MARCH 1, 1999

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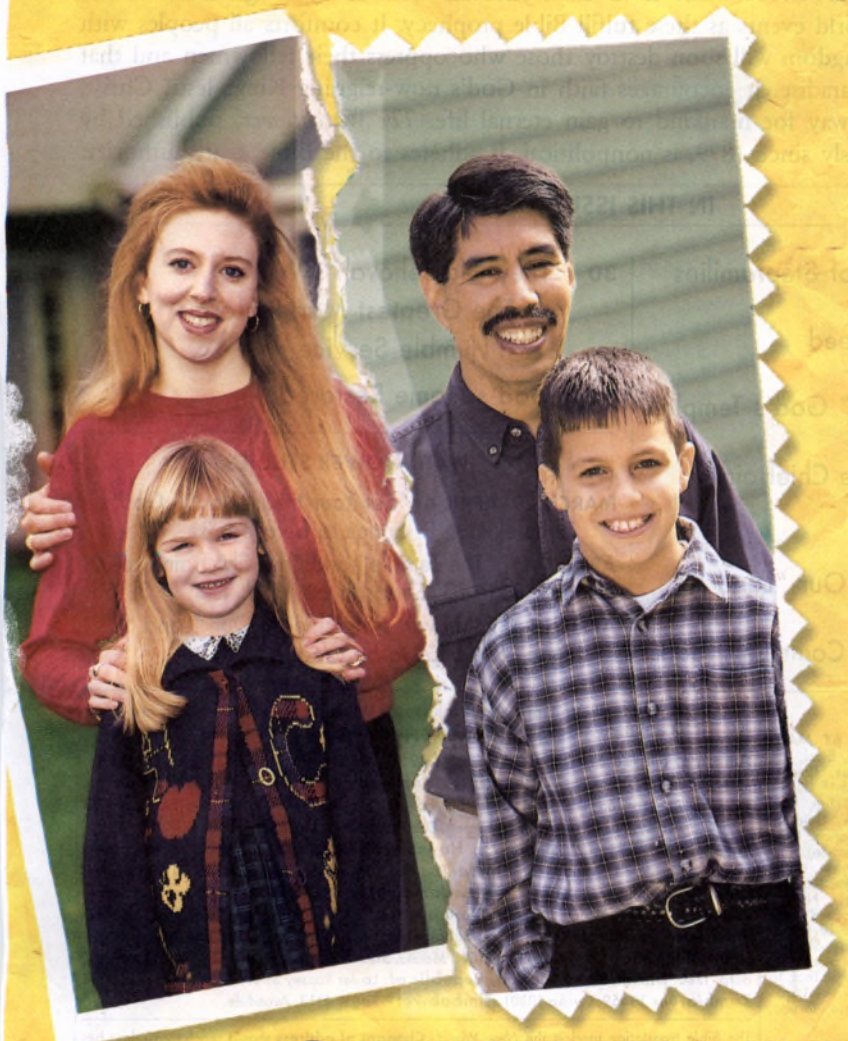
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



# STEPFAMILIES

## How They Can Succeed

# 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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**HAPPY STEPFAMILIES ARE POSSIBLE! HOW?**

The stepfamily has become a common type of household in many parts of the world. Yet, stepfamilies have unique problems. The most challenging is undoubtedly child rearing. However, as the two articles that follow will try to show, it is possible to rear children successfully in a stepfamily environment.

# The SPECIAL PROBLEMS of STEPFAMILIES

*"You are not really my father!"*

TRADITIONALLY, STEPFATHERS AND STEPMOTHERS HAVE HAD A BAD PRESS. WHEN WE WERE children, many of us heard some version of the fairy tale of Cinderella, who suffered so much at the hands of her cruel stepmother. Children in Europe learn, too, the fairy tale *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Snow White's stepmother turns out to be a wicked witch!

Do such fairy tales give an accurate view of stepfamilies? Are all stepparents really so bad? No. Most of them want only what is best for the children they inherit by marriage. But they do have to face some difficult problems inherent in stepfamily life.

## The Problems of Child Rearing

When a first marriage breaks down, the cause is often the immaturity of the mates. In a second marriage, dealing with the children can strain the relationship. Some records show that more than 4 out of 10 blended families end in divorce within the first five years.

The newlyweds may not realize the emotional turmoil, the conflicts of loyalty, and the feelings of jealousy and resentment that the stepparent's arrival sparks in the stepchildren. These may imagine that the stepparent has replaced them in the affections of their natural parent. Moreover, a natural parent abandoned by a mate may find it hard to understand the children's ongoing attachment to the former mate. One boy tried to explain his good relationship with his biological father, saying, "Mom, I know Dad treated you badly, but he has been good to me!" Such an expression, while honest, could make a mother feel bitter resentment toward the child's father.

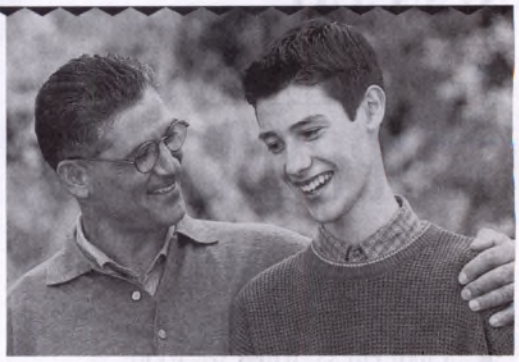
One stepfather confessed: "I was not really prepared to deal with all the problems related to bringing up my stepchildren. I went into the situation thinking that now that I had married their mother, I was their father. It was as simple as that! I did not understand the children's

attachment to their biological father, and I made many mistakes."

Tensions can arise especially in the matter of discipline. Children need loving discipline, but they often rebel against it even when it comes from a natural parent. How much harder to accept it from a stepparent! Commonly, when faced with such discipline, a stepchild will say something like, "You are not really my father!" How devastating such words can be to a well-meaning stepparent!

Can children be successfully reared in a blended family? Can stepparents play a positive role in building a successful stepfamily? The answer to both questions is yes if all involved follow the counsel in God's inspired Word, the Bible.

# STEPFAMILIES CAN SUCCEED



ARE SUCCESSFUL STEPFAMILIES POSSIBLE? YES, ESPECIALLY IF ALL INVOLVED REMEMBER that "all Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16) When everyone applies Bible principles, success is virtually ensured.

### The Basic Quality

The Bible sets down only a few actual laws to govern human relations. Mostly it encourages the cultivating of good qualities and attitudes that guide us to act wisely. Such good attitudes and qualities are the basis of happy family life.

It may seem self-evident, but it is nevertheless worth saying that the basic quality needed for any family to be successful is love. The apostle Paul said: "Let your love be without hypocrisy. . . . In brotherly love have tender affection for one another." (Romans 12:9, 10) The word "love" is much misused, but the quality Paul referred to here is special. It is godly love, and it "never fails." (1 Corinthians 13:8) The Bible describes it as unselfish and ready to serve. It works actively for the good of others. It is patient and kind, never jealous, boastful, or conceited. It does not seek its own advantage. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope, to endure whatever comes.—1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Genuine love helps to smooth over differences and unite people with very different upbringings and personalities. And it helps to counteract the devastating effects of a divorce or a biological parent's death. One man who became a stepfather describes his very real problems: "I was often too concerned about my own feelings to analyze the emotions of my stepchildren or even of my wife. I had to learn to be less sensitive. Most important,

I had to learn to be humble." Love helped him to make the needed changes.

### The Biological Parent

Love can help in handling the children's relationship with their now absent biological parent. A stepfather confides: "I wanted to have first place in my stepchildren's affections. When they visited their biological father, I found it hard to resist the temptation to criticize him. When they returned after a pleasant day with him, I felt terrible. When they had a bad day, I was elated. Really, I was afraid of losing them. One of the most difficult things was to come to terms with the importance of the biological father's role in my stepchildren's lives."

Genuine love helped this stepfather to face the fact that it was unrealistic to expect "instant" love. He should not have felt rejected when the children did not immediately accept him. He came to realize that he may never completely replace the biological father in his children's hearts. The children had known this man from their earliest days, while the stepfather was a newcomer who would have to work for the children's love. Researcher Elizabeth Einstein reflects the experience of many when she says: "The biological parent can never be replaced—*never*. Even a parent who is dead or one who has abandoned the children retains an important place in the children's lives."

### Discipline—A Touchy Subject

The Bible indicates that loving discipline is essential for young people, and that includes stepchildren. (Proverbs 8:33) A number of professionals are coming around to the Bible's position on this. Professor Ceres Alves de Araújo stated: "By nature no one likes limits, but they are necessary. 'No' is a protective word."

However, in a blended family, views on discipline can lead to serious rifts. Stepchildren have in part been molded by an adult who is now absent. Likely, they have habits or customs that may irritate the stepparent. And they probably do not understand why the stepparent feels strongly about certain matters. How to deal successfully with the situation? Paul exhorts Christians: "Pursue . . . love, endurance, mildness of temper." (1 Timothy 6:11) Christian love helps both stepparent and children to be mild and patient as they learn to understand one another. If the stepparent is impatient, 'anger, wrath, and abusive speech' can quickly ruin any relationship that has been achieved.—Ephesians 4:31.

Insight into what will help in this was provided by the prophet Micah. He said: "What is Jehovah asking back from you but to exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with your God?" (Micah 6:8) Justice is vital when administering discipline. But what about kindness? One Christian elder relates that it was often difficult to get his stepchildren up on Sunday morning to share in congregation worship. Rather than berating them, he tried kindness. He got up early, prepared breakfast, then took each of them a warm drink. As a result, they were much more inclined to heed his appeal to get up.

Professor Ana Luisa Vieira de Mattos made the following interesting comment: "It is not the type of family that is important but the quality of the relationship. In my studies I have observed that young people who have behavioral problems almost always come from families in which there is weak parental supervision, a lack of rules and communication." She also said: "It can never be sufficiently emphasized that rearing children implies the need to say no." In addition, Drs. Emily and John Visher stated: "Basically, discipline works only when the person receiving the discipline cares about

the reactions of and the relationship with the person doing the disciplining."

These remarks touch on the question of who in stepfamilies should administer the discipline. Who should be the one to say no? After talking matters over, some parents have decided that, to begin with, the biological parent should be the main disciplinarian in order to give the stepparent time to build a closer relationship with the children. Let the children learn to feel confident of the stepparent's love for them before being disciplined by him or her.

