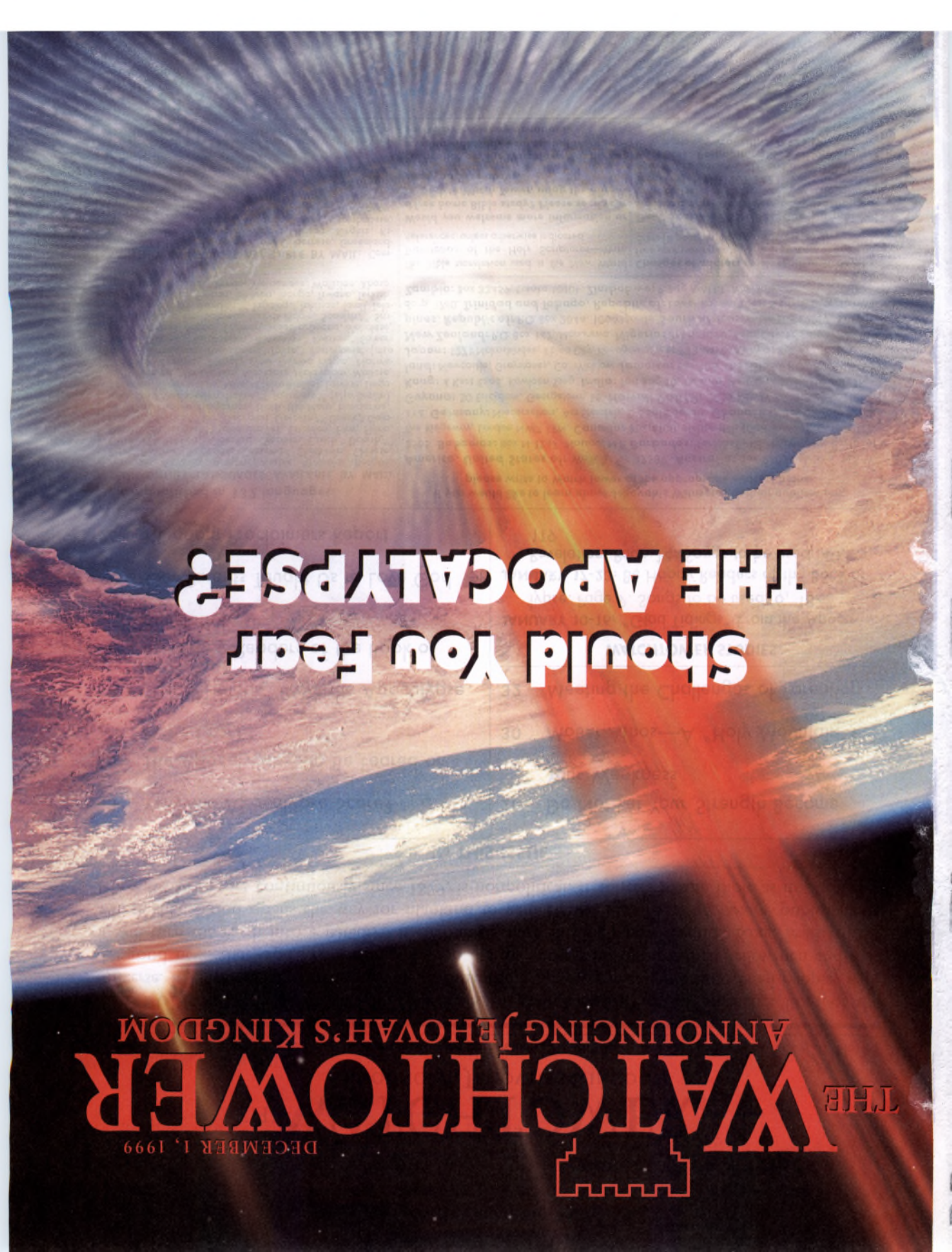




Should You Fear THE APOCALYPSE?

THE
WATCHTOWER
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM
DECEMBER 1, 1999

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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WHY THE APOCALYPSE SCARE?

FOR decades, Christian fundamentalists have been prophesying that [some] sort of society-wide breakdown lies just around the corner," notes Damian Thompson, a religion writer, in *Time* magazine. "Now, to their astonishment, not only are these scenarios being taken seriously, but they are being circulated by the very people who used to ridicule them: computer programmers, business leaders and politicians." He asserts that fear of a worldwide computer failure in the year 2000 "has turned thoroughly secular individuals into unlikely millenarians" who fear the advent of disasters like "mass panic, gov-

ernment paralysis, food riots, planes crashing into skyscrapers."

Adding to the general anxiety are the disquieting activities of various small religious groups, often termed "apocalyptic." In January 1999, in an article titled "Jerusalem and the Sirens of the Apocalypse," the French daily *Le Figaro* said: "The [Israeli] security services estimate at over a hundred the number of 'millenarians' on or near the Mount of Olives awaiting the parousia or the apocalypse."

The 1998 *Britannica Book of the Year* contains a special report on "Doomsday Cults." It mentions, among others, suicide

Medieval fears of the Apocalypse proved to be unjustified

cults, such as Heaven's Gate, the People's Temple, and the Order of the Solar Temple, and Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth), which organized the deadly poison-gas attack in the Tokyo subway in 1995, killing 12 people and injuring thousands. Summing up this report, Martin E. Marty, professor of religion at the University of Chicago, wrote: "The turning of the calendar page to 2000 is inspiring—and will almost certainly inspire all kinds of prophecies and movements. Some may become dangerous. It will be a time that should not be faced complacently."

History of the Apocalypse Scare

Apocalypse, or Revelation, is the name of the last book in the Bible, written toward the end of the first century C.E. In view of the prophetic nature and highly symbolic language of this book, the adjective "apocalyptic" came to be applied to a form of literature that began long before the Bible book of Revelation was written. The mythological symbolism of this literature goes back to ancient Persia and even beyond. Hence, *The Jewish Encyclopedia* speaks of "the distinctly Babylonian character of most of the mythological elements incorporated in this [Jewish apocalyptic] literature."

Jewish apocalyptic literature flourished from the start of the second century B.C.E. to the end of the second century C.E. Explaining the reason for these writings, one Bible scholar wrote: "The Jews divided all time into two ages. There was *this present age*, which is wholly bad . . . The Jews, therefore, waited for the end of things as they are. There was *the age which is to come* which was to be wholly good, the golden age of God in which would be peace, prosperity and righteousness . . . How was this present age to become the age which is to come? The



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Jews believed that the change could never be brought about by human agency and, therefore, looked for the direct intervention of God. . . . The day of the coming of God was called *The Day of the Lord* and was to be a terrible time of terror and destruction and judgment which would be the birthpangs of the new age. All apocalyptic literature deals with these events."

Is the Apocalypse Scare Justified?

The Bible book of Revelation speaks of "the war of the great day of God the Almighty," or Armageddon, wherein the wicked will be destroyed, followed by a

thousand-year period (sometimes called the Millennium) during which Satan will be abysed and Christ will judge humankind. (Revelation 16:14, 16; 20:1-4) In the Middle Ages, these prophecies were misunderstood by some because Catholic "Saint" Augustine (354-430 C.E.) had stated that the Millennium began at the birth of Christ and would be followed by the Last Judgment. Augustine apparently gave little thought to the time frame, but as the year 1000 approached, apprehension grew. Histori-

ans disagree on the extent of this medieval apocalypse scare. However widespread it was, it certainly turned out to be unjustified.

Similarly today, there are religious and secular fears that the year 2000 or 2001 will bring with it a terrifying apocalypse. But are these fears justified? And is the message contained in the Bible book of Revelation, or Apocalypse, something to be feared or, on the contrary, is it something we should hope for? Please read on.

THE APOCALYPSE—TO BE FEARED OR HOPED FOR?

"Apocalypse is today not merely a biblical depiction but it has become a very real possibility."

—Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, former secretary-general of the United Nations.

THAT use of the word "apocalypse" by a leading world figure reflects the way most people understand it and see it used in film and book titles, magazine articles, and newspaper reports. It conjures up visions of a cosmic cataclysm. But what does the word "apocalypse" really mean? And more important still, what is the message contained in the Bible book named Apocalypse, or Revelation?

The word "apocalypse" comes from a Greek term that means "uncovering," or "unveiling." What was unveiled, or revealed, in the Biblical Revelation? Was it exclusively a message of doom, a harbin-

ger of annihilation with no survivors? Asked what he thought of the Apocalypse, historian Jean Delumeau, member of the Institut de France, declared: "It is a book of comfort and hope. People have dramatized its contents by focusing on its catastrophic episodes."

Early Church and the Apocalypse

How did the early "Christians" view the Apocalypse and the hope it sets forth of the Thousand Year Reign (Millennium) of Christ over the earth? The same historian stated: "Christians of the first few centuries appear to me, by and large, to have adopted

millennialism. . . . Among Christians of the early centuries who believed in the Millennium were notably Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor, . . . Saint Justin, born in Palestine, who suffered martyrdom in Rome about 165, Saint Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, who died in 202, Tertullian, who died in 222, and . . . the great writer Lactantius."

