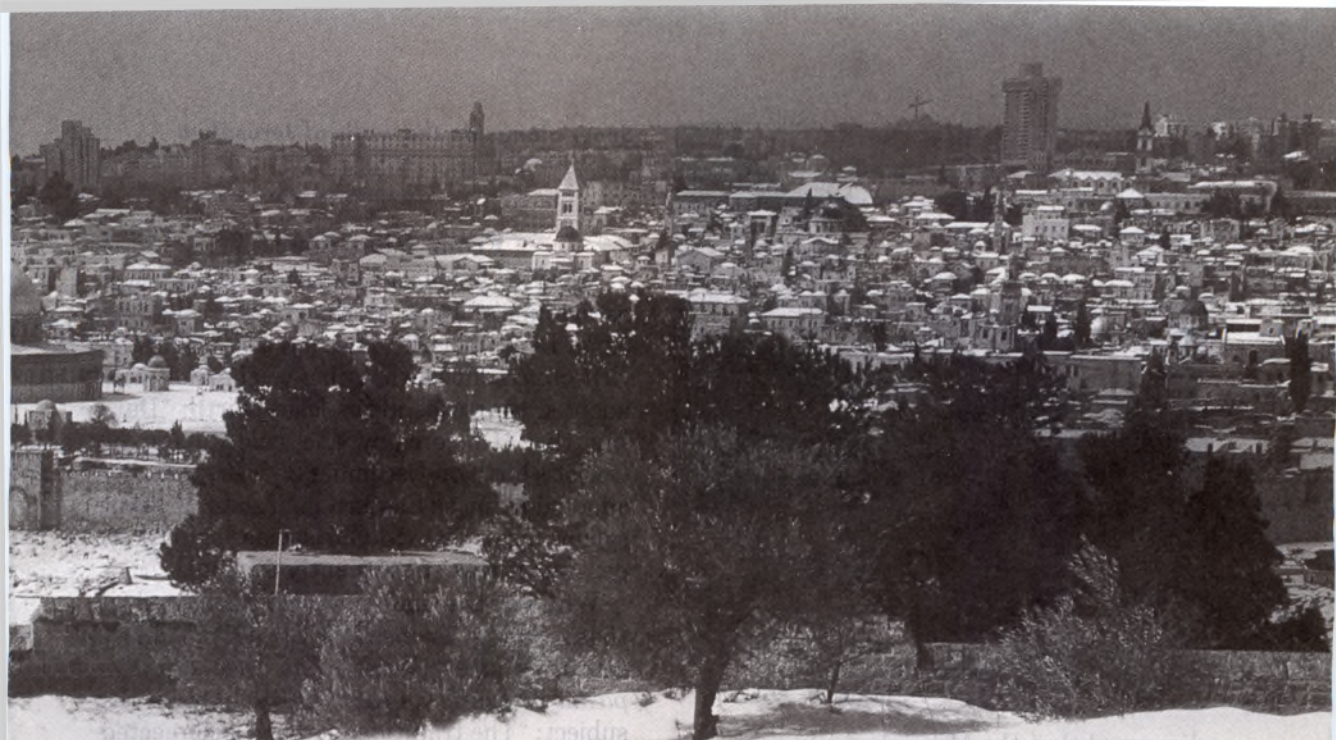
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emotionally appealing manger scene often displayed at Christmastime. There lies the baby Jesus, wrapped warmly and guarded by his mother, with snow softly blanketing the surrounding landscape. Does this popular view fit the Bible's description of this historic event?

The Bible writer Luke relates a carefully documented account of Jesus' birth: "There were also in that same country shepherds living out of doors and keeping watches in the night over their flocks. And suddenly Jehovah's angel stood by them, and Jehovah's glory gleamed around them, and they became very fearful. But the angel said to them: 'Have no fear, for, look! I am declaring to you good news of a great joy that all the people will have, because there was born to you today a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in David's city [Bethlehem]. And this is a sign for you: you will find an infant bound in cloth bands and lying in a manger.' And

suddenly there came to be with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying: 'Glory in the heights above to God, and upon earth peace among men of goodwill.'"—Luke 2:8-14.

If you were to read this account to the average Israeli today and ask him what time of year this could be, he would likely answer, "Sometime between April and October." Why? The answer is simple. From November to March is the cold, rainy season in Israel, and December 25 is certainly in the wintertime. Shepherds would not be living out-of-doors, keeping watch over their flocks in the fields at night. Considering the reports at the beginning of this article, you can well understand why. Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, is located in the higher elevations and is just a few miles from Jerusalem. Even in years when the weather is less extreme, it is quite cold there at night during the winter.—Micah 5:2; Luke 2:15.



Snow-covered Jerusalem, as seen from the east

A look into history at the time of Jesus' birth sheds light on the fact that he was not born during December's snow. Jesus' mother, Mary, although in an advanced stage of pregnancy, had to travel from her home in Nazareth to Bethlehem. She and Joseph did so to meet the requirements of the census decreed by the Roman ruler Caesar Augustus. (Luke 2:1-7) The Jewish populace, resenting the Roman rule and its heavy taxation, was already on the verge of rebellion. Why would Rome unnecessarily irritate them by requiring many to travel to be registered during the most difficult and even treacherous winter weather? Is it not far more reasonable that this would have been decreed for a season that lends itself to travel, such as spring or autumn?

Biblically Based Calculations

The historical and physical evidence disqualifies December, or any other winter

month, as fitting the accounts of Jesus' birth. Moreover, the Bible reveals through prophecy the time of year that Jesus was born. Where does it do this?

In the book of Daniel, chapter 9, we find one of the most impressive prophecies regarding the Messiah. It describes both his coming and his being cut off in death, which provided a ransom sacrifice to atone for sin and establish a basis for obedient mankind to gain "righteousness for times indefinite." (Daniel 9:24-27; compare Matthew 20:28.) According to this prophecy, all of this would be accomplished within a period of 70 weeks of years, beginning in the year 455 B.C.E., when the command went forth to rebuild Jerusalem.* (Nehemiah 2:1-11) From the time division in this prophecy, it can be

* For a fuller discussion of this prophecy, see the brochure *Will There Ever Be a World Without War?* page 26, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



Snow alongside the walls of Jerusalem

discerned that the Messiah would appear at the beginning of the 70th week of years. This occurred when Jesus presented himself for baptism in 29 C.E., officially beginning his Messianic role. "At the half of the week," or after three and a half years, the Messiah would be cut off in death, thereby bringing an end to the value of all sacrifices under the Mosaic Law covenant.—Hebrews 9:11-15; 10:1-10.

This prophecy reveals that the length of Jesus' ministry was three and a half years. Jesus died on Passover, Nisan 14 (according to the Jewish calendar), in the spring of 33 C.E. The equivalent date for that year would be April 1. (Matthew 26:2) Counting back three and a half years places his baptism in 29 C.E. at the beginning of October. Luke informs us that Jesus was about 30 years old at his baptism. (Luke 3:21-23) This would mean that Jesus' birth also was near the beginning of October. In harmony with Luke's account, the shepherds would at that time of year still be "out of doors and keeping watches in the night over their flocks." —Luke 2:8.

From What Source?

Since the evidence points to early October as the time of Jesus' birth, why is it celebrated on December 25? *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* shows that this celebration was adopted centuries after Jesus' birth: "During the 4th century the celebration of Christ's birth on December 25 was gradually adopted by most Eastern churches. In Jerusalem, opposition to Christmas lasted longer, but it was subsequently accepted."

Why was the custom so easily accepted by those calling themselves Christians many centuries after Christ? *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* sheds further light on the subject: "The traditional customs connected with Christmas have developed from several sources as a result of the coincidence of the celebration of the birth of Christ with the pagan agricultural and solar observances at midwinter. In the Roman world the Saturnalia (December 17) was a time of merry-making and exchange of gifts. December 25 was also regarded as the birth date of the Iranian mystery god Mithra, the Sun of Righteousness."

Was all of this really a "coincidence"? By no means! It is a fact of history that in the fourth century C.E., under Emperor Constantine, the Roman Empire mutated from persecutor of Christianity to sponsor of "Christianity" as an accepted religion. As more of the general populace, who lacked background in the true meaning of Christianity, adopted this new faith, they began celebrating their familiar pagan festivals with newfound "Christian" titles. What date could be more appropriate to the celebrating of the birth of Christ than December 25, which was already marked as the birthdate of "the Sun of Righteousness"?

Does It Matter?

