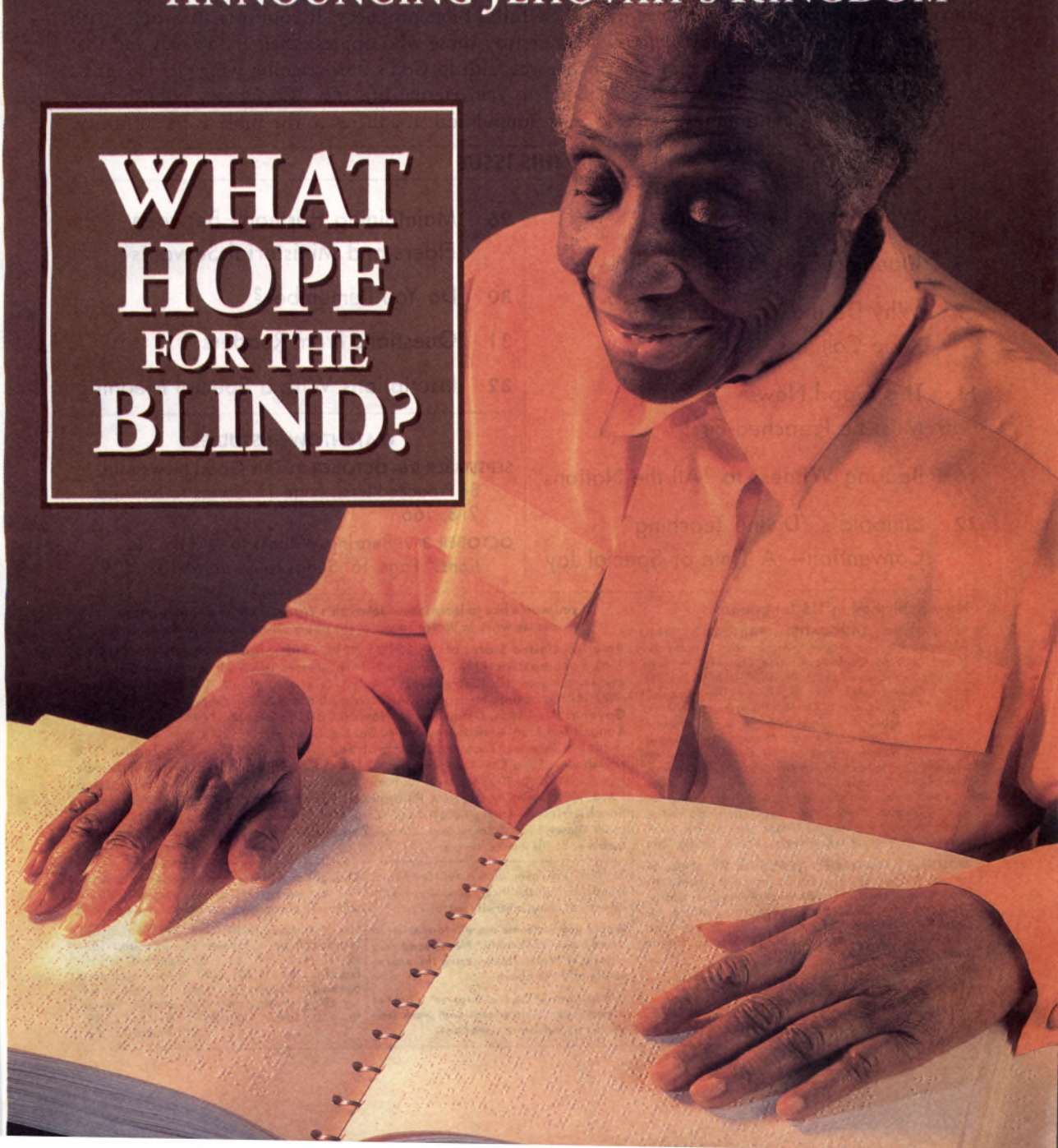


AUGUST 15, 1994

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**WHAT
HOPE
FOR THE
BLIND?**



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

August 15, 1994

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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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JOHN MILTON composed his epic works *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* even though completely blind. Being both blind and deaf did not halt Helen Keller in her work with those having physical deficiencies. Yes, many blind people cope well. But

how wonderful it would be if everyone could enjoy good eyesight! You may especially agree if you have a loved one or a friend who is blind or has impaired vision.

True, in some lands rehabilitation programs teach visually impaired people the skills of daily living. Braille and trained guide dogs help the blind to care for many of their needs. Nevertheless, many people view blindness as the most dreaded disability. One writer asserted: "To be blind is to lose access to the most significant part of our perceptual world." At the same time, many have

WHAT HOPE FOR THE BLIND?

to depend increasingly on others.

Why, you may wonder, is blindness so prevalent? Well, have you heard of trachoma? It is responsible for about nine million cases of blindness. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* says about it: "The disease is contagious and thrives where populations are crowded together in poor hygienic surroundings. Shortage of water for washing, and the myriads of flies attracted to human waste, aid the dissemination of the disease. In some ways trachoma is more of a social than a medical problem; if living standards can be improved, overcrowding reduced, flies discouraged, and adequate water supplies ensured, the incidence of trachoma decreases rapidly." Another million or so suffer from onchocerciasis, or river blindness. Or what about xerophthalmia? Though the name is difficult, the fact is that it is a common cause of blindness. Diabetes,

diphtheria, measles, scarlet fever, and sexually transmitted diseases may also lead to blindness.

As we get older, our vision may decline as a result of such disorders as macular degeneration and glaucoma, and we cannot omit cataracts. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* notes: "Cataract is still high on the list of causes of blindness in many countries in the world, and this is all the more tragic in that it is so easily curable by surgical means."

Despite new discoveries in ophthalmology, the eradication of blindness seems far

"Until the nutritional and hygienic standards of a large part of the world population can be improved, preventable blindness will remain at its present high level."

—The New Encyclopædia Britannica

away. The same encyclopedia says: "Advances in the prevention and the medical and surgical treatment of blindness can only be of benefit to a population that has access to medical care. Until the nutritional and hygienic standards of a large part of the world population can be improved, preventable blindness will remain at its present high level."

While antibiotics and surgery certainly have their place in the fight against blindness, the hope of permanent cure has to do with something that happened nearly two thousand years ago.

Curing the Blind in Jesus' Day

Visualize a man in his early 30's walking along a dusty road. Hearing that he is passing by, two blind men at the roadside cry out: "Have mercy on us!" Although onlookers order them to keep quiet, the blind ones cry out loudly: "Have mercy on us!" The man kindly asks: "What do you want me to do for you?" Eagerly they answer: "Let our eyes be opened." Now imagine: The man touches their eyes, and immediately they receive sight!—Matthew 20:29-34.

What a joy for these formerly blind men! Yet, blindness is so common. This was just one incident. Why should it merit your attention? Because it was Jesus of Nazareth who granted those blind men the favor of seeing. In fact, besides being 'anointed to declare good news to the poor,' Jesus was 'sent forth to grant a recovery of sight to the blind.'—Luke 4:18.

People were astonished by such miraculous cures performed by means of God's powerful holy spirit. We read: "The crowd felt amazement as they saw the dumb speaking and the lame walking and the blind seeing, and they glorified the God of Israel." (Matthew 15:31) Without any cost or the making of a personal display or seeking his own glory in such healings, Jesus highlighted Jehovah God's love and mercy. However, Jesus had compassion also for the spiritually blind and helpless people who were "skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd."—Matthew 9:36.

Interesting as such history might be, you may wonder, What about today? Since today no one cures people as Jesus did, do those healings have a meaning for us? Is there any hope for the blind? Please read the following article.

“THE sky is not less blue because the blind man does not see it,” says a Danish proverb. But in our busy day-to-day lives, do we see that the sky is blue, as it were? Do we view the future with confidence? Do we really believe the

OPENING EYES TO THE GOOD NEWS

good news that God’s Word, the Bible, presents?

In the preceding article, we considered aspects of literal blindness. Let us now examine a type of vision that is far more important. It involves our lasting happiness as well as the prospects for our loved ones.

Without doubt, we face “critical times hard to deal with.” (2 Timothy 3:1) What happens as people struggle to make a living, put up with health difficulties and family problems, and cope with social injustice and lack of love? Sadly, many find that their trust in fellowmen, religion, and government wanes. Sensing that there is no way out, some conclude that their problems will never be solved in a normal way. In the

Brazilian newspaper *Jornal da Tarde*, Jacob Pinheiro Goldberg observes: “People, in the face of brutal reality, feel so annoyed by errors that they do not reason logically, and they rely on exasperating mysticism.” Yet, even when things go wrong, we want to use good sense, do we not?

Imagine for a moment that you need a home for your family, and money is no object. Perhaps you look around and visit various houses in different neighborhoods. Though real-estate salesmen try to accommodate your wishes, the home you have in mind remains elusive. Yet, since the contentment and well-being of your family are involved, you do not give up, do you? Now envision the happiness when at last you find the house of your dreams.

Just as you would spend time looking for a new home, why not examine the Bible to see a solution to your problems? Just as we have to weigh the facts when making decisions about a home, so we need to reason soundly on what we read in God’s Word. And even more beneficial than finding a home is our seeing and accepting the truth about Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. 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.”—John 17:3.

But if the Bible’s message is so valuable, why do so many remain blinded to its good news? For one thing, and this may surprise many, “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) As a result, Satan the Devil “has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, that the illumination of the glorious good news about the Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine through.” (2 Corinthians 4:4) Although we see with our eyes, it is the brain that interprets the light entering the eye. Hence, being blind is also defined as being

“unable or unwilling to discern or judge.” This calls to mind a popular saying: “None so blind as those who won’t see.”

