

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

DECEMBER 15, 1998

Has Christmas
LOST CHRIST?

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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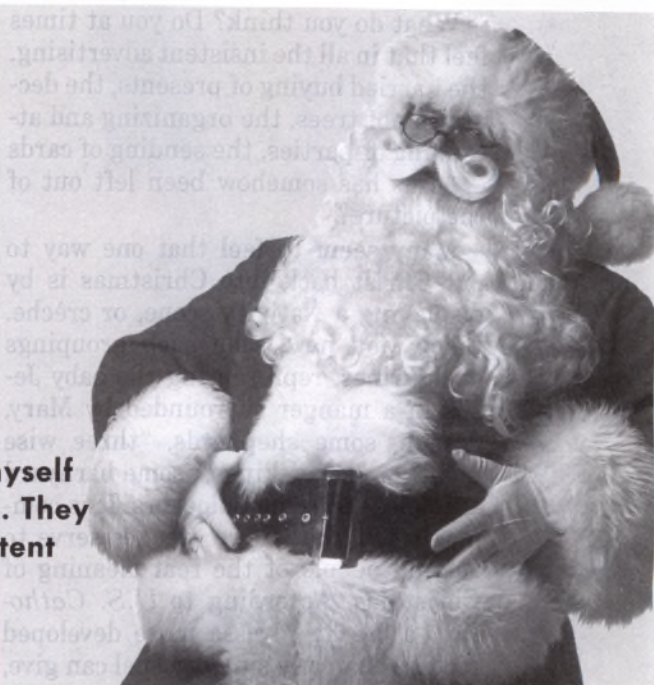
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Has Christmas LOST CHRIST?

"I have never been able to reconcile myself to the gaieties of the Christmas season. They have appeared to me to be so inconsistent with the life and teaching of Jesus."

—Mohandas K. Gandhi.

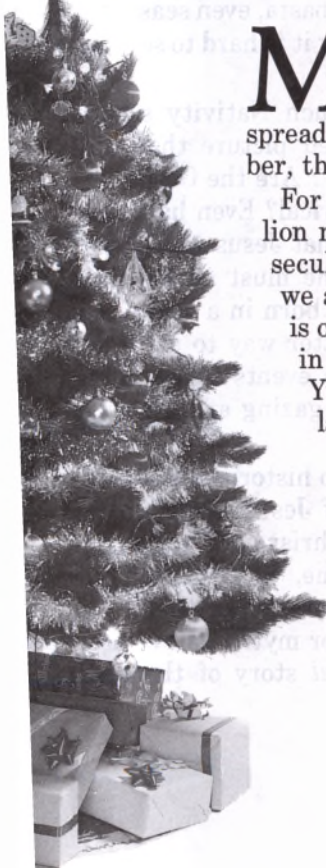


MANY would completely disagree with Gandhi. 'What,' they may wonder, 'could a Hindu statesman really know about a Christian holiday?' It must be admitted, though, that Christmas has spread all over the world, affecting all manner of cultures. Each December, the holiday seems all-pervasive.

For example, some 145 million Asians celebrate Christmas, 40 million more than a decade ago. And if by "gaieties" Gandhi meant the secular side of modern-day Christmas, the frenzied consumerism that we all observe, it is hard to deny that this aspect of the celebration is often the most prominent. *Asiaweek* magazine notes: "Christmas in Asia—from the festive lights in Hong Kong to towering hotel Yuletide trees in Beijing to a creche in downtown Singapore—is largely a secular (mainly retail) event."

Has the modern-day celebration of Christmas lost sight of Christ? Officially, December 25 has been observed since the fourth century C.E., when the Roman Catholic Church designated that day for religious observance of Jesus' birth. But according to a recent poll taken in the United States, only 33 percent of those polled felt that the birth of Christ is the most important aspect of Christmas.

Border on pages 3-6, 8, and 9: Fifty Years of Soviet Art



What do you think? Do you at times feel that in all the insistent advertising, the harried buying of presents, the decorating of trees, the organizing and attending of parties, the sending of cards—Jesus has somehow been left out of the picture?

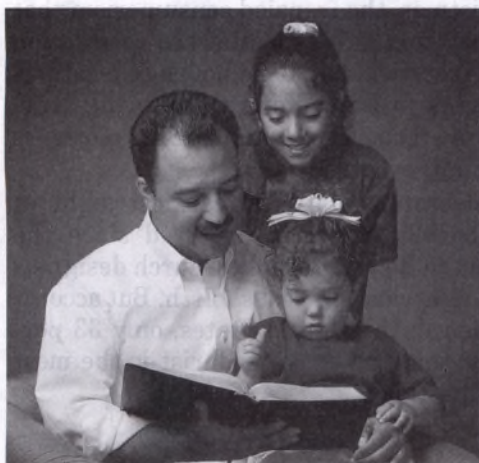
Many seem to feel that one way to put Christ back into Christmas is by displaying a Nativity scene, or crèche. Likely you have seen such groupings of figurines, representing the baby Jesus in a manger surrounded by Mary, Joseph, some shepherds, “three wise men,” or “three kings,” some barnyard animals, and some onlookers. It is commonly felt that these crèches serve to remind people of the real meaning of Christmas. According to *U.S. Catholic*, “a crèche gives a more developed picture than any single gospel can give, though it also emphasizes the nonhistorical character of these narratives.”

How, though, would a Nativity scene suggest that the narratives in the Gospel accounts of the Bible are *non-historical*? Well, it must be admitted that quaintly painted little sculptures lend an aura of legend or fairy tale

to the birth of Christ. First popularized by a monk in the 13th century, the Nativity scene was once a fairly modest affair. Today, like so many other things associated with this holiday, Nativity scenes have become big business. In Naples, Italy, rows of shops sell figures for Nativity scenes, or *presepi*, year round. Some of the more popular figures represent, not characters from the Gospel accounts, but modern-day celebrities, such as Princess Diana, Mother Teresa, and clothing designer Gianni Versace. Elsewhere, *presepi* are made of chocolate, pasta, even seashells. You can appreciate why it is hard to see history in such displays.

How, then, could such Nativity scenes give “a more developed picture than any single gospel can give”? Are the Gospel accounts not truly historical? Even hardened skeptics must admit that Jesus was a real, historical person. So he must at one time have been a real baby, born in a real place. There should be a better way to get a developed picture of the events surrounding his birth than merely gazing at a Nativity scene!

In fact, there is. Two historians wrote independent accounts of Jesus’ birth. If you sometimes feel that Christ goes largely ignored at Christmastime, why not examine these accounts for yourself? In them, you will find, not legends or myths, but a fascinating story—the *real* story of the birth of Christ.





JESUS' BIRTH The Real Story

THINK of a widely known event in your country's history. It is well documented, written up by more than one historian. Now, what if someone told you that this event had never happened, that it was all a myth? Or, bringing the matter closer to home, what if someone claimed that much of what your family had told you about your own grandfather's birth and early life is false? In either case, the very suggestion might make you indignant. Surely you would not accept such claims at mere face value!

Yet, critics today commonly dismiss the Gospel records of Jesus' birth by Matthew and Luke. They say that these accounts are hopelessly contradictory and irreconcilable and that both contain blatant falsehoods and

historical blunders. Could that be true? Instead of accepting such charges, let us examine the Gospel records for ourselves. In the process, let us see what they have to teach us today.

Purpose in Writing

At the outset it helps to remember the purpose of these Biblical accounts. They are not biographies; they are Gospels. The distinction is important. In a biography, the author may fill hundreds of pages, endeavoring to show how his subject developed into the figure that is so well-known. Thus, some biographies spend scores of pages detailing the parentage, birth, and childhood of their subjects. With the Gospels, it is different. Of the four Gospel records, Matthew's and Luke's are the only two that tell of Jesus' birth and childhood. Their aim, however, is not to show how Jesus developed into the man he did. Remember, Jesus' followers recognized that he had existed as a spirit creature before he ever came to the earth. (John 8:23, 58) So Matthew and Luke did not draw on Jesus' childhood in order to explain what kind of man he became. Rather, they related incidents that suited the purpose of their Gospels.

And what was their purpose in writing them? The word "gospel" means "good news." Both men had the same message—that Jesus is the promised Messiah, or Christ; that he died for mankind's sins; and that he was resurrected to heaven. But the two writers had



markedly different backgrounds and wrote for different audiences. Matthew, a tax collector, shaped his account for a largely Jewish audience. Luke, a physician, wrote to the “most excellent Theophilus”—who possibly had some high position—and, by extension, to a broader audience of Jews and Gentiles. (Luke 1:1-3) Each writer selected incidents that were most relevant to and most likely to convince his particular audience. Thus, Matthew’s record stresses the Hebrew Scripture prophecies that were fulfilled in connection with Jesus. Luke, on the other hand, follows the more classic historical approach that his non-Jewish audience might have recognized.

Not surprisingly, their accounts differ. But the two do not, as critics claim, contradict each other. They complement each other, dovetailing nicely to form a more complete picture.

Jesus’ Birth in Bethlehem

Matthew and Luke both record an outstanding miracle concerning the birth of Jesus—he was born of a virgin. Matthew shows that this miracle fulfilled a prophecy uttered centuries before by Isaiah. (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22, 23) Luke explains that Jesus was born in Bethlehem because a registration instituted by Caesar forced Joseph and Mary to travel there. (See box on page 7.) That Jesus was born in Bethlehem was significant. Centuries earlier, the prophet Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be from this seemingly insignificant town near Jerusalem.—Micah 5:2.

The night of Jesus’ birth has become famous as the basis for Nativity scenes. However, the real story is quite different from the one so often depicted.