There is little question that Jesus' first followers, who were of Jewish background, did not celebrate his birthday. According to the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, "the celebration of birthdays is unknown in traditional Jewish ritual." Early Christians certainly would not have adopted such a celebration. Rather than celebrate his birth, they would respect Jesus' command to memorialize his death, for which they had an incontestable date, namely, Nisan 14.—Luke 22:7, 15, 19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Centuries before Christ, the Jewish people, who were then God's chosen nation, were prophetically warned about the end of their coming exile in Babylon: "Turn away, turn away, get out of there, touch nothing unclean; get out from the midst of her, keep yourselves clean, you who are carrying the utensils of Jehovah." (Isaiah 52:11) They were to return to their homeland to reestablish Jehovah's pure worship. It would be unthinkable for them to adopt the unclean pagan customs and forms of worship that they had observed in Babylon.

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Not surprisingly, this same command is repeated for Christians at 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18. In place of the Jewish nation that rejected Christ, his followers became the representatives of pure worship. They had the responsibility to help others come out of spiritual darkness and into the light of truth. (1 Peter 2:9, 10) How could they possibly do this if they mixed Christ's teachings with customs and holidays of pagan origin?

As much as it might appeal to popular tastes, celebrating a "White Christmas" amounts to "touching the unclean thing." (2 Corinthians 6:17) One who truly loves God and Christ must avoid it.

Beside the fact that its origins are in pagan celebrations, we have also seen that Christmas does not represent truth, since Jesus was born in October. Yes, no matter what scene might come up in one's imagination, Jesus simply was not born in the snow.

Only in the warm season can shepherds stay with their flocks at night on the rocky hillsides, as seen below



"Seek Jehovah, All You Meek Ones"

"SEEEK Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth, who have practiced His own judicial decision. Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger."—Zephaniah 2:3.

The prophet Zephaniah addressed those words to the "meek ones of the earth," and he urged them to "seek meekness" in order to be protected in "the day of Jehovah's anger." It leaves little doubt that meekness is a prerequisite for survival. But why?

Why Seek Meekness?

Meekness is the quality of being of mild character, free from arrogance or conceit. It is closely related to other virtues, such as humility and mildness. That being so, meek persons are teachable and are willing to accept discipline from God's hand, even though it may seem grievous for the moment.—Psalm 25:9; Hebrews 12:4-11.

In itself meekness may have little to do with one's education or station in life. However, those who are highly educated or successful in a worldly way tend to feel that they are qualified to make decisions for themselves in everything, even in matters of worship. This can hinder them from allowing another person to teach them some-

thing or from accepting counsel and making necessary changes in their lives. Others who are materially rich may fall into the erroneous thinking that their security lies in their material possessions. Hence, they feel no need for the spiritual riches from God's Word, the Bible.—Matthew 4:4; 5:3; 1 Timothy 6:17.

Consider the scribes, the Pharisees, and the chief priests of Jesus' day. On one occasion when the officers they sent to arrest Jesus returned without him, the Pharisees said: "You have not been misled also, have you? Not one of the rulers or of the Pharisees has put faith in him, has he? But this crowd that does not know the Law are accursed people." (John 7:45-49) In other words, to them, only the ignorant and uneducated would be naive enough to believe in Jesus.

Even so, some Pharisees were drawn to the truth, and they even defended Jesus and the Christians. Among these were Nicodemus and Gamaliel. (John 7:50-52; Acts 5:34-40) After Jesus' death, "a great crowd of priests began to be obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7) Undoubtedly the most outstanding example was the apostle Paul. He was educated at the feet of Gamaliel and became a highly accomplished and respected advocate of Judaism. However, in time he responded humbly to Christ Jesus' call and



became his zealous follower.—Acts 22:3; 26:4, 5; Galatians 1:14-24; 1 Timothy 1:12-16.

All of this illustrates that no matter what one's background may be or how one may now feel about the message from the Bible, the words of Zephaniah still apply. If one wants to be approved by God and be guided by his Word, meekness is indispensable.

Those Who "Seek Meekness" Today

Millions of people around the world are responding to the Kingdom good news. Jehovah's Witnesses are conducting over four million Bible studies weekly in the homes of such people. These come from many and varied backgrounds and different economic and social circumstances. Yet, one thing they have in common is that they have enough humility to accept the Bible message that someone presented to them at their own doorstep or elsewhere. Many of them are making fine progress because they are willing to put forth the effort to overcome the obstacles in their way. Yes, they are among the "meek ones of the earth" today.

Take, for example, Maria in Mexico. She studied law at the university and was financially secure because of an inheritance. On account of this, she developed some very liberal concepts that turned her, as she put it, into a "rebellious, rude, overbearing, and atheistic" per-

son. "I came to think that everything could be resolved with money and that God was not important. Actually, I felt he didn't even exist," Maria recalled. "For me the church was something ridiculous and just a social requirement," she added.

Later, Maria noticed the changes in her cousin after he became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. "He had been so terrible, and now he was a very peaceful and upright person," Maria explained. "The relatives said that he was a preacher and read the Bible, and for that reason he did not drink or run

after women anymore. So I wanted him to come and read the Bible to me because I thought that this way I was going to find the peace and tranquillity I wanted so much." The result was that Maria accepted a Bible study with a Witness couple.

She had many things to overcome, and it was also very difficult for her to accept the Bible principle of headship so as to be in subjection to her husband. But she made radical changes in her life and attitude. She confessed: "I think that ever since the brothers walked through my door

and brought with them Jehovah's help, there have been happiness, tranquillity, and God's blessing dwelling in my home." Today, Maria is a dedicated, baptized Witness of Jehovah.

In the pursuit of true worship, there is another area in which meekness, or the lack



of it, plays an important role. Very often, the wife in a family accepts the truth and wants to serve God, yet the husband holds back. Perhaps it is difficult for some husbands to accept the idea that there is someone else—Jehovah God—to whom his wife must now be subject. (1 Corinthians 11:3) A woman in Chihuahua, Mexico, asked for a Bible study, and in time she and her seven children came into the truth. At first her husband was opposed. Why? Because he did not want his family to go preaching from house to house, offering Bible literature. Apparently he felt that this was beneath his dignity. His family, however, stood firm in their decision to serve God. In time the husband began to see the value of accepting God's arrangement. But 15 years went by before he dedicated himself to Jehovah.

Throughout Mexico, there are still many isolated communities where local residents have their native Indian languages and customs. The message of the Bible is reaching these people and is helping them to improve their cultural level, as some learn to read and write while they learn the truth. However, the fact that people have little education or few material resources does not necessarily mean that they will be more receptive. Racial pride and strong attachment to ancestral traditions at times make it difficult for some to accept the truth. This also explains why in some Indian villages, those who do accept the truth are often harassed by the other villagers. So meekness takes many forms.



Respond With Meekness

What about you personally? Are you responding to the truth of God's Word? Or is it difficult for you to accept some Bible truths? Perhaps you would want to examine yourself to see what is hindering you. Are you disturbed because the majority of the people drawn to the truth are of humble origin? Could personal pride be involved in your thinking? It is good to reflect on the apostle Paul's words: "God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put the wise men to shame; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put the strong things to shame; and God chose the ignoble things of the world and the things looked down upon, the things that are not, that he might bring to nothing the things that are, in order that no flesh might boast in the sight of God."—1 Corinthians 1:27-29.

Would you reject a treasure just because you found it in a humble earthen container? Of course not! Yet, that is the way God chooses to present his life-saving Word of truth to us, as the apostle Paul explains: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the power beyond what is normal may be God's and not that out of ourselves." (2 Corinthians 4:7) Meekness and humility will enable us to see the true value of the treasure and not just the "earthen vessels," or human agencies, conveying it to us. Doing so, we will also increase the probability of our being "concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger" and being among the meek who "will inherit the earth."—Zephaniah 2:3; Matthew 5:5.

TRUST IN JEHOVAH!

“Trust in Jehovah with all your heart.”—PROVERBS 3:5.

A LONGTIME missionary writes: “‘TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL THINE HEART; AND LEAN NOT UNTO THINE OWN UNDERSTANDING.’ Those words from the Bible, framed and hanging on a wall in a home I was visiting, captured my attention. For the rest of that day I pondered over them. Could I, I asked myself, trust God with *all* my heart?” This person was then 21 years of age. At 90 years of age and still serving faithfully as an elder in Perth, Australia, he can look back on a life enriched with the fruitage of wholehearted trust in Jehovah, including 26 rigorous years of pioneering new missionary fields in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Burma (now Myanmar), Malaya, Thailand, India, and Pakistan.*

² “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart”—these words of Proverbs 3:5, as rendered by the *New World Translation*, should motivate all of us to continue devoting our lives wholeheartedly to Jehovah, confident that he can strengthen our faith, even to the point of overcoming mountainlike obstacles. (Matthew 17:20) Let us now examine Proverbs 3:5 in its context.

