

SEPTEMBER 15, 1998

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

ARE
YOU
AWAKE
TO
OUR
TIMES?



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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ARE YOU AWAKE TO OUR TIMES?

BEING awake to danger can make the difference between life and death. This can be illustrated by what happened on two volcanic islands.

Mount Pelée, the most deadly volcano of the 20th century, erupted on May 8, 1902, on the Caribbean island of Martinique. It killed all but a few of the 30,000 residents of Saint Pierre, a city at the foot of the volcano.

In June 1991, Mount Pinatubo exploded in what was probably the greatest eruption of the century. It took place in a densely populated area of the Philippines and caused some 900 deaths. However, this time two factors helped to save thousands of lives: (1) being awake to the danger and (2) willingness to act in harmony with warnings.

Fitting Action Saved Lives

Mount Pinatubo had been dormant for hundreds of years when, in April 1991, it began to show signs of an impending eruption. Steam and sulfur dioxide began to escape from the cone. Local residents felt a series of earth tremors, and a sinister dome of solidified lava began to emerge from the mountain. Scientists from the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology kept a close vigil and in time convinced officials that it would be wise to evacuate 35,000 inhabitants from nearby towns and villages.

People are understandably loath to flee their homes without cause, but reticence was overcome by a video presentation that vividly depicted the perils of a volcanic

eruption. The mass exodus came none too soon. Two days later, a mighty explosion hurled two cubic miles of ash into the atmosphere. Mudflows, or lahars, later killed hundreds. Probably thousands were spared, however, because the people had been alerted to the danger and had acted in harmony with warnings.

Escape From a Man-Made Cataclysm

In the first century of our Common Era, Christians living in Jerusalem also had to decide whether they should abandon their homes. Flight from that city in 66 C.E. saved them from the destruction that befell other residents and thousands of Jews who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover of 70 C.E. Over one million people were inside that walled city for the Passover observance when Roman armies cut off any chance of escape. Famine, power struggles, and the Romans' relentless attacks resulted in a death toll of more than one million.

The cataclysm that stamped out the Jewish revolt against Rome did not come unannounced. Several decades earlier, Jesus Christ had foretold that Jerusalem would be besieged. He said: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her." (Luke 21:20, 21) Those instructions were clear, and Jesus' followers took them seriously.

Godo-Foto, West Stock



The fourth-century historian Eusebius of Caesarea reports that the Christians of all Judea acted on Jesus' warning. When the Romans abandoned their first siege of Jerusalem in 66 C.E., many Jewish Christians went to live in the Gentile city of Pella, in the Roman province of Perea. By being

awake to their times and by acting on Jesus' warning, they escaped what has been described as "one of the most terrible sieges in all history."

Today, similar vigilance is needed. So is specific action. The following article will explain why.

IT IS HIGH TIME TO AWAKE!

"MAKE no mistake about the age we live in; already it is high time for us to awake out of our sleep." (Romans 13:11, *Knox*) The apostle Paul wrote those words to Christians in Rome some 14 years before the catastrophic end of the Jewish system of things in 70 C.E. Because they were spiritually awake, Jewish Christians were not in Jerusalem at that crucial time, so they escaped death or slavery. But how did they know that they needed to keep clear of the city?

Jesus Christ had warned that enemies would encircle Jerusalem and that its inhabitants would be dashed to the ground. (Luke 19:43, 44) Thereafter, Jesus gave his faithful followers a composite sign that was not difficult to recognize. (Luke 21:7-24) For those Christians who lived in Jerusalem, abandoning the city meant leaving homes and jobs. Nevertheless, their vigilance and flight preserved their lives.

When Jesus foretold Jerusalem's destruction, his disciples asked: "When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matthew 24:3) In his reply, Jesus compared his future presence with the period leading up to the global Flood of Noah's day. Jesus pointed out that the Deluge swept away all the wicked. (Matthew 24:21, 37-39) He thus indicated that God would again intervene in human affairs. To what extent? Why, to the point of removing an entire evil world, or system of things! (Compare 2 Peter 3:5, 6.) Could that happen in our time?

Christians fled from Jerusalem because they were spiritually awake



Is Everything Still the Same?

Few first-century Jews ever imagined that their holy city, Jerusalem, would be destroyed. Similar disbelief often prevails among people who live near a volcano but who have not experienced an eruption of one. "Not in my lifetime" is a common reaction when warnings are voiced. "Typically volcanoes erupt every two or three centuries," explains volcanologist Lionel Wilson. "You worry if your parents had to move because of an eruption. But if it happened to your grandparents, then it's folklore."

Accurate information, however, can enable us to recognize danger signals and take them seriously. Of those who fled from Mount Pelée, one was familiar with volcanoes and understood the danger signals. Such signs were also correctly interpreted shortly before the eruption of Mount Pinatubo. The volcanologists who monitored the unseen forces building up inside the

mountain convinced local people to leave the area.

Of course, some will always ignore danger signals and insist that nothing is going to happen. They may even ridicule those who take decisive action. The apostle Peter predicted that such a viewpoint would be common in our day. "You know this first," he said, "that in the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.'" —2 Peter 3:3, 4.

Do you believe that we are in "the last days"? In *The Columbia History of the World*, John A. Garraty and Peter Gay ask: "Are we seeing the breakdown of our civilization?" Then these historians analyze the problems of government, the global rise in



crime and civil disobedience, the breakdown of family life, the failure of science and technology to solve society's problems, the crisis of authority, and the worldwide moral and religious decay. They conclude: "If these are not the signs of an emphatic ending, they look uncommonly like it."

We have sound reason to believe that an "ending" is imminent. No, we need not fear an end of the earthly globe itself, for the Bible says that God "has founded the earth upon its established places; it will not be made to totter to time indefinite, or forever." (Psalm 104:5) Yet, we should expect an early end to the wicked system of things that has caused mankind so much misery. Why? Because we can see many evident features identifying the last days of this system, as outlined by Jesus Christ. (See the box "Some Features of the Last Days.") Why not compare Jesus' words with world events? Doing so may help you to make wise decisions for yourself and your family. But why take action right now?

A Real Need to Stay Awake

Though scientists may know when a volcanic eruption is imminent, they cannot tell precisely when it will occur. Likewise, regarding the end of this system of things, Jesus said: "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father." (Matthew 24:36) Since we do not know exactly when the present system of things will end, Jesus gave us this warning: "Know one thing, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have kept awake and not allowed his house to be broken into. On this account you too prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man [Jesus] is coming."—Matthew 24:43, 44.

Jesus' words show that the cataclysmic end of this system will catch this world by

surprise. Even if we are his followers, we need to 'prove ourselves ready.' Our situation is like that of a householder who might be caught unawares because he does not know when a thief will break into his house.

Similarly, the apostle Paul told Christians in Thessalonica: "You yourselves know quite well that Jehovah's day is coming exactly as a thief in the night. . . . Brothers, you are not in darkness, so that that day should overtake you as a thief." Paul also urged: "Let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses." (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 4, 6, footnote) What does it mean to "stay awake and keep our senses"?

Unlike the flight of first-century Christians from Jerusalem, our flight to safety does not involve leaving a certain city. After exhorting his fellow believers in Rome to awaken from sleep, Paul urged them to "put off the works belonging to darkness" and "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 13:12, 14) By following Jesus' steps closely, we will show ourselves awake to the times, and this spiritual vigilance will place us in line for divine protection when this wicked system of things comes to an end.—1 Peter 2:21.

Those who follow Jesus Christ enjoy meaningful and satisfying lives. Millions of Jehovah's Witnesses have discovered that the yoke of Christian discipleship is a kindly and refreshing one. (Matthew 11:29, 30, footnote) The first step in becoming a disciple is 'taking in knowledge of God and of the one whom he sent forth, Jesus Christ.' (John 17:3) The Witnesses visit millions of homes every week in order to help people to gain "an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) They would be delighted to conduct free Bible studies with you in your home. And as you grow in knowledge of God's Word, doubtless you too will be convinced that our days are different. Indeed, it is high time to awake from sleep!

SOME FEATURES OF THE LAST DAYS

"Nation will rise against nation"; 'peace will be taken away from the earth.' (Matthew 24:7; Revelation 6:4)

The two world wars of this century, along with dozens of other conflicts, have taken peace away from the earth. "The First—and so the Second—World War became different from all wars previously fought," writes historian John Keegan, "different in scale, intensity, extensiveness and material and human cost. . . . The World Wars killed more people, consumed more wealth and inflicted more suffering over a wider area of the globe than any previous war." Wars now afflict women and children more than soldiers. The United Nations Children's Fund calculates that in the last ten years, two million children have been killed in wars.



U.S. Coast Guard photo

"Food shortages"

(Matthew 24:7; Revelation 6:5, 6, 8)

In 1996 the prices of wheat and maize rose dramatically. The reason? World reserves of these cereals had fallen to a mere 50-day supply, the lowest figure on record. Rising prices for basic foodstuffs mean that hundreds of millions of the world's impoverished people—many of them children—go to bed hungry.



FAO photo/B. Imevbore

"Earthquakes in one place after another"

(Matthew 24:7)

During the last 2,500 years, only nine earthquakes have each killed over 100,000 people. Four of these quakes have occurred since 1914.



