

FEBRUARY 1, 1997

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM**
Its Meaning
for You



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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What Does Religious Freedom Mean to You?



Although freedom of religion is considered a basic right in the United States, a wave of mob violence against Jehovah's Witnesses swept through the country in the 1940's

MILLIONS have fought for it. Some have even died for it. It is truly one of mankind's most precious possessions. What is it? Freedom! *The World Book Encyclopedia* defines freedom as "the ability to make choices and to carry them out." It continues: "From a legal point of view, people are free if society imposes no unjust, unnecessary, or unreasonable limits on them. Society must also protect their rights—that is, their basic liberties, powers, and privileges."

The concept sounds simple. In practice, however,

it seems to be virtually impossible for people to agree on just where the boundaries of freedom should be set. For example, some believe that a government should enact laws to protect the freedom of its citizens. But others will argue that these laws are the very shackles from which citizens need to be set free! Clearly, freedom means different things to different people.

What About Religious Freedom?

Perhaps the freedom that is most hotly disputed is freedom of religion, which has been defined as "the right to believe in and to practice the faith of one's choice." According to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion." This includes a person's right "to change his religion or belief," along with the freedom "to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." —Article 18.

Surely, we would expect any nation that genuinely cares for its subjects to grant such freedom. Sadly, this does not always happen. "Religion touches the deepest feelings of many people," notes *The World Book Encyclopedia*. "Some governments have close ties to one religion and consider people of other faiths to be a

threat to political authority. A government also may regard religion as politically dangerous because religions may place allegiance to God above obedience to the state.”

For these reasons some governments place restrictions on the exercise of religion. A few discourage the practice of any faith at all. Others, though claiming to advocate freedom of worship, keep a tight rein on all religious activities.

Consider, for example, the situation that prevailed for many years in Mexico. Although the Constitution guaranteed religious freedom, it stipulated: “Churches used for public worship are the property of the Nation, represented by the Federal Government, who shall determine which ones can continue to be used as such.” In 1991 the Constitution was amended to end this restriction. Nevertheless, this example illustrates that religious freedom may be interpreted differently in various lands.

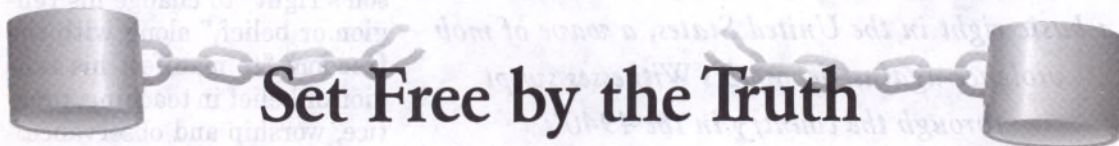
Another Kind of Religious Freedom

Does religious freedom exist in the land in which you live? If so, how is it defined?

Can you worship God in the manner you choose, or are you compelled to become a member of the State religion? Are you permitted to read and disseminate religious literature, or is such printed material proscribed by the government? Can you talk to others about your faith, or is this considered to be an infringement on their religious rights?

The answers to these questions depend upon where you live. Interestingly, however, there is a kind of religious freedom that does not depend at all upon locale. While in Jerusalem in the year 32 C.E., Jesus said to his followers: “If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”—John 8:31, 32.

What did Jesus mean by this statement? His Jewish listeners longed for liberation from Roman rule. But Jesus was not discussing freedom from political oppression. Rather, he was promising his disciples something far better, as we will see in the following article.



IN THE United States, more than a million people are confined in prisons. Of these, almost three thousand have been sentenced to die. Picture yourself in that situation. How would you feel? The thought of such a prospect is grim indeed. Yet, in a sense, *all* humans are in a similar circumstance. The Bible says: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) Yes, as descendants of Adam, we are “imprisoned” by a sinful condition.

(Romans 5:12) We feel the effects of our confinement every day, as did the Christian apostle Paul, who wrote: “I behold in my members another law warring against the law of my mind and leading me captive to sin’s law that is in my members.”—Romans 7:23.

As a result of our sinful nature, each of us is under a death sentence, so to speak, for the Bible states: “The wages sin pays is death.” (Romans 6:23) The psalmist Moses described our situation well: “Seventy

years is all we have—eighty years, if we are strong; yet all they bring us is trouble and sorrow; life is soon over, and we are gone.” —Psalm 90:10, *Today's English Version*; compare James 4:14.

It was with mankind's enslavement to sin and death in mind that Jesus said to his followers: “The truth will set you free.” (John 8:32) With those words, Jesus was extending to his followers the hope of something far greater than freedom from Roman rule—he was offering them a pardon from sin and a release from death! How would this be granted to them? “If the Son sets you free,” Jesus told them, “you will be actually free.” (John 8:36) Yes, by laying down his life, “the Son,” Jesus, served as a propitiatory sacrifice to buy back what Adam lost. (1 John 4: 10) This opened the way for all obedient mankind to be released from bondage to sin and death. God's only-begotten Son died “in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16.

So the truth that can set us free revolves around Jesus Christ. Those who become his footstep followers have the hope of being liberated from sin and death when God's Kingdom takes full control of earth's affairs. Even now, those who accept the truth of God's Word experience genuine freedom. In what ways?

Freedom From Fear of the Dead

Millions today live in fear of the dead. Why? Because their religions have taught them that a soul leaves the body at death and passes on to a spirit realm. That is why it is customary in some lands for the relatives of the deceased to hold a wake lasting several days and nights. This often includes loud singing and the beating of drums. The mourners believe that this will please the dead person and prevent his spirit from

coming back to haunt the living. Christendom's false teachings about the dead have only served to perpetuate this tradition.

The Bible, however, reveals the truth about the condition of the dead. It clearly states that your soul is *you*, not some mysterious part of you that lives on after death. (Genesis 2:7; Ezekiel 18:4) Furthermore, the dead are not being tormented in a fiery hell, nor are they part of a spirit realm that can affect the living. “As for the dead,” says the Bible, “they are conscious of nothing at all . . . There is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol [the grave], the place to which you are going.”—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10.

These Bible truths have set many people free from fear of the dead. No longer do they offer costly sacrifices to appease their ancestors, nor do they worry that their loved ones are being mercilessly tormented for their errors. They have learned that the Bible holds out a wonderful hope for those who have died, for it tells us that at God's appointed time, there will be “a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.” (Acts 24:15; John 5:28, 29) Thus, the dead are now simply resting, as if in a sound sleep.—Compare John 11:11-14.

The truth about the condition of the dead and the hope of a resurrection can free us from the despair that death may bring with it. Such hope sustained a married couple in the United States when their four-year-old son was killed in an accident. “There is a void in our lives that cannot be filled until we see our son again by means of the resurrection,” admits his mother. “But we know our pain is only temporary, since Jehovah promises to wipe away our tears of sorrow.”—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Freedom From Fear of the Future

What does the future hold? Will our earth be burned up in a nuclear holocaust?

Will the ruination of earth's environment render our planet unlivable? Will moral breakdown lead to anarchy and chaos? These are real fears for many today.

The Bible, however, offers freedom from such morbid fears. It assures us that "the earth is standing even to time indefinite." (Ecclesiastes 1:4) Jehovah did not create our planet simply to see it destroyed by irresponsible humans. (Isaiah 45:18) Rather, Jehovah created the earth to serve as a paradise home for a united human family. (Genesis 1:27, 28) His purpose has not changed. The Bible tells us that God will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:18) After that, "the meek ones themselves will possess the earth," says the Bible, "and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:11.

This promise is trustworthy, for God does not lie. Jehovah stated through his prophet Isaiah: "My word that goes forth from my mouth will . . . not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it." (Isaiah 55:11; Titus 1:2) Therefore, we can look forward with confidence to the fulfillment of God's promise recorded in the Bible at 2 Peter 3:13: "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell."

Freedom From Fear of Man

The Bible provides us with sterling examples of men and women who displayed fearlessness in their devotion to God. Among these were Gideon, Barak, Deborah, Daniel, Esther, Jeremiah, Abigail, and Jael—to name just a few. These faithful men and women manifested the attitude of the psalmist who wrote: "In God I have put my

trust. I shall not be afraid. What can earthling man do to me?"—Psalm 56:11.

In the first century, the apostles Peter and John manifested similar boldness when religious authorities commanded them to stop preaching. "As for us," they replied, "we cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard." As a result of their firm stand, Peter and John were later imprisoned. After their miraculous release, they went right back and continued "speaking the word of God with boldness." Soon Peter and the other apostles were brought before the Jewish Sanhedrin. "We positively ordered you not to keep teaching upon the basis of this name," the high priest said to them, "and yet, look! you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching." Peter and the other apostles answered: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 4:16, 17, 19, 20, 31; 5:18-20, 27-29.

In their work of preaching the good news of God's Kingdom, Jehovah's Witnesses today strive to imitate the zeal of the first-century Christians. Even the youths among them often prove themselves fearless by speaking up to others about their faith. Consider some examples.

Stacie, a teenager, is shy by nature. As a result, talking to others about her faith was at first a challenge. What did she do to overcome her shyness? "I studied the Bible and made sure I understood what I was talking about," she says. "It made it easier, and I had more confidence in myself." Stacie's fine reputation was reported on in the local newspaper. The article, written by a teacher in her school, commented: "[Stacie's] faith seems to have given her the strength to fight many of the pressures that most teenagers feel. . . . She feels that service to God should be foremost in her mind."