A blind person cannot see what is in front of him, so he may be in danger of injury. The literal blindness of many cannot now be reversed, yet no one is obliged to remain spiritually blind.

Overcoming Spiritual Blindness

Just as poor sanitary conditions can weaken the eyesight, a degrading environment can contribute to moral blindness. Moreover, Jesus Christ warned against man-made doctrines and traditions. He made it clear that religious leaders back then were misleading their flock: “Blind guides is what they are. If, then, a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”—Matthew 15:14.

Instead of being deceived by blind leaders, how happy are those who open their eyes to the good news about God’s Kingdom! Declared Jesus: “For this judgment I came into this world: that those not seeing might see.” (John 9:39) How, though, can spiritually blind ones come to see? Well, let us continue our review of literal blindness.

Various provisions are now available to the visually impaired. This was not always the case. No really serious attempts were made to aid the blind before Valentin Haüy established a special school for the blind in 1784. Later, Louis Braille invented the system that bears his name; he did so to help visually impaired ones to read.

What about the spiritually blind? In recent years serious efforts have been made to declare the good news even in the remotest parts of the earth. (Matthew 24:14) Jehovah’s Witnesses are pleased to bring hope to both the figuratively and the physically blind.

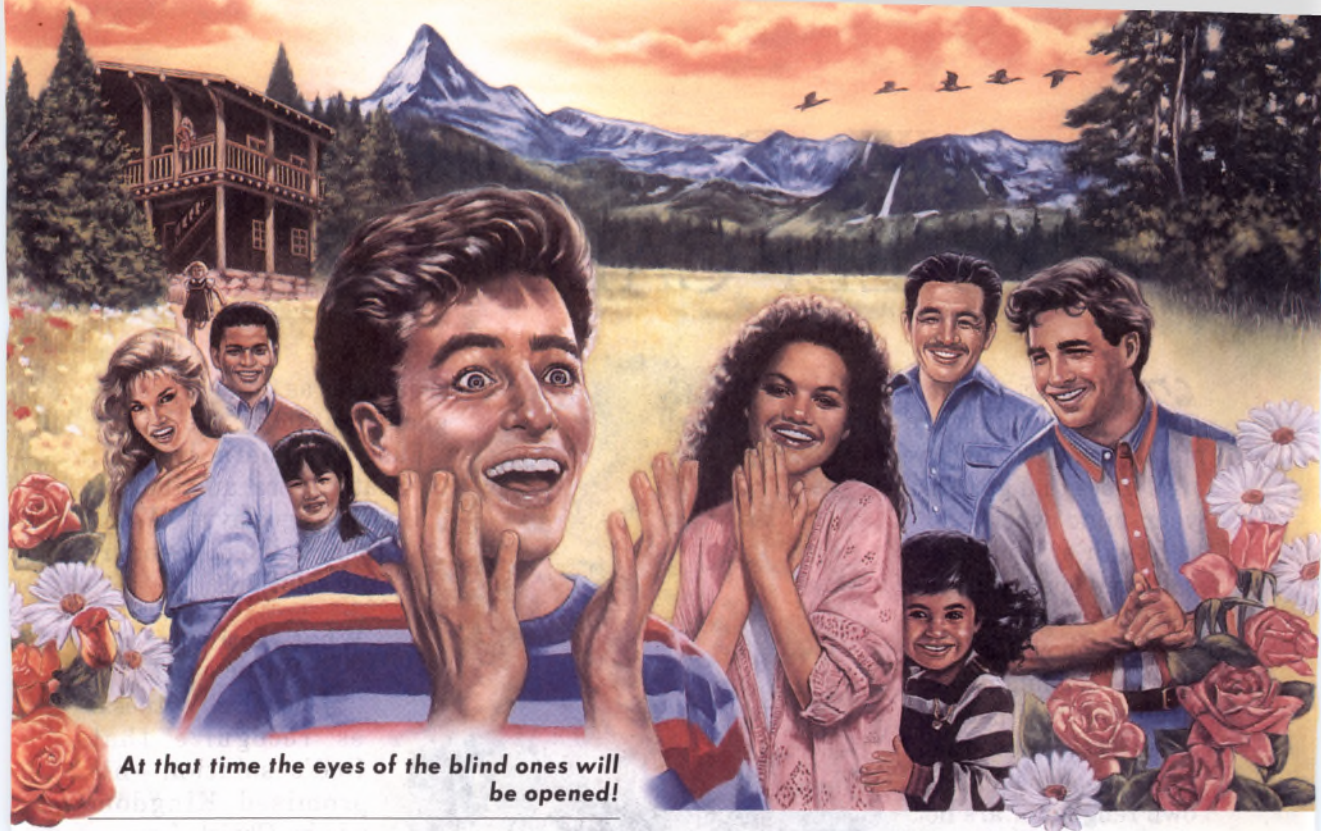
A Brazilian woman wrote: “I want to say that despite my physical deficiency, I can see—spiritually. What a wonderful God! We are happy to know that ‘Jehovah will open his hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.’” (Psalm 145:16) And Jorge, who is physically blind, recalls: “My life can very well be divided into two parts: before and after the Witnesses. . . . By means of them, I began to see the world with clarity and brightness. I enjoy an excellent rapport with everyone in the congregation.” Delightful as that is, the Bible gives us assurance that soon no one on earth will be blind—literally or spiritually. How will that be? How will it prove true earth wide that “Jehovah is opening the eyes of the blind ones”?—Psalm 146:8.

The Only Permanent Cure —God’s Kingdom

Despite increased medical know-how, a host of diseases continue to cause blindness, pain, and death. What, then, is needed to eliminate malnutrition, poor sanitary conditions, and the distress that take away both vision and the joy of life? Jesus’ curing of the blind and others was a small-scale pattern for the future. Happily, his teaching and healing work foreshadowed blessings to be extended to earth under God’s Kingdom government.

Healing on a worldwide scale is near.* This divine healing program is beautifully illustrated by the apostle John: “He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of its broad way. And on this side of the river and on that side there were trees of life producing twelve crops of fruit, yielding their fruits

* Please examine the evidence presented in the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, chapter 18, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



At that time the eyes of the blind ones will be opened!

each month. And the leaves of the trees were for the curing of the nations.”—Revelation 22:1, 2.

Expressions such as “water of life” and “trees of life” illustrate that after today’s wicked system has ended, curative provisions of God’s Kingdom will gradually lift mankind to perfection. In fact, the benefits of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice (including complete forgiveness of sins), together with knowledge of Jesus Christ and his Father, will bring about perfect health and everlasting life.—John 3:16.

Happiness in God’s New World

Visualize, then, the earth without crime, pollution, or poverty. Envision your family living peacefully in the restored Paradise. (Isaiah 32:17, 18) What a delight it will be to observe the variety of color with perfect mind and senses!

“The natural condition for the human being is to live in a constantly changing environment—of light, color, forms. There’s no such thing as a monotonous environment in nature,” says Faber Birren. “Color is one of the natural delights of this world. It is the rule of nature, not the exception, and much of the good life depends on it.”

How precious the gift of sight is! What joy it will be when the eyes once blind—literally or spiritually—will see!

Yes, in the coming restored Paradise, blindness and other disabilities will no longer cause unhappiness! No one will be misled anymore. Since genuine love will prevail, all will be enlightened spiritually. That, and much more, lies just ahead, but right now is the time to become approved by the One who will fulfill his prophetic promise: “At that time the eyes of the blind ones will be opened!”—Isaiah 35:5.

Why Do the Witnesses KEEP CALLING?

THERE they are again! But they were here only a few weeks ago! Does that go through your mind when one of Jehovah's Witnesses calls on you? Millions today are regularly visited by Jehovah's Witnesses. You might ask, Why do they persist when they know that most people have their own religion or are not interested? That question deserves an answer.

Responsibility Before God

Jehovah's Witnesses have learned from the Scriptures that since 1914, the year World War I began, world events have been fulfilling Bible prophecies regarding the end of the present world system and the incoming rule of God's Kingdom over this earth. Almost a century of violence, bloodshed, and hatred seems to have left mankind further than ever from a political solution to their problems. The wars and terrorism that still afflict the human family are proof that human rulership has failed to change people's hearts, minds, and attitudes. Deep-seated resentment over events that took place back in history still poison the relations between ethnic, racial, and religious groups. That is

true in areas as far apart as Afghanistan, India, the Middle East, Northern Ireland, South Africa, and the former Yugoslavia. What, then, is the only enduring solution?

What Motivates the Witnesses?

Jehovah's Witnesses recognize that God's solution—his promised Kingdom rule by Christ Jesus—is the only viable answer. Jesus even included a petition for that Kingdom rule in his famous model prayer: "You must pray, then, this way: 'Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.'" The Witnesses believe that this prayer really asks for God's intervention in the affairs of mankind. —Matthew 6:9, 10.