Historian Luke, who tells us of the census that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, also tells us of the shepherds’ spending that important night out-of-doors with their flocks. These two circumstances have led many Bible researchers to conclude that Jesus could not have been born during December. They point out the unlikelihood of Caesar’s forcing the volatile Jews to trek to their home cities during the cold and rainy season, which could further enrage a rebellious people. It is equally unlikely, scholars note, that shepherds would have been living out-of-doors with their flocks in such inclement weather.—Luke 2:8-14.

Note that Jehovah chose to announce the birth of his Son, not to the educated and influential religious leaders of the day, but to rugged laborers living out-of-doors. The scribes and Pharisees likely had little to do with shepherds, whose irregular hours kept them from observing some details of the oral law. But God favored these humble, faithful men with a great honor—a delegation of angels informed them that the Messiah, whom God’s people had been awaiting for thousands of years, had just been born in Bethlehem. It was these men, and not the “three kings” so often represented in Nativity scenes, who visited Mary and Joseph and beheld this innocent baby lying in a manger.—Luke 2:15-20.

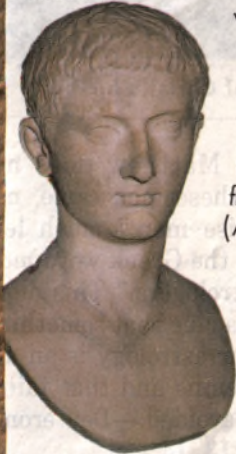
Jehovah Favors Humble Seekers of Truth

God favors humble people who love him and are keenly interested in seeing the fulfillment of his purposes. This is a recurring theme in the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. When, about a month after the child’s birth, Joseph and Mary present him at the temple in obedience to the Mosaic Law, they make an offering there of “a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.” (Luke 2:22-24)

WAS LUKE IN ERROR?

HOW could Jesus, who grew up in Nazareth and was commonly known as the Nazarene, have been born in Bethlehem, some 90 miles away? Luke explains: "Now in those days [before Jesus' birth] a decree went forth from Caesar Augustus for all the inhabited earth to be registered; (this first registration took place when Quirinius was governor of Syria;) and all people went traveling to be registered, each one to his own city."—Luke 1:1; 2:1-3.

Photograph taken by courtesy of the British Museum



Tiberius Caesar
(14-37 C.E.)



Musée de Normandie,
Caen, France

Caesar Augustus
(27 B.C.E.—14 C.E.)

Critics widely attack this passage as a blunder or, worse, a fabrication. They insist that this census and the governorship of Quirinius took place in 6 or 7 C.E. If they are right, this would cast serious doubt on Luke's account, for the evidence suggests that Jesus was born in 2 B.C.E. But these critics ignore two key facts. First, Luke acknowledges that there was more than one census—note that he refers to "this first registration." He was well aware of another, later registration. (Acts 5:37) This later census is the same one that the historian Josephus described, which occurred in 6 C.E. Second, the governorship of Quirinius does not force us to assign Jesus' birth to that late date. Why? Because Quirinius evidently served in that post twice. Many scholars recognize that his first term fell about 2 B.C.E.

Some critics say that Luke invented the census to create a reason for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Micah 5:2. This theory makes Luke a willful liar, and no critic can reconcile such an allegation with the scrupulous historian who wrote the Gospel and the book of Acts.

Something else no critic can explain: The census itself fulfilled a prophecy! In the sixth century B.C.E., Daniel prophesied about a ruler who would be "causing an exactor to pass through the splendid kingdom." Did this apply to Augustus and his order to carry out a census in Israel? Well, the prophecy goes on to foretell that the Messiah, or "Leader of the covenant," would be "broken" during the reign of this ruler's successor. Jesus was indeed "broken," executed, during the reign of Augustus' successor, Tiberius.—Daniel 11:20-22.

The Law actually called for a ram, but it allowed for this less expensive option in cases of poverty. (Leviticus 12:1-8) Think of it. Jehovah God, the Sovereign of the universe, selected, not a wealthy family, but a poor one

as the household in which his beloved, only-begotten Son would be raised. If you are a parent, this should serve as a vivid reminder that the best gift you can give your children—far better than material wealth or a



Jehovah's angel favored humble shepherds with the good news of Christ's birth

prestigious education—is a home environment that puts spiritual values first.

At the temple, two other faithful, humble worshipers are favored by Jehovah. One is Anna, an 84-year-old widow who is “never missing from the temple.” (Luke 2:36, 37) Another is a faithful elderly man named Simeon. Both are thrilled with the privilege God has granted them—before they die, laying eyes on the one who would be the promised Messiah. Simeon utters a prophecy over the child. It is a prophecy filled with hope but tinged with mourning. He foretells that this young mother, Mary, will one day be pierced with grief over her beloved son.—Luke 2:25-35.

A Child in Danger

Simeon's prophecy is a grim reminder that this innocent child will become an object of hatred. Even while he is still an infant, this hatred is already at work. Matthew's account details how this is so. A number of months have passed, and Joseph, Mary, and Jesus are now living in a house in Bethlehem. They receive an unexpected visit from a number of foreigners. Despite what countless Na-

tivity scenes depict, Matthew does not specify how many of these men came, nor does he call them “wise men,” much less “three kings.” He uses the Greek word *ma'goi*, which means “astrologers.” This alone should give the reader a clue that something evil is at work here, for astrology is an art that God's Word condemns and that faithful Jews scrupulously avoided.—Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Isaiah 47:13, 14.

These astrologers have followed a star from the east and are bearing gifts for “the one born king of the Jews.” (Matthew 2:2) But the star does not lead them to Bethlehem. It draws them to Jerusalem and to Herod the Great. No man in the world holds such means and motive to harm young Jesus. This ambitious, murderous man had killed several of his own immediate family members whom he viewed as threats.* Disturbed to hear of the birth of a future “king of the Jews,” he dispatches the astrologers to find that One in Bethlehem. As they go, something strange happens. The “star” that led them to travel to Jerusalem seems to move! —Matthew 2:1-9.

* In fact, Caesar Augustus observed that it was safer to be Herod's pig than Herod's son.

Now, whether this was an actual light in the sky or simply a vision, we do not know. But we do know that this “star” was not from God. With sinister precision, it leads these pagan worshipers right to Jesus—a child vulnerable and helpless, protected only by a poor carpenter and his wife. The astrologers, Herod’s unwitting dupes, likely would have reported back to the vengeful monarch, leading to the child’s destruction. But God intervenes through a dream and sends them back home by another route. The “star,” then, must have been a device of God’s enemy Satan, who would go to any lengths to harm the Messiah. How ironic that the “star” and astrologers are portrayed in Nativity scenes as emissaries of God!—Matthew 2:9-12.

Still, Satan does not give up. His pawn in the matter, King Herod, orders that all infants in Bethlehem under two years of age be killed. But Satan cannot win a battle against Jehovah. Matthew notes that God had long ago foreseen even this vicious slaughter of innocent children. Jehovah countered Satan again, warning Joseph through an angel to flee to Egypt for safety. Matthew reports that some time later Joseph again moved his little family and finally settled them in Nazareth, where Jesus grew up with his younger brothers and sisters.—Matthew 2:13-23; 13:55, 56.

The Birth of Christ —What It Means for You

Do you find yourself somewhat surprised by this summary of the events surrounding Jesus’ birth and early childhood? Many do. They are surprised to find that the accounts are actually harmonious and accurate, despite some people’s bold assertions to the contrary. They are surprised to learn that some events were foretold hundreds of years

in advance. And they are surprised that some key elements in the Gospels differ markedly from portrayals in traditional Nativity stories and crèches.

Perhaps most surprising of all, though, is that so much of the traditional Christmas celebrations misses the vital points of the Gospel narratives. Little thought is given, for instance, to Jesus’ Father—not Joseph, but Jehovah God. Imagine his feelings upon entrusting his beloved Son to Joseph and Mary for them to raise him and provide for him. Imagine the heavenly Father’s agony in letting his Son grow up in a world in which a hate-filled king would plot his murder even when he was a mere child! It was profound love for mankind that moved Jehovah to make this sacrifice.—John 3:16.

The real Jesus is often lost in Christmas celebrations. Why, there is no record that he ever even told the disciples his date of birth; nor is there any indication that his followers celebrated his birthday.

It was not Jesus’ birth but his death—and its history-making significance—that he commanded his followers to commemorate. (Luke 22:19, 20) No, it was not as a helpless baby in a manger that Jesus wished to be remembered, for he is nothing of the kind now.

More than 60 years after his execution, Jesus revealed himself in vision to the apostle John as a mighty King riding into battle. (Revelation 19:11-16) It is in that role, as Ruler of God’s heavenly Kingdom, that we need to get to know Jesus today, for he is a King who will change the world.



SALVATION BELONGS TO JEHOVAH

"The true God is for us a God of saving acts."—PSALM 68:20.

JEHOVAH is the Savior of humans who love him. (Isaiah 43:11) Israel's renowned King David knew this from personal experience, and he wholeheartedly sang: "Salvation belongs to Jehovah." (Psalm 3:8) The prophet Jonah used the same words in fervent prayer while in the belly of the great fish.—Jonah 2:9.

² David's son Solomon also knew that Jehovah is the Source of salvation, for he said: "The horse is something prepared for the day of battle, but salvation belongs to Jehovah." (Proverbs 21:31) In the ancient Middle East, oxen pulled the plow, asses carried burdens, people rode on mules, and horses were used in warfare. Before the Israelites en-

1, 2. (a) Why can we say that Jehovah is the Source of salvation? (b) How would you explain Proverbs 21:31?

tered the Promised Land, however, God commanded that their future king "should not increase horses for himself." (Deuteronomy 17:16) War horses would not be needed because Jehovah would save his people.

