

# The WATCHTOWER

*Announcing*  
**JEHOVAH'S  
KINGDOM**

APRIL 1, 1973

Semimonthly

"HAPPY IS HE WHO  
READS ALOUD"

—  
WHY WAS IT WRITTEN  
IN THAT WAY?

—  
A SPECIAL INVITATION TO YOU

©WTB&TS



**"YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS JEHOVAH.—Isa. 43:12**

## THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER"

Every watchtower has its purpose. It serves as an elevated place for a wide-awake person with sharp vision. It enables him to see far ahead into the distance and tell those below for whom he is a watchman what is drawing near, whether it is a danger against which to prepare or it is something good over which to be glad with strong faith and hope.

Because of having the name "The Watchtower" this magazine justly has to render a similar useful service to the people of all nations. This is an international magazine and makes no racial distinctions, for we are all facing a common world danger; we are all hoping for a common good.

Ever since "The Watchtower" began to be published in July of 1879 it has looked ahead into the future, always striving to aid its readers to advance in knowledge and to gain a clearer picture of the glorious new order of things that is in store for righteous mankind. No, "The Watchtower" is no inspired prophet, but it follows and explains a Book of prophecy the predictions in which have proved to be unerring and unfailing till now. "The Watchtower" is therefore under safe guidance. It may be read with confidence, for its statements may be checked against that prophetic Book.

Among the many nations of today there are hundreds of differing religions. Which one does this magazine present? Not the confused religions of Christendom, but the religion of the oldest sacred Book on earth. Which Book? The Sacred Bible of the Holy Scriptures, written by inspiration in the name of the Creator of heaven and earth, the only living and true God.

The sacred, nonpolitical purpose of "The Watchtower" is accordingly to encourage and promote study of the Holy Bible and to give our many readers the needed unsectarian help to understand that Book of true religion and infallible prophecy. Thus this magazine will be helping them to prove worthy of perfect life and happiness in God's promised new order under His everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

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"They will all be taught by Jehovah."—John 6:45; Isaiah 54:13

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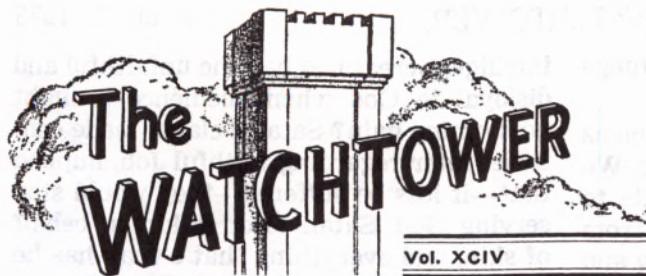
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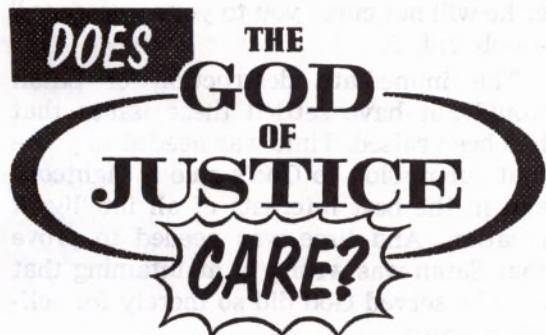
# The WATCHTOWER

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JEHOVAH'S  
KINGDOM

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THROUGHOUT history humans have suffered much. Bitter tears have been shed over the loss of loved ones in death. Sickness, aging, crippling accidents and lack of life's necessities have brought agonizing pain to many. Besides all of this, men, women and children have fallen victim to oppression, injustices, crime and violence.

Yet the Bible says of God: "All his ways are justice." (Deut. 32:4) Do you find it hard to understand why a God of justice would tolerate wickedness for centuries? Do you wonder if he really cares about you?

You are not alone. Even in ancient times upright men were perplexed about God's apparent toleration of lawlessness, oppression and suffering. They sought a satisfying answer from Jehovah God, their Creator. One of these men was a Hebrew prophet named Habakkuk. Grieved about terrible conditions, he asked: "How long, O Jehovah, must I cry for help, and you

do not hear? How long shall I call to you for aid from violence, and you do not save? Why is it that you make me see what is hurtful, and you keep looking upon mere trouble? And why are despoiling and violence in front of me, and why does quarreling occur, and why is strife carried? Therefore law grows numb, and justice never goes forth. Because the wicked one is surrounding the righteous one, for that reason justice goes forth crooked."—Hab. 1:2-4.

In answer to his questions, the prophet Habakkuk was given a vision that assured him of Jehovah's ultimately taking action to remove wickedness. Habakkuk was also told: "The vision is yet for the appointed time, and it keeps panting on to the end, and it will not tell a lie. Even if it should delay, keep in expectation of it; for it will without fail come true. It will not be late."—Hab. 2:3.

This gives us confidence that Jehovah God has an "appointed time" for taking action. Even if there should appear to be a "delay" from the human standpoint, this does not mean that God does not care about us, that he has forgotten us and changed his purpose. Since "Jehovah is a lover of justice, . . . he will not leave his loyal ones." (Ps. 37:28) His prophetic word, including his promise to end injustices, oppression and pain, is "panting" or eagerly moving forward to its fulfillment. (Rev. 21:3, 4) Relief for honest-hearted

people from the present system of things is therefore sure to come.

Due to our short life-span, we humans would very much want that relief *now*. We may think tomorrow could be too late to begin enjoying the benefits resulting from the end of wickedness, disease, sorrow and suffering. So, we may incline to be impatient, to feel that God is slow, to feel that he is 'delaying' in bringing the foretold relief.

Jehovah God, however, has no limitations affecting him by a time element. He is God "from time indefinite to time indefinite." (Ps. 90:2) "One day is with Jehovah as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." (2 Pet. 3:8) Unlike short-lived humans who cannot long postpone their plans if they are to be carried out, Jehovah God can wait until developments in the stream of time are just right for the accomplishment of the greatest good possible.

#### ISSUES AT STAKE

Being almighty, Jehovah God could have destroyed the wicked centuries ago. But this would not really have been in man's best interests. Why not? Primarily because of issues or questions that were raised shortly after Jehovah God placed the first human pair, Adam and Eve, in a beautiful paradise home.

The one responsible for raising these questions was an invisible spirit creature, later called "Devil" and "Satan." Using a serpent, the Devil claimed that disobedience to divine law would not lead to death as God had stated but would result in gain. (Gen. 3:4, 5) This claim called into question whether God's exercise of rulership over his creatures was really in their best interests.

The fact that Adam and Eve joined Satan in a course of disobedience raised yet another question or issue: Would all other

intelligent creatures become unfaithful and disloyal to God when obedience brought no seeming gain? Satan's claim, made centuries later regarding faithful Job, implied that—if loss be suffered—they would stop serving God. Satan said: "Skin in behalf of skin, and everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul. For a change, thrust out your hand, please, and touch as far as his bone and his flesh and see whether he will not curse you to your very face."

—Job 2:4, 5.

The immediate destruction of Satan would not have settled these issues that had been raised. Time was needed to prove that submission to God's rule is righteous and in the best interests of all intelligent creation. And time was needed to prove that Satan was wrong in maintaining that all who served God did so merely for selfish reasons.

The accusations made against God and his intelligent creatures might be illustrated in a human way. Suppose a father of a large family is slandered by one of his neighbors. The neighbor claims that the father does not have the best interests of the family at heart and is needlessly severe and oppressive. Regarding the members of the family, the neighbor contends that none love the father but merely stay in the home because he provides food and other necessities for them.