What if the stepparent is the father? Does not the Bible say that the father is the head of the family? Yes. (Ephesians 5:22, 23; 6:1, 2) However, a stepfather may wish to delegate the matter of discipline for a while, especially if it involves punishment. He may allow the children to obey 'the law of their mother' while he lays a foundation for them to 'listen to the discipline of their [new] father.' (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20; 31:1) Evidence shows that, in the long run, this does not work against the principle of headship. In addition, one stepfather says: "I remembered that discipline includes admonition, correction, and reproof. When this is given in a just, loving, and compassionate way and is backed up by parental example, it usually works."

### Parents Need to Communicate

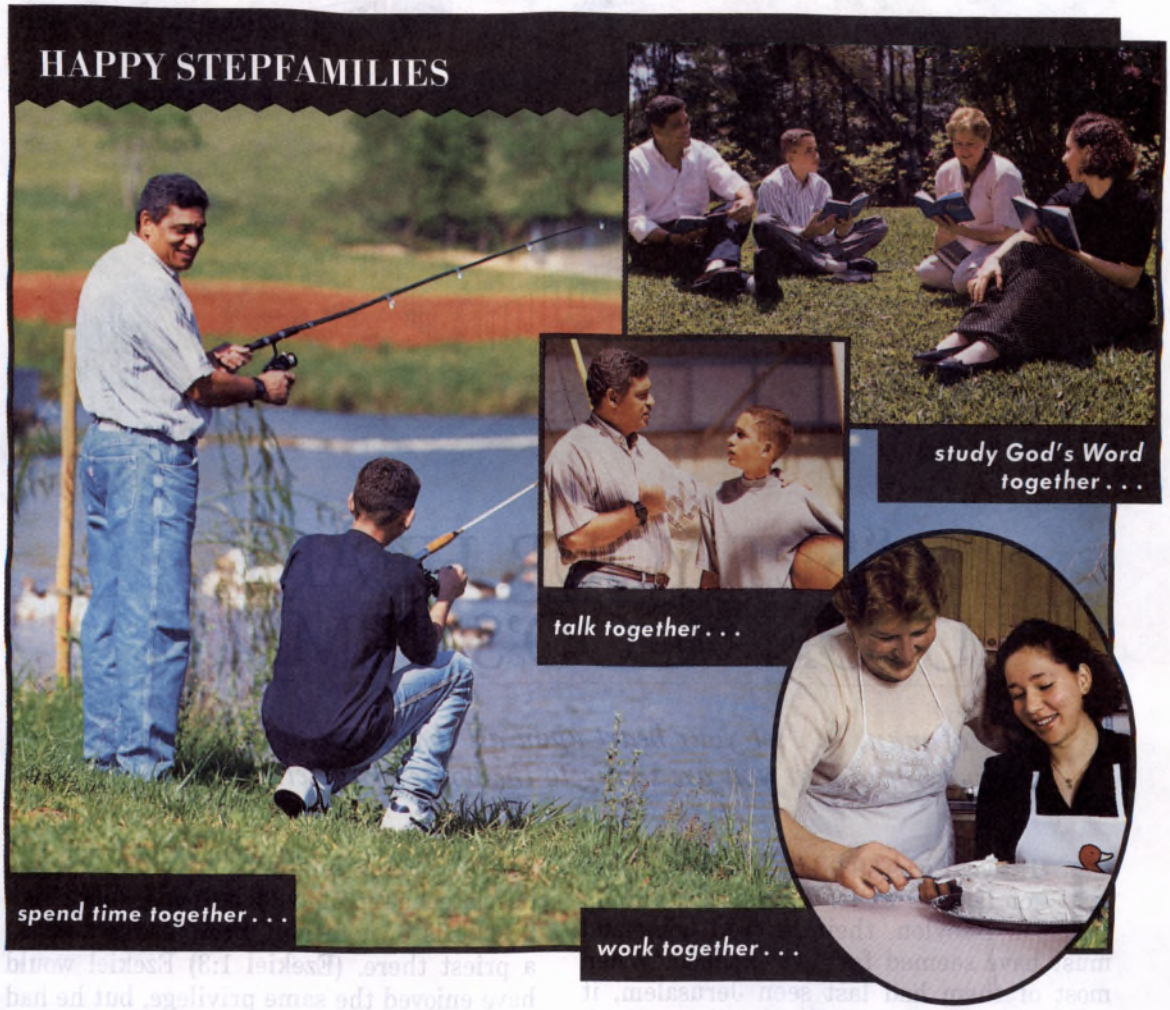
Proverbs 15:22 says: "There is a frustrating of plans where there is no confidential talk." In a stepfamily, calm and frank confidential talk between the parents is vital. A columnist in the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* observed: "Children always tend to test the limits set by the parents." That may be doubly true in stepfamilies. Hence, the parents need to come to an agreement on different matters so that the children will see that they are united. What, though, if a stepparent acts in a way that the biological parent feels is unjust? Then the two should sort things out in private, not in front of the children.

One mother who remarried relates: "The most difficult thing for a mother is to see the stepfather disciplining her children, especially if she feels that he is acting hastily or is not truly just. It breaks her heart, and she wants to defend her children. At such times, it is hard to remain subject to one's husband and support him.

"On one occasion, my two boys, aged 12 and 14, asked their stepfather's permission to do something. He immediately refused and then left the room without giving the boys any opportunity to explain why the request was important to them. The boys were ready to cry, and I was speechless. The older boy looked at me and said: 'Mom, did you see what he did?' I answered: 'Yes, I did. But he is still the head of the house, and the Bible tells us to respect headship.' They were good boys and agreed with this, and they calmed down a little. That same evening, I explained things to my husband, and he realized that he had been too authoritarian. He went straight to the boys' room and apologized.

"We learned a lot from that incident. My husband learned to listen before making decisions. I learned to uphold the principle of headship, even when it hurts. The boys learned the importance of being in subjection. (Colossians 3:18, 19) And my husband's heartfelt apology taught us all an important lesson in humility. (Proverbs 29:23) Today, both sons are Christian elders."

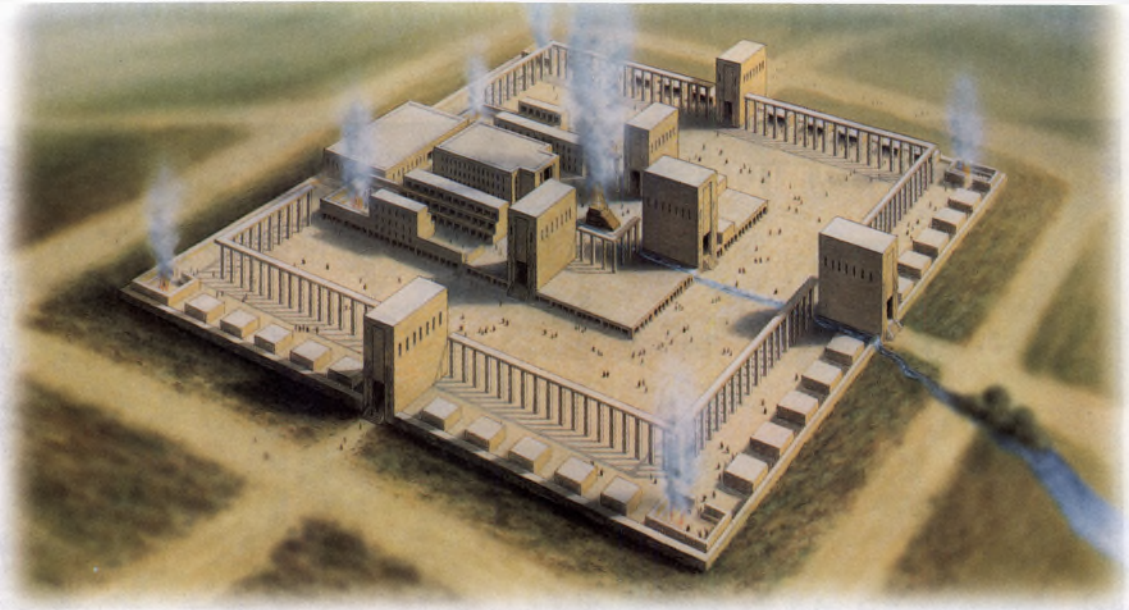
Mistakes will be made. Children will say or do things that hurt. Pressures of the moment will lead stepparents to act unreasonably. However, those simple words, "I am sorry, please forgive me," can do much to heal wounds.




### Strengthening Family Unity

It takes time to build a warm relationship in a stepfamily. If you are a stepparent, you need to show empathy. Be understanding, ready to spend time with the children. Play with the younger ones. Be prepared to talk with the older ones. Look for opportunities to spend time together—for example, invite the children to help with household tasks, like preparing dinner or washing the car. Invite them to come along and help when you go to the supermarket. In addition, small, affectionate gestures might show the love you feel. (Of course, stepfathers should be careful to observe proper boundaries with their stepdaughters and not make them feel uncomfortable. And stepmothers should remember that boys have boundaries too.)

Stepfamilies can be successful. Many are. The most successful are those in which all involved, especially the parents, cultivate right attitudes and realistic expectations. The apostle John wrote: "Beloved ones, let us continue loving one another, because love is from God." (1 John 4:7) Yes, heartfelt love is the real secret of a happy stepfamily.



# "SET YOUR HEART UPON" GOD'S TEMPLE!

*"Son of man, . . . set your heart upon all that I am showing you . . . Tell everything that you are seeing to the house of Israel."*—EZEKIEL 40:4.

THE year was 593 B.C.E., the 14th year of Israel's exile. To the Jews living in Babylon, their beloved homeland must have seemed far away indeed. When most of them had last seen Jerusalem, it was in flames, its mighty wall smashed, its proud buildings in ruins. The temple of Jehovah—once the city's crowning glory, the one center for pure worship in all the earth—had been reduced to rubble. Now the bulk of Israel's exile lay yet ahead. It would be 56 years before the promised deliverance. —Jeremiah 29:10.

[2] It must have saddened the faithful prophet Ezekiel to think of God's temple lying in ruins hundreds of miles away, a desolate haunt of wild animals. (Jeremiah 9:11) His own father, Buzi, had served as a priest there. (Ezekiel 1:3) Ezekiel would have enjoyed the same privilege, but he had been taken into exile with the nobility of Jerusalem in 617 B.C.E., when still young. Now about 50 years old, Ezekiel likely knew that he would never see Jerusalem again nor have any part in the rebuilding of her temple. Imagine, then, how much it must have meant to Ezekiel to receive a vision of a glorious temple!

[3] This extensive vision, filling nine chapters of Ezekiel's book, provided exiled Ju-

1. In what condition did God's chosen people find themselves in 593 B.C.E.?
2. Why would memories of God's temple in Jerusalem have saddened Ezekiel?

