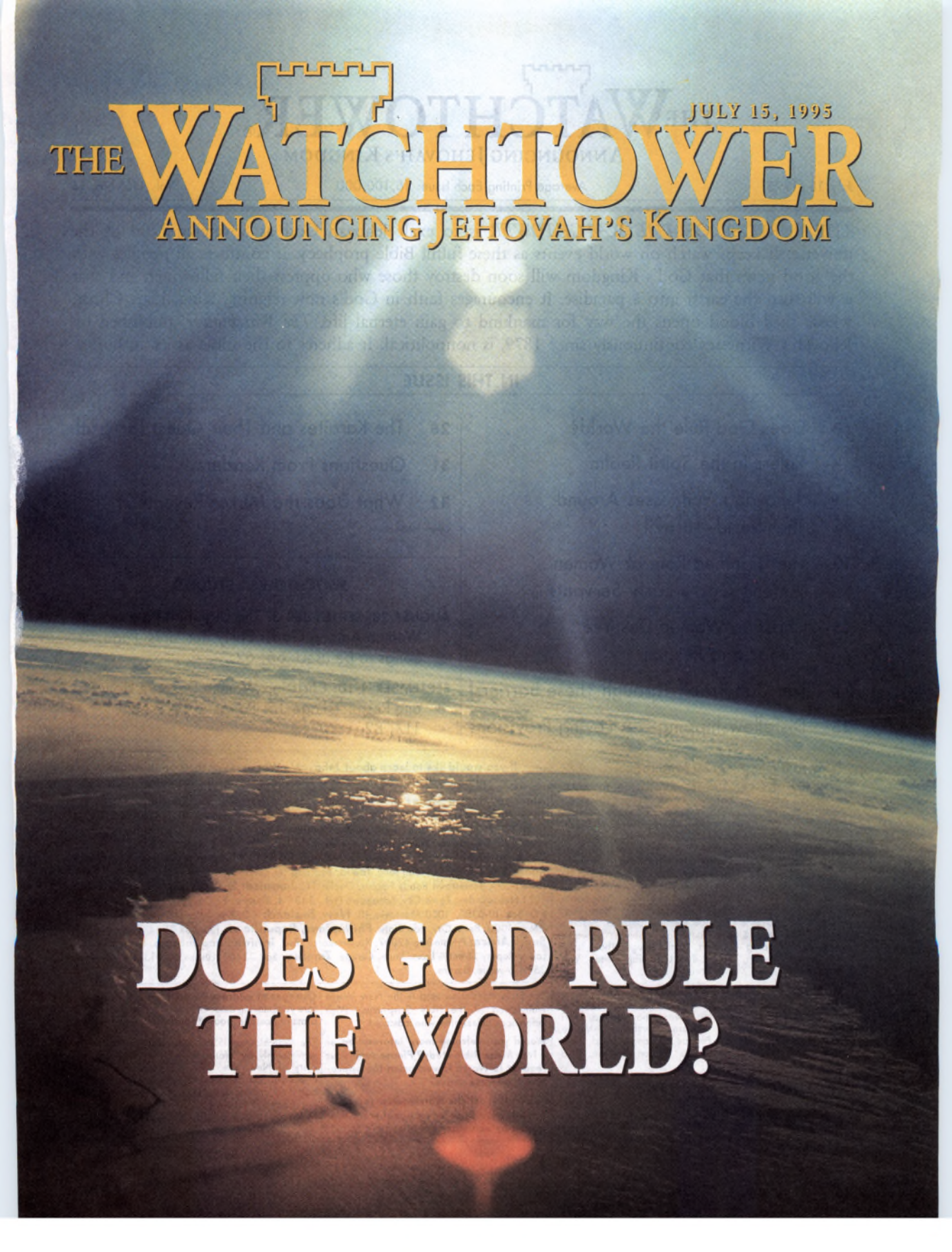




JULY 15, 1995

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**DOES GOD RULE
THE WORLD?**

THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

July 15, 1995

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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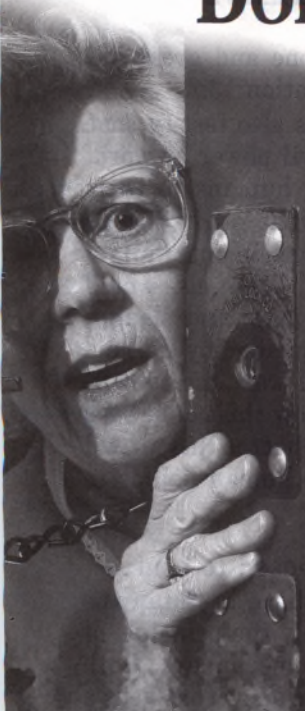
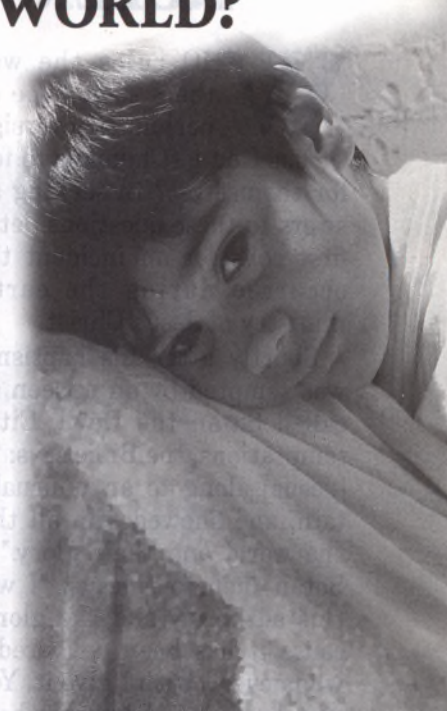
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DOES GOD RULE THE WORLD?

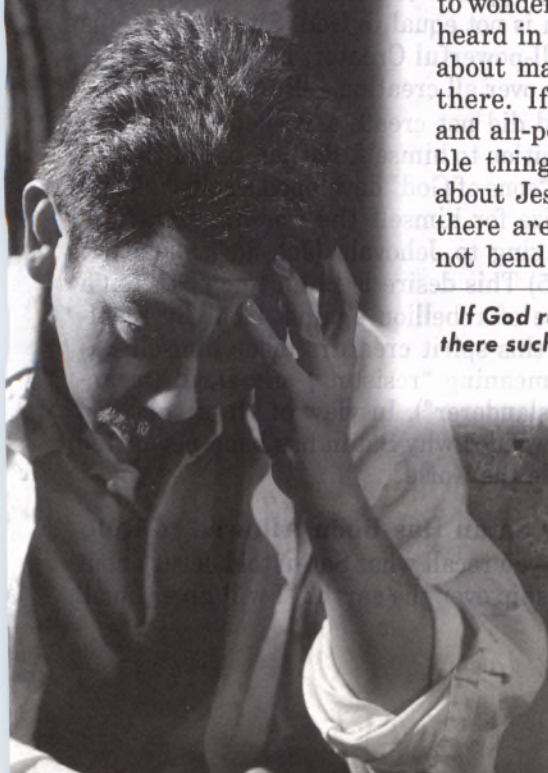


IT IS Sunday morning. Many people climb out of bed, get dressed, eat breakfast, and dash off to church. There they listen to a sermon about how God rules supreme over the earth, unrivaled in authority. They are told that he cares deeply for people. Reference is also made to Jesus Christ. They may hear that he is the King of kings to whom every knee bends in obedience.

Upon arriving home from church, these people may turn on the television and watch the news. Now they hear about famine, crime, drug abuse, poverty. And they see pathetic scenes of disease and death.

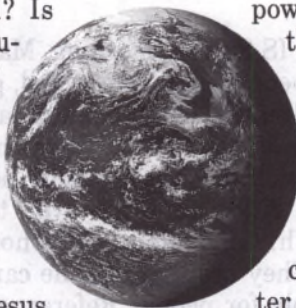
Such individuals may begin to wonder about the things they heard in church and especially about matters never explained there. If God is both loving and all-powerful, why do terrible things happen? And what about Jesus Christ? Obviously, there are many knees that do not bend in obedience to him.

If God rules the world, why is there such suffering and turmoil?



RULERS IN THE SPIRIT REALM

WHO rules the world? Is there some type of superhuman oversight? Or has God left humans to fend for themselves? In seeking answers to these questions, let us first consider an incident that occurred during the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ.



Shortly after his baptism, Jesus was tempted by an unseen spirit creature called Satan the Devil. Citing one of the temptations, the Bible says: "The Devil took [Jesus] along to an unusually high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory." (Matthew 4:8) Satan then told Jesus: "I will give you all this authority and the glory of them, because it has been delivered to me, and to whomever I wish I give it. You, therefore, if you do an act of worship before me, it will all be yours."—Luke 4:6, 7.

Satan claimed to possess authority over all the kingdoms, or governments, of this world. Did Jesus deny this claim? No. In fact, he confirmed it on another occasion by referring to Satan as "the ruler of the world."—John 14:30.

According to the Bible, Satan is a wicked angel possessing great power. The Christian apostle Paul associates Satan with "the wicked spirit forces" and speaks of them as "the world rulers of this darkness." (Ephesians 6:11, 12) Moreover, the apostle John said that "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19) The Bible book of Revelation states that Satan is "misleading the entire inhabited earth." (Revelation 12:9) In symbolic terms, Revelation also depicts Satan as a dragon that gives to the world's political system "its

power and its throne and great authority."—Revelation 13:2.