"Increasing of lawlessness" (Matthew 24:12)

As the 20th century draws to a close, lawlessness, or lawbreaking, has become widespread. Terrorist attacks on civilians, cold-blooded killers, and mass murders are among the horrible aspects of these violent last days.



"In one place after another pestilences" (Luke 21:11)

During the 1990's, likely 30 million people will die of tuberculosis. Disease-carrying bacteria are becoming more and more drug-resistant. Malaria, another deadly disease, strikes between 300 and 500 million people every year and kills an estimated 2 million. By the end of this decade, AIDS is expected to cause 1.8 million deaths a year. "Today humanity is experiencing an epidemic of epidemics," declares the State of the World 1996.

"This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth."

(Matthew 24:14)

In 1997, Jehovah's Witnesses spent well over one billion hours preaching the good news of the Kingdom. More than five million Witnesses regularly take this message to people in 232 lands.



A Proud Regent Loses an Empire



“AS REGARDS Belshazzar the king,” wrote the prophet Daniel, “he made a big feast for a thousand of his grandees, and in front of the thousand he was drinking wine.” As the banquet progressed, however, the king’s “very complexion was changed in him, and his own thoughts began to frighten him, and his hip joints were loosening and his very knees were knocking each other.” Before the night was over, “Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed and Darius the Mede himself received the kingdom.”—Daniel 5:1, 6, 30, 31.

Who was Belshazzar? How did he come to be called “the Chaldean king”? Exactly what was his status in the Neo-Babylonian Empire? How did he lose the empire?

Coregent or King?

Daniel refers to Nebuchadnezzar as the father of Belshazzar. (Daniel 5:2, 11, 18, 22) However, this relationship is not literal. The book *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, by Raymond P. Dougherty, suggests that perhaps Nebuchadnezzar was his grandfather through his mother, Nitocris. It may also be that Nebuchadnezzar, being a royal pre-

decessor, was simply the “father” of Belshazzar as to the throne. (Compare Genesis 28:10, 13.) In any case, the cuneiform inscriptions on several clay cylinders discovered in southern Iraq during the 19th century identify Belshazzar as the eldest son of Nabonidus, king of Babylon.

Since the account in Daniel chapter 5 focuses on the events of the night of Babylon’s fall in 539 B.C.E., it does not relate how Belshazzar came to have regal authority. But archaeological sources give some idea of the relationship between Nabonidus and Belshazzar. “The Babylonian texts reveal that Nabonidus was an eccentric ruler,” says Alan Millard, archaeologist and authority on ancient Semitic languages. Millard adds: “While he did not ignore the gods of Babylon, he . . . gave very considerable attention to the moon god at two other cities, Ur and Harran. For several years of his reign, Nabonidus did not even live in Babylon; instead he stayed at the distant oasis of Teima [or, Tema] in northern Arabia.” Evidently, Nabonidus spent much of his reign away from the capital, Babylon. During his absences,

Belshazzar was consigned the administrative authority.

Shedding more light on Belshazzar's true position, a cuneiform document described as the "Verse Account of Nabonidus" states: "He [Nabonidus] entrusted the 'Camp' to his oldest (son), the firstborn, the troops everywhere in the country he ordered under his (command). He let (everything) go, [he] entrusted the kingship to him." Thus, Belshazzar was a coregent.

Can a coregent, though, be considered a king? A statue of an ancient ruler found in northern Syria in the 1970's shows that it was not unknown for a ruler to be called king when, strictly speaking, he had a lesser title. The statue was that of a ruler of Gozan and was inscribed in Assyrian and Aramaic. The Assyrian inscription called the man governor of Gozan, but the parallel Aramaic inscription called him king. So it would not be unprecedented for Belshazzar to be called crown prince in the official Babylonian inscriptions while being called king in the Aramaic writing of Daniel.

The arrangement of joint rulership between Nabonidus and Belshazzar continued into the final days of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. On the very night of Babylon's fall, therefore, Belshazzar offered to make Daniel the *third* ruler in the kingdom, not the second.—Daniel 5:16.

An Overconfident and Proud Regent

The final events of Belshazzar's reign indicate that the prince was overconfident and proud. When the end of his rule came on October 5, 539 B.C.E., Nabonidus was holed up in Borsippa, having suffered a defeat by Medo-Persian forces. Babylon itself was under siege. But Belshazzar felt so secure in

the city surrounded by massive walls that on that very night, he held "a big feast for a thousand of his grandees." Herodotus, Greek historian of the fifth century B.C.E., says that inside the city, people "were dancing at the time, and enjoying themselves."

Outside Babylon's walls, though, the Medo-Persian army was vigilant. Under the direction of Cyrus, they had diverted the waters of the Euphrates River, which ran through the center of the city. His warriors were ready to slosh up the riverbed as soon as the water level sank sufficiently. They would climb up the slope and enter the city through the open copper doors on the wall along the riverfront.

If Belshazzar had taken note of the activity outside the city, he could have shut the copper gates, mounted his strong men on the walls along the riverbanks, and entrapped the enemy. Instead, under the influence of wine, arrogant Belshazzar called for the vessels from Jehovah's temple to be brought in. Then he, his guests, his wives, and his concubines defiantly drank from them while praising the Babylonian gods. Suddenly, a hand appeared miraculously and began writing on the palace wall. Struck with fear, Belshazzar called upon his wise men to provide the interpretation of that message. But they "were not competent enough to read the writing itself or to make known to the king the interpretation." Finally, Daniel "was brought in before the king." Under divine inspiration, Jehovah's courageous prophet revealed the meaning of the miraculous message, predicting the fall of Babylon to the Medes and the Persians.—Daniel 5:2-28.

The Medes and the Persians easily took the city, and Belshazzar did not live through the night. With his death, and the apparent surrender of Nabonidus to Cyrus, the Neo-Babylonian Empire came to an end.

TIMES AND SEASONS IN JEHOVAH'S HANDS

"It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times or seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction."—ACTS 1:7.

WHAT could be more natural for those "sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done" in Christendom and throughout the earth than to wonder when this wicked system will end and be replaced by God's righteous new world? (Ezekiel 9:4; 2 Peter 3:13) Jesus' apostles asked him time-oriented questions just before his death and after his resurrection. (Matthew 24:3; Acts 1:6) In reply, however, Jesus did not give them a means of calculating dates. In one case he gave them a composite sign, and in the other he said that 'it did not belong to them to get knowledge of the times or seasons which the Father had placed in his own jurisdiction.'—Acts 1:7.

² Although Jesus is Jehovah's only-begotten Son, he himself has not always known his Father's timetable for events. In his prophecy regarding the last days, Jesus humbly acknowledged: "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father." (Matthew 24:36) Jesus was willing to wait patiently for his Father to reveal to him the exact time for destructive action to be taken against this wicked system of things.*

* See *The Watchtower*, August 1, 1996, pages 30-1.

1. How did Jesus answer his apostles' time-oriented questions?
2. Why can it be said that Jesus has not always known his Father's timing of events due to occur during the time of the end?

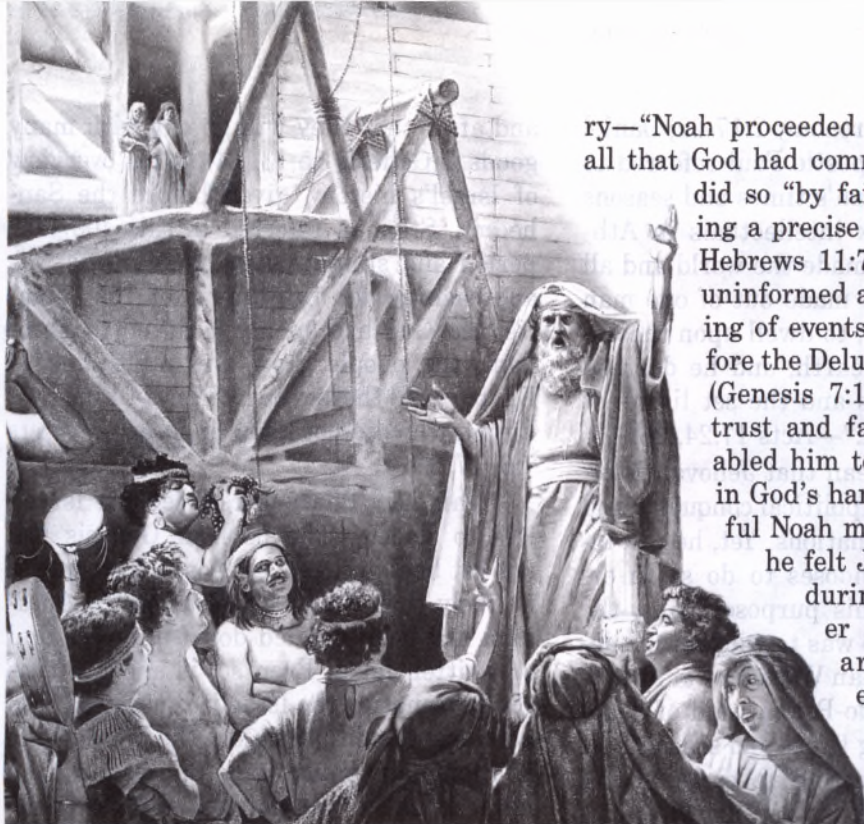
³ Two things can be deduced from the way Jesus answered questions relating to when things would occur in fulfillment of God's purpose. First, that Jehovah has a timetable; and second, that he alone fixes it, and his servants cannot expect to be given precise advance information of his times or seasons.