Concerning Papias, who reportedly suffered martyrdom in Pergamum in 161 or 165 C.E., *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states: "Bishop Papias of Hierapolis, a disciple of St. John, appeared as an advocate of millenarianism. He claimed to have received his doctrine from contemporaries of the Apostles, and Irenæus narrates that other 'Presbyteri', who had seen and heard the disciple John, learned from him the belief in millenarianism as part of the Lord's doctrine. According to Eusebius . . . Papias in his book asserted that the resurrection of the dead would be followed by one thousand years of a visible, glorious earthly kingdom of Christ."

What does this tell us about the effect that the book Apocalypse, or Revelation, had on the early believers? Did it inspire fear or hope? Interestingly, historians call the primitive Christians chiliasts, from the Greek words *khi'li-a e'te* (thousand years). Yes, many of them were known for being believers in the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, which would usher in paradise conditions on earth. The only place in the Bible where the millennial hope is specifically mentioned is the Apocalypse, or Revelation. (20:1-7) So, far from frightening believers, the Apocalypse gave them a wonderful hope. In his book *The Early Church and the*

World, Oxford professor of church history Cecil Cadoux writes: "Chiliastic views, though eventually rejected, were widely held in the Church for a considerable period, being taught by some of the most highly respected authors."

Why the Apocalypse Hope Was Rejected

Since it is an irrefutable historic fact that many, if not most, of the early Christians hoped in the Millennial Reign of Christ over a paradise earth, how did it occur that such "chiliastic views" were "eventually rejected"? Some justifiable criticism came about because, as scholar Robert

Mounce pointed out, "unfortunately, many chiliasts allowed their imaginations to run riot and read into the thousand-year period all manner of materialistic and sensuous extremes." But these extremist views could have been corrected without rejecting the true hope of the Millennium.

Surprising indeed were the means used to suppress millennialism by its adversaries. The *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* says of Roman churchman

Caius (end of second century, beginning of third) that "in order to conquer millennialism, he unequivocally denied the authenticity of the Apocalypse [Revelation] and of the Gospel of St. John." This *Dictionnaire* further states that Dionysius, third-century bishop of Alexandria, wrote a treatise against millennialism that "in order to prevent those who adhered to this opinion from basing their belief on the Apocalypse of Saint John, did not hesitate to deny its authenticity." Such virulent opposition to



Papias claimed to have received the Millennium doctrine directly from contemporaries of the apostles

the hope of millennial blessings on earth evinces a subtle influence that was at work among theologians at that time.

In his book *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Professor Norman Cohn writes: "The third century saw the first attempt to discredit millenarianism, when Origen, perhaps the most influential of all the theologians of the ancient Church, began to present the Kingdom as an event which would take place not in space or time but only in the souls of believers." Relying on Greek philosophy rather than on the Bible, Origen diluted the wonderful hope of earthly blessings under the Messianic Kingdom into an incomprehensible "event . . . in the souls of believers." Catholic author Léon Gry wrote: "The predominant influence of Greek philosophy . . . gradually brought about the downfall of Chiliastic ideas."

"The Church Has Lost Its Message of Hope"

Augustine was undoubtedly the Church Father who did the most to fuse Greek philosophy with what was by his time only a semblance of Christianity. Initially an ardent advocate of millenarianism, he eventually rejected any idea of a future Millennial Reign of Christ over the earth. He gave Revelation chapter 20 an allegorical twist.

The Catholic Encyclopedia says: "Augustine finally held to the conviction that there will be no millennium. . . . The first resurrection, of which this chapter treats, he tells us, refers to the spiritual rebirth in baptism; the sabbath of one thousand years after the

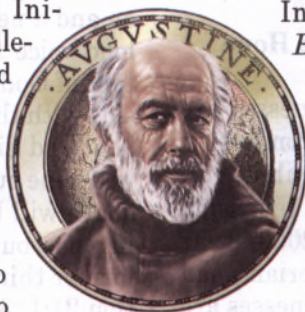


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Tertullian believed in Christ's Millennial Reign

six thousand years of history, is the whole of eternal life." *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* states: "Augustine's allegorical millennialism became the official doctrine of the church . . . The Protestant Reformers of the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican traditions . . . remained firmly attached to the views of Augustine." Thus, the members of Christendom's churches were deprived of the millennial hope.

Moreover, according to Swiss theologian Frédéric de Rougemont, "by repudiating his initial faith in the thousand-year reign, [Augustine] caused incalculable damage to the Church. With the immense authority of his name, he sanctioned an error that deprived [the Church] of its earthly ideal." German theologian Adolf Harnack concurred that the rejection of belief in the Millennium deprived the common people of "the religion they understood," replacing "the old faith and the old hopes" with "a faith they could not understand." Today's empty churches in many lands are eloquent proof that people need a faith and a hope they can understand.



"By repudiating his initial faith in the thousand-year reign, [Augustine] caused incalculable damage to the Church"

In his book *Highlights of the Book of Revelation*, Bible scholar George Beasley-Murray wrote: "Largely owing to the immense influence of Augustine on the one hand and the espousal of millenarianism by the sects on the other, Catholics and Protestants have united in rejecting it. When asked what alternative hope they have for man in this world the official answer is: None at all. The world will be destroyed at the advent of Christ to give place to an eternal heaven



The Paradise earth promised in the Apocalypse is something to be eagerly hoped for

and hell in which history will be forgotten. . . . The church has lost its message of hope.”

The Wonderful Apocalypse Hope Is Still Alive!

For their part, Jehovah’s Witnesses are convinced that the wonderful promises in connection with the Millennium will be fulfilled. Interviewed on a French television program on the theme “Year 2000: Fear of the Apocalypse,” French historian Jean Delumeau stated: “Jehovah’s Witnesses are following exactly the line of millenarianism, for they say that soon . . . we will enter—admittedly, through cataclysms—a period of 1,000 years of happiness.”

This is just what the apostle John saw in a

vision and described in his book *Apocalypse*, or *Revelation*. He wrote: “I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: ‘Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.’”—*Revelation* 21:1, 3, 4.

Jehovah’s Witnesses are engaged in a worldwide Bible educational work to enable as many people as possible to embrace this hope. They will be happy to help you to learn more about it.

"GLAD TIDINGS" FROM THE APOCALYPSE

"I saw another angel flying in midheaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare as glad tidings to those who dwell on the earth."—REVELATION 14:6.

CONTRARY to the accusations against them, Jehovah's Witnesses are not an "apocalyptic sect" or a "doomsday cult." They do, however, accept the Apocalypse, or book of Revelation, as part of the inspired Word of God. True, Revelation does contain judgment messages against the wicked. But in their public witnessing, God's servants focus mainly on the wonderful hope set out in the Bible, including that in the Apocalypse, or Revelation. Thus, they do not add to or take anything away from the prophetic words found therein.—Revelation 22: 18, 19.

Heralds of Glad Tidings

² An often cited Scriptural basis for the public ministry of Jehovah's Witnesses is Jesus' statement: "This good news of the kingdom will be heralded in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Mat-

1. While Jehovah's Witnesses believe in the inspiration of the book Apocalypse, why are they not an "apocalyptic sect"?

2. What are some scriptures that Jehovah's Witnesses often use in their preaching work?



thew 24:14, footnote) And what is "this good news of the kingdom"? Many Witnesses would answer by quoting verses from Revelation chapters 20 and 21 that refer to the Thousand Year Reign of Christ and his Kingdom government and the human society, where death, mourning, and pain will be "no more."—Revelation 20:6; 21:1, 4.

³ As heralds of these glad tidings, Jehovah's Witnesses are really the mouthpiece of a symbolic heavenly messenger whose mission is also described in Revelation. "I saw another angel flying in midheaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare as glad tidings to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people." (Revelation 14:6) The "everlasting good news" includes the announcement that "the kingdom [or, rulership] of the world" has "become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" and that Jehovah's "appointed time" has come "to bring to ruin those ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:15, 17, 18) Is that not truly good news?

3. To what mission does the public ministry of Jehovah's Witnesses correspond?

What Revelation Holds for Us

⁴ The opening chapter of the book of Revelation presents Jehovah as “the Alpha and the Omega, . . . the One who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty.” And it presents his Son, Jesus Christ, as “the Faithful Witness,” “the first-born from the dead,” and “the Ruler of the kings of the earth.” It also speaks of Jesus as “him that loves us and that loosed us from our sins by means of his own blood.” (Revelation 1:5, 8) Thus, from the outset, Revelation expounds fundamental life-saving truths. “Those who dwell on the earth” will not benefit from the glad tidings brought to them unless they recognize the sovereignty of Jehovah, put faith in the shed blood of Jesus, and believe that Jehovah resurrected him and that Christ is now earth’s God-appointed Ruler.—Psalm 2:6-8.

⁵ The next two chapters depict Christ Jesus as the loving heavenly Overseer of the congregations of his disciples on earth. The scroll addressed to a selection of seven Christian congregations that existed in Asia Minor in the first century C.E. contained encouragement and firm counsel that still apply today. The messages sent to the congregations usually begin with such words as “I know your deeds” or “I know your tribulation.” (Revelation 2:2, 9) Yes, Christ knew exactly what was going on in the congregations of his disciples. He commended some for their love, faith, labor in the ministry, endurance, and faithfulness to his name and word. Others he reproved because they had let their love for Jehovah and his Son cool off, or they had lapsed into sex-

4. (a) What fundamental truths are outlined in chapter 1 of Revelation? (b) What is required of those who wish to benefit from the glad tidings? 5. In what role is Christ depicted in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation?