World events also testify that there is an evil power at work, manipulating humans to their injury. For what other reason do human governments fail to promote peace? What else would cause people to hate and slaughter one another? Appalled by the carnage and death in a civil war, one eyewitness said: "I don't know how this could have happened. It is more than hatred. It's an evil spirit that is using these human beings to destroy each other."

A Real Person Opposed to God

Today, many do not believe in Satan the Devil. Yet, he is not merely the principle of evil in humankind, as some believe. Both the Bible and world events show that he is a real person. Furthermore, Satan is diametrically opposed to Jehovah God. Of course, Satan is not equal to God. Since Jehovah is the all-powerful Creator, he is the rightful Ruler over all creation.—Revelation 4:11.

God did not create a wicked creature in opposition to himself. Rather, one of the angelic "sons of God" developed a selfish desire to seize for himself the worship rightfully belonging to Jehovah. (Job 38:7; James 1:14, 15) This desire led him to embark on a course of rebellion against God. By rebelling, this spirit creature made himself Satan (meaning "resister") and Devil (meaning "slanderer"). In view of all of this, you may wonder why Satan has been permitted to rule the world.

Why Satan Has Been Allowed to Rule

Do you recall what Satan told Jesus about rulership over the earth? "I will give you all

this authority . . . because it has been delivered to me," said Satan. (Luke 4:6) That statement shows that Satan the Devil exercises authority only by God's permission. But why does God tolerate Satan?

The answer to that question relates to events in the garden of Eden, where Satan began his career as world ruler. There Satan suggested that God was ruling in a bad way by withholding something good from the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. According to Satan, if they ate the fruit forbidden by God, they would be liberated. Adam and Eve would be free and independent of Jehovah. They would be like God himself!—Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:1-5.

By lying in this way and seducing Eve and through her inducing Adam to break God's law, Satan brought the first human pair under his leadership and control. The Devil thus became their god, one in opposition to Jehovah. Instead of liberation, however, Adam and Eve experienced slavery to Satan, to sin, and to death.—Romans 6:16; Hebrews 2:14, 15.

In harmony with his perfect justice, Jehovah could immediately have executed Satan and his two new followers. (Deuteronomy 32:4) Yet, there was a moral issue involved. Satan had called into question the rightfulness of Jehovah's way of ruling. In his wisdom, God allowed time to pass so that it could be proved that independence from him brings disaster. Jehovah permitted the rebels to continue living for a time, allowing Adam and Eve to have offspring.—Genesis 3:14-19.

Though most of Adam's offspring have not submitted to Jehovah's rulership, God's dealings with His worshipers have demonstrated its superiority. Proper recognition of Jehovah's authority brings happiness and true security. On the other hand, misery

and insecurity have resulted from human rule under Satan's influence. Yes, "man has dominated man to his injury." (Ecclesiastes 8:9) Humans have not found genuine security and lasting happiness under human rule in this world lying in Satan's power. However, there is sound reason for optimism.

Satan's Time Is Short!

Satan's influence on earth is temporary. Jehovah will not tolerate satanic rule much longer! Soon the Devil will be put out of action. A new ruler will take control of the earth, a righteous king chosen by God himself. That King is Jesus Christ. Concerning his enthronement in heaven, Revelation says: "The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ." (Revelation 11:15) Bible chronology, together with the fulfillment of Scriptural prophecy, proves that this event took place in the year 1914.—Matthew 24:3, 6, 7.

The Bible also describes what happened shortly after Jesus' enthronement. It says: "War broke out in heaven: Michael [Jesus Christ] and his angels battled with the dragon [Satan the Devil], and the dragon and its angels battled but it did not prevail, neither was a place found for them any longer in heaven. So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him."—Revelation 12:7-9.

What would be the result of Satan's expulsion from heaven? Those in heaven could rejoice, but what about the earth's inhabitants? "Woe for the earth and for the sea," says Revelation 12:12, "because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time."

Indeed, the casting of Satan out of heaven has brought woe to the earth. *The Columbia History of the World* states: "The great catastrophe of the Four Years' War of 1914-1918 . . . showed the Western world that it could not protect civilization from its own stupidity or evil impulse. The spirit of the West has never really recovered from that shattering."

The woes of this generation are marked by far more than a shattered spirit. Jesus prophesied: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another." He also foretold pestilences. (Matthew 24:7, 8; Luke 21:11) Moreover, the Bible says that in "the last days" of Satan's system of things, many would be "lovers of themselves, lovers of money, . . . disobedient to parents, . . . not open to any agreement." People would also be "lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God."—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Wars, pestilences, food shortages, earthquakes, and a change for the worse in moral values—all such things have taken place on an unprecedented scale since 1914, just as the Bible foretold. They indicate that the enraged enemy of God and man—Satan the Devil—has been cast out of heaven and now must confine his wrath to the domain of the earth. But the Bible also shows that Satan will not be allowed to operate much longer. He has only "a short period of time" remaining until Armageddon, when God destroys the world system that Satan controls.

What will then happen to Satan? The apostle John wrote: "I saw an angel coming down out of heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he hurled him into the

abyss and shut it and sealed it over him." (Revelation 20:1-3) What relief for suffering mankind!

Rejoicing Under Kingdom Rule

With Satan out of the way, God's Kingdom under Jesus Christ will take full control of mankind's affairs. Instead of having many governments on earth, only one heavenly government will remain to rule over the entire planet. War will be a thing of the past, and peace will prevail everywhere. Under the rule of God's Kingdom, all will dwell together in loving brotherhood.—Psalm 72:7, 8; 133:1; Daniel 2:44.

What sort of ruler will Jesus prove to be? When he was on the earth, he displayed a deep love for people. Jesus compassionately gave food to the hungry. He healed the sick and restored sight to the blind, speech to the speechless, and soundness of limb to the lame. Jesus even brought the dead back to life! (Matthew 15:30-38; Mark 1:34; Luke 7:11-17) Those miracles were foregleams of the marvelous things he will yet do as King. How wonderful it will be to have such a beneficent ruler!

Endless blessings will be experienced by those who submit to Jehovah's sovereignty. The Scriptures promise: "At that time the eyes of the blind ones will be opened, and the very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped. At that time the lame one will climb up just as a stag does, and the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness." (Isaiah 35:5, 6) Pointing ahead to that grand day, the apostle John wrote: "I heard a loud voice from the throne say: 'Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The for-



mer things have passed away.”—Revelation 21:3, 4.

The delights bestowed by Jehovah God’s rulership through his Son, Jesus Christ, will more than compensate for any suffering we may have experienced in the present system of things dominated by Satan the Devil. In God’s promised new world, people will

Mankind will be secure in the earthly domain of God’s Kingdom

not wonder, ‘Who really is in charge?’ (2 Peter 3:13) Obedient mankind will be happy and secure in the earthly domain of the loving Rulers in the spirit realm, Jehovah and Christ. Why not embrace the hope of being among their subjects?

Jehovah's Witnesses Around the World

BRAZIL is a giant land in many respects. In both size and population, it is the fifth largest country in the world. It covers nearly half the land area of South America and is the home of more people than all the other countries of that continent combined. Brazil also has the world's largest rain forest. Through that forest flows the mightiest river on earth—the Amazon.

Brazil is also a giant in another sense. The number of its publishers of the good news of God's Kingdom is approaching 400,000, and last year more than 1,000,000 attended the Memorial of Christ's death. This land therefore especially stands out as far as the Kingdom-preaching work is concerned. Recent experiences illustrate this point.

Serving Where the Need Is Greater

Antonio and his wife made the difficult decision to leave their relatives and a secure, well-paying job in São Paulo to serve where the need for Kingdom proclaimers was greater in the state of Minas Gerais. Their territory included a colony of workers at a sugar refinery. The first day they witnessed there, they started nine Bible studies. Within 18 months, they were conducting more than 40 studies!

At first, meetings were held right in the refinery. However, the new publishers wanted to see a

real Kingdom Hall. Hence, a bus was rented to take 75 persons to the nearest congregation. Then came a convention; 45 of the new Bible students attended and were interviewed. Fifteen of these were baptized on that occasion. Needless to say, tears of joy flowed freely!

The same bus company was used for similar trips, and the officials provided special rates. In appreciation, Antonio presented a Bible study aid to the owner of the firm. He agreed to begin studying the Bible that very evening and was baptized after several months of diligent study. At first, his wife was opposed to the study, but in time, her attitude softened. Today she too is a baptized Witness of Jehovah.

In February 1992 a congregation with 22 active publishers was formed. By 1994 this number had increased to 42, with 4 regular pioneers, or full-time preachers of the good news. As a result, Antonio concluded: "My wife and I have seen that if we 'test Jehovah out,' as Malachi 3:10 states, he will 'empty out upon us a blessing until there is no more want.'"

Offering Bible Literature

Perhaps another reason why the preaching work is taking such giant strides in Brazil is that the Witnesses offer Bible literature at every opportunity. For example, one congregation wrote the Watch Tower Society's branch

office asking for 250 copies of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*. Why such a large order?

The letter explained: 'One of the schools in town has decided to use this book as teaching material in one of the classes. The decision of the school authorities is due to the informal witnessing that has been done by the parents of the students who are Jehovah's Witnesses and by one of the school supervisors. May Jehovah continue to bless his servants as they provide fine instruction with this book.' Yes, and may Jehovah continue to bless the fine progress of the Kingdom-preaching work in the giant land of Brazil.