3. (a) What was the purpose of Ezekiel's vision of the temple? (b) What are the four main components of the vision?

deans with a faith-strengthening promise. Pure worship would be restored! In the centuries since then, even down to our day, this vision has been a source of encouragement to lovers of Jehovah. How so? Let us examine what Ezekiel's prophetic vision meant to the exiled Israelites. It has four main components: the temple, the priesthood, the chieftain, and the land.

### The Temple Restored

[4] First, Ezekiel is brought to "a very high mountain." On the mountain to the south is a huge temple, like a walled city. An angel, whose "appearance was like the appearance of copper," takes the prophet on a thorough tour of the premises. (Ezekiel 40:2, 3) As the vision proceeds, Ezekiel beholds the angel meticulously taking measurements of the temple's three matching pairs of gates with their guard chambers, an outer courtyard, an inner courtyard, dining rooms, an altar, and the temple sanctuary with its Holy and Most Holy compartments.

[5] Then, Jehovah himself appears in the vision. He enters the temple and assures Ezekiel that He will reside there. But He calls for a cleansing of His house, saying: "Now let them remove their fornication and the carcasses of their kings far from me, and I shall certainly reside in the midst of them to time indefinite." (Ezekiel 43:2-4, 7, 9) These "carcasses of their kings" evidently referred to idols. Jerusalem's rebellious rulers and people had polluted God's temple with idols and, in effect, had made kings of them. (Compare Amos 5:26.) Far from being living gods or kings, these were dead, dirty things in Jehovah's eyes. They must be removed.—Leviticus 26:30; Jeremiah 16:18.

[6] What was the point of this part of the vision? It assured the exiles of the complete restoration of pure worship at God's temple. Further, the measuring of the temple provided a divine guarantee that the vision was absolutely sure of fulfillment. (Compare Jeremiah 31:39, 40; Zechariah 2:2-8.) All idolatry would be cleansed away. Jehovah would once again bless his house.

### The Priesthood and the Chieftain

[7] The priesthood was also to undergo a cleansing, or refining, process. The Levites were to be rebuked for succumbing to idolatry, while the priestly sons of Zadok were to be commended and rewarded for remaining clean.* Still, both groups would have positions of service in God's restored house—depending, no doubt, on their faithfulness as individuals. Further, Jehovah decreed: "And my people they should instruct in the difference between a holy thing and a profane thing; and the difference between what is unclean and what is clean they should cause them to know." (Ezekiel 44:10-16, 23) So the priesthood was to be restored, and the faithful endurance of the priests would be rewarded.

[8] The vision also refers to one called the chieftain. Ever since the days of Moses, the nation had had chieftains. The Hebrew word for chieftain, *na·si′*, could refer to a head of

4. Where is Ezekiel taken at the outset of his vision, what does he see there, and who gives him a guided tour?

5. (a) What assurance does Jehovah give Ezekiel? (b) What were "the carcasses of their kings" that had to be removed from the temple, and why was this important?

* This may have touched Ezekiel personally, for it is said that he himself was of the priestly family of Zadok.

6. What did the measuring of the temple signify?

7. What information is given regarding the Levites and the priests?

8. (a) Who were the chieftains of ancient Israel? (b) In what ways was the chieftain of Ezekiel's vision active in pure worship?

a paternal house, a tribe, or even a nation. In Ezekiel's vision, Israel's rulers as a class are rebuked for oppressing the people and are exhorted to be fair and just. Although not of the priestly class, the chieftain is active in a prominent way in pure worship. He enters and exits the outer courtyard with the nonpriestly tribes, sits in the porch of the East Gate, and provides some of the sacrifices for the people to offer. (Ezekiel 44:2, 3; 45:8-12, 17) The vision thus assured Ezekiel's people that the restored nation would be blessed with exemplary leaders, men who would support the priesthood in organizing God's people and be fine examples in spiritual matters.

### The Land

9 Finally, Ezekiel's vision included an overview of the land of Israel. It was to be divided with an allotment for each tribe. The chieftain too would have an inheritance. The priests, however, would not, for Jehovah said, "I am their inheritance." (Ezekiel 44: 10, 28; Numbers 18:20) The vision showed that the chieftain's allotment of land would be located on either side of a special area called the holy contribution. This was a square piece of land divided into three strips —the top for the repentant Levites, the middle for the priests, and the bottom for the city and its productive land. Jehovah's temple would be located in the priests' strip of land, in the center of the square contribution.—Ezekiel 45:1-7.

10 How all of this must have lifted the hearts of those exiles! Each family was assured of having an inheritance in the land. (Compare Micah 4:4.) Pure worship would occupy an exalted, central place there. And notice in Ezekiel's vision that the chieftain, like the priests, would live on land contributed by the people. (Ezekiel 45:16) So in the restored land, the people were to contribute to the work of those whom Jehovah appointed to take the lead, supporting them by cooperating with their direction. In all, this land was a picture of organization, cooperation, and security.

11 Would Jehovah bless their land? The prophecy answers this question with a heartwarming picture. A stream flows from the temple, widening as it goes, becoming a torrent by the time it enters the Dead Sea. There it revives lifeless waters, and a fishing industry flourishes on a stretch of the shoreline. Along the riverbanks are many trees that bear fruit year-round, giving nourishment and healing.—Ezekiel 47:1-12.

12 To the exiles, this promise echoed and confirmed earlier restoration prophecies that they held very dear. More than once, Jehovah's inspired prophets had described a restored, repopulated Israel in paradisaic terms. Dead regions coming to life had been a recurring prophetic theme. (Isaiah 35:1, 6, 7; 51:3; Ezekiel 36:35; 37:1-14) So the people could expect that Jehovah's life-giving blessings would flow forth like a river from the restored temple. Consequently, a spiritually dead nation would revive. The restored people would be blessed with outstanding spiritual men—men as righteous and firm as the trees along those visionary riverbanks, men who would take the lead in rebuilding a ruined land. Isaiah too had written of "big trees of righteousness" who would "rebuild the long-standing devastated places."—Isaiah 61:3, 4.

9. (a) How was the land to be divided, but who would not receive an inheritance? (b) What was the holy contribution, and what did it contain?
10. What did the prophecy about the dividing of the land mean to faithful Judeans in exile?
11, 12. (a) How does Jehovah prophetically assure his people that he would bless their restored homeland? (b) What was pictured by the trees along the banks of the river?

## When Is the Vision Fulfilled?

13 Were the returning exiles disappointed? Far from it! A restored remnant returned to their beloved homeland in 537 B.C.E. In time, under the guidance of these "big trees of righteousness"—such as the scribe Ezra, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and the High Priest Joshua—the long-devastated places were rebuilt. Chieftains, for example Nehemiah and Zerubbabel, ruled in the land fairly and justly. Jehovah's temple was restored, and his provisions for life—the blessings of living by his covenant—again flowed forth. (Deuteronomy 30:19; Isaiah 48:17-20) One blessing was knowledge. The priesthood was restored to duty, and the priests instructed the people in the Law. (Malachi 2:7) As a result, the people revived spiritually and again became fruitful servants of Jehovah, as pictured by the Dead Sea being healed and generating a productive fishing industry.

14 Were these events the only fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision? No; something far greater is indicated. Consider: The temple that Ezekiel saw could not really be built as described. True, the Jews took that vision seriously and even applied some details literally.* However, the visionary temple as a whole was too large even to fit on Mount Moriah, the site of the former temple. In addition, Ezekiel's temple was not in the city but some distance away on a separate tract of land, whereas the second temple was built where its predecessor had stood, in the city of Jerusalem. (Ezra 1: 1, 2) Further, no literal river ever emerged from Jerusalem's temple. So ancient Israel saw only a token fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy. This implies that there must be a greater, spiritual fulfillment of this vision.

15 Clearly, we must look for the main fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision in Jehovah's great spiritual temple, which the apostle Paul discusses at length in the book of Hebrews. That temple went into operation when Jesus Christ was anointed as its High Priest in 29 C.E. But was Ezekiel's vision fulfilled in Jesus' day? Evidently not. Jesus, as the High Priest, fulfilled the prophetic import of the Atonement Day by means of his baptism, his sacrificial death, and his entry into the Most Holy, heaven itself. (Hebrews 9:24) Interestingly, though, Ezekiel's vision does not contain a single mention of either the high priest or the Atonement Day. So it seems unlikely that this vision was pointing toward the first century C.E. In what time period, then, does it apply?

16 For an answer, let us go back to the vision itself. Ezekiel wrote: "In the visions of God he brought me to the land of Israel and gradually set me down upon a very high mountain, on which there was something like the structure of a city to the south." (Ezekiel 40:2) The setting for this vision, the "very high mountain," reminds us of Micah 4:1: "It must occur in the final part of the days that the mountain of the house of Jehovah will become firmly established above the top of the mountains, and it will certainly be lifted up above the hills; and to it peoples must stream." When does this prophecy come into fulfillment? Micah 4:5 shows

* For instance, the ancient Mishnah suggests that in the restored temple, the altar, the temple's two-leaved doors, and the cooking areas were built to conform to Ezekiel's vision.

13. (a) In what sense did Jehovah bless his restored people with "big trees of righteousness"? (b) How was the prophecy about the Dead Sea fulfilled?

14. Why was there to be a fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy surpassing what happened following the Jews' return from exile in Babylon?

15. (a) When did Jehovah's spiritual temple go into operation? (b) What indicates that Ezekiel's vision was not fulfilled during Christ's lifetime on earth?

16. The setting of Ezekiel's vision reminds us of what other prophecy, and how does this help us to discern the time of the main fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision?

that this commences while the nations still worship false gods. In fact, it has been in our own time, "the final part of the days," that pure worship has been lifted up, restored to its proper place in the lives of God's servants.

[17] What made this restoration possible? Remember, in the most significant event of Ezekiel's vision, Jehovah comes to the temple and insists that his house be cleansed of idolatry. When was God's spiritual temple cleansed? At Malachi 3:1-5, Jehovah foretells a time when he will "come to His temple" accompanied by his "messenger of the covenant," Jesus Christ. The purpose? "He will be like the fire of a refiner and like the lye of laundrymen." This refining commenced during the time of the first world war. The result? Jehovah has resided in his house and blessed the spiritual land of his people from 1919 onward. (Isaiah 66:8) We may conclude, then, that Ezekiel's temple prophecy sees an important fulfillment during the last days.