The King Jesus Christ will completely rid the earth of war, famine, and death

ual immorality, idolatry, or apostate sectarianism.

⁶ Chapter 4 provides an awe-inspiring vision of the heavenly throne of Jehovah God. It offers a glimpse of the glory of Jehovah’s presence and of the heavenly ruling structure he will use. The crowned rulers, whose thrones encircle the central throne of the universe, do obeisance to Jehovah and proclaim: “You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created.”—Revelation 4:11.

⁷ Does this mean something to people to-

6. What does the vision recorded in chapter 4 help people to understand?

7. (a) What does the angel summon earth’s inhabitants to do? (b) What is an important part of our educational work?

day? It certainly does. If they want life under the Millennial Kingdom, they must heed what the "angel flying in midheaven" proclaims: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of the judgment by him has arrived." (Revelation 14:6, 7) One of the main purposes of the Bible educational work carried out by Jehovah's Witnesses is to help "those who dwell on the earth" to know and worship Jehovah, recognize his Creatorship, and willingly submit to his righteous sovereignty.

The Lamb Worthy of Honor

⁸ The following two chapters, 5 and 6, present Jesus Christ as a Lamb found worthy to open a scroll with seven seals, thus revealing in symbolic language the events occurring in our day. (Compare John 1:29.) To this symbolic Lamb, heavenly voices say: "You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because you were slaughtered and with your blood you bought persons for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth." (Revelation 5:9, 10) This vision teaches that on the basis of Christ's shed blood, certain humans of all origins are called to be with him in heaven and "rule as kings over the earth." (Compare Revelation 1:5, 6.) Their limited number is revealed later in Revelation.

⁹ In another vision, Christ is presented as the crowned rider of a white horse, going forth "conquering and to complete his conquest." Happily, he will conquer the evil effects symbolized by the three other horse-

8. (a) How is Christ depicted in chapters 5 and 6? (b) What can all who listen to the glad tidings learn from this vision?

9. How is Christ presented in chapter 6?

men of the Apocalypse, whose furious ride has brought war, famine, and death to mankind since the pivotal year 1914. (Revelation 6:1-8) The unique role of Christ, the Lamb of God, in the salvation of mankind and in the outworking of Jehovah's wonderful purposes is a principal theme of the Bible-teaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses.

¹⁰ Chapter 7 contains glad tidings indeed. Only in the book of Revelation do we find the number of those whom Jesus called the "little flock" to whom the Lamb's Father gives the Kingdom. (Luke 12:32; 22:28-30) These are sealed by Jehovah God by means of his spirit. (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22) The apostle John, who received the Revelation, attests: "I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand." (Revelation 7:4) This precise number is confirmed in a later chapter as being the total of those "bought from among mankind" to rule with the Lamb on the heavenly Mount Zion. (Revelation 14:1-4) While the churches of Christendom give vague and unconvincing explanations of this number, interestingly, Bible scholar E. W. Bullinger says of it: "It is the simple statement of fact: a *definite* number in contrast with the *indefinite* number in this very chapter."

¹¹ To what indefinite number was Bullinger referring? In verse 9, the apostle John wrote: "After these things I saw, and, look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." (Revelation 7:9) Who compose this great crowd, what is their

10. (a) What important information is supplied in chapter 7? (b) How did Christ speak of those who receive the Kingdom?

11. (a) What glad tidings are to be found in chapter 7? (b) What prospects open up before the members of the "great crowd"?

present standing before God, and what does the future hold for them? The apocalyptic answer is good news for earth dwellers. We read: "These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Through faith in Christ's shed blood, they will be protected during "the great tribulation." Christ "will guide them to fountains of waters of life. And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 7:14-17) Yes, millions of people living today can become part of the innumerable crowd that will survive the end of the present wicked system of things. As subjects of the King Jesus Christ during his Millennial Reign, they will be guided by him to everlasting life on earth. Is that not good news?

"His Judgments Are True and Righteous"

¹² Chapters 8 to 19 are largely responsible for the reputation that the book Apocalypse, or Revelation, has of being a book foretelling terrifying catastrophes. They contain hard-hitting judgment messages (symbolized by trumpet blasts, plagues, and bowls of divine anger) directed against various elements of Satan's system of things. These judgments will be executed, first against false religion ("Babylon the Great"), then against the ungodly political systems, symbolized by wild beasts.—Revelation 13:1, 2; 17:5-7, 15, 16.*

¹³ These chapters portray the cleansing of the heavens, with Satan and his demons

* For a full explanation of the book of Revelation, see the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, published in 1988 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

12, 13. (a) What do chapters 8 through 19 contain? (b) Why should honesthearted people not be disturbed by such prophecies?

being cast down to the vicinity of the earth. This provides the only logical explanation for the unprecedented world distress since 1914. (Revelation 12:7-12) They also describe, in symbolic language, the destruction of Satan's wicked system of things on earth. (Revelation 19:19-21) Should honesthearted people be shocked by such dramatic events? No, for during the execution of God's judgments, a heavenly host cries out: "Praise Jah, you people! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God, because his judgments are true and righteous."—Revelation 19:1, 2.

¹⁴ Jehovah will not bring in a righteous system of things without ridding the earth of those who are ruining it. (Revelation 11:17, 18; 19:11-16; 20:1, 2) However, no human or political state has the authority or the power to accomplish this. Only Jehovah and his appointed King and Judge, Christ Jesus, can do this in righteousness.—2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.

¹⁵ As the Apocalypse quite clearly shows, Jehovah purposes to bring an end to the present wicked system. This fact should be a cause for rejoicing for men and women who "are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done." (Ezekiel 9:4) This should impress upon them the urgent need to heed the call made by the angel with the glad tidings, who declared: "Fear God . . . because the hour of the judgment by him has arrived, and so worship the One who made the heaven and the earth." (Revelation 14:7) May such people worship and serve Jehovah alongside

14, 15. (a) How will the end of the present wicked system be brought about in righteousness? (b) Why should this part of the Apocalypse be a cause for rejoicing for honesthearted people?

his Witnesses, "who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus."—Revelation 12:17.

The Glorious Millennial Reign

¹⁶ Chapters 20 to 22 of the book of Revelation contain the Scriptural basis for hope in the Millennium. This is the only part of the Bible that actually mentions a thousand-year period that will be the prelude to an eternity of happiness in heaven and on earth. The churches of Christendom have rejected the Millennial hope. Since church dogma has it that the righteous go to heaven and the wicked to hell, it has no place for a paradise earth. The model prayer, which asks that God's "will be done on earth as it is in heaven," has lost all meaning for most members of Christendom's churches. (Matthew 6:10, *New International Version*) But that is not true of Jehovah's Witnesses. They firmly believe that Jehovah God did not make the earth "for nothing," but "to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:12, 18) Thus, ancient prophecy, the model prayer, and the apocalyptic hope of the Millennium all agree. During his Thousand Year Reign, Christ will see to it that Jehovah's will is done on earth, even as it is done in heaven.

¹⁷ The term "thousand years" occurs six times in the first seven verses of Revelation chapter 20. Noteworthy is the fact that it is used four times with the definite article "the," showing that it refers to a literal millennium, not just to an unspecified long period of time, as many of Christen-

16. (a) Why have the churches of Christendom rejected the Millennial hope? (b) Why do Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the model prayer will be answered?

17. What indicates that "the thousand years" are to be taken literally?

dom's commentators would have us believe. What will take place during the Millennium? First, Satan is neutralized for the entire period. (Revelation 20:1-3; compare Hebrews 2:14.) What good news that is!

¹⁸ Since "power of judging" is given to those who "rule as kings with him [Christ] for the thousand years," this period is, in fact, a thousand-year "day" of judgment. (Revelation 20:4, 6; compare Acts 17:31; 2 Peter 3:8.) The dead will be resurrected and, together with the survivors of "the great tribulation," will be judged equitably according to their deeds, or actions, during that time. (Revelation 20:12, 13) At the end of the thousand years, Satan will be released briefly in order to submit mankind to a final test after which he, his demons, and any rebels on earth who follow him will be destroyed forever. (Revelation 20:7-10) Humans who pass the test will have their names written indelibly in "the book of life" and will be ushered into an eternity

18. (a) Why can the Millennium be called a "day" of judgment? (b) What will occur at the end of the thousand years?

Points for Review

- ☐ What fundamental truths found in Revelation chapters 4 to 6 form an important part of the glad tidings?
- ☐ What glad tidings are to be found in Revelation chapter 7?
- ☐ Why should honesthearted people not be disturbed by the messages of judgment found in Revelation?
- ☐ In what ways will the Millennium be a "day" of judgment?

of happy life, serving and worshipping Jehovah on a paradise earth.—Revelation 20:14, 15; Psalm 37:9, 29; Isaiah 66:22, 23.

¹⁹ Such are the glad tidings set forth in the Apocalypse. They are not empty man-made promises. The apostle John wrote:

19. (a) Why can we be sure that the wonderful promises set forth in the book of Revelation will be fulfilled without fail? (b) What will be considered in the following article?

“The One seated on the throne said: ‘Look! I am making all things new.’ Also, he says: ‘Write, because these words are faithful and true.’” (Revelation 21:5) What must we do to share in the fulfillment of these glad tidings? The book of Revelation contains much counsel for those who want to please God. Following such counsel will bring us boundless happiness, now and forever, as the next article will show.