COUNTRY PROFILE 1994 Service Year

PEAK NUMBER WITNESSING:
385,099

RATIO:
1 Witness to 404

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE:
1,018,210

AVERAGE PIONEER PUBLISHERS:
38,348

AVERAGE BIBLE STUDIES:
461,343

NUMBER BAPTIZED:
24,634

NUMBER OF CONGREGATIONS:
5,928

BRANCH OFFICE:
CESÁRIO LANGE



BRAZIL



**Witnessing in the Botanical
Garden in Rio de Janeiro**

A sound car in use in São Paulo about 1940



Branch office in Cesário Lange



THE DIGNIFIED ROLE OF WOMEN AMONG GOD'S EARLY SERVANTS

"Jehovah God went on to say: 'It is not good for the man to continue by himself. I am going to make a helper for him, as a complement of him.'"

—GENESIS 2:18.

"NOWHERE in the ancient Mediterranean or Near East were women accorded the freedom that they enjoy in modern Western society. The general pattern was one of subordination of women to men, just as slaves were subordinate to the free, and young to old. . . . Male children were more highly esteemed than female, and baby girls were sometimes left to die by exposure." That is how one Bible dictionary describes the lot of women in ancient times.

² The situation is not much better in many parts of the world today. In 1994, for the first time, the U.S. State Department's annual human rights report focused on the treatment of women. "Data on 193 Countries Show Day-to-Day Discrimination Is a Fact of Existence," stated a *New York*

1. How does a Bible dictionary describe the lot of women in ancient times?

2, 3. (a) According to one report, what is the situation for many women today? (b) What questions are raised?



Times heading regarding the report.

³ Since large numbers of women with diverse cultural backgrounds are associated with the congregations of Jehovah's people earth wide, some questions arise: Is the treatment just described the kind that God originally intended for women? How were women treated among worshipers of Jehovah in Bible times? And how should women be treated today?

"A Helper" and "a Complement"

⁴ After Adam had been in the garden of Eden alone for some time, Jehovah observed: "It is not good for the man to continue by himself. I am going to make a helper for him, as a complement of him." (Genesis 2:18) Even though Adam was a perfect man, something else was needed in order to carry out the Creator's purpose. To

4. What observation did Jehovah make after the first man had been in the garden of Eden alone for some time, and what did God then do?

fill the need, Jehovah created the woman and performed the first marriage.—Genesis 2:21-24.

⁵ Do the words “helper” and “complement” indicate that the woman’s God-assigned role was demeaning? On the contrary. Bible writers often apply to God the Hebrew noun (*‘ezer*) rendered “helper.” For instance, Jehovah proves to be “our helper and our shield.” (Psalm 33:20; Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7) At Hosea 13:9, Jehovah even refers to himself as Israel’s “helper.” As for the Hebrew word (*ne’ghedh*) rendered “complement,” one Bible scholar explains: “The help looked for is not just assistance in his daily work or in the procreation of children . . . but the mutual support companionship provides.”

⁶ There is thus nothing demeaning in Jehovah’s describing the woman as “a helper” and “a complement.” The woman had her own unique mental, emotional, and physical makeup. She was a suitable counterpart, a satisfying complement for the man. Each was different, yet each was needed to “fill the earth” in accord with the Creator’s purpose. It was evidently after the creation of both the man and the woman that “God saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good.”—Genesis 1:28, 31.

⁷ With the introduction of sin, things changed for the man and the woman. Jehovah pronounced sentence on both of them as

5. (a) How is the Hebrew noun rendered “helper” often used by the Bible writers? (b) What is indicated by the fact that Jehovah referred to the first woman as “a complement”?

6. What was said after the creation of the woman, and why?

7, 8. (a) With the introduction of sin in Eden, how would the role of the woman be affected? (b) What questions are raised regarding the fulfillment of Genesis 3:16 among worshipers of Jehovah?

sinner. “I shall greatly increase the pain of your pregnancy,” Jehovah told Eve, speaking of the eventuality he permits as though it were done by him. He added: “In birth pangs you will bring forth children, and your craving will be for your husband, and he will dominate you.” (Genesis 3:16) Since that time, many wives have been dominated, oftentimes harshly, by their husbands. Instead of being valued as helpers and complements, they have frequently been treated more like servants or slaves.

⁸ What, though, did the fulfillment of Genesis 3:16 mean for female worshipers of Jehovah? Were they relegated to a place of subservience and humiliation? Far from it! But what about Bible accounts that tell of customs and practices affecting women that might seem unacceptable in certain societies today?

Understanding Biblical Customs

⁹ Women were well treated among God’s servants in Bible times. Of course, in considering customs involving women in those days, it is helpful to keep several things in mind. First, when the Bible tells of unpleasant situations that developed because of selfish domination by wicked men, that does not mean that God approved of such treatment of women. Second, although Jehovah tolerated certain customs among his servants for a time, he regulated these in order to protect women. Third, we must be careful not to judge ancient customs by modern standards. Certain customs that might appear unpleasant to people living today were not necessarily viewed as demeaning by women back then. Let us consider some examples.

9. When we consider customs involving women in Bible times, what three things should we keep in mind?

¹⁰ *Polygamy*:* According to Jehovah's original purpose, a wife would not share her husband with another woman. God created only one wife for Adam. (Genesis 2:21, 22) After the rebellion in Eden, the practice of polygamy first appeared in the line of Cain. Eventually it became a custom and was adopted by some worshipers of Jehovah. (Genesis 4:19; 16:1-3; 29:21-28) Although Jehovah allowed polygamy and it served to increase Israel's population, he showed consideration for women by regulating the practice so that wives and their children would be protected. (Exodus 21:10, 11; Deuteronomy 21:15-17) Moreover, Jehovah never abandoned his original standard of monogamy. Noah and his sons, to whom the command to 'be fruitful and fill the earth' was repeated, were all monogamous. (Genesis 7:7; 9:1; 2 Peter 2:5) God portrayed himself as a *monogamous* husband when symbolizing his relationship with Israel. (Isaiah 54:1, 5) Then, too, God's original standard of monogamy was reestablished by Jesus Christ and was practiced in the early Christian congregation.—Matthew 19:4-8; 1 Timothy 3:2, 12.

¹¹ *Paying a bride-price*: The book *Ancient Israel—Its Life and Institutions* states: "This obligation to pay a sum of money, or its equivalent, to the girl's family obviously gives the Israelite marriage the outward appearance of a purchase. But the

* According to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, "polygamy" refers to a "marriage in which a spouse of either sex may have more than one mate at the same time." The more specific term "polygyny" is defined as "the state or practice of having more than one wife or female mate at one time."

10. How did Jehovah view the practice of polygamy, and what indicates that he never abandoned his original standard of monogamy?

11. Why was a bride-price paid in Bible times, and was this demeaning to women?

[bride-price] seems to be not so much the price paid for the woman as a *compensation given to the family*." (Italics ours.) So the payment of a bride-price served to compensate the woman's family for the loss of her services and for the effort and expense required of her family in caring for her. Instead of demeaning the woman, then, it affirmed her value to her family.—Genesis 34:11, 12; Exodus 22:16; see *The Watchtower*, January 15, 1989, pages 21-4.

¹² *Husbands as "owners"*: An incident in the life of Abraham and Sarah about 1918 B.C.E. indicates that by their time it had evidently become customary to view a married man as the "owner" (Hebrew, *ba'al*) and a married woman as the 'owned one' (Hebrew, *be'u-lah*). (Genesis 20:3) These expressions are thereafter at times used in the Scriptures, and there is no indication that pre-Christian women found them offensive.* (Deuteronomy 22:22) Wives were not to be treated as pieces of property, though. Property or wealth could be bought, sold, and even inherited, but this was not so of a wife. "The inheritance from fathers is a house and wealth," says a Bible proverb, "but a discreet wife is from Jehovah."—Proverbs 19:14; Deuteronomy 21:14.

* Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, married men and women are referred to far more often as "husband" (Hebrew, *ish*) and "wife" (Hebrew, *ish-shah*). In Eden, for example, the terms Jehovah used were, not "owner" and 'owned one,' but "husband" and "wife." (Genesis 2:24; 3:16, 17) Hosea's prophecy foretold that after returning from exile, Israel would repentantly call Jehovah "My husband," and no longer "My owner." This may suggest that the term "husband" had a more tender connotation than "owner."—Hosea 2:16.

12. (a) How were married men and women at times referred to in the Scriptures, and were these terms offensive to women? (b) What is noteworthy about the terms Jehovah used in Eden? (See footnote.)

A Dignified Role

¹³ What, then, was the role of women among God's servants in pre-Christian times? How were they viewed and treated? Put simply, when God-fearing men followed Jehovah's own example and obeyed his Law, women retained their dignity and enjoyed many rights and privileges.

¹⁴ Women were to be respected. God's Law to Israel commanded that both fathers and mothers be respected. (Exodus 20:12; 21:15, 17) "You should fear each one his mother and his father," says Leviticus 19:3. When Bath-sheba approached her son Solomon on one occasion, "at once the king rose to meet her and bowed down to her" in a gesture of respect. (1 Kings 2:19) Observes the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*: "The prophetic comparisons of the love of God for Israel to the love of a husband for his wife can only have been made in a society in which women were respected."