Fatherly Instruction

³ The opening nine chapters of the Bible

* See the article “Trusting Jehovah With All My Heart,” as told by Claude S. Goodman, *The Watchtower*, December 15, 1973, pages 760-5.

1. How did Proverbs 3:5 impress a young man, and with what long-term result?
2. What confidence should Proverbs 3:5 build in us?
3. (a) What encouragement is to be found in the first nine chapters of Proverbs? (b) Why should we give close attention to Proverbs 3:1, 2?

book of Proverbs glow with fatherly instruction, wise counsel from Jehovah for all who look forward to enjoying sonship in the heavens or “the glorious freedom of the children of God” on a paradise earth. (Romans 8:18-21, 23) Here is wise counsel that may be used by parents in raising sons and daughters. Outstanding is the advice of Proverbs chapter 3, which commences with the caution: “My son, my law do not forget, and my commandments may your heart observe.” As the last days of Satan’s wicked world move toward their finale, may we pay ever closer attention to Jehovah’s reminders. The way may have seemed long, but the promise to all who endure is that “length of days and years of life and peace will be added to you”—eternal life in Jehovah’s new system.—Proverbs 3:1, 2.

⁴ A happy relationship between father and son can be most precious. Our Creator, Jehovah God, arranged for it to be that way. Christ Jesus said of his own intimate relationship with Jehovah: “The Son cannot do a single thing of his own initiative, but only what he beholds the Father doing. For whatever things that One does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father has affection for the Son and shows him all the things he himself does.” (John 5:19, 20) Jehovah purposed that a similar intimacy should exist between himself and all of his family on earth, as well as between human fathers and their children.

- 4, 5. (a) What happy relationship is described at John 5:19, 20? (b) How does the counsel at Deuteronomy 11:18-21 apply down to our day?

⁵ A trusting family relationship was encouraged in ancient Israel. Jehovah counseled fathers there: "You must apply these words of mine to your heart and your soul and bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they must serve as a frontlet band between your eyes. You must also teach them to your sons, so as to speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down and when you get up. And you must write them upon the doorposts of your house and on your gates, in order that your days and the days of your sons may be many on the soil that Jehovah swore to your forefathers to give to them, as the days of the heavens over the earth." (Deuteronomy 11:18-21) The inspired Word of our Grand Instructor, Jehovah God, can indeed serve to link him intimately with parents and their children, as well as with all others serving him in the Christian congregation.—Isaiah 30:20, 21.

⁶ Wise fatherly advice for God's people, old and young, continues in verses 3 and 4 of Proverbs chapter 3: "May loving-kindness and trueness themselves not leave you. Tie them about your throat. Write them upon the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and good insight in the eyes of God and of earthling man." Jehovah God himself excels in displaying loving-kindness and trueness. As Psalm 25:10 states, "all the paths of Jehovah are loving-kindness and trueness." In imitation of Jehovah, we should treasure these qualities and their protective power, valuing them as we would a priceless necklace and engraving them indelibly on our heart. Fervently, then, we can pray: "O Jehovah, . . . let your loving-kindness and your trueness themselves constantly safeguard me."—Psalm 40:11.

6. How may we find favor with God and man?

An Abiding Trust

⁷ Trust is defined by Webster's *Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* as "assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something." Jehovah's character is firmly anchored in his loving-kindness. And we can have complete confidence in his ability to do what he has promised, for his very name, Jehovah, identifies him as the great Purposer. (Exodus 3:14; 6:2-8) As Creator, he is the Fountain of strength and dynamic energy. (Isaiah 40:26, 29) He is the epitome of truth, for "it is impossible for God to lie." (Hebrews 6:18) Hence, we are encouraged to place implicit trust in Jehovah, our God, the great Source of all truth, who has the almighty power to protect his trusting ones and to bring all of his grand purposes to glorious success.—Psalm 91:1, 2; Isaiah 55:8-11.

⁸ In the degraded world around us, trust is sadly lacking. Instead, we find greed and corruption everywhere. The front cover of the May 1993 issue of the magazine *World Press Review* was emblazoned with the message: "THE CORRUPTION BOOM—Dirty Money in the New World Order. The corruption industry extends from Brazil to Germany, from the United States to Argentina, from Spain to Peru, from Italy to Mexico, from the Vatican to Russia." Based as it is on hatred, greed, and distrust, man's so-called new world order reaps nothing but escalating miseries for mankind.

⁹ In contrast with political nations, Jehovah's Witnesses are happy to be "the nation whose God is Jehovah." They alone can truthfully say, "In God we trust." Each one of them can cry out joyfully: "In union with

7. In what ways has Jehovah shown his trustworthiness?

8, 9. Why is trust sadly lacking in the world, and how do Jehovah's people provide a contrast?

God I shall praise his word. . . . In God I have put my trust. I shall not be afraid.”—Psalm 33:12; 56:4, 11.

¹⁰ In an Asian land where thousands of young Witnesses have suffered severe beatings and imprisonments, trust in Jehovah has enabled the great majority to endure. One night in prison, a young Witness who had undergone horrible tortures felt he could take no more. But another youth came stealthily to him through the shadows. He whispered: “Don’t give up; I compromised and have not had any peace of mind since then.” The first youth renewed his resolve to stand firm. We can have complete trust in Jehovah that he will help us overcome any and every effort by Satan to erode our integrity.—Jeremiah 7:3-7; 17:1-8; 38:6-13, 15-17.

¹¹ The first commandment reads in part: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart.” (Mark 12:30) As we meditate on God’s Word, the grand truths that we are learning sink deep down into our heart so that we are motivated to spend our all in the service of our wonderful God, the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. It is with a heart brimming with appreciation for him—for all that he has taught us, has done for us, and will yet do for us—that we are stimulated to trust implicitly in his salvation.—Isaiah 12:2.

¹² This trust can be cultivated over the years. A humble Witness of Jehovah who served faithfully for over 50 years at the Watch Tower Society’s Brooklyn headquarters, commencing in April 1927, wrote: “At the close of that month I received an allowance of \$5.00 enclosed in an envelope with

10. What has strengthened many young Christians to keep integrity?

11. How are we stimulated to trust in Jehovah?

12. Over the years, how have many Christians shown their trust in Jehovah?

a beautiful card featuring the Bible text at Proverbs 3:5, 6 . . . There was every reason to trust Jehovah, for at headquarters I soon came to appreciate that Jehovah had a ‘faithful and discreet slave’ faithfully caring for all the Kingdom interests here on the earth.—Matthew 24:45-47.”* This Christian’s heart was set, not on love of money, but on gaining “a never-failing treasure in the heavens.” Similarly at this day, the thousands that serve at the Watch Tower Society’s Bethel homes around the earth do so under a type of legal vow of poverty. They trust in Jehovah to provide their everyday needs.—Luke 12:29-31, 33, 34.

Lean Upon Jehovah

¹³ Our heavenly Father admonishes us: “Do not lean upon your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5) Worldly counselors and psychologists can never hope to approach the wisdom and understanding that Jehovah displays. “His understanding is beyond recounting.” (Psalm 147:5) Rather than lean on the wisdom of prominent men of the world or on our own uninformed emotions, let us look to Jehovah, his Word, and the elders in the Christian congregation for mature advice.—Psalm 55:22; 1 Corinthians 2:5.

¹⁴ Human wisdom or pride of station will get us nowhere in the fast-approaching day of severe trial. (Isaiah 29:14; 1 Corinthians 2:14) In Japan during World War II, a capable but proud shepherd of God’s people chose to lean upon his own understanding. Under pressure he turned apostate, and most of the flock also folded under

* See the article “Determined to Praise Jehovah,” as told by Harry Peterson, *The Watchtower*, July 15, 1968, pages 437-40.

13, 14. (a) Where only may mature advice be found? (b) What must be avoided in order to survive persecution?

persecution. A loyal Japanese sister, who courageously survived terrible treatment in filthy prison cells, commented: "Those who remained faithful had no special abilities and were inconspicuous. Surely all of us must always trust in Jehovah with all our heart."^{*}

¹⁵ Trusting in Jehovah, rather than our own understanding, involves humility. How important this quality is for all who want to please Jehovah! Why, even our God, though Sovereign Lord of all the universe, displays humility in his dealings with his intelligent creation. We can be thankful for that. "He is condescending to look on heaven and earth, raising up the lowly one from the very dust." (Psalm 113:6, 7) Out of his great mercy, he forgives us our frailties on the basis of his greatest gift to mankind, the precious ransom sacrifice of his beloved Son, Christ Jesus. How grateful we should be for this undeserved kindness!