BE HAPPY READERS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

“Happy is he who reads aloud and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and who observe the things written in it.”

—REVELATION 1:3.

I JOHN . . . came to be in the isle that is called Patmos for speaking about God and bearing witness to Jesus.” (Revelation 1:9) Such were the circumstances in which the apostle John wrote the book Apocalypse, or Revelation. It is thought that he was exiled to Patmos during the rule of Roman Emperor Domitian (81-96 C.E.), who enforced emperor worship and became a persecutor of Christians. While on Patmos, John received a series of visions that he put down in writing. He related them, not to scare the early Christians, but to strengthen, comfort, and encourage them in view of the trials

they were undergoing and those that lay ahead.—Acts 28:22; Revelation 1:4; 2:3, 9, 10, 13.

² The circumstances in which this Bible book was written are very significant for Christians living today. John was undergoing persecution because he was a witness for Jehovah and His Son, Christ Jesus. He and his fellow Christians were living in a climate of hostility because, while endeavoring to be good citizens, they could not practice emperor worship. (Luke 4:8) In some countries, true Christians today find themselves in a similar situation, where the State assumes the right to define what is “religiously correct.” How comforting,

1. In what circumstances did the apostle John find himself when he wrote Revelation, and for what purpose were these visions put down in writing?

2. Why is the situation in which John and his fellow Christians found themselves of interest to Christians living today?



**Happy are those who recognize
the Source of the glad tidings**

therefore, are the words found in the introduction to the book of Revelation: "Happy is he who reads aloud and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and who observe the things written in it; for the appointed time is near." (Revelation 1:3) Yes, attentive and obedient readers of Revelation can find true happiness and many blessings.

³ Who is the ultimate Source of the Revelation, and what channel is used to transmit it? The opening verse tells us: "A revelation by Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to show his slaves the things that must shortly take place. And he sent forth his angel and presented it in signs through him to his slave John." (Revelation 1:1) To put it simply, the actual Source of the Revelation is Jehovah God, who gave it to Jesus, and

3. Who is the Source of the Revelation made to John?

by means of an angel, Jesus communicated it to John. A little further scrutiny reveals that Jesus also used the holy spirit to convey messages to the congregations and to give John visions.—Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; compare Acts 2:33.

⁴ Jehovah still uses his Son, the "head of the congregation," to teach his servants on earth. (Ephesians 5:23; Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45) Jehovah also uses his spirit to instruct his people. (John 15:26; 1 Corinthians 2:10) And just as Jesus used "his slave John" to communicate sustaining spiritual food to the first-century congregations, so today he uses "the faithful and discreet slave," made up of his anointed "brothers" on earth, to give his domestics and their companions spiritual "food at the proper time." (Matthew 24:45-47; 25:40) Happy are those who recognize the Source of the 'good gifts' we receive in the way of spiritual food and the channel He is using.—James 1:17.

Christ-Directed Congregations

⁵ In the opening chapters of Revelation, Christian congregations are likened to lampstands. Their overseers are likened to angels (messengers) and to stars. (Revelation 1:20)* Speaking of himself, Christ told John to write: "These are the things that he says who holds the seven stars in his right hand, he who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands." (Revelation 2:1) The seven messages sent to the seven

* See *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, pages 28-9, 136 (footnote).

4. What means does Jehovah still use today to lead his people on earth?

5. (a) To what are Christian congregations and their overseers likened? (b) In spite of human imperfection, what will contribute to our happiness?

Asian congregations show that in the first century C.E., the congregations and their elders had their strong points and their weak points. The same is true today. We will, therefore, be much happier if we never lose sight of the fact that Christ, our Head, is in the midst of the congregations. He knows exactly what is going on. The overseers are symbolically “in his right hand,” that is, under his control and direction and answerable to him for the way they shepherd the congregations.—Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17.

⁶ We would, however, be deceiving ourselves if we thought that only the overseers are answerable to Christ for their deeds. In one of his messages, Christ said: “All the congregations will know that I am he who searches the kidneys and hearts, and I will give to you individually according to your deeds.” (Revelation 2:23) This is at once a warning and an encouragement—a warning that Christ knows our deep-seated motives, an encouragement because it assures us that Christ is aware of our efforts and will bless us if we do what we can.—Mark 14:6-9; Luke 21:3, 4.

6. What shows that the overseers are not the only ones answerable to Christ?

In Our Next Issue

Christmas—Why Even in the Orient?

Finding Real Peace in
a Troubled Land

Let Us Be the Sort That Have Faith

⁷ Christ's message to the congregation in the Lydian city of Philadelphia contains no reproof, but it does make a promise that should be of the greatest interest to us. “Because you kept the word about my endurance, I will also keep you from the hour of test, which is to come upon the whole inhabited earth, to put a test upon those dwelling on the earth.” (Revelation 3:10) The Greek for “kept the word about my endurance” can also mean “kept what I said about endurance.” Verse 8 suggests that the Christians in Philadelphia not only had obeyed Christ's commands but had followed his counsel to endure faithfully themselves.—Matthew 10:22; Luke 21:19.

⁸ Jesus added that he would keep them from “the hour of test.” Just what that meant for those Christians back there, we do not know. Although there was a brief respite in the persecution after the death of Domitian in 96 C.E., a new wave of persecution began under Trajan (98-117 C.E.), doubtless bringing further trials. But the major “hour of test” occurs in “the Lord's day” during “the time of the end,” where we now are. (Revelation 1:10; Daniel 12:4) Spirit-anointed Christians went through a particular time of testing during and immediately following World War I. Yet, “the hour of test” is still on. It affects “the whole inhabited earth,” including the millions making up the great crowd, who hope to survive the great tribulation. (Revelation 3:10; 7:9, 14) Happy we will be if we ‘keep what Jesus said about endurance,’ namely: “He that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved.”—Matthew 24:13.

7. How had Christians in Philadelphia ‘kept the word about Jesus' endurance’?

8. (a) What promise did Jesus make to the Philadelphian Christians? (b) Who today are affected by “the hour of test”?

Happy Submission to Jehovah's Sovereignty

⁹ The vision of Jehovah's throne and of his heavenly court given in chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation should fill us with awe. We should be impressed by the heartfelt expressions of praise uttered by the powerful heavenly creatures as they joyfully submit to Jehovah's righteous sovereignty. (Revelation 4:8-11) Our voices should be heard among those that say: "To the One sitting on the throne and to the Lamb be the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might forever and ever."—Revelation 5:13.

¹⁰ In a practical way, this means our being joyfully submissive to Jehovah's will in all things. The apostle Paul wrote: "Whatever it is that you do in word or in work, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, thanking God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:17) Our reading of Revelation will make us truly happy if we in the innermost recesses of our minds and hearts recognize Jehovah's sovereignty and take his will into account in every aspect of our lives.

¹¹ Joyful submission to Jehovah's sovereignty is the basis for happiness on a personal level and on a universal level. Soon a symbolic great earthquake will shake Satan's world system to its very foundations and destroy it. There will be no place of refuge for humans who refuse to submit to Christ's heavenly Kingdom government, representing God's legitimate domination. The prophecy states: "The kings of the earth and the top-ranking ones and

9, 10. (a) In what ways should the vision of Jehovah's throne affect us? (b) How can our reading of Revelation contribute to our happiness?

11, 12. (a) How will Satan's earthly system be shaken and destroyed? (b) According to Revelation chapter 7, who will be "able to stand" at that time?

the military commanders and the rich and the strong ones and every slave and every free person hid themselves in the caves and in the rock-masses of the mountains. And they keep saying to the mountains and to the rock-masses: 'Fall over us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'"—Revelation 6:12, 15-17.

¹² With regard to that question, in the next chapter, the apostle John describes those making up the great crowd, who come out of the great tribulation, as "standing before the throne and before the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9, 14, 15) Their standing before the throne of God shows that they recognize that throne and fully submit to Jehovah's sovereignty. They therefore stand approved.