[18] Like other restoration prophecies, Ezekiel's vision has a further fulfillment, a final one, in Paradise. Only at that time will righthearted mankind receive the full benefits of God's temple arrangement. Christ will then administer the value of his ransom sacrifice, in company with his heavenly priesthood of 144,000. All obedient human subjects of Christ's rule will be lifted to perfection. (Revelation 20:5, 6) However, Paradise cannot be the *primary* time of fulfillment for Ezekiel's vision. Why not?

17. How does the prophecy at Malachi 3:1-5 help us to determine when the temple of Ezekiel's vision was cleansed?
18. When will the temple vision have its final fulfillment?

### Do You Remember?

- ☐ What was the initial fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision of the temple and its priesthood?
- ☐ How did Ezekiel's vision of the allotment of the land find an early fulfillment?
- ☐ In the restoration of ancient Israel, who acted as faithful chieftains and who acted as "big trees of righteousness"?
- ☐ Why must Ezekiel's temple vision find its main fulfillment during the last days?

### The Vision Focuses on Our Own Day

[19] Ezekiel saw a temple that needed to be cleansed of idolatry and spiritual fornication. (Ezekiel 43:7-9) This surely could not apply to the worship of Jehovah in Paradise. Furthermore, the priests of the vision picture the anointed priestly class while still on earth, not after their heavenly resurrection or during the Millennium. Why? Note that the priests are pictured as serving in the inner courtyard. Articles in previous issues of *The Watchtower* have shown that this courtyard pictures the unique spiritual standing of Christ's underpriests while they are still on the earth.* Observe also that the vision stresses the imperfection of the priests. They are told to offer sacrifices for their own sins. They are warned of the danger of becoming unclean—spiritually and morally. So they do not picture the resurrected anointed ones, of whom the apostle Paul wrote: "The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised up *incorruptible*." (1 Corinthians 15:52; Ezekiel 44:21, 22, 25, 27) The priests in the vision mingle with and serve the people directly. This will not be so in Paradise, when the priestly class will be in heaven. The vision provides, therefore, a fine picture of the way the anointed work

* See *The Watchtower*, July 1, 1996, page 16; December 1, 1972, page 718.

19, 20. Why must the main fulfillment of the vision occur today and not in Paradise?

closely with the "great crowd" on earth today.—Revelation 7:9; Ezekiel 42:14.

[20] Thus Ezekiel's vision of the temple portends the wholesome effects of a spiritual cleansing undergoing fulfillment today. But what does that mean to you? This is not merely some abstract theological puzzle. This vision has a great deal to do with your own day-to-day worship of the only true God, Jehovah. In our next article, we will see how.

# "THE TEMPLE" AND "THE CHIEFTAIN" TODAY

*"As regards the chieftain in their midst, when they come in, he should come in; and when they go out, he should go out."*—EZEKIEL 46:10.

SOME ancient rabbis were not entirely comfortable with the book of Ezekiel. According to the Talmud, some of them even considered excluding the book from the canon of the Holy Scriptures. They had a particularly hard time with the temple vision and pronounced it beyond human comprehension. Other Bible scholars have been baffled by Ezekiel's vision of Jehovah's temple. What about us?

[2] Since the restoration of pure worship, Jehovah has blessed his people with many flashes of spiritual insight, including the discernment of what God's spiritual temple is—Jehovah's templelike arrangement for pure worship.* This key truth helps us to unlock much of the meaning of Ezekiel's temple vision. Let us consider more closely the four components of this vision—the temple, the priesthood, the chieftain, and the land. What do these mean today?

* See the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, page 64, paragraph 22, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

1, 2. What key truth helps us to unlock much of the meaning of Ezekiel's temple vision?

## The Temple and You

[3] Imagine that we are on a tour of this visionary temple. We approach and climb seven steps to one of the huge gates. Inside this entryway, we look up in awe. Its ceiling is over 100 feet above us! We are thus reminded that standards for entering Jehovah's arrangement for worship are lofty. Shafts of light from the windows illuminate wall carvings of palm trees, used in the Scriptures to picture uprightness. (Psalm 92:12; Ezekiel 40:14, 16, 22) This sacred place is for those who are morally and spiritually upright. In harmony with that, we want to remain upright so that our worship is acceptable to Jehovah.—Psalm 11:7.

[4] Along each side of the passageway, there are three guard chambers. Will the guards allow us inside the temple? Jehovah tells Ezekiel that no foreigner who is "uncircumcised in heart" may enter. (Ezekiel 40:10; 44:9) What does that mean? God accepts

3. What do we learn from the lofty ceiling and the wall carvings in the entryways to the temple?

4. Who are denied entry to the temple, and what does this teach us?

as worshipers only those who love his laws and live by them. (Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2: 29) He welcomes such ones into his spiritual tent, his house of worship. (Psalm 15: 1-5) Ever since pure worship was restored in 1919, Jehovah's earthly organization has upheld and progressively clarified his moral laws. Those who willfully refuse to obey are no longer welcomed into association with his people. Today, the Bible-based practice of disfellowshipping unrepentant wrongdoers has served to keep our worship clean and pure.—1 Corinthians 5:13.

[5] The passageway opens onto the outer courtyard where the people worship and praise Jehovah. This reminds us of the apostle John's vision of the "great crowd" worshiping Jehovah "day and night in his temple." Palm trees figure in both visions. In Ezekiel's vision they decorate the entryway walls. In John's vision the worshipers have palm branches in their hands, symbolizing their joy in praising Jehovah and in welcoming Jesus as their King. (Revelation 7:9-15) In the context of Ezekiel's vision, the 12 tribes of Israel picture the "other sheep." (John 10:16; compare Luke 22:28-30.) Are you too one of those who find joy in praising Jehovah by proclaiming his Kingdom?

[6] As we tour the outer courtyard, we see the 30 dining rooms where the people partake of their voluntary offerings. (Ezekiel 40:17) Today, those of the other sheep do not offer animal sacrifices, but they do not come empty-handed to the spiritual temple. (Compare Exodus 23:15.) The apostle Paul wrote: "Through [Jesus] let us always offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name. Moreover, do not forget the doing of good and the sharing of things with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Hebrews 13:15, 16; Hosea 14:2) It is a great privilege to offer Jehovah such sacrifices.—Proverbs 3:9, 27.

[7] Ezekiel watches as an angel measures this visionary temple. (Ezekiel 40:3) Similarly, the apostle John was told: "Get up and measure the temple sanctuary of God and the altar and those worshiping in it." (Revelation 11:1) What does this measuring mean? In both cases this evidently served as a guarantee, a sign that nothing can stop Jehovah from fulfilling his purposes regarding pure worship. Likewise today, we may be assured that nothing—not even fierce opposition from powerful governments—can stop the restoration of pure worship.

[8] As we walk across the outer courtyard, we see that there are three gates leading into the inner courtyard; the inner gates line up with and are the same size as the outer gates. (Ezekiel 40:6, 20, 23, 24, 27) Only priests may enter the inner courtyard. The inner gates remind us that the anointed must measure up to divine standards and laws, but the same standards and laws guide all true Christians. But what is the work of the priests, with what meaning today?

## A Faithful Priesthood

[9] In pre-Christian times, the priests did hard work at the temple. Slaughtering the sacrificial animals, offering them on the altar, and serving fellow priests and the people was a physically demanding job. But they had other important work. Jehovah

5. (a) What similarities are there between Ezekiel's vision and John's vision recorded at Revelation 7:9-15? (b) In Ezekiel's vision, who are pictured by the 12 tribes worshiping in the outer courtyard?
6. What was the purpose of the dining rooms in the outer courtyard, and of what privilege may this remind those of the other sheep?
7. Of what does the measuring of the temple assure us?
8. Who enter the gates into the inner courtyard, and of what do these gates remind us?
9, 10. How has the "royal priesthood," as foreshadowed by the priestly class in Ezekiel's vision, provided spiritual instruction?

*The allotment of land as depicted in Ezekiel's vision*

commanded regarding the priests: "My people they should instruct in the difference between a holy thing and a profane thing; and the difference between what is unclean and what is clean they should cause them to know."—Ezekiel 44:23; Malachi 2:7.

10 Do you appreciate the hard work and humble service that the anointed as a body, "a royal priesthood," has done in behalf of pure worship? (1 Peter 2:9) Like the Levitical priesthood of old, they have taken the lead in giving spiritual instruction, helping people to understand what is clean and acceptable in God's eyes and what is not. (Matthew 24:45) Such instruction, coming through Bible-based publications and Christian meetings and conventions, has helped millions to become reconciled to God.—2 Corinthians 5:20.

11 However, the priests must do more than teach others to be clean; they must be clean themselves. Thus, Ezekiel foresaw a refining process for the priesthood of Israel. (Ezekiel 44:10-16) Similarly, history shows that in 1918, Jehovah sat "as a refiner" in his spiritual temple, examining the anointed priestly class. (Malachi 3:1-5) Those deemed spiritually clean or who repented of former idolatry were allowed to continue in the privilege of service in his spiritual temple. Still, like everyone else, individual anointed ones can become unclean—spiritually and morally. (Ezekiel 44:22, 25-27) They have had to work hard to remain "without spot from the world."—James 1:27; compare Mark 7:20-23.

11. (a) How did Ezekiel's vision emphasize the importance of cleanness on the part of the priests? (b) In the last days, how have the anointed been cleansed in a spiritual sense?

12 Each of us might ask, 'Do I appreciate the example set by the anointed over their many years of faithful service? Do I imitate their faith?' It is good for those of the great crowd to remember that they will not always have the anointed with them here on earth. Of the priests in Ezekiel's vision, Jehovah said: "No possession [of land] should you people give them in Israel: I am their possession." (Ezekiel 44:28) Similarly, the anointed have no everlasting place on earth. They have a heavenly inheritance, and those of the great crowd view it as a privilege to support and encourage them while they are still here on earth.—Matthew 25:34-40; 1 Peter 1:3, 4.

12. Why should we appreciate the work of the anointed?

### The Chieftain—Who Is He?

13 Now an intriguing question arises. Whom, then, does the chieftain represent? Since he is spoken of both as an individual and as a group, we may assume that he represents a class of men. (Ezekiel 44:3; 45:8, 9) But who? Surely not the anointed. In the vision, he works closely with the priesthood, but he is not one of them. Unlike the priestly class, he is given an inheritance in the land and thus has a future here on earth, not in heaven. (Ezekiel 48:21) Further, Ezekiel 46:10 says: "As regards the chieftain in their midst, when they [the nonpriestly tribes] come in [to the temple's outer courtyard], he should come in; and when they go out, he should go out." He does not enter the inner courtyard but worships in the outer courtyard, entering and exiting the temple with the people. These factors decidedly place the chieftain among the great crowd of the other sheep.