So why do Jehovah's Witnesses feel the need constantly to go from house to house to try to deliver that message? Because of two commands that Jesus highlighted: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. The second, like it, is

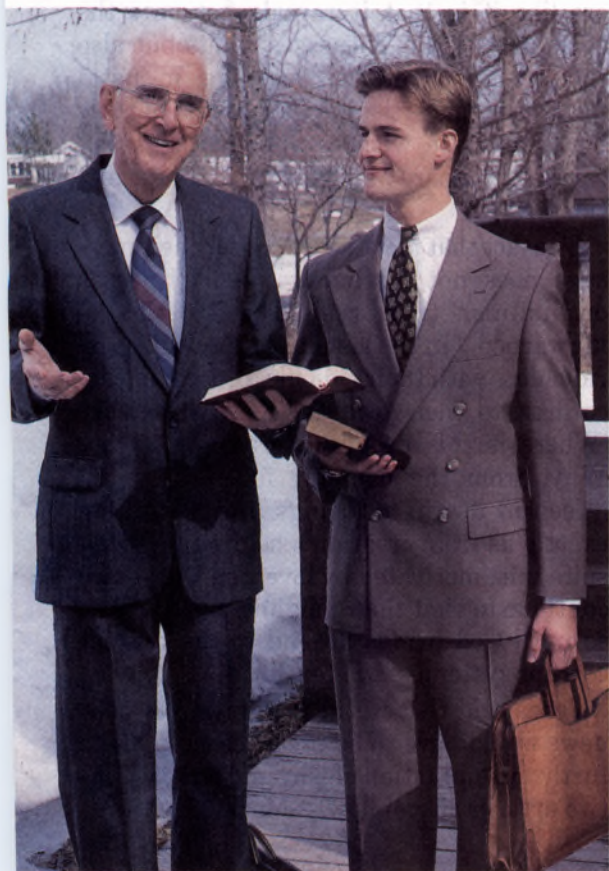


this, 'You must love your neighbor as yourself.'—Matthew 22:37-39.

The Witnesses want God's blessing for themselves, and because they love their neighbors, they want that same blessing for them. Thus, following Jesus' example, they feel compelled by unselfish love to visit their neighbors. They want at least to offer them the opportunity of getting to know what "the happy God" has promised for obedient mankind on a cleansed earth.—1 Timothy 1:11; 2 Peter 3:13.

The Christian missionary Paul believed in God's promises and thus could write: "Paul,

Jehovah's Witnesses do not have a salaried clergy class—all are volunteer ministers



a slave of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ according to the faith of God's chosen ones and the accurate knowledge of the truth which accords with godly devotion upon the basis of a hope of the everlasting life which God, who cannot lie, promised before times long lasting." Yes, God, "who cannot lie," "promised" everlasting life to those who humbly seek to know and serve him.—Titus 1:1, 2; Zephaniah 2:3.

Are the Witnesses Paid?

Occasionally some have alleged that the Witnesses are paid for their ministry. Nothing could be further from the truth! They take seriously Paul's words to the congregation in Corinth: "We are not peddlers of the word of God as many men are, but as out of sincerity, yes, as sent from God, under God's view, in company with Christ, we are speaking."—2 Corinthians 2:17.

Some religious leaders do preach for money, whether it be payment for religious services or promoting commercial enterprises on their TV ministries. Most religions have a paid clergy.

In contrast, the Witnesses have no paid clergy, and often their Bible literature is offered without price to sincere seekers of truth, though many of these are moved to make voluntary donations. These are used to defray the costs of this worldwide preaching work. In line with Jesus' counsel: "You received free, give free," the Witnesses freely expend their resources, including time and energy, in devoting millions of hours each year to God's service. Thus, they teach interested persons from house to house and by means of home Bible studies.—Matthew 10:8; 28:19, 20; Acts 20:19, 20.

The facts prove that there is no monetary motive for Jehovah's Witnesses as individuals, for their local congregations, or for the Watch Tower Society. No one receives any payment for going from house to house. Then how is the work financed? By voluntary contributions from appreciative people all around the world. No collections are ever taken.

The Impact of Their Witnessing

Do the house-to-house ministry and the Witnesses' informal preaching have an impact on the public consciousness? The evidence in the media gives a resounding yes to that question. Jehovah's Witnesses have been mentioned in the course of TV programs and movies when someone is shown knocking on a door. Cartoon strips have mentioned the Witnesses. Their zealous activity is so well-known that cartoonists around the world have included references to Jehovah's Witnesses. These may appear to be satirical, but they are usually based on a positive fundamental fact—that the Wit-

nesses are known for their persistent house-to-house preaching.—Acts 20:20.

One recent cartoon showed a man climbing a mountain to consult a "guru." He said: "Speak to me of wondrous things to come!" How did the "guru" answer? "Let's see . . . There will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon to blood." The inquirer asked: "What's the good news?" To which the "guru" responded: "God will wipe away every tear . . . and there shall be no more death nor sorrow nor pain!" Asked the visitor: "How do you know of such things?" The answer? "Nobody escapes Jehovah's Witnesses!" And that must also have been true of the cartoon artist himself!

The impressive point of this strip and others like it is that it reveals not only the constancy of the Witnesses' visits but also the consistency of their message. In just a few words, the artist gave a key part of their house-to-house witness and quoted scriptures.—Compare Matthew 24:7, 29; Revelation 21:3, 4.

The fact that most people reject their message does not discourage the Witnesses or diminish their zeal. The apostle Peter warned: "In the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.'" Despite this, motivated by love, the Witnesses continue to visit their neighbors and will do so until God brings an end to the present corrupt system.—2 Peter 3:3, 4.

Jesus said that in the last days, the good news would have to be preached first. For a further examination of why and how, see the two articles that follow.—Mark 13:10.

THIS GOOD NEWS MUST BE PREACHED FIRST

"In all the nations the good news has to be preached first."—MARK 13:10.

WHY do Jehovah's Witnesses preach so persistently? Certainly we are known worldwide for our public ministry, whether it be from house to house, on the streets, or during informal contacts. On every suitable occasion, we identify ourselves as Witnesses and try with tact to communicate the good news we treasure. In fact, we could say that this ministry is our trademark!—Colossians 4:6.

² Just think about it—whenever people see in their neighborhood a group of well-dressed men, women, and children with briefcases, what is usually their first thought? Is it, 'Oh, here come the Catholics (or Orthodox) again!' or, 'Here come the Pentecostals (or Baptists) again!' No. People know that such religions do not have whole families performing a house-to-house ministry. Perhaps some religious groups send some "missionaries" for a two-year stint into certain areas, but their rank-and-file members do not participate in any such ministry. Only Jehovah's Witnesses are recognized worldwide for their zeal in communicating their message to others on every suitable occasion. And they are known for their magazines, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*—Isaiah 43:10-12; Acts 1:8.

Contrast With Christendom's Clergy

³ In stark contrast, news reports have

1. 2. What is a trademark of the Witnesses, and why?

3. 4. How are Christendom's clergy often depicted in the media?

time and again revealed many of the clergy in some lands to be pedophiles, immoral swindlers, and frauds. Their works of the flesh and their extravagant life-styles are manifest for all to see. One popular songwriter expressed it well in his song entitled "Would Jesus Wear a Rolex [a very expensive gold watch] on His Television Show?" He asks the question: "Would Jesus be political if He came back to Earth? Have His second home in Palm Springs [a wealthy California community] and try to hide His worth?" How appropriate are the words of James: "You have lived in luxury upon the earth and have gone in for sensual pleasure. You have fattened your hearts on the day of slaughter."—James 5:5; Galatians 5:19-21.

⁴ The clergy's hobnobbing with politicians and even participating in elections as political candidates show them up as modern-day scribes and Pharisees. At the same time, in countries such as the United States and Canada, religion's coffers are being drained by the high costs of litigation and judgments against clergy, resulting from their licentious conduct with children and adults.—Matthew 23:1-3.

⁵ Correctly, Jesus could say to the clergy of his day: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you resemble whitewashed graves, which outwardly indeed appear beautiful but inside are full of dead men's bones and of every sort of

5. Why have Christendom's clergy not proved to be "the faithful and discreet slave"?

uncleanness. In that way you also, outwardly indeed, appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." Thus, God has not given to Christendom's clergy, whether Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, or nondenominational, the commission to preach the good news. They have not proved to be the foretold "faithful and discreet slave."—Matthew 23:27, 28; 24:45-47.

Why Preach the Good News First?

⁶ In his terse version of Jesus' command to preach the good news in all the nations, Mark alone uses the word "first." (Mark 13:10; compare Matthew 24:14.) The version by J. B. Phillips reads: "For before the end comes the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations." The adverbial use of "first" implies that other events will follow the worldwide evangelizing work. Those events will include the promised great tribulation and Christ's righteous rulership over the new world.—Matthew 24:21-31; Revelation 16:14-16; 21:1-4.

⁷ So why does God want the good news preached first? One reason is that he is a God of love, justice, wisdom, and power. In the fulfillment of Jesus' statements recorded at Matthew 24:14 and Mark 13:10, we can find an impressive manifestation of these attributes of Jehovah. Let us briefly examine them one by one and see how they relate to the preaching of the good news.

The Good News and Jehovah's Love

⁸ How does preaching the good news reflect God's love? First of all, because it is not a message intended exclusively for one race or group. It is the good news for "all the nations." God loves the human family so

much that he sent his only-begotten Son to the earth to be a ransom sacrifice for the sins of all mankind, not just one race. The apostle John wrote: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life. For God sent forth his Son into the world, not for him to judge the world, but for the world to be saved through him." (John 3:16, 17) Surely the good news, a message promising a new world of peace, harmony, and justice, is an evidence of God's love.—2 Peter 3:13.

The Good News and Jehovah's Power

⁹ How is Jehovah's power manifested by the preaching of the good news? Consider, whom has he used to carry out this commission? Has it been Christendom's most powerful religious organizations, such as the Roman Catholic Church or prominent Protestant denominations? No, their involvement in politics disqualifies them for the assignment. (John 15:19; 17:14; James 4:4) Their relative wealth and their connections and influence with the elite ruling class have not impressed Jehovah God, nor has their tradition-bound theology. Human power has not been needed to get God's will done.—Zechariah 4:6.