¹³ On the other hand, chapter 13 depicts the rest of earth's inhabitants as worshipping Satan's political system, symbolized by a wild beast. They receive a mark on their "forehead" or on their "hand," showing their mental and physical support for that system. (Revelation 13:1-8, 16, 17) Then, chapter 14 adds: "If anyone worships the wild beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he will also drink of the wine of the anger of God that is poured out undiluted into the cup of his wrath . . . Here is where it means endurance for the holy ones, those who observe the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14:9, 10, 12) As time goes on, the question will increasingly

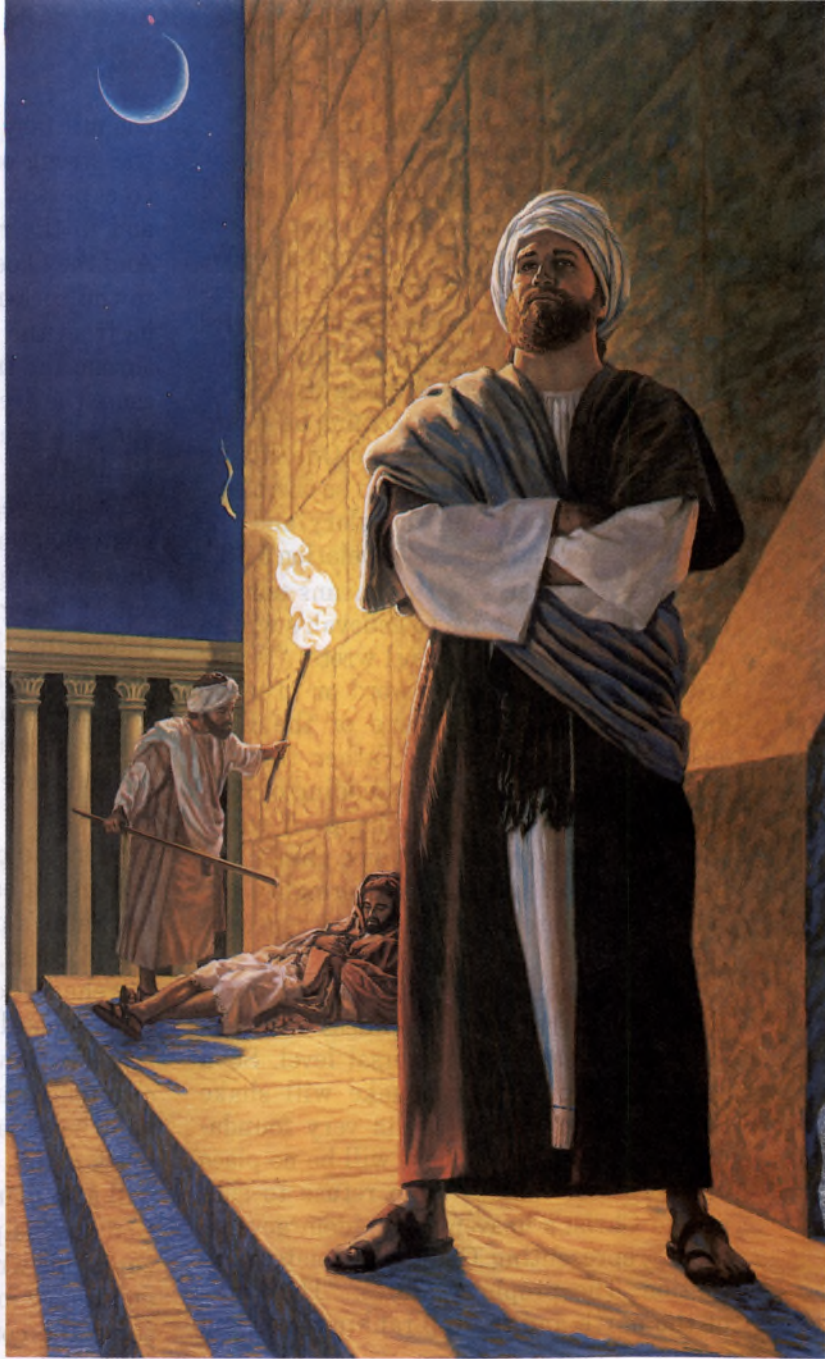
13. (a) What do the majority of earth's inhabitants worship, and what is symbolized by the mark on their forehead or on their hand? (b) So why will endurance be necessary?

**Happy is the
one that stays awake**

be: Whom do you support? Jehovah and his sovereignty or the ungodly political system symbolized by the wild beast? Happy will those be who avoid receiving the mark of the beast and who endure faithfully in submission to Jehovah's sovereignty.

¹⁴ The rulers of "the entire inhabited earth" are on a collision course, heading for a confrontation with Jehovah over the issue of sovereignty. The showdown will be Armageddon, "the war of the great day of God the Almighty." (Revelation 16:14, 16) An intriguing parenthesis appears right in the midst of the description of the gathering of earth's rulers for war with Jehovah. Jesus himself breaks into the vision to say: "Look! I am coming as a thief. Happy is the one that stays awake and keeps his outer garments, that he may not walk naked and people look upon his shamefulness." (Revelation 16:15) This may allude to Levite temple guards who were stripped of their garments and publicly disgraced if they were found sleeping during their guard duty.

14, 15. What message interrupts Revelation's description of Armageddon, with what meaning for us?



¹⁵ The message is clear: If we want to survive Armageddon, we must remain spiritually alert and keep the symbolic garments that identify us as faithful Witnesses of Jehovah God. Happy we will be if we

avoid spiritual lethargy and continue without letup, sharing zealously in spreading the “everlasting good news” of God’s established Kingdom.—Revelation 14:6.

‘Happy Is Anyone Observing These Words’

¹⁶ Happy readers of the book of Revelation can only thrill with joy as they read the closing chapters that describe our glorious hope—a new heaven and a new earth, that is, a righteous heavenly Kingdom government ruling over a new, cleansed human society, all to the praise of “Jehovah God the Almighty.” (Revelation 21:22) As the wonderful series of visions closed, the angelic messenger said to John: “These words are faithful and true; yes, Jehovah the God of the inspired expressions of the prophets sent his angel forth to show his slaves the things that must shortly take place. And, look! I am coming quickly. Happy is anyone observing the words of the prophecy of this scroll.”—Revelation 22:6, 7.

¹⁷ Revelation’s happy readers will remember that words similar to these occur at the beginning of the “scroll.” (Revelation 1:1, 3) These words assure us that all “the things” prophesied in this final book of the Bible will “shortly take place.” We are living so deep in the time of the end that relevant events foretold in Revelation must surely soon occur in quick succession. Any seeming stability in Satan’s system should not, therefore, lull us to sleep. The alert reader will remember the warnings given in the messages sent to the seven Asian congregations and will avoid the traps of materialism, idolatry, immorality, lukewarmness, and apostate sectarianism.

16. Why are the closing chapters of Revelation a particular cause for happiness?

17. (a) What assurance is given at Revelation 22:6? (b) What should we be alert to avoid?

¹⁸ In the book of Revelation, Jesus announces several times: “I am coming quickly.” (Revelation 2:16; 3:11; 22:7, 20a) He must yet come to execute judgment on Babylon the Great, Satan’s political system, and on all humans who refuse to submit to Jehovah’s sovereignty, as now expressed by the Messianic Kingdom. We join our voices with that of the apostle John, who exclaimed: “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.”—Revelation 22:20b.

¹⁹ Jehovah himself states: “Look! I am coming quickly, and the reward I give is with me, to render to each one as his work is.” (Revelation 22:12) While awaiting the glorious reward of life without end as a part of either the promised “new heaven” or the “new earth,” may we zealously join in extending the invitation to all honesthearted people: “‘Come!’ And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life’s water free.” (Revelation 22:17) May they also become happy readers of the inspired and inspiring book of Revelation!

18, 19. (a) Why must Jesus yet come, and in what hope expressed by John do we share? (b) For what purpose is Jehovah yet to “come”?

Points for Review

- ☐ What channel did Jehovah use to transmit the Revelation, and what can we learn from this?
- ☐ Why should we be happy to read the messages sent to the seven congregations in Asia?
- ☐ How can we be kept safe during “the hour of test”?
- ☐ What happiness will be ours if we observe the words of the scroll containing the Revelation?



OUR PARENTS TAUGHT US TO LOVE GOD

AS TOLD BY ELIZABETH TRACY

Armed men, who earlier that day led a mob against us, forced Mom and Dad from the car. My sister and I, left alone in the back seat, were wondering if we would ever see our parents again. What led to this frightening experience near Selma, Alabama, U.S.A., in 1941? And what did the teachings we received from our parents have to do with it?

MY DAD, Dewey Fountain, was raised by a relative on a farm in Texas after his parents died when he was still an infant. Later he went to work in the oil fields. In 1922, when he was 23, he married Winnie, a pretty young Texan, and began making plans to settle down and raise a family.

He built a house in the timberlands of east Texas near the small town of Garrison. There he cultivated a variety of crops, including cotton and corn. He also raised all kinds of farm animals. In time, we children were born—Dewey junior in May 1924, Edwena in December 1925, and in June 1929, I came along.

Learning Bible Truth

Mom and Dad thought they understood the Bible, since they belonged to the Church of Christ. But in 1932, G. W. Cook left the books *Deliverance* and *Government*, published by the Watch Tower Society, with Dad's brother Monroe Fountain. Eager to share with my parents what he was learning, Monroe often came over at breakfast time, read an article from *The*

Watchtower, and then “accidentally” left the magazine behind. Afterward, Mom and Dad would read it.

One Sunday morning Uncle Monroe invited Dad to a neighbor's house for a Bible study. He assured him that Mr. Cook could answer all his questions from the Bible. On Dad's return from the study, he excitedly told the family: “I got all my questions answered and then some! I thought I knew it all, but when Mr. Cook started to explain about hell, the soul, God's purpose concerning the earth, and how God's Kingdom will bring it about, I began to feel that I actually knew nothing about the Bible!”

Our house was something of

a social center. Relatives and friends came and visited, made fudge and popcorn balls, and sang along as Mom played the piano. Slowly these events gave way to discussions of Bible subjects. Although we children could not understand all the things discussed, our parents' strong love for God and for the Bible was so evident that each of us children developed a similar love for God and his Word.

Other families too opened their homes for weekly Bible discussions, which usually centered around a subject in the latest *Watchtower* magazine. When families in the neighboring towns of Appleby and Nacogdoches hosted the meetings, we piled into our Model A Ford and traveled there, come rain or shine.