14 Clearly, the chieftain has some responsibility among God's people. In the outer courtyard, he sits in the porch of the East Gate. (Ezekiel 44:2, 3) This would indicate a position of oversight, similar to that of the older men in Israel who sat at the gate of the city and rendered judgment. (Ruth 4:1-12; Proverbs 22:22) Who among the other sheep hold offices of oversight today? Elders with an earthly hope who have been appointed by holy spirit. (Acts 20:28) So the chieftain class is now being groomed with the prospect of later serving in an administrative capacity in the new world.

15 What, though, is the relationship today between the anointed priestly class and such older men who, as part of the great crowd, are serving in positions of oversight? Ezekiel's vision suggests that the elders who are members of the great crowd have a supportive and subordinate role, while the anointed take the spiritual lead. How so? Remember, the priests in the vision were given the responsibility to instruct the people in spiritual matters. They were also told to act as judges in legal cases. Additionally, the Levites were assigned to "posts of oversight" in the temple gates. (Ezekiel 44:11, 23, 24) Clearly, the chieftain was to submit to the spiritual services and leadership of the priests. It is fitting, then, that in modern times the anointed have taken the lead in pure worship. For example, the members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses have been chosen from among them. Such faithful anointed elders have been training the developing chieftain class for decades, preparing prospective members of this class for the day when they will be delegated their full measure of authority in God's new world to come.

16 What kind of overseers are these prospective members, who are in line for enlarged responsibilities as the chieftain class? The prophecy found at Isaiah 32:1, 2 says: "Look! A king will reign for righteousness itself; and as respects princes, they will rule as princes for justice itself. And each one must prove to be like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm, like streams of water in a waterless country, like the shadow of a heavy crag in an exhausted land." This prophecy is being fulfilled today as Christian elders —anointed and other sheep—work to protect the flock from such 'rainstorms' as persecution and discouragement.

17 The words "prince" and "chieftain," which have similar meanings in Hebrew, are

13, 14. (a) Why must the chieftain be of the other sheep? (b) Whom does the chieftain picture?

15. (a) How does Ezekiel's vision shed light on the relationship between elders who are of the great crowd and the anointed priestly class? (b) What lead have anointed elders taken in God's earthly organization?

16. According to Isaiah 32:1, 2, how must all elders act?

17. How should Christian shepherds view themselves, and how should the flock view them?

not used as titles designed to exalt men. Rather, they describe the responsibility these men bear in caring for God's sheep. Jehovah sternly warns: "That is enough of you, O chieftains of Israel! Remove the violence and the despoiling, and do justice and righteousness themselves." (Ezekiel 45:9) It is good for all elders today to take such counsel to heart. (1 Peter 5:2, 3) The flock, in turn, recognizes that Jesus has provided shepherds as "gifts in men." (Ephesians 4:8) Their qualifications are set down in God's inspired Word. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) Christians therefore follow the elders' lead. —Hebrews 13:7.

18 In Bible times some chieftains had much authority, others less. Today, elders of the great crowd have widely varying responsibilities. Some serve in one congregation; others serve many congregations as traveling overseers; others serve whole countries as Branch Committee members; others directly assist various committees of the Governing Body. In the new world, Jesus will appoint "princes in all the earth" to take the lead among Jehovah's worshipers on earth. (Psalm 45: 16) No doubt he will select many of these from among the faithful elders of today. Because these men are proving themselves now, he will choose to entrust many with even greater privileges in the future when he reveals the role of the chieftain class in the new world.

### The Land of God's People Today

19 Ezekiel's vision also portrays the restored land of Israel. What does this aspect of the vision represent? Other restoration prophecies foretold that the land, Israel, would be a paradise like Eden. (Ezekiel 36: 34, 35) Today, we enjoy a restored "land," and it too is, in a sense, Edenic. In a similar vein, we often speak of our spiritual paradise. *The Watchtower* has defined our "land" as "the realm of activity" of God's chosen people.* Wherever a servant of Jehovah may be, he is in that restored land as long as he is endeavoring to uphold true worship by walking in Christ Jesus' footsteps.—1 Peter 2:21.

20 What about the portion of land called "the holy contribution"? This was the people's contribution for the support of the priesthood and the city. Similarly, "all the people of the land" were to contribute a portion of land for the chieftain. What does this mean today? Not, of course, that God's people should be burdened with a salaried clergy class. (2 Thessalonians 3:8) Rather, the support given to the elders is primarily spiritual. It includes assisting in the work at hand and showing a cooperative, submissive spirit. Yet, as in Ezekiel's day, this contribution is made *"to Jehovah,"* not to any man.—Ezekiel 45:1, 7, 16.

* See *The Watchtower*, July 1, 1995, page 20.

18. What are some responsibilities of the prospective chieftain class now, and what will be its responsibility in the future?
19. What does the land of Ezekiel's vision represent?
20. What principle might we learn from "the holy contribution" in Ezekiel's vision, and how might we apply this principle?

#### Points to Review

- ☐ What does the temple in Ezekiel's vision picture?
- ☐ Whom do the priests serving at the temple picture?
- ☐ What is the chieftain class, and what are some of its responsibilities?
- ☐ What is the land in Ezekiel's vision, and in what sense is it allotted to the 12 tribes?
- ☐ What does the city picture?

[21] It is not only the chieftain and the priesthood who have assigned places in this restored land. The dividing of the land shows that each one of the 12 tribes has a secure inheritance. (Ezekiel 47:13, 22, 23) So those of the great crowd not only have a place in the spiritual paradise today but will also receive an assignment of land when they inherit a place in the earthly realm of God's Kingdom.

[22] Finally, what does the city in the vision represent? It is no heavenly city, for it lies in the midst of "profane" (nonsacred) land. (Ezekiel 48:15-17) So it must be something earthly. Well, what is a city? Does it not convey the idea of people coming together as a group and forming something structured and organized? Yes. Hence, the city appears to picture the earthly administration that benefits all who will make up the righteous earthly society. It will operate in its fullness in the coming "new earth." (2 Peter 3:13) The city's gates on all sides, one for each tribe, well illustrate openness. Today, God's people are not under some secretive, clandestine administration. Responsible brothers are to be approachable; the principles that guide them are well-known to all. The fact that people from all tribes cultivate the land that supports the city reminds us that the other sheep support, even in a material way, the administrative arrangements made for God's people worldwide.—Ezekiel 48:19, 30-34.

[23] What, though, about the river flowing from the temple sanctuary? What that represents today and on into the future will be the subject of the third and final article in this series.

21. What may we learn from the dividing of the land in Ezekiel's vision?

22. (a) The city in Ezekiel's vision represents what? (b) What might we learn from the city's having gates on all sides?

23. What will we consider in the following article?

# JEHOVAH'S BLESSING ON OUR "LAND"

*"Everything will be alive where the torrent comes."*—EZEKIEL 47:9.

WATER is a remarkable fluid. All physical life depends on it. Not one of us can survive long without it. We also depend on it for cleansing, since water can dissolve and wash away impurities. So we wash our bodies, our clothes, even our food in it. Doing so may save our lives.

[2] The Bible uses water to picture Jehovah's spiritual provisions for life. (Jeremiah 2:13; John 4:7-15) These provisions include the cleansing of his people through Christ's ransom sacrifice and the knowledge of God found in his Word. (Ephesians 5:25-27) In Ezekiel's temple vision, the miraculous river that flows from the temple symbolizes such life-giving blessings. But when does that river flow, and what does it mean for us today?

1, 2. (a) How important is water? (b) What does the water of Ezekiel's visionary river picture?

## A River Flows in a Restored Land

[3] As captives in Babylon, Ezekiel's people sorely needed Jehovah's provisions. How encouraging, then, for Ezekiel to see a trickle of water emerge from the sanctuary and flow out of the visionary temple! An angel measures the stream at 1,000-cubit intervals. Its depth increases from ankle-deep to knee-deep to hip-deep to a torrent that calls for swimming. The river brings life and fertility. (Ezekiel 47:2-11) Ezekiel is told: "Alongside the torrent there will come up, along its bank on this side and on that side, all sorts of trees for food." (Ezekiel 47:12a) As the torrent enters the Dead Sea—a lifeless body of water—life springs up! Fish swarm. A fishing industry thrives.

[4] This beautiful prophecy may have reminded the Jewish exiles of another prophecy recorded more than two centuries earlier: "Out of the house of Jehovah there will go forth a spring, and it must irrigate the torrent valley of the Acacia Trees."* (Joel 3:18) Joel's prophecy, like Ezekiel's, foretells that a river would flow from God's house, the temple, and bring life to an arid region.

[5] *The Watchtower* has long held that Joel's prophecy is being fulfilled in our time.# Surely, then, the same holds true for Ezekiel's similar vision. In the restored land of God's people today, just as in ancient Israel, Jehovah's blessings have indeed flowed forth.

* This torrent valley may refer to the Valley of Kidron, which extends southeast from Jerusalem and ends at the Dead Sea. Its lower course in particular is waterless and dry year-round.

# See the *Watchtower* issues of May 1, 1881, and June 1, 1981.

3. What did Ezekiel experience, as reported at Ezekiel 47:2-12?

4, 5. How is Joel's prophecy regarding a river similar to that of Ezekiel, and why is this significant?

## A Mighty Flow of Blessings

[6] What is the source of the blessings upon God's restored people? Well, notice that the water flows from God's temple. Likewise today, the blessings come from Jehovah through his great spiritual temple—the arrangement for pure worship. Ezekiel's vision adds an important detail. In the inner courtyard, the stream flows past the altar, just south of it. (Ezekiel 47:1) The altar is in the very center of the visionary temple. Jehovah meticulously describes it to Ezekiel and orders that the blood of a sacrifice be sprinkled upon it. (Ezekiel 43:13-18, 20) That altar had great meaning for all Israelites. Their covenant with Jehovah had been validated long before when Moses sprinkled blood upon an altar at the foot of Mount Sinai. (Exodus 24:4-8) The sprinkling of blood upon the visionary altar should have reminded them that once they returned to their restored land, Jehovah's blessings would flow forth as long as they honored their covenant with him.—Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

[7] Similarly, God's people today are blessed through a covenant—a better one, the new covenant. (Jeremiah 31:31-34) It too was long ago validated by blood, that of Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 9:15-20) Today, whether we are among the anointed, who are parties to that covenant, or are among the "other sheep," who are beneficiaries of it, we find great meaning in the symbolic altar. It symbolizes God's will in connection with Christ's sacrifice. (John 10:16; Hebrews 10:10) Just as the symbolic altar is in the very center of the spiritual temple, Christ's ransom sacrifice is central to pure worship. It is the basis for the forgiveness of our sins and hence for all our hopes for the future. (1 John 2:2) We thus strive to live by the law associated with

6. The sprinkling of blood on the visionary altar should have reminded the Jews of what?

7. What meaning do Christians today find in the symbolic altar?

the new covenant, "the law of the Christ." (Galatians 6:2) As long as we do that, we will benefit from Jehovah's provisions for life.