¹⁰ It is as the apostle Paul said in his letter to the Corinthian congregation: "You behold his calling of you, brothers, that not many wise in a fleshly way were called, not many powerful, not many of noble birth; but 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,

6. What events are soon to take place?

7. Why does God want the good news preached first?

8. How is the preaching of the good news a manifestation of God's love? (1 John 4:7-16)

9. Why has Jehovah not used Christendom's powerful religions to preach the good news?

10. Whom has God chosen to do the preaching?

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 1:26-29.

¹¹ Jehovah’s Witnesses have very few wealthy members in their ranks and certainly no politically powerful ones. Their strict neutrality in political matters means that they can exercise no political influence. On the contrary, they have often been victims of vile persecution instigated by religious and political leaders during this 20th century. Yet, in spite of the fierce opposition raised up against them by the disciples of Nazism, Fascism, Communism, nationalism, and false religion, not only are the Witnesses preaching the good news in all the world but they have also increased amazingly in number.—Isaiah 60:22.

¹² To what do the Witnesses attribute their success? Jesus promised his disciples: “You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth.” So, what exactly would be the source of their success? Jesus said: “You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you.” Likewise today, power from God, not human ability, has been the key to the Witnesses’ success in their worldwide ministry. Using apparently the weakest of people, God is accomplishing the greatest educational work in history.—Acts 1:8; Isaiah 54:13.

The Good News and Jehovah’s Wisdom

¹³ The good news is being preached by vol-

11. What facts about the Witnesses have made them unique?

12. Why have the Witnesses been successful?

13. (a) Why do the Witnesses serve voluntarily and without payment? (b) How has Jehovah answered Satan’s taunt?

unteers. Jesus said: “You received free, give free.” (Matthew 10:8) Therefore, none of Jehovah’s Witnesses receive a salary for serving God, nor do they look for one. In fact, they do not even have collections at their meetings. They are happy, by means of their devoted unselfish service, to give to God an answer to his accuser, Satan the Devil. This spirit opposer of God has in effect said that humans would not serve God with an unselfish motive. In his *wisdom* Jehovah has produced an overwhelming answer to Satan’s taunt—millions of loyal Christian Witnesses preaching the good news from house to house, on the streets, and informally.—Job 1:8-11; 2:3-5; Proverbs 27:11.

¹⁴ Another evidence of God’s wisdom in having the good news preached is that the Kingdom promise itself is a manifestation of God’s wisdom. The apostle Paul wrote: “Now we speak wisdom among those who are mature, but not the wisdom of this system of things nor that of the rulers of this system of things, who are to come to nothing. But we speak God’s wisdom in a sacred secret, the hidden wisdom, which God foreordained before the systems of things for our glory.” That “hidden wisdom” refers to God’s wise means for ending the rebellion started in Eden. The wisdom of that sacred secret was revealed in Jesus Christ, who is central to the good news of God’s Kingdom.*—1 Corinthians 2:6, 7; Colossians 1:26-28.

The Good News and God’s Justice

¹⁵ Particularly in connection with *justice*

* For further explanation of God’s wisdom and the “sacred secret,” see *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume II, page 1190, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

14. What is “the hidden wisdom” to which Paul refers?

15. How do we know that Jehovah is a God of justice? (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 33:5)

do we see the importance of the word “first” at Mark 13:10. Jehovah is a God of justice that is tempered with loving-kindness. He says through his prophet Jeremiah: “Let the one bragging about himself brag about himself because of this very thing, the having of insight and the having of knowledge of me, that I am Jehovah, the One exercising loving-kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I do take delight,” is the utterance of Jehovah.” —Jeremiah 9:24.

¹⁶ How is Jehovah’s justice shown with regard to preaching the good news? Let us illustrate it with a mother who has made a delicious chocolate cake that is to be eaten when visitors come later in the day. If she leaves it on the kitchen table without saying a word to her children about when it is to be eaten, what will be the natural inclination of the children? All of us were children at one time! Some little finger will want to test that cake! Now if mother has failed to give due warning, she will have a weak case for discipline. On the other hand, if she clearly states that the cake will be eaten later when the visitors come and therefore it is not to be touched, then she has clearly given a warning. If there is disobedience, she is entitled to take firm and just action. —Proverbs 29:15.

¹⁷ Jehovah, in his justice, will not bring judicial action against this wicked system of things without first giving due warning. Therefore, especially since 1919, after the first world war had brought on “pangs of distress,” Jehovah has had his Witnesses go throughout the earth zealously proclaiming the good news. (Matthew 24:7, 8, 14) The

16. How may it be illustrated that justice requires giving a warning first?

17. How has Jehovah manifested justice in a special way since 1919?

nations cannot rightly profess ignorance of this unique warning.

How Widely Has the World Been Covered?

¹⁸ An indication of the effectiveness of this worldwide educational work can be seen from the book *Last Places—A Journey in the North*. Its author relates that when he checked the sea charts for the isolated island of Foula, one of the Shetland Islands north of Scotland, the charts indicated “all around the island WKS (wrecks), RKS (rocks), LDGS (ledges), and OBS (obstructions).” These “warned the prospective mariner to stay away. Foula’s waters were a dazzling minefield, which made the island inhospitable to yachtsmen, day-trippers, and even Her Majesty’s public works brigade, though not—I learned in a few days—Jehovah’s Witnesses.” He continued: “Just as they ransacked big city slums and the Third World for converts, so too they proselytized for their faith on remote Foula.” He acknowledged that a local inhabitant, Andrew, had a copy of *The Watchtower* left on his doorstep some months before. Then he

18. (a) What evidence is there of the Witnesses’ activity in remote areas? (b) What other examples do you know of?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ What distinguishes Jehovah’s Witnesses from the clergy?
- ☐ How does the preaching reflect God’s love, power, and wisdom?
- ☐ How does preaching the good news reflect God’s justice?
- ☐ What keeps Jehovah’s Witnesses going in their ministry?



No matter how isolated people may be, Jehovah's Witnesses want to reach them

added: "One week later I would see a copy of [*Awake!* in Danish] in the Faeroes [North Sea islands] and two months later a copy of [*The Watchtower* in Danish] in Nuuk, Greenland." What eloquent testimony to the zealous activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in those northern latitudes!

What Keeps the Witnesses Going?

¹⁹ Of course, preaching from house to house to strangers is no easy matter, regardless of how many years one may have been a Witness. Then what keeps these Christians going? Their Christian dedica-

19, 20. (a) What impels Jehovah's Witnesses to keep preaching? (b) What questions will next be answered?

tion and a sense of responsibility. Paul wrote: "If, now, I am declaring the good news, it is no reason for me to boast, for necessity is laid upon me. Really, woe is me if I did not declare the good news!" True Christians have a message that means life, so how could they possibly keep it to themselves? The very principle of bloodguilt for failing to give a warning in time of danger is an impelling reason to preach the good news.—1 Corinthians 9:16; Ezekiel 3:17-21.

²⁰ How, then, is the good news being preached? What is the key to the Witnesses' success? What features of their ministry and organization help to identify them as the true religion? Our following article will answer those questions.

BEARING WITNESS TO “ALL THE NATIONS”

“This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come.”—MATTHEW 24:14.

WHAT a surprise the above words of Jesus must have been to his Jewish disciples! The very idea of sanctified Jews going to talk to “unclean” Gentiles, “people of the nations,” was foreign to a Jew, even repugnant.* Why, a conscientious Jew would not think of entering a Gentile home! Those Jewish disciples still had so much to learn about Jesus, his love, and his commission. And they still had much to learn about Jehovah’s impartiality.—Acts 10:28, 34, 35, 45.

² Jehovah’s Witnesses have preached the good news among the nations, including modern-day Israel, and are proclaiming it now in more nations than ever before. In 1994 over four and a half million Witnesses are preaching in some 230 lands. They are conducting about four and a half million home Bible studies with interested people. This is being done in the face of worldwide prejudice, often based on ignorance of the teachings and motives of the Witnesses. As was said of the early Christians, so it can be said of them: “Truly as regards this sect it

* For further information on the Gentiles, see the topic “Nations” in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume II, pages 472-4, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

1. Why must Jesus’ words recorded at Matthew 24:14 have been a surprise to his followers?
2. (a) How extensive has been the Witnesses’ ministry? (b) What three basic factors have contributed to the Witnesses’ progress?

is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against.” (Acts 28:22) Then to what can we attribute their successful ministry? There are at least three factors that contribute to their progress—following the leadings of Jehovah’s spirit, imitating Christ’s practical methods, and using the right instruments for effective communication.

Jehovah’s Spirit and the Good News

³ Do Jehovah’s Witnesses boast of their success, as if it were due to any special abilities they might have? No, for Jesus’ words apply: “When you have done all the things assigned to you, say, ‘We are good-for-nothing slaves. What we have done is what we ought to have done.’” As dedicated, baptized Christians, Jehovah’s Witnesses have voluntarily accepted the responsibility to serve God, no matter what their personal circumstances. For some, that means full-time service as missionaries or as volunteers in branch offices and facilities for printing Christian publications. For others such Christian willingness leads them to construction work on religious buildings, to full-time preaching as pioneer ministers, or to part-time preaching as publishers of the good news in local congregations. None of us can rightly brag about doing our duty, “what we ought to have done.”—Luke 17:10; 1 Corinthians 9:16.