How might the father disprove the falsehoods? If strong enough, he could use force and beat up his neighbor, compelling the neighbor to withdraw his slanderous remarks. But would this really settle the matter? Would it convince others? Might not observers conclude that the accusations could be true in view of the father's attempt to stamp them out by violent means? So, then, would it not be better for the father to allow his own family to serve as witnesses against the false charges? Indeed! Their words and actions over

a period of time could demonstrate to others that they really loved their father and appreciated the fine way he exercised his headship.

This is what Jehovah God has done. By allowing wicked persons to continue living for a time, he has made it possible for others to share in proving Satan's claim to be false by remaining faithful, even under unfavorable and trying circumstances. This has been in harmony with the principle found at Proverbs 27:11: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me."

God's refraining from executing the wicked immediately has also given individuals a merciful opportunity to change their ways and become his obedient servants. As the apostle Peter told fellow Christians: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9) What marvelous evidence this is of Jehovah's caring about mankind! He wants people to come into a position that will mean salvation for them, and he gives them time to do so. Then, when he does act, no one can rightly claim that God was unjust in not giving humans enough time to change.

Furthermore, the evidence will be undeniable that God's rule is right and that millions of his creatures in the heavens and on the earth serve him out of a pure motive, out of love for him. Any who thereafter challenge the rightfulness, righteousness and deservedness of his sovereignty will not be tolerated. There will be no need to allow such challengers time to try to prove their contention, thereby disrupting the peace and harmony of God's universal family. (Compare Revelation 20:7-9.) Thus God's having allowed enough

time for the settlement of the issues raised by Satan will result in the greatest good for obedient mankind. The settlement of these issues makes certain that no one will ever again have to endure injustices, suffering or oppression on account of those who have no love for righteousness.

#### HUMANS MUST ACT NOW

It is especially urgent today that we respond favorably to Jehovah God's unmerited kindness in giving humans an opportunity to become his approved servants. The evidence of Bible chronology and Bible prophecy unmistakably points to this very generation as the one that will witness the "appointed time" for the removal of this wicked system. (Matt. 24:34; 2 Tim. 3:1-5) The God of justice has not left mankind without due notice of this. In more than 200 lands his Christian witnesses are diligently proclaiming the destruction of the present wicked system and the ushering in of a righteous new order. "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." (2 Pet. 3:13) This means that God's kingdom by Jesus Christ will, as "new heavens," rule over the "new earth" of devoted subjects.

If you desire to be among the loyal subjects of God's kingdom, heed the inspired advice: "Do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace." (2 Pet. 3:14) For a person to be found in that condition, he must know and act in harmony with Jehovah God's requirements for life as set forth in his Word the Holy Bible. Jehovah's witnesses in your area will be happy to assist you in gaining this vital Bible knowledge. The next time they call on you, ask them about their free weekly home Bible study arrangement. Or, write to the publishers of this magazine and we will gladly arrange for someone to call on you.

# *A Special Invitation to You*

*The time: the evening of Tuesday, April 17.*

*The occasion: the annual Memorial of Christ's death.*

*The place: the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.*

*You are cordially invited to attend.*



HY will it be profitable for you to be present on this occasion? Because it has to do with the kind of government under which all lovers of righteousness will live in God's new order, now near at hand. If you believe in good government, you will be greatly encouraged by this meeting.

This annual celebration, instituted by Jesus Christ the night before his death, is a communion meal. But it is no common meal to satisfy hunger. Rather, it features certain symbolisms of great significance to us all. Four Bible writers provide us with accounts of this observance. Jesus had completed the Jewish Passover meal with his apostles on the evening of Nisan 14 of the Jewish calendar, in the year 33 C.E. During the Passover meal he had dismissed the traitor Judas. (John 13:26, 27, 30) The historian Luke reports what then took place:

"He [Jesus] took a loaf, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, saying: 'This means my body which is to be given in your behalf. Keep doing this in remembrance of me.' Also, the cup in the same way after they had the evening meal, he saying: 'This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood, which is to be poured out in your

behalf.'"—Luke 22:19, 20; Matt. 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; 1 Cor. 11:23-26.

Jesus' words, "keep doing this," are a command to all Christians in the new covenant to come together for this observance. However, this memorial is also of interest to others, to all persons who love justice and right and who desire to live in peace and unity with others. By understanding the meaning of the Memorial celebration, you can get the answers to the primary questions of life. You may have asked some of them: Why do all people die? Is there hope of a resurrection for the dead? Will the earth ever be ruled in peace and justice? Do all good persons go to heaven, or will some be able to live forever here on earth?

## **THE NEW COVENANT**

On the night of this symbolic meal, Jesus said that his blood validated the "new covenant." What is the new covenant? It is a 'contract' between Jehovah God and a definite number of persons specially selected, "chosen, precious, with God" to be a "royal priesthood."—1 Pet. 2:4, 9.

Jesus Christ is Mediator of this covenant. The apostle Paul writes: "There is one God, and one mediator between God

and men, a man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all." (1 Tim. 2:5, 6) The shedding of his blood was necessary, because those taken into the new covenant are sinners, having inherited sin and imperfection from Adam. (Rom. 5:12) Christ's ransom sacrifice bought back all human life rights and is the basis for forgiveness of sins. Jesus "suffered death, that he by God's undeserved kindness might taste death for every man," says the apostle. (Heb. 2:9) Thus God can deal with those in the new covenant as righteous persons.—Rom. 3:23, 24; 8:1.

As Mediator, Christ also helps those in the new covenant to fulfill its terms and to qualify to be kings and priests with him. The apostle Peter writes encouragingly to Christians that, through Christ, God "will himself finish your training, he will make you firm, he will make you strong." (1 Pet. 5:10) They become firm, trustworthy as maintainers of righteousness. God's strict qualifications for these prospective rulers of earth are set forth in the Christian Greek Scriptures, commonly called the "New Testament." The love, devotion and uprightness required of them are described in John 15:12, 17; Galatians 5:22, 23; 1 John 2:15; 4:7, 8; 5:3, and many other texts.

These who prove faithful to death "will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years." (Rev. 20:6) They will, as a body, be Christ's "wife," his "bride." (Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2-4) Under his headship this wifelike body of kings and priests will care for the human family, applying the benefits of Christ's ransom to mankind, including the resurrected dead. (Acts 24:15; John 5:28, 29) Mankind on earth will then symbolically "eat" of Christ's flesh as "food" for everlasting life.—John 6:51.

Thus all humankind is affected by what

the memorial of Christ's death stands for. It includes much more than merely meditating on his death. The Lord's Evening Meal involves a calling to mind of who Christ is, what he did and what he is doing now, his unbreakable devotion to God, his love and firmness for righteousness, his fine personality and his deep, warm love toward us. This symbolic meal is a remembrance of the closest sort, as a brother's remembrance of his brother, or a son of his father. It is a bringing seriously to our attention Jehovah's purpose and our personal relationship to God and his Son. The occasion provides a period of soul-searching to 'test whether we are in the faith, to keep proving what we ourselves are.'—2 Cor. 13:5.

#### EVIDENCE THAT END OF WICKEDNESS NEARS

The Scriptures show that only 144,000 are selected from among mankind to be sharers with Christ in his Kingdom rule and as underpriests. (Rev. 14:1, 3-5) They are a "little flock" as compared with earth's billions. (Luke 12:32) This selection began at the time of Christ's presence on earth more than 1,900 years ago. Obviously, the choosing of these would eventually be completed. At the end of this present corrupt system we could expect only a few to be remaining on earth.