Tommy began learning about the Bible from his parents when he was just five

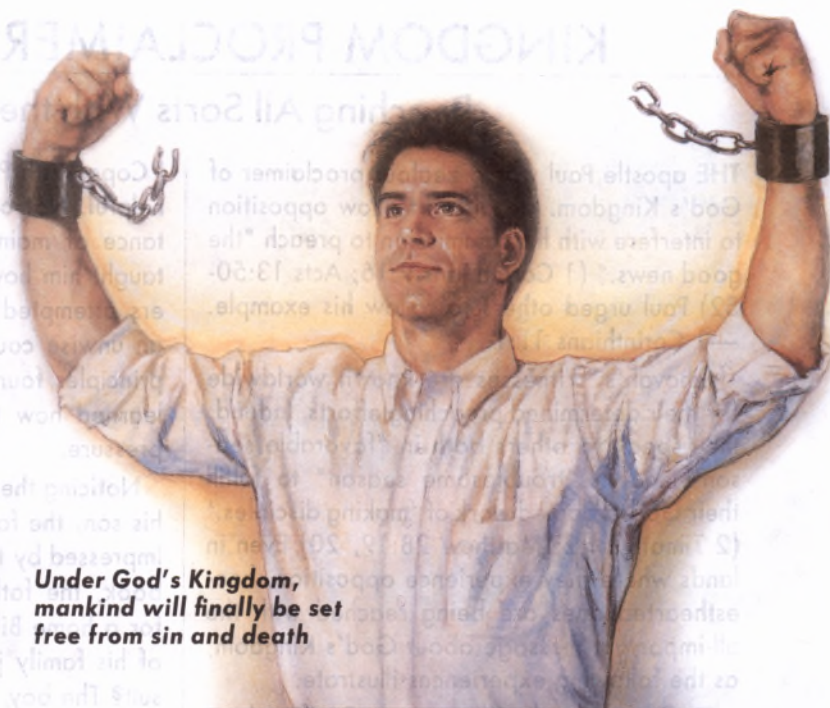
years old. Even at an early age, he took a bold stand for true worship. While his young classmates were drawing holiday pictures, Tommy drew scenes of God's promised Paradise. As a teenager, Tommy noticed that many of the pupils were puzzled about the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses. Rather than shrink back with fear, he asked one of his teachers if he could conduct a question-and-answer discussion with his class so that he could answer all their questions at one time. This was granted, and a fine witness was given.

When she was 17 years old, Markietta found an excellent opportunity to talk to others in her class about her faith. "We were given an assignment to make a speech," she says. "I chose my topic to be on the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*.* I picked five chapters from the book and wrote the titles on the blackboard. I asked the class to rank these in the order they felt was most important." A discussion with class participation followed. "I showed the class the book," Markietta concludes, "and a number of students asked for a copy. Even my teacher said she wanted one."

You Can Be Set Free by the Truth

As we have seen, the truth contained in the Bible has a liberating effect on those of all ages who study it and take its message

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***Under God's Kingdom,
mankind will finally be set
free from sin and death***

to heart. It liberates them from fear of the dead, fear of the future, and fear of man. Ultimately, Jesus' ransom will set obedient mankind free from sin and death. What a joy it will be to live forever on a paradise earth, no longer imprisoned by our inherited sinful condition!—Psalm 37:29.

Would you like to learn more about the blessings that God has promised? If so, what should you do? 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) So if you want to experience the freedom that Jesus promised to his disciples, you must learn about Jehovah God and his Son. You need to know what God's will is and then do it, for the Bible says: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever." —1 John 2:17.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Reaching All Sorts With the Truth

THE apostle Paul was a zealous proclaimer of God's Kingdom. He did not allow opposition to interfere with his commission to preach "the good news." (1 Corinthians 9:16; Acts 13:50-52) Paul urged others to follow his example. —1 Corinthians 11:1.

Jehovah's Witnesses are known worldwide for their determined preaching efforts. Indeed, they speak to others both in "favorable season" and in "troublesome season" to fulfill their God-ordained work of 'making disciples.' (2 Timothy 4:2; Matthew 28:19, 20) Even in lands where they experience opposition, honesthearted ones are being reached with the all-important message about God's Kingdom, as the following experiences illustrate.

□ On an island in the western Pacific where the work of Jehovah's Witnesses is under ban, a 12-year-old boy found himself surrounded by bad associates at school. Many of his classmates routinely smoked cigarettes, read pornographic literature, harassed teachers, and engaged in fighting. The situation got so bad that the boy asked his father if he could transfer to another school. The father, however, reasoned with his son against such an idea, since he felt that the students' conduct in the other schools nearby would be no different. Yet, how was he to help his son?

The father remembered having a book for young people in the house. It was a gift from a relative who was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. So he looked for the book, and upon finding it, he passed it on to his son. It was entitled *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*.^{*} The boy found the chapter "How Can

I Cope With Peer Pressure?" to be especially helpful. Not only did it teach him the importance of maintaining self-respect but it also taught him how to say no tactfully when others attempted to pressure him into following an unwise course. By applying the Scriptural principles found in the book, the young man learned how to cope successfully with peer pressure.

Noticing these and other positive changes in his son, the father decided to read the book. Impressed by the practical advice found in the book, the father asked Jehovah's Witnesses for a home Bible study. Later, other members of his family joined him in the study. The result? The boy, his younger brother, his father, and two of the boy's grandparents are now Jehovah's Witnesses.

□ In the same land, two of Jehovah's Witnesses were imprisoned because of their strict obedience to Bible principles. However, they did not let their situation deter them from speaking out boldly about God's Kingdom. They approached a prison official and received permission to commemorate the Lord's Evening Meal there. How happy they were when 14 prisoners expressed interest in the Bible and joined the Witnesses for this important event! Following their release, some of them continued to study the Bible and associate with Jehovah's Witnesses.

In more than 25 countries, Jehovah's Witnesses suffer as a result of bans or various forms of opposition or persecution. Like the apostles, however, they continue "without let-up teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus." —Acts 5:42.

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"THIS IS HOW GOD LOVED US"

"If this is how God loved us, then we are ourselves under obligation to love one another."—1 JOHN 4:11.

ON Sunday, March 23, 1997, after sundown, there will no doubt be over 13,000,000 people worldwide who will gather in Kingdom Halls and other meeting places being used by Jehovah's Witnesses. Why? Because their hearts have been touched by God's greatest expression of love toward humankind. Jesus Christ focused attention on that magnificent evidence of God's love, saying: "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."—John 3:16.

² As we consider the love that God has shown, we do well to ask ourselves, 'Do I truly appreciate what God has done? Does the way that I am using my life give evidence of that appreciation?'

"God Is Love"

³ Displaying love is not in itself extraordinary on God's part because "God is love." (1 John 4:8) Love is his dominant characteristic. When he was preparing the earth for human habitation, his raising the mountains and gathering water into lakes and

oceans was a breathtaking display of *power*. (Genesis 1:9, 10) When God put into operation the water cycle and the oxygen cycle, when he designed countless micro-organisms and varieties of vegetation to convert chemical elements of the earth into a form that humans could assimilate in order to sustain their lives, when he set our biological clocks to correspond with the length of days and of months on planet Earth, this manifested great *wisdom*. (Psalm 104:24; Jeremiah 10:12) Yet, even more outstanding in the physical creation is the evidence of God's *love*.

⁴ Our palates tell us of God's love when we bite into succulent, ripe fruit that obviously was made not only to sustain us but also to bring us pleasure. Our eyes see unmistakable evidence of it in breathtaking sunsets, the star-filled heavens on a clear night, the varied forms and vibrant colors of flowers, the antics of young animals, and the warm smiles of friends. Our noses make us aware of it when we breathe the sweet scent of spring flowers. Our ears sense it as we listen to the sound of a waterfall, the songs of birds, and the voices of dear ones. We feel it when a loved one gives us a warm embrace. Certain animals are endowed with abilities to see, hear, or smell things that humans cannot. But humankind, made in the image

1. On March 23 after sundown, why will millions of people be gathering in Kingdom Halls and other meeting places around the globe?

2. What questions could all of us beneficially ask ourselves regarding our response to God's love?

3. (a) Why is the displaying of love not unusual for God? (b) How are power and wisdom manifest in his works of creation?

4. In the physical creation, what evidence of God's love should all of us see and appreciate?

God gave his only-begotten Son

of God, has the capacity to sense God's love in a manner that no animal can.—Genesis 1:27.

⁵ When Jehovah God created the first humans, Adam and Eve, he surrounded them with evidence of his love. He had planted a garden, a paradise, and caused trees of all sorts to grow in it. He had provided a river to water it and filled it with fascinating birds and animals. He gave all of this to Adam and Eve as their home. (Genesis 2:8-10, 19) Jehovah dealt with them as his children, part of his universal family. (Luke 3:38) Having provided Eden as a pattern, the heavenly Father of this first human pair set before them the satisfying assignment of extending Paradise to cover the globe. The entire earth was to be populated with their offspring.—Genesis 1:28.

⁶ Shortly, however, Adam and Eve faced a test of obedience, a test of loyalty. First one and then the other failed to show appreciation for the love that had been bestowed upon them. What they did was shocking. It was inexcusable! As a result, they lost their relationship with God, were expelled from his family, and were ousted from Eden. We today still feel the effects of their sin. (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:1-6, 16-19, 24; Romans 5:12) But have we learned from what happened? How are *we* responding to God's love? Do the decisions we make each day show that we appreciate his love?—1 John 5:3.

⁷ Even the gross lack of appreciation our first human parents showed for all that God had done for them did not stifle God's own love. Out of compassion for humans not then born—including those of us alive today—God allowed Adam and Eve to raise a family before they died. (Genesis 5:1-5; Matthew 5:44, 45) If he had not done that, none of us would have been born. By progressive revelation of his

5. How did Jehovah show abundant love toward Adam and Eve?

6. (a) How do you feel about the rebellious course taken by Adam and Eve? (b) What might indicate that we have learned from what took place in Eden and that we have benefited from that knowledge?

7. In spite of what Adam and Eve did, how did Jehovah show love for their offspring?



will, Jehovah also provided a basis for hope for all those of Adam's offspring who would exercise faith. (Genesis 3:15; 22:18; Isaiah 9:6, 7) His arrangement included the means whereby people of all nations could regain what Adam had lost, namely, perfect life as approved members of God's universal family. He did this by providing a ransom.

Why a Ransom?