3. Why can we not boast of what has been accomplished?

Jehovah's Witnesses are increasing in many Catholic countries, such as Spain

⁴ Any success we have can be attributed to Jehovah's spirit, or active force. It is as valid to say today as it was in the days of the prophet Zechariah: "This is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, saying, 'Not by a military force, nor by power, but by my spirit,' Jehovah of armies has said." Thus, worldwide opposition to the Witnesses' preaching work has been overcome, not by human effort, but by Jehovah's direction and protection.—Zechariah 4:6.

⁵ As to those who respond to the Kingdom message, Jesus said: "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by Jehovah.' Everyone that has heard from the Father and has learned comes to me. . . . No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." (John 6:45, 65) Jehovah can read hearts and minds, and he knows those who will likely respond to his love even though they may not yet know him. He also uses his angels to direct this unique ministry. That is why in vision John saw angelic participation and wrote: "I saw another angel flying in midheaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare as glad tidings to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people."—Revelation 14:6.

Conscious of a Spiritual Need

⁶ Another factor in Jehovah's granting a person opportunity to accept the good news is that expressed by Jesus: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need, since the

4. How has worldwide opposition to the Christian ministry been overcome?

5. What role does Jehovah play in having the Kingdom message spread?

6. What basic attitude is needed for a person to respond to the good news?



kingdom of the heavens belongs to them." (Matthew 5:3) A self-satisfied person or one who is not seeking truth will not be conscious of a spiritual need. He or she thinks only in material, fleshly terms. Complacency becomes a barrier. Therefore, when many we meet as we go from house to house reject the message, we have to take into account all the different reasons people may have for their reaction.

⁷ Many decline to listen because they stubbornly adhere to the religion they inherited and are not open to discussion. Others have gravitated to a religion that fits their personality—some want mysticism, others respond to emotionalism, still others seek a social club at their church. Many today have chosen a life-style that is in conflict with God's standards. Perhaps they live an immoral life, which is their reason for saying, "I'm not interested." Yet others, who may

7. Why do many not respond to the truth?



**Jehovah's Witnesses are active
in nations around the globe**



claim to be educated and scientific, reject the Bible as being too simplistic.—1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4.

⁸ Should rejection by the majority diminish our faith and zeal in the lifesaving ministry? We can draw comfort from Paul's words to the Romans: "What, then, is the case? If some did not express faith, will their lack of faith perhaps make the faithfulness of God without effect? Never may that happen! But let God be found true, though every man be found a liar, even as it is written: 'That you might be proved righteous in your words and might win when you are being judged.'"—Romans 3:3, 4.

8. Why should rejection not diminish our zeal? (John 15:18-20)

⁹ We can derive encouragement from the many examples around the world of countries that have seemed to be very unresponsive and yet, in time, have proved to be just the opposite. Jehovah and the angels have known that there were goodhearted ones to be found—but Jehovah's Witnesses had to be persistent and endure in their ministry. Take, for example, some countries where Catholicism seemed to present an insurmountable obstacle 50 years ago—Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, and Spain. The Witnesses were few back in 1943, only 126,000 worldwide, with 72,000 of these in the United States.

9, 10. What evidence is there that opposition has been overcome in many lands?

The ignorance and prejudice confronting the Witnesses seemed like a brick wall that could not be broken through. Yet, today some of the most successful preaching results have been in these countries. The same is true of many formerly Communist countries. In 1993 the baptism of 7,402 at a convention in Kiev, Ukraine, gives evidence of this.

¹⁰ What methods have the Witnesses used in order to communicate the good news to their neighbors? Have they used material inducements to get converts, which is what some have alleged? Have they visited only the poor and uneducated, as others have claimed?

Successful Methods for Transmitting the Good News

¹¹ Jesus and his disciples established the pattern that the Witnesses follow to this day in their disciple-making work. Jesus went wherever there were people, rich or poor—to homes, to public places, to lakesides, to mountainsides, even to synagogues.—Matthew 5:1, 2; 8:14; Mark 1:16; Luke 4:15.

¹² Regarding his own ministry, the apostle Paul could rightly say: “You well know how from the first day that I stepped into the district of Asia I was with you the whole time, slaving for the Lord . . . , while I did not hold back from telling you any of the things that were profitable nor from teaching you publicly and from house to house.”—Acts 20:18-20.

¹³ Jehovah’s Witnesses are known all over the world for their following the apostolic pattern, the house-to-house ministry. Rather than concentrate on an expensive, shal-

11. What fine example did Jesus set in his ministry? (See John 4:6-26.)

12, 13. (a) How did Paul provide a pattern for Christians? (b) How have Jehovah’s Witnesses followed Paul’s example?

COUNTRY	WITNESSES ACTIVE IN 1943	IN 1993
Argentina	374	102,043
Brazil	430	366,297
Chile	72	44,668
Colombia	??	60,854
France	World War II—no record	122,254
Ireland	150?	4,224
Italy	World War II—no record	201,440
Mexico	1,565	380,201
Peru	No record of activity	45,363
Philippines	World War II—no record	116,576
Poland	World War II—no record	113,551
Portugal	No record of activity	41,842
Spain	No record of activity	97,595
Uruguay	22	9,144
Venezuela	No record of activity	64,081

low, and impersonal TV ministry, the Witnesses go to the people, rich and poor, and meet them face-to-face. They seek to converse about God and his Word.* They do not try to make rice Christians, using material handouts. To those willing to reason, they point out that the only true solution to mankind’s problems is rulership by God’s Kingdom, which will change conditions on our earth for the better.—Isaiah 65:17, 21-25; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4.

¹⁴ To get the work accomplished in as many lands as possible, missionaries and pioneers have established a bridgehead in many nations. They have laid a foundation, and then the local Witnesses have taken the

* For practical suggestions on the Christian ministry, see *The Watchtower*, August 15, 1984, page 15, “How to Become Effective Ministers,” and page 21, “Effective Ministry Leading to More Disciples.”

14. (a) How have many missionaries and pioneers laid a solid foundation? (b) What do we learn from the experience of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Japan?

lead. Thus, it has not required large numbers of foreign Witnesses to keep the preaching going and to keep it well organized. One outstanding example is that of Japan. Back in the late 1940's, mainly Australasian and British missionaries went there, studied the language, adapted to the somewhat primitive conditions of that postwar era, and set about witnessing from house to house. During World War II, the Witnesses had been banned and persecuted in Japan. So the missionaries arrived to find only a handful of active Japanese Witnesses. But today they have grown to over 187,000 in more than 3,000 congregations! What was the secret of their early success? One missionary with over 25 years of service there said: "It was most important to learn to converse with the people. By knowing their language, we were able to identify with them, to understand and appreciate their way of life. We had to show that we loved the Japanese. We humbly tried to become a part of the local community without, of course, compromising our Christian values."

Christian Conduct Also a Witness

¹⁵ However, people have not responded to a Bible message only. They have also seen Christianity in action. They have observed the love, harmony, and unity of the Witnesses even under the most trying situations, such as civil wars, tribal strife, and ethnic enmity. The Witnesses have maintained a clear stand of Christian neutrality in all conflicts and have fulfilled Jesus' words: "I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves."—John 13:34, 35.

15. How have the Witnesses demonstrated Christian conduct?

¹⁶ Neighborly love was illustrated in the case of an elderly man who wrote to a local paper about "Mr. and Mrs. Nice Guy." He explained that his neighbors had been kind to him when his wife was dying. "Since she passed away . . . they have been super," he wrote. "Since then they have 'adopted' me . . . , doing all kinds of chores and helping to solve the problems of a 74-year-old retiree. What makes all this even more unusual is that they're black, I'm white. They're Jehovah's Witnesses, I'm a drop-out Catholic."

¹⁷ This experience illustrates that we can give a witness in many ways, including our daily conduct. In fact, unless our conduct is Christlike, our ministry would be Pharisaical, without effect. We do not want to be like those that Jesus described: "All the things they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say but do not perform."—Matthew 22:37-39; 23:3.

The Slave Class Supplies the Right Instruments

¹⁸ Another vital factor in preaching the good news to all the nations has been the availability of Bible literature produced by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. We have books, brochures, tracts, and magazines that can satisfy almost every sincere questioner. If we meet a Muslim, a Hindu, a Buddhist, a Taoist, or a Jew, we can use the book *Mankind's Search for God* or a variety of tracts and booklets to start a conversation and possibly a Bible study. If an evolutionist asks about creation, we can use the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* If a young person asks, "What is the purpose of life?" we can refer him to the book *Questions Young People Ask*

16. What experience illustrates practical Christian love?

17. What course should we avoid?

18. How does Bible literature equip us to help honesthearted people?

—*Answers That Work*. If someone is deeply affected by personal problems—depression, fatigue, rape, divorce—we have magazines that have dealt in a practical way with such subjects. Truly, the faithful slave class that Jesus prophesied would be supplying “food at the proper time” is fulfilling its role. —Matthew 24:45-47.

¹⁹ But to reach the nations, it has been necessary to produce this literature in many tongues. How has it been possible to translate the Bible and Scriptural literature into over 200 languages? A brief consideration of one example, Albania, illustrates how the faithful and discreet slave class has been able to promote the good news in spite of great difficulties and without a modern Pentecost to give instant access to languages. —Acts 2:1-11.