¹⁵ Jehovah expects his male worshipers to respect women, for he respects them. Indications of this are found in scriptures in which Jehovah uses the experiences of women illustratively and likens his own feelings to those of women. (Isaiah 42:14; 49:15; 66:13) This helps readers to understand how Jehovah feels. Interestingly, the Hebrew term for "mercy," or "pity," which Jehovah applies to himself, is closely related to the word for "womb" and can be described as "motherly feeling."—Exodus 33:19; Isaiah 54:7.

¹⁶ *The advice of godly women was valued.* When God-fearing Abraham hesitated

13. When God-fearing men followed Jehovah's example and obeyed his Law, what resulted to women?

14, 15. What indications are there that women were respected in Israel, and why could Jehovah rightly expect his male worshipers to respect them?

16. What examples show that the advice of godly women was valued?

to heed the advice of his godly wife, Sarah, on one occasion, Jehovah told him: "Listen to her voice." (Genesis 21:10-12) The Hittite wives of Esau "were a source of bitterness of spirit to Isaac and Rebekah." In time, Rebekah expressed the distress she would experience if their son Jacob was to marry a Hittite. What was Isaac's reaction? "Consequently," says the account, "Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and commanded him and said to him: 'You must not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.'" Yes, even though Rebekah had not offered formal advice, her husband made a decision that took her feelings into account. (Genesis 26:34, 35; 27:46; 28:1) King David later avoided bloodguilt because he listened to the plea of Abigail.—1 Samuel 25:32-35.

¹⁷ *Women had a measure of authority in the family.* Children were urged: "Listen, my son, to the discipline of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother." (Proverbs 1:8) The description of the "capable wife" in Proverbs chapter 31 reveals that an industrious married woman not only managed a household but might also handle real-estate transactions, establish a productive field, operate a small business, and be known for her words of wisdom. Most important of all was the praiseworthy woman's reverential fear of Jehovah. No wonder the value of such a wife was "far more than that of corals"! Precious red coral was highly prized for jewelry and decorative purposes.—Proverbs 31:10-31.

Women Who Received God's Special Favor

¹⁸ Jehovah's regard for women was reflected in the special favor he bestowed upon some of them in Bible times. Hagar,

17. What shows that women had a measure of authority in the family?

18. In what ways was special favor bestowed upon certain women in Bible times?

Sarah, and the wife of Manoah were visited by angels who communicated divine direction to them. (Genesis 16:7-12; 18:9-15; Judges 13:2-5) There were “women servants” at the tabernacle and female singers in Solomon’s court.—Exodus 38:8; 1 Samuel 2:22; Ecclesiastes 2:8.

¹⁹ Several times in Israel’s history, Jehovah used a woman to represent him or to speak for him. Regarding the prophetess Deborah, we read: “The sons of Israel would go up to her for judgment.” (Judges 4:5) Following Israel’s defeat of Canaanite king Jabin, Deborah had a truly special privilege. She was evidently the composer, at least in part, of the victory song that eventually became part of Jehovah’s inspired record.* (Judges, chapter 5) Centuries later, to inquire of Jehovah, King Josiah sent to the prophetess Huldah a delegation that included the high priest. Huldah could authoritatively reply: “This is what Jehovah the God of Israel has said.” (2 Kings 22:11-15)

* Noteworthy is the use of the first person with reference to Deborah at Judges 5:7.

19. At times, Jehovah used women to represent him in what way?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What do the words “helper” and “complement” indicate about the woman’s God-assigned role?
- ☐ When considering customs affecting women in Bible times, what should we keep in mind?
- ☐ What shows that women had a dignified role among God’s servants of early times?
- ☐ In what ways did Jehovah bestow special favor on women in pre-Christian times?

On that occasion the king commanded the delegation to go to a prophetess, but this was done to receive direction from Jehovah.—Compare Malachi 2:7.

²⁰ Jehovah’s concern for the welfare of women is evident from the instances in which he acted in behalf of some of his female worshipers. Twice he intervened to protect Abraham’s beautiful wife, Sarah, from being violated. (Genesis 12:14-20; 20:1-7) God showed favor to Jacob’s less-loved wife, Leah, by ‘opening her womb’ so that she bore a son. (Genesis 29:31, 32) When two God-fearing Israelite midwives risked their lives to preserve Hebrew male children from infanticide in Egypt, Jehovah appreciatively “presented them with families.” (Exodus 1:17, 20, 21) He also answered Hannah’s fervent prayer. (1 Samuel 1:10, 20) And when the widow of a prophet faced a creditor who was prepared to take her children to pay off her debt, Jehovah did not leave her in the lurch. Lovingly, God enabled the prophet Elisha to multiply her supply of oil so that she could pay the debt. Thus she preserved her family and her dignity.—Exodus 22:22, 23; 2 Kings 4:1-7.

²¹ Far from encouraging a disparaging view of women, therefore, the Hebrew Scriptures present a balanced picture of their lot among God’s servants. Although Jehovah did not shield his female worshipers from the fulfillment of Genesis 3:16, women were treated with dignity and respect by godly men who followed Jehovah’s example and heeded his Law.

²² In the centuries following the completion of the Hebrew Scriptures, the role of

20. What examples indicate Jehovah’s concern for the feelings and welfare of women?

21. The Hebrew Scriptures present what balanced picture of the lot of women?

22. By the time Jesus was on earth, how had the role of women changed, and what questions are asked?

women changed among the Jews. By the time Jesus appeared on earth, rabbinic traditions had greatly restricted women in their religious privileges and their social

life. Did such traditions influence the way Jesus dealt with women? How should Christian women be treated today? These questions will be discussed in the next article.

CHRISTIAN WOMEN DESERVE HONOR AND RESPECT

"You husbands, continue dwelling . . . with them according to knowledge, assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one."—1 PETER 3:7.

AT THE old well near the city of Sychar one noontime toward the end of 30 C.E., Jesus revealed how he felt that women should be treated. He had spent the morning trekking through the hilly country of Samaria and arrived at the well tired, hungry, and thirsty. As he sat beside the well, a Samaritan woman approached to draw some water. "Give me a drink," Jesus said to her. The woman must have stared at him in amazement. She asked: "How is it that you, despite being a Jew, ask me for a drink, when I am a Samaritan woman?" Later, when his disciples returned from buying foodstuffs, they were taken aback, wondering why Jesus was "speaking with a woman."—John 4:4-9, 27.

² What prompted this woman's question and the disciples' concern? She was a Samaritan, and Jews had no dealings with Samaritans. (John 8:48) But evidently there was also another reason for concern. At

that time, rabbinic tradition discouraged men from talking to women in public.* Yet, Jesus openly preached to this sincere woman, even revealing to her that he was the Messiah. (John 4:25, 26) Jesus thereby showed that he would not be bound by unscriptural traditions, including those that degraded women. (Mark 7:9-13) On the contrary, by what he did and by what he taught, Jesus demonstrated that women should be treated with honor and respect.

How Jesus Treated Women

³ Jesus' tender compassion for people

* *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* explains: "Women did not eat with male guests, and men were discouraged from talking with women. . . . Conversation with a woman in a public place was particularly scandalous." The Jewish *Mishnah*, a collection of rabbinic teachings, advised: "Talk not much with womankind. . . . He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and at the last will inherit Gehenna."—*Aboth* 1:5.

1, 2. (a) Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman by the well prompted what concern, and why? (See also footnote.) (b) By preaching to the Samaritan woman, what did Jesus demonstrate?

3, 4. (a) How did Jesus respond to the woman who touched his garment? (b) How did Jesus set a good example for Christian men, particularly overseers?

was reflected in the way he dealt with women. On one occasion a woman who had been suffering from a flow of blood for 12 years searched for Jesus in a crowd. Her condition made her ceremonially unclean, so she should not have been there. (Leviticus 15:25-27) But she was so desperate that she slipped in behind Jesus. When she touched his garment, she was instantly healed! Even though he was on his way to the home of Jairus, whose daughter was gravely ill, Jesus stopped. Having felt power go out of him, he looked around for the one who had touched him. Finally, the woman came and fell down before him trembling. Would Jesus scold her for being in the crowd or for touching his garment without his permission? On the contrary, she found him very warm and kind. "Daughter," he said, "your faith has made you well." This was the only time Jesus directly addressed a woman as "daughter." How that word must have put her heart at ease!—Matthew 9:18-22; Mark 5:21-34.

⁴ Jesus looked beyond the letter of the Law. He saw the spirit behind it and the need for mercy and compassion. (Compare Matthew 23:23.) Jesus noted the sickly woman's desperate circumstances and took into consideration that she was motivated by faith. He thereby set a good example for Christian men, particularly overseers. If a Christian sister is facing personal problems or an especially difficult or trialsome situation, elders should try to look beyond the immediate words or actions and take into consideration the circumstances and the motives. Such insight may indicate that patience, understanding, and compassion are needed instead of counsel and correction.—Proverbs 10:19; 16:23; 19:11.

⁵ Hemmed in by rabbinic traditions, women living when Jesus was on earth were restricted from serving as legal witnesses.* Consider what happened shortly after Jesus was resurrected from the dead on the morning of Nisan 16, 33 C.E. Who would be the first to see the resurrected Jesus and bear witness to other disciples that their Lord had been raised up? It turned out to be the women who had stayed within view of the impalement site until he expired.—Matthew 27:55, 56, 61.