¹⁶ Jesus himself reminds us: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12) In humility, baptized brothers should reach out for responsibilities in the Christian congregation. Yet, overseers should regard their appointment, not as a status symbol, but as the opportunity to perform a work, humbly, appreciatively, eagerly, as did Jesus, who said: "My Father has kept working until now, and I keep working." —John 5:17; 1 Peter 5:2, 3.

¹⁷ May we always humbly and prayerfully

^{*} See the article "Jehovah Does Not Forsake His Servants," as told by Matsue Ishii, *The Watchtower*, May 1, 1988, pages 21-5.

15. What godly quality is essential if we are to please Jehovah?

16. How may brothers reach out for privileges in the congregation?

17. What should all of us appreciate, leading to what activity?

appreciate that we are no more than dust in Jehovah's sight. How glad we can be, then, that "the loving-kindness of Jehovah is from time indefinite even to time indefinite toward those fearing him, and his righteousness to the sons of sons"! (Psalm 103:14, 17) All of us should therefore be keen students of God's Word. The time spent in personal and family study, and in congregation meetings, should be among our most precious hours each week. In this way we build up "knowledge of the Most Holy One." That is "what understanding is." —Proverbs 9:10.

"In All Your Ways . . ."

¹⁸ Pointing us to Jehovah, the divine Source of understanding, Proverbs 3:6 next states: "In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." Taking notice of Jehovah involves keeping close to him in prayer. Wherever we may be and no matter what situation may arise, we have immediate access to him in prayer. As we go about our daily tasks, as we prepare for field service, as we go from house to house proclaiming his Kingdom, our constant prayer can be that he will bless our activity. Thus, we can have the inestimable privilege and joy of 'walking with God,' confident that he will 'make our paths straight,' as he did for God-fearing Enoch, Noah, and faithful Israelites, such as Joshua and Daniel. —Genesis 5:22; 6:9; Deuteronomy 8:6; Joshua 22:5; Daniel 6:23; see also James 4:8, 10.

¹⁹ When we make our petitions known to Jehovah, we can be confident that 'the peace of God that excels all thought will guard our hearts and our mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.' (Philippians 4:7) This peace

18, 19. How may we apply Proverbs 3:6 in our lives, and with what result?



The joyful Kingdom message makes its appeal to people of honest heart



of God, reflected in a joyful countenance, can recommend our message to householders that we meet during our preaching work. (Colossians 4:5, 6) It can also encourage those who may be afflicted by the stresses or injustices so common in today's world, as the following account shows.*

²⁰ Max Liebster, a natural Jew who by a seeming miracle survived the Holocaust,

* See also the article "Deliverance! Proving Ourselves Grateful," as told by Max Liebster, *The Watchtower*, October 1, 1978, pages 20-4.

20, 21. (a) During the Nazi terror, how did the integrity of Jehovah's Witnesses encourage others? (b) What resolve should the voice of Jehovah awaken in us?

described his journey to a Nazi extermination camp in these words: "We were locked in carriages that were transformed into many tiny cells for two persons. Kicked into one of them, I faced a prisoner whose eyes reflected serenity. He was there because of his respect for God's law, choosing prison and possible death rather than shed the blood of other people. He was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. His children had been taken away from him, and his wife had been executed. He was expecting to share her fate. The 14-day journey brought an answer to my prayers, for it was during this very journey to death that I found the hope of everlasting life."

In Summary

- ☐ What kind of counsel is presented in Proverbs?
- ☐ How does trust in Jehovah benefit us?
- ☐ What is involved in leaning on Jehovah?
- ☐ Why should we take notice of Jehovah in all our ways?
- ☐ How does Jehovah make our paths straight?

²¹ After experiencing the Auschwitz “lions’ den,” as he termed it, and being baptized, this brother married one of Jehovah’s

Witnesses who herself had been imprisoned and whose father had suffered in the concentration camp at Dachau. While her father was there, he heard that his wife and young daughter had also been arrested. He described his reaction: “I was deeply worried. Then one day while I was queuing up for a shower, I heard a voice quoting Proverbs 3:5, 6 . . . It echoed like a voice coming down from the heavens. It was just what I needed to recover my balance.” Actually, the voice was that of another prisoner quoting this text, but the incident emphasizes what power God’s Word can exert on us. (Hebrews 4:12) May Jehovah’s voice speak powerfully to us today through the words of our 1994 yeartext: “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart”!

CULTIVATING GODLY FEAR

“Fear Jehovah and turn away from bad.”—PROVERBS 3:7.

THE Bible book of Proverbs contains a wealth of spiritual counsel. Jehovah provided this guidebook initially to instruct his typical nation of Israel. Today, it provides wise sayings for his holy Christian nation, “upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived.”—1 Corinthians 10:11; Proverbs 1:1-5; 1 Peter 2:9.

² Turning to Proverbs 3:7, we read: “Do not become wise in your own eyes. Fear Jehovah and turn away from bad.” Ever since

1. For whom was Proverbs written?
2. Why is the warning at Proverbs 3:7 most timely today?

the time of our first parents, when the Serpent enticed Eve with the promise of their “knowing good and bad,” mere human wisdom has failed to answer the needs of mankind. (Genesis 3:4, 5; 1 Corinthians 3:19, 20) At no period in history has this been more apparent than in this 20th century—these “last days” when mankind, reaping the fruits of atheistic, evolutionary thinking, is plagued by racism, violence, and every kind of immorality. (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13; 2 Peter 3:3, 4) It is a ‘new world disorder’ that neither the UN nor the fragmented religions of the world can untangle.

³ God's prophetic Word informs us that demonic forces have gone forth to "the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty . . . to the place that is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon." (Revelation 16:14, 16) Soon terror from Jehovah will envelop those kings, or rulers. It will be like the fright that fell upon the Canaanites when Joshua and the Israelites came to execute judgment on them. (Joshua 2:9-11) But today it is the one typified by Joshua, Christ Jesus—the "King of kings and Lord of lords"—who will 'strike the nations and shepherd them with a rod of iron' in expression of "the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty."—Revelation 19:15, 16.

⁴ Who will find salvation at that time? Those delivered will be, not the ones consumed by fright, but all who have cultivated a reverential fear of Jehovah. Instead of being wise in their own eyes, these "turn away from bad." In humility, they feed their minds on what is good, so that the bad is crowded out of their thinking. They cherish a wholesome respect for the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, the "Judge of all the earth," who is about to execute everyone who cleaves to badness, just as he annihilated the depraved Sodomites. (Genesis 18:25) Indeed, for God's own people, "the fear of Jehovah is a well of life, to turn away from the snares of death."—Proverbs 14:27.

⁵ In this day of divine judgment, all who devote themselves entirely to Jehovah in fear of ever displeasing him will come to realize the truth stated figuratively at Proverbs 3:8: "May [the fear of Jehovah] become a healing to your navel and a refreshment to your bones."

3. What developments were prophesied for our day?

4, 5. Who will find salvation, and why?

Honoring Jehovah

⁶ Our appreciative fear of Jehovah, together with intense love for him, should motivate us to heed Proverbs 3:9: "Honor Jehovah with your valuable things and with the firstfruits of all your produce." We are not *pressured* into honoring Jehovah with our offerings. These should be voluntary, as indicated some 12 times from Exodus 35:29 to Deuteronomy 23:23 with regard to sacrifices in ancient Israel. These firstfruits to Jehovah should be the very best gifts we can offer, in recognition of the goodness and loving-kindness that we have enjoyed at his hand. (Psalm 23:6) They should reflect our resolve to "keep on . . . seeking *first* the kingdom and his righteousness." (Matthew 6:33) And what results from honoring Jehovah with our valuable things? "Then your stores of supply will be filled with plenty; and with new wine your own press vats will overflow."—Proverbs 3:10.

⁷ Jehovah's primary way of blessing us is spiritual. (Malachi 3:10) Hence, the firstfruits that we offer to him should be primarily spiritual. We should use our time, energy, and vital force in doing his will. This in turn will nourish us, in the same way that such activity became strengthening "food" to Jesus. (John 4:34) Our spiritual stores of supply will be filled, and our joy, symbolized by new wine, will overflow. In addition, as we trustingly pray for a sufficiency of material food for each day, we can consistently contribute generously from our means in support of the worldwide Kingdom work. (Matthew 6:11) Everything that we possess, including material assets, came to us from our loving heavenly Father. He will pour out

6. What should motivate us to heed Proverbs 3:9?

7. What firstfruits should we offer to Jehovah, and what will be the outcome?

**Those who offer their
best in sacrifice to
Jehovah will be
blessed abundantly**

again speaks of the happy father-and-son relationship that exists in godly families, as well as between Jehovah and his beloved spiritual children on earth. We read: "The discipline of Jehovah, O my son, do not reject; and do not abhor his reproof, because the one whom Jehovah loves he reproves, even as a father does a son in whom he finds pleasure." People of the world detest reproof. Jehovah's people should welcome it. The apostle Paul quoted these words from Proverbs, saying: "My son, do not belittle the discipline from Jehovah, neither give out when you are corrected by him; for whom Jehovah loves he disciplines . . . True, no discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but grievous; yet afterward

further blessings, to the extent that we use these valuable things to his praise.—Proverbs 11:4; 1 Corinthians 4:7.