²⁰ Only a few years ago, Albania was still looked upon as the only truly atheist Communist country. The *National Geographic* magazine stated in 1980: “Albania forbids [religion], proclaiming itself in 1967 ‘the first atheist state in the world.’ . . . Albania’s new generation knows only atheism.” Now that Communism has declined, Albanians who recognize their spiritual need are responding to the preaching being done by Jehovah’s Witnesses. A small translation team consisting of young Witnesses with a knowledge of Italian and English was formed in Tiranë in 1992. Qualified brothers visiting from other lands taught them to use laptop computers to enter text in Albanian. They started off translating tracts and the *Watchtower* magazine. As they gain experience, they work on translating other valuable Bible publications. Presently there are some 200 active Witnesses in that tiny country (population 3,262,000), and 1,984 attended the Memorial in 1994.

19, 20. How has the Kingdom work gained speed in Albania?

All of Us Have a Responsibility

²¹ World events are reaching a climax. With the increase in crime and violence, the slaughter and rape in local wars, the prevailing lax morality and its fruitage of sexually transmitted diseases, the disrespect for legitimate authority, the world appears to be becoming anarchic, ungovernable. We are in a period parallel to pre-Flood times described in Genesis: “Jehovah saw that the badness of man was abundant in the earth and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only bad all the time. And Jehovah felt regrets that he had made men in the earth, and he felt hurt at his heart.” —Genesis 6:5, 6; Matthew 24:37-39.

²² Just as in Noah’s day, Jehovah will take action. But in his justice and love, he wants the good news and the warning message to be preached first to all the nations. (Mark 13:10) In this respect Jehovah’s Witnesses have a responsibility—to find those who are worthy of God’s peace and to teach them his ways of peace. Soon, in God’s due time, the preaching commission will be successfully completed. “Then the end will come.” —Matthew 10:12, 13; 24:14; 28:19, 20.

21. In what kind of period are we living?

22. What Christian responsibility do all of Jehovah’s Witnesses have?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ What success have modern-day Witnesses had in their ministry?
- ☐ Why do many reject the Christian message?
- ☐ What apostolic method of preaching do the Witnesses use?
- ☐ What instruments do we have for an effective ministry?
- ☐ What must all of us do in harmony with Mark 13:10?

Ethiopia's "Divine Teaching" Convention

A Time of Special Joy

IT WAS not Ethiopia's first district convention in freedom, but it was definitely special. Since obtaining legal recognition on November 11, 1991, Jehovah's Witnesses met for the third time in the country's largest stadium, the City Stadium, right in the center of Addis Ababa. As this arena was initially unavailable on Sunday and no other facility large enough could be found, the program was compressed into three days, from Thursday to Saturday, January 13-15, 1994.

These three days basked not only in beautiful temperate weather under blue skies but also in spiritual enlightenment with the full impact of "Divine Teaching." In the setting of an attractive floral arrangement around the platform, that convention theme stood out prominently in Amharic script.

But what made the convention special? Along with the rich program, everyone's thoughts and feelings were focused on our loving international brotherhood and the clear manifestations of God's blessing on his people in the form of Kingdom growth. There were some 270 foreign delegates from 16 lands, including even Djibouti and Yemen. Over half came from winter weather in Europe and North America. The visitors included two members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, Lloyd Barry and Daniel Sydlík.

Traditional Ethiopian hospitality coupled with heartfelt love for their visiting broth-

ers made for an exuberance that overcame language barriers. The greetings were not mere handshakes but hugs and kisses, up to sixfold! Many visitors had read about the Kingdom work in Ethiopia and knew that their Ethiopian brothers were tested integrity keepers who had persevered through imprisonments and other forms of persecution.* But visiting delegates were surprised to see so many young people showing happy faces and a politeness that is on the wane in most lands today. Many Ethiopian sisters wore their white, skillfully embroidered traditional dresses, which added to a truly festive spirit.

The baptism on Friday proved to be thrilling. A long line of 530 newly dedicated ones, from 10 to 80 years of age, stretched across half the playing field in the stadium. This was much more than anyone had expected—more than 1 for every 7 Witnesses in the country. What an evidence of Jehovah's blessing on his people here! There were many tears of joy at this sight, which was enhanced by the beautiful singing by over 40 Italian delegates. Many thought of the prophetic words of Isaiah 60:5: "At that time you will see and certainly become radiant, and your heart will actually quiver and expand, because to you the wealthiness of the sea will direct itself; the very resources of the nations will come to you."

* See the 1992 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

Addis Ababa, January 13-15, 1994



Special Causes for Joy

Jehovah's blessing was further emphasized on Friday, when the small beginnings of the Kingdom work in Ethiopia were recaptured in interviews. These were conducted with a group of early missionaries who had served there in the 1950's and 1970's. Well over 8,000 heard Ray Casson, John Kamphuis, and Haywood Ward describe their work of Bible education, starting on September 14, 1950, when they arrived in Addis Ababa. The imperial government of those days required that they be active in general education. So they set up a school for adult education in the center of town, featuring a variety of subjects. But in their spare time, these missionaries sought to advance education focused on divine teaching. They had to struggle to learn Amharic, a complicated language with an alphabet of

250 characters. About half a year went by before they succeeded in conducting their first home Bible study. About 43 years later, they met people on the street who remembered these former schoolteachers. At the convention, though, they rejoiced to be reunited with dozens of their former Bible students who became stalwarts in the faith, and who introduced them to their own spiritual children and grandchildren.—1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20.

The joyful and very attentive audience applauded at length not only the interviews with former missionaries but also reports and greetings from Britain, Canada, Germany, Israel, Italy, Kenya, the Netherlands, and the United States—brought by foreign representatives. This again underscored the loving worldwide brotherhood of God's people. The main talks presented by the anointed brothers from the Governing Body, as well as their heartfelt prayers, also touched the audience deeply. The young people in the stadium identified themselves with the

A group of pioneers in Addis Ababa (right); integrity keepers who all were imprisoned (below); 113-year-old Witness and his wife



characters in the drama about young people who remember their Creator, the drama being presented in a very natural and lively manner. In addition to the new releases in English, three new Amharic releases generated much enthusiasm.*

During intermissions and at other times, there were fine opportunities to get acquainted with many precious individuals. For instance, right in the front row, with a handmade cane, sat the oldest publisher in Ethiopia, Tulu Mekuria. Last year, at the ripe old age of 113, he was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. At this convention he had the joy of seeing his 80-year-old wife follow his example, becoming his spiritual sister as well. His presence during the entire program was a fine inspiration to younger ones. One of such was Yohanes Gorems, who at age 16 and still a student in school has already served for four years as a regular pioneer publisher. He and other school-age pioneers who are even younger have learned to buy out the opportune time, such as by

** Your Youth—Getting the Best Out Of It, Making Your Family Life Happy, and Jehovah's Witnesses—Unitedly Doing God's Will Worldwide.*

witnessing early in the morning on the way to school or by using intermissions and after-school hours.

What Examples of Integrity!

Hundreds in the audience had experienced imprisonment and torture under previous governments. Mandefro Yifru looks back on five such years in prison, but now he enjoys serving in Addis Ababa in the newly established office, which cares for translation, printing, and shipping. Another young man serving with him, Zecarias Eshetu, did not veer from his integrity eight years ago when his father was murdered for maintaining Christian neutrality during three years of imprisonment. Zecarias, one of five children, was ten years old when his father went to jail. Meswat Girma and his sister, Yoalan, now in their late teens and still in school, remember their father only from pictures, as they were very small when he was suddenly executed for his neutrality. His loyalty inspired them, and both are serv-

ing as regular pioneers, as their father was doing at the time of his death.

Another integrity keeper was Tamirat Yadette, now serving as a special pioneer in a beautiful region of the Rift Valley. Because of his Christian neutrality, he spent three years in seven different prisons, at times in chains and subjected to severe beatings. Yet, in prison he helped over a dozen people to take their stand for God's Kingdom.

Tesfu Temelso, now serving as a circuit overseer, was imprisoned 17 times during his years as a special pioneer. He has scars from the beatings, but he is thrilled to see congregations in his former assignments. Dozens of brothers and sisters from the Akaki Congregation suffered imprisonment and cruelty, yet the congregation has grown to over a hundred publishers. They have built the first Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in Ethiopia. From Dese, a town in a picturesque setting about 200 miles north of the capital, came a group of five who faced death and saw a local brother die from the torture he had been subjected to. One elder among them, Maseresha Kasa, explained that he persevered during six years' imprisonment, not because he was special in any way, but merely because he learned to rely on Jehovah.—Romans 8:35-39; compare Acts 8:1.

Even recently, others have demonstrated their faithfulness under test. A large group came to the convention from a nearby country where, because of their neutrality, Witnesses had been denied police protection, travel documents, marriage certificates, hospital treatment, and jobs. When war was raging near Mesewa, an Eritrean port on the Red Sea, the whole congregation, 39 in all, including children, lived for about four months under a low bridge in the desert to escape the bombardment of their homes by the former government. In this setting of

heat and deprivation, their daily text discussions and other meetings gave them great strength and a close attachment to Jehovah as well as to one another. Two special-pioneer sisters serving near the source of the Blue Nile endured mob threats and harassment instigated by the Orthodox Church, but the two persevered and saw several Bible students symbolize their dedication by baptism at this convention.

One brother recounted his trial of isolation on a job deep in the arid Ogaden region, not far from Somalia. He kept alive spiritually by preaching and then holding meetings with interested ones, including medical doctors, who benefited from divine teaching and now teach others. Another fine example of integrity keeping was a special pioneer in Addis Ababa who, in 1992, was brutally beaten and left for dead by a mob incited by Orthodox priests. Happily, he recovered and continues serving in the same territory. The radiant smile on his face reveals no trace of bitterness. For him, as for all the other tested ones and newer ones, this "Divine Teaching" Convention was a festival of joy.