The facts of record indicate that we are indeed near to that end, for only a "remnant" of these remain. How can we know this? Consider these requirements: Those professing to be spirit-begotten, spirit-anointed sons of God, "partakers of the heavenly calling" (the invitation to heaven), have to be engaged unitedly in doing the work that Christ commanded, to "make disciples of people of all the nations." (Heb. 3:1; Matt. 28:19, 20) They must manifest themselves as being in the new covenant by vigorously preaching and

teaching the good news of God's Messianic kingdom as the only government that can and will bring peace and righteousness to this earth. (Matt. 6:10) These true "sons of God" are "no part of the world," are not meddling in political affairs or seeking great wealth and prominence.—John 17:16.

These spiritual brothers of Jesus also make public declaration of their heavenly hope by partaking of the unleavened bread and the wine at the Lord's Evening Meal as joint participants with Christ, "united with him in the likeness of his death" so as also to "be united with him in the likeness of his resurrection." (Rom. 6:5) When you view the religious people in the world, you indeed find *very few* of such persons, do you not?

#### OBSERVERS NOT PARTAKING

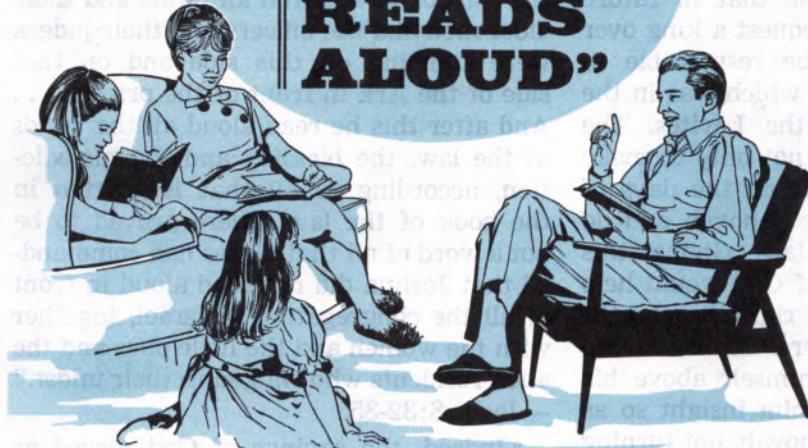
However, not all attending this memorial observance are partakers of the emblems served. Jesus said: "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold [of the "little flock"]; those also I must bring, and they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock, one shepherd." (John 10:16) They would support the stand the anointed ones have taken and would cooperate in preaching the good news to others. But God has not held out the heavenly invitation to them, just as he did not give the faithful men of old the heavenly calling. Jesus pointed out this truth, saying: "The law and the prophets lasted until John's time [John the Baptist]; since that time, it is the kingdom of heaven that has its preachers, and all who will, press their way into it." (Luke 16:16, Knox; compare Psalm 45:16; Hebrews 11:39, 40.) The "other sheep" associates of Christ's brothers hope to be survivors of this world's destruction and to enjoy the Kingdom rule with its blessings of life right here on this earth.

The vision in the book of Revelation distinguishes them from the spiritual brothers of Christ when it first enumerates those finally "sealed" as 144,000 persons, just before the winds of destruction strike this earth. Then it describes "a great crowd, which *no man was able to number*, out of all nations, . . . standing before the throne and before the Lamb," also publicly proclaiming the salvation they owe to Jehovah and Jesus Christ.—Rev. 7:1-10.

Jesus foretold the appearance of these persons on the scene in his illustration of the 'sheep and goats.' He gave the time setting: "*When the Son of man arrives in his glory*, and all the angels with him, then *he will sit down on his glorious throne*. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." (Matt. 25:31, 32) He said that the "sheep" would do good to his brothers. Since the year 1935, more than a million and a half of these "sheep" have associated with the spiritual brothers of Christ and have been of great help to them in getting the good news preached world wide, aiding others, in turn, to learn of God's provisions for life.—Matt. 25:34-40; compare Zechariah 8:23.

The Memorial is therefore not an occasion for sadness, but is, rather, one of happiness at the things Christ's death accomplished. At this commemoration meal, as celebrated by Jehovah's witnesses, a speaker will explain the meaning and significance of the Memorial. Then the emblems, the bread and the wine, will be served. The simple procedure set by Jesus Christ on that evening 1,940 years ago will be followed. You are cordially invited to come as an observer, to listen and learn and to consider your own relationship to God and his purposes through Christ as brought to your attention on this Memorial occasion.

# "HAPPY IS HE WHO READS ALOUD"



"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."—Rev. 1:3.

others? Did you know that it is an ancient command of God in his Word of Truth, the Bible, that his people should read aloud? In your Bible at Deuteronomy 31:9-12 you will find these words recorded: "Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests

**W**HAT a wonderful gift the Creator, Jehovah God, has given man by granting him the ability to read and write so as to understand and grasp the significance of matters of importance! As you read this information, contemplate what a blessing it is to be able to understand what the words on this and succeeding pages mean. And to impress upon your mind just how wonderful this gift is, try reading this same type of information in another language, one that you do not understand or speak. Would it not be meaningless? Yes, indeed, how wonderful it is to be able to read, understand and observe the application of the things written for mankind's enjoyment, especially as they pertain to knowing and serving the Creator himself, Jehovah God!

**2** With your ability to read, do you ever read aloud for the benefit of yourself and

the sons of Levi, the carriers of the ark of Jehovah's covenant, and to all the older men of Israel. And Moses went on to command them, saying: 'At the end of every seven years, in the appointed time of the year of the release, in the festival of booths, when all Israel comes to see the face of Jehovah your God in the place that he will choose, you will read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. Congregate the people, the men and the women and the little ones and your alien resident who is within your gates, in order that they may listen and in order that they may learn, as they must fear Jehovah your God and take care to carry out all the words of this law.'

**3** Without doubt this public reading done by the Levites and older men was beneficial to all the hearers. It was not as if each one assembled could readily get the information for himself at any time he

1. Why is the ability to read and write a truly wonderful gift that Jehovah has given man?  
2. How can we most beneficially use the ability to read, and, in this regard, what command of Jehovah is found at Deuteronomy 31:9-12?

3. (a) Why was public reading in ancient times particularly necessary? (b) How were Israel's kings to obtain a copy of the law, and why were they to read it regularly?

might desire, for copies of the Word of God were limited. Therefore public reading was a necessity to impress important things on the minds of the people. In fact, Moses himself, under the inspiration of God, had told the people that in future days when they would request a king over them the king would be responsible to make a copy of the law, which was in the charge of the priests, the Levites. The king would be required, not only to make a copy, but to read in it all the days of his life, in order to fear Jehovah and do all the words of the law. Giving this attention to the Word of God would help the king to maintain a right heart attitude toward his brothers. It would aid him to avoid exalting himself above his brothers. It would give him insight so as to walk in the way of Jehovah, not turning aside from the commandment to the right or to the left. And, as a result, he would personally benefit in that he would have Jehovah's favor and would in that way lengthen his days upon the throne of the kingdom.—Deut. 17:18-20.