Acting on What They Learned

It did not take long for our parents to see the need for action. Love of God required that what was learned be shared with others. (Acts 20:35) But this step of going public with one's faith was a challenge, especially since our parents were naturally shy, humble people. Yet, their love for God motivated them, and this in turn helped them to teach us to put deep trust in Jehovah. Dad expressed it this way: "Jehovah is making preachers out of pea pickers!" In 1933, Mom and Dad symbolized their dedication to Jehovah by water baptism in a fishpond near Henderson, Texas.

Early in 1935, Dad wrote the Watch Tower Society and asked a

number of questions regarding the Christian hope of everlasting life. (John 14:2; 2 Timothy 2:11, 12; Revelation 14:1, 3; 20:6) He received a reply directly from Joseph F. Rutherford, then president of the Society. Instead of answering his questions, Brother Rutherford invited Dad to attend the convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in Washington, D.C., in May.

'Impossible!' Dad thought. 'We are farmers with 65 acres planted with vegetables. It all will have to be harvested and taken to the market at that time.' Soon afterward, however, a flood came and washed his excuses away—crops, fences, and bridges. So we joined other Witnesses on a chartered school bus that took us 1,000 miles northeast to the convention.

At the convention Dad and Mom were thrilled to listen to the clear explanation of the identity of the "great multitude" who will survive the "great tribulation." (Revelation 7:9, 14, *King James Version*) For the rest of their lives, the hope of eternal life on a paradise earth motivated Mom and Dad, and they encouraged us children to "get a firm hold on the real life," which for us meant the everlasting life on earth that Jehovah offers. (1 Timothy 6:19; Psalm 37:29; Revelation 21:3, 4) Even though I was only five, I truly enjoyed being with my family at this happy event.

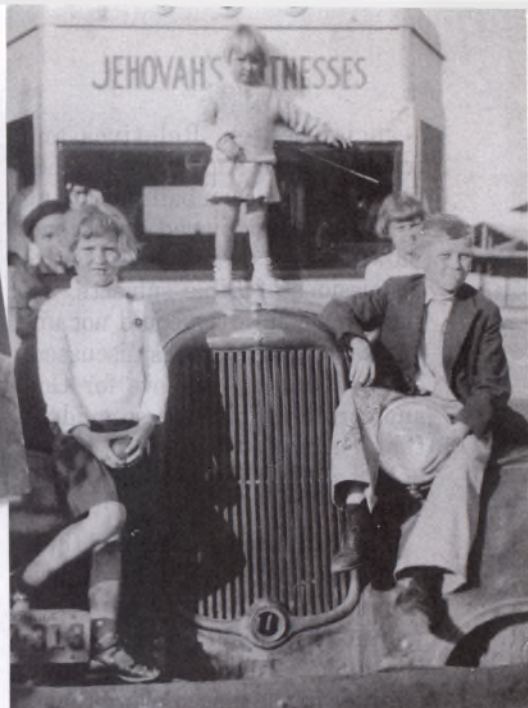
After returning from the convention, the family replanted the crops, and we later had the finest harvest ever. This surely helped to convince Mom and Dad that putting full trust in Jehovah would never go unrewarded. They took up a special form of the preaching work in which they each agreed to spend 52 hours a month in the ministry. And then, when the following planting season came, they sold out—lock, stock, and barrel! Dad had a 20 x 8-foot trailer built for the five of us to live in, and he bought a brand-new two-door Ford sedan to pull it. Uncle Monroe did the same, and he too moved into a trailer with his family.

Teaching Us the Truth

Dad and Mom began pioneering, as the full-time ministry is called, in October 1936. As a family, we began preaching in counties in east Texas that had rarely been covered with the Kingdom message. For almost a year, we moved from place to place, but overall, we really enjoyed this life. Mom and Dad taught us by their word



Fountain family: (left to right) Dewey, Edwena, Winnie, Elizabeth, Dewey junior; right: Elizabeth and Dewey junior on the fenders of Henschel's sound truck (1937); below right: Elizabeth doing placard work at age 16



and example to be like the early Christians who gave of themselves to pass along Bible truth to others.

We children especially admired our mother for the sacrifices she made by giving up her home. There was one thing she would not part with, though, and that was her sewing machine. It was a good thing too. With her ability as a seamstress, she always kept us well dressed. At each convention, we had attractive new clothes to wear.

I well remember when Herman G. Henschel came with his family to our area in a Watch Tower Society sound truck. They would park the truck in a thickly populated area, play a short recorded lecture, and then make personal visits on the people to provide further information. Dewey junior enjoyed the companionship of Herman's son Milton, who was then in his mid-teens. Now Milton is the president of the Watch Tower Society.

During the convention in 1937 in Columbus, Ohio, Edwena was baptized, and Mom and Dad were offered the privilege of serving as special pioneers. At the time, that work involved spending at least 200 hours a month in the preaching work. As I look back, I realize how much Mom's fine example has helped me in supporting my husband in his Christian assignments.

When Dad established a Bible study with a family,

he took us children along to provide a positive example for their children. He had us look up and read the Bible texts and answer some of the basic questions. As a result, many of those young ones we studied with are serving Jehovah faithfully to this day. Indeed, a firm foundation was also laid for us to continue to love God.

As Dewey junior grew older, he found it difficult to live in such cramped quarters with two younger sisters. So in 1940 he chose to leave and take up the pioneer ministry with another Witness. Eventually, he married Audrey Barron. Thus Audrey was also taught many things by our parents, and she came to love Mom and Dad dearly. After Dewey junior went to prison in 1944 for his Christian neutrality, she came to live with us for a time in our cramped trailer.

At the huge convention in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1941, Brother Rutherford spoke directly to the children ages 5 to 18, who were seated in a special section in front. Edwena and I listened to his calm, clear voice; he was like a loving father instructing his own children at home. He encouraged parents: "Today Christ Jesus has gathered his covenant people before him, and in the most forceful way he tells them to instruct their children in the way of righteousness." He added: "Keep them at home and teach them the truth!" Happily, our parents did!

At that convention, we received the new booklet *Jehovah's Servants Defended*, which reviewed court cases that Jehovah's Witnesses had won, including those in the Supreme Court of the United States. Dad studied it with us as a family. Little did we know that



we were being prepared for what happened a few weeks later in Selma, Alabama.

Mob Action in Selma

The morning of that frightening experience, Dad had delivered copies of a letter to the sheriff, the mayor, and the chief of police in Selma that described our constitutional right to carry on our ministry under the protection of the law. Nevertheless, they decided to run us out of town.

In late afternoon, five armed men arrived at our trailer and took Mother, my sister, and me hostage. They proceeded to ransack everything inside, looking for something subversive. Dad was outside, and they ordered him to hitch the trailer to the car, pointing their pistols at him all along. At this moment, I was not scared. It seemed so ridiculous that these men thought we were dangerous that my sister and I got the giggles. We soon sobered up, however, with a glance from Dad.

When we were ready to leave, the men wanted Edwena and me to ride with them in their car. Dad stood his ground. "Over my dead body!" he declared. After some discussion our family was allowed to travel together, with the armed men following us in their car. Some 15 miles out of town, they signaled for us to park at the side of the highway and took Mom and Dad away. The men took turns trying to persuade them: "Give up that religion. Return to the farm, and raise your girls right!" Dad tried to reason with them but to no avail.

Finally, one man said: "Go, and if you ever come back to Dallas County, we will kill every one of you!"

Relieved and together again, we traveled on for several hours and then parked for the night. We had taken note of their license-plate number. Dad promptly reported everything to the Watch Tower Society, and some months later the men were identified and arrested.

To Gilead Missionary School

Edwena received an invitation to attend the 7th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in South Lansing, New York, in 1946. Albert Schroeder, one of the instructors, mentioned her fine qualities to his former pioneer partner Bill Elrod, who was then serving at Bethel, the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York.* Edwena and Bill were

* See *The Watchtower* of March 1, 1988, pages 11-12.

introduced, and about a year after her graduation from Gilead, they were married. For many years they remained in the full-time ministry, including serving together for five years at Bethel. Then one day in 1959, Brother Schroeder announced to the 34th class of Gilead that his dear friend had become father to twins, a boy and a girl.

While I was serving with my parents in Meridian, Mississippi, late in 1947, the three of us received an invitation to attend the 11th class of Gilead. We were shocked because according to the requirements I was too young, and Mom and Dad were too old. But an exception was made, and we received that undeserved privilege of advanced Bible instruction.

Missionary Service With My Parents

Our missionary assignment was Colombia, South America. It was not until December 1949, more than a year after our graduation, however, that we arrived in Bogotá at a missionary home where three others were already living. At first, Dad almost concluded that it would be easier to teach the people English than for him to learn Spanish! Yes, there were trials, but oh, how great the blessings! There were fewer than a hundred Witnesses in Colombia in 1949, but now there are well over 100,000!

After serving in Bogotá for five years, Mom and Dad were sent to the city of Cali. In the meantime, in 1952, I married Robert Tracy, a fellow missionary in Colombia.* We remained in Colombia until 1982, at which time we were assigned to Mexico, where we have served ever since. Eventually, in 1968, my parents had to return to the United States for medical attention. After regaining their health, they continued as special pioneers near Mobile, Alabama.