⁸ Was it really necessary for a ransom price in the form of a human life to be paid? Could not God simply have decreed that although Adam and Eve must die for their rebellion, all of their offspring who would obey God could live forever? From a shortsighted human standpoint, that might sound reasonable. However, Jehovah is "a lover of righteousness and justice." (Psalm 33:5) Only after Adam and Eve became sinners did they produce children; so none of those children were born perfect. (Psalm 51:5) They all had an inheritance of sin, and the penalty for sin is death. If Jehovah had ignored this, what sort of example would that have set for the members of his universal family? He could not ignore his own righteous standards. He respected the requirements of justice. No one could ever legitimately find fault with the way in which God dealt with the issues involved. —Romans 3:21-23.

⁹ How, then, could a suitable basis be provided for delivering those of Adam's offspring who would demonstrate loving obedience to Jehovah? If a *perfect* human was to die sacrificially, justice could allow for the value of that perfect life to provide a covering for the sins of those who would in faith accept the ransom. Since the sin of

8. Why could God not simply have decreed that although Adam and Eve must die, none of their obedient offspring would have to die?

9. According to the divine standard of justice, what sort of ransom was needed?

one man, Adam, was responsible for causing the entire human family to be sinners, the shed blood of another perfect human, being of corresponding value, could balance the scales of justice. (1 Timothy 2:5, 6) But where could such a person be found?

How Great Was the Cost?

¹⁰ Among the offspring of sinner Adam, there was no one who could provide what was needed in order to buy back the life prospects that Adam had forfeited. "Not one of them can by any means redeem even a brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; (and the redemption price of their soul is so precious that it has ceased to time indefinite) that he should still live forever and not see the pit." (Psalm 49:7-9) In the place of leaving humankind with no way out, Jehovah himself mercifully made provision.

¹¹ Jehovah did not send an angel to earth to pretend to die by laying down an incarnated body while he lived on as a spirit. Instead, by performing a miracle that only God, the Creator, could have devised, he transferred the life-force and personality pattern of a heavenly son to the womb of a woman, Mary the daughter of Heli, of the tribe of Judah. God's active force, his holy spirit, safeguarded the development of the child in its mother's womb, and it was born a perfect human. (Luke 1:35; 1 Peter 2:22) This one then had at his disposal the price needed to provide a ransom that would fully satisfy the requirements of divine justice. —Hebrews 10:5.

¹² To which of his myriads of heavenly

10. Why were Adam's offspring unable to provide the needed ransom?

11. By what means did Jehovah provide the perfect human life that was needed for a suitable ransom?

12. (a) In what sense is Jesus God's "only-begotten Son"? (b) How did God's sending this one to provide the ransom emphasize His love for us?

sons did Jehovah give this assignment? To the one described in the Scriptures as his "only-begotten Son." (1 John 4:9) This expression is used to describe, not what he became when born as a human, but what he was prior to that in the heavens. He is the only one whom Jehovah created directly without the cooperation of anyone else. He is the Firstborn of all creation. He is the one who was used by God to bring into existence all other creatures. The angels are sons of God, as Adam was a son of God. But Jesus is described as having "a glory such as belongs to an only-begotten son from a father." He is said to reside "in the bosom position with the Father." (John 1:14, 18) His relationship with the Father is a close, confidential, tender one. He shares his Father's love for humankind. Proverbs 8:30, 31 expresses how his Father feels about this Son and how the Son feels about humankind: "I came to be the one he [Jehovah] was specially fond of day by day, I being glad before him all the time, . . . and the things I [Jesus, Jehovah's Master Worker, the personification of wisdom] was fond of were with the sons of men." It was this most precious Son that God sent to earth to provide the ransom. How meaningful, therefore, is Jesus' statement: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son"—John 3:16.

¹³ To help us grasp in some measure what that means, long before Jesus came to earth, God instructed Abraham, some 3,890 years ago: "Take, please, your son, your only son whom you so love, Isaac, and make a trip to the land of Moriah and there offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall designate to you." (Genesis 22:1, 2) In faith, Abraham obeyed. Put yourself in Abraham's position. What if that was

13, 14. What should the Bible record of Abraham's attempting to offer up Isaac help us to appreciate about what Jehovah did? (1 John 4:10)

your son, your only son whom you dearly love? What feelings would you have as you split the wood for the burnt offering, make the trip of several days to the land of Moriah, and place your son on the altar?

¹⁴ Why does a compassionate parent have such feelings? Genesis 1:27 says that God created man in His image. Our feelings of love and compassion reflect in a very limited way Jehovah's own love and compassion. In Abraham's case, God intervened, so that Isaac was not actually sacrificed. (Genesis 22:12, 13; Hebrews 11:17-19) However, in his own case, Jehovah did not stop short of providing the ransom, though it was done at great cost to both himself and his Son. What was done was, not because of any obligation on God's part, but, rather, as an expression of extraordinary undeserved kindness. Do we fully appreciate it?—Hebrews 2:9.

What It Makes Possible

¹⁵ That loving provision made by God has a profound effect on the lives of those who accept it in faith. They were formerly alienated from God as a result of sin. They were, as his Word says, 'enemies because their minds were on works that were wicked.' (Colossians 1:21-23) But they became "reconciled to God through the death of his Son." (Romans 5:8-10) Having changed their course of life and having accepted the forgiveness that God makes possible to those who exercise faith in Christ's sacrifice, they are favored with a clean conscience.—Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 3:21.

¹⁶ Jehovah has extended to a limited number of these, a little flock, the undeserved favor of being associated with his Son in the

15. How has the ransom affected lives even in this present system of things?

16. What blessings are granted to the little flock because of their faith in the ransom?

heavenly Kingdom, with a view to carrying out God's original purpose for the earth. (Luke 12:32) These have been taken "out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation . . . to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth." (Revelation 5:9, 10) To these, the apostle Paul wrote: "You received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which spirit we cry out: 'Abba, Father!' The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:15-17) In being adopted by God as his sons, they are granted the cherished relationship that Adam lost; but to these sons will be granted the added privileges of heavenly service—something that Adam never had. No wonder the apostle John said: "See what sort of love the Father has given us, so that we should be called children of God!" (1 John 3:1) To such ones God expresses not only principled love (*a-ga'pe*) but also tender affection (*phi-li'a*), which is characteristic of the bond that exists between genuine friends.—John 16:27.

¹⁷ To others too—all who exercise faith in God's generous provision for life through Jesus Christ—Jehovah opens the opportunity to gain the precious relationship that Adam lost. The apostle Paul explained: "The eager expectation of the creation [the human creation descended from Adam] is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God [that is, they await the time when it becomes clearly evident that the sons of God who are heirs with Christ of the heavenly Kingdom are taking positive action in behalf of humankind]. For the creation was subjected to futility [they were born in sin

17. (a) To all who exercise faith in the ransom, what opportunity is given? (b) What will "the glorious freedom of the children of God" mean for them?

with the prospect of death, and there was no way in which they could liberate themselves], not by its own will but through him that subjected it, on the basis of hope [given by God] that the creation itself also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God." (Romans 8:19-21) What will that freedom mean? That they have been liberated from bondage to sin and death. They will have perfection of mind and body, Paradise as their home, and eternal life in which to enjoy their perfection and express their appreciation to Jehovah, the only true God. And how was all of this made possible? Through the ransom sacrifice of God's only-begotten Son.

¹⁸ On Nisan 14, 33 C.E., in an upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus instituted the Memorial of his death. The annual commemoration of his death has become an important event in the lives of all true Christians. Jesus himself commanded: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19) In 1997 the Memorial will be held after sundown on March 23 (which is when Nisan 14 begins). On that day, nothing could be more important than being present for this Memorial occasion.

18. On March 23 after sundown, what will we be doing, and why?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ In what ways has God shown abundant love for humankind?
- ☐ Why was a perfect human life needed to ransom Adam's offspring?
- ☐ At what great cost did Jehovah provide the ransom?
- ☐ What does the ransom make possible?

“THOUGH YOU NEVER SAW HIM, YOU LOVE HIM”

“Though you never saw him, you love him.

Though you are not looking upon him at present, yet you exercise faith in him and are greatly rejoicing.”—1 PETER 1:8.

NO ONE alive on earth today has ever seen Jesus Christ. Yet, millions of people profess to love him. Each year on January 9, in Manila, the Philippines, a life-size statue of Jesus Christ bearing a cross is pulled through the streets in what has been described as the most massive, most spectacular manifestation of popular religion in the country. The excited crowd pushes and shoves; people even climb over one another in a frenzied effort to touch the image. Many who are present to observe this are attracted mainly by the festive procession. Yet, some of them are undoubtedly people who feel sincerely drawn to Jesus. As evidence of that, they may wear a crucifix or may regularly go to church. However, can such idolatry be regarded as true worship?

²In the first century, there were many thousands in the Roman provinces of Judea, Samaria, Perea, and Galilee who personally *did* see and hear Jesus Christ. They listened as he explained heartwarming truths about the Kingdom of God. They were eyewitnesses of the miracles that he

performed. Some of these became his devoted disciples, convinced that he was “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16) However, those to whom the apostle Peter wrote his first inspired letter had not been among these.

³Those addressed by Peter were located in the Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia—all in the area of modern-day Turkey. To them Peter wrote: “Though you never saw him, you love him. Though you are not looking upon him at present, yet you exercise faith in him and are greatly rejoicing with an unspeakable and glorified joy.” (1 Peter 1:1, 8) How had they come to know Jesus Christ to the point of loving him and exercising faith in him?

⁴Evidently, some were in Jerusalem when the apostle Peter witnessed to the crowd attending the festival of Pentecost in 33 C.E. After the festival many disciples stayed in Jerusalem in order to receive further instruction from the apostles. (Acts 2:9, 41, 42; compare 1 Peter 1:1.) On repeated missionary tours, the apostle Paul carried on a zealous ministry also among the people who lived in the area to which Peter later sent the first Biblical letter bearing his name. —Acts 18:23; 19:10; Galatians 1:1, 2.

4, 5. How did those people who had never seen Jesus learn enough about him to love him and put faith in him?