³ The Sovereign Lord Jehovah is "a God of saving acts." (Psalm 68:20) What an encouraging thought! But what "saving acts" has Jehovah performed? And whom has he saved?

Jehovah Saves the Upright

⁴ All those pursuing an upright course as God's dedicated servants can draw comfort from the apostle Peter's words: "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off." Proving this point, Peter said that God "did not hold back from punishing an ancient world, but kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people."—2 Peter 2:5, 9.

⁵ Imagine yourself amid conditions in Noah's day. Materialized demons are on earth. The offspring of these disobedient angels treat people cruelly, and 'the earth is filled

3. What questions merit our consideration?

4. How do we know that Jehovah saves godly people?

5. Under what conditions did Noah serve as "a preacher of righteousness"?



with violence.' (Genesis 6:1-12) However, Noah cannot be bullied into forsaking Jehovah's service. Instead, he is "a preacher of righteousness." He and his family build an ark, never doubting that wickedness will be eliminated in their lifetime. Noah's faith condemns that world. (Hebrews 11:7) Present-day conditions parallel those of Noah's day, marking these as the last days of this wicked system of things. (Matthew 24:37-39; 2 Timothy 3:1-5) Like Noah, then, will you prove faithful as a preacher of righteousness serving along with God's people as you await the salvation of Jehovah?

⁶ Peter provides further evidence that Jehovah saves the upright. The apostle says: "[God] delivered righteous Lot, who was greatly distressed by the indulgence of the law-defying people in loose conduct—for that righteous man by what he saw and heard while dwelling among them from day to day was tormenting his righteous soul by reason of their lawless deeds." (2 Peter 2:7, 8; Genesis 19:1-29) Sexual immorality has become a way of life for millions in these last days. Like Lot, are you 'greatly distressed by the indulgence in loose conduct' on the part of so many today? If you are, and if you are practicing righteousness, you may be among those saved by Jehovah when this wicked system is brought to its end.

Jehovah Saves His People From Oppressors

⁷ As long as this old system lasts, Jehovah's servants will experience persecution and enemy oppression. But they can be confident that Jehovah will deliver them, for he has saved his oppressed people in the past. Suppose you were an Israelite suffering oppression at the hands of the Egypt-

tians of Moses' day. (Exodus 1:1-14; 6:8) God strikes Egypt with one plague after another. (Exodus 8:5-10:29) When the death-dealing tenth plague claims the lives of the Egyptian firstborn, Pharaoh allows Israel to depart but later mobilizes his forces and speeds after them. Soon, however, he and his men are destroyed in the Red Sea. (Exodus 14:23-28) You join Moses and all Israel in this song: "Jehovah is a manly person of war. Jehovah is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his military forces he has cast into the sea, and the choice of his warriors have been sunk in the Red Sea. The surging waters proceeded to cover them; down they went into the depths like a stone." (Exodus 15:3-5) Similar disaster awaits all oppressors of God's people in these last days.

⁸ For years after the Israelites entered the Promised Land, judges administered justice among them. The people sometimes suffered under foreign oppression, yet God used faithful judges to deliver them. Though we may similarly 'groan because of oppressors and those shoving us around,' Jehovah will also save us as his loyal servants. (Judges 2:16-18; 3:9, 15) In fact, the Bible book of Judges gives us assurance of this and of the greater salvation God will provide by means of his appointed Judge, Jesus Christ.

⁹ Let us return to the days of Judge Barak. Because of false worship and divine disapproval, the Israelites have experienced 20 years of harsh domination by Canaanite King Jabin. Sisera is the chief of the large Canaanite military host. But, 'a shield cannot be seen, nor a lance, among forty thousand in Israel,' although the nation may number some four million. (Judges 5:6-8) The Israelites repentantly cry out to Jehovah. As directed by God through the prophetess Deborah, Barak assembles 10,000 men

6. How does 2 Peter 2:7, 8 prove that Jehovah saves the upright?

7. How do Jehovah's dealings with the Israelites in Egypt prove that he delivers his people from oppression?

8, 9. From the book of Judges, give an example proving that Jehovah saves his people from oppressors.

on Mount Tabor, and Jehovah draws the enemy up the valley below lofty Tabor. Thundering across the plain and Kishon's dry riverbed come Sisera's legions and 900 war chariots. But a torrential downpour swells the Kishon with overwhelming floodwaters. As Barak and his men march down Mount Tabor under cover of the storm, they witness the havoc wrought by Jehovah's unleashed fury. Barak's men pick off the terrified, fleeing Canaanites, and none escape. What a warning for our oppressors who presume to fight against God!—Judges 4:3-16; 5:19-22.

¹⁰ Jehovah will save his present-day servants from all their oppressive foes, just as

10. Why can we be sure that God will save his present-day servants from all their oppressors?

he saved God-fearing Israel in times of peril. (Isaiah 43:3; Jeremiah 14:8) God delivered David "out of the palm of all his enemies." (2 Samuel 22:1-3) So even if we are oppressed or persecuted as Jehovah's people, let us be courageous, for his Messianic King will free us from oppression. Yes, "the souls of the poor ones he will save. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul." (Psalm 72:13, 14) That redemption is near indeed.

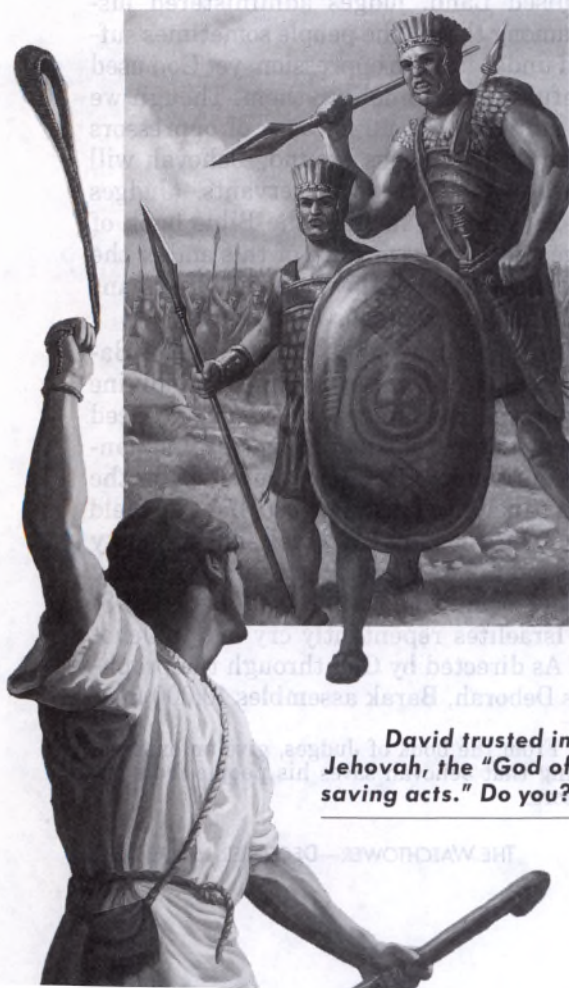
God Saves Those Who Trust in Him

¹¹ To see the salvation of Jehovah, we must courageously trust in him. David displayed courageous reliance on God when he went out to meet the giant Goliath. Imagine that towering Philistine standing before young David, who calls out: "You are coming to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I am coming to you with the name of Jehovah of armies, the God of the battle lines of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day Jehovah will surrender you into my hand, and I shall certainly strike you down and remove your head off you; and I shall certainly give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines this day to the fowls of the heavens and to the wild beasts of the earth; and people of all the earth will know that there exists a God belonging to Israel. And all this congregation will know that neither with sword nor with spear does Jehovah save, because to Jehovah belongs the battle." Goliath is soon dead, and the Philistines are routed. Clearly, Jehovah saved his people.—1 Samuel 17:45-54.

¹² When facing persecutors, we may need to "muster up courage" and trust in God more fully. (Isaiah 46:8-13; Proverbs 3:5, 6) Note this incident at a place named Pas-

11. What example of reliance on Jehovah did young David provide?

12. Why may it be helpful to remember David's mighty man Eleazar?



David trusted in Jehovah, the "God of saving acts." Do you?

dammim. Israel has retreated before the Philistine forces. But fear does not immobilize Eleazar, one of David's three outstanding mighty men. He takes his stand in a field of barley and single-handedly strikes down the Philistines with the sword. Thus 'Jehovah saves Israel with a great salvation.' (1 Chronicles 11:12-14; 2 Samuel 23:9, 10) Nobody expects us to fight off a military force single-handedly. Yet, we may at times be alone and pressured by enemies. Will we prayerfully rely on Jehovah, the God of saving acts? Will we seek his help so as to avoid betraying our fellow believers to persecutors?

Jehovah Saves Integrity Keepers

¹³ To experience the salvation of Jehovah, we must maintain integrity to him at all costs. God's people of ancient times experienced various trials. Think of what you may have faced if you had lived in the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. Rehoboam's harshness had prompted the ten tribes to withdraw support from him and to form the northern kingdom of Israel. (2 Chronicles 10:16, 17; 11:13, 14) Of its many kings, Jehu was the best, but even he 'did not walk in Jehovah's law with all his heart.' (2 Kings 10:30, 31) Nevertheless, the ten-tribe kingdom had its integrity keepers. (1 Kings 19:18) They exercised faith in God, and he proved to be with them. Despite tests of your faith, are you maintaining integrity to Jehovah?