The convention organization operated smoothly, making visitors think that the volunteers involved had had many years of experience. In fact, they have made rapid progress during the past two years. The three-day convention ended all too quickly. The peak attendance on Saturday was 9,556. The national television, radio, and the press provided favorable coverage. All could see that Jehovah was making his people spiritually rich. The audience included thousands of interested ones who have started to benefit from "Divine Teaching." A wide field is open to Jehovah's Witnesses in this country of about 50 million people, and the convention strengthened all in their determination to use the remaining time in this system of things to help sincere ones to benefit also from divine teaching.

MAINTAINING HARMONY

Between Elders and Ministerial Servants

SHORTLY after Pentecost 33 C.E., an emergency arose in the newly formed Christian congregation. An arrangement had been established to care for needy widows. But after a while “a murmuring arose on the part of the Greek-speaking Jews against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution.”—Acts 6:1.

These complaints reached the ears of the apostles. “So the twelve called the multitude of the disciples to them and said: ‘It is not pleasing for us to leave the word of God to distribute food to tables. So, brothers, search out for yourselves seven certified men from among you, full of spirit and wisdom, that we may appoint them over this necessary business.’”—Acts 6:2, 3.

This illustrates an important principle of organization within the Christian congregation. Some responsible men are used to care for routine matters, while others care for weightier spiritual concerns. This is not without precedent. In ancient Israel, Aaron and his descendants were appointed to serve as priests to make sacrifices to God. However, Jehovah directed that the Levites assist them by ‘taking care of all the utensils of the tent of meeting.’ (Numbers 3:5-10) Similarly, overseers today are assisted by ministerial servants.

The Role of Elders and Ministerial Servants

The Scriptures outline high qualifications for both elders and ministerial servants.

(1 Timothy 3:1-10, 12, 13; Titus 1:6-9) They are not competitors but work for the same goal—the building up of the congregation. (Compare Ephesians 4:11-13.) Nevertheless, there are some differences in the work they perform in the congregation. At 1 Peter 5:2, overseers are told: “Shepherd the flock of God in your care, not under compulsion, but willingly; neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly.” They render an account to God for how they carry out this sacred trust.—Hebrews 13:17.

What about ministerial servants? The Scriptures do not require that they be as qualified in their ability to teach. Their duties are somewhat different from those of elders. In the first century C.E., there were doubtless many things of a material, routine, or mechanical nature that required attention, perhaps including the purchase of material for copying the Scriptures or even doing the copying itself.

Today, ministerial servants continue to fulfill a variety of important tasks within the congregation, such as caring for congregation accounts and territories, distributing magazines and books, and maintaining the Kingdom Hall. Some ministerial servants who have the ability may even be used in teaching, sometimes conducting Congregation Book Studies, handling parts on Service Meetings, and delivering public talks.

When elders and ministerial servants work together harmoniously, the congregation’s needs—both spiritual and organizational—are cared for in a balanced way.

**Elders view ministerial servants,
not as subordinates, but as
fellow ministers of God**



Congregation members are then joyful, strong, and spiritually productive. Recall what Paul wrote to anointed ones in Ephesus: "By being harmoniously joined together and being made to cooperate through every joint that gives what is needed, according to the functioning of each respective member in due measure, makes for the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."—Ephesians 4:16.

Elders and ministerial servants must strive to develop a similar harmony, that is, agreement, accord, cooperation, and unity. However, such harmony does not come about automatically. It must be cultivated and carefully guarded.

What Elders Can Do

An important step is to recognize that the relationship of an elder to a ministerial servant is not that of a master to a slave or of an employer to an employee. Where there is true harmony, elders view ministerial ser-



vants as fellow ministers of God. (Compare 1 Corinthians 3:6-9.) "In showing honor to one another take the lead," says Romans 12:10. Elders therefore avoid treating ministerial servants in ways that might appear to be condescending or demeaning. They encourage, rather than crush, wholesome initiative. Treating ministerial servants with respect tends to bring out the best in them and helps them to enjoy their work in the congregation.

Elders should also bear in mind that their commission to shepherd the flock of God in their care includes the brothers serving as ministerial servants. True, such responsible men are expected to be mature Christians. Nevertheless, like the rest of the flock, they need personal attention from time to time. Elders should be keenly interested in their spiritual development.

For example, when the apostle Paul met the young man Timothy, he immediately grasped Timothy's potential and "expressed the desire for this man to go out with him." (Acts 16:3) Timothy served as Paul's traveling companion, receiving invaluable training as a result. Why, years later Paul could

write Christians in Corinth: "I am sending Timothy to you, as he is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord; and he will put you in mind of my methods in connection with Christ Jesus"—1 Corinthians 4:17.

Elders, have you begun tapping the full potential of the ministerial servants in your congregation? Do you help them advance by giving them personal training in public speaking and Bible research? Have you invited qualified ones to accompany you on shepherding calls? Do you work with them in the field ministry? In Jesus' parable of the talents, the master told his faithful servants: "Well done, good and faithful slave!" (Matthew 25:23) Are you likewise generous with praise and commendation toward ministerial servants who modestly carry out their assignments in a fine way? (Compare Proverbs 3:27.) If not, will they feel that their work is not appreciated?

Communication is likewise critical to a harmonious working relationship. (Compare Proverbs 15:22.) Duties should be neither assigned nor taken away in an arbitrary or haphazard manner. The elders should prayerfully discuss how a brother's abilities can best be used in the congregation. (Compare Matthew 25:15.) When an assignment is made, a brother should be thoroughly briefed as to what exactly is required of him. "When there is no skillful direction," warns Proverbs 11:14, "the people fall."

It is not best simply to tell a brother to take over the accounts, magazines, or literature department from another servant. Sometimes a newly assigned servant inherits a batch of inaccurate or incomplete records. How disheartening! "Let all things take place decently and by arrangement," directs 1 Corinthians 14:40. Elders should take the initiative to train brothers, ac-

quainting them with congregational procedures and setting an example themselves in following such procedures. For example, elders are to arrange for the congregation accounts to be audited every three months. Neglecting such an important arrangement can lead to problems and undermine the respect ministerial servants have for organizational instructions.

But suppose a brother seems negligent in handling a particular assignment? Instead of summarily removing him from his assignment, elders should talk matters over with him. Perhaps the problem is a lack of training. If the brother continues to have difficulties handling his assignment, perhaps he would do well in another assignment.

Elders can also promote harmony by manifesting humility. Philippians 2:3 encourages Christians to do "nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with lowliness of mind considering that the others are superior to you." An elder should thus try to cooperate if an attendant directs him to sit in a certain seat in the hall, not reasoning that because he is an elder, he need not obey. Perhaps the attendant is simply following through on the suggestion to sit in different sections of the hall, though he should remember that there is no rule that all must do so.* An elder will avoid unnecessarily overruling decisions on matters that have been assigned to a ministerial servant.

Ministerial Servants Working for Harmony

"Ministerial servants should likewise be serious," noted the apostle Paul. (1 Timothy 3:8) Their viewing assignments seriously—as part of their sacred service—does much to prevent tensions from developing.

* See *The Watchtower* of August 15, 1992, page 12.

If you are a ministerial servant, do you perform your duties with enthusiasm? (Romans 12:7, 8) Have you applied yourself so as to become skilled in the handling of your duties? Are you reliable and dependable? Do you show a willing spirit when it comes to assignments? A ministerial servant in one African land handles three different assignments in the congregation. His attitude? "Well, it simply means more hard work," he says, "and hard work does not kill you." Indeed, those who give of themselves enjoy the most happiness.—Acts 20:35.

You can also do much to promote harmony by cooperating fully with the elders. "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive," says Hebrews 13:17, "for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you." True, the elders are imperfect men, and it might be easy to find fault with them. Yet a critical attitude breeds mistrust. It can ruin your joy and adversely affect others in the congregation. The apostle Peter thus gave this advice: "You younger men, be in subjection to the older men. But all of you gird yourselves with lowliness of mind toward one another . . . Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."—1 Peter 5:5, 6.

Such counsel is particularly apropos if you feel you are being overlooked for privileges of service. Perhaps you have been "reaching out for an office of overseer," but no appointment has been made. (1 Timothy 3:1) Lowliness of mind can help you to maintain "a waiting attitude." (Lamentations 3:24) Rather than feel resentment toward the elders—which is sure to undermine your working relationship—ask them if there are

areas in which you might make improvement. Your genuine willingness to accept and apply counsel will no doubt be seen as evidence of spiritual growth.

Godly humility and modesty can help a ministerial servant to keep his balance if he has exceptional abilities or educational and social advantages. How tempting it might be for him to try to outshine the elders or to call attention to his own abilities! Proverbs 11:2 reminds us that "wisdom is with the modest ones." A modest brother is aware of his limitations. He is willing to work quietly in the background and to use his abilities to support the elders. Modesty may also help him to realize that while he may have much knowledge in a worldly way, he may still lack in the important areas of spiritual wisdom and discernment—qualities in which the elders may excel.—1 Corinthians 1:26–2:13; Philippians 1:9.

Clearly, elders and ministerial servants play vital roles. Together they can do much to build up all in the congregation. But to do so, they must work together harmoniously, "with complete lowliness of mind and mildness, with long-suffering, putting up with one another in love, earnestly endeavoring to observe the oneness of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace."—Ephesians 4:2, 3.

In Our Next Issue

Science, Religion, and the
Search for Truth

Beware of Boasting

Do Restrictions Discourage You?