1. Although no one on earth today has seen Jesus, how do some religious people endeavor to show devotion to him?

2, 3. (a) Who among Jesus’ followers actually saw and heard him? (b) Who else in the first century loved Jesus and put faith in him, although they never personally saw him?

⁵ Why were those people, who had never seen Jesus, so strongly attracted to him? In our day, why do millions more, around the globe, deeply love him?

The Things That They Heard

⁶ If you had been in Jerusalem when Peter spoke to that festival crowd in 33 C.E., what would you have learned about Jesus? Beyond all doubt the miracles he performed showed that he was sent by God. That, although sinful men had put Jesus to death, he was no longer in the grave but had been resurrected and then was exalted to heaven to the right hand of God. That Jesus was, indeed, the Christ, the Messiah of whom the prophets had written. That through Jesus Christ, holy spirit had been poured out on his followers so that they were quickly able to witness to people from many nations about the magnificent things that God was doing by means of his Son. The hearts of many who heard Peter on that occasion were deeply moved, and some 3,000 got baptized as Christian disciples. (Acts 2:14-42) If you had been there, would you have taken such decisive action?

⁷ If you had been among those present when the apostle Paul taught in Antioch in the Roman province of Galatia, what else might you have learned about Jesus? You would have heard Paul explain that Jesus' being condemned to death by the rulers in Jerusalem had been foretold by the prophets. You would also have heard about eyewitness evidence of Jesus' resurrection. You would surely have been impressed by

6. (a) If you had heard Peter witness about Jesus at Pentecost 33 C.E., what could you have learned? (b) How did this affect some 3,000 who were present?

7. (a) If you had been in Antioch when the apostle Paul preached there, what might you have learned? (b) Why did some in the crowd become believers and share the good news with others?

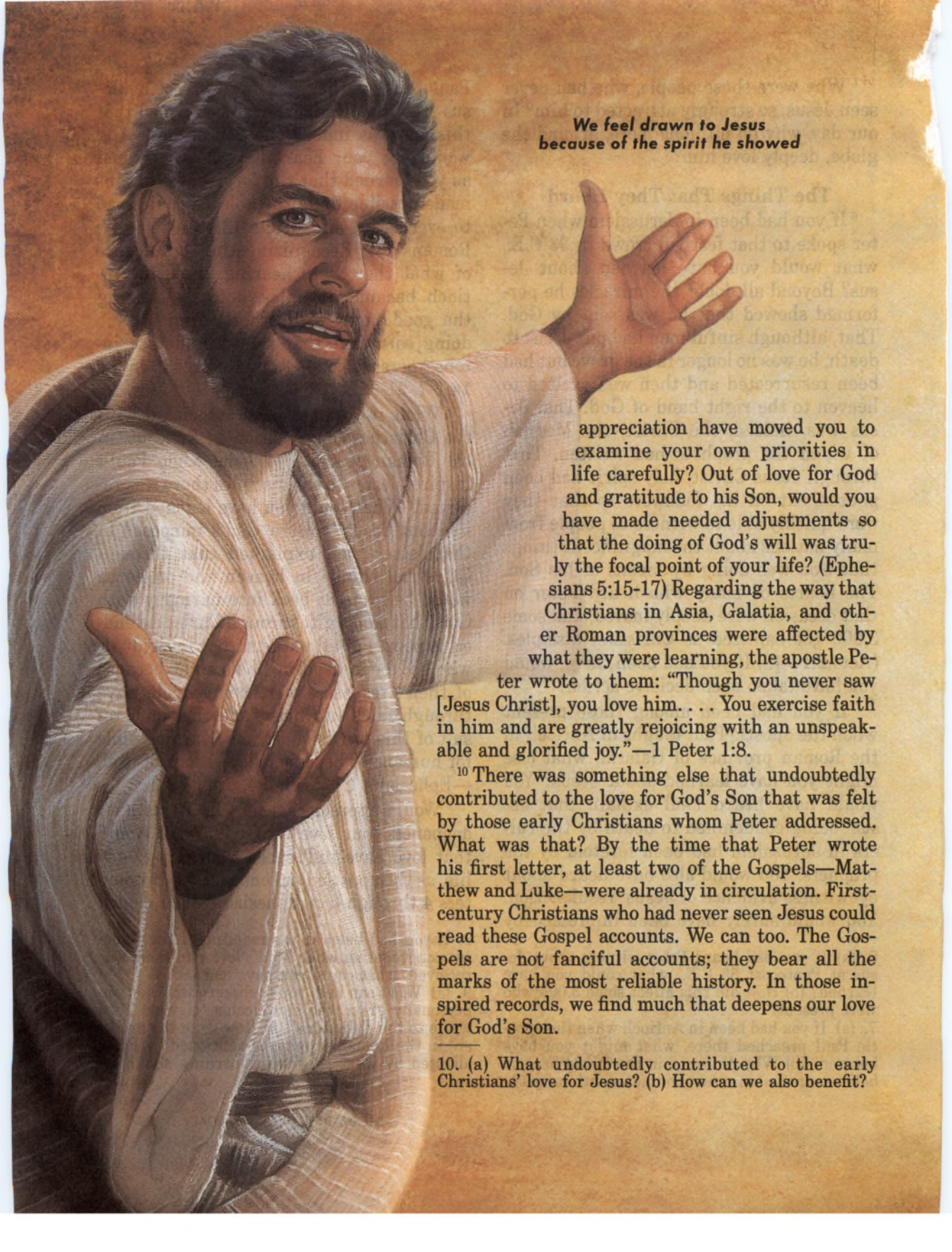
Paul's explanation that by resurrecting Jesus from the dead, Jehovah confirmed that this one was indeed the Son of God. And would not your heart have been warmed as you learned that the forgiveness of sins made possible by faith in Jesus could lead to everlasting life? (Acts 13:16-41, 46, 47; Romans 1:4) Recognizing the significance of what they were hearing, some in Antioch became disciples, actively sharing the good news with others, even though doing so meant that they would face intense persecution.—Acts 13:42, 43, 48-52; 14:1-7, 21-23.

⁸ What if you had been associated with the Christian congregation in Ephesus, in the Roman province of Asia, when Paul's inspired letter to the disciples there was received? What could you have learned from it about Jesus' role in God's purpose? In that letter Paul explained that through Christ all things in heaven and on earth would be brought back into harmony with God, that God's gift through Christ extended to people of all nations, that individuals who had been dead in God's sight because of their trespasses were being made alive through faith in Christ, and that as a result of this provision, it was again possible for humans to become beloved sons of God.—Ephesians 1:1, 5-10; 2:4, 5, 11-13.

⁹ Would appreciation for all of this have deepened your love for God's Son? Would that love have influenced your day-to-day life, as the apostle Paul encouraged in chapters 4 through 6 of Ephesians? Would such

8. If you had been at the meeting of the Ephesus congregation when Paul's letter to them was received, what could you have learned?

9. (a) What can help you to discern whether you personally grasp the significance of what Paul wrote to the Ephesians? (b) How were the brothers in the Roman provinces mentioned by Peter affected by what they were learning about Jesus?



**We feel drawn to Jesus
because of the spirit he showed**

appreciation have moved you to examine your own priorities in life carefully? Out of love for God and gratitude to his Son, would you have made needed adjustments so that the doing of God's will was truly the focal point of your life? (Ephesians 5:15-17) Regarding the way that Christians in Asia, Galatia, and other Roman provinces were affected by what they were learning, the apostle Peter wrote to them: "Though you never saw [Jesus Christ], you love him. . . . You exercise faith in him and are greatly rejoicing with an unspeakable and glorified joy."—1 Peter 1:8.

¹⁰ There was something else that undoubtedly contributed to the love for God's Son that was felt by those early Christians whom Peter addressed. What was that? By the time that Peter wrote his first letter, at least two of the Gospels—Matthew and Luke—were already in circulation. First-century Christians who had never seen Jesus could read these Gospel accounts. We can too. The Gospels are not fanciful accounts; they bear all the marks of the most reliable history. In those inspired records, we find much that deepens our love for God's Son.

10. (a) What undoubtedly contributed to the early Christians' love for Jesus? (b) How can we also benefit?

The Spirit He Showed

¹¹ There in the written record of Jesus' life, we learn how he dealt with other humans. The spirit he showed touches the heart of people even now, over 1,960 years after he died. Everyone alive is burdened with the effects of sin. Many millions are victims of injustice, struggle with illness, or for other reasons feel crushing disappointment. To all such, Jesus says: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light."—Matthew 11:28-30.

¹² Jesus showed sensitive concern for the poor, the hungry, and those sorrowing. When circumstances made it necessary, he even fed large crowds miraculously. (Luke 9:12-17) He freed them from enslaving traditions. He also built up their faith in God's provision to put an end to political and economic oppression. Jesus did not crush the spirit of those who were already downtrodden. With tenderness and love, he skillfully lifted up the meek. He refreshed those who were like bruised reeds that had doubled over and those who were like smoldering flaxen wicks about to be extinguished. Right down to the present, his name inspires hope, even in the hearts of those who have never seen him.—Matthew 12:15-21; 15:3-10.