[8] One such benefit is a clean standing before Jehovah. In the visionary temple, the inner courtyard is missing something that was quite prominent in the courtyard of the tabernacle and in Solomon's temple—a great basin, later called a sea, for the priests to wash in. (Exodus 30:18-21; 2 Chronicles 4:2-6) What could the priests in Ezekiel's visionary temple use for cleansing? Why, that miraculous stream flowing through the inner courtyard! Yes, Jehovah would bless them with the means to enjoy a clean, or holy, standing.

[9] Likewise today, the anointed have been blessed with a clean standing before Jehovah. Jehovah views them as holy, declaring them righteous. (Romans 5:1, 2) What about the "great crowd," pictured by the nonpriestly tribes? They worship in the outer courtyard, and the same stream runs through that part of the visionary temple. How appropriate, then, that the apostle John saw the great crowd wearing clean white robes as they worship in the courtyard of the spiritual temple! (Revelation 7:9-14) No matter how they have been treated in this degraded world, they may be assured that as long as they exercise faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice, Jehovah views them as clean and pure. How do they exercise faith? By following in the footsteps of Jesus, having full confidence in the ransom sacrifice.—1 Peter 2:21.

[10] As already mentioned, there is another vital feature of this symbolic water—knowledge. In the restored Israel, Jehovah blessed his people with Scriptural instruction by means of the priesthood. (Ezekiel 44:23) In a comparable way, Jehovah has blessed his people today with ample instruction about his Word of truth, through the "royal priesthood." (1 Peter 2:9) Knowledge about Jehovah God, about his purposes for mankind, and especially about Jesus Christ and the Messianic Kingdom has flowed in an ever-increasing torrent during these last days. How grand is the deepening flood of spiritual refreshment that we are receiving! —Daniel 12:4.

[11] Just as the river that the angel measured grew progressively deeper, so the flow of life-giving blessings from Jehovah has increased dramatically in order to accommodate the influx of people into our blessed spiritual land. Another restoration prophecy foretold: "The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time." (Isaiah 60:22) These words have come true—millions have thronged to join us in pure worship! Jehovah has made abundant "water" available to all who turn to him. (Revelation 22:17) He sees to it that his earthly organization distributes Bibles and Bible literature all over the world, in hundreds of languages. Similarly, Christian meetings and conventions have been arranged worldwide so that all can be supplied with the crystal-clear waters of truth. How do such provisions affect people?

8. (a) What was missing from the inner courtyard of the visionary temple? (b) By what means could priests in the visionary temple cleanse themselves?

9. How can those of the anointed and those of the great crowd have a clean standing today?

10, 11. What is one important feature of the symbolic water, and how does this relate to the tremendous expansion of the river?

## The Water Brings Life!

[12] The river in Ezekiel's vision brings life and health. When Ezekiel learns of the trees that would grow alongside the river, he is

12. (a) Why are the trees in Ezekiel's vision able to produce as they do? (b) What is represented by these fruitful trees during the last days?

told: "Their leafage will not wither, nor will their fruitage be consumed. . . . And their fruitage must prove to be for food and their leafage for healing." Why do these trees produce in this amazing manner? "Because the water for them—it is coming forth from the very sanctuary." (Ezekiel 47:12b) These symbolic trees foreshadow all of God's provisions for restoring mankind to perfection on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. On earth at this time, the anointed remnant takes the lead in providing spiritual nourishment and healing. After the 144,000 have all received their heavenly reward, the benefits stemming from their priestly service as corulers with Christ will extend into the future, ultimately leading to the complete conquest of Adamic death.—Revelation 5:9, 10; 21:2-4.

13 The visionary river runs into the lifeless Dead Sea and heals all that it reaches. This sea pictures a spiritually dead environment. But life swarms "in every place to which the double-size torrent comes." (Ezekiel 47:9) Similarly, in the last days, people have been coming to life spiritually wherever the water of life has penetrated. The first ones so revitalized were the anointed remnant in 1919. They sprang back to life spiritually from a deathlike, inactive state. (Ezekiel 37:1-14; Revelation 11:3, 7-12) Those vital waters have since reached other spiritually dead ones, and these have come to life and formed an ever-increasing great crowd of other sheep, who love and serve Jehovah. Soon, this provision will extend to the multitudes of resurrected ones.

14 Spiritual vitality results in productivity. This is illustrated by the fishing industry that flourishes on the shores of the sea that was formerly dead. Jesus told his followers: "I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19) In the last days, the fishing work began with the gathering of the remaining ones of the anointed, but it has not stopped there. The life-giving water from Jehovah's spiritual temple, including the blessing of accurate knowledge, affects people of all nations. Wherever that torrent has reached, spiritual life has resulted.

15 Of course, not all respond favorably now to the message of life; nor will all those who are resurrected during the Millennial Reign of Christ do so. (Isaiah 65:20; Revelation 21:8) The angel declares that parts of the sea are not healed. These marshy, lifeless places are 'given to salt.' (Ezekiel 47:11) As to the people of our day, not all who are offered Jehovah's life-giving water accept it. (Isaiah 6:10) At Armageddon, all of those who have chosen to remain in a spiritually lifeless and sick condition will be given to salt, that is, destroyed forever. (Revelation 19:11-21) However, those who have been faithfully drinking these waters can hope to survive and see the final fulfillment of this prophecy.

### The River Flows in Paradise

16 Like other restoration prophecies, Ezekiel's temple vision sees its final fulfillment during the Millennium. Then the priestly class will no longer be here on the earth. "They will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with him [in heaven] for the thousand years." (Revelation 20:6) These heavenly priests will be associated with Christ in administering the full benefits of Christ's ransom sacrifice. Thus

13. What healing has been accomplished during our time?
14. The fishing industry flourishing along a stretch of the shore of the Dead Sea well illustrates what today?
15. What shows that not everyone will accept God's provisions for life, and what is the end result for such ones?
16. When and how will Ezekiel's temple vision have its final fulfillment?

righteous mankind will be saved, restored to perfection!—John 3:17.

[17] In effect, the river seen by Ezekiel will then flow with the most potent water of life. This is the primary time of application for the prophecy recorded at Revelation 22: 1, 2: "He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of its broad way. And on this side of the river and on that side there were trees of life producing twelve crops of fruit, yielding their fruits each month. And the leaves of the trees were for the curing of the nations."

[18] During the Millennium, all illnesses —physical, mental, and emotional—will be healed. This is well pictured by "the curing of the nations" by means of the symbolic trees. Thanks to the provisions administered by Christ and the 144,000, "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'" (Isaiah 33:24) And the river will enter into its time of greatest expansion. It will have to broaden and deepen in order to accommodate the millions, perhaps billions, of resurrected humans who will drink of these pure waters of life. The visionary river healed the Dead Sea, bringing life to wherever its waters flowed. In Paradise, men and women will come to life in the fullest sense, being healed of inherited Adamic death if they exercise faith in the ransom benefits extended to them. Revelation 20:12 foretells that "scrolls" will be opened in those days, providing additional light of understanding from which the resurrected ones will benefit. Sadly, some will refuse to be healed, even in Paradise. These rebels are the ones 'given to the salt' of everlasting destruction.—Revelation 20:15.

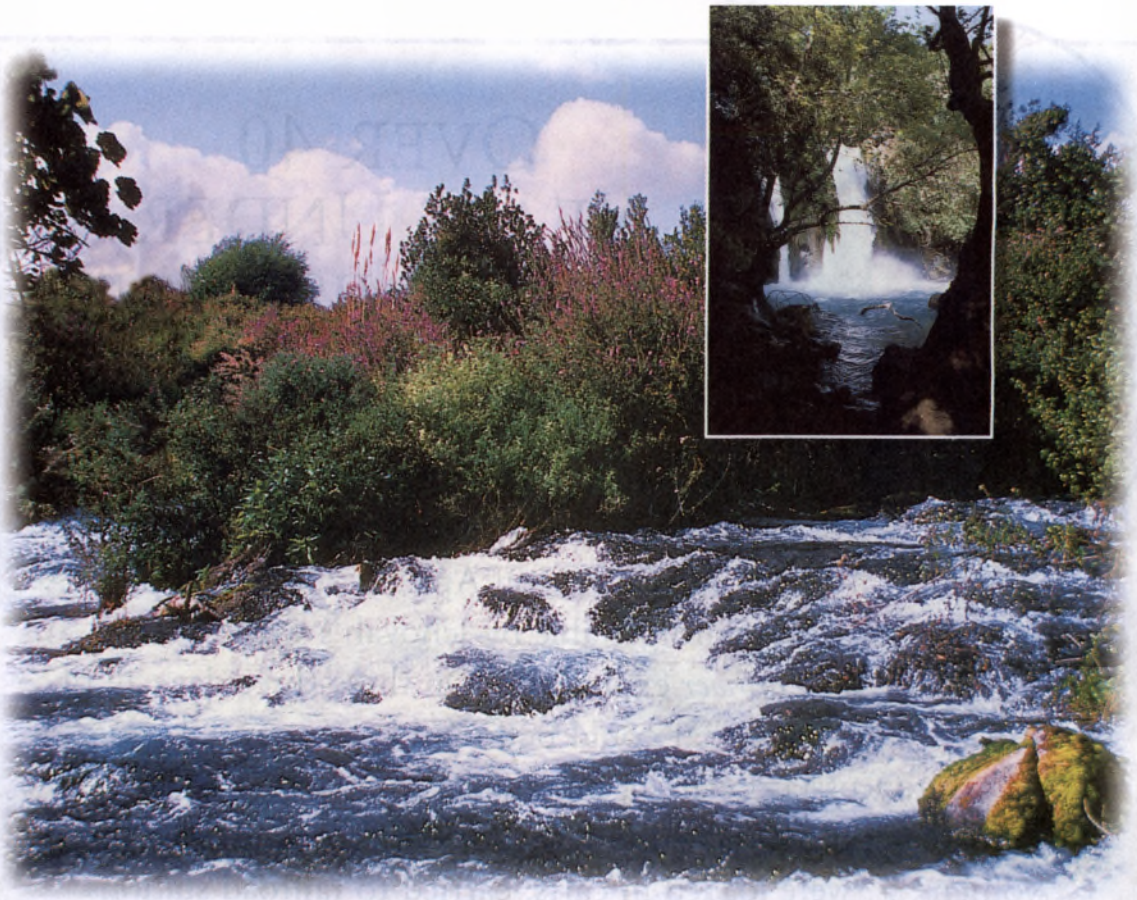
17, 18. (a) How is a life-giving river described at Revelation 22:1, 2, and when is the primary time of application for that vision? (b) In Paradise, why will the river of water of life see a time of great expansion?