#### SUCCESS THAT DEPENDED UPON READING

\* After the death of Moses, his successor Joshua was likewise commanded to give heed to the counsel of God in written form. Says the Bible record: "This book of the law should not depart from your mouth, and you must in an undertone read in it day and night, in order that you may take care to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way successful and then you will act wisely."—Josh. 1:8.

\* There is no doubt that Joshua saw the wisdom of adhering to the law of God in written form. Concerning the actions of Joshua not long after the entry of the

nation of Israel into the land promised to them by God, the sacred writings contain this information: "Then he [Joshua] wrote there upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses that he had written before the sons of Israel. And all Israel and their older men and the officers and their judges were standing on this side and on that side of the Ark in front of the priests. . . . And after this he read aloud all the words of the law, the blessing and the malediction, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There proved to be not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read aloud in front of all the congregation of Israel, together with the women and the little ones and the alien residents who walked in their midst."—Josh. 8:32-35.

\* Indeed, the sayings of God served as a fine protection to the Israelites both during their journey in the wilderness for forty years and during the time of the conquest and settling of the land of promise. (Eccl. 7:12) The reading of the commands and directions of Jehovah kept prominently before them the requirements of Jehovah. However, in time they left off keeping this important requirement, the doing of the will of God by reading and by adhering to his commands. By the time of King Jehoshaphat many in the land had turned from pure worship, leaving the service of Jehovah for the worship of pagan gods and the service of the Baals. But, as for Jehoshaphat, he loved Jehovah and walked in his commands, and Jehovah firmly established the kingdom of Judah in his hand. (2 Chron. 17:4, 5) One of the more important accomplishments of the reign of Jehoshaphat took place in his third year. The chronicler Ezra records it in these words: "And in the third

4. What counsel did Joshua receive regarding the "book of the law"?

5. How did Joshua show he realized the need of reading and applying the words found in the "book of the law"?

6. (a) How was the book of God's law a safeguard to Israel? (b) In time, what error did the people commit, but what action did Jehoshaphat take to remedy the situation?

year of [Jehoshaphat's] reigning he sent for his princes . . . to teach in the cities of Judah, and with them the Levites, . . . [and] the priests. And they began teaching in Judah, and with them there was the book of Jehovah's law; and they kept going around through all the cities of Judah and teaching among the people."

(2 Chron. 17:7-9)  
This proved to be a blessing to them.

<sup>7</sup> It does seem, though, that this requirement of God,

to read his word and to carry out his commands, was easily forgotten by the people of God. Between the time of Jehoshaphat (936-911 B.C.E.) and Josiah (659-629 B.C.E.) again and again king and people failed to keep the regulations and commands of Jehovah. Obeying the directives of Jehovah was so loosely regarded that by the time of Josiah, who began ruling when just a young boy, the people, to a large extent, had forgotten many of the commands of Jehovah. In fact, it was during Josiah's eighteenth year, when he directed that Jehovah's temple be repaired from its fallen and neglected state, that the high priest at the temple found the "very book of the law" in the house of Jehovah. The contents of this newly found book of the law were read to King Josiah. As soon as he heard what it had to say, Josiah immediately ripped his garments apart. And why was this? Let Josiah himself answer: "Great is Jehovah's rage that has been set afire against us over the fact that our forefathers *did not listen* to the words of this book by doing according to all that is written concerning us."—2 Ki. 22:3-13.

7. What problem continued to develop among God's people, and what was Josiah's reaction when he heard the words from "book of the law"?

<sup>8</sup> Josiah's further action is recorded for us in these words: "After that the king went up to the house of Jehovah, and also all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and also the priests and the prophets and all the people, from small to great; and he began to read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of Jehovah." Thereafter the king and the people conclud-

ed a covenant before Jehovah to walk in accord with that which was written in the book. How truly beneficial the public reading of that law was to those there gathered!—2 Ki. 23:2, 3.

#### HOW READING MADE A REMNANT HAPPY

<sup>9</sup> It is sad to think that after concluding this covenant to walk in accord with what was written in the book, the people of God forgot their God and his Word and the reading of it for direction and succumbed to the will of the nations round about. Their continued neglect led to their downfall as a nation in 607 B.C.E. But Jehovah, being merciful, heard their pleas and, in his due time, allowed a remnant of them to return from exile to their beloved Jerusalem and Judah to engage in pure worship. Nevertheless, Jehovah's view of the importance of his written Word had not diminished with time. Ezra, the scribe of God, again calls upon them in their restored condition to remember the things that are written. We are told by Governor Nehemiah: "And all the people proceeded

8. What course of action did Josiah then take, and how did the people respond?

9. (a) Because of neglecting God's Word, what resulted to the nation of Israel? (b) How did Jehovah show mercy to his people, and how did public reading again serve a useful purpose? (c) Besides reading, what further steps were taken to assist the people?

#### NEXT ISSUE—SPECIAL!

#### How Resurrection Benefits All the Dead in Hell

to gather themselves as one man at the public square that was before the Water Gate. Then they said to Ezra the copyist to bring the book of the law of Moses, which Jehovah had commanded Israel. Accordingly Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation of men as well as of women and of all intelligent enough to listen, on the first day of the seventh month. And he continued to read aloud from it before the public square that is before the Water Gate, from daybreak till midday, in front of the men and the women and the other intelligent ones; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law." (Neh. 8:1-3) Those there with Ezra, the Levites, were explaining the law to the people, while the people were in a standing position. "And they continued reading aloud from the book, from the law of the true God, it being expounded, and there being a putting of meaning into it; and they continued giving understanding in the reading." The result? There was "a great rejoicing, for they had understood the words that had been made known to them."—Neh. 8:6-8, 12.

#### THE LORD JESUS DID PUBLIC READING

<sup>10</sup> The greatest exponent of the written Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is an outstanding example of one interested in doing the will and work of his Creator and Father, Jehovah God. On three different occasions he was tempted by Satan

10. How did Jesus view the written Word of God and public reading of it?

the Devil, the adversary of both God and man, and he refused to compromise his position with Jehovah, three times rebuking Satan by the use of God's own Word, saying, "It is written." (Matt. 4:1-11) On his first visit to the synagogue in Nazareth as the Messiah, he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and, opening it to the place where his commission in life was outlined, he publicly read to the gathered crowd. The result was that the people marveled at the winsome words that proceeded out of his mouth.

—Luke 4:16-22.



At the synagogue in Nazareth  
the Lord Jesus read aloud from  
the scroll of Isaiah

<sup>11</sup> The disciples of Jesus likewise read and studied the written Word of God. The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians and encouraged them in these words: "And when this letter has been read among you, arrange that it also be read in the congregation of the Laodiceans and that you also read the one from Laodicea." (Col. 4:16) To the congregation in Thessalonica, Paul wrote: "I am putting you under the solemn obligation by the Lord for this letter to be read to all the brothers." (1 Thess. 5:27) To the young man Timothy, Paul gave this admonition: "While I am coming, continue applying yourself to public reading, to exhortation, to teaching."—1 Tim. 4:13.

#### READING THAT BRINGS HAPPINESS TODAY

<sup>12</sup> With this background on the wisdom

11. How did the apostle Paul encourage the reading of words of truth?

12, 13. Because "the appointed time is near," at Revelation 1:3, what are we called upon to do, and with what benefit?

of reading, studying, and applying with understanding the Word of our God and Creator, we can better appreciate the directive of Revelation 1:3. Indeed, it is a message for our day. Under inspiration the apostle John writes: "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."—Rev. 1:3.