Reproofs of Love

⁸ In verses 11 and 12, Proverbs chapter 3
8, 9. How should we regard reproof and discipline?

to those who have been trained by it it yields peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness."—Hebrews 12:5, 6, 11.

⁹ Yes, reproof and discipline are a necessary part of the training of each one of us, whether we receive it from parents, through the Christian congregation, or as we meditate on the Scriptures during our personal

study. It is a matter of life and death for us to heed discipline, as Proverbs 4:1, 13 also states: "Listen, O sons, to the discipline of a father and pay attention, so as to know understanding. Take hold on discipline; do not let go. Safeguard it, for it itself is your life."

The Greatest Happiness

¹⁰ What beautiful expressions now follow, indeed 'delightful and correct words of truth'! (Ecclesiastes 12:10) These inspired words of Solomon describe true happiness. They are words that we should inscribe on our hearts. We read:

¹¹ "Happy is the man that has found wisdom, and the man that gets discernment, for having it as gain is better than having silver as gain and having it as produce than gold itself. It is more precious than corals, and all other delights of yours cannot be made equal to it. Length of days is in its right hand; in its left hand there are riches and glory. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its roadways are peace. It is a tree of life to those taking hold of it, and those keeping fast hold of it are to be called happy."—Proverbs 3:13-18.

¹² Wisdom—how often this is mentioned in the book of Proverbs, 46 times in all! "The fear of Jehovah is the start of wisdom." This is the godly, practical wisdom based on knowledge of God's Word that enables his people to steer a safe course through the dangerous tempests that rage in Satan's world. (Proverbs 9:10) Discernment, referred to 19 times in Proverbs, is the handmaiden of wisdom, helping us to combat Satan's devices. In perpetrating his crafty acts, the great Adversary has behind

10, 11. What are some facets of the delightful words at Proverbs 3:13-18?

12. How should wisdom and discernment benefit us?

him millenniums of experience. But we have something far more valuable than experience as a teacher—godly discernment, the ability to distinguish right from wrong and to choose the correct way to go. This is what Jehovah teaches us through his Word.—Proverbs 2:10-13; Ephesians 6:11.

¹³ The economic chaos in today's world is a harbinger of the fulfillment of the prophecy at Ezekiel 7:19: "Into the streets they will throw their very silver, and an abhorrent thing their own gold will become. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them in the day of Jehovah's fury." All the material wealth on earth does not begin to compare with the saving power of wisdom and discernment. Wise King Solomon stated on another occasion: "Wisdom is for a protection the same as money is for a protection; but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom itself preserves alive its owners." (Ecclesiastes 7:12) Happy indeed are all who today walk in Jehovah's ways of pleasantness and who in wisdom choose the "length of days," the everlasting life that is God's gift to everyone exercising faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice!—Proverbs 3:16; John 3:16; 17:3.

Cultivating True Wisdom

¹⁴ It is appropriate that we humans, who are created in the image of God, strive to cultivate wisdom and discernment, qualities that Jehovah himself displayed in performing his marvelous works of creation. "Jehovah himself in wisdom founded the earth. He solidly fixed the heavens in discernment." (Proverbs 3:19, 20) He proceeded to make living creatures, not by some mystical, inexplicable process of evolution,

13. What can protect us during hard economic times, and how?

14. In what ways has Jehovah displayed exemplary wisdom?

but by direct acts of creation, each “according to its kind” and for a wise purpose. (Genesis 1:25) When finally man was brought forth with intelligence and abilities far superior to those of the animals, the applause of the angelic sons of God must have echoed and reechoed through the heavens. (Compare Job 38:1, 4, 7.) Jehovah’s discerning foresight, his wisdom, and his love are clearly seen in all of his productions on earth.—Psalm 104:24.

¹⁵ We need not only to cultivate Jehovah’s qualities of wisdom and discernment but also to hold fast to them, never slacking off in our study of his Word. He admonishes us: “My son, may they not get away from your eyes. Safeguard practical wisdom and thinking ability, and they will prove to be life to your soul and charm to your throat.” (Proverbs 3:21, 22) Thus we can walk in security and in peace of mind, even during the thieflike approach of the day of “sudden destruction” that will break forth upon Satan’s world. (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3) During the great tribulation itself, “you will not need to be afraid of any sudden dreadful thing, nor of the storm upon the wicked ones, because it is coming. For Jehovah himself will prove to be, in effect, your confidence, and he will certainly keep your foot against capture.”—Proverbs 3:23-26.

Love for Doing Good

¹⁶ These are days for showing zeal in preaching this good news of the Kingdom for a witness to all the nations. But this witness work must be backed up by other Christian activity, as described at Proverbs 3:27, 28: “Do not hold back good from those

15. (a) Why is it not sufficient simply to cultivate wisdom? (b) What confidence should Proverbs 3:25, 26 awaken in us?

16. What action is required of Christians in addition to zeal in the ministry?

to whom it is owing, when it happens to be in the power of your hand to do it. Do not say to your fellowman: ‘Go, and come back and tomorrow I shall give,’ when there is something with you.” (Compare James 2:14-17.) With much of the world in the grip of poverty and famine, there have been urgent calls for us to help our fellowman, especially our spiritual brothers. How have Jehovah’s Witnesses responded?

¹⁷ Take one example: During the past year, an urgent call for help came from the former Yugoslavia. The brotherhood in neighboring countries responded marvelously. During the frigid months of last winter, it was possible for several relief convoys to penetrate the war area, transporting current publications, warm clothing, food, and medicines to needy Witnesses. On one occasion, the brothers applied to take in 15 tons of relief supplies, but when they received the permit, it was for 30 tons! Jehovah’s Witnesses in Austria quickly dispatched three more trucks. In all, 25 tons reached their intended destination. How delighted our brothers were to receive these bounteous spiritual and material provisions!

¹⁸ How did those recipients respond? Earlier this year, an elder wrote: “The brothers and sisters in Sarajevo are alive and well, and what is most important, we are still *spiritually strong* to endure this crazy war. The situation was very difficult concerning food. May Jehovah bless and reward you for the efforts you have made for us. The authorities have special respect for Jehovah’s Witnesses because of their exemplary way of life and because of their respect of the

17-19. (a) What urgent need was met during 1993, and with what response? (b) What demonstrates that our beleaguered brothers are “coming off completely victorious”?

authorities. We are also grateful for the spiritual food you delivered to us.”—Compare Psalm 145:18.

¹⁹ These endangered brothers have shown appreciation, too, by their zealous field ministry. Many neighbors come to them requesting home Bible studies. In the city of Tuzla, where five tons of relief food was delivered, 40 publishers reported 25 hours each in service on the average for the month, in fine support of the nine pioneers in the congregation. They had a remarkable attendance of 243 at the Memorial of Jesus’ death. These dear brothers are indeed “coming off completely victorious through him that loved us.”—Romans 8:37.

²⁰ The generosity manifested in the large convoys of relief food and warm clothing shipped into the former Soviet Union has also been matched by the zeal of the brothers there. For example, in Moscow the Memorial attendance this year was 7,549, compared with 3,500 last year. During the same period, congregations in that city increased from 12 to 16. In the entire former Soviet Union (omitting the Baltic States), the increase in congregations was 14 percent, in Kingdom publishers 25 percent, and in pioneers 74 percent. What a spirit of zeal and self-sacrifice! It reminds one of the first century when there was “an equalizing.” The Christians that had spiritual and material assets made generous gifts to those in less favored places, while the zeal of these afflicted ones brought joy and encouragement to the donors.—2 Corinthians 8:14.

Hate the Bad!