Jehovah's Times and Seasons

⁴ What is meant by "times" and "seasons"? Jesus' statement recorded at Acts 1:7 contains two aspects of time. The Greek word rendered "times" means "time in the sense of duration," a space of time (long or short). "Seasons" is the translation of a word referring to a fixed or an appointed time, a particular season, or period, marked by certain features. Regarding these two original words, W. E. Vine states: "In Acts 1:7, 'the Father has set within His own authority' both the times (*chronos*), the lengths of the periods, and the seasons (*kairos*), epochs characterized by certain events."

⁵ Before the Flood, God fixed a 120-year time limit for the corrupt world that hu-

3. What can we learn from Jesus' answers to questions regarding God's purpose?
4. What are the meanings of the Greek words translated "times" and "seasons" at Acts 1:7?
5. When did Jehovah inform Noah of His purpose to destroy the corrupt world, and what dual mission did Noah perform?



**Noah's faith enabled him to leave
time factors in Jehovah's hands**

mans and rebellious materialized angels had brought about. (Genesis 6:1-3) Godly Noah was 480 years old at that point. (Genesis 7:6) He was childless and remained so for another 20 years. (Genesis 5:32) Much later, only after Noah's sons had reached adulthood and had married, God informed Noah of His purpose to remove wickedness from the earth. (Genesis 6:9-13, 18) Even then, though Noah was entrusted with the dual commission of building the ark and preaching to his contemporaries, Jehovah did not reveal his time schedule to him.—Genesis 6:14; 2 Peter 2:5.

⁶ For decades—perhaps half a century—

6. (a) How did Noah show that he left time factors in Jehovah's hands? (b) How can we follow Noah's example?

ry—"Noah proceeded to do according to all that God had commanded him." Noah did so "by faith," without knowing a precise date. (Genesis 6:22; Hebrews 11:7) Jehovah left him uninformed about the exact timing of events until one week before the Deluge was due to begin. (Genesis 7:1-5) Noah's implicit trust and faith in Jehovah enabled him to leave time factors in God's hands. And how grateful Noah must have been when he felt Jehovah's protection during the Flood and later stepped out of the ark onto a cleansed earth! With a similar hope of deliverance in view, should we not exercise such faith in God?

⁷ After the Flood, most of Noah's descendants abandoned the true worship of Jehovah. With the aim of remaining in one place, they began to build a city and a tower for false worship. Jehovah determined that it was time to intervene. He confused their language and "scattered them from [Babel] over all the surface of the earth." (Genesis 11:4, 8, 9) Later, the language groups developed into nations, some of which absorbed other nations and became regional powers, and even world powers.—Genesis 10:32.

⁸ In line with the outworking of his purpose, occasionally God determined national frontiers and at what point in time a certain nation would predominate locally or as a world power. (Genesis 15:13, 14, 18-21;

7, 8. (a) How did nations and world powers come into existence? (b) In what way did Jehovah 'decree the appointed times and the set limits of the dwelling of men'?

Exodus 23:31; Deuteronomy 2:17-22; Daniel 8:5-7, 20, 21) The apostle Paul referred to this aspect of Jehovah's times and seasons when he told Greek intellectuals in Athens: "The God that made the world and all the things in it . . . made out of one man every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth, and he decreed the appointed times and the set limits of the dwelling of men."—Acts 17:24, 26.

⁹ This does not mean that Jehovah is responsible for all the political conquests and changes among the nations. Yet, he can intervene when he chooses to do so in order to accomplish his purpose. Thus, the prophet Daniel, who was to witness the demise of the Babylonian World Power and its replacement by Medo-Persia, said of Jehovah: "He is changing times and seasons, removing kings and setting up kings, giving wisdom to the wise ones and knowledge to those knowing discernment."—Daniel 2:21; Isaiah 44:24-45:7.

"The Time Was Approaching"

¹⁰ Over four centuries in advance, Jehovah set the precise year when he would humiliate the king of the Egyptian World Power and liberate Abraham's descendants from slavery. Revealing his purpose to Abraham, God promised: "You may know for sure that your seed will become an alien resident in a land not theirs, and they will have to serve them, and these will certainly afflict them for four hundred years. But the nation that they will serve I am judging,

9. How has Jehovah 'changed times and seasons' respecting kings?

10, 11. (a) How long in advance did Jehovah set the time when he would deliver Abraham's descendants from bondage? (b) What suggests that the Israelites did not know exactly when they were going to be delivered?

and after that they will go out with many goods." (Genesis 15:13, 14) In his overview of Israel's history, given before the Sanhedrin, Stephen referred to this 400-year period and stated: "Just as the time was approaching for fulfillment of the promise that God had openly declared to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, until there rose a different king over Egypt, who did not know of Joseph."—Acts 7:6, 17, 18.

¹¹ This new Pharaoh reduced the Israelites to slavery. The book of Genesis had not yet been written by Moses, although it is likely that Jehovah's promises to Abraham had been handed down in either oral or written form. Even so, it appears that the information the Israelites possessed did not allow them to calculate the precise date of their deliverance from oppression. God knew when he was going to deliver them, but apparently the suffering Israelites were not informed. We read: "It came about during those many days that the king of Egypt finally died, but the sons of Israel continued to sigh because of the slavery and to cry out in complaint, and their cry for help kept going up to the true God because of the slavery. In time God heard their groaning and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So God looked on the sons of Israel and God took notice."—Exodus 2:23-25.

¹² This lack of knowledge about the exact time of Israel's deliverance can also be deduced from Stephen's synopsis. Speaking of Moses, he said: "When the time of his fortieth year was being fulfilled, it came into his heart to make an inspection of his brothers, the sons of Israel. And when he

12. How did Stephen show that Moses acted in advance of Jehovah's time?

caught sight of a certain one being unjustly treated, he defended him and executed vengeance for the one being abused by striking the Egyptian down. *He was supposing his brothers would grasp that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not grasp it.*" (Acts 7:23-25) Moses here acted 40 years in advance of God's time. Stephen pointed out that Moses had to wait another 40 years before God 'gave the Israelites salvation by his hand.'—Acts 7:30-36.

¹³ Although "the time was approaching for fulfillment of the promise" and that precise year had been fixed by God, Moses and all Israel had to exercise faith. They had to wait for Jehovah's appointed time, apparently without being able to calculate it in advance. We too are convinced that our deliverance from the present wicked system of things is approaching. We know that we are living in "the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) So should we not be willing to display our faith and await Jehovah's due time for his great day? (2 Peter 3:11-13) Then, like Moses and the Israelites, we may well sing a glorious song of deliverance, to Jehovah's praise.—Exodus 15:1-19.

'When the Time Arrived'

¹⁴ Jehovah had set a fixed time for his only-begotten Son to come to the earth as the Messiah. Paul wrote: "When the full limit of the time arrived, God sent forth his Son, who came to be out of a woman and who came to be under law." (Galatians 4:4) This was in fulfillment of God's promise to send a Seed—"Shiloh, to whom the obedi-

ence of the peoples would belong.'—Genesis 3:15; 49:10.

¹⁵ God's prophets—even angels—kept on the watch for the "season" when the Messiah would appear on earth and salvation would be made possible for sinful mankind. "Concerning this very salvation," said Peter, "a diligent inquiry and a careful search were made by the prophets who prophesied about the undeserved kindness meant for you. They kept on investigating what particular season or what sort of season the spirit in them was indicating concerning Christ when it was bearing witness beforehand about the sufferings for Christ and about the glories to follow these. . . . Into these very things angels are desiring to peer."—1 Peter 1:1-5, 10-12.

¹⁶ By means of his prophet Daniel—a man of unwavering faith—Jehovah had given a prophecy involving "seventy weeks." That prophecy would enable first-century Jews to know that the appearance of the promised Messiah was approaching. In part, the prophecy stated: "From the going forth of the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Leader, there will be seven weeks, also sixty-two weeks." (Daniel 9:24, 25) Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant scholars generally agree that the "weeks" mentioned here mean weeks of years. The 69 "weeks" (483 years) of Daniel 9:25 began in 455 B.C.E., when Persian King Artaxerxes authorized Nehemiah "to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem." (Nehemiah 2:1-8) They ended 483 years later—in 29 C.E., when Jesus was baptized and anointed with holy spirit, thus becoming the Messiah, or Christ.—Matthew 3:13-17.

13. How is our situation similar to that of the Israelites before their deliverance from Egypt?
14, 15. How do we know that God had set a time for his Son to come to earth, and for what did prophets and even angels keep on the watch?

16, 17. (a) By means of what prophecy did Jehovah help first-century Jews to be in expectation of the Messiah? (b) How did Daniel's prophecy affect Jewish expectation of the Messiah?