<sup>13</sup> To be among these happy ones, we need to read aloud and hear the words of the prophecy of God in Revelation, and throughout the inspired sixty-six letters of God's Word, and we must act in harmony with what we read. The psalmist says, concerning a really happy man, that "his delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night." The results? "Everything he does will succeed." However, "the wicked are not like that!"—Ps. 1:1-4.

<sup>14</sup> Young and old, male and female among God's people are called upon to listen and to learn from God's Word. For this reason Jehovah's visible organization publishes Bibles as well as magazines, booklets, books and tracts that focus our attention on the Bible. It sponsors regular meetings of God's people each week for five hours of study. These include Bible reading, instruction in the Word of God from the public platform, participation in discussions designed to teach us what God would have us to do, and assistance in learning how to aid others to join with us in pure worship.

<sup>15</sup> Even as in the days of ancient Israel when there were the Levites, priests and older men who took the lead in reading and applying and teaching the Word of God, so today Jehovah has a Christian

14. In what ways does Jehovah's visible organization seek to assist us in knowing well the contents of the Word of God?

15. In addition to public reading and study, what are we encouraged to do?

congregation with "older men" to assist us in reading and understanding God's Word. There is a governing body, and there are "older men" in the local congregations. They are charged with the responsibility of reading, teaching, exhorting, and handling the Word of God aright. In fact, among the qualifications of an elder or "older man," the apostle Paul wrote that he must be "qualified to teach," be "a good teacher." (1 Tim. 3:2; *New English Bible*) Additionally, Jehovah's visible organization encourages each one of us to study privately, to read privately, and to do so as a family and with friends.

<sup>16</sup> To avoid the pitfalls into which Israel fell takes as much, if not more, discipline today than it did in the days when the nation of Israel was the favored people of God. Even as they left off serving Jehovah, neglecting the study of his Word and listening to it read, due to pressures from surrounding nations and peoples, so we are faced with similar circumstances. Israel had false religious worship on all sides, the worship of the Baal, calf worship, idolatry. We face false worship today throughout the earth and in similar ways. There are false teachings with which to contend. There is idolizing of the state or of institutions. There is degrading hedonism, the philosophy that pleasure is the chief good in life. It is easy to leave off studying the Word and commands of God and to cease governing our lives by his laws. We need to be continually reminding ourselves of the need of studying God's Word, faithfully adhering to its commands and seeking to please our Creator, Jehovah.

#### HELP YOUR FAMILY TO BE HAPPY

<sup>17</sup> On the family level it can be especially

16. (a) Name some pitfalls that caused Israel to neglect doing God's will. (b) How do Christians face similar obstacles?

17. What can help to make Bible reading most meaningful for those who do it?

helpful to read aloud and consider the meaning of the Word of God. Remember, in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah there was a reading aloud from the law of God. There was also a putting of meaning into it and a giving of understanding to the reading. This is an important feature of reading God's Word: getting the meaning and then understanding its message as it relates to us personally.—Neh. 8:8.

<sup>18</sup> To illustrate an advantage in reading aloud perhaps in a family group or among friends, and then giving consideration to what is read, getting the understanding of it, consider Hebrews 2:1-4. There we read: "That is why it is necessary for us to pay more than the usual attention to the things heard by us, that we may never drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved to be firm, and every transgression and disobedient act received a retribution in harmony with justice; how shall we escape if we have neglected a salvation of such greatness in that it began to be spoken through our Lord and was verified for us by those who heard him, while God joined in bearing witness with signs as well as portents and various powerful works and with distributions of holy spirit according to his will?" To get the meaning of these verses, let us review the material. There are a number of points that we can come to appreciate in this way.

<sup>19</sup> The opening words of chapter two say "that is why." This ties the information back to the first chapter of Hebrews. Hebrew Christians were to "pay more than the usual attention to the things heard." Why? Because they were spoken by God's Son, the one greater than all other prophets and even greater than angels. Next consider what happened to the Israelites for ignoring the 'word as transmitted by

angels,' the Law covenant. They were punished for their willful disobedience to the word, receiving "a retribution in harmony with justice." That being the case, can we expect anything less if we refuse to pay more than the usual attention to the Word of God? Verse four helps us to realize who is backing up the word of the Lord Jesus. And who is that? The Creator himself, Jehovah God, who, by his holy spirit, bore witness concerning the words and works of Jesus. The signs, portents and powerful works made possible by God established the authenticity and divine authorization of the work of Jesus. For example, look at the miracles Jesus and his apostles performed, healing the deaf, blind and lame, expelling demons, and even raising the dead. In these ways we have proof positive of the need to "pay more than the usual attention to the things heard."

<sup>20</sup> By doing reading in this manner, following the example of Ezra, the priests and Levites of ancient Israel, as well as Jesus and his apostles, we can see the tremendous assistance we can receive in getting the meaning and understanding of God's Word. Of course, there is one thing that it is vital for us to do, as Paul admonished Timothy: "Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright." (2 Tim. 2:15) We should always be alert to have the correct understanding of God's Word. We want to avoid twisting the Scriptures, as this would lead us to wrong conclusions and might stumble others. (2 Pet. 3:16) We also want to "shun empty speeches that violate what is holy; for they will advance to more and more ungodliness." (2 Tim. 2:16) Needless to

18, 19. Explain the meaning of the words of Hebrews 2:1-4.

20. (a) What is the advice of 2 Timothy 2:15? (b) What, then, should we avoid? (c) What assistance today do we have in "handling the word of the truth aright"?

say, this means being selective in our reading material. The Scriptures tell us that "to the making of many books there is no end, and much devotion to them is wearisome to the flesh." (Eccl. 12:12) Jehovah through his Son and the operation of the holy spirit has poured out upon his faithful servants on earth a superabundance of blessings and he has opened the minds and hearts of his "faithful and

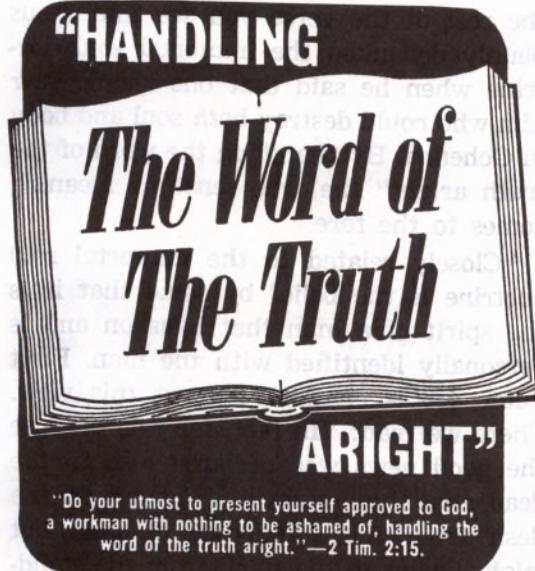
discreet slave" class to understand the true meaning of his Word. In turn, that faithful slave class passes on the precious truths to persons everywhere who will avail themselves of the treasures of truth. Our desire, then, should be truly to handle the Word of God aright. In the article that follows, let us examine how this can be done to our benefit as we read and study God's Word.

undertake a reading and a study of God's Word we want to do it in such a way that we get the true meaning and a clear understanding of what it says.

<sup>2</sup> Often the context or material surrounding a verse we may read will help us to understand and apply it in the proper way. We want to remember that the Bible is not a collection of disjointed, unrelated verses, gathered together at random, and appropriate for use under any circumstances to prove a point that we may feel to be correct. Rather, we must get the whole picture when we read the Word of God. We want to ask who is speaking, to whom, on what matter and if the text relates to a *specific* topic only. This is important if we are to 'handle the word of the truth aright.'