²¹ The third chapter of Proverbs next pre-

20. What “equalizing” has taken place in the former Soviet Union?

21. How are the wise ones and the stupid ones contrasted in the closing words of Proverbs chapter 3?

sents a series of contrasts, closing out with this admonition: “Do not become envious of the man of violence, nor choose any of his ways. For the devious person is a detestable thing to Jehovah, but His intimacy is with the upright ones. The curse of Jehovah is on the house of the wicked one, but the abiding place of the righteous ones he blesses. If it has to do with ridiculers, he himself will deride; but to the meek ones he will show favor. Honor is what the wise ones will come to possess, but the stupid ones are exalting dishonor.”—Proverbs 3:29-35.

²² How may we avoid being numbered among the stupid ones? We must learn to hate the bad, yes, *detest* what Jehovah detests—all the devious ways of this violent, bloodguilty world. (See also Proverbs 6: 16-19.) In contrast, we must cultivate what is good—uprightness, righteousness, and meekness—so that in humility and the fear of Jehovah we may attain to “riches and glory and life.” (Proverbs 22:4) This will be the reward to all of us who loyally apply the admonition: “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart.”

22. (a) How may we avoid the fate of the stupid ones? (b) What do the wise ones hate, and what do they cultivate, with what reward?

What Is Your Comment?

- ☐ How does the theme text of this study apply today?
- ☐ How may we honor Jehovah?
- ☐ Why should we not belittle discipline?
- ☐ Where is the greatest happiness to be found?
- ☐ How may we love the good and hate the bad?

RAHAB

Declared Righteous by Works of Faith

JUST imagine! A harlot declared righteous from God's standpoint. "Never!" many would exclaim. Yet, that is what happened to the prostitute Rahab of Jericho, an ancient Canaanite city.

The Bible writer James records: "A man is to be declared righteous by works, and not by faith alone. In the same manner was not also Rahab the harlot declared righteous by works, after she had received the messengers hospitably and sent them out by another way? Indeed, as the body without spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (James 2:24-26) Why was Rahab declared righteous? What did she do to be granted such a privileged standing with God?

The Israelites Are Coming!

Let us return to the year 1473 B.C.E. Visualize the setting. Jericho is heavily fortified. Perched atop the city's walls is the house of Rahab the harlot. From this vantage point, she can likely look eastward toward the overflowing waters of the river Jordan. (Joshua 3:15) On its eastern bank, she might observe the encampment of the Israelites, with a fighting force of over 600,000. They are only a few miles away!

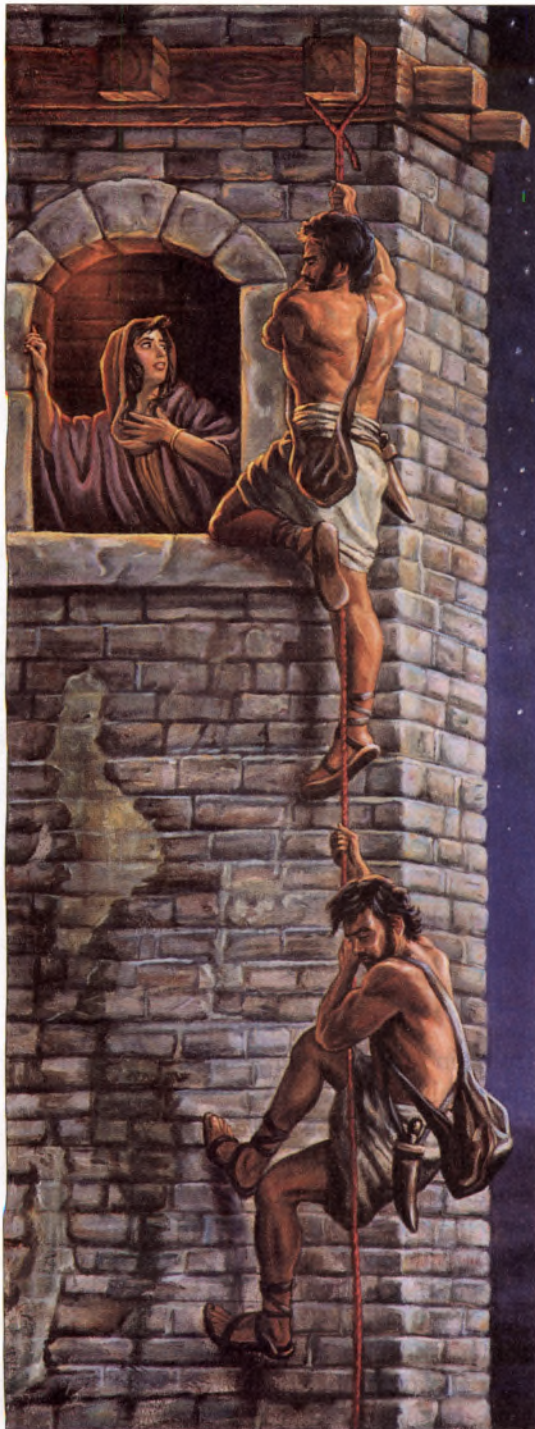
Rahab has learned about Israel's exploits in battle. She has also heard about displays of Jehovah's power, particularly in opening an escape corridor for the Israelites through the Red Sea. Surely, then, the swollen waters of the Jordan will be no barrier. This is a time of crisis! How will Rahab react?

Rahab Takes Her Stand

Soon, Rahab receives two unexpected visitors—spies from the Israelite encampment. They seek a lodging place, and she admits them to her home. But word of their presence reaches the ears of the king of Jericho. He promptly dispatches his minions of law enforcement to take them into custody. —Joshua 2:1, 2.

By the time the king's officers arrive, Rahab has taken her stand for Jehovah God. "Bring out the men that came to you," demand the royal emissaries. Rahab has concealed the spies among stalks of flax laid to dry on her roof. She says: "Yes, the men did come to me, and I did not know from where they were. And it came about at the closing of the [city] gate by dark that the men went out. I just do not know where the men have gone. Chase after them quickly, for you will overtake them." (Joshua 2:3-5) That the king's men do—in vain.

Rahab has thrown the enemies off the trail. She immediately takes further steps that display her faith in Jehovah by works. Up to the roof she goes and tells the spies: "I do know that Jehovah will certainly give you the land." Rahab admits that all the land's inhabitants are fearful because they have heard that God "dried up the waters of the Red Sea" from before the Israelites 40 years earlier. The people also know that the Israelites devoted two Amorite kings to destruction. "When we got to hear it," says Rahab, "then our hearts began to melt, and no spirit has arisen yet in anybody because



Rahab was declared righteous because her works proved that she had faith

of you, for Jehovah your God is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.” —Joshua 2:8-11.

Rahab pleads: “Now, please, swear to me by Jehovah that, because I have exercised loving-kindness toward you, you also will certainly exercise loving-kindness toward the household of my father, and you must give me a trustworthy sign. And you must preserve alive my father and my mother and my brothers and my sisters and all who belong to them.” —Joshua 2:12, 13.

The men agree and tell Rahab what to do. From her window, she must hang the scarlet cord used to lower the spies to the ground outside the walls of Jericho. She must gather her family into her home, where they must remain for protection. Rahab gives the departing spies helpful information about the lay of the land and tells them how to elude their pursuers. This the spies do. After displaying the scarlet cord and gathering members of her household, Rahab awaits further developments. —Joshua 2:14-24.

What has Rahab done? Why, she has proved that her faith rests in Almighty God, Jehovah! She will live by his standards. Yes, and she will be declared righteous for such works of faith.

Down Come the Walls!

A few weeks pass. Accompanied by priests —some with rams’ horns and others bearing the sacred ark of the covenant—Israelite men of war are encircling Jericho. They have been doing this once each day for six days now. On this seventh day, however, they have already marched around the city six times. There they go again!



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

Archaeologists have uncovered remains of ancient Jericho, including a small section of an early wall

The seventh march completed, long blasts from the horns fill the air. The Israelites now shout mightily. At that, Jehovah causes Jericho's protective walls to collapse in thunderous rumblings. Only the section supporting Rahab's house remains standing. The rest of the city and its residents are destroyed. Her faith proved by works, the repentant prostitute is preserved along with her household, and she begins to dwell among Jehovah's people.—Joshua 6: 1-25.

A Look at Rahab's Traits

Rahab was no pampered idler, for on her roof were stalks of flax being dried in the sun. Fibers of flax would be used to make linen. There was also a stock of crimson

thread in Rahab's house. (Joshua 2:6, 18) So she may have engaged in producing linen and possibly knew the art of dyeing. Yes, Rahab was an industrious woman. Above all, she had come to have a reverential fear of Jehovah.—Compare Proverbs 31: 13, 19, 21, 22, 30.

What about Rahab's other profession? She was not just the hostess of an inn. No, the Scriptures identify her by using Hebrew and Greek words denoting a prostitute. For example, the Hebrew word *zoh-nah'* always has to do with an illicit relationship. Incidentally, among the Canaanites harlotry was not a business of ill repute.