⁶ Early in the morning on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and other women went to the tomb with spices to treat Jesus' body. Upon finding the tomb empty, Mary ran off to tell Peter and John. The other women remained. Soon, an angel appeared to them and told them that Jesus had been raised up. "Go quickly and tell his disciples," the angel instructed. While these women were hurrying to deliver the news, Jesus himself appeared to them. "Go, report to my brothers," he told them. (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1, 2; John 20:1, 2) Unaware of the angel's visit and overcome with grief, Mary Magdalene returned to the empty tomb. Jesus appeared to her there, and after she fi-

* The book *Palestine in the Time of Christ* states: "In some cases, the woman was put almost on a par with the slave. For instance, she could not give evidence in a court of justice, except to attest the death of her husband." Referring to Leviticus 5:1, *The Mishnah* explains: "[The law about] 'an oath of testimony' applies to men but not to women."—*Shebuoth* 4:1.

5. (a) In what way were women restricted by rabbinic traditions? (See footnote.) (b) Who were the first ones to see and bear witness about the resurrected Jesus?

6, 7. (a) What did Jesus tell the women who came to the tomb? (b) How did Jesus' male disciples at first react to the testimony of the women, and what can be learned from this?

nally recognized him, he said: "Be on your way to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God.'" —John 20:11-18; compare Matthew 28:9, 10.

⁷ Jesus could have appeared first to Peter, John, or one of the other male disciples. Instead, he chose to favor these women by making them the first eyewitnesses of his resurrection and by commissioning them to bear witness about it to his male disciples. How did the men initially react? The record states: "These sayings appeared as nonsense to them and they would not believe the women." (Luke 24:11) Could it be that they found the testimony difficult to accept because it came from women? If so, in time they received abundant evidence that

To their delight, godly women were the first to see the resurrected Jesus, who had them bear witness to his brothers



Jesus had been raised from the dead. (Luke 24:13-46; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8) Today, Christian men act wisely when they take into account the observations of their spiritual sisters.—Compare Genesis 21:12.

⁸ It is truly heartwarming to note the way Jesus dealt with women. Ever compassionate and completely balanced in dealing with women, he neither exalted nor belittled them. (John 2:3-5) He repudiated the rabbinic traditions that stripped them of their dignity and that invalidated the Word of God. (Compare Matthew 15:3-9.) By treating women with honor and respect, Jesus revealed firsthand how Jehovah God feels they should be treated. (John 5:19) Jesus also set a splendid example for Christian men to imitate.—1 Peter 2:21.

Jesus' Teachings Regarding Women

⁹ Jesus refuted rabbinic traditions and dignified women not only by his actions but by his teachings as well. Consider, for example, what he taught about divorce and adultery.

¹⁰ Regarding divorce, Jesus was asked this question: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on every sort of ground?" According to Mark's account, Jesus said: "Whoever divorces his wife [except on the ground of fornication] and marries another commits adultery against her, and if ever a woman, after divorcing her husband, marries another, she commits adultery." (Mark 10:10-12; Matthew 19:3, 9) Those simply stated words showed respect for the dignity of women. How so?

8. By the way he dealt with women, what did Jesus reveal?

9, 10. How did Jesus refute rabbinic traditions regarding women, and what did he say after the Pharisees raised a question about divorce?

¹¹ First, by the words "except on the ground of fornication" (found in Matthew's Gospel account), Jesus indicated that the marriage bond is not to be viewed lightly or broken easily. The prevailing rabbinic teaching allowed for divorce on such minor grounds as a wife's spoiling a dish of food or talking to a strange man. Why, divorce was even allowed if a husband found a woman who was more attractive in his eyes! One Bible scholar notes: "When Jesus spoke as he did he was . . . striking a blow for women by seeking to restore marriage to the position it ought to have." Indeed, marriage ought to be a permanent union in which a woman can feel secure.—Mark 10:6-9.

¹² Second, by the expression "commits adultery against her," Jesus introduced a view that was not recognized in the rabbinic courts—the concept of a husband's committing adultery *against his wife*. Explains *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*: "In rabbinic Judaism a woman by infidelity could commit adultery against her husband; and a man, by having sexual relations with another man's wife, could commit adultery against him. But a man could never commit adultery against his wife, no matter what he did. Jesus, by putting the husband under the same moral obligation as the wife, raised the status and dignity of women."

¹³ Third, by the phrase "after divorcing her husband," Jesus recognized the right of a woman to divorce an unfaithful hus-

11. Jesus' words "except on the ground of fornication" indicate what about the marriage bond?

12. By the words "commits adultery against her," what concept was Jesus introducing?

13. Concerning divorce, how did Jesus show that under the Christian system, there would be one standard for both men and women?

band—a practice apparently known but not common under Jewish law in that day.* It was said that “a woman may be divorced with or without her will, but a man only with his will.” According to Jesus, however, under the Christian system, the same standard would apply to both men and women.

¹⁴ Jesus’ teachings clearly reveal a deep concern for the welfare of women. It is, therefore, not hard to understand why some women felt such love for Jesus that they cared for his needs out of their own belongings. (Luke 8:1-3) “What I teach is not mine,” Jesus said, “but belongs to him that sent me.” (John 7:16) By what he taught, Jesus reflected Jehovah’s own tender consideration for women.

“Assigning Them Honor”

¹⁵ The apostle Peter observed firsthand the way Jesus dealt with women. Some 30 years later, Peter gave wives loving counsel and then wrote: “You husbands, continue dwelling in like manner with them according to knowledge, assigning them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one, since you are also heirs with them of the undeserved favor of life, in order for your prayers not to be hindered.” (1 Peter 3:7) What did Peter mean by the words “assigning them honor”?

¹⁶ According to one lexicographer, the

* First-century Jewish historian Josephus reports that King Herod’s sister Salome sent her husband “a document dissolving their marriage, which was not in accordance with Jewish law. For it is (only) the man who is permitted by us to do this.”—*Jewish Antiquities*, XV, 259 [vii, 10].

14. By his teachings, what did Jesus reflect?

15. What did the apostle Peter write about the way husbands should treat their wives?

16. (a) What is the meaning of the Greek noun translated “honor”? (b) How did Jehovah honor Jesus during the transfiguration, and what do we learn from this?

Greek noun translated “honor” (*ti-me'*) means “price, value, honour, respect.” Forms of this Greek word are rendered “gifts” and “precious.” (Acts 28:10; 1 Peter 2:7) We get insight into what it means to honor someone if we examine Peter’s use of a form of the same word at 2 Peter 1:17. There he said with reference to Jesus’ transfiguration: “He received from God the Father honor and glory, when words such as these were borne to him by the magnificent glory: ‘This is my son, my beloved, whom I myself have approved.’” At Jesus’ transfiguration, Jehovah honored his Son by expressing his approval of Jesus, and God did so in the hearing of others. (Matthew 17:1-5) The man who honors his wife, then, does not humiliate or downgrade her. Rather, he demonstrates by his words and his deeds—in private and in public—that he esteems her.—Proverbs 31:28-30.

¹⁷ This honor, Peter says, should be ‘assigned’ by Christian husbands to their wives. It is to be rendered, not as a favor, but as their wives’ rightful due. Why are wives entitled to such honor? Because “you are also heirs with them of the undeserved favor of life,” explains Peter. In the first century C.E., the men and women who received Peter’s letter were all called to be joint heirs with Christ. (Romans 8:16, 17; Galatians 3:28) They did not have the same responsibilities in the congregation, but they would eventually share in ruling with Christ in heaven. (Revelation 20:6) Today, too, when most of God’s people have an earthly hope, it would be a serious mistake for any Christian man to feel that because of the privileges he may have in the congregation, he has more value

17. (a) Why is honor due the Christian wife? (b) Why should a man not feel that he has more value in God’s eyes than a woman does?

in God's eyes than women do. (Compare Luke 17:10.) Men and women have an equal spiritual standing before God, for Jesus' sacrificial death opened up to both men and women the same opportunity—that of being freed from the condemnation of sin and death, with everlasting life in view.—Romans 6:23.

¹⁸ Peter gives another compelling reason why a husband should honor his wife, “in order for [his] prayers not to be hindered.” The expression “to be hindered” comes from a Greek verb (*en-ko'pto*) that literally means “to cut into.” According to Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, it “was used of impeding persons by breaking up the road, or by placing an obstacle sharply in the path.” Hence, the husband who fails to assign his wife honor could find that there is a roadblock between his prayers and God's hearing. The man may feel unworthy to approach God, or Jehovah may not be disposed to listen. Clearly, Jehovah is greatly concerned with the way men treat women.—Compare Lamentations 3:44.

18. What compelling reason does Peter give for a husband to honor his wife?

What Is Your Answer?

- ☐ What examples demonstrate that Jesus treated women with honor and respect?
- ☐ How did Jesus' teachings show respect for the dignity of women?
- ☐ Why should a husband assign honor to his Christian wife?
- ☐ What obligation to show honor do all Christians have?