#### SOME EXAMPLES

<sup>3</sup> To illustrate, let us consider the words of Paul to Timothy at 2 Timothy 2:15. There he says: "Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright." These words were written to a person well grounded in God's truth and to one doing the will of God. We know this because of



"Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright." —2 Tim. 2:15.

THE Word of God is alive and powerful in our lives. Like a sword, it can divide the soul and spirit. (Heb. 4:12) It gets down to our reasons for what we do. It differentiates between what we may seem to be as a living soul, and what we really are in our heart, in our attitude and in our spirit. Since God's Word is likened to a sword, we want to be sure we use it skillfully. We want to be cautious that we do not use such a cutting instrument in a wrong way, but, as Paul counseled, that we use it "aright." When we

1. To what is God's Word likened, and so what attitude should we have in using it?

2. How should we not view the Bible, and so what questions would be appropriate when we read a portion of the Scriptures?

3. What background information aids one properly to understand 2 Timothy 2:15?

what Paul wrote to Timothy earlier, as recorded in the beginning of this letter. To Timothy, Paul said: "For I recollect the faith which is in you without any hypocrisy, and which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eu-nice, but which I am confident is also in you." (2 Tim. 1:1, 2, 5) In his words recorded at 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul was telling Timothy how to give instructions to Christians, those who were a part of God's congregation. Though it is true that a Christian should use the word of truth correctly when speaking with unbelievers, Paul was not in this case telling Timothy how to convert unbelievers to Christianity. This is evident by what Paul said to him concerning his teaching: "Just as I encouraged you to stay in Ephesus when I was about to go my way into Macedonia, so I do now, that you might command certain ones not to teach different doctrine." Here it is evident that some *within* the Christian congregation were teaching different doctrines, were not "handling the word of the truth aright." Paul also counseled Timothy: "The things that you heard from me with the support of many witnesses, these things commit to faithful men, who, in turn, will be adequately qualified to teach others." (1 Tim. 1:3; 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:2) Again, the mention of committing the important information to faithful men who could also teach others in a qualified way gives further evidence that Timothy was dealing with those within the Christian congregation. He was to use the truth to benefit and guide his brothers.

#### **AVOID DISTORTING SCRIPTURES TO PROVE A POINT**

<sup>10</sup>\* It is imperative that we avoid willfully misapplying a text to prove our point. The

clergy of Christendom are often guilty of this very thing. Take, for example, Matthew 10:28. We read there: "And do not become fearful of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be in fear of him that can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." Clergymen will point to the first part of Jesus' words to prove that the soul is immortal and cannot die. Is that what Jesus really said? It may seem like it, if you stop reading in the middle of the verse. But if you read the rest of the verse you see that Jesus plainly debunked the immortal soul doctrine when he said that one should fear him who could destroy *both* soul and body in Gehenna. By "handling the word of the truth aright" the true sense or meaning comes to the fore.

<sup>5</sup> Closely related to the immortal soul doctrine is the belief by some that it is the spirit of a man that lives on and is personally identified with the man. First Peter 4:6 is cited to support this view. There we read: "In fact, for this purpose the good news was declared also to the dead, that they might be judged as to the flesh from the standpoint of men but might live as to the spirit from the standpoint of God." Believers in the idea that the spirit as an intelligent being survives the death of the body contend that Peter here gave evidence of this when he mentioned the good news as being declared to the dead. Is this so? In order to 'handle God's word aright,' we must let it speak for itself. Was Peter there referring to persons who were physically dead? Since the physically dead are "conscious of nothing at all" (Eccl. 9:5), these dead mentioned by Peter are the same as those Je-

4. (a) Show to what extent the clergy of Christendom go in misapplying Matthew 10:28. (b) What is the real truth of this scripture as it pertains to the soul of man?

5. (a) How do some interpret 1 Peter 4:6? (b) What is the true meaning of the verse, and what additional Scriptural proof can you cite?

sus spoke of when he said: "Let the dead bury their dead," and those referred to by the apostle Paul when he wrote: "It is you God made alive though you were dead in your trespasses and sins." Anyone living who is dead in the sight of Jehovah can come to life in a spiritual sense by hearing the word of God, repenting and following the Lord Jesus. The hope for the literal dead is the resurrection and the opportunity then to hear the good news and to be judged.—Matt. 8:22; Eph. 2:1.

<sup>6</sup> Jehovah's people, too, need to be cautious in the applying of scriptures so that they correctly present God's Word in their preaching and teaching activity. As an example, take the statement that is sometimes made that one of the names given to Satan the Devil is Lucifer. Reference may be made by some to Isaiah 14:12-16. According to the *Authorized Version (King James)*, verse twelve says: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" The word "Lucifer" is a translation of the Hebrew word *heh-lel'*, "shining one." *Heh-lel'*, as here used, is not a personal name or a title, but, rather, a term describing the brilliant position taken by Babylon's dynasty of kings in the line of Nebuchadnezzar. It would not be correct to say that Satan the Devil is the one here called Lucifer as though it were one of his names. The expression here refers primarily to the king of Babylon, for, according to verse four, this is a "proverbial saying against the king of Babylon." Also, verses fifteen and sixteen of this chapter fourteen say that this "shining one" (Lucifer) is to be brought down to

Sheol, which is mankind's common grave, not an abiding place for Satan the Devil. Furthermore, the fact is that those seeing this "shining one" brought into this condition say: "Is this *the man* that was agitating the earth, that was making kingdoms rock?" Satan is not a man but an invisible spirit creature. Thus, while the king of Babylon reflected the attitude of his father, the Devil, still the word Lucifer was not a name given to Satan the Devil. By "handling the word of the truth aright" we are prepared to speak the clear sayings of God as we have them on the printed pages of the Bible.

<sup>7</sup> However, there is no injustice done to the Word of God when his servants use properly selected texts from various parts of the Bible to prove doctrinal points. While it is true that opposers of God's Word at times charge that the Witnesses deviously use scattered texts in the Bible to prove their points, we well know from a study of the Bible that Jesus and his apostles used selected texts to prove certain basic truths. For example, Jesus, when being tempted in the wilderness at the end of his forty days of fasting, referred to various passages of God's Word to rebut the arguments of the Devil. (Matt. 4:3-10; Deut. 8:3; 6:13, 16; 5:9) The apostle Paul also employed this technique with the Jews when teaching in the synagogue. The account in Acts 17:2, 3 says: "So according to Paul's custom he went inside to them, and for three sabbaths he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and *proving by references* that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying: 'This

6. (a) What explanation of Isaiah 14:12-16 has been given? (b) What is the Scriptural explanation? (c) Thus who is the Lucifer of Isaiah 14:12-16, and whose attitude does he reflect?

7. (a) Why is no injustice done to the Bible by the use of properly selected texts to prove particular points, and whose example do we have in doing so? (b) Show how the apostle Paul might have proved by references to the Hebrew Scriptures that Christ was to suffer and to rise from the dead?

is the Christ, this Jesus whom I am publishing to you.' "—See Psalm 22:7, 8; Isaiah 50:6; 53:3-5; Psalm 16:8-10.