### How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What do the waters flowing from the temple picture?
- ☐ What healing has Jehovah accomplished by means of the symbolic river, and why has the river increased in volume?
- ☐ What do the trees along the banks of the river picture?
- ☐ What will the city picture during the Millennial Reign, and why is the name of the city appropriate?

[19] Also at that time, the apportioning of the land in Ezekiel's vision will find its final fulfillment. Ezekiel saw the land properly allotted; likewise, each faithful Christian can be sure that he will have a place, an inheritance, in Paradise. Likely, the desire to have one's own house to live in and care for will be fulfilled in an orderly way. (Isaiah 65:21; 1 Corinthians 14:33) The city that Ezekiel saw fittingly pictures the administrative arrangement that Jehovah purposes for the new earth. The anointed priestly class will no longer be physically present among mankind. The vision suggests as much by portraying the city in "profane" land at some distance from the temple. (Ezekiel 48:15) While the 144,000 rule with Christ in heaven, the King is not without representatives on earth. His human subjects will benefit greatly from the loving guidance and direction of the chieftain class. However, the real seat of government will be, not on earth, but in heaven. Everyone on earth, including

19. (a) How will the allotting of the land be fulfilled in Paradise? (b) What feature in Paradise does the city picture? (c) What is the significance of the city's location at some distance from the temple?



*The river of life represents God's provision for salvation*

the chieftain class, will be in subjection to the Messianic Kingdom.—Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 18, 22.

[20] Note the final words of Ezekiel's prophecy: "The name of the city from that day on will be Jehovah Himself Is There." (Ezekiel 48:35) This city will not exist to give men power or influence; nor will it be there to enforce any human's will. It is Jehovah's city, ever reflecting his mind and his loving, reasonable ways. (James 3:17) This gives us heartwarming assurance that Jehovah will bless his structured "new earth" society of mankind on into an indefinitely lasting future.—2 Peter 3:13.

[21] Do we not thrill at the prospect ahead of us? Fittingly, then, each of us would do well to ask: 'How do I respond to the wonderful blessings unveiled in Ezekiel's vision? Do I faithfully support the work being done by loving overseers, including those of the anointed remnant and the prospective members of the chieftain class? Have I made pure worship the very center of my life? Do I take full advantage of the waters of life flowing so abundantly today?' May each of us continue to do so and delight in Jehovah's provisions throughout eternity!

20, 21. (a) Why is the name of the city appropriate? (b) What questions should our understanding of Ezekiel's vision cause us to ask ourselves?

# OVER 40 YEARS UNDER COMMUNIST BAN

AS TOLD BY MIKHAIL VASILEVICH SAVITSKII

*The Watchtower* of April 1, 1956, reported that "a great purge" of Jehovah's Witnesses was carried out on April 1, 7, and 8, 1951. "These are dates unforgettable by Jehovah's witnesses in Russia," *The Watchtower* explained. "On these three days all of Jehovah's witnesses that could be found in Western Ukraine, White Russia [Belarus], Bessarabia, Moldavia, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia—more than seven thousand men and women . . . were loaded in carts, carried to railroad stations and there put in cattle cars and sent far away."

ON April 8, 1951, my wife, my eight-month-old son, my parents, my younger brother, and many other Witnesses were taken from their homes in and around Ternopol', Ukraine. After being loaded into cattle cars, they traveled for about two weeks. Finally, they were unloaded in the Siberian taiga (subarctic woodland) west of Lake Baikal.

Why was I not included in this purge? Before relating where I was at the time and what happened to all of us afterward, let me tell you how I came to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

### Bible Truth Reaches Us

In September 1947, when I was only 15, two of Jehovah's Witnesses called at our home in the small village of Slaviatin, about 30 miles from Ternopol'. As Mother and I sat listening to these young people —one of whom was named Maria—I knew this was not just another religion. They explained their faith and answered our Bible questions in a clear manner.

I believed that the Bible was God's Word, but I was disappointed with the church. Grandfather used to say: "Priests frighten people with talk of torment in hellfire,

but the priests don't fear anything themselves. They just rob and deceive the poor." I remember the acts of violence and arson against Polish residents of our village at the beginning of World War II. Shockingly, these attacks were organized by the Greek Catholic priest. Afterward I saw dozens of the slaughtered victims, and I was anxious to know the reasons for such cruelty.

As I studied the Bible with the Witnesses, I began to understand. I learned basic Bible truths, including the fact that there is no burning hell and that Satan the Devil uses false religion to promote war and bloodshed. Periodically, I would pause during my personal study and offer a heartfelt prayer of thanks to Jehovah for what I was learning. I began to share these Bible truths with my younger brother Stakh, and I was very happy when he accepted them.

### Practicing What I Learned

I recognized the need for personal changes and immediately quit smoking. I also understood the need for meeting regularly with others for organized Bible study. To do this I hiked through the woods about six miles to reach a secret place where meetings were held. At times only a few women could get to the meeting, and even though I was not yet baptized, I was asked to conduct it.

Possessing Bible literature was risky, and being caught with it could result in a prison sentence of up to 25 years. Still, I desired to have my own library. One of our neighbors had studied with Jehovah's Witnesses, but because of fear, he quit and buried his literature in his garden. How I thanked Jehovah when the man dug up all his books and magazines and agreed to let me have them! I hid them in Father's beehives, where others would not be inclined to search.

*The year I joined my family in Tulun*

In July 1949, I dedicated my life to Jehovah and was baptized in symbol of my dedication. It was the happiest day of my life. The Witness who conducted the secret baptism emphasized that it is not easy to be a true Christian and that many trials lay ahead. Soon I learned how true his words were! Still, my life as a baptized Witness began joyfully. Two months after my baptism, I married Maria, one of the two who had introduced Mother and me to the truth.

### My First Trial Came Suddenly

On April 16, 1950, I was returning home from the small town of Podgaitsi when soldiers suddenly confronted me and found some Bible literature that I was taking to our study group. I was arrested. During the first few days of custody, I was beaten with a rod, and I was not allowed to eat or sleep.

***Above: My father and my children outside our house in Tulun, Siberia***

***Top right: My daughter Nadia and her daughter, who both died in an automobile accident***

***Right: A family portrait in 1968***

I was also commanded to do a hundred deep knee bends with my hands over my head, which I was too exhausted to complete. After this I was thrown into a cold, damp basement for 24 hours.

The purpose of the mistreatment was to lower my resistance and to make it easier to get information from me. "Where did you get the literature, and who were you taking it to?" they demanded. I refused to reveal a thing. Then a portion of the law by which I would be tried was read to me. It said that spreading and keeping anti-Soviet literature was punishable by execution or 25 years' imprisonment.

"Which punishment would you prefer?" they asked.

"Neither," I replied, "but my trust is in Jehovah, and with his help I'll accept anything that he allows."

To my surprise, after seven days they let me go. That experience helped me appreciate the truthfulness of Jehovah's promise: "I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you."—Hebrews 13:5.

By the time I returned home, I was very sick, but Father took me to a doctor, and I soon recovered. Although Father did not share the religious convictions of the rest of the family, he supported us in our worship.

### Imprisonment and Exile

Some months later I was drafted for service in the Soviet army. I explained my conscientious objection. (Isaiah 2:4) Nevertheless, in February 1951, I was given a four-year sentence and was sent to a prison in Ternopol'. Later I was transferred to one in L'viv, a larger city about 75 miles away. While in prison there, I learned that many Witnesses had been deported to Siberia.

In the summer of 1951, a group of us were sent beyond Siberia, all the way to the Far East. We traveled for a month—some

7,000 miles—crossing 11 time zones! Only once, after more than two weeks on the train, did we stop at a place where we were allowed to take a bath. That was at a large public bathhouse in Novosibirsk, Siberia.

There, in the midst of a great crowd of prisoners, I heard a man say in a loud voice: "Who here is of the family of Jonadab?" The term "Jonadab" was used at the time to identify those with the hope of eternal life on earth. (2 Kings 10:15-17; Psalm 37:11, 29) Several prisoners immediately identified themselves as Witnesses. With what joy we greeted one another!

### Spiritual Activity in Prison

While in Novosibirsk we agreed upon a password by which we could identify one another when we reached our destination. We all ended up in the same prison camp on the Sea of Japan, not far from Vladivostok. There we organized regular meetings for Bible study. Being with these mature, older brothers who had been sentenced to long prison terms really strengthened me spiritually. They took turns conducting our meetings, using Bible texts and related points that they recalled from *Watchtower* magazines.

Questions were asked, and the brothers gave answers. Many of us cut pieces of paper from empty cement sacks and made notes of the comments on them. We saved the notes and bound them together to use as our personal reference library. After a couple of months, those with long sentences were sent to camps to the far north of Siberia. Three of us younger brothers were transferred to Nakhodka, a nearby city less than 400 miles from Japan. I spent two years in prison there.

We sometimes obtained a copy of *The Watchtower*. For months it served as spiritual food for us. In time, we also received letters. The first one I received from my family (now in exile) brought tears to my eyes. It related that, as described in *The Watchtower* quoted in the introduction, Witness homes had been invaded and families had been given just two hours to leave.

### With My Family Again

I was released in December 1952, after serving two years of my four-year sentence. I joined my family in the small village of Gadaley near Tulun, Siberia, where they had been deported to. Of course, it was wonderful to be with them again—my son Ivan was nearly three years old, and my daughter Anna was almost two. My freedom, however, was relative. My passport was confiscated by the local authorities, and I was placed under close observation. I could not travel more than two miles from home. Later, I was allowed to ride on horseback to the market in Tulun. Exercising caution, I met with fellow Witnesses there.

By then, we had two girls, Anna and Nadia, and two boys, Ivan and Kolya. In 1958 we had another son, Volodya. And later, in 1961, we had another daughter, Galia.

The KGB (former state security agency) often detained and interrogated me. Their purpose was not only to get me to reveal information about the congregation but also to create the suspicion that I was cooperating with them. So they would take me to a fine restaurant and try to get pictures of me smiling and having a good time with them. But I discerned their motive, and with conscious effort I kept a constant frown on my face. Each time I was detained, I told the brothers exactly what had occurred. Thus, they never doubted my loyalty.