Jehovah's use of a harlot demonstrates his great mercy. Outward appearances can deceive us, but God "sees what the heart is." (1 Samuel 16:7) Hence, righthearted prostitutes who repent of their harlotry can receive Jehovah God's forgiveness. (Compare Matthew 21:23, 31, 32.) Rahab herself turned

from sin to a righteous course having divine approval.

The Israelite spies lived by God's Law, so they did not lodge at Rahab's house for immoral reasons. Their reason may have been that it was less likely that suspicion would be aroused by their presence in a harlot's house. Its position on the city wall would also facilitate escape. Jehovah evidently guided them to a sinner whose heart had been so favorably affected by reports of divine dealings with the Israelites that she



repented and changed her ways. God's statement that Israel was to drive out the Canaanites because of their immoral practices, and his blessing on Rahab and on the conquest of Jericho, make it evident that the spies did not commit immorality.—Leviticus 18:24-30.

What about Rahab's misleading words to pursuers of the spies? God approved of her course. (Compare Romans 14:4.) She took a risk in order to protect his servants, giving evidence of her faith. While malicious lying is wrong in Jehovah's eyes, a person is not obligated to divulge truthful information to people who are not entitled to it. Even Jesus Christ did not give full details or direct answers when doing so could have brought unnecessary harm. (Matthew 7:6; 15:1-6; 21:23-27; John 7:3-10) Evidently, Rahab's course of misdirecting the enemy officers must be viewed in that light.

Rahab's Reward

How was Rahab rewarded for exercising faith? Her preservation during Jericho's destruction surely was a blessing from Jeho-

vah. Later, she married Salmon (Salma), the son of the wilderness chieftain Nahshon of the tribe of Judah. As parents of the godly Boaz, Salmon and Rahab formed a link in the line of descent that led to King David of Israel. (1 Chronicles 2:3-15; Ruth 4:20-22) More significantly, the former prostitute Rahab is one of only four women named in Matthew's genealogy of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 1:5, 6) What a blessing from Jehovah!

Though not an Israelite and once a prostitute, Rahab is an outstanding example of a woman who proved by her works that she had full faith in Jehovah. (Hebrews 11:30, 31) Like others, some of whom have abandoned a life of prostitution, she will receive yet another reward—a resurrection from the dead to life on a paradise earth. (Luke 23:43) Because of her faith backed by works, Rahab gained the approval of our loving and forgiving heavenly Father. (Psalm 130:3, 4) And surely her fine example provides encouragement for all lovers of righteousness to look to Jehovah God for life everlasting.

Keeping Our Eye “Simple” in Kingdom Work

THE German Democratic Republic (G.D.R.), or what was known as East Germany, barely reached middle age. Forty-one years of existence ended on October 3, 1990, when its territory, roughly the size of Liberia or the state of Tennessee in the United States, was integrated into the Federal Republic of Germany, which had been called West Germany.

Reunification of the two Germanys has meant an immense package of reforms. What had separated the two countries was, not just a physical border, but a frontier of ideologies. What did all of this mean for the people there, and how has life changed for Jehovah's Witnesses?

The *Wende*, the revolution in November 1989 that made reunification possible, came



Witnesses in Germany are using their freedom to get more and more involved in Kingdom activity



hard on the heels of four decades of rigid socialism. During that period, the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses were banned, and the persecution of them was at times intense.* When freedom came to the G.D.R., euphoria swept through the population. But as the elation waned, many became disoriented, disappointed, even disillusioned. The task of integrating the two Germanys into one social, political, and economic entity is proving to be formidable.

* See "Jehovah Cared for Us Under Ban," Parts 1-3, in *The Watchtower* issues of April 15, May 1, and May 15, 1992.

According to the special report "162 Tage Deutsche Geschichte" (162 Days of German History) in *Der Spiegel*, following reunification there was widespread fear of unemployment, inflation, and increasing rents. "Will I have enough pension?" asked many in the former G.D.R. What about housing? "All over the G.D.R., old buildings are falling into decay, whole streets becoming uninhabitable." Pollution reached horrific levels.

Faced with such social and economic turmoil, how have Jehovah's Witnesses in the former G.D.R. managed?

Keeping the Eye Properly Focused

Jehovah's Witnesses have no ideological frontiers. Their Bible-based faith is the same, whether in East or West. With their social environment in transition, most Witnesses maintain spiritual balance by keeping their eyes riveted on the prime goal of serving Jehovah. Why is this imperative?

Because "the scene of this world is changing." (1 Corinthians 7:31) One Christian elder remarks that preaching under ban prior to the *Wende* required courage; it taught the Witnesses to rely on Jehovah and trained them in handling the Bible. Now, however, "we have to be more careful not to be side-tracked by materialism and the anxieties of life."

Freedom and progress are often measured in material terms. Many people in this region feel a need to make up for lost time or maybe lost pleasures. This becomes clear when one is driving along the cobblestone roads in the towns and villages of Thuringia and Saxony in the south. The roads may be in need of repair, the dwellings modest, but what a plethora there is of television satellite dishes! It is easy for a person to be duped into believing that security and happiness result from having everything the eye sees. What a dangerous trap that is!

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke about the dangers of paying undue attention to material things and to the anxieties of life. "Stop storing up for yourselves treasures upon the earth," he cautioned. He added: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If, then, your eye is simple, your whole body will be bright." (Matthew 6:19, 22) What did he mean? A simple eye is one that is in focus and that transmits clear images to the mind. A spiritual eye that is simple keeps the image of God's Kingdom clear. So a

Christian's resolve to keep his eye simple, clearly focused on the Kingdom of God, and to relegate anxieties to the background helps to keep him spiritually balanced.

This can be illustrated by the experience of a couple from Zwickau, Saxony, who showed interest in the Bible at the time of the *Wende*. Their business was very time-consuming, yet they put spiritual interests first, attending all Christian meetings. "From the point of view of our business, we cannot afford the time," they admitted, "but spiritually we need it." What a wise decision!

Consider, too, a family in Plauen, also in Saxony. The husband was a watchmaker, a master craftsman with his own business. Following the *Wende*, the rent for his premises increased sharply. What should he do? "It would cost a lot of money, and I learned the truth to live for the truth." So he moved into premises less well-situated but with a lower rent. Yes, the watchmaker learned very quickly about keeping his eye simple.

A few, though, learned too late. One Christian elder, reasoning that the newly introduced free-market economy was full of promise, went into business. A traveling overseer kindly urged him not to let business commitments crowd out spirituality. Yet, sadly, that is what happened. Some months later the brother resigned as an elder. He later wrote: "Based on my own experience, I would advise any brother who is reaching out for service privileges not to go into business on his own." This does not mean that being self-employed is wrong for a Christian. But whether we have our own business or not, paying too much attention to economic anxieties can make us involuntary slaves of wealth. Jesus showed the outcome: "No one can slave for two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will stick to the one and despise the

other.” (Matthew 6:24) The German poet Goethe stated: “None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.”

Being caught in a literal storm may require us to squint or cup our hands around our eyes to keep our goal in sight. When surrounded by political, economic, or social turmoil, concentration is necessary to keep our spiritual goal in view. What are some Christians doing to keep their eye simple in Kingdom work?

Increased Kingdom Activity

All over the former G.D.R., Witnesses are devoting more time to preaching than ever before. In the last two years, the average time spent in field service rose by 21 percent. The result is a dramatic 34-percent increase in home Bible studies. Furthermore, the number of regular pioneers is currently four times as high as it was just two years ago! While others worry and complain, more than 23,000 Christians in what was hitherto the G.D.R. are coping with the situation by keeping their eye simple. This has contributed to the astonishing increase in Kingdom activity. —Compare Joshua 6:15.

The expanded activity means that the territory is being well cared for in the south, where the majority of Witnesses live. Many of the place-names have a historic ring. If you are fond of fine china, you will recognize the town of Meissen, near Dresden, as the origin of some of the world’s most delicate porcelain. Meissen is now the home of some 130 Kingdom publishers. Or consider Weimar, “the classical capital of Germany.” The Goethe-Schiller Memorial in the town center testifies to Weimar’s dignified connections with those two writers and is a source of pride for many there. Today Wei-

mar can be proud of its over 150 publishers of the good news.

In the north, however, things are very different, with fewer publishers and greater distances between congregations. Particularly are jobs scarce. Many who have work are under pressure to stay overtime so as to keep their job. One brother serving as a full-time preacher in the north explains: “Under ban each brother needed Jehovah’s protection in field service, but finding a job was not difficult. Now it’s the other way around. We have freedom to preach, but we need his guidance with regard to employment. Such a change takes quite some getting used to.”