#### MEANING OF TEXTS OFTEN HIDDEN IN CONTEXT

<sup>9</sup> For texts to be deliberately misapplied, though, is to do gross injustice to the Scriptures. We do not want to be guilty of such misapplication even in more or less minor matters. As an illustration, in speaking with someone about the resurrection we might say that the Bible definitely proves that the wicked are not going to be resurrected. We may then read to them this Bible verse: "The remembrance of the righteous one is due for a blessing, but the very name of the wicked ones will rot." (Prov. 10:7) Now, it is true that those whom Jehovah considers grossly wicked, not covered by the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus, will not have a resurrection. However, Proverbs 10:7 does not prove this determination by Jehovah. Why not? When reading the context of this chapter in Proverbs, it is noted that a series of contrasts is outlined: a wise son and a stupid son, a hardworking person and one slack of hand, a son with insight and a son acting shamefully. But the resurrection and Gehenna are not there being discussed. So it would not be appropriate to say this scripture deals with that matter. Rather, the point to be made is that the name or reputation of wicked ones is not a pleasant memory, but sickening, putrid. To prove that some will not be resurrected, it would be better to refer to Scripture texts on Gehenna, the second death.—Matt. 23:33; Rev. 21:8; see also Matthew 25:46.

8. (a) Why is misapplication of the Scriptures to be avoided? (b) Show what the real meaning of Proverbs 10:7 is, and why. (c) What scriptures would it be wise to use in discussing who is not entitled to a resurrection?

<sup>10</sup> This making sure of matters by reading and getting the sense of the context in no way hinders one in explaining the truth. To the contrary, it strengthens one's argument based on the Bible, because it becomes readily evident to the one being instructed that what is being taught is really what the Bible says. The Bible is the inspired Word of Almighty God, and to get his mind on matters, with the assistance of the holy spirit, is to benefit from the wisdom of the Creator as set out in his written Word. Jehovah had something in mind in placing a text in the Bible. He knows precisely what we need and so he provides that which assists us and aids us to grow spiritually in discernment and in the accurate knowledge of him.

<sup>11</sup> Our relationship with Jehovah should be as his children. As such, how much do we truly appreciate his love and care for us? Do we 'handle his word aright' in regard to what it says about our personal prayers to him and do we understand what his Word tells us concerning how he wants us to feel toward him? Many have read the words of 1 John 4:18 concerning perfect love and have made the wrong application of those words. The Bible there says: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love throws fear outside, because fear exercises a restraint. Indeed, he that is under fear has not been made perfect in love." At first glance some have concluded that they will just never be able to be perfect in love, because fear causes them to walk around or to run from danger whenever possible. But is that the kind of fear the apostle is here talking about?

<sup>12</sup> A reading of the context of 1 John

9. Why does insistence on considering the context of a scripture not hinder one in explaining the truth?  
10, 11. (a) What meaning might one easily ascribe to 1 John 4:18? (b) What does the context establish as to the true meaning? (c) How does this agree with Psalm 139?

4:18 will help us to see the special meaning of this verse of Scripture. The previous verse shows that the discussion by John is a continuation of the discussion on having "freeness of speech." He is not here speaking about freeness of speech in preaching the Kingdom good news. Rather, he speaks of freeness of speech as regards one's speech toward God. This is shown in the third chapter of First John, verses 19-21. So the person in whom God's love reaches its full expression feels free to come to his heavenly Father in full confidence. His imperfection and sinful condition do not deter him from coming to Jehovah to ask for help in doing the will of Jehovah. As a child can come to a loving father in full confidence that his father will understand him and help him, even when he has made a mistake, so should one feel about one's heavenly Father, Jehovah. One should feel free to approach him with any problem one may have, to ask for assistance in doing the will of one's Father. One should have no morbid fear of the heavenly Father, that Jehovah will exact absolute justice from an imperfect, sinful creature, that he will condemn one outright for one's sinful condition of mind and heart. This is not to say that one should revel in doing wrong and then go to the heavenly Father to seek forgiveness, thus taking advantage of Jehovah's mercy. But it does mean that one need not fear to go to one's heavenly Father to seek to straighten out that which is crooked, to correct one's imperfect thoughts or actions, knowing that Jehovah knows all there is to know about one.—Ps. 139:1-3, 15-18, 23, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Having this correct understanding of 1 John 4:18, one comes to realize the excelling value of one's spiritual relationship

12. How does a proper understanding of 1 John 4:18 benefit us individually?

with Jehovah one's Creator. One speaks from one's heart to Jehovah and asks direction upon one's life, that it might be pleasing to Jehovah. Thus our being "made perfect in love" means that love of God in us is not in any way undeveloped, but, rather, because of this perfect love we are moved continuously to do his will wholeheartedly with full confidence in our heavenly Creator and Father. This, in turn, gives us great freeness in our approach to God through prayer.—Eph. 3:12; Heb. 4:16; 1 John 5:14.

#### HANDLING PROPHETIC SCRIPTURE ARIGHT

<sup>13</sup> As we study God's Word and become more and more conversant with its message of beauty and its meaning in our lives, we well realize that to understand it in the way Jehovah has purposed is enriching and rewarding. How often we have quoted from the Hebrew Scripture prophecies regarding the blessings in store for mankind in God's righteous new order, and rightly so! But often we may have failed to see that many of the prophecies have already undergone a fulfillment on a miniature scale with ancient Israel. Take, for example, the words of Isaiah 35:1, 7, where we read: "The wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom as the saffron. And the heat-parched ground will have become as a reedy pool, and the thirsty ground as springs of water. In the abiding place of jackals, a resting-place for them, there will be green grass with reeds and papyrus plants." The context of this scripture shows plainly that it applied to the returning Jewish exiles in the days of Governor Zerubbabel. Verse 10 says

13. (a) What is it important to bear in mind about many Hebrew Scripture prophecies, and how is this shown in connection with the prophecy at Isaiah 35:1, 7? (b) Of what are prophecy fulfillments on Jehovah's people of ancient times a sure guarantee?

that "the very ones redeemed by Jehovah will return and certainly come to Zion." It was his purpose to make that land a miniature paradise for them, and this would require that he make the wilderness and waterless region, as well as the desert plain, to become as ready pools and springs of water. By proper application of these sayings of God, we well realize that his performing of miracles in behalf of his chosen people of ancient time is a guarantee of a much greater further fulfillment of such promises under the rule of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is readily apparent that Jehovah will indeed pour out a blessing on this earth under the Kingdom rule of Christ Jesus, making not only the desert "blossom as the saffron," but opening blind eyes and deaf ears and restoring health to the lame, even as this prophecy says.—Isa. 35:5, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Without question we can say that the "word of God is alive and exerts power." (Heb. 4:12) God is alive. He speaks to mankind through the pages of his living Bible, thereby giving power to his servants and understanding of deep truths concerning himself and his purpose for mankind. Every Christian witness of Jehovah God should want to handle that word aright, to be able to use it effectively in teaching others and in cutting down false religious teachings that have darkened the minds and hearts of untold millions held captive to Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. Says Paul to Timothy: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the

14. Why should all true Christians want to handle God's Word of truth aright?

man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work." —2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

<sup>15</sup> To use God's Word aright one has to read it and study it, looking for the hidden treasures contained therein. Such understanding and appreciation does not come automatically, but requires hard work and diligent seeking. Says the proverb: "My son, if you will receive my sayings and treasure up my own commandments with yourself, so as to pay attention to wisdom with your ear, that you may incline your heart to discernment; if, moreover, you call out for understanding itself and you give forth your voice for discernment itself, if you keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures you keep searching for it, in that case, you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God." (Prov. 2:1-5) From what we have considered in these paragraphs, it is evident that we should want to know why things were said as they were in God's Word and what application can be made of the words. We should always seek reasons for the way explanations are given and seek to handle the Word of God aright.