¹⁴ Widespread disregard for God's Law led to calamity for the kingdom of Israel. When the Assyrians conquered it in 740 B.C.E., individuals from its ten tribes undoubtedly fled to the two-tribe kingdom of Judah,

13. Why was it difficult to maintain integrity to God in the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel?

14. What salvation did Jehovah perform in the days of King Hezekiah, and what led to the Babylonian conquest of Judah?

where they could worship Jehovah at his temple. Four of Judah's 19 kings of David's line—Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah—were outstanding in their devotion to God. In the days of integrity-keeping Hezekiah, the Assyrians came against Judah with a mighty army. In answer to Hezekiah's petitions, God used just one angel to kill 185,000 Assyrians in a single night, thus giving salvation to His worshipers! (Isaiah 37:36-38) Later, the failure of the people to keep the Law and to heed the warnings of God's prophets led to the Babylonian conquest of Judah and the destruction of its capital, Jerusalem, and the temple in 607 B.C.E.

¹⁵ Endurance was needed by Jewish exiles in order to maintain integrity to God while in Babylonian captivity for some 70 sad years. (Psalm 137:1-6) One noteworthy integrity keeper was the prophet Daniel. (Daniel 1:1-7; 9:1-3) Imagine his joy when the decree of Persian King Cyrus went into effect in 537 B.C.E., allowing the Jews to return to Judah to rebuild the temple! (Ezra 1:1-4) Daniel and others had endured for years, but they finally saw Babylon's overthrow and the deliverance of Jehovah's people. This should help us to display endurance while we await the destruction of "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion.—Revelation 18:1-5.

Jehovah Always Saves His People

¹⁶ Jehovah always saves his people when they are faithful to his name. (1 Samuel 12:22; Isaiah 43:10-12) Step back to the days of Queen Esther—the fifth century B.C.E. King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) has appointed Haman as prime minister. Enraged by the

15. Why was endurance needed by Jewish exiles in Babylon, and how did Jehovah eventually effect a deliverance?

16. What salvation did God bring about in the days of Queen Esther?

refusal of Mordecai the Jew to bow down to him, Haman plots to destroy him and all the Jews in the Persian Empire. He paints them as lawbreakers, adds an economic inducement, and is allowed to use the king's signet ring to seal a document decreeing their extermination. Esther courageously reveals her Jewish ancestry to the king and exposes Haman's murderous plot. Haman is soon hanging on the very stake he prepared for Mordecai's execution. Mordecai is made prime minister, with authorization to allow the Jews to defend themselves. They win a great victory over their enemies. (Esther 3:1-9:19) This event should strengthen our faith that Jehovah will perform saving acts in behalf of his obedient present-day servants.

¹⁷ Another reason why God saves his people is that they obey him and his Son. Put yourself in the place of Jesus' first-century Jewish disciples. He tells them: "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." (Luke 21:20-22) Years pass, and you wonder when these words will be fulfilled. Then comes a Jewish revolt in 66 C.E. Roman forces under Ces-

17. How did obedience play a role in the deliverance of first-century Jewish Christians living in Judea?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What Scriptural proof is there that God saves his upright people?
- ☐ How do we know that Jehovah saves those who trust in him and maintain their integrity?
- ☐ What provision has God made for salvation to everlasting life?

Jehovah always saves his people, as he proved in Queen Esther's day

tus Gallus surround Jerusalem and make a thrust up to the temple walls. Suddenly, the Romans withdraw for no apparent reason. What will Jewish Christians do? In his *Ecclesiastical History* (Book III, chapter V, 3), Eusebius says that they fled from Jerusalem and Judea. They were spared because they obeyed Jesus' prophetic warning. Are you as quick to comply with Scriptural guidance provided through "the faithful steward" appointed over all of Jesus' "belongings"?—Luke 12:42-44.

Salvation to Everlasting Life

¹⁸ Heeding Jesus' warning saved the lives of Jewish Christians in Judea. But Jesus' death makes salvation to eternal life possible for "all sorts of men." (1 Timothy 4:10) Mankind's need for a ransom arose when Adam sinned, thus losing life for himself and selling the human race into slavery to sin and death. (Romans 5:12-19) The animal sacrifices offered under the Mosaic Law were only a token covering for sin. (Hebrews 10:1-4) Since Jesus did not have a human father and God's holy spirit evidently 'overshadowed' Mary from the time she conceived until Jesus' birth, he was born free from any inheritance of sin or imperfection. (Luke 1:35; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:18, 19) When Jesus died as a perfect integrity keeper, he offered his own perfect life to repurchase and emancipate mankind. (Hebrews 2:14, 15) Christ thus "gave himself a corresponding ransom for all." (1 Timothy 2:5, 6) Not all will avail themselves of this provision for salvation, but God approves the application of its benefits to those who accept it in faith.

18, 19. (a) What salvation did Jesus' death make possible, and for whom? (b) What was the apostle Paul determined to do?



¹⁹ By presenting the value of his ransom sacrifice to God in heaven, Christ repurchased Adam's offspring. (Hebrews 9:24) Jesus thus gains a Bride, formed of his 144,000 anointed followers raised to heavenly life. (Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 14:3, 4; 21:9) He also becomes an "Eternal Father" to those accepting his sacrifice and receiving everlasting earthly life. (Isaiah 9:6, 7; 1 John 2:1, 2) What a loving arrangement! Paul's appreciation for it is evident in his second inspired letter to the Christians in Corinth, as the next article will show. In fact, Paul was determined to let nothing prevent him from helping people to avail themselves of Jehovah's wonderful provision for salvation to everlasting life.

THIS IS THE DAY OF SALVATION!

"Look! Now is the especially acceptable time.

Look! Now is the day of salvation."—2 CORINTHIANS 6:2.

JEHOVAH has set a day of judgment for mankind. (Acts 17:31) If it is to be a day of salvation for us, we need an approved standing with him and his appointed Judge, Jesus Christ. (John 5:22) Such a standing calls for conduct in harmony with God's Word and faith that impels us to help others to be Jesus' true disciples.

² Because of inherited sin, the world of mankind is alienated from God. (Romans 5:

1. What is needed for an approved standing with God and Christ?
2. Why is the world of mankind alienated from God?

12; Ephesians 4:17, 18) Therefore, those to whom we preach can gain salvation only if they become reconciled to him. The apostle Paul made this clear when writing to Christians in Corinth. Let us examine 2 Corinthians 5:10-6:10 to see what Paul said about judgment, reconciliation with God, and salvation.

"We Keep Persuading Men"

³ Paul linked judgment with preaching when he wrote: "We must all be made

3. How did Paul "keep persuading men," and why should we do this today?

manifest before the judgment seat of the Christ, that each one may get his award for the things done through the body, according to the things he has practiced, whether it is good or vile. Knowing, therefore, the fear of the Lord, we keep persuading men." (2 Corinthians 5:10, 11) The apostle 'kept persuading men' by preaching the good news. What about us? Since we are facing the end of this wicked system of things, we should do our utmost to persuade others to take the steps needed to gain Jesus' favorable judgment and the approval of the Source of salvation, Jehovah God.

⁴ If God has blessed our ministry, however, we should not boast. In Corinth some were puffed up with pride in themselves or in other men, thus causing divisions in the congregation. (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:3, 4) Alluding to this situation, Paul wrote: "We are not again recommending ourselves to you, but giving you an inducement for boasting in respect to us, that you may have an answer for those who boast over the outward appearance but not over the heart. For if we were out of our mind, it was for God; if we are sound in mind, it is for you." (2 Corinthians 5:12, 13) The haughty ones were not interested in the congregation's unity and spiritual welfare. They wanted to boast in outward appearances instead of helping fellow believers to develop good hearts before God. Hence, Paul reproved the congregation and later stated: "He that boasts, let him boast in Jehovah." —2 Corinthians 10:17.

⁵ Did not Paul himself boast? Some may have thought so because of what he said about being an apostle. But he had to boast "for God." He boasted about his creden-

4, 5. (a) Why should we not boast about our accomplishments in Jehovah's service? (b) How was it that Paul boasted "for God"?

tials as an apostle, so that the Corinthians would not be lost to Jehovah. Paul did this to bring them back to God because false apostles were turning them in the wrong direction. (2 Corinthians 11:16-21; 12:11, 12, 19-21; 13:10) Yet, Paul was not constantly trying to impress everyone with his accomplishments.—Proverbs 21:4.

Does Christ's Love Compel You?

⁶ As a true apostle, Paul taught others about Jesus' ransom sacrifice. It had an impact on Paul's life, for he wrote: "The love the Christ has compels us, because this is what we have judged, that one man died for all; so, then, all had died; and he died for all that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised up." (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15) What love Jesus showed in giving his life for us! Surely that should be a compelling force in our lives. Gratitude to Jesus for giving his life in our behalf should move us to zealous activity in proclaiming the good news of the salvation provided by Jehovah through his beloved Son. (John 3:16; compare Psalm 96:2.) Is "the love the Christ has" compelling you to have a zealous share in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work?—Matthew 28:19, 20.