¹⁷ Whether first-century Jews knew precisely when the 483 years began is open to question. But when John the Baptizer began his ministry, "the people were in expectation and all were reasoning in their hearts about John: 'May he perhaps be the Christ?'" (Luke 3:15) Some Bible scholars link this expectation to Daniel's prophecy. In commenting on this verse, Matthew Henry wrote: "We are here told . . . how the people took occasion, from the ministry and baptism of John, to think of the Messiah, and to think of him as at the door. . . . Daniel's seventy weeks were now expiring." The French *Manuel Biblique*, by Vigouroux, Bacuez, and Brassac states: "People knew that the seventy weeks of years fixed by Daniel were drawing to a close; nobody was surprised to hear John the Baptist announce that the kingdom of God had drawn near." Jewish scholar Abba Hillel Silver wrote that according to "the popular chronology" of the day, "the Messiah was expected around the second quarter of the first century C.E."

By Way of Review

- ☐ As regards Jehovah's times and seasons, what did Jesus tell his apostles?
- ☐ How long in advance did Noah know when the Flood was due to begin?
- ☐ What indicates that Moses and the Israelites did not know exactly when they were going to be delivered from Egypt?
- ☐ How can we benefit from Bible examples involving Jehovah's times and seasons?

Events—Not Time Calculations

¹⁸ Although chronology apparently helped the Jewish people to have a general idea of when the Messiah was due to appear, subsequent events show that it did not help to convince most of them of Jesus' Messiahship. Less than a year before his death, Jesus asked his disciples: "Who are the crowds saying that I am?" They replied: "John the Baptist; but others, Elijah, and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has risen." (Luke 9:18, 19) We have no record that Jesus ever quoted the prophecy of the symbolic weeks to prove that he was the Messiah. But on one occasion, he said: "I have the witness greater than that of John, for the very works that my Father assigned me to accomplish, the works themselves that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father dispatched me." (John 5:36) Rather than any revealed chronology, Jesus' preaching, his miracles, and the events surrounding his death (the miraculous darkness, the rending of the temple curtain, and the earthquake) testified that he was the Messiah sent by God.—Matthew 27:45, 51, 54; John 7:31; Acts 2:22.

¹⁹ Similarly, after the death of Jesus, the early Christians were given no means to calculate the coming end of the Jewish system of things. True, Daniel's prophecy of the symbolic weeks mentioned the destruction of that system. (Daniel 9:26b, 27b) But this would occur after the end of the "seventy weeks" (455 B.C.E.–36 C.E.). In other words, after the first Gentiles be-

18. While Daniel's prophecy helped the Jews to identify the time when the Messiah could be expected to appear, what was the most convincing evidence of Jesus' Messiahship?

19. (a) How would Christians know that Jerusalem's destruction was near? (b) Why did the early Christians who fled from Jerusalem still need much faith?

came Jesus' followers in 36 C.E., Christians were beyond the chronological milestones of Daniel chapter 9. For them, *events*, not chronology, would indicate that the Jewish system must shortly end. Those events, foretold by Jesus, began to come to a climax from 66 C.E., when Roman legions attacked Jerusalem and then withdrew. This gave faithful, attentive Christians in Jerusalem and Judea the opportunity to 'flee to the mountains.' (Luke 21:20-22) Having no chronological signposts, those early Christians did not know when the destruction of Jerusalem would come about. What faith it took for them to leave their homes, farms, and workshops and to stay out of Jerusalem for some four years until the Roman army returned in 70 C.E. and exterminated the Jewish system!—Luke 19:41-44.

²⁰ Like Noah, Moses, and first-century Christians in Judea, we today can confidently leave the times and seasons in Jehovah's hands. Our conviction that we are living in the time of the end and that our deliverance is drawing near depends, not merely on chronological computation, but on real-life events in fulfillment of Bible prophecies. Furthermore, although we are living during Christ's presence, we are not relieved of the need to exercise faith and to keep on the watch. We must continue to live in eager expectation of the exciting events foretold in the Scriptures. This will be the subject of the following article.

20. (a) How can we benefit from the examples of Noah, Moses, and first-century Christians in Judea? (b) What will we discuss in the following article?

WAITING IN “EAGER EXPECTATION”

“The eager expectation of the creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God.”—ROMANS 8:19.

THE situation of true Christians today resembles that of the first-century Christians. A prophecy helped Jehovah's servants of those days to identify when the Messiah was due to appear. (Daniel 9:24-26) The same prophecy foretold Jerusalem's destruction but contained no elements enabling Christians to know in

1. What similarity exists between the situation of Christians today and that of first-century Christians?

advance when that city would be destroyed. (Daniel 9:26b, 27) Similarly, a prophecy providentially caused sincere 19th-century Bible students to be in expectation. By linking the “seven times” of Daniel 4:25 with “the times of the Gentiles,” they anticipated that Christ would receive Kingdom power in 1914. (Luke 21:24, *King James Version*; Ezekiel 21:25-27) While the book of Daniel contains many prophecies, none of these enable present-day Bible

students to calculate exactly when Satan's entire system of things will be destroyed. (Daniel 2:31-44; 8:23-25; 11:36, 44, 45) However, this will soon occur, for we are living in "the time of the end."—Daniel 12:4.*

Watchfulness During Christ's Presence

² True, a prophecy put Christians in a state of expectation before Christ was invested with Kingdom power in 1914. But the "sign" that Christ gave of his presence and of the conclusion of the system of things featured *events*. And most of these would be seen *after his presence had begun*. Such events—wars, food shortages, earthquakes, pestilences, increased lawlessness, persecution of Christians, and the worldwide preaching of the good news of the Kingdom—serve as the major proof that we are now living during Christ's presence in kingly power.—Matthew 24:3-14; Luke 21:10, 11.

³ Yet, the whole tenor of Jesus' parting counsel to his disciples was: "Keep looking, keep awake, . . . keep on the watch." (Mark 13:33, 37; Luke 21:36) A careful reading of the context of these exhortations to watchfulness shows that Christ was not primarily speaking of keeping a close watch for the sign of the beginning of his presence. Instead, he was ordering his true disciples to keep watchful *during* his presence. For what were true Christians to remain on the watch?

* See chapters 10 and 11 of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

2, 3. (a) What constitutes the major proof that we are living during Christ's presence in kingly power? (b) What shows that Christians were to keep on the watch during Jesus Christ's presence?

⁴ Jesus gave his great prophecy in answer to the question: "When will these things be [events leading up to the destruction of the Jewish system of things], and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matthew 24:3) The foretold sign would serve to identify not only Christ's presence but also events leading up to the end of the present wicked system of things.

⁵ Jesus showed that during his "presence" (Greek, *pa-rour-si'a*) he would come with power and glory. Concerning such "coming" (denoted by forms of the Greek word *er'kho-mai*), he declared: "Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in lamentation, and they will see the Son of man *coming* on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. . . . Now learn from the fig tree as an illustration this point: Just as soon as its young branch grows tender and it puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. Likewise also you, when you see all these things, know that he [Christ] is near at the doors. . . . Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is *coming*. . . . Prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man is *coming*."—Matthew 24:30, 32, 33, 42, 44.

Why Does Jesus Christ Come?

⁶ Although present as King since 1914, Jesus Christ must yet judge systems and individuals before executing judgment on those he finds to be wicked. (Compare 2 Co-

4. What purpose would be served by the sign that Jesus gave?

5. How did Jesus show that while spiritually present, he would yet be "coming"?

6. How will the destruction of "Babylon the Great" come about?



inthians 5:10.) Jehovah will soon put it into the minds of political rulers to destroy "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion. (Revelation 17:4, 5, 16, 17) The apostle Paul specifically stated that Jesus Christ will destroy "the man of lawlessness"—the apostate clergy of Christendom, a prominent part of "Babylon the Great." Paul wrote: "The lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will do away with by the spirit of his mouth and bring to nothing by the manifestation of his presence."—2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8.

⁷ In the near future, Christ will judge people of the nations on the basis of how they have acted toward his brothers yet on earth. We read: "When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate peo-

7. When the Son of man arrives in his glory, what judgment will he render?

**Christians must keep
awake in expectation of Christ's coming**

ple one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will put the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. . . . The king will say to [the sheep], 'Truly I say to you, To the extent that you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' . . . And [the goats] will depart into everlasting cutting-off, but the righteous ones into everlasting life."—Matthew 25:31-46.

⁸ As shown in the parable of the sheep and the goats, Jesus executes final judgment upon all the ungodly. Paul assured

8. How does Paul describe Christ's coming to execute judgment upon the ungodly?



The anointed remnant keep busy in Jehovah's service, not basing their faith on time calculations

suffering fellow believers of “relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength, at the time he comes to be glorified in connection with his holy ones.” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10) With all these exciting events ahead of us, should we not exercise faith and eagerly keep on the watch for Christ’s coming?