¹⁹ The obligation to show honor does not rest with husbands alone. Whereas a husband should honor his wife by treating her lovingly and with dignity, a wife should honor her husband by being in subjection and showing deep respect. (1 Peter 3:1-6) Moreover, Paul admonished Christians to ‘show honor to one another.’ (Romans 12:10) This is a call for men and women in the congregation to serve together with mutual respect. When such a spirit prevails, Christian women will not speak out in a manner that undermines the authority of those taking the lead. Rather, they will support the elders and cooperate with them. (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35; Hebrews 13:17) For their part, Christian overseers will treat “older women as mothers, younger women as sisters with all chasteness.” (1 Timothy 5:1, 2) Wisely, the elders will give kind consideration to the voice of their Christian sisters. Thus, when a sister shows her regard for theocratic headship and respectfully asks a question or even points out something that requires attention, the elders will gladly give consideration to her question or problem.

²⁰ Ever since the introduction of sin in Eden, women in many cultures have been relegated to a position of dishonor. But that is not the kind of treatment that Jehovah originally intended for them to experience. No matter what cultural views toward women may prevail, the record of both the Hebrew and the Christian Greek Scriptures clearly shows that godly women should be treated with honor and respect. It is their God-given due.

19. How may men and women in the congregation serve together with mutual respect?

20. According to the Scriptural record, how should women be treated?

You Can Break Through These Barriers!

A JUMBO jet may take aboard hundreds of passengers and tons of cargo. How can such a heavy aircraft get off the ground? Simply, by means of lift.

When the plane hurtles down the runway, the air rushes over and under the curved wings. This produces an upward force called lift. When sufficient lift is generated, the craft can break free of the ground and fly. Of course, an overloaded plane cannot generate sufficient lift to become airborne.

We also can become overloaded. Centuries ago, King David said that his 'errors were like a load too heavy for him.' (Psalm 38:4) Likewise, Jesus Christ warned against becoming weighed down with the anxieties of life. (Luke 21:34) Negative thoughts and feelings can weigh us down to the extent that it may seem difficult to get "airborne." Are you weighed down in that way? Or have you experienced some barrier to your further spiritual development? If so, what may be helpful?

Are You Bored?

Boredom—a common complaint today—can become a mental barrier, even for some of Jehovah's people. Young ones especially have the tendency to dismiss some activities as boring. Do you sometimes feel that way about Christian meetings? If so, what can you do to make your meeting attendance stimulating?

Getting involved is the key. Paul wrote to the young man Timothy: "Be training yourself with godly devotion as your aim. For bodily training is beneficial for a little; but godly devotion is beneficial for all things, as

it holds promise of the life now and that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:7, 8) A book on fitness would be boring and of limited value if we did not follow through on the recommended exercises. Christian meetings are designed to exercise our minds and will do so if we prepare and participate. This involvement will make meetings more rewarding and interesting.

In this regard, a young Christian woman named Mara said: "If I don't prepare for the meetings, I don't enjoy them. When I have prepared beforehand, however, my mind and heart are more receptive. The meetings become more meaningful, and I look forward to commenting."

Learning to listen will also help. Listening to good music is easy and immediately pleasurable. But not all satisfaction is instantaneous. We derive satisfaction from the meeting program only when we listen closely to what is said. A Christian named Rachel observed: "When the speaker is not lively, I need to concentrate very hard. The rule for me is, 'The less absorbing the talk, the more I need to concentrate.' . . . I pay special attention to the scriptures, trying to gain as much from them as possible." We need to discipline ourselves, like Rachel, in order to listen. The book of Proverbs says: "My son, to my wisdom O do pay attention. To my discernment incline your ears." —Proverbs 5:1.

Certain information presented at the meetings may be somewhat repetitive. Necessarily so! All of God's servants need reminders. The imperfect flesh, with its wayward leanings and faulty memory, needs

all the help it can get. The apostle Peter 'was disposed to remind fellow believers of some things, although they knew them and were firmly set in the truth.' (2 Peter 1:12) Jesus also explained that "every public instructor . . . is like a man, a householder, who brings out of his treasure store things new and old." (Matthew 13:52) Thus, while our meetings bring out familiar Scriptural thoughts, or 'old treasures,' there are always some 'new treasures' to delight us.

Being determined to take full advantage of the meetings can result in a real spiritual lift. "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need [those who are beggars for the spirit]," Jesus said. (Matthew 5:3, footnote) Such an attitude toward the wholesome spiritual food provided at meetings will banish boredom.—Matthew 24:45-47.

Discouraged by a Bad Example?

Have you been upset by the conduct of someone in your congregation? Perhaps you have wondered, 'How can a brother behave like that and still be in good standing?' Such thoughts can act as a mental barrier, blinding us to the value of the pleasant companionship we can have with God's people.—Psalm 133:1.

Perhaps some members of the congregation at Colossae had a similar problem. Paul exhorted them: "Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely if anyone has a cause for complaint against another." (Colossians 3:13) Paul recognized that some Colossian Christians may have behaved badly and thus may have given others genuine cause for complaint. So we should not be unduly surprised if one of our brothers or sisters is occasionally lacking in some Christian quality. Jesus gave sound counsel on settling serious difficulties. (Matthew 5:23, 24; 18:15-17) But most of the time, we can just put up with the

limitations of fellow believers and forgive them. (1 Peter 4:8) In fact, such an approach can be for our own good and that of others. Why is this the case?

"The insight of a man certainly slows down his anger, and it is beauty on his part to pass over transgression," says Proverbs 19:11. How much better it is to forgive than to allow anger and resentment to fester! Salvador, an elder known for his loving spirit, said: "When a brother treats me badly or says something unkind, I ask myself: 'How can I help my brother? How can I avoid losing my precious relationship with him?' I am always conscious of how easy it is to say the wrong thing. If someone speaks thoughtlessly, the ideal solution would be for him to take back what he said and start all over again. But that is impossible, so I take the next best course and ignore the comment. I just put it down to an outburst of the imperfect flesh rather than to a reflection of my brother's true self."

You may feel that doing this is more easily said than done. But a lot has to do with the way we channel our thinking. "Whatever things are lovable, . . . continue considering these things," counseled Paul. (Philippians 4:8) "Lovable" literally means "affection-inducing." Jehovah wants us to consider what is good in people, to focus on that which induces affection rather than resentment. He himself gives us the supreme example in this respect. The psalmist reminded us of this, saying: "If errors were what you watch, O Jah, O Jehovah, who could stand?"—Psalm 103:12; 130:3.

True, on occasion the conduct of a brother may be disappointing, but the vast majority of our fellow worshipers are splendid examples of Christian living. If we remember this, like David we will be happy 'to laud Jehovah very much and to praise him in among many people.'—Psalm 109:30.

Does Being a Witness Seem Too Difficult?

Sadly, because of another mental barrier, some have not yet begun to praise Jehovah. Many men who are not Jehovah's Witnesses responsibly provide for their families and even support their wives in the Christian ministry. They are friendly and may take an interest in the congregation, but they refrain from becoming dedicated servants of God. What is holding them back?

One problem may be that these husbands notice the busy theocratic activity of their wives and feel that being a Witness is too demanding. Or possibly they fear that they could never engage in the house-to-house preaching work. From their viewpoint, the responsibilities seem to overshadow the blessings. Why the mental barrier? Most Bible students learn and apply the truth gradually. But unbelieving husbands are often very much aware of all the Christian re-

sponsibilities before they have built up the motivation to accept them.

Manuel, who was in this situation, explains: "For about ten years, I accompanied my wife to the assemblies and to the meetings. To be honest, I preferred the company of Witnesses to that of people of the world, and I was happy to help them when I could. I was impressed by the love that prevailed among them. But the idea of going from house to house was a big obstacle for me, and I was afraid that my workmates would make fun of me.

"My wife was very patient with me and never tried to force me to study the Bible. Both she and the children 'preached' mainly by their good example. José, an elder in the congregation, took a special interest in

***With Jehovah's help, we can break
through mental barriers***



me. I think it was his encouragement that finally made me begin to study seriously. After getting baptized, I realized that the obstacles were in my own mind more than anything else. Once I decided to serve Jehovah, I experienced his help in overcoming my fears."

How can wives and Christian elders help husbands like Manuel to overcome their mental barrier? A Bible study may build appreciation and a desire to do God's will. Indeed, well-rounded Scriptural knowledge is the basis for exercising faith and having confidence in the hope ahead.—Romans 15:13.

What will encourage such husbands to accept a Bible study? Often, friendship with an understanding brother in the congregation can be a deciding factor. Perhaps an elder or another experienced brother could get to know the husband. Once a good relationship is established, all that he may need is for someone to offer to study with him. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) Meanwhile, the discreet Christian wife can share spiritual morsels with her unbelieving husband, realizing that he is not likely to respond to pressure.—Proverbs 19:14.

As Manuel learned by experience, once a person gains spiritual strength, moun-

tainous obstacles become more like molehills. Jehovah invigorates those who desire to serve him. (Isaiah 40:29-31) In God's strength and with the support of mature Witnesses, barriers may be removed. The house-to-house work can thus become less daunting and workmates less intimidating, while whole-souled service becomes more appealing.—Isaiah 51:12; Romans 10:10.

Maintaining Momentum

It is possible to break through barriers such as the three we have considered. When an airplane takes off, maximum engine power is normally required as well as the undivided attention of the flight crew. During takeoff, the engines gulp considerably more fuel than during any other part of the flight. Similarly, to break free from negative thoughts and feelings requires maximum effort and concentration. Getting started may be the most difficult phase, whereas progress becomes easier once momentum has been gained.—Compare 2 Peter 1:10.