⁷ By using their lives in a way that shows gratitude for what Christ did in their behalf, anointed ones 'live no longer for themselves, but for him.' "Consequently," said Paul, "from now on we know no man according to the flesh. Even if we have known Christ according to the flesh, certainly we now know him so no more." (2 Corinthians 5:16) Christians must not view people in

6. How should Christ's love affect us?

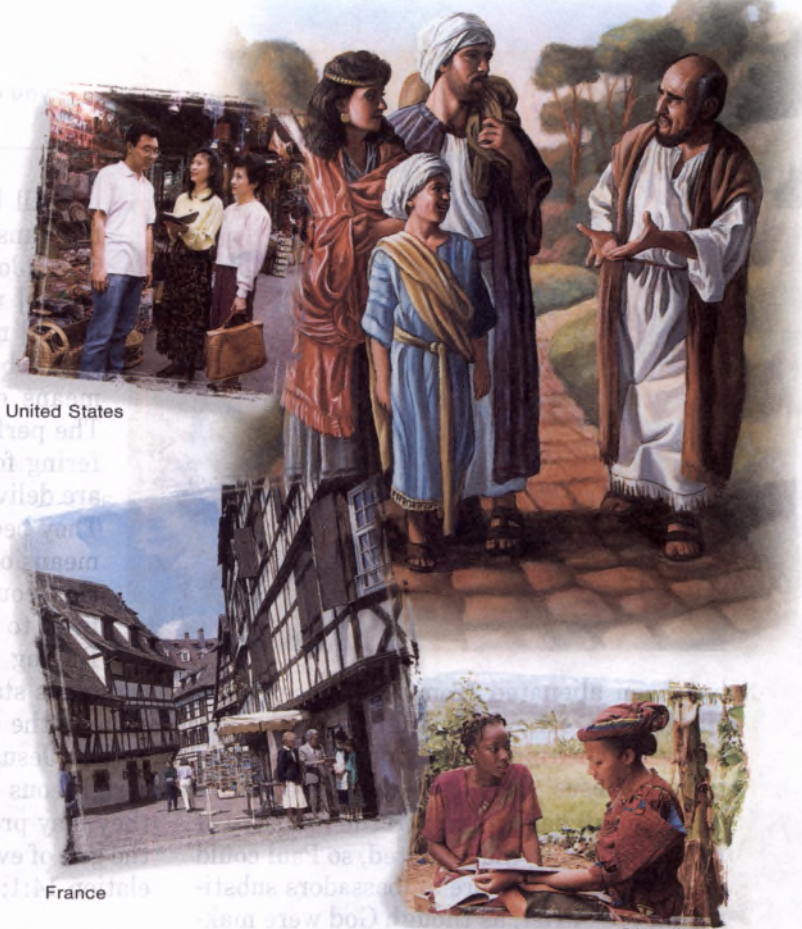
7. What does it mean to "know no man according to the flesh"?

Like Paul, are you zealously preaching and helping others to become reconciled to God?

a fleshly way, perhaps favoring Jews over Gentiles or rich over poor. Anointed ones “know no man according to the flesh,” for it is their spiritual relationship with fellow believers that is important. Those who ‘knew Christ according to the flesh’ were not just the humans who saw Jesus while he was on earth. Even if some hoping in the Messiah once looked at Christ on the basis of his flesh, they were no longer to do so. He gave his body as a ransom and was resurrected as a life-giving spirit. Others raised to heavenly life would give up their fleshly bodies without ever having seen Jesus Christ in the flesh.—1 Corinthians 15:45, 50; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5.

⁸ Still addressing anointed ones, Paul adds: “If anyone is in union with Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away, look! new things have come into existence.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) To be “in union with Christ” means to enjoy a oneness with him. (John 17:21) This relationship came into existence for the person when Jehovah drew him to his Son and begot that person with holy spirit. As a spirit-begotten son of God, he was “a new creation” with the prospect of sharing with Christ in the heavenly

8. How have individuals come to be “in union with Christ”?



United States

France

Côte d'Ivoire

Kingdom. (John 3:3-8; 6:44; Galatians 4:6, 7) Such anointed Christians have been given a grand privilege of service.

“Become Reconciled to God”

⁹ How Jehovah has favored the “new creation”! Says Paul: “All things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of the reconciliation, namely, that God was by means of Christ reconciling a world to himself, not reckoning to them their trespasses, and he committed the word of the reconciliation to us.” (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19) Mankind

9. What has God done to make reconciliation with him possible?



In this day of salvation, are you among the multitudes becoming reconciled to Jehovah God?

has been alienated from God since Adam sinned. But Jehovah lovingly took the initiative in opening the way of reconciliation through Jesus' sacrifice.—Romans 5:6-12.

¹⁰ Jehovah has committed the ministry of reconciliation to the anointed, so Paul could say: "We are therefore ambassadors substituting for Christ, as though God were making entreaty through us. As substitutes for Christ we beg: 'Become reconciled to God.'" (2 Corinthians 5:20) In ancient times, ambassadors were dispatched mainly during periods of hostility to see if warfare could be averted. (Luke 14:31, 32) Since the sinful world of mankind is alienated from God, he has sent his anointed ambassadors forth to inform people of his terms for reconciliation. As substitutes for Christ, anointed ones beg: "Become reconciled to God." This entreaty is a merciful urging to seek peace with God and accept the salvation he makes possible through Christ.

10. To whom did Jehovah commit the ministry of reconciliation, and what have they done to carry it out?

¹¹ All humans who exercise faith in the ransom can become reconciled to God. (John 3:36) Paul says: "The one [Jesus] who did not know sin he [Jehovah] made to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness by means of him." (2 Corinthians 5:21) The perfect man Jesus was the sin offering for all of Adam's offspring who are delivered from inherent sinfulness. They become "God's righteousness" by means of Jesus. This righteousness, or righteous standing before God, comes first to Christ's 144,000 joint heirs. During his Thousand Year Reign, a righteous standing as perfect humans will come to the earthly children of the Eternal Father, Jesus Christ. He will uplift them to a righteous standing in perfection so that they may prove faithful to God and receive the gift of everlasting life.—Isaiah 9:6; Revelation 14:1; 20:4-6, 11-15.

"The Especially Acceptable Time"

¹² For salvation, we must act in harmony with Paul's words: "Working together with him [Jehovah], we also entreat you not to accept the undeserved kindness of God and miss its purpose. For he says: 'In an acceptable time I heard you, and in a day of salvation I helped you.' Look! Now is the especially acceptable time. Look! Now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:1, 2) Jehovah's anointed ambassadors and his envoys, the "other sheep," do not accept their heavenly Father's undeserved kindness and miss

11. Through faith in the ransom, who ultimately attain a righteous standing before God?

12. What important ministry is being carried out by Jehovah's ambassadors and envoys?

its purpose. (John 10:16) By their upright conduct and zealous ministry in this "acceptable time," they seek divine favor and are informing earth's inhabitants that this is "the day of salvation."

¹³ Paul quotes Isaiah 49:8, which reads: "This is what Jehovah has said: 'In a time of goodwill I have answered you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you; and I kept safeguarding you that I might give you as a covenant for the people, to rehabilitate the land, to bring about the repossessing of the desolated hereditary possessions.'" This prophecy was first fulfilled when the people of Israel were freed from captivity in Babylon and later returned to their desolate homeland.—Isaiah 49:3, 9.

¹⁴ In further fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, Jehovah gave his "servant" Jesus as "a light of the nations, that [God's] salvation may come to be to the extremity of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6, 8; compare Isaiah 42:1-4, 6, 7; Matthew 12:18-21.) The "time of goodwill," or "acceptable time," evidently applied to Jesus while he was on earth. He prayed, and God "answered" him. That proved to be "a day of salvation" for Jesus because he maintained perfect integrity and thus "became responsible for everlasting salvation to all those obeying him."—Hebrews 5:7, 9; John 12:27, 28.

¹⁵ Paul applies Isaiah 49:8 to anointed Christians, entreating them 'not to miss the purpose of God's undeserved kindness' by failing to seek his goodwill during the "acceptable time" and the "day of salvation" that he provides. Paul adds: "Look! Now is the especially acceptable time. Look! Now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)

13. What is the substance of Isaiah 49:8, and how was it first fulfilled?

14. How was Isaiah 49:8 fulfilled in the case of Jesus?

15. Since when have spiritual Israelites endeavored to prove worthy of God's undeserved kindness, and with what objective?

Since Pentecost 33 C.E., spiritual Israelites have endeavored to prove worthy of God's undeserved kindness so that the "acceptable time" would be "a day of salvation" for them.

'Recommending Ourselves as God's Ministers'

¹⁶ Some men associated with the Corinthian congregation were not proving worthy of God's undeserved kindness. They slandered Paul in an effort to destroy his apostolic authority, although he avoided "giving any cause for stumbling." He certainly recommended himself as God's minister "by the endurance of much, by tribulations, by cases of need, by difficulties, by beatings, by prisons, by disorders, by labors, by sleepless nights, by times without food." (2 Corinthians 6:3-5) Later, Paul reasoned that if his opponents were ministers, he was "more outstandingly one" because of suffering more imprisonments, beatings, dangers, and privations.—2 Corinthians 11:23-27.

¹⁷ Like Paul and his companions, we can recommend ourselves as God's ministers. How? "By purity," or chasteness, and by acting in harmony with accurate Bible knowledge. We can recommend ourselves "by long-suffering," patiently enduring wrong or provocation, and "by kindness" as we do helpful things for others. Moreover, we can recommend ourselves as ministers of God by accepting guidance by his spirit, displaying "love free from hypocrisy," speaking truthfully, and relying on him for power to carry out the ministry. Interestingly, Paul also proved his ministerial status "through the weapons of righteousness on the right hand and on the left." In ancient warfare, the right hand usually wielded the sword

16. Under what trying circumstances did Paul recommend himself as God's minister?

17. (a) By displaying what qualities can we recommend ourselves as ministers of God? (b) What are "the weapons of righteousness"?

while the left held the shield. In waging spiritual warfare against false teachers, Paul did not employ weapons of the sinful flesh—deviousness, trickery, deceit. (2 Corinthians 6:6, 7; 11:12-14; Proverbs 3:32) He used righteous “weapons,” or means, for furthering true worship. So should we.

¹⁸ If we are God’s ministers, we will comport ourselves as did Paul and his coworkers. We will act like Christians whether honored or disrespected. Bad reports about us will not stop our preaching work, nor will we become haughty if reported on favorably. We will speak the truth and may gain recognition for godly works. When in deadly peril under enemy assault, we will trust in Jehovah. And we will accept discipline with gratitude.—2 Corinthians 6:8, 9.