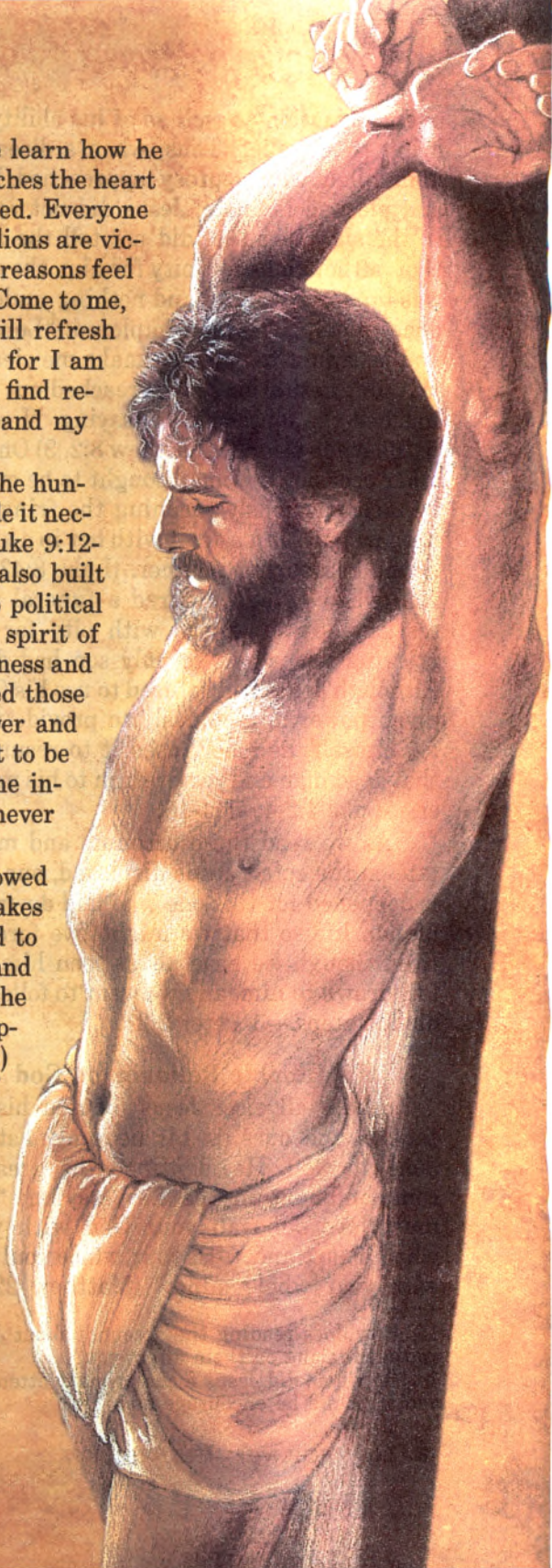
¹³ Jesus did not approve of wrongdoing, yet he showed understanding toward people who had made mistakes in life but who manifested repentance and turned to him for help. (Luke 7:36-50) He would sit down and have a meal with people who were despised in the community if he felt that this would provide an opportunity to help them spiritually. (Matthew 9:9-13) As a result of the spirit he displayed, millions of people in similar circumstances who have never seen Jesus have been moved to get to know him and have put faith in him.

¹⁴ The way that Jesus dealt with people who were ill or disabled gives evidence of his warmth

11, 12. What is there about the spirit that Jesus showed toward other humans that makes you love him?

13. Why does the way Jesus dealt with sinners attract people?

14. What appeals to you about the way in which Jesus helped people who were ill, disabled, or bereaved?



and compassion as well as of his ability to bring them relief. Thus, when a diseased man filled with leprosy approached him and pleaded for help, Jesus did not recoil at the sight. And he did not tell the man that, although he felt pity for him, the case was too far advanced and nothing could be done to help. The man implored: "Lord, if you just want to, you can make me clean." Without hesitation, Jesus reached out and touched the leprous man, saying: "I want to. Be made clean." (Matthew 8:2, 3) On another occasion a woman sought to be cured by inconspicuously touching the fringe of his garment. Jesus dealt with her in a kindly and reassuring manner. (Luke 8:43-48) And when he encountered a funeral procession, he was moved with pity for the grieving widow whose only son had died. Although Jesus had refused to use his God-given power miraculously to provide food for himself, he freely used it to resurrect that dead man and restore him to his mother.—Luke 4:2-4; 7:11-16.

¹⁵ As we read these accounts and meditate on the spirit Jesus displayed, our love is deepened for this one who laid down his human life so that we might live forever. Even though we have never seen him, we feel drawn to him, and we want to follow in his footsteps.—1 Peter 2:21.

His Humble Reliance on God

¹⁶ Above all else, Jesus focused his attention and ours on his heavenly Father, Jehovah God. He identified the greatest commandment in the Law, saying: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind." (Matthew 22:36,

15. How does reading the accounts about Jesus and meditating on them affect you?

16. On whom did Jesus focus primary attention, and what did he encourage us to do?

37) He admonished his disciples: "Have faith in God." (Mark 11:22) When they were faced with a serious test of their faith, he urged them: "Pray continually." —Matthew 26:41.

¹⁷ Jesus himself set the example. Prayer was an important part of his life. (Matthew 14:23; Luke 9:28; 18:1) When the time came for him to select his apostles, Jesus did not simply rely on his own judgment, though formerly all the angels in heaven were under his supervision. Humbly he spent an entire night in prayer to his Father. (Luke 6:12, 13) When he faced arrest and a painful death, Jesus again turned to his Father, praying earnestly. He did not take the view that he knew Satan well and could easily handle whatever that wicked one might devise. Jesus realized how important it was that he not fail. What a reproach failure would be for his Father! And what a loss for humankind, whose life prospects depended on the sacrifice that Jesus was to offer!

¹⁸ Jesus prayed repeatedly—when with his apostles in an upper room in Jerusalem and even more fervently in the garden of Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:36-44; John 17:1-26; Hebrews 5:7) When suffering on the torture stake, he did not revile those who taunted him. Instead, he prayed in behalf of those who were acting in ignorance: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34) He kept his mind focused on his Father, "committing himself to the one who judges righteously." The final words that he uttered on the torture stake were a prayer to his Father. (1 Peter 2:23; Luke 23:46) How grateful we are that, with full reliance on Jehovah, Jesus faithfully completed the

17, 18. (a) How did Jesus demonstrate his humble reliance on his Father? (b) Why is what he did so important to us?

assignment that his Father had entrusted to him! Though we have never seen Jesus Christ, how deeply we love him for what he did!

Expressing Our Love for Him

¹⁹ How can we give evidence that the love we profess is more than mere words? Since his Father, whom Jesus loved, prohibited the making of images and then treating these as objects of devotion, we surely would not bring honor to Jesus by wearing such an image on a chain around our neck or by carrying one through the streets. (Exodus 20:4, 5; John 4:24) It would be no honor to Jesus for us to attend religious services, even doing so several times a week, if we did not live in harmony with his teachings the rest of the week. Jesus said: "He that has my commandments and observes them, that one is he who loves me. In turn he that loves me will be loved by my Father." —John 14:21, 23; 15:10.

²⁰ What commandments did he give us? Foremost, to worship the true God, Jehovah, and him alone. (Matthew 4:10; John 17:3) Because of his role in God's purpose, Jesus also taught that we must exercise faith in him as God's Son and that we must show it by shunning wicked works and by walking in the light. (John 3:16-21) He counseled us to seek first God's Kingdom and his righteousness, putting these ahead of concern about physical needs. (Matthew 6:31-33) He commanded that we love one another as he loved us. (John 13:34; 1 Peter 1:22) And he commissioned us to be witnesses concerning God's purpose, even as he was. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20;

19. In expressing love for Jesus, what practices would we avoid as completely inappropriate?

20. What are some things that will show whether we truly do love Jesus?

Revelation 3:14) Although they have never seen Jesus, some five million Witnesses of Jehovah today are moved by genuine love for him to observe those commandments. Their not having personally seen Jesus in no way weakens their determination to be obedient. They call to mind what their Lord said to the apostle Thomas: "Because you have seen me have you believed? Happy are those who do not see and yet believe." —John 20:29.

²¹ It is hoped that you will be among those worldwide who will gather at the Kingdom Halls of Jehovah's Witnesses after sunset on Sunday, March 23, 1997, to recall the greatest expression of God's love toward mankind and to commemorate the death of his loyal Son, Jesus Christ. What is said and done on that occasion should deepen love for Jehovah and his Son and so increase the desire to keep God's commandments. —1 John 5:3.

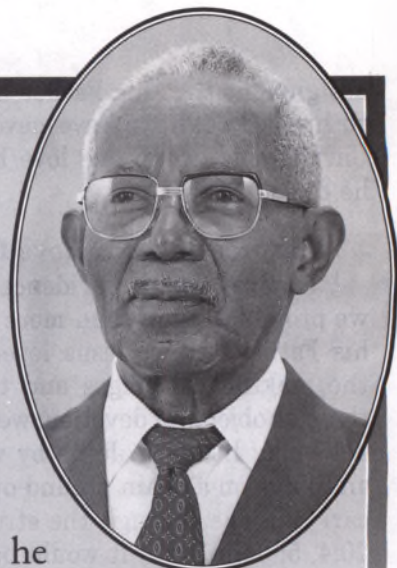
21. How do we benefit from attending the Memorial of Christ's death, which will be held this year on Sunday, March 23?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ How had those to whom the first book of Peter was addressed come to know and love Jesus?
- ☐ What are some of the things that early Christians heard that impress you?
- ☐ What is there about the spirit Jesus showed that deepens your love for him?
- ☐ Why is Jesus' humble reliance on God so important to us?
- ☐ How can we demonstrate our love for Jesus Christ?

SUSTAINED BY MY CONFIDENCE IN JEHOVAH

AS TOLD BY AGENOR DA PAIXÃO



Our only son, Paul, died of bronchitis when he was just 11 months old. Three months later, on August 15, 1945, my precious wife died of pneumonia. I was 28, and these blows left me sad and distressed. Yet confidence in Jehovah and his promises sustained me. Let me relate how I came to have this confidence.

FROM the time of my birth in Salvador, Bahia State, Brazil, on January 5, 1917, Mother taught me to worship the “saints” of the Catholic Church. She even woke my brothers and me up early in the morning so that we could pray together. However, my parents also attended sessions of candomblé, the African-Brazilian voodoo rites. I respected these beliefs, but I had no confidence in the so-called saints of Catholicism or in candomblé. What particularly disappointed me was the racial prejudice manifested within these religions.

In time my two older brothers left home to look for work. Later my father abandoned the family. So at the age of nine, I had to find work to help my mother and my younger sister. About 16 years later, conversations with a fellow factory worker proved to be a turning point in my life.