Forward momentum is maintained by promptly heeding Scriptural encouragement. (Psalm 119:60) We can be sure that the congregation will want to help. (Galatians 6:2) Most important of all, however, is the support of Jehovah God. As David said, "blessed be Jehovah, who daily carries the load for us." (Psalm 68:19) When we unburden ourselves in prayer, our load becomes lighter.

At times, an airplane leaves behind a rainy gray world, passes through a cloud layer, and flies into a sky full of bright sunshine. We too can leave behind negative thoughts. With divine help, we can break through the cloud layer, as it were, and bask in the bright, happy atmosphere of Jehovah's worldwide family of worshipers.

In Our Next Issue

Better Times Ahead

Jehovah—A God Who Teaches

The Rewards of Persistence

DISFELLOWSHIPPING

A Loving Provision?

“HOLY, holy, holy is Jehovah God, the Almighty.” (Revelation 4:8) In accord with that description, Jehovah is the Source of holy standards. These are set out in “the holy writings,” and Christians are obligated to follow these guidelines. Indeed, they must avoid anything unclean in Jehovah’s eyes.—2 Timothy 3:15; Isaiah 52:11.

The Bible clearly commands: “In accord with the Holy One who called you, do you also become holy yourselves in all your conduct, because it is written: ‘You must be holy, because I am holy.’” (1 Peter 1:15, 16) Ever since the Christian congregation came into existence 19 centuries ago, true Christians have put up a hard fight to protect it from spiritual and moral uncleanness.—Jude 3.

Why Protection Is Necessary

All of God’s servants face the challenge of keeping clean morally and spiritually. To that end, three powerful enemies must be resisted—Satan, his world, and our sinful fleshly inclinations. (Romans 5:12; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 John 5:19) Satan’s world will tempt you to be immoral, will challenge you to adopt its ways, and will offer you material wealth, fame, position, prominence, and power. But those who are determined to pursue true worship resist what Satan offers and remain “without spot from the world.” Why? Because they want to stay under the protective and loving care of Jehovah’s clean organization.—James 1:27; 1 John 2:15-17.

Jehovah has provided assistance for any member of the Christian congregation who falls victim to Satan’s temptations because of human weakness. Spiritually qualified el-

ders have been appointed to protect the congregation and lovingly help erring ones to repent of their sin and make the adjustments needed for recovery. Any Christian who gets involved in wrongdoing should be patiently helped to repent and change his ways.—Galatians 6:1, 2; James 5:13-16.

How Disfellowshipping Is Loving

Baptized servants of Jehovah who deliberately follow a wicked course and refuse to change must be viewed as unrepentant and thus unfit for Christian fellowship. (Compare 1 John 2:19.) Such individuals cannot be allowed to remain in the clean Christian congregation and thereby contaminate it. They must be expelled.

The propriety of expelling those who practice wicked deeds can be illustrated by the following situation: Because of the increase of assaults and violent crimes against students, some schools have adopted a policy that “calls for lifetime suspensions for students who use or threaten to use weapons,” reports *The Globe and Mail*, a newspaper in Toronto, Canada. The expelling is done to protect the students who want to benefit from the educational program without being subjected to violent acts.

Why is it loving to expel an unrepentant wrongdoer from the congregation? Doing so is an expression of love for Jehovah and his ways. (Psalm 97:10) This action shows love for those pursuing a righteous course because it removes from their midst one who could exercise a bad influence on them. It also protects the purity of the congregation. (1 Corinthians 5:1-13) If gross immorality or spiritual uncleanness were permitted to

remain in the congregation, it would become contaminated and would be unsuitable for rendering sacred service to Jehovah, who is holy. Furthermore, the wrongdoer's expulsion may help him to see the seriousness of his wayward course, repent, and make necessary changes and thus be accepted back into the congregation.

The Effect on Others

When a member of the congregation commits a serious sin, such as adultery, he is not making Jehovah's heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11) Any Christian who succumbs to sexual immorality certainly is not thinking as Joseph did when Potiphar's wife tried to get him to have sexual relations with her. Joseph's reaction was: "How could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?" (Genesis 39:6-12) Joseph respected Jehovah's holy standards and fled the scene. On the other hand, an adulterer seems to lack sufficient love for God to refrain from satisfying his fleshly passion.—Galatians 5:19-21.

A baptized person who violates God's commandments is not manifesting concern

Are you showing love to faithful relatives of those expelled from the congregation?

about the damage and pain he will cause his believing relatives. The emotional impact is more than some can bear. After discovering that her son was immoral, one Christian woman lamented: "Very few, if any, brothers and sisters seem to understand how hurt and devastated we are. . . . We are crushed at heart." The good name of an entire family may be brought into question. Depression and a measure of guilt may beset faithful family members. The wrongdoer's wicked course thus brings heartache to the family.

Loving Help for Family Members

Faithful Christian family members of expelled individuals need to remember that disfellowshipping is both loving and protective. Every possible effort is made to help the wrongdoer. But if he proves to be disobedient to God and is stubbornly unrepentant, the congregation needs to be protected and has no alternative but to act as God's Word directs: "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves." (1 Corinthians 5:13) As one Witness said, "disfellowshipping is about loyalty to Jehovah."

When a family member is disfellowshipped, Christian relatives experience pain. Appointed elders should therefore do



their best to be spiritually refreshing to them. (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Elders can pray for them and with them. Often it is possible to visit these faithful Christians to discuss upbuilding Scriptural thoughts. Shepherds of the flock should use every opportunity to strengthen these dear ones spiritually before and after Christian meetings. Additional encouragement can be given by accompanying them in the field ministry. (Romans 1:11, 12) Spiritual shepherds need to show these faithful servants of Jehovah the love and attention they deserve.—1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8.

The sinful course of a person is no reason to ignore any in his family who remain faithful to Jehovah. Israel's wicked King Saul was rejected by God, but David did not allow this to interfere with his own affection for Saul's son Jonathan. In fact, the bond between David and Jonathan became very strong. (1 Samuel 15:22, 23; 18:1-3; 20:41) So all in the congregation should be supportive and loving toward Christians whose relatives sin against Jehovah.

How unloving it would be to ignore or be unkind to such faithful ones! Loyal family members have a special need for encouragement. They may feel alone and may find their situation very difficult. Perhaps you can share a spiritual gem or an upbuilding experience with them by telephone. If the expelled person answers the phone, simply ask to speak to the Christian relative. You might invite the faithful members in such a household to a social gathering or a meal in your home. If you meet them while shopping, you might use that occasion for some upbuilding association. Remember, loyal Christians who have disfellowshipped relatives are still part of Jehovah's clean organization. They could easily become isolated and discouraged. Therefore, be alert to

show them kindness and love. Continue to do good 'toward all those related to you in the faith.'—Galatians 6:10.

Appreciate Jehovah's Provision

How thankful we can be that Jehovah God shows tender concern for each one in the worldwide family of his worshipers. Through his organization he has lovingly provided an arrangement to assist us in walking before him in a righteous way. Even if a family member deliberately practices sin and must be expelled from the congregation, there is a way back if he truly repents. This is illustrated by the following example:

Elders had tried to help a person we will call Anna, but she turned to smoking, drinking, and drugs. She was unrepentant and did not remain in the congregation. Before long, however, Anna began to miss the loving fellowship of Jehovah's clean congregation and prayed to him for help. She admits that she had not fully appreciated how much the elders care about those who stray. Anna began to attend the meetings again, and this led to repentance. Thereafter, she was accepted back into the loving and protective congregation. Once again, Anna is upholding Jehovah's high standard of morality. She is grateful for the love shown by the elders and also remarks: "You have no idea how much help Christian publications have been to me. Jehovah certainly does look after our needs well."

Yes, God has provided a way back for those who have been expelled from the congregation but later repent. We have seen that even disfellowshipping itself is a loving provision. But how much better it is to avoid this sad experience by always sticking to the righteous ways of our holy God! May we ever be grateful for the privilege of praising Jehovah as a part of his clean, loving, and protective organization.

THE KARAITES AND THEIR QUEST FOR TRUTH

“SEARCH thoroughly in the [Scriptures] and do not rely on my opinion.” Those words were spoken by a leading Karaite of the eighth century C.E. Who were the Karaites? Can we learn anything of value from their example? To answer these questions, we must go back in history to a long-standing controversy that led to the Karaite movement.

How Did the Controversy Begin?

In the final centuries before the Common Era, a new philosophy developed within Judaism. It was the concept that God gave two Laws at Mount Sinai, one written and one oral.* By the first century C.E., there were heated clashes between those who espoused this new teaching and those who rejected it. The Pharisees were the promoters, whereas the Sadducees and the Essenes were among the opposers.

In the middle of this controversial scene, Jesus of Nazareth appeared as the promised Messiah. (Daniel 9:24, 25; Matthew 2:1-6, 22, 23) Jesus faced all those conflicting groups of Jews. In reasoning with them, he spoke against making the word of God invalid because of their tradition. (Matthew 15:3-9) Jesus also taught spiritual truths in a manner possible only for the Messiah. (John 7:45, 46) Moreover, Jesus' true followers alone gave evidence of divine backing. They became known as Christians. —Acts 11:26.