¹⁹ Ending his discussion about the ministry of reconciliation, Paul spoke of himself and his associates “as sorrowing but ever rejoicing, as poor but making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things.” (2 Corinthians 6:10) While those ministers had reason to sorrow over their afflictions, they had inner joy. They were materially poor, but they ‘made many

18. If we are God’s ministers, how will we comport ourselves?

19. How is it possible to ‘make many rich’ spiritually?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ Why is reconciliation with God vitally important?
- ☐ Who are the ambassadors and the envoys engaged in the ministry of reconciliation?
- ☐ How can we recommend ourselves as God’s ministers?
- ☐ What does the 1999 yeartext of Jehovah’s Witnesses mean to you?

rich’ spiritually. In fact, they ‘possessed all things’ because their faith brought them spiritual riches—even the prospect of becoming heavenly sons of God. And they had a rich and happy life as Christian ministers. (Acts 20:35) Like them, we can ‘make many rich’ by sharing in the ministry of reconciliation right now—in this day of salvation!

Trust in Salvation by Jehovah

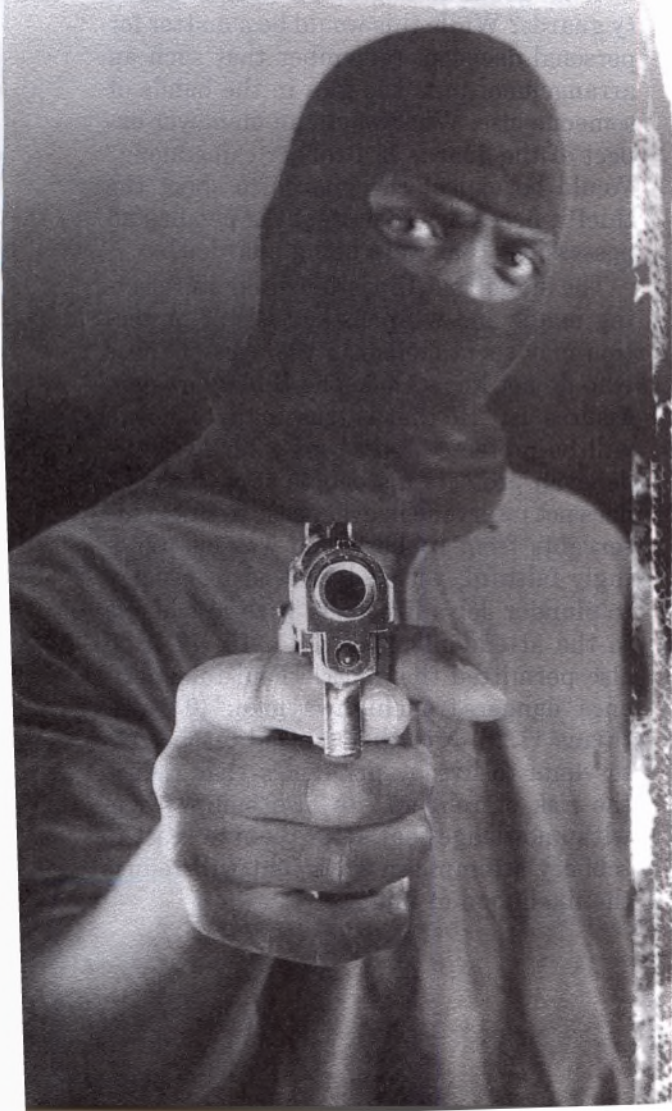
²⁰ When Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians in about 55 C.E., only some 15 years remained for the Jewish system of things. The apostle earnestly wanted Jews and Gentiles to become reconciled to God through Christ. That was a day of salvation, and there was no time to waste. Well, we have been in a corresponding conclusion of a system of things since 1914. The global work of Kingdom preaching now under way marks this as the day of salvation.

²¹ People of all nations need to hear about God’s provision for salvation through Jesus Christ. There is no time for delay. Paul wrote: “Look! Now is the day of salvation.” Those words of 2 Corinthians 6:2 will be the 1999 yeartext of Jehovah’s Witnesses. How fitting, for we face something far worse than the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple! Just ahead is the end of this entire system of things, involving everyone on earth. Now—not tomorrow—is the time to act. If we believe that salvation belongs to Jehovah, if we love him, and if we value eternal life, we will not miss the purpose of God’s undeserved kindness. With a heartfelt desire to honor Jehovah, we will prove by word and deed that we really mean it when we exclaim: “Look! Now is the day of salvation.”

20. (a) What was Paul’s earnest desire, and why was there no time to waste? (b) What marks the day of salvation in which we are now living?

21. (a) What yeartext has been chosen for 1999? (b) What should we be doing in this day of salvation?

When Armed Robbers Strike



IN Ikoyi, an exclusive West African suburb, mansions have become fortresses. Many have walls that tower ten feet high, topped with spikes, jagged glass, or coils of razor wire. Guards man massive gates that are secured with bolts, bars, chains, and padlocks. Windows are barred. Steel gates separate the bedrooms from the rest of the house. At night, large dogs—Alsations and Rottweilers—are released from their enclosures. Bright lights banish the darkness, and computerized surveillance systems softly beep when all is well.

None doubt the need to make their homes secure. Newspaper headlines lament: "Armed Robbers Sack Community"; "Kid Robbers Go Wild"; and "Panic, as Street Gangs Seize [a Township]." This is the picture in many countries. As the Bible foretold, we truly live in critical times.—2 Timothy 3:1.

The crime rate, including that of armed robbery, is soaring globally. Increasingly, governments are unable or unwilling to protect their own citizens. In some countries the police, outnumbered and outgunned, are poorly equipped to respond to calls for help. Most bystanders are reluctant to get involved.

Victims, unable to rely on help from either police or public, are left to fend for themselves. Said a Christian elder in a developing country: "If you raise an alarm, the robbers will maim or kill you. Forget about outside help. If help comes, fine, but do not expect it or call for it because calling for help might only be calling for more trouble."

Protection and God's Word

While Christians are no part of the world, they are in the world. (John 17:11, 16) So like everyone else, they make reasonable provisions for their security. Yet, unlike many who do not serve Jehovah, God's people seek protection within the framework of Christian principles.

In contrast, people in some African countries employ magic in seeking to protect themselves from robbery. A medicine man may make a cut in a client's wrist, chest, or back. Then a magical potion is rubbed into the cut, some incantations are offered, and the person is supposed to be immune to assault from robbers. Others put charms or magical potions in their homes, believing that such "insurance" will cause robbers to leave them unmolested.

True Christians have nothing to do with any kind of magic. The Bible condemns all

forms of spiritism, and rightly so, since such practices can put people in contact with the demons, the very ones who are promoting violence on earth. (Genesis 6:2, 4, 11) The Bible plainly states: "You must not practice magic."—Leviticus 19:26.

Some people desperately seek security by arming themselves with guns. Christians, though, take seriously the words of Jesus, who said: "Those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52) God's people have 'beaten their swords into plowshares' and do not buy guns to protect themselves from robbery or assault.—Micah 4:3.

What about arranging for armed security guards? While this would be a matter for personal decision, remember that such an arrangement puts the gun in the hands of someone else. What would an employer expect of the guards if a robber came along? Would he expect the guards to shoot the thief if necessary to protect the people and possessions that were being guarded?

The stand that Christians take in rejecting magic and weapons as tools of protection may seem foolish in the eyes of those who do not know God. The Bible, however, assures us: "He that is trusting in Jehovah will be protected." (Proverbs 29:25) While Jehovah protects his people as a whole, he does not intervene in every case to shield his servants from robbery. Job was outstandingly faithful, yet God allowed marauders to plunder Job's livestock, with loss of life to the attendants. (Job 1:14, 15, 17) God also permitted the apostle Paul to experience "dangers from highwaymen." (2 Corinthians 11:26) Nonetheless, God teaches his servants to live by principles that reduce the risk of robbery. He also equips them with knowledge that helps them to react to robbery attempts in ways that will reduce the likelihood of injury.

In Our Next Issue

Real Help for the Family

Do You Have Faith Like Abraham's?

Jerome—A Controversial Pioneer in Bible Translation



Reducing the Threat of Robbery

The wise man observed long ago: "The plenty belonging to the rich one is not permitting him to sleep." (Ecclesiastes 5:12) In other words, those who possess many things may become so anxious about losing their possessions that they lose sleep worrying about it.

So one way to reduce not only anxiety but also the threat of robbery is to avoid amassing an abundance of expensive possessions. The inspired apostle wrote: "Everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world." (1 John 2:16) The same desires that move

people to buy costly things move others to steal. And a "showy display of one's means of life" can be an invitation to those who are inclined to plunder.

Apart from keeping a low profile, another safeguard against robbery is to demonstrate that you are a true Christian. If you show love to others, are honest in your dealings, and are active in the Christian ministry, you can build up a reputation in your community for being a good person, one deserving of respect. (Galatians 5:19-23) Such a Christian reputation can be far more protective than a weapon.

When Armed Robbers Come

What should you do, though, if robbers manage to enter your home and confront

A Robbery Foiled in West Africa

As told by Eunice Ebuh

"Armed robbers planned their attack on the day when we usually hold the Congregation Book Study in our home. We throw our gates wide open for the brothers and sisters and interested ones. The robbers likely knew our habits and meeting time. We know for sure that they had stolen a car elsewhere and came to wait by our gate on the day and at the time of the book study.

"As it happened, the week they came was the week of the visit of the circuit overseer. Instead of meeting at our house, we met at the Kingdom Hall. After the meeting was over, there was an elders' meeting. Normally the children and I would have gone home, but my husband, who is an elder, asked us to wait for him. He said he would not be long. So we waited.

"Next we discovered that the car would not start. The circuit overseer and my husband were not able to fix it. The mechanic we called could not fix it either.