### Contact With the Camps

Over the years, hundreds of Witnesses were put in prison camps. During this time, we kept regular contact with our incarcerated brothers, supplying literature to them. How was this done? When brothers or sisters were released from a camp, we learned from them ways in which literature might be brought in secretly despite the strict controls. For about ten years, we were able to supply our brothers in these camps with copies of magazines and books that we obtained through Poland and other countries.

Many of our Christian sisters spent long hours tediously copying literature in such tiny script that a whole magazine could be concealed in something as small as a matchbox! In 1991, when we were no longer under ban and were receiving beautiful four-color magazines, one of our sisters said: "Now we will be forgotten." She was wrong. Even though humans may forget, the work of such loyal ones will never be forgotten by Jehovah!—Hebrews 6:10.

### Relocation and Tragedies

Late in 1967 my brother's house in Irkutsk was searched. Film and copies of Bible literature were found. He was convicted and given a three-year prison sentence. However, a search of our house turned up nothing. Still, authorities were convinced of our involvement, so my family had to leave the area. We moved about 3,000 miles west to the city of Nevinnomyssk in the Caucasus. There we kept busy with informal witnessing.

Tragedy struck on the first day of school vacation in June 1969. While trying to retrieve a ball near a high-voltage electric transformer, our 12-year-old son, Kolya, received a severe electric shock. Over 70 percent of his body was burned. In the hospital, he turned to me and asked: "Will we be able to go together again to the island?" (He was speaking of an island we used to enjoy visiting.) "Yes, Kolya," I said, "we'll go to that island again. When Jesus Christ raises you to life, we surely will go to that island." Semiconscious, he kept singing one of his favorite Kingdom songs, one that he liked to play on his trumpet in the congregation orchestra. Three days later he died, confident in the hope of the resurrection.

The following year our 20-year-old son, Ivan, was drafted for military service. When he refused to serve, he was arrested and spent three years in prison. In 1971, I was drafted and was again threatened with imprisonment for not serving. My case dragged on for months. In the meantime my wife became ill with cancer and needed much attention. For this reason they dismissed my case. Maria died in 1972. She had been a faithful companion, loyal to Jehovah to her death.

### Our Family Spread Abroad

In 1973, I married Nina. Her father had thrown her out of his home in 1960 because she had become a Witness. She was a zealous minister who had been among those sisters who had worked hard copying magazines for those in the camps. My children came to love her too.

The authorities became disturbed by our activity in Nevinnomyssk and pressured us to leave. So in 1975 my wife, my daughters, and I moved to the southern Caucasus region in Georgia. At the same time, my sons Ivan and Volodya moved to Dzhambul on the southern border of Kazakstan.

In Georgia the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses was just beginning. We witnessed

informally in and around Gagra and Sukhumi on the Black Sea Coast, and after a year, ten new Witnesses were baptized in a mountain river. Soon, the authorities insisted that we leave the area, and we moved to eastern Georgia. There we intensified our efforts to find sheeplike people, and Jehovah blessed us.

We met together in small groups. Language was a problem, since we did not know Georgian and some Georgians did not speak Russian well. At first, we studied only with Russians. Soon, though, the preaching and teaching in the Georgian language progressed, and now there are thousands of Kingdom proclaimers in Georgia.

In 1979, under KGB pressure my employer said that I was no longer welcome in his country. It was then that my daughter Nadia was involved in a car accident in which both she and her young daughter were killed. My mother had died faithful to Jehovah in Nevinnomyssk the year before, leaving my father and my brother. So we decided to return there.

### Blessings for Endurance

In Nevinnomyssk we continued to produce Bible literature underground. Once during the mid-1980's when I was summoned by the authorities, I told them that I had dreamed I was hiding our magazines. They laughed. As I was leaving, one of them said: "May you have no more dreams about how you hide your literature." He concluded: "Soon the literature will be displayed on your shelves, and you will be going to the meetings arm in arm with your wife and with your Bible in hand."

In 1989 we were saddened when my daughter Anna died of an aneurysm in the brain. She was only 38. That same year, in August, the Witnesses in Nevinnomyssk rented a train and traveled to Warsaw, Poland, to attend an international convention. There were 60,366 present, including thousands from the Soviet Union. We *really did* think we were dreaming! Less than two years later, on March 27, 1991, I was privileged to be one of the five long-standing congregation elders in the Soviet Union to sign the historic document in Moscow that provided legal recognition for the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses!

I am delighted that my surviving children are serving Jehovah faithfully. And I am looking forward to God's new world when I can again see Anna, Nadia and her daughter, as well as Kolya. When he is resurrected, I will keep my promise to take him to that island that we enjoyed so much together many years ago.

In the meantime, what a joy it has been to see the rapid growth of Bible truth in this vast land! I am truly happy with my lot in life, and I thank Jehovah for letting me become one of his Witnesses. I am convinced of the truthfulness of Psalm 34:8: "Taste and see that Jehovah is good, O you people; happy is the able-bodied man that takes refuge in him."

## In Our Next Issue

The Last Day of Jesus' Human Life

Pay Constant Attention to Your Teaching

Do Not Be Overcome by Anxiety

# The Greatest Man Performs a Humble Service

JESUS knew that his final hours with his apostles would be precious. Before long, he would be arrested, and his faith would be tested as never before. Jesus was also aware that great blessings lay ahead. Soon he would be exalted to the right hand of God and be given "the name that is above every other name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the ground."—Philippians 2:9, 10.

Yet, neither anxiety over his impending death nor eagerness for his promised reward distracted Jesus from the needs of his apostles. He "loved them to the end," John later recorded in his Gospel. (John 13:1) And in these crucial last hours of his life as a perfect human, Jesus taught his apostles a vital lesson.

## A Lesson in Humility

The apostles were with Jesus in an upper room in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Previously, Jesus had heard them arguing about who was the greatest among them. (Matthew 18:1; Mark 9:33, 34) He had discussed this matter with them and had endeavored to correct their viewpoint. (Luke 9:46) Now, however, Jesus emphasized those lessons using a different approach. He chose not only to talk to them about humility but to demonstrate it.

Jesus "got up from the evening meal and laid aside his outer garments," John writes. "Taking a towel, he girded himself. After that he put water into a basin and started to wash the feet of the disciples and to dry them off with the towel with which he was girded."—John 13:4, 5.

In the warm climate of the ancient Middle East, people usually wore open sandals as they walked on dusty roads. Upon entering the home of a common person, they would be greeted by a host, who would provide vessels and water so that they could wash their feet. In wealthier homes, a slave would perform the task of foot washing.—Judges 19:21; 1 Samuel 25:40-42.

In the upper room, Jesus and his apostles were not someone's guests. There was no host to provide vessels, and there were no slaves to do the foot washing. When Jesus began washing their feet, the apostles were put in an awkward situation. Here the One who was the greatest among them performed the humblest task!

At first, Peter refused to let Jesus wash his feet. But Jesus told him: "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." When Jesus finished washing the feet of all the apostles, he said: "Do you know what I have done to you? You address me, 'Teacher,' and, 'Lord,' and you speak rightly, for I am such. Therefore, if I, although Lord and Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash the feet of one another. For I set the pattern for you, that, just as I did to you, you should do also."—John 13:6-15.

Jesus was not instituting a ritual of foot washing. Rather, he was helping his apostles adopt a new frame of mind—one of humility and a willingness to perform the lowliest of tasks in behalf of their brothers. Evidently, they got the point. Consider what happened years later when the question of circumcision arose. Though "much disputing" took place, those present maintained good order and listened respectfully to one another's views. Furthermore, it seems that the one who presided over that meeting was the disciple James —not one of the apostles, as we might have expected, since they were present. This detail in the account in Acts indicates that the apostles had

made considerable progress in manifesting humility.—Acts 15:6-29.

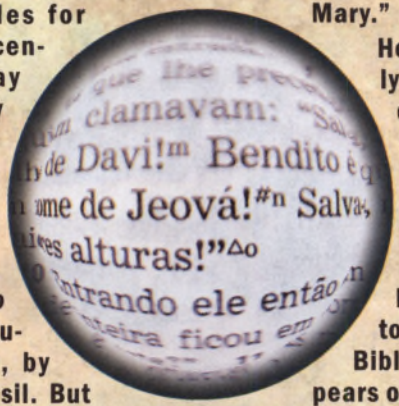
### Lesson for Us

By washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus provided a powerful lesson in humility. Indeed, Christians should not think that they are so important that others should always serve them, nor should they aspire to positions of honor and prestige. Instead, they should follow the pattern set by Jesus, who "came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many." (Matthew 20:28) Yes, followers of Jesus should be willing to perform the humblest services for one another.

For good reason Peter wrote: "Gird yourselves with lowliness of mind toward one another, because God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones." (1 Peter 5:5) The Greek word for "gird" is derived from the word meaning "a slave's apron," under which a loose garment was girded up. Could Peter have been making reference to Jesus' act of girding himself with a towel and washing the feet of his apostles? This cannot be stated with certainty. Nevertheless, Jesus' humble service made an indelible impression on Peter's heart, as it should upon the hearts of all who would be Christ's followers.—Colossians 3:12-14.

# — GOD'S NAME RESTORED —

"AFTER the name Jehovah has been omitted from Bibles for many years and maybe centuries, his modern-day witnesses are the only Christian religion to take a stand and restore the tetragrammaton."*




The above words are from the book *Jeová dentro do Judaísmo e do Cristianismo* (Jehovah in Judaism and Christianity), by Brazilian writer Assis Brasil. But the question may be raised, Although a few Bible translations use the divine name in one form or another, why have other religions omitted it from their Bibles? "The name of God was removed," says Brasil, "either because of superstition . . . , ulterior motives, or a desire to exalt the names of Jesus and his mother, Mary."

However, as Mr. Brasil rightly points out: "The omission of the [divine] name has been completely corrected in Portuguese by the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.*" How so? In that the name Jehovah has been restored to its rightful place in that Bible. The name Jehovah appears over 7,200 times in the *New World Translation.*

Since its first release, well over six-and-a-half million copies of this modern, literal translation in Portuguese have been distributed. Thus, a journalist writing in the Brazilian newspaper *Diário do Nordeste* was prompted to ask, "Did you know that God has a name?" Thanks to this modern Bible translation, millions can now answer, "Yes. The divine name is Jehovah."●

* In the Hebrew language, God's name is written יהוה. These four letters (read from right to left) are commonly referred to as the Tetragrammaton.