* For an explanation of the so-called oral law, see pages 8-11 of the brochure *Will There Ever Be a World Without War?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

When Jerusalem's temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., the Pharisees were the only religious sect that survived intact. Now without priesthood, sacrifices, and temple, Pharisaical Judaism could invent substitutes for all of these, allowing tradition and interpretation to supersede written Law. This opened the door for new “sacred books” to be written. First came the Mishnah, with its additions to and interpretations of their oral law. Later, other collections of writings were added and called the Talmud. At the same time, apostate Christians began taking liberties with Jesus' teachings. Both circles spawned powerful religious systems—rabbinic authority on the one hand and church authority on the other.

Because of Jewish conflicts with pagan Rome and later with “Christian” Rome, the center of Judaism eventually shifted to Babylon. It was there that the writings of the Talmud were edited in their most complete form. Although the rabbis claimed that the Talmud revealed the will of God more completely, many Jews sensed the increasing weight of rabbinic authority and longed for the word of God delivered to them through Moses and the prophets.

In the latter half of the eighth century C.E., Jews in Babylon who opposed rabbinic authority and belief in their oral law responded to a learned leader named Anan ben David. He proclaimed each Jew's right to unrestricted study of the Hebrew Scriptures as the only source of true religion, without regard for rabbinic interpretation

or the Talmud. Anan taught: "Search thoroughly in the Torah [the written law of God] and do not rely on my opinion." Because of this emphasis on Scripture, Anan's followers became known as *Qa-ra'im*, a Hebrew name meaning "readers."

Karaites and Rabbis Clash

What are some examples of Karaite teachings that caused consternation in rabbinic circles? The rabbis forbade eating meat and milk together. They presented this as the oral law's explanation of Exodus 23:19, which says: "You must not boil a kid in its mother's milk." On the other hand, the Karaites taught that this verse meant just what it said—no more, no less. They argued that the rabbinic restrictions were man's invention.

According to their interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:8, 9, the rabbis held that Jewish men had to pray wearing tefillin, or phylacteries, and that a mezuzah was to be placed on each doorpost.* The Karaites regarded these verses as having only figurative and symbolic meaning and therefore rejected such rabbinic regulations.

In other matters the Karaites were far more restrictive than the rabbis. For instance, consider their view of Exodus 35:3, which reads: "You must not light a fire in any of your dwelling places on the sabbath day." The Karaites forbade leaving a lamp or a light burning even if it was lit before the Sabbath.

Particularly after Anan's death, Karaite leaders frequently disagreed over the de-

* Tefillin are two small square leather boxes containing slips bearing Scriptural passages. These cases were traditionally worn on the left arm and on the head during weekday morning prayers. The mezuzah is a small parchment scroll inscribed with Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21, placed in a case fixed to the doorpost.

gree and nature of certain restrictions, and their message was not always clear. The Karaites lacked unity because they did not recognize any single leader but emphasized personal reading and interpretation of the Scriptures, as opposed to rabbinic-style authority. Despite this, however, the Karaite movement grew in popularity and influence far beyond the Babylonian Jewish community and spread throughout the Middle East. A major Karaite center was even established in Jerusalem.

During the ninth and tenth centuries C.E., Karaite scholars excelled in a renewed study of the Hebrew language and experienced a sort of golden age. They considered the written Hebrew Scripture text, not the oral traditions, to be holy. Some Karaites became careful copyists of the Hebrew Scriptures. In fact, it was the Karaite challenge that spurred Masoretic study of the Scriptures among all Jews, ensuring a more accurately preserved Bible text today.

During this period of rapid growth, Karaite Judaism engaged in open missionary work among other Jews. This posed a clear threat to rabbinic Judaism.

How Did the Rabbis Respond?

The rabbinic counterattack was a vehement war of words, with cunning flexibility and repositioning of teaching. During the century following Anan's attack, rabbinic Judaism adopted a number of the Karaite methods. The rabbis became more proficient in quoting the Scriptures, incorporating Karaite style and method in their rhetoric.

The undisputed leader of this verbal bout with the Karaites was Sa'adia ben Joseph, who became head of the Jewish community in Babylon in the first half of the tenth century C.E. Sa'adia's major

A group of Karaites

work, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, was translated into English by Samuel Rosenblatt, who said in its introduction: "Even though . . . he was the authority in his day on the Talmud, [Sa'adia] makes comparatively sparing use of this source of Jewish tradition, apparently because it was his desire to defeat with their own weapons the Karaites who accepted only the Written Law as binding."

Following in Sa'adia's footsteps, rabbinic Judaism eventually gained the upper hand. It accomplished this by adapting just enough to take dynamic force away from Karaite arguments. The final blow was administered by Moses Maimonides, the noted Talmudic scholar of the 12th century. By his tolerant attitude toward the Karaites with whom he dwelt in Egypt, as well as his convincing scholarly style, he won their admiration and weakened the position of their own leadership.

The Karaite Movement Loses Momentum

Now lacking unity and without a well-orchestrated countermeasure, the Karaite movement lost both momentum and followers. With the passing of time, the Karaites modified their views and principles. Leon Nemoy, an author on the Karaite movement, writes: "While the Talmud remained theoretically outlawed, much talmudic material was quietly incorporated into Karaite practice of law and custom." In essence,



From the book *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1910

the Karaites lost their original purpose and adopted much of rabbinic Judaism.

There are still about 25,000 Karaites in Israel. A few thousand more can be found in other communities, mostly in Russia and the United States. Having their own oral traditions, however, they differ from the first Karaites.

What can we learn from the history of the Karaites? That it is a serious mistake to 'make the word of God invalid by tradition.' (Matthew 15:6) To be set free from burdensome traditions of men requires accurate knowledge of the Scriptures. (John 8:31, 32; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Yes, those who seek to know and do God's will do not rely on men's traditions. Instead, they diligently search the Bible and apply the beneficial instruction of God's inspired Word.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Was Mary who became the mother of Jesus already pregnant when she went to visit her relative Elizabeth?

Yes, she evidently was.

In Luke chapter 1, we read first about the pregnancy of Elizabeth, the wife of priest Zechariah, who bore John (the Baptizer). When Elizabeth was "in her sixth month the angel Gabriel" visited Mary to inform her that she would become pregnant and give birth to the "Son of the Most High." (Luke 1:26, 30-33) But when did Mary become pregnant?

Luke's account goes on to relate that Mary thereupon traveled to Judah to visit her pregnant relative Elizabeth. When the two women met, the infant in Elizabeth's womb (John) leaped. Elizabeth referred to 'the fruit of Mary's womb,' and called Mary "the mother of my Lord." (Luke 1:39-44) The logical conclusion therefore is that Mary had already conceived,

that she was pregnant when she went to see Elizabeth.

Luke 1:56 reads: "Then Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her own home." This verse is not giving a precise calculation down to the exact calendar day. It says "about three months," which would put Elizabeth in her ninth month of pregnancy.

After having been of help to Elizabeth during the latter part of her pregnancy, Mary departed for her home in Nazareth. Possibly Mary realized that once Elizabeth gave birth (to John), there might be many visitors, some of them even being relatives. That could be awkward or embarrassing for an unmarried young woman who was herself pregnant. How far along was Mary's pregnancy when she left for Nazareth? Since she was with Elizabeth "about three months," Mary would probably have been late in the third month or early in the fourth month of her pregnancy when she returned to Nazareth.

ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 7, 1995

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the members of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania will be held on October 7, 1995, at the Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, 2932 Kennedy Boulevard, Jersey City, New Jersey. A preliminary meeting of the members only will convene at 9:30 a.m., followed by the general annual meeting at 10:00 a.m.

The members of the Corporation should inform the Secretary's Office now of any change in their mailing addresses during the past year so that the regular letters of notice and proxies can reach them during July.

The proxies, which will be sent to the members along with the notice of the annual meeting, are

to be returned so as to reach the Office of the Secretary of the Society not later than August 1. Each member should complete and return his proxy promptly, stating whether he is going to be at the meeting personally or not. The information given on each proxy should be definite on this point, since it will be relied upon in determining who will be personally present.

It is expected that the entire session, including the formal business meeting and reports, will be concluded by 1:00 p.m. or shortly thereafter. There will be no afternoon session. Because of limited space, admission will be by ticket only. No arrangements will be made for tying in the annual meeting by telephone lines to other auditoriums.

What Does the Mirror Reveal?

LOOK in a mirror. What do you see? At times, a glance in the mirror reveals in your appearance an embarrassing flaw that you are glad to correct before others notice it.

The Bible is much like a mirror. It can help us acquire an honest view of ourselves, which will prevent us from thinking too much—or too little—of our worth in God's eyes. (Matthew 10: 29-31; Romans 12:3) Additionally, the Bible can reveal flaws in our words, deeds, or attitudes that we need to correct. When this happens, will you ignore what the mirror reveals?

Says the Bible writer James: "If anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, this one is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, and off he goes and immediately forgets what sort of man he is." —James 1:23, 24.

In contrast, James describes another man, one "who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and who persists in it." (James 1:25) The Greek word translated "peers" means to stoop beside or to bend forward to look. "More than a fleeting glance is at issue," says the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. The word implies a careful search for a hidden object. "There is something important which the viewer desires to see, even though it may be difficult for him to see it and grasp its meaning all at once," writes Bible commentator R. V. G. Tasker.

Will you thus scrutinize yourself in the mirror of God's Word and then conform to what it requires? James continues: "This man, because he has become, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, will be happy in his doing it." —James 1:25.