Eagerly Waiting for Christ’s Revelation

⁹ “The revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven” will be not only to bring destruction upon the wicked but also to reward the righteous. The remaining ones

9, 10. Why do the anointed ones still on earth eagerly wait for the revelation of Jesus Christ?

of Christ’s anointed brothers still on earth may yet suffer before Christ’s revelation, but they rejoice in their glorious heavenly hope. To anointed Christians, the apostle Peter wrote: “Go on rejoicing forasmuch as you are sharers in the sufferings of the Christ, that you may rejoice and be overjoyed also during the revelation of his glory.”—1 Peter 4:13.

¹⁰ Anointed ones are determined to remain faithful until Christ ‘gathers them together to him’ so that “the tested quality” of their faith “may be found a cause for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:1; 1 Peter 1:7) Concerning such faithful spirit-begotten Christians, it can be said: “The witness about the Christ has been rendered firm among you, so that you do not fall short in any gift at all, while you are eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—1 Corinthians 1:6, 7.

¹¹ The anointed remnant share the feelings of Paul, who wrote: “I reckon that the sufferings of the present season do not amount to anything in comparison with the glory that is going to be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18) Their faith does not need to be propped up by time calculations. They keep busy in Jehovah’s service, providing a wonderful example for their companions, the “other sheep.” (John 10:16) These anointed ones know that this wicked system’s end is near, and they heed Peter’s ex-

11. While awaiting the revelation of Jesus Christ, what do anointed Christians do?

hortation: "Brace up your minds for activity, keep your senses completely; set your hope upon the undeserved kindness that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."—1 Peter 1:13.

"The Eager Expectation of the Creation"

¹² Do the other sheep also have something for which to live in eager expectation? Most assuredly they do. After speaking of the glorious hope of those adopted by Jehovah as his spirit-begotten "sons" and "joint heirs with Christ" in the heavenly Kingdom, Paul said: "The eager expectation of the creation is waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will but through him that subjected it, on the basis of hope that the creation itself also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God."—Romans 8:14-21; 2 Timothy 2:10-12.

¹³ Through Adam's sin, all his descendants were "subjected to futility," being born in bondage to sin and death. They have been unable to free themselves from such bondage. (Psalm 49:7; Romans 5:12, 21) Oh, how the other sheep long to be "set free from enslavement to corruption"! But before that happens, certain things must occur according to Jehovah's times and seasons.

¹⁴ The remnant of the anointed "sons of God" must first be 'revealed.' What will this involve? In God's due time, it will become evident to the other sheep that the

12, 13. How was human creation "subjected to futility," and for what do the other sheep long?

14. What will be involved in "the revealing of the sons of God," and how will this result in mankind's being "set free from enslavement to corruption"?

anointed have been finally "sealed" and glorified to reign with Christ. (Revelation 7:2-4) The resurrected "sons of God" will also be 'revealed' when they share with Christ in destroying Satan's wicked system of things. (Revelation 2:26, 27; 19:14, 15) Then, during Christ's Thousand Year Reign, they will be further 'revealed' as priestly channels for dispensing the benefits of Jesus' ransom sacrifice to human "creation." This will result in mankind's being "set free from enslavement to corruption" and eventually entering into "the glorious freedom of the children of God." (Romans 8:21; Revelation 20:5; 22:1, 2) With such grand prospects, is it any wonder that the other sheep are "waiting for the revealing of the sons of God" with "eager expectation"?—Romans 8:19.

Jehovah's Patience Means Salvation

¹⁵ Jehovah is the Great Timekeeper. His timing of events will prove to be perfect. Things may not always appear to be shaping up the way we personally expected. However, we can have absolute faith that all of God's promises will be fulfilled. (Joshua 23:14) He may be allowing things to go on longer than many expected. But let us seek to understand his ways and be in admiration of his wisdom. Paul wrote: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and past tracing out his ways are! For 'who has come to know Jehovah's mind, or who has become his counselor?'" —Romans 11:33, 34.

¹⁶ Peter wrote: "Beloved ones, since you are awaiting these things [the destruction

15. What should we never forget with regard to Jehovah's timing of events?

16. Who stand to benefit from Jehovah's patience?

of the old “heavens” and “earth” and their replacement by God’s promised “new heavens” and “new earth”], do your utmost to be found *finally* by him spotless and unblemished and in peace. Furthermore, consider the patience of our Lord as salvation.” Because of Jehovah’s patience, millions more are being given the opportunity to be saved through the “day of Jehovah,” which will come unexpectedly “as a thief.” (2 Peter 3:9-15) His patience is also allowing each one of us to ‘keep working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.’ (Philippians 2:12) Jesus said that we must ‘pay attention to ourselves’ and “keep awake” if we want to be approved and succeed in “standing before the Son of man” at the time he comes for judgment.—Luke 21:34-36; Matthew 25:31-33.

Keep On Waiting With Endurance

¹⁷ Paul urged his spiritual brothers to keep their eyes, “not on the things seen,

17. What words of the apostle Paul should we take to heart?

By Way of Review

- ☐ Regarding time calculations, how is our situation similar to that of the first-century Christians?
- ☐ Why must Christians “keep on the watch,” even during Christ’s presence?
- ☐ Why is human creation in eager expectation of “the revealing of the sons of God”?
- ☐ Why can we confidently leave the times and seasons in Jehovah’s hands?

but on the things unseen.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18) He wanted nothing to cloud their view of the heavenly reward set before them. Whether we are anointed Christians or we are of the other sheep, let us keep in mind the wonderful hope set before us and not give up. Let us ‘keep waiting with endurance,’ proving that “we are not the sort that shrink back to destruction, but the sort that have faith to the preserving alive of the soul.”—Romans 8:25; Hebrews 10:39.

¹⁸ We can confidently leave the times and seasons in Jehovah’s hands. The fulfillment of his promises “will not be late” according to his time schedule. (Habakkuk 2:3) Meanwhile, Paul’s exhortation to Timothy takes on added meaning for us. He said: “I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is destined to judge the living and the dead, and by his manifestation and his kingdom, preach the word, be at it urgently in favorable season, in troublesome season . . . Do the work of an evangelizer, fully accomplish your ministry.”—2 Timothy 4:1-5.

¹⁹ Lives are at stake—our own and those of our neighbors. Paul wrote: “Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.” (1 Timothy 4:16) Time is very short for this wicked system of things. While we await with eager expectation the exciting events ahead of us, let us be ever aware that it is still Jehovah’s time and season for his people to preach the good news of the Kingdom. That work must be accomplished to his satisfaction. “Then,” as Jesus said, “the end will come.”—Matthew 24:14.

18. Why can we confidently leave the times and seasons in Jehovah’s hands?

19. What is it still time for Jehovah’s people to do, and why?

IS GOD REAL TO YOU?

WHEN you experience distressing problems, do you readily approach God in prayer? If so, do you sense that you are talking to a real person?

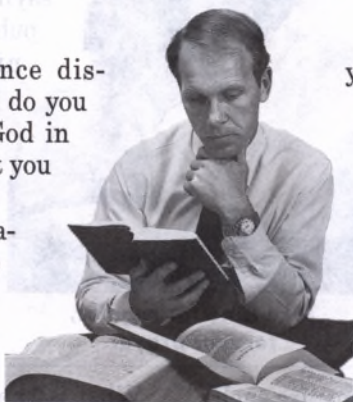
Referring to his heavenly Father, Jesus Christ said: "He that sent me is real." (John 7:28) Yes, Jehovah God is real, and praying to him is like turning to a very close human friend for help or advice. To be heard by God, of course, our prayers must meet Scriptural requirements for acceptable prayer. For instance, we must humbly approach the "Hearer of prayer" through his Son, Jesus Christ.—Psalm 65:2; 138:6; John 14:6.

Some may feel that because God is invisible, he is impersonal. To them, God may seem abstract. Even some Christians, who have learned about God's wonderful attributes, may at times find it difficult to appreciate how real he is. Has this been your experience? If so, what can help to make Jehovah God real to you?

Study the Scriptures

Do you study the Holy Scriptures regularly? The more frequent and intensive your periods of Bible study are, the more real Jehovah God will be to you. Your faith will thus be strengthened, in effect enabling you to 'see the One who is invisible.' (Hebrews 11:6, 27) On the other hand, infrequent or spasmodic study of the Bible is unlikely to have a significant impact on your faith.

To illustrate: Imagine that your doctor directed you to apply a certain ointment twice a day to eliminate a persistent rash. Would



**Make your study periods
faith strengthening**

your rash disappear if you applied the ointment only once or twice a month? That is not likely. Similarly, the psalmist gives us a "prescription" for spiritual health. Read God's Word "in an undertone day and night." (Psalm 1:1, 2) To enjoy the cumulative benefit, we need to follow the "prescription"—daily consideration of God's Word with the help of Christian publications.—Joshua 1:8.

Would you like to make your study periods more faith strengthening? Here is one suggestion: After reading a chapter in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* or another Bible containing cross-references, select an interesting verse and look up the reference scriptures cited. This will enrich your study, and doubtless you will be impressed with the internal harmony of the Bible. In turn, this will make its Author, Jehovah God, more real to you.

Using cross-references can also familiarize you with Bible prophecies and their fulfillment. Perhaps you are acquainted with major Bible prophecies, such as those relating to Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonians. Yet, the Bible contains a network of interrelated prophecies and their fulfillment. Some of these are not well-known.