Caring for Our Parents

As the years piled up, Mom and Dad began slowing down and were needing more support and attention. Upon their request, they were assigned to serve near Edwena and Bill in Athens, Alabama. Later our brother, Dewey junior, thought it would be wise to have the family live closer together in South Carolina. So Bill relocated his family to Greenwood, along with Mom and Dad. This loving adjustment made it possible for Robert

and me to continue our missionary service in Colombia, knowing that my parents were being well cared for.

Then, in 1985, Dad suffered a stroke that left him speechless and bedridden. We got together for a family conference to consider how best to care for our parents. It was decided that Audrey would become Dad's primary caregiver and that Robert and I could best help by sending a letter every week with encouraging experiences and by visiting as often as possible.

My last visit with Dad is still vivid in my mind. He could not ordinarily articulate speech, but after we told him that we were returning to Mexico, he somehow uttered, with great effort and emotion, one word, "Adios!" By this we knew that, in his heart, he was supporting our decision to carry on in our missionary assignment. He died in July 1987, and Mom died nine months later.

A letter I received from my widowed sister well sums up the appreciation we each feel for our parents. "I treasure my rich Christian heritage and never for one moment feel that I would have been happier if our parents had chosen to raise us differently. Their example of strong faith, self-sacrifice, and complete trust in Jehovah has brought me through some low moments in my life." Edwena concluded: "I thank Jehovah for parents who by word and example showed us the happiness that we can have if we build our lives around serving our loving God, Jehovah."

* See *The Watchtower* of March 15, 1960, pages 189-91.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Theocratic Expansion in Namibia

THE good news of God's Kingdom first reached Namibia in the late 1920's. Since that time, hundreds of honesthearted people have responded to God's message of salvation. The following experiences show how Jehovah is gathering these desirable ones into his fold.—Haggai 2:7.

□ Paulus, a subsistence farmer who lives in northeastern Namibia, was first contacted by Jehovah's Witnesses when he visited Windhoek, the capital city. Paulus quickly became convinced that he had found the truth. He returned home with the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*. Then, on a trip to Rundu, the closest town where there was a Kingdom Hall, Paulus found the Witnesses and begged them to visit him.

However, the distance was too great for the Witnesses to come and conduct a weekly Bible study with Paulus. Undeterred, Paulus began to study the Bible on his own. In addition, he zealously preached to others about the things he was learning. In time, a Bible study group was formed. When the small group heard on the radio that an assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses would be held in Rundu, they scraped together their meager earnings and arranged for transportation to attend.

What a thrilling experience it was for them to associate with Jehovah's Witnesses for the first time! Arrangements were soon made for qualified brothers to visit this group regularly. Today, there are six publishers in the village where Paulus lives.

□ Johanna's interest in God's name was sparked when she heard someone speaking badly of Jehovah's Witnesses. She recalls: "The very first time I heard the name Jehovah, it became indelibly fixed in my mind, and I began to wonder who Jehovah is. I was living with my husband near Walvis Bay on the Namibian coast. On one occasion we went to town, and I saw some Witnesses distributing the *Watchtower* magazine on the street. I obtained a copy and asked for a Bible study, since I had many questions. I cried when they informed me that they were unable to come because their vehicle had broken down. Soon thereafter my husband passed away, and I



went to live in Keetmanshoop. A special pioneer (full-time evangelizer) had been assigned to work there, and I obtained the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* from him. From the very start, I recognized the ring of truth.

"Eventually, I was invited to share in the preaching work, but fear of man overwhelmed me. While walking from door to door, I prayed to Jehovah that he would let me die rather than make me preach. When I first engaged in street witnessing, I hid myself in a narrow alley, hoping no one would see me. Finally, I plucked up enough courage to hold out a magazine to a passerby, and only then did I manage to say something. That day, with Jehovah's help, I shared my Bible-based hope with dozens of people.

"Today, 12 years later, although materially poor, I still treasure the privilege of the pioneer service and continue to derive immeasurable joy from sharing Kingdom truth with others."

DO NOT LET YOUR Strength BECOME YOUR Weakness



With 16 watertight compartments in its hull, the luxury liner *Titanic* was considered unsinkable. On its maiden voyage in 1912, it carried only about half the number of lifeboats needed. The ship struck an iceberg and sank, with the loss of over 1,500 lives.

GOD-FEARING King Uzziah of ancient Jerusalem was a brilliant military commander. With Jehovah's help, he defeated his enemies one after the other. "Consequently [Uzziah's] fame went out to a great distance, for he was helped wonderfully until he was strong." But then "his heart became haughty . . . so that he acted unfaithfully against Jehovah his God." Because of Uzziah's haughtiness, he was struck with leprosy.—2 Chronicles 26:15-21; Proverbs 16:18.

These two accounts teach us that strengths, when not balanced by wisdom, modesty, and humility, can easily become weaknesses or liabilities. This is sobering, for in one way or another, every one of us has certain strengths, or gifts, and we want these to be an asset and a source of joy to ourselves and others, especially to our Creator. Indeed, we ought to put to full use any gift of God we may have but at the same time regulate it so that it remains a valuable asset.

For example, a person who loves his work could easily turn this gift into a weakness by becoming a workaholic. A cautious person may not be easily fooled, or deceived, but he may be cautious to the point of never making decisions. Efficiency too is a fine quality, but if taken to extremes, so that it ignores the human element, the result may be a cold, rigid environment that breeds unhappiness. So take a moment to reflect on your own strengths. Do you manage them well? Are they a blessing to others? Above all, do you use them to honor Jehovah, the Source of "every good gift"? (James 1:17) To that end, let us take a closer look at a few other examples of strengths that could develop into weaknesses, even liabilities, if left unchecked.

Use Mental Abilities Wisely

A good mind is certainly a fine asset. Still, it could become a weakness if it leads to overconfidence or causes us to develop

an inflated opinion of ourselves, especially if others commend us excessively or flatter us. Or we might develop an intellectual view of God's Word and Bible-based study publications.

Overconfidence may surface in various ways. For example, when someone with a fine mind receives a speaking assignment in the Christian congregation, perhaps a public discourse or a talk in the Theocratic Ministry School, he may leave preparation to the last minute, maybe not even praying for Jehovah's blessing. Rather, he trusts in his reserve of knowledge and in his ability to think on his feet. Natural ability may mask his laxness for a time, but without Jehovah's full blessing, his spiritual progress would slow down, perhaps even stop. What a waste of a fine gift!—Proverbs 3:5, 6; James 3:1.

Someone of keen mind might also take an intellectual view of the Bible and Bible study aids. However, such knowledge only "puffs up," or inflates the ego like a balloon; it does not 'build up' loving Christian relationships. (1 Corinthians 8:1; Galatians 5:26) On the other hand, the spiritual man, regardless of his mental abilities, always prays for and trusts in God's spirit. His strength becomes ever more an asset as he grows in love, humility, knowledge, and wisdom—and all in pleasing proportion.—Colossians 1:9, 10.

Ability would also become a weakness if through it we developed an inflated opinion of ourselves, revealing a lack of modesty. A gifted person—and any who adulate him—may forget that Jehovah "does not regard any who are wise in their own heart," gifted though they may be. (Job

Spiritual advancement depends on prayerful study and reliance on Jehovah



37:24) "Wisdom is with the modest ones," says God's Word. (Proverbs 11:2) The apostle Paul, though highly intelligent and well educated, said to the Corinthians: "I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come with an extravagance of speech or of wisdom . . . I came to you in weakness and in fear and with much trembling; and my speech and what I preached were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of spirit and power, that your faith might be, not in men's wisdom, but in God's power."—1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

The truly wise person is not fooled by the world's view of intellect, nor by its definition of success. So rather than using his talents to earn the plaudits of men or to amass worldly riches, he gives his best to the One who gave him his life and abilities. (1 John 2:15-17) To that end he keeps

Kingdom interests first in his life, becoming like a fruitful “tree planted by streams of water.” Thanks to Jehovah’s blessing, not to his own natural talents, “everything he does will succeed.”—Psalm 1:1-3; Matthew 6:33.

Let Christianity Add to Your Strength

By its very nature, Christianity is so rich with strengths that worldly philosophies pale next to it. The Christian way of life, for example, makes the best husbands and wives, the best neighbors, and the best employees—people who are honest, respectful, peaceful, and diligent. (Colossians 3:18-23) Additionally, Christian training in speaking and teaching builds good communication skills. (1 Timothy 4:13-15) Not surprisingly, therefore, Christians are often sought out by their employers for added responsibilities and promotions. But such strengths could also be misused if not carefully guarded. A promotion or a tempting job offer may mean virtual dedication to the company, missing Christian meetings regularly, or sacrificing valuable time with one’s family.

In Australia a Christian elder and family man, who was also a highly successful businessman, “had the world before him,” as the saying goes. Yet he refused the temptation to make it in this system. “I wanted to spend more time with my family and in the Christian ministry,” he said. “So my wife and I agreed that I would carefully ease back on the amount of time I spent at my secular work. Why should I work a five-day week if I do not need to?” he added. By making a few well-thought-out adjustments in his life, this elder found that he could still care for his family by working a three- or four-day week. In time, he was invited to share in other privileges of

service, such as serving on the local Assembly Hall Committee and in district convention administration. Wisely channeled, his strengths brought him and his family joy and satisfaction.