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Have you given careful thought to recent issues of *The Watchtower*? If so, you will find it interesting to recall the following:

□ **What is a principal difference between man and animals?**

A major difference centers on the structure, capacity, and functions of the brain. In animals nearly all the cerebral functions have been programmed in what has come to be called instinctive wisdom. This is not the case with humans. God endowed humans with the faculty of free will. (Proverbs 30:24-28)—4/15, page 5.

□ **What part did singing play in temple worship of the Israelites?**

Music, especially singers, occupied an important place in worship, not necessarily to instill the weightier matters of the Law, but to provide the right spirit for worship. It helped the Israelites to worship Jehovah in a spirited way. (1 Chronicles 23:4, 5; 25:7)—5/1, pages 10, 11.

□ **What kind of attention do children need from infancy?**

Parents have to give almost constant attention to a newborn. Paul wrote: "From infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation." (2 Timothy 3:15) So the parental attention Timothy received, even from infancy, was also of a spiritual kind.—5/15, page 11.

□ **What are four lines of evidence that prove that the Bible contains God's message for all mankind?**

(1) Availability. The Bible is available to some 98 percent of the world's population. (2) Historicity. The Bible contains historical facts, rather than unprovable legends. (3) Practicality. Its commands and principles outline a way of life that bring benefits to those who adhere to them. (4) Prophecy. It is a book that tells in detail what will occur in the future.—6/1, pages 8, 9.

□ **What responsibility goes with knowing the right religion?**

Once we have identified the right religion, we must build our lives around it. It is a way of life. (Psalm 119:105; Isaiah 2:3)—6/1, page 13.

□ **Why is personal study of the Bible so essential?**

All of God's servants need to have their joy and strength renewed from day to day by finding new or deeper aspects of the truth of God's Word. In this way they keep themselves spiritually stimulated.—6/15, page 8.

□ **What is meant by the word "sin" as used in the Bible?**

In their verb forms, the Hebrew and Greek words generally used in the Bible to denote "sin" mean "miss," in the sense of missing or not reaching a goal, mark, or target. The first human pair fell short of the glory of God, missing the purpose of their being created in God's image. In other words, they sinned. (Genesis 2:17; 3:6)—6/15, page 12.

□ **Why is it very unwise to read apostate literature?**

Some of the apostate literature presents falsehoods by means of "smooth talk" and "counterfeit words." (Romans 16:17, 18; 2 Peter 2:3) All apostate writings simply criticize and tear down. Nothing is upbuilding.—7/1, page 12.

□ **Was Greece the cradle of democracy?**

In ancient Greece, democracy was practiced only in a few city-states, and even in these only males voted. This meant that four fifths of the population were left out. That was hardly popular sovereignty or democracy!—7/1, page 16.

□ **What causes a Christian marriage to flourish?**

When husband and wife respect God's view of wedding and endeavor to live by the principles of his Word. (Ephesians 5:21-33)—7/15, page 10.

□ **How can your family study be enjoyable?**

Try to keep all the children involved. Be positive and upbuilding, warmly commending your children for their participation. Do not simply cover material but try to reach the hearts of your children.—7/15, page 18.

□ **What is implied by the expression: "Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' " (1 Thessalonians 5:3)**

Note that the Bible does not say that the nations will achieve "peace and security." But they will at least be talking about it in a unique way, expressing an optimism and a conviction not hitherto felt. The chances of achieving peace and security will appear to be closer than ever before.—8/1, page 6.

□ **Name three ways in which Jehovah demonstrates reasonableness.**

Jehovah has demonstrated his being ready to forgive. (Psalm 86:5) He has been willing to alter a contemplated course of action as new circumstances have arisen. (See Jonah, chapter 3.) Also, Jehovah has shown himself to be reasonable in the exercise of authority. (1 Kings 22:19-22)—8/1, pages 12-14.



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Since Jesus descended from both Jesse and David, why is he called "the root" of his ancestors Jesse and David?

You normally think of a root of a tree or of a plant as coming before the trunk or the branches. So it would seem that Jesse (or his son David) would be spoken of as the root from which Jesus eventually sprang. Still, Isaiah 11:10 foretold that the coming Messiah would be "the root of Jesse," and Romans 15:12 applied this prophecy to Jesus Christ. Later Revelation 5:5 called him "the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David." There are reasons for these designations.

The Bible often uses a plant, such as a tree, illustratively. Sometimes this draws on the fact that as a seed sprouts and grows, the roots develop before the boughs, other branches, or fruit being supported by the roots. For example, Isaiah 37:31 reads: "Those who escape of the house of Judah, those who are left remaining, will certainly take root downward and produce fruitage upward." —Job 14:8, 9; Isaiah 14:29.

If harm comes to the root, the rest of the tree feels the effect. (Compare Matthew 3:10; 13:6.) Accordingly, Malachi wrote: "'The day that is coming will certainly devour them,' Jehovah of armies has said, 'so that it will not leave to them either root or bough.'" (Malachi 4:1) The meaning is clear—complete cutting off. The parents (roots) would be cut off, as well as their offspring (boughs).^{*} This underscores the responsibility parents have toward their minor children; the lasting future of minor children could be determined by

^{*} An ancient Phoenician funerary inscription used similar language. It said of any who opened the burial place: "May they not have root below or fruit above!"—*Vetus Testamentum*, April 1961.

their parents' standing before God.—1 Corinthians 7:14.

The language at Isaiah 37:31 and Malachi 4:1 draws on the fact that boughs (and the fruit on secondary branches) derive their life from the root. This is a key to understanding how Jesus is the "root of Jesse" and the "root of David."

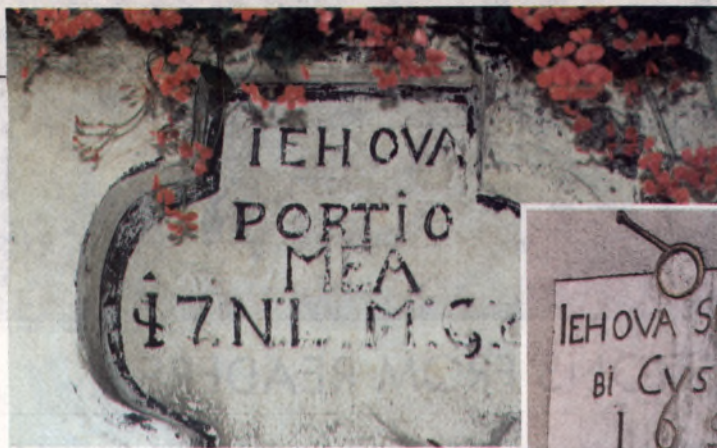
In a fleshly way, Jesse and David were Jesus' ancestors; they were the roots, he the offshoot or bough. Isaiah 11:1 said of the coming Messiah: "There must go forth a twig out of the stump of Jesse; and out of his roots a sprout will be fruitful." Similarly, at Revelation 22:16, Jesus calls himself "the offspring of David." But he also terms himself "the root of David." Why?

One way Jesus is the "root" of Jesse and David is that by means of him their genealogical line stays alive. No human today can prove that he is of the tribe of Levi, Dan, or even Judah, but we can be certain that the line of Jesse and David lives on because Jesus now is alive in heaven. —Matthew 1:1-16; Romans 6:9.

Jesus also received the position of heavenly King. (Luke 1:32, 33; 19:12, 15; 1 Corinthians 15:25) This bears on his relationship even with his ancestors. Prophetically, David called Jesus his Lord.—Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:34-36.

Finally, Jesus Christ is empowered as Judge. During the coming Millennium, the benefits of Jesus' ransom will extend also to Jesse and David. Their life on earth then will depend on Jesus, who will serve as their "Eternal Father." —Isaiah 9:6.

Consequently, though Jesus sprang from the line of Jesse and David, what he has become and will yet do qualifies him to be called "the root of Jesse" and "the root of David."



IEHOVA PORTIO MEA:

**Jehovah is
my share.
—See Psalm
119:57**



Inscriptions With a Special Meaning

"IEHOVA SIT TIBI CUSTOS"

THESE words inscribed on the front wall of a 17th-century house in Celerina, eastern Switzerland, mean "Jehovah be your protector." In this mountainous area, it is not uncommon to find God's name etched or painted on centuries-old houses, churches, and rectories. How did the name Jehovah become so well-known?

Ancient Rhaetia (comprising parts of what are now southeastern Germany, Austria, and eastern Switzerland) became a Roman province in 15 B.C.E. The inhabitants came to speak Romansh, a Latin-based language that developed into several dialects that are still spoken in some of the Alpine valleys of Switzerland and northern Italy.

In time, portions of the Bible were translated into Romansh. One edition, the *Biblia Pitschna*, contained the Psalms and the Christian Greek Scriptures. In this Bible, published in 1666, the

name Iehova appeared many times throughout the Psalms. Since the Bible was the primary reading material in the home, readers of the *Biblia Pitschna* became familiar with the name of the Creator.

However, succeeding generations lost interest in Biblical matters. Many did not bother to inquire what the word "Iehova" meant, nor did the clergy make any effort to explain it. Hence, these inscriptions became mere decorations characteristic of a bygone era.

In recent decades a remarkable reeducation has been taking place. Jehovah's Witnesses have come up from the lowlands, spending vacations in these beautiful valleys and making it a point to teach the residents about the God whose name is Jehovah. Some Witnesses have even settled in the area so that they can spend more time telling people about the Creator's marvelous purposes for the earth and for man. Thus, these archaic Romansh inscriptions are taking on new meaning as people learn about the true God, Jehovah.