<sup>16</sup> The succeeding article will show that there are entire Bible books written with a certain people in mind and with a certain message to be conveyed. In handling this precious word of God in the right manner, it will be to our advantage to seek out information on this matter, to know the background, purpose and value of the inspired words.

15. To understand and appreciate God's Word, what effort should we put forth?

16. What further information will assist us to handle God's Word aright?



# WHY WAS IT Written In That Way?

"Make me understand, that I may observe your law and that I may keep it with the whole heart."

—Ps. 119:34.

**H**AVE you not found that often times when you need encouragement, truths from God's storehouse, the Holy Bible, have given you the strength to face personal trials and problems? It seems that all of us have had this occur in our lives as Christians.

For example, many today have been through periods of discouragement when opposers have spoken slightly of God's people and have even resorted to violence because of their being Christian witnesses of Jehovah who have stood up for the truth. Many who have been associated with true Christianity for fifty or sixty years well remember the unkind remarks and actions of neighbors and others during World War I, and thereafter, against Jehovah's witnesses. How often in derisive terms many were called Russellites and Millennial Dawners! Some were beaten, tarred and feathered, imprisoned, spoken of abusively, whipped and spit upon. Through it all, Jehovah's Christian witnesses have continued on doing the work commanded by their God, Jehovah. How have they been

1. Is the need for encouragement a common problem, and where can the encouragement often be found?
2. What discouragement have many witnesses of Jehovah faced over the years, and how have they been able to stand firm in the face of it?

able to do so? In part because of the understanding, encouragement and strength they have received from the Word of God and from the publications printed by the "faithful and discreet slave" in these days of wickedness.

And, really, that is the purpose of God's Word, to build up the servants of Jehovah. For that reason when one reads the various books of the Bible one should have in mind background information about the book and its writer. The reader of the Holy Scriptures would do well to ask himself, 'Why was it written in that way?'

Let us take a book of the Bible and spend some time determining the reasons why it is written in the style and with the arguments that are used. Our discussion will focus on the apostle Paul's letter to the Christians in Jerusalem; it is commonly called the letter to the Hebrews, in the Christian Greek Scriptures. (Heb. 13:22) By considering the circumstances existing nineteen hundred years ago when Paul penned his letter, we will be helped to understand and appreciate why he wrote what he did to strengthen and comfort God's people.

## FIRST-CENTURY OPINIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

Let us go back in time to approximately the year 61 C.E., and to the city of Jerusalem. It is about twenty-eight years since the death of Jesus on a torture stake just outside the walls of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a holy city to the Jews. From all outward appearances, Jerusalem weathered the days of the despised Jesus from Nazareth. The claim is that the religion of the Jews is the religion of antiquity, stretching back to their forefather Abraham. The spiritual leaders of

3. What should our view be when we read the Bible?
4. On what Bible book in particular are we now going to focus our attention?
5. What is the religious situation prevailing in Jerusalem about the year 61 C.E.?

the Jews, the rabbis, are held in high esteem by the people. They are given prestige and honor. They have seated themselves in the seat of Moses and have the most prominent place at evening meals and the front seats in the synagogues, and they receive the greetings in the market-places and are called "Rabbi" by men. They, indeed, are a part of the religious power structure of the day.—Matt. 23:6, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Also in the city of Jerusalem are comparatively few persons belonging to a hated sect called Christians or "The Way." (Acts 9:2; 19:9; 22:4) They are viewed with scorn by the Jewish religious leaders and their followers. They are persecuted and berated. What is more, they are primarily of Jewish birth and therefore doubly hated for having left the Jews' religion to become followers of Jesus, the "so-called" Christ. So great is the hatred for Christians that when the apostle Paul had been in the city some years earlier his mere appearance in the temple had stirred up a riot, with the religious Jews screaming at the top of their voices: "Take such a man away from the earth, for he was not fit to live!" (Acts 22:22) More than forty Jews bound themselves with a curse neither to eat nor to drink until they had done away with Paul. (Acts 23:12-15) In this atmosphere of religious fanaticism and hatred of Christians the congregation had to live, preach and keep itself firm in the faith. How they needed encouragement and a sound knowledge and understanding of Christ and the way in which he fulfilled the law of Moses in order that they might keep from falling back to Judaism and the observance of the Mosaic law! Certainly Paul knew what they needed. He knew personally of the trials they were undergoing.

6. (a) How were the Christians in that city viewed by the Jewish religious leaders? (b) What experience did the apostle Paul have when he was in the city not many years previous? (c) What was the great need of the small group of Christians in Jerusalem?

<sup>7</sup> Think for a moment of some of the arguments and opposition those early Jewish Christians had to face. First of all, far be it from the Jewish religious leaders and their followers to let those hated Christians think they had God's favor. Was it not the Jews that had the tangible evidence of God's blessing? Was it not true that God dealt with the Jews through angels? Surely, for says the book of Moses: "Jehovah's angel appeared to [Moses] in a flame of fire in the midst of a thorn-bush." Later Jehovah said: "Here I am sending an angel ahead of you to keep you on the road and to bring you into the place that I have prepared." (Ex. 3:2; 23:20) Why, the Jews may have boasted that Moses even spoke with God mouth to mouth. Furthermore, look at the magnificent temple, with the Holy and Most Holy compartments. Observe its striking beauty, its strength, its firm foundation! That is what the Jews had! And another thing: think of the Jewish priesthood! Why, it ran all the way back to Aaron and his sons, members of the tribe of Levi. The high priest was a descendant of this special line. The Jews had the Law covenant, given to Moses by God himself. The divine kingdom was the possession of the Jews; and Jerusalem, why, Jerusalem was the throne city from which God's rule was to go forth.

<sup>8</sup> Now look at the Christians in Jerusalem. What did they have? From the viewpoint of the Jewish leaders, the Christians had nothing by comparison. Their leader Jesus was dead, and had died as a common criminal. Who was he? He had no prominence as far as the Jewish leaders were concerned. He was just the son of a lowly carpenter, and from Nazareth at

7. List some of the arguments the Jewish leaders and their followers might have used against the Christians.  
8, 9. (a) How might the Jewish leaders have berated the founder of Christianity and his followers? (b) With what may they well have contrasted the Christians themselves and their humble meeting places?

that. As for education, he had none of the formal training in the advanced rabbinical schools. How he lacked in knowledge and education from the Jews' point of view when compared with what their teachers and instructors knew and had been taught! And more than that, among his followers there were very few learned men. Fishermen, tax collectors, and even Gentiles comprised his followers for the most part, and those Gentiles were certainly not of the natural seed of Abraham in the eyes of the Jewish leaders. How could the Christians think for one moment that they had the favor of God and that God was dealing with them? The Jews felt they were the ones chosen by God, for it was they who were the offspring of Abraham. Added to that, the Christians met in upper rooms or other out-of-the-way places, while the Jews had their beautiful temple at which to assemble.

<sup>9</sup> No doubt, arguments such as these, and many others, were used against Jewish Christians. How they needed encouragement and understanding of the situation! If only someone would know of their need and send comfort and help!

#### COUNTERARGUMENT FAVORS CHRIST OVER MOSES

<sup>10</sup> Of course, Jehovah God in heaven