For example, read the prophecy about the penalty for rebuilding Jericho and then consider its fulfillment. Joshua 6:26 states: "Joshua had an oath pronounced at that particular time, saying: 'Cursed may the man be before Jehovah who gets up and does build this city, even Jericho. At the

forfeit of his firstborn let him lay the foundation of it, and at the forfeit of his youngest let him put up its doors.” Fulfillment came some 500 years later, for we read at 1 Kings 16:34: “In [King Ahab’s] days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho. At the forfeit of Abiram his firstborn he laid the foundation of it, and at the forfeit of Segub his youngest he put up its doors, according to Jehovah’s word that he spoke by means of Joshua the son of Nun.”* Only a real God could inspire such prophecies and see to their fulfillment.

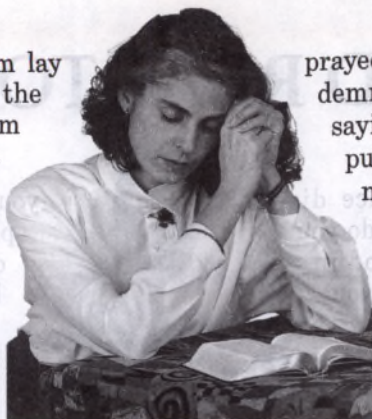
While reading the Bible, you may become curious about a certain point. For instance, you may wonder how many years elapsed between a prophecy and its fulfillment. Rather than simply asking someone, why not put forth the effort to find out for yourself? With the use of charts and Bible study aids, track down the answers as industriously as you would endeavor to decipher a treasure map. (Proverbs 2:4, 5) Finding the answers will have a profound effect on your faith and will make Jehovah God more real to you.

Pray Regularly and Fervently

Do not overlook the importance of prayer and faith. Jesus’ disciples made this direct request: “Give us more faith.” (Luke 17:5) If Jehovah has not seemed real to you, why not pray to him about your need for more faith? Confidently ask your heavenly Father for his help in making himself real to you.

If a problem is weighing on your mind, take the time needed to express yourself to your heavenly Friend in a heartfelt way. When Jesus was approaching death, he

* As another example, read about the foretold defilement of Jeroboam’s altar at 1 Kings 13:1-3. Then take note of the fulfillment recorded at 2 Kings 23:16-18.



Take time for regular, fervent prayer

prayed intensely. Although he condemned the religious practice of saying lengthy prayers meant for public display, he spent a whole night in private prayer before selecting his 12 apostles. (Mark 12:38-40; Luke 6:12-16) We might also take a lesson from Hannah, who became the mother of the prophet Samuel. Yearning for a male offspring, “she prayed extendedly before Jehovah.”—1 Samuel 1:12.

What is the basic lesson in all of this? If you hope to receive answers to your prayers, you must pray earnestly, fervently, incessantly—and, of course, in harmony with God’s will. (Luke 22:44; Romans 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 John 5:13-15) Doing this will help to make God real to you.

Observe Creation

An artist’s personality can be revealed by his paintings. Similarly, the “invisible qualities” of Jehovah, the Designer and Creator of the universe, are clearly seen in creation. (Romans 1:20) When we carefully observe Jehovah’s handiwork, we obtain a better understanding of his personality, and he thus becomes more real to us.

If you go beyond casual observation of things created by God, you may be deeply impressed with the reality of his qualities. For example, information about the navigational abilities of birds may well heighten your appreciation of Jehovah’s wisdom. In reading about the universe, you may learn that the Milky Way, which is about 100,000 light-years across, is only one of billions of galaxies throughout space. Does that not impress upon you the reality of the Creator’s wisdom?

Certainly, Jehovah’s wisdom is real! But what does that mean to you? Well, he sure-



**Observe
how God's
qualities are
manifest in
creation**

ly cannot be perplexed by the problems that any of us take to him in prayer. Yes, even meager knowledge of creation can make Jehovah more real to you.

Walk With Jehovah

Can you personally experience how real Jehovah is? Yes, if you are like the faithful patriarch Noah. He always obeyed Jehovah, so much so that it could be said: "Noah walked with the true God." (Genesis 6:9) Noah lived as though Jehovah were by his very side. God can be that real to you.

If you are walking with God, you trust in Scriptural promises and act in harmony with them. For instance, you believe Jesus' words: "Keep on . . . seeking first the kingdom and [God's] righteousness, and all these other things [material necessities] will be added to you." (Matthew 6:25-33) True, Jehovah may not always provide what you need in the way you expect. Yet, when you pray and then experience God's help, he will be as real to you as anyone who is at your side.

Such a close relationship with Jehovah develops as one persists in walking with God. Consider Manuela, a Spanish-speaking Witness, who has endured numerous trials. She says: "Whenever I am troubled or in need, I

Hummingbird: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C./Dean Biggins; stars: Photo: Copyright IAC/RGO 1991, Dr. D. Malin et al, Isaac Newton Telescope, Roque de los Muchachos Observatory, La Palma, Canary Islands

have applied the principle found at Proverbs 18:10. I run to Jehovah for help. He has always been 'a strong tower' for me." Manuela can say this after 36 years of relying on Jehovah and experiencing his support.

Are you just beginning to make Jehovah your confidence? Do not be discouraged if your relationship with him is not yet what you want it to be. Live each day as a person who is walking with God. As you build a life pattern of faithfulness, you will come to enjoy a closer relationship with Jehovah. —Psalm 25:14; Proverbs 3:26, 32.

Another way to walk with God is to be absorbed in his service. When you engage in the Kingdom-preaching activity, you are a fellow worker with Jehovah. (1 Corinthians 3:9) Being aware of this helps to make God very real to you.

The psalmist urges: "Roll upon Jehovah your way, and rely upon him, and he himself will act." (Psalm 37:5) Never fail to roll upon God whatever burdens or cares you have. Always look to him for help and guidance. If you prayerfully rely on Jehovah God and always trust him implicitly, you will feel secure because you know that he will not fail to act in your behalf. Are you confident when approaching Jehovah with your personal concerns? You will be—if God is real to you.

NEGOTIATING A REASONABLE BRIDE-PRICE



TODAY, as in Bible times, some cultures require that a bride-price be paid before a man can marry a woman. "I am willing to serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter," said Jacob to his future father-in-law, Laban. (Genesis 29:18) Because of Jacob's love for Rachel, he offered a high price—the equivalent of seven years' wages! Laban accepted the offer but tricked Jacob into first marrying his older daughter, Leah. Laban's subsequent dealings with Jacob continued to be devious. (Genesis 31:41) The emphasis that Laban placed on material gain caused his daughters to lose respect for him. "Are we not really considered as foreigners to him since he has sold us, so that he keeps eating continually even from the money given for us?" they asked.—Genesis 31:15.

Sadly, in today's materialistic world, many parents are like Laban. And some are far worse. According to one African newspaper, some marriages are negotiated "simply for the sake of profiteering by greedy fathers." Another factor is economic pressure that tempts some parents into viewing their daughters as a means of easing a financial crisis.*

Some parents hold their daughters back from marriage because they are waiting for the highest bidder. This can cause serious problems. A newspaper reporter stationed in eastern Africa wrote: "Young people choose to elope to escape excessive dowries demanded by tenacious in-laws." Sexual immorality is one of the problems caused by the demand for a high bride-price. Furthermore, some young men manage to buy a wife but are left in heavy debt. "Parents should

be reasonable," urged a South African social worker. "They should not demand high amounts. The newly married couple need to live . . . So why bankrupt the young man?"

How can Christian parents set an example of reasonableness when negotiating for the payment or receipt of a bride-price? This is a serious matter, for the Bible commands: "Let your reasonableness become known to all men."—Philippians 4:5.

Reasonable Bible Principles

Whether Christian parents decide to negotiate for a bride-price or not is a personal decision. If they choose to do so, such negotiations should be conducted in harmony with Bible principles. "Let your manner of life be free of the love of money," says God's Word. (Hebrews 13:5) If this principle is not evident in marriage negotiations, a Christian parent might be making manifest that he is not a good example. Men with respon-

* In some cultures, the situation is reversed. The in-laws expect a dowry from the bride's parents.

sible positions in the Christian congregation are to be "reasonable," not 'lovers of money' or "greedy of dishonest gain." (1 Timothy 3: 3, 8) A Christian who greedily and unrepentantly extorts a high bride-price may even be disfellowshipped from the congregation.—1 Corinthians 5:11, 13; 6:9, 10.

Because of the problems caused by greed, some governments have enacted laws that set a ceiling on the bride-price. For example, a law in the West African country of Togo states that the bride-price "can be paid in kind or in cash or in both ways." The law adds: "In no case should the amount exceed the sum of 10,000 F CFA (US\$20.00)." Repeatedly, the Bible commands Christians to be law-abiding citizens. (Titus 3:1) Even if the government does not enforce such a law, a true Christian will want to obey. He will thus maintain a good conscience before God and will not be a cause of stumbling to others.—Romans 13:1, 5; 1 Corinthians 10:32, 33.

Who Is Responsible for Negotiations?