"The children had to walk home. After a while, I went home too. I arrived at about ten o'clock. Neither I nor the children entered the compound in a car, which would have required opening the big gate.

"When I entered my bedroom, I heard a gun-

shot, very loud. I wondered what was happening. I tried to telephone the police, but the phone was dead. I rushed downstairs and locked the steel entrance door, then hurried to lock the middle door. I turned off the lights. My children were panicking, so I told them to be calm. We prayed together for Jehovah's protection. Meanwhile, my husband was still at the Kingdom Hall struggling to get the car started.

"I looked out the window and saw a man lying on the street outside the gate. It seemed that the robbers had gone, so I put the injured man in my car and rushed him to the hospital. It was a risk, but I had to do something. Sadly, though, he died the next day.

"Despite that tragedy, things could have been very much worse. The circuit overseer's visit meant that we did not have the book study in our house. The car's breaking down meant that we did not drive home as a family. My husband, whom the robbers would certainly have seized, did not arrive home until very late. These and other factors were to our advantage that night.

"Jehovah is our stronghold and our refuge. It is as the scripture says: 'Unless Jehovah himself guards the city, it is to no avail that the guard has kept awake.'"—Psalm 127:1.

you? Remember that your life is more important than possessions. Christ Jesus said: "Do not resist him that is wicked; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other also to him. And if a person wants to . . . get possession of your inner garment, let your outer garment also go to him."—Matthew 5:39, 40.

This is wise counsel. Although Christians are not obligated to give criminals information about assets, robbers are more likely to become violent if they sense resistance, lack of cooperation, or deceit. Many of them, "having come to be past all moral sense," are easily provoked to vicious, ruthless behavior.—Ephesians 4:19.

Samuel lives in an apartment complex. Robbers blocked off the building and moved from apartment to apartment, plundering. Samuel heard gunshots, doors being smashed, and people shouting, crying, and wailing. Escape was impossible. Samuel told his wife and three sons to kneel on the floor, raise their hands, close their eyes, and wait. When the robbers stormed in, Samuel spoke to them with downcast eyes, knowing that if he looked at their faces, they might think he would identify them later. "Come in," he said. "Whatever you want, take. You are free to take anything. We are Jehovah's Witnesses, and we will not resist you." The robbers were taken aback by this. Over the next hour or so, a total of 12 armed men came in groups. Though they made off with jewelry, money, and electronic equipment, the family was not beaten or hacked with machetes as were others in the building. Samuel's family thanked Jehovah for their lives.

This exemplifies that when it comes to money and material things, victims of robbery who do not resist may reduce the likelihood of injury.*

Sometimes a Christian's giving a witness can be a defense against injury. When robbers attacked the home of Ade, he told them: "I know things are hard for you, and that is why you are in this line of work. As Jehovah's Witnesses, we believe that one day everyone will have enough to eat for himself and his family. Everyone will live in peace and happiness under God's Kingdom." That sapped the robbers' aggression. One of them said: "We are sorry we have come to your house, but you must understand that we are hungry." Although they

* There are, of course, limits to cooperation. Jehovah's servants do not cooperate in any way that violates God's law. For example, a Christian would not willingly submit to rape.

stripped Ade of his possessions, they did not touch him or his family.

Keeping Calm

It is not easy to be calm in a dangerous situation, especially when a primary aim of robbers is to terrorize their victims into submission. Prayer will help us. Our cry for help, though silent and brief, can be heard by Jehovah. The Bible assures us: "The eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their cry for help." (Psalm 34:15) Jehovah hears us and can give us the wisdom to deal calmly with any situation.—James 1:5.

Besides prayer, another aid in being calm is to decide in advance what you will and will not do if you are robbed. Of course, it is not possible to know beforehand in what situation you will find yourself. Still, it is good to have principles in mind, just as it is wise to have safety procedures in mind in case you are in a building that catches fire. Forethought helps you to keep calm, to avoid panic, and to escape injury.

God's view of robbery is clearly stated: "I, Jehovah, am loving justice, hating robbery along with unrighteousness." (Isaiah 61:8) Jehovah inspired his prophet Ezekiel to list robbery as a very serious sin. (Ezekiel 18:18) Yet, the same Bible book also shows that God will mercifully forgive the person who repents and gives back what is taken in robbery.—Ezekiel 33:14-16.

Despite living in a crime-ridden world, Christians rejoice in the hope of life under God's Kingdom, when robbery will be no more. Concerning that time, the Bible promises: "[God's people] will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble; for the very mouth of Jehovah of armies has spoken it."—Micah 4:4.



A Decision for Choice

NONE other than the most illustrious Personage in all the universe endorses informed choice. He is our Creator. Possessing unlimited knowledge of man's needs, he generously gives instruction, warning, and guidance on the wise course to take. Still, he does not disregard the free will with which he endowed his intelligent creatures. His prophet Moses reflected God's outlook: "I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring."—Deuteronomy 30:19.

This principle affects the field of medicine. The concept of informed choice, or informed consent, is gradually gaining acceptance in Japan and other lands where it was not so common in the past. Dr. Michitaro Nakamura offered this description of informed consent: "It is the idea that the doctor explains to the patient in easily understood language the illness, the prognosis, the method of treatment, and possible side effects, respecting the patient's right to decide for himself the method of treatment."—*Japan Medical Journal*.

For years, doctors in Japan have presented various reasons for resisting this way of treating patients, and the courts have tended to defer to medical custom. Thus, it was a landmark when a decision for informed choice was handed down by Chief Judge Takeo Inaba of the Tokyo High Court on February 9, 1998. What was that decision, and what was the issue that brought the case to the courts?

Back in July 1992, 63-year-old Misae Takeda, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, came in contact with the Institute of Medical Science Hospital, University of Tokyo. She had been diagnosed with a malignant tumor of the liver and was in need of surgery. Keenly wanting to obey the Biblical injunction against the misuse of blood, she made clear to her physicians her desire to receive only nonblood treatment. (Genesis 9:3, 4; Acts 15:29) The physicians accepted a release from liability form, which absolved them and the hospital of any liability resulting from her decision. They assured her that they would comply.

However, after the surgery, and while Misae was still under sedation, she was given a blood transfusion—directly contrary to her clearly expressed wishes. Efforts to keep the unauthorized transfusion secret were exposed when a hospital employee apparently leaked the matter to a news reporter. As you can understand, this sincere Christian woman was devastated when she learned of the unauthorized transfusion. She had trusted the medical staff, believing that they would keep their word and respect her religious convictions. Because of the emotional anguish she suffered over this gross violation of the doctor/patient relationship and in hopes of establishing a precedent that would spare others from similar medical mistreatment, she took the matter to court.

Public Order and Morals

Three judges of the Tokyo District Court heard the case and ruled in favor of the physicians and, thus, against the right of informed consent. In their decision, handed down on March 12, 1997, they stated that any attempt to make a contract for absolute nonblood treatment was invalid. Their reasoning was that it would be in violation of

kojo ryo-zoku,* or societal standards, for a physician to enter into a special agreement not to administer blood even if a critical situation developed. Their opinion was that a doctor's chief obligation is to save life in the best way he can, so such a contract would be invalid from the start, regardless of the patient's religious convictions. They ruled that in the final analysis, a physician's professional opinion should take precedence over any advance medical request that a patient might make.

Furthermore, the judges stated that for the same reasons, while expected to explain the basic procedure, effects, and hazards of a proposed operation, a physician "could leave unsaid whether he intended to administer blood or not." Their judgment was: "It cannot be determined to be unlawful nor improper that the doctors as Defendants understood the Plaintiff's wishes not to accept blood transfusions under any circumstances and acted as if they would honor her wishes and thus caused her to accept the operation in question." The thinking was that if the physicians had acted otherwise, the patient might have refused surgery and left the hospital.

That court ruling shocked and dismayed advocates of informed consent. In discussing the Takeda case decision and implications for informed consent in Japan, Professor Takao Yamada, a leading authority on civil law, wrote: "If the thinking of this decision is permitted to stand, blood transfusion refusal and the legal principle of informed consent will become a candle flickering in the wind." (Legal journal *Hogaku Kyoshitsu*) With strong words he condemned the forced blood transfusion as "a gross violation of trust, similar to a sneak attack." Professor Yamada added that such

* A legally undefined concept that is left to the magistrate to interpret and apply.

trust-destroying action should “absolutely never be permitted.”

Misae’s modest nature made it difficult for her to be thrust into the limelight. But realizing that she could have a share in defending Jehovah’s name and righteous standards concerning the sanctity of blood, she was determined to do her part. She wrote to her legal counsel: “I am no more than dust, even less. I wonder why such an incompetent person like me is used. But when I seek to do just what Jehovah—the one who can make the stones cry out—says, he will give me power.” (Matthew 10:18; Luke 19:40) On the witness stand during that trial, she described in a trembling voice the emotional trauma she experienced as a result of the betrayal. “I felt violated, like a woman who had been raped.” Her testimony left few dry eyes among those in the courtroom that day.

Surprise Encouragement

In the face of the District Court decision, the case was immediately appealed to the High Court. The opening arguments in the appellate court began in July 1997, and a now pale but determined Misae was there in a wheelchair. The cancer had recurred, and she was getting weaker. Misae was greatly encouraged when the chief judge, in an unusual move, spelled out the direction that the court intended to take. He made it clear that the appeal court did not agree with the finding of the lower court—that a physician had the right to ignore the patient’s wishes, acting as if he was going to comply but being secretly determined to do something else. The chief judge said that the court would not support the paternalistic ethic of “*Shirashimu bekarazu, yorashimu be-shi*,”* meaning, “Keep them ignorant and

dependent” on medicine. Misae later said: “I am very happy to hear the judge’s fair comment, which is entirely different from the previous ruling by the District Court.” She added: “This is what I have been praying to Jehovah for.”