A Balanced Attitude Toward Privileges

Christian men are encouraged to reach out for privileges of service in the congregation. “If any man is reaching out for an office of overseer [or ministerial servant], he is desirous of a fine work.” (1 Timothy 3:1) As with the strengths already mentioned, a willingness to accept responsibilities also needs to be tempered with good judgment. Nobody should take on so many assignments that he loses his joy in Jehovah’s service. Yes, a willing spirit is commendable, indeed necessary, for Jehovah disapproves of a self-sparing attitude; but willingness must also reflect modesty and “soundness of mind.”—Titus 2:12; Revelation 3:15, 16.

Jesus’ gentleness, insight, and sensitivity made even the lowliest ones feel at ease in his presence. Likewise today, people feel comfortable with those whose strength is an empathetic, caring personality. In the Christian congregation, such warm, approachable elders are truly treasured “gifts in men.” They are “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.”—Ephesians 4:8; Isaiah 32:2.

But elders must balance time spent helping others with their own need for personal study, meditation, prayer, and the public ministry. Naturally, married elders also need to take time for their families, to whom they should be especially approachable.



Capable Women —A Wonderful Blessing

Like capable elders, spiritually-minded women are also a fine asset to Jehovah's organization. Generally, women are gifted with an interest in other people—a quality that Jehovah values and encourages. Keep "an eye, not in personal interest upon just your own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others," wrote the apostle Paul. (Philippians 2:4) Yet, this "personal interest" has its limits, for no Christian would want to be "a busybody in other people's matters"; nor should one be a gossip. —1 Peter 4:15; 1 Timothy 5:13.

Women have many other gifts. A Christian wife, for example, may be more gifted mentally than her husband is. Nevertheless, as "a capable wife" who fears Jehovah, she would respect her husband and use her gifts to complement him, not to compete with him. And rather than envy or resent her, a wise, humble husband would value his wife's strengths and rejoice in them. He would encourage her to use her talents to the full to build up her household and to help her children 'fear Jehovah,' just as she herself does. (Proverbs 31:10, 28-30; Gen-

Personal interest coupled with modesty is a blessing

esis 2:18) Such modest, humble husbands and wives thrive in marriages that truly honor Jehovah.

Subjecting a Strong Personality

A strong personality that is set on righteousness and doing Jehovah's will whole-souled can be a fine asset when softened by modesty and humility. Yet, it can be a weakness if it causes one to dominate or intimidate others. This is especially true within the Christian congregation. Christians should feel relaxed with one another, including when in the company of congregation elders.—Matthew 20:25-27.

Elders, in turn, should feel at ease in one another's company. And when they meet together, holy spirit, not the force of personality, should influence their decisions. Indeed, holy spirit can influence any elder on the body, including the youngest or most reticent elder. So those who have stronger personalities, even when they feel that they are in the right, should manage their strength by learning the art of deference, thus "showing honor" to fellow elders. (Romans 12:10) Ecclesiastes 7:16 kindly warns: "Do not become righteous overmuch, nor show yourself excessively wise. Why should you cause desolation to yourself?"

Jehovah, the Source of "every good gift," manages his awesome strengths with absolute perfection. (James 1:17; Deuteronomy 32:4) And he is our Teacher! So let us learn from him and work hard, both at developing our natural gifts, or strengths, and at managing them wisely, modestly, and lovingly. What a blessing to others we will then be!

Mount Athos

A “HOLY MOUNTAIN”?

TO THE more than 220 million members of the Orthodox Church, Mount Athos, a rugged headland in northern Greece, is “the most holy mountain in the Orthodox Christian world.” For many of them, a pilgrimage to the “holy mountain” of Athos is a cherished dream. What is this “holy mountain”? How did it take on such importance? And is it the “mountain” to which God-fearing people must look for spiritual guidance and true worship?

The expression “holy mountain” does appear in the Bible. It is associated with the holy, pure, and elevated worship of the true God, Jehovah. Mount Zion in ancient Jerusalem became a “holy mountain” when King David brought the ark of the covenant there. (Psalm 15:1; 43:3; 2 Samuel 6:12, 17) After Solomon’s temple was built on Mount Moriah, “Zion” came to include the temple site; hence, Zion remained God’s “holy mountain.” (Psalm 2:6; Joel 3:17) Since God’s temple was in Jerusalem, at times that city was also called God’s “holy mountain.”—Isaiah 66:20; Daniel 9:16, 20.

What about today? Is Mount Athos—or any other summit—the “holy mountain” where people must stream to worship God acceptably?

A Monastic “Holy Mountain”

Mount Athos is located at the eastern end of the Chalcidice Peninsula on the tip of a narrow strip of land jutting into the Aegean Sea just east of modern-day Thessaloniki.

It is an impressive marble peak that rises precipitously from the sea to a height of 6,667 feet.

Athos has long been considered a holy place. In Greek mythology it was the home of the gods before Mount Olympus became their home. Sometime after Constantine the Great (fourth century C.E.), Athos became a holy place to the Christian churches. According to one legend, the “virgin” Mary, accompanied by John the Evangelist en route to Cyprus to visit Lazarus, landed at Athos as the result of a sudden violent storm. Struck by the beauty of the mountain, she asked Jesus for it. Hence, Athos also came to be known as “the Garden of the Holy Virgin.” By the middle Byzantine period, the whole rocky outcrop came to be known as the Holy Mountain. This designation was officially adopted and confirmed in the mid-11th century by decree of Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus.

Because of its rugged and isolated nature, Athos is the sort of place that lends itself to the practice of ascetic life. Through the centuries, it attracted religious men from all over the Orthodox world—Greeks, Serbians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Russians, and others—who constructed numerous monasteries, with their churches and communities. Some 20 of these have survived.

Mount Athos Today

Today, Athos is an autonomous region, with a charter ratified in 1926. After years of decline, the number of resident monks has risen to more than 2,000.

Each of the monasteries has its own network of farms, chapels, and dwellings. The ultimate sanctuary of the hermits is to be found in the settlement of Karoulia, perched high in the dizzying cliffs on the end of Mount Athos. Here a cluster of individual huts can be reached only by a maze of footpaths, stone steps, and chains.



Tellis/Greek National Tourist Organization

On Athos, the monks still live out their ancient liturgical daily routine, using the Byzantine clock (with the day beginning at sunset) and the Julian calendar (13 days behind the Gregorian).

Although this religious site is said to owe its "holiness" to a woman, for 1,000 years its monks and hermits have declared the whole peninsula off-limits to all female forms of life—human and animal—along with any eunuch or beardless man. Recently, the ruling regarding the beardless and some female animals has been relaxed, but women are still strictly banned within 550 yards of the Athos shoreline.

A "Holy Mountain" for All

Is Athos the "holy mountain" to which God-fearing Christians should come to worship? Speaking to a Samaritan woman who believed that God should be worshiped on Mount Gerizim, Jesus made clear that no literal mountain would any longer be designated as a place for worshiping God. "The

A Long-Hidden Treasure Trove

Over the centuries, the Athonite monks have accumulated a treasure trove that includes an estimated 15,000 manuscripts, some said to date from the fourth century, making it one of the world's most precious collections. There are scrolls, complete volumes and leaves of the Gospels, psalms and hymns, besides very old paintings, icons, sculptures, and metalworks. It is estimated that Mount Athos holds one fourth of the world's Greek manuscripts, although many still need to be properly cataloged. In 1997, for the first time, the monks allowed some of their treasures to be exhibited in Thessaloniki.

hour is coming when neither in [Gerizim] nor in Jerusalem will you people worship the Father," said Jesus. Why? "God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with *spirit and truth*."—John 4:21, 24.

Pointing toward our time, the prophet Isaiah foretold that a symbolic "mountain of the house of Jehovah" would "become firmly established above the top of the mountains" and be "lifted up above the hills," and people of all the nations would figuratively stream to it.—Isaiah 2:2, 3.

Men *and* women who want to have an approved relationship with God are invited to worship Jehovah with "spirit and truth." Millions around the world have found their way to the 'mountain of Jehovah.' They, among others, echo the feelings of a Greek lawyer who said regarding Athos: "I doubt if spirituality is enclosed in walls or in monasteries."—Compare Acts 17:24.



Meeting the Challenges of Parenting

REARING children today, especially those of teenage years, is a formidable challenge for parents. The

Gazette of Montreal, Canada, reports that experimentation with alcohol and drugs has become "the norm for adolescents." It emphasizes that parents have "a responsibility to be vigilant about changes in [their] teenagers' behaviour."

What should parents look for that may indicate such adolescent problems? Some physical, emotional, and social warning signs identified by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry include lasting fatigue, change in personality and temperament, spending excessive time locked in the bedroom, confrontational behavior, and getting into trouble with the law.

How can parents protect their children from such harmful experimentation and its resulting negative consequences? Dr. Jeffrey L. Derevensky, of McGill University, believes that open communication and the fostering of mutual respect during the formative years of a child may minimize problems later. The *Gazette* adds that even though a desire for more independence surfaces during adolescence, teenagers continue to need "the guidance, support, structure and love provided by their parents." These observations echo a Bible proverb that states: "Train up a boy according to the way for him; even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it." (Proverbs 22:6) God counsels parents to be examples, companions, communicators, and teachers.—Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.

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