Acquiring Confidence in Jehovah

I met Fernando Teles in 1942. He often said that it was wrong to worship “saints.” (1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 John 5:21) At first I did not pay any attention to him. But his sincerity and his interest in people, regardless of their color, attracted me, and I came to admire his Bible knowledge, particularly what he said about God’s Kingdom and a paradise earth. (Isaiah 9:6, 7; Daniel 2:44; Revelation 21:3, 4) Noting my interest, he gave me a Bible and some Bible literature.

A few weeks later, I accepted an invitation to a congregation Bible study. The group was studying the book *Religion*, published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. I enjoyed the study and began to attend all the congregation meetings of Jehovah’s Witnesses. What especially impressed me was the absence of prejudice and the

way I was immediately accepted. About that time I began to court Lindaura. When I spoke with her about what I was learning, she began to attend the meetings with me.

Another thing that impressed me at the meetings was the emphasis placed on the preaching work. (Matthew 24:14; Acts 20:20) Encouraged by the pioneers, as full-time ministers are called, I began to speak informally to others on the train as I traveled back and forth to work. When I found someone who was interested, I would get his address and visit him to try to cultivate that interest.

In the meantime, my confidence in Jehovah and in the organization that he is using kept growing. Thus, after listening to a Bible discourse on Christian dedication, I was baptized, in the Atlantic Ocean, on April 19, 1943. On that same day, I shared for the first time in the regular house-to-house ministry.

Two weeks later, on May 5, Lindaura and I were married. Then, in August 1943, she was baptized during the first assembly held by Jehovah's Witnesses in the city of Salvador. The 1973 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* said regarding that assembly: "Clergy action managed to silence the public lecture in Salvador, but not before a great deal of fine advertising . . . had taken place." The evidence of Jehovah's guidance in the face of severe persecution strengthened my confidence in him.

As I related at the beginning, just two years after Lindaura's baptism—and three months after the death of our son—my dear wife died. She was only 22. But the confidence I had in Jehovah sustained me during those difficult months.

Strengthened by Spiritual Activity

In 1946, a year after losing my wife and son, I was appointed Bible study servant in

the one congregation then existing in Salvador. That same year the Theocratic Ministry School started in the congregations in Brazil, and I became the first school conductor in the state of Bahia. Then in October 1946, the "Glad Nations" Theocratic Assembly was held in the city of São Paulo. My employer of ten years said that he needed me and pressured me not to go. However, after I explained to him how much my attending the assembly would mean to me, he gave me a generous gift and wished me well on the trip.

The assembly sessions in São Paulo's Municipal Theater were conducted in Portuguese—the language of Brazil—as well as in English, German, Hungarian, Polish, and Russian. At that assembly the *Awake!* magazine was released in Portuguese. I was so moved by the assembly—some 1,700 attended the public talk—that I filled out an application to begin pioneering on November 1, 1946.

At that time we used the phonograph extensively in our pioneer work. The talk "Protection" was one we often played to householders. Afterward, we said: "To protect ourselves from an invisible enemy, we have to stick to a friend who is also invisible. Jehovah is our greatest friend and is much more powerful than our enemy, Satan. So we have to stick close to Jehovah to protect ourselves from him." Then we offered the booklet *Protection*, which provided further information.

I had pioneered less than a year when I received an invitation to serve as a special pioneer with the Carioca Congregation in Rio de Janeiro. There we sometimes faced strong opposition. My partner, Ivan Brenner, once was actually attacked by a householder. The neighbors called the police, and we were all taken to the police station.

During the interrogation, the enraged

householder accused us of disturbing the peace. The chief of police ordered him to keep quiet. Then the police chief turned to us and in a mild tone said we were free to go. He held our accuser and charged him with assault. Situations like that sustained my confidence in Jehovah.

Expanded Full-Time Ministry

On July 1, 1949, I was thrilled to be invited to serve at Bethel, as the principal facilities of Jehovah's Witnesses in a country are called. The Bethel in Brazil was then located at 330 Licínio Cardoso Street in Rio de Janeiro. At the time, there were only 17 in the entire Bethel family. For a while I attended the local Engenho de Dentro Congregation, but later I was assigned as the presiding overseer in the only congregation in Belford Roxo, a city located a few miles from Rio de Janeiro.

Weekends were very busy. On Saturdays I traveled to Belford Roxo by train, shared in the field ministry in the afternoon, and then went to the Theocratic Ministry School and Service Meeting in the evening. I stayed overnight with the brothers and participated in the field ministry the next morning. That afternoon I attended the public Bible talk and *Watchtower* Study and returned to Bethel about half past nine at night. Today there are 18 congregations in Belford Roxo.

In 1954, after three and a half years of that schedule, I was assigned back to Rio de Janeiro as the presiding overseer in the São Cristóvão Congregation. For the next ten years, I served with that congregation.

My Bethel Assignments

My first assignment at Bethel was to build a garage for the Society's lone vehicle, a 1949 Dodge van nicknamed Chocolate because of its brown color. When the garage

was completed, I was assigned to work in the kitchen, where I stayed for three years. Then I was transferred to the Job Press Department, which is where I have been now for over 40 years.

Much of the printing equipment we had was secondhand. For example, for many years we had an old platen press that we affectionately called Sarah, after Abraham's wife. It had been used for years in the factory at the Watch Tower Society's headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. Then in the 1950's, it was shipped to Brazil. Here, like Abraham's wife, in its old age it produced fruitage—in the form of *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines.

I have never ceased to be amazed at the increase in the number of publications produced in Brazil's printing plant. In the entire year of 1953, we printed 324,400 magazines, but now the production is more than three million each month!

Our Bethel Facilities

It has been exciting over the years to watch the expansion of our Bethel facilities in Brazil. In 1952 we built a two-story factory behind our home in Rio de Janeiro. Then in 1968, Bethel was transferred to a new building in the city of São Paulo. When we moved in, everything seemed large and spacious for our Bethel family of 42 members. We really thought that this building would serve for all our future growth. However, in 1971 two five-story additions were built, and an adjoining factory was purchased, remodeled, and tied in to this complex. But within a few years, the continued increase of Kingdom proclaimers—we passed the 100,000 mark in 1975—demanded more room.

Therefore, a new complex of buildings was constructed about 90 miles from São Paulo near the small town of Cesário Lange.



The Brazil branch where I now live



With my wife, who died in 1945

In 1980 our Bethel family of 170 members was transferred to these new facilities. Since then the Kingdom work has grown dramatically. We now have over 410,000 sharing regularly in the preaching work in Brazil! To care for the spiritual needs of all these Kingdom proclaimers, we have had to keep building new factories to print Bible literature and new residences to accommodate Bethel volunteers. We presently have about 1,100 Bethel family members!

Treasured Privileges

I count Bethel service as a precious privilege. Thus, although in earlier years I considered remarriage, I chose to focus fully on my privileges at Bethel and in the preaching work. Here I have had the pleasure of serving alongside countless young people in the printery and of training them in their assignments. I have attempted to deal with them as if they were my sons. Their zeal and unselfishness have been a source of great encouragement to me.

Another privilege has been to enjoy the company of fine roommates over the years. True, differences in personality at times have presented a challenge. Yet I learned not to expect perfection from others. I have striven to keep from making mountains out

of molehills or taking myself too seriously. Laughing at my own mistakes has helped me to put up with those of others.

Another precious privilege I enjoyed was that of being able to attend large international conventions in the United States. One of these was the "Everlasting Good News" Assembly, held at Yankee Stadium, New York, in 1963, and the other was the "Peace on Earth" International Assembly held at the same place in 1969. While I was there, I had the joy of visiting the nearby world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York!

It was also my privilege for ten years to share—in rotation with others—in presiding at the morning worship of the Bethel family. Still, the grandest privilege, one that has brought me great joy and encouragement, is that of taking the Kingdom message to honesthearted ones, even as our Master, Jesus Christ, did.

In recent years I have faced the challenge of living with Parkinson's disease. The loving care of the brothers and sisters in Bethel's infirmary has been a source of constant help and comfort to me. With full confidence, I pray that Jehovah may give me the strength to continue doing my best in behalf of his true worship.

SINGING is a gift from God. Raising our voices in song can bring pleasure to us and to our Creator. By means of it, we can express our emotions, both sorrows and joys. Even more, we can voice our love, adoration, and praise for the Originator of song, Jehovah.

Most of some three hundred Bible references to music relate to the worship of Jehovah. Singing is also associated with joy—not only the joy of those singing but joy on the part of Jehovah as well. The psalmist wrote: “Let them make melody to him. For Jehovah is taking pleasure in his people.”—Psalm 149:3, 4.

But how important is singing in modern worship? How can Jehovah’s people today

please him by raising their voices in song? What place should music have in true worship? Exploring the history of music in worship will help answer these questions.

Music’s Historical Place in Worship

The first Biblical reference to music is not specifically noted in connection with the worship of Jehovah. At Genesis 4:21, Jubal is credited with what may be the invention of the first musical instruments or perhaps the establishment of some kind of music profession. However, music was a part of Jehovah’s worship even before the creation of humans. A number of Bible translations describe angels as singing. Job 38:7 tells of the angels crying out joyfully and “shouting in applause.” Thus, there is Scriptural reason

Music’s Place in



to believe that singing in worship to Jehovah was a practice long before man came on the scene.

Some historians have argued that ancient Hebrew music was all melody, without supportive harmony. However, more than one note could be played at a time on the harp, an instrument prominently mentioned in the Bible. The harpists must have noticed the harmony that could be produced by combinations of tones on the instrument. Rather than being primitive, their music was undoubtedly quite advanced. And judging by the poetry and prose of the Hebrew Scriptures, we can conclude that Israelite music was of high quality. Certainly, the inspiration for musical compositions was far loftier than that of the neighboring nations.

The ancient temple organization provided for complex arrangements of instrumentation and voices in temple worship. (2 Chronicles 29:27, 28) There were "directors," "experts," "learners," and "heads of the singers." (1 Chronicles 15:21; 25:7, 8; Nehemiah 12:46) Commenting on their advanced musical skills, historian Curt Sachs wrote: "The choruses and orchestras connected with the Temple in Jerusalem suggest a high standard of musical education, skill, and knowledge. . . . Though we do not know how that ancient music sounded, we have sufficient evidence of its power, dignity, and mastership." (*The Rise of Music in the Ancient World: East and West*, 1943, pages 48, 101-2) The Song of Solomon is an example of the creativity and quality of Hebrew

Modern Worship



compositions. It is a story in song, similar to the libretto, or text, of an opera. The song is called in the Hebrew text "Song of the Songs," that is, the most excellent song. For the ancient Hebrews, singing was an integral part of worship. And it allowed for positive emotional expression in their praise of Jehovah.

Singing by the First-Century Christians

Music continued to be a regular part of worship among the early Christians. In addition to having the inspired Psalms, seemingly they composed original music and lyrics for worship, setting the precedent for modern-day composition of Christian songs. (Ephesians 5:19) The book *The History of Music*, by Waldo Selden Pratt, explains: "Singing in public and private worship was a matter of course for the early Christians. For Jewish converts this was a continuance of synagogue customs . . . In addition to the Hebrew Psalms . . . , the new faith tended constantly to produce new hymns, at first apparently in the form of rhapsodies."*

Highlighting the value of singing, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Evening Meal, he and the apostles probably sang the Hallel. (Matthew 26:26-30) These were songs of praise to Jehovah recorded in the Psalms and sung in connection with the Passover celebration.—Psalms 113-118.

The Influence of False Worship

By the so-called Dark Ages, religious music was reduced to mournful chanting. About 200 C.E., Clement of Alexandria said: "We need one instrument: the peaceful word of adoration, not harps or drums or pipes or trumpets." Restrictions were imposed, limiting church music to vocals. This

* A rhapsody is a musical piece distinguished in various sections by a spirit of freedom. Often rhapsodies extolled heroic events or characters.

style became known as a chant or plainsong. "Less than forty years after the erection of Constantinople, the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 367) prohibited the participation both of instruments *and of congregations* in the liturgy. Orthodox music has been purely vocal," says the book *Our Musical Heritage*. (Italics ours.) These restrictions had no basis in early Christianity.

During the Dark Ages, the Bible was a closed book to the common people. Christians who dared to own or to read a Bible were persecuted and even killed. It is no wonder, then, that the practice of singing praises to God largely disappeared during that dark period. After all, if the common people did not have access to the Scriptures, how would they know that one tenth of the entire Bible is song? Who would inform them that God commanded his worshipers to "sing to Jehovah a new song, his praise in the congregation of loyal ones"?—Psalm 149:1.

Restoring Music to Its Proper Place in Worship

Jehovah's organization has done much to restore music and singing to their rightful place in worship. For example, the February 1, 1896, issue of *Zion's Watch Tower* consisted of only songs. It was entitled "Zion's Glad Songs of the Morning."

In 1938 singing at congregation meetings was largely dispensed with. However, the wisdom of following apostolic example and direction soon prevailed. At the 1944 district convention, F. W. Franz delivered the discourse "Song of Kingdom Service." He showed that songs of praise to Jehovah were offered by God's heavenly creatures long before the creation of man and said: "It is proper and pleasing to God for His earthly servants to lift their voices in literal song." After developing the argument for singing in worship, he announced the release of the

Kingdom Service Song Book for use at the weekly service meetings.* Then the December 1944 *Informant* (now called *Our Kingdom Ministry*) announced that other meetings would also include opening and closing songs. Singing once again became a part of Jehovah's worship.

'Singing in Our Hearts to Jehovah'

The value of heartfelt singing is illustrated by our brothers in Eastern Europe and in Africa who have experienced years of adversity and persecution. Lothar Wagner spent seven years in solitary confinement. How did he bear up? "For several weeks I concentrated on completing my storehouse of Kingdom songs. When I did not know the text exactly I simply made up one or two stanzas. . . . What an abundance of encouraging and upbuilding thoughts our Kingdom songs contain!"—*1974 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 226-8.

During five years of solitary confinement because of his faithful stand, Harold King found comfort in composing and singing

* First Corinthians 14:15 appears to indicate that singing was a regular feature of first-century Christian worship.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR BETTER SINGING

1. Hold the songbook up when singing. This helps one to breathe more naturally.
2. Take a good breath at the beginning of each phrase.
3. Opening the mouth a little more than feels comfortable at first will naturally increase the volume and resonance of the voice.
4. Above all, keep in focus the sentiment of the song being sung.

songs of praise to Jehovah. Several of his compositions are now used by Jehovah's Witnesses in their worship. The joy connected with singing is a sustaining one. But it should not take persecution to convince us of the value of singing praises to God.

All of Jehovah's people can find joy in song. Even though we may have some inhibitions in expressing ourself verbally, our feelings toward Jehovah can be free when we voice them in song. The apostle Paul indicated how we can find joy in singing praises when he admonished Christians to keep "speaking to yourselves with psalms and praises to God and spiritual songs, singing and accompanying yourselves with music in your hearts to Jehovah." (Ephesians 5: 19) When our hearts are filled with spiritual things, we find powerful expression in song. So the key to improved singing is the right heart attitude.

Having a good relationship with Jehovah contributes to a joyful spirit, moving us to speak, sing, and shout Jehovah's praises. (Psalm 146:2, 5) We sing heartily about the things we enjoy. And if we like the song or the sentiments of the song, we will most likely sing it with real feeling.

One does not have to sing loudly to sing with feeling. Loud singing is not necessarily synonymous with good singing; neither is singing that cannot be heard. Some voices with natural resonance may stand out even though the singing may be soft. Part of the challenge of singing well in a group is learning to blend in. Whether you are singing in harmony or in unison, your matching volume with those near you makes for a pleasing and unified song. Christian modesty and a listening ear help one acquire the balance of singing out with spirit and yet not being overbearing with one's voice. However, those who sing with skill or who have exceptionally fine voices should never be discouraged from singing out. A beautiful voice

can provide strong support to a congregation singing praises to Jehovah.

Singing at our meetings also provides an appropriate setting for singing harmony parts to the melodies. Those who have an ear for harmony or who can read the harmony lines in the songbook and voice them are encouraged to blend in with the singing and add to the beauty of the music.*

Some may claim, 'I cannot carry a tune' or 'I have a terrible voice; it cracks on the high notes.' Thus, they are timid when singing, even at the Kingdom Hall. The truth is that no voice lifted up in praise to Jehovah is "terrible" from his viewpoint. Just as one's speaking voice can be improved with practice and by following helpful suggestions given in the Theocratic Ministry School, so one's singing can be improved. Some have improved their voices by simply humming while doing chores. Humming helps smooth out the tone of the voice. And at appropriate times while we are alone or working

* Some of the songs in our current songbook, *Sing Praises to Jehovah*, retain the four-part harmony style for the benefit of those who enjoy singing the harmony parts. However, many of the songs have been arranged for piano accompaniment and were given a musical style that seeks to preserve the international origins of the tunes. Improvising harmonic notes for the songs written without the strict four-part harmonies may provide a pleasing enhancement to our singing at meetings.

In Our Next Issue

When Suffering Will Be No More

Your Life—What Is Its Purpose?

Bioethics and Bloodless Surgery

where we would not disturb others, singing Kingdom melodies is an excellent exercise for the voice and a means of putting one in a joyful, relaxed frame of mind.

We can also encourage singing a few of the Kingdom songs at gatherings. Such singing, accompanied by an instrument such as a guitar or a piano or by the Society's piano recordings, gives a spiritual tone to our gatherings. It also provides an aid for learning the songs and singing them well at congregation meetings.

To help congregations get into the spirit of singing at meetings, the Society has provided recorded musical accompaniments. When they are played, the one handling the sound system should be aware of the volume. If the music is not loud enough, the congregation may be timid about singing out. As the brother controlling the sound system sings along with the congregation, he will be able to determine whether the music is giving a supportive lead or not.

Make Melody to Jehovah

Singing gives us the opportunity to express our feelings for our Creator. (Psalm 149:1, 3) It is, not just an emotional outburst, but a controlled, reasonable, and joyful expression of our praise. Pouring our heart into congregation singing can put us in the proper frame of mind and heart for the program that follows and can spur us on to a greater share in Jehovah's worship. Although singing has emotional impact, the words can also serve to instruct us. By thus expressing ourselves in unison and in harmony, we are meekly and humbly preparing our hearts so that we may learn together as a congregated people.—Compare Psalm 10:17.

Singing will always be a part of Jehovah's worship. We therefore have the prospect of sharing forever the sentiments of the psalmist: "I will praise Jehovah during my lifetime. I will make melody to my God as long as I am."—Psalm 146:2.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

According to news reports, after a baby is delivered, some hospitals save the placenta and umbilical cord to extract things from their blood. Should this concern a Christian?

In many locations, nothing like that occurs, so Christians need not be concerned. If there is very good reason to believe that such a practice is followed in the hospital where a Christian will give birth, it would be proper simply to direct the physician that the placenta and the umbilical cord should be disposed of, not used in any way.

Various medical products have been obtained from biological sources, either animal or human. For example, certain hormones have been extracted from the urine of pregnant horses. Horse blood has been a source of tetanus serum, and gamma globulin to fight disease has long been derived from the blood in human placentas (the afterbirth). The placentas have been retained and frozen by some hospitals and later collected by a pharmaceutical laboratory so that the blood rich in antibodies could be processed to extract gamma globulin.

More recently, researchers have claimed success in using blood from the afterbirth to treat one type of leukemia, and it has been theorized that such blood might be useful in some immune-system disorders or in place of bone-marrow transplants. Hence, there has been a degree of publicity about parents having blood from the afterbirth extracted, frozen, and banked in case it might be useful in a treatment for their child in years to come.

Such commercialization of placental blood is hardly tempting for true Christians, who guide their thinking by God's perfect law. Our Creator views blood as sacred, representing God-given life. The only use of blood that he authorized was on the altar, in connection with sacrifices. (Leviticus 17:10-12; compare Romans 3:25; 5:8; Ephesians 1:7.) Otherwise, blood removed from a creature was to be poured out on the ground, disposed of.—Leviticus 17:13; Deuteronomy 12:15, 16.