The following month Misae passed away, surrounded by a loving family and the medical staff of a different hospital, where her sincere convictions were understood and respected. Though greatly saddened by her death, her son, Masami, and other family members were determined to see the case to its completion, in harmony with her wishes.

The Decision

Finally, on February 9, 1998, the three judges of the High Court handed down their ruling, reversing the decision of the lower court. The small courtroom was filled with reporters, academics, and others who had faithfully followed the trial. Major newspapers and television stations reported on the decision. Some of the headlines read: “Court: Patients Can Refuse Treatment”; “High Court: Transfusion a Rights Violation”; “Doctor Who Performed Forced Blood Transfusion Loses in Court”; and “Jehovah’s Witness Gets Damages for Transfusion.”

Reports on the decision were accurate and overwhelmingly favorable. *The Daily Yomiuri* reported: “Judge Takeo Inaba said it was improper for doctors to perform procedures that a patient had refused.” It also stated clearly: “The doctors who gave [the blood transfusion] deprived her of the chance to choose her treatment.”

The *Asahi Shimbun* pointed out that while in this case the court felt there was insufficient evidence that a contract existed in which both parties agreed that blood would not be used even in a life-endangering

* This was the creed of feudal lords of the Tokugawa period as to how they should rule their subjects.

situation, the judges disagreed with the lower court on the legality of such contract: "If there is a well-advised agreement between the parties concerned that a blood transfusion should not be given under any circumstances, this Court does not deem it against public order and, hence, invalid." Further, this newspaper pointed out the judges' view that "every human being is doomed to die someday, and the process toward that moment of death can be decided by each individual."

Actually, Jehovah's Witnesses have researched this matter and are convinced that they are choosing the best way to live. That includes rejecting the known hazards of blood transfusions and instead accepting nonblood procedures that are widely used in many lands and that are in harmony with God's law. (Acts 21:25) A well-known Japa-

nese professor of constitutional law pointed out: "In reality, the refusing of [the blood transfusion] treatment in question is not a matter of choosing 'how to die' but, rather, that of how to live."

The decision by the High Court should alert physicians that their discretionary rights are not as broad as some have thought. And it should result in many more hospitals' establishing ethical guidelines. While this court ruling has been generally accepted and is encouraging to patients, who have had little voice in their treatment, not all parties have wholeheartedly embraced it. The state-run hospital and the three physicians have appealed the case to the Supreme Court. So we must wait to see whether Japan's highest court will also uphold patients' rights, as does the Sovereign of the universe.

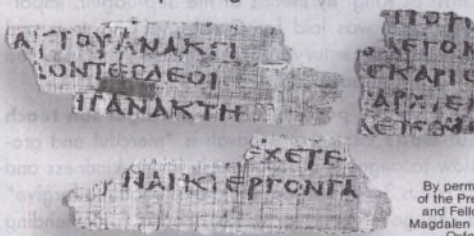
Scholar Redates Bible Manuscript

According to Carsten Peter Thiede, a German expert in papyrology, there is strong evidence that three papyrus fragments of the Gospel of Matthew (known as the Magdalen Papyrus) were written in the first century.

After comparing the fragments (containing parts of Matthew chapter 26) with an ancient business letter found in Egypt, Thiede noted that the Egyptian document resembles "the Magdalen Papyrus almost like a twin—in general appearance and in the shape and formation of individual letters." Thiede and coauthor Matthew D'Ancona conclude in their book *Eyewitness to Jesus—Amazing New Manuscript Evidence About the Origin of the Gospels* that the similarities between the two documents indicate that they were written at about the same time. When? The business document is dated "In the year 12 of Nero the Lord, Epeiph 30"

—which is, according to our calendar, July 24, 66 [C.E.]."

"This dating, if accurate, is extremely significant," comments Professor Philip W. Comfort, in an article published in the *Tyndale Bulletin*, "because it places a manuscript of the Gospel of Matthew within the same century it was written." It also would make the Magdalen Papyrus the oldest Gospel fragments in existence.



By permission
of the President
and Fellows of
Magdalen College,
Oxford

The Magdalen Papyrus, shown actual size

DO YOU REMEMBER?

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

□ **Why can we have confidence in Jehovah's choice of individuals to guide his people?** Jehovah chooses for certain responsibilities individuals who have the qualities necessary to guide his people in the way he wants them to go at a particular time.—8/15, page 14.

□ **What can we learn from Jonah's experience?** Jonah thought too much of himself and too little of others. We can learn from Jonah by keeping ourselves and our personal feelings in the background.—8/15, page 19.

□ **In what way can it be said that "the name of Jehovah is a strong tower"?** (Proverbs 18:10) Taking refuge in God's name signifies trusting in Jehovah himself. (Psalm 20:1; 122:4) It means supporting his sovereignty, upholding his laws and principles, having faith in his promises, and giving him exclusive devotion. (Isaiah 50:10; Hebrews 11:6)—9/1, page 10.

□ **How does Paul's method of witnessing before dignitaries provide an example for us?** In speaking to King Agrippa, Paul used discretion, emphasizing points on which he and Agrippa were in agreement. Likewise, we should stress the positive aspects of the good news, emphasizing hopes held in common. (1 Corinthians 9:22)—9/1, page 31.

□ **Who benefit from Jehovah's patience?** Because of Jehovah's patience, today millions more are being given the opportunity to be saved through the coming "day of Jehovah." (2 Peter 3:9-15) His patience is also allowing each of us to 'keep working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.' (Philippians 2:12)—9/15, page 20.

□ **How valuable was the Septuagint translation of the Bible?** This translation figured prominently in spreading knowledge about Jehovah God and his Kingdom with Jesus Christ as King. By means of the *Septuagint*, important groundwork was laid for Greek-speaking Jews and Gentiles in the first century to accept the good news of the Kingdom.—9/15, page 30.

□ **What does the parable of the prodigal son teach us about God?** First, that Jehovah is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth." (Exodus 34:6) Second, that he is "ready to forgive" when a change of heart provides a basis for extending mercy. (Psalm 86:5)—10/1, pages 12, 13.

□ **When will the peaceful conditions promised at Isaiah 65:21-25 be realized?** As Jehovah's united worshippers in the spiritual paradise today, the anointed and

those of the "other sheep" are now experiencing God-given peace. (John 10:16) And such peace will extend into the physical Paradise, when 'God's will takes place in all the earth, even as it does in heaven.' At that time the prophet Isaiah's words will be fully realized. (Matthew 6:10)—10/15, page 24.

□ **Why do Christians celebrate wedding anniversaries but not birthdays?** The Bible does not put marriage in a bad light. It is entirely a private matter whether Christians choose to take note of a wedding anniversary, reflecting on the joyfulness of that event and on their resolve to work for success as a couple. However, the only birthday celebrations of Biblical record are those of pagans, and such were linked to instances of cruelty.—10/15, pages 30, 31.

□ **In Paul's illustration recorded at 1 Corinthians 3:12, 13, what does the "fire" represent, and of what should all Christians be aware?** There is a fire that we all face in life—tests of our faith. (John 15:20; James 1:2, 3) Everyone to whom we teach the truth will be tested. If we teach poorly, there may be sad consequences, as Paul warned. (1 Corinthians 3:15)—11/1, page 11.

□ **How did Noah 'walk with the true God'?** (Genesis 6:9) Noah walked with God in that he did what God told him to do. Because of devoting his life to the doing of God's will, Noah enjoyed a warm, intimate relationship with God.—11/15, page 10.

□ **What opportunities are opened for us by our not knowing the exact time when God's vengeance will be executed on the wicked?** This gives us the opportunity to prove that we truly love Jehovah and want to walk in his ways forever. It also shows that we are loyal to God and trust in his way of handling matters. Moreover, this helps to keep us vigilant and spiritually awake. (Matthew 24:42-44)—11/15, page 18.

□ **What does it mean to put faith "in the name of the Son of God"?** (1 John 5:13) This means obeying all of Christ's commandments, including his commandment to "love one another." (John 15:14, 17) Love seeks to do good to others. It banishes all racial, religious, and social prejudice.—12/1, page 7.

□ **Why are Jehovah's Witnesses "objects of hatred"?** (Matthew 10:22) Jehovah's Witnesses have been unjustly hated for the same reasons that the early Christians were persecuted. First, Jehovah's Witnesses act upon their religious beliefs in ways that make them unpopular with some. Second, they have been targets of false accusations—barefaced lies and twisted presentations of their beliefs.—12/1, page 14.

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Will You Heed the Warning?

WHO/League of Red Cross



ON May 19, 1997, a cyclone swept through the district of Chittagong, Bangladesh. Winds approaching 150 miles per hour were recorded in the town of Cox Bazaar. In rural areas, thatched huts simply disappeared, leaving small mud squares where they once stood. Trees and telegraph poles were uprooted; others were snapped in half like matchsticks. A headline in the *Bhorar Kagoj* newspaper reported that 105 people were killed by the cyclone.

The weather service broadcast the storm's approximate path some 36 hours in advance. Doubtless, many lives were saved as hundreds of thousands of people took refuge in concrete cyclone shelters.

For over a hundred years now, Jehovah's Witnesses have been broadcasting news of an im-

pending cataclysm that will be far more destructive than any cyclone. The Bible calls it "the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah." (Joel 2:31) By heeding the prophetic messages of warning found in the Bible, we may escape its fury.—Zephaniah 2:2, 3.

No, Jehovah's Witnesses are not prophets of doom. Theirs is a message of hope. They desire to help people learn about God's Kingdom, which will soon rid the earth of all unrighteousness. God's Word, the Bible, tells us: "Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be. But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:10, 11.