In some cultures, the way the bride-price is negotiated may clash with another important principle. According to the Bible, the father is responsible for the affairs of his household. (1 Corinthians 11:3; Colossians 3: 18, 20) Therefore, those with responsible positions in the congregation are to be men who 'preside in a fine manner over children and their own households.'—1 Timothy 3:12.

However, it may be common in the community for important marriage negotiations to be left to relatives of the family head. And these relatives lay claim to a share of the bride-price. This places a test on Christian households. In the name of custom, some family heads allow unbelieving relatives to extort a high bride-price. This has sometimes led to the marriage of a Christian girl to an unbeliever. That is contrary to the ad-

monition that Christians should marry "only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39) A family head who allows unbelieving relatives to make decisions that prove detrimental to the spiritual welfare of his children cannot be viewed as "presiding over his own household in a fine manner."—1 Timothy 3:4.

As in the case of the God-fearing patriarch Abraham, what if a Christian father does not directly take part in the marriage negotiations of one of his children? (Genesis 24:2-4) If someone else is appointed to do this, the Christian father should make sure that the negotiator follows instructions that are in harmony with the reasonable principles of the Bible. Moreover, before any moves are made to negotiate a bride-price, Christian parents should carefully think matters over and not allow themselves to be carried away by unreasonable customs or demands.—Proverbs 22:3.

Avoiding Unchristian Traits

The Bible condemns pride and the making of a "showy display of one's means of life." (1 John 2:16; Proverbs 21:4) Yet, certain individuals associated with the Christian congregation have displayed these traits in their marriage negotiations. Some imitate the world by showing off the payment or the receipt of a large bride-price. On the other hand, one of the Watch Tower Society's branch offices in Africa reports: "Some husbands have not shown respect when the family has been reasonable in their demands, viewing their wives as being purchased for the price of a 'goat.'"

Greed for a high bride-price has overtaken some Christians and has led to tragic consequences. For example, consider this report from another branch office of the Watch Tower Society: "It is generally hard for single brothers to get married or for sisters to find mates. The consequence is a

growing number of disfellowshippings because of sexual immorality. Some brothers go to the mines in search of gold or diamonds that they can sell in order to have sufficient means to get married. This may take them one or two years or more, and they usually become weak spiritually as they get away from the association with the brothers and the congregation.”

To avoid such sad consequences, Christian parents should follow the example of mature ones in the congregation. Although he was not a parent, the apostle Paul was reasonable in his dealings with fellow believers. He was careful to avoid imposing an expensive burden on anyone. (Acts 20: 33) Certainly, Christian parents should consider his unselfish example when entering into bride-price negotiations. In fact, Paul was divinely inspired to write: “Unitedly become imitators of me, brothers, and keep your eye on those who are walking in a way that accords with the example you have in us.”—Philippians 3:17.

Examples of Reasonableness

When it comes to marriage negotiations, many Christian parents have set a fine example of reasonableness. Consider the case of Joseph and his wife, Mae, who serve as full-time evangelizers.* They live on one of the Solomon Islands where bride-price negotiations are sometimes a problem. To avoid such difficulties, Joseph and Mae arranged for their daughter Helen to get married on a neighboring island. They did the same for another daughter, Esther. Joseph also agreed that his son-in-law Peter pay a bride-price well below what could reasonably be accepted. Asked why he did this, Joseph explained: “I did not want to make a burden for my son-in-law who is a pioneer.”

Many of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Africa

* Substitute names are used in this article.

have also set a fine example of reasonableness. In some areas, members of the extended family generally expect to be paid a large amount of money in advance of negotiations about the actual bride-price. And in order to secure a bride, the bridegroom may be expected to promise that he will cover the future bride-price for a younger brother of his fiancée.

In contrast, consider the example of Kosi and his wife, Mara. Their daughter, Beboke, recently married a traveling overseer of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Before the marriage, relatives put great pressure on the parents for their share of a large bride-price. However, the couple stood firm and did not comply with such demands. Instead, they negotiated directly with their future son-in-law, requesting a minimum for their daughter and then returning half of it to the couple for use in preparing for their wedding day.

Another example in the same country involves a young Witness named Itongo. At first, her family requested a reasonable bride-price. But relatives demanded that the amount be increased. The atmosphere was tense, and it seemed that these relatives might get their way. Though timid by nature, Itongo stood up and respectfully stated that she was determined to marry a zealous Christian named Sanze, according to what had been arranged. Then she courageously said, “*Mbi ke*” (meaning, “The matter is settled”) and sat down. She was supported by her Christian mother, Sambeko. There was no further discussion, and the couple got married as originally planned.

There are things that concern loving Christian parents much more than the personal benefit of a bride-price. A husband in Cameroon explains: “My mother-in-law seizes every opportunity to tell me that whatever I wanted to give her as a bride-price, I should use to care for the needs of her

daughter." Loving parents are also concerned about the spiritual welfare of their children. For instance, consider Farai and Rudo, who live in Zimbabwe and spend much time in the work of preaching the good news of God's Kingdom. Though not wage earners, they gave their two daughters away in marriage for a fraction of the price often asked. Their reason? They wanted their daughters to benefit from marriage to men who truly love Jehovah. "What we regarded as more important was the spirituality of both our daughters and our sons-in-law," they explained. How refreshing! In-laws who show loving concern for the spiritual and material well-being of their married children are to be highly commended.

Benefits of Reasonableness

Joseph and Mae of the Solomon Islands were blessed for the generous and careful way they handled the marriages of their daughters. Thus, their sons-in-law were not placed in debt. Instead, both couples have been able to spend many years in the full-time work of spreading the Kingdom message. Looking back, Joseph says: "The decisions that I and my family have made have resulted in rich blessings.

THEY RETURNED THE BRIDE-PRICE

In some communities, a bride and her parents are looked down upon if the bride-price is low. Thus, pride and a desire to flaunt a family's status are sometimes motives for negotiating a high price. A family in Lagos, Nigeria, provide a refreshing contrast. Their son-in-law, Dele, explains:

"My wife's family relieved me of many of the expenses that go with the traditional bride-price ceremony, such as buying expensive changes of clothing. Even when my family presented the bride-price to them, their spokesperson asked: 'Do you want to take this girl as a wife or as a daughter?' Together my family replied: 'We want to take her as a daughter.' After that, the bride-price was returned to us in the same envelope.

"Up till today, I appreciate my in-laws' handling of our wedding. It made me have a high regard for them. Their excellent spiritual outlook makes me see them as very close relatives. It also had a tremendous effect on how I view my wife. I have developed a deep appreciation for her because of the way I was treated by her family. When we have a disagreement, I do not allow it to become a problem. Once I remember the family from which she comes, the disagreement is minimized.

"My family and hers have become cemented in bonds of friendship. Even now, two years after our wedding, my father still sends gifts and foodstuffs to my wife's family."

True, sometimes there was a lot of pressure from those who did not understand, but I have a good conscience and contentment as I see my children busy and strong in Jehovah's service. They too are happy, and my wife and I are more than happy."

Another benefit has been good relations between in-laws. For example, Zondai and Sibusiso serve as volunteer workers with their wives, who are fleshly sisters, at the Zimbabwe branch of the Watch Tower Society. Their father-in-law, Dakarai, is a full-time evangelizer and not a wage earner. During bride-price negotiations, he said he would accept whatever they could afford. "We dearly love our father-in-law," say Zondai and Sibusiso, "and we would do all in our power to help him if he came to be in need."

Yes, being reasonable in bride-price negotiations contributes to family happiness. For instance, the newlyweds will not be in debt, making it easier for them to adjust to married life. This has enabled many young couples to pursue spiritual blessings, such as serving full-time in the urgent work of preaching and disciple making. In turn, this brings glory to the loving Originator of marriage, Jehovah God.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.

A BIBLE TRANSLATION THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

When God's prophet Moses began writing the Bible over 3,500 years ago, just one small nation could read it. (Deuteronomy 7:7) That was so because the Scriptures were available only in that nation's original Hebrew tongue. However, that would change in time.

THE spread of the Bible's message and its positive influence throughout the centuries are in no small measure the result of its first translation—the *Septuagint*. Why was it made? And can it rightly be said that this was a Bible that changed the world?

An Inspired Translation?

After their exile in Babylon during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E., many Jews remained outside the land of ancient Israel and Judah. For the Jews born in exile, Hebrew became a second language. By the third century B.C.E., there was a Jewish community in Alexandria, Egypt—a major cultural center of the Grecian Empire. Those Jews saw the value of translating the Sacred Scriptures into Greek, which was then their mother tongue.

Up to that time, the Bible's inspired message had been recorded in Hebrew, with small portions in closely related Aramaic. Would expressing the Word of God in a different language diminish the powerful effects of divine inspiration, perhaps even leading to wrong interpretations? Could the Jews, who had been entrusted with the inspired Word, allow themselves to risk perverting that message through translation?—Psalm 147:19, 20; Romans 3:1, 2.