When Christians hunt an animal or kill a domestic chicken or pig, they drain the blood and dispose

of it. They do not literally have to pour it on the ground, for the point is that they dispose of the blood rather than put it to any use.

Christians who are hospitalized understand that biological products removed from them are disposed of, whether the products be body wastes, diseased tissue, or blood. Granted, a doctor might want certain tests to be done first, such as a urinalysis, a pathological examination of tumorous tissue, or tests on the blood. But thereafter, the products are disposed of in accord with local law. The hospital patient hardly needs to make special requests to this effect because it is both reasonable and medically prudent to discard such biological products. If a patient had valid reason to doubt that such a normal practice was going to be followed, he or she could mention it to the physician involved, stating that for religious reasons he or she wanted all such products disposed of.

However, as mentioned, this is seldom a concern for the average patient because in many places such salvage and reuse of the afterbirth or other biological products is not even considered, much less practiced routinely.

The article "Let Us Abhor What Is Wicked," appearing in "The Watchtower" of January 1, 1997, seemed to be focusing on pedophilia. How is this practice to be defined?

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines "pedophilia" as "sexual perversion in which children are the preferred sexual object." Aspects of this practice are condemned at Deuteronomy 23:17, 18. There God spoke against becoming a temple prostitute ("or, 'a catamite,' a boy kept for purposes of sexual perversion," footnote). These verses also forbid anyone to bring into "the house of Jehovah" the price of "a dog" ("likely a pederast; one who practices anal intercourse, especially with a boy," footnote). These Scriptural and secular references establish that what *The Watchtower* was discussing was a child's being made the object of sexual abuse, including fondling, by an adult.

SHECHEM

The City in the Valley

DEEP in the heart of the land God chose for his people, nestled between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, lay the city of Shechem. It was here—nearly four thousand years ago—that Jehovah promised Abraham: “To your seed I am going to give this land.”—Genesis 12:6, 7.

In harmony with this promise, Abraham’s grandson Jacob camped at Shechem and built an altar that he called “God is the God of Israel.” Probably Jacob dug a well in this area to supply water to his family and flocks, a well that centuries later would be known as “Jacob’s fountain.”—Genesis 33:18-20, footnote; John 4:5, 6, 12.

However, not all the members of Jacob’s family showed zeal for true worship. Dinah, his daughter, sought out companions among the Canaanite girls of Shechem. Dinah, who was then still young, left the safety of her family’s tents and began to visit the nearby city, making friends there.

How would the young men of the city view this young virgin who regularly visited their city—apparently unaccompanied? A chieftain’s son “got to see her and then took her and lay down with her and violated her.” Why did Dinah court danger by associating with the immoral Canaanites? Was it because she felt she needed the company of girls her own age? Was she as headstrong and independent as some of her brothers? Read the Genesis account, and try to comprehend the distress and shame that Jacob and Leah must have felt because of the tragic consequences of their daughter’s visits to Shechem.—Genesis 34:1-31; 49:5-7; see also *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1985, page 31.

Nearly 300 years later, the results of dis-

regarding theocratic guidelines once again came to the fore. At Shechem, Joshua organized one of the most memorable assemblies in Israelite history. Imagine the scene in the valley. More than a million people—men, women, and children—belonging to six tribes of Israel stand in front of Mount Gerizim. Across the valley about the same number from the other six tribes stand in front of Mount Ebal.* And there below, alongside the ark of the covenant and between the two masses of Israelites, stand the priests and Joshua. What a setting!—Joshua 8:30-33.

Rising above this enormous crowd, the two mountains offer a stark contrast of beauty and barrenness. Gerizim’s upper slopes look green and fertile, while those of Ebal are mainly gray and bare. Can you feel the buzz of excitement as the Israelites await the moment for Joshua to speak? Every sound echoes in this natural theater.

During the four to six hours that Joshua takes to read ‘the book of the law of Moses,’ the people also participate. (Joshua 8:34, 35) Apparently, the Israelites in front of Gerizim say Amen! after each of the blessings, whereas the Amen! of those in front of Ebal emphasizes each malediction. Perhaps the barren appearance of Mount Ebal serves to remind the people of the disastrous outcome of disobedience.

“Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt,” warns Joshua. In unison, more than a million voices

* The six tribes in front of Mount Gerizim were Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. The six tribes in front of Mount Ebal were Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.—Deuteronomy 27:12, 13.

es respond: "Amen!" Joshua waits for this thunderous response to die down before continuing: "Cursed is the one who moves back the boundary mark of his fellowman." Once again the six tribes, accompanied by many alien residents, shout: "Amen!" (Deuteronomy 27:16, 17) If you had been there, would you have ever forgotten that meeting held between the mountains? Would not the need for obedience have been indelibly imprinted on your mind?

Shortly before he died some 20 years later, Joshua once again called the nation together at Shechem for them to fortify their resolve. He put before them the choice that everyone must make. "Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve," he said. "But as for me and my household, we shall serve Jehovah." (Joshua 24:1, 15) Evidently, these faith-stirring conventions at Shechem made their mark. For many years after Joshua's death, the Israelites imitated his faithful example.—Joshua 24:31.

Some 15 centuries later when Jesus was resting under the shadow of Mount Gerizim, a heartwarming conversation took place. Weary from a long journey, Jesus was sitting by Jacob's fountain when a Samaritan woman with a water jar approached. The woman was most surprised when Jesus asked her for a drink, since Jews did not talk to Samaritans, let alone drink from their vessels. (John 4:5-9) Jesus' next words surprised her even more.

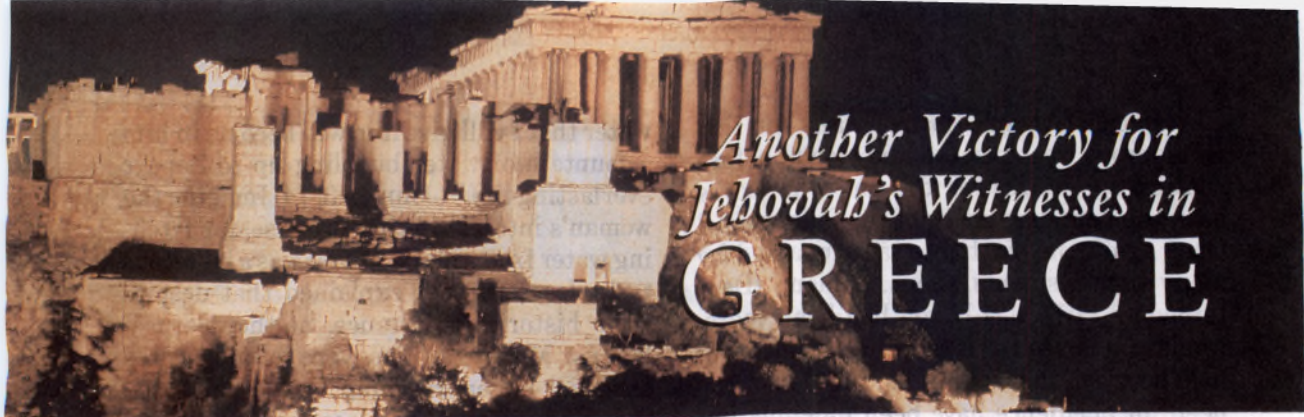
"Everyone drinking from this water will get thirsty again. Whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty at all, but the

water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water bubbling up to impart everlasting life." (John 4:13, 14) Imagine the woman's interest in that promise, for fetching water from this deep well was a laborious task. Jesus further explained that despite their historic importance, neither Jerusalem nor Mount Gerizim were religious sites essential for approaching God. Heart attitude and conduct, not location, were what mattered. "True worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth," he said. "Indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him." (John 4:23) How comforting those words must have been! Once again this valley became the place where people were urged to serve Jehovah.

Today the city of Nablus lies alongside the ruins of ancient Shechem. Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal still dominate the valley, standing as silent witnesses to the events of the past. Jacob's well, at the base of these mountains, may still be visited. As we meditate on the events that took place there, we are reminded of the importance of upholding true worship, just as Joshua and Jesus taught us to do.—Compare Isaiah 2:2, 3.

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Another Victory for Jehovah's Witnesses in GREECE

ON October 6, 1995, a legal case involving two full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses was heard by the three-member Magistrates' Court in Athens. The charge was proselytism, and the suit had been filed by a police officer after the Witnesses visited his home.

The questions put forth by the presiding judge showed that she was very interested in the work of Jehovah's Witnesses. For example, she asked: "How long have you been doing this work? How have people been treating you over the years? What kind of response has there been to your work? What do you say to people at their doors?" All present in the courtroom listened intently to the fine witness that was given.

Much to the Witnesses' surprise, even the prosecutor spoke out in their favor. "Jehovah's Witnesses have the constitutional right not only to believe in and worship their God," he noted in his closing speech, "but also to spread their faith from door to door, in public squares, and on the streets, even distributing their literature free of charge if they so desire." The prosecutor cited various decisions of acquittal issued by the courts and the Council of State. He also referred to the case of *Kokkinakis v. Greece*, which was decided

in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses by the European Court of Human Rights.* "Please note," warned the prosecutor, "that Greece even paid a fine in this case. So we should be very careful when called upon to judge such cases. In fact, these cases should never be brought to court in the first place."

Following the prosecutor's speech, there was not much left for the Witnesses' lawyer to say. Nevertheless, he took the opportunity to emphasize that the proselytism law is unconstitutional and that it has been embarrassing Greece on an international scale.

The presiding judge simply glanced at the other two judges, and the brother and sister were unanimously acquitted. The trial, which lasted an hour and ten minutes, was a victory for both Jehovah's name and his people.

This is the fourth acquittal involving proselytism cases after the *Kokkinakis* case was heard by the European Court of Human Rights. Jehovah's Witnesses in Greece rejoice that problems in connection with their preaching are now virtually nonexistent and that it is possible to continue the work without hindrance.

* See *The Watchtower*, September 1, 1993, pages 27-31.