Are the publishers pleased to be able to preach more often? Wolfgang’s view is: “It is far better for the same publisher to work the same territory over and over again. People grow to trust him and are more open.” Apart from that, householders are “no longer embarrassed to talk about religion at the door, even when passersby are within hearing distance. Religion is not a taboo subject anymore.” Ralf and Martina agree. “We enjoy working our territory more frequently. We can get to know people personally and are also thrilled about the wide variety of literature available.”

Appreciation for Our Literature

Ralf and Martina especially appreciate the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* For the many who embraced atheism in the former G.D.R., this book is proving to be a wonderful Bible study aid. They also wished for a shorter publication containing similar material. “How excited we were at the release of the brochure *Does God Really Care About Us?* at the 1992 ‘Light Bearers’ District Convention in Dresden. It was an answer to our prayers.”

Many non-Witnesses have come to admire the Watch Tower publications. In July 1992 a lecturer in social education wrote to express her "highest respect and warmest thanks" for the publications, which she uses to prepare lectures. In January 1992 a lady in Rostock accepted a copy of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* from two Witnesses who came to her door. She wrote to the Germany branch office: "I belong to the Lutheran Church. I have the highest regard for the activities of the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. They state resolutely that man can no longer exist without God's guidance."

How much spiritual guidance have Christendom's churches given their members? The prestigious newspaper *Die Zeit* commented in December 1991 that whereas the Lutheran Church had "basked in glory for a short time as mother of the peaceful revolution, its public rating seems to be sinking rapidly." Indeed, a representative of the Lutheran Church lamented: "People confused life in the free-market system with paradise." A church member in Magdeburg wrote requesting information. Why? "After years of smiling in disbelief," wrote the gentleman, "I am now firmly convinced that this world is at its relative end and that we shall encounter great troubles in the near future."—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Building for Expansion

Prior to the *Wende*, Kingdom Halls were not allowed in the G.D.R. Now they are urgently needed; building them is being given priority. This is another aspect of true worship that has undergone remarkable transition. The experience of one brother illustrates just how rapid this change has been.

In March 1990, just hours after Jehovah's Witnesses received legal recognition in the

G.D.R., a brother was invited to address a group of Witnesses, using a microphone for the first time in his life. Two and a half years later, the congregation he associates with dedicated a brand-new Kingdom Hall. By the end of 1992, seven Kingdom Halls had been constructed for 16 congregations. Over 30 others, as well as an attractive Assembly Hall, are in the planning stage.

Eye Fixed on God's Kingdom

"Shortly after the *Wende*," remarks a Christian elder, "many people rejected the Bible. They placed their hope in the new government, which held out a promise of better conditions at last." Was their hope fulfilled? "Within two years they changed their minds. People now agree with us that human governments can never bring about peace and righteousness."

Multitudes rejoiced at the eclipse of rigid socialism in the G.D.R., heralding what they considered to be a golden dawn of Western ideology. But they were disappointed. Regardless of what government is in power, Jehovah's Witnesses keep their eye simple and firmly fixed on God's Kingdom, which shines like a star in the heavens. Such hope will never lead to disappointment.—Romans 5:5.

In Our Next Issue

When East Meets West

Take Refuge in Jehovah

The Watchtower and Awake!
—Timely Journals of Truth

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Have you appreciated reading the recent issues of *The Watchtower*? Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

□ **What practical help can be given to the sick and the elderly within a congregation today?**

In the early Christian congregation, a list was kept of widows in need of material support. (1 Timothy 5: 9, 10) Likewise today, the elders might make up a list of sick and elderly ones needing special attention. However, it should not be left to the elders alone to take the initiative in this area. All in the congregation must be aware of such needs. (1 Timothy 5:4-8)—8/15, pages 28-9.

□ **Is the Bible story of Jonah being swallowed by a marine animal unbelievable?**

No, either a sperm whale, a great white shark, or a whale shark can swallow a man. Further, Jesus himself confirmed that the account of Jonah is true. (Matthew 12:39, 40)—8/15, page 32.

□ **What harm results from the superstitious use of amulets and charms?**

Their use actually discourages people from intelligently facing up to their problems and encourages them to look to luck as a cure-all. They also give the user a false sense of security. More important, a person who puts faith in the power of magical amulets and good-luck charms may surrender the control of his life to unseen demonic forces.—9/1, page 4.

□ **What are four elements that can help make a marriage last?**

These are the willingness to *listen*, the ability to *apologize*, the capacity to provide consistent emotional support, and the desire to *touch affectionately*. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Ephesians 5:33; James 1:19)—9/1, page 20.

□ **What is one way in which Jehovah supplies endurance to those who encounter trials?**

Jehovah does this through the examples of endurance recorded in his Word, the Bible. (Romans 15:4) As we contemplate these, we are encouraged to endure, and we also learn much about how to endure.—9/15, pages 11-12.

□ **What is godly devotion?**

Godly devotion refers to devotion to Jehovah that moves us to do what is pleasing to him, even in the face of difficult trials, because we love God from the heart.—9/15, page 15.

□ **How should we view God's mercy?**

We should never treat lightly God's great mercy. We ought to be like Paul and show our appreciation by struggling against our own imperfections. (1 Corinthians 9:27) In this way we will demonstrate, even in the face of difficulties, that we have a genuine desire to do what is right.—10/1, page 23.

□ **Why is it appropriate that Paul listed long-suffering as the first aspect of love?**

It has been said that there can be no such thing as Christian fellowship without long-suffering, or without patiently putting up with one another. This is because all of us are imperfect, and our imperfections and shortcomings try others. Therefore, long-suffering is fundamental if love is to exist between brothers.—10/15, page 21.

□ **Did the first Christians use God's name?**

The evidence says yes. Jesus taught his followers to pray to God: "Let your name be sanctified." (Matthew 6:9) And at the end of his ministry, he prayed: "I have made your name manifest to the men you gave me out of the world." (John 17:6) Besides, early copies of the *Septuagint* contained God's name in the form of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton.—11/1, page 30.

□ **What Bible examples show that the way we handle our mistakes can affect our lives?**

King Saul stubbornly resisted counsel, and his mistakes multiplied, eventually culminating in his death in God's disfavor. (1 Samuel 15:17-29) On the other hand, despite his mistakes and sins, King David repentantly accepted correction and remained faithful to Jehovah. These Bible examples show that admitting our mistakes helps us to maintain a good relationship with God and therefore to have the prospect of everlasting life. (Psalm 32:1-5)—11/15, pages 29-30.

□ **How does Jehovah come to the aid of his people when they are in distress because of natural disasters or other causes?**

Jehovah helps, not by miraculously reversing the forces of nature or by some other supernatural act, but by another force that most people do not truly comprehend—love. Yes, Jehovah truly loves his people, and he has nurtured among them a love for one another that is so strong that he is able to accomplish for them what appears to be miraculous. (1 John 4:10-12, 21)—12/1, page 10.

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My Anger or My Health?

WHO does not get angry? It happens to all of us. At times a degree of anger may be justified. But, honestly, is it not true that often our anger (or its intensity) is unjustified?

The Bible tells us: "Let anger alone and leave rage; do not show yourself heated up only to do evil." (Psalm 37:8) How wise is such counsel? Could it affect your long-term health?

In its "Health" section, *The New York Times* noted:

"People who often explode in hostile rages or who sit around fuming over every perceived slight may be doing more than making themselves unpleasant. They may be killing themselves.

"Researchers have gathered a wealth of data lately suggesting that chronic anger is so damaging to the body that it ranks with, or even exceeds, cigarette smoking, obesity and a high-fat diet as a powerful risk factor for early death.

"Our studies indicate that hostile, suspicious anger is right up there with any other health hazard we know about," said Dr. Redford Williams, a researcher in behavioral medicine at the Duke University Medical Center."

Studies indicate that those overreacting to common bumps on the road of life produce more stress hormones. Their frequent outbursts can cause an imbalance between the protective and the harmful forms of cholesterol, putting them at risk of cardiovascular disease.

Some may respond, 'But that's just the way I am' or, 'That's how I grew up.' Nonetheless, that does not mean you cannot change, by sincerely trying to apply God's counsel. In your own Bible, check his counsel about anger and rage recorded at Proverbs 14:29, 30; 22:24, 25; Ephesians 4:26; James 1:19, 20.

Applying that divine wisdom may improve your health and extend your life. The *Times* noted: "Many researchers said anger-prone people could reduce the risk of early mortality by changing knee-jerk, hostile responses."