These sensitive issues caused apprehension. Yet, concern that Jews would no longer understand God's Word finally outweighed all other considerations. A decision was made to prepare a Greek translation of the Torah—the first five books of the Bible, penned by Moses. The actual translation process is shrouded in legend. According to the *Letter of Aristeas*, the Egyptian ruler Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.E.) wanted a copy of the Pentateuch (or, Torah) translated into Greek for his royal library. He commissioned 72 Jewish scholars, who came to Egypt from Israel and completed the translation in 72 days. This translation was then read to the Jewish community, who declared it both beautiful and accurate. Later embellishments of this story claimed that each translator was placed in a separate room, and yet their translations were identical, letter for letter. Because of the tradition about 72 translators, this Greek Bible translation came to be known as the *Septuagint*, based on a Latin word meaning "Seventy."

Most present-day scholars agree that the *Letter of Aristeas* is an apocryphal writing. They also believe that the initiative for translation came, not from Ptolemy II, but from the leaders of the Alexandrian Jewish community. But

the writings of the Jewish Alexandrian philosopher Philo and the Jewish historian Josephus as well as the Talmud all display a general belief among first-century Jews that the *Septuagint* was inspired to the same degree as the original Scriptures. Such traditions no doubt resulted from an effort to make the *Septuagint* acceptable to the Jewish community worldwide.

Although the initial translation involved only the five books of Moses, the name *Septuagint* came to refer to the entire Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek. The remaining books were translated over the next hundred years or so. Rather than being a coordinated effort, the production of the entire *Septuagint* was a piecemeal accomplishment. The translators differed in their abilities and knowledge of Hebrew. Most books were translated literally, sometimes to the extreme, while other translations were quite free. A few exist in both long and short versions. By the end of the second century B.C.E., all the books of the Hebrew Scriptures could be read in Greek. Despite inconsistent results, the effect of translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek went far beyond what the translators could have expected.

Japheth in the Tents of Shem?

In discussing the *Septuagint*, the Talmud quotes Genesis 9:27: "Let . . . Japheth . . . reside in the tents of Shem." (Megillah 9b, Babylonian Talmud) The Talmud figuratively implies that through the beauty of the Greek language of the *Septuagint*, Japheth (the father of Javan, from whom the Greeks descended) dwelt in the tents of Shem (the forefather of the nation of Israel). However, it could also be said that through the *Septuagint*, Shem dwelt in the tents of Japheth. How so?

After the conquests of Alexander the Great, in the latter part of the fourth century B.C.E., an intense effort was made to spread Greek language and culture throughout the conquered

lands. This policy was called Hellenization. The Jews felt themselves under constant cultural assault. If Greek culture and philosophy prevailed, the very religion of the Jews would be undermined. What could stem the tide of this assault?

Regarding one possible motive of the Jews in translating the *Septuagint*, Jewish Bible translator Max Margolis comments: "If we may at all lay the scheme at the door of the Jewish community, another motive will have played into it, namely, to open up the Jewish Law to the inspection of the Gentile population and to convince the world that the Jews possessed a culture which rivalled the wisdom of Hellas [Greece]." Making the Hebrew Scriptures available to the Greek-speaking world may therefore have been both a form of self-defense and a counterattack.

Alexander's policy of Hellenization had made Greek the international language of the world. Even when his realm was overrun by the Romans, common (or, Koine) Greek remained the language of trade and communication among nations. Whether this resulted from a deliberate effort or was a natural development, the *Septuagint* version of the Hebrew Scriptures quickly found its way into the homes and hearts of many non-Jews previously unacquainted with God and the Law of the Jews. The results were astonishing.

Proselytes and God-Fearers

By the first century C.E., Philo could write that the "beauty and dignity of the legislation of Moses is honoured not among the Jews only, but also by all other nations." Regarding Jews living outside Palestine in the first century, Jewish historian Joseph Klausner says: "It is hard to believe that all these millions of Jews had assembled themselves by emigration from little Palestine alone. One is forced to say that this great increase came also from the reception of male and female proselytes in large numbers."

However, these impressive points do not tell the whole story. Author Shaye J. D. Cohen, professor of Jewish history, states: "Many gentiles, both men and women, converted to Judaism during the last centuries B.C.E. and the first two centuries C.E. Even more numerous, however, were those gentiles who accepted certain aspects of Judaism but did not convert to it." Both Klausner and Cohen refer to these nonconverts as God-fearers, an expression that appears frequently in Greek literature of the period.

What is the difference between a proselyte and a God-fearer? Proselytes were full converts, considered Jews in every sense because they accepted the God of Israel (rejecting all other gods), underwent circumcision, and joined themselves to the nation of Israel. In contrast, Cohen says regarding God-fearers: "Although these gentiles observed any number of Jewish practices and venerated in one form or another the God of the Jews, they did not see themselves as Jews and were not seen by others as Jews." Klausner describes them as "standing in a middle position," for they accepted Judaism and "observed a part of its customs, but . . . did not become complete Jews."

Perhaps some became interested in God because of discussions with Jews engaged in missionary activity or by observing how they were different in conduct, custom, and behavior.

In Our Next Issue

"The Truth Will Set You Free"

Local Cultures and Christian Principles—Are They Compatible?

Keep Making Spiritual Progress!

Yet, the *Septuagint* was the main tool assisting these God-fearers to learn about Jehovah God. While there is no way to know the exact number of first-century God-fearers, the *Septuagint* unquestionably spread some knowledge about God throughout the Roman Empire. By means of the *Septuagint*, important groundwork was also being laid.

The Septuagint Helped to Prepare the Way

The *Septuagint* figured prominently in spreading the message of Christianity. Many Greek-speaking Jews were among those present at the founding of the Christian congregation at Pentecost 33 C.E. Proselytes were also among those who became Christ's disciples at that early stage. (Acts 2:5-11; 6:1-6; 8:26-38) Since the inspired writings of Jesus' apostles and other early disciples were intended for as wide an audience as possible, they were recorded in Greek.* Therefore, many quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures appearing in the Christian Greek Scriptures were based on the *Septuagint*.

Others besides natural Jews and proselytes were ready to accept the Kingdom message. The Gentile Cornelius was "a devout man and one fearing God together with all his household, and he made many gifts of mercy to the people and made supplication to God continually." In 36 C.E., Cornelius, his family, and others who assembled at his home were the first Gentiles baptized as Christ's followers. (Acts 10:1, 2, 24, 44-48; compare Luke 7:2-10.) When the apostle Paul traveled throughout Asia Minor and Greece, he preached to many Gentiles who already feared God as well as to "Greeks who worshiped God." (Acts 13:16, 26; 17:4) Why were Cornelius and those other Gentiles ready to accept the good news? The *Septuagint* had helped to prepare the way. One

* The Gospel of Matthew may have been written first in Hebrew, with a version in Greek provided thereafter.



The "Septuagint" was understood by many people to whom Paul preached

scholar surmises that the *Septuagint* "is a book of such critical significance that apart from it both Christendom and the western culture would be inconceivable."

The *Septuagint* Loses Its "Inspiration"

The extensive use of the *Septuagint* eventually caused a backlash among the Jews. In discussions with Christians, for example, the Jews claimed that the *Septuagint* was a mis-translation. By the second century C.E., the Jewish community had completely turned its back on the translation that it had once praised as inspired. The rabbis rejected the legend of the 72 translators, stating: "It happened once that five elders wrote the Torah for King Ptolemy in Greek, and that day was as ominous for Israel

as the day on which the golden calf was made, since the Torah could not be accurately translated." To ensure stricter agreement with rabbinic views, the rabbis authorized a new translation into Greek. It was carried out in the second century C.E. by a Jewish proselyte named Aquila, a disciple of the rabbi Akiba.

The *Septuagint* ceased to be used by Jews, but it became the standard "Old Testament" of the emerging Catholic Church until it was superseded by Jerome's Latin *Vulgate*. Although a translation can never take the place of the original, the *Septuagint* played an important role in spreading knowledge about Jehovah God and his Kingdom by means of Jesus Christ. Truly, the *Septuagint* is a Bible translation that changed the world.



THE WAR THAT DESTROYED THE 19TH CENTURY

U.S. National Archives photo

REFLECTING on the new millennium, Charley Reese, newspaper columnist for *The Orlando Sentinel*, wrote: "The 1914-18 war that destroyed the 19th century is not over." What did he mean? He explained: "History doesn't pay any attention to calendars. The 19th century—defined as a set of beliefs, assumptions, attitudes and morals—did not end on Jan. 1, 1901. It ended in 1914. That's also when the 20th century, defined the same way, began. . . .

"Virtually all of the conflicts

that we have been concerned with all of our lives stemmed from that war. Nearly all of the intellectual and cultural currents that we have lived with were born out of that war. . . .

"I think it did such damage because it shattered people's belief that humans can control their destiny. . . . The war disabused people of that belief.

No one on either side thought it would turn out the way it did.

It destroyed the British and French empires. It killed off the best of a whole generation of British, French and German

men. . . . In a short period of time, it killed 11 million people."

For over 120 years, Jehovah's Witnesses have pointed to 1914 as the end of what Jesus called "the appointed times of the nations." (Luke 21:24) In that year, the resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ was enthroned as King of the heavenly Kingdom. By means of that Kingdom, Jehovah God will permanently eliminate all the suffering that has characterized this century.—Psalm 37:10, 11; Ecclesiastes 8:9; Revelation 21:3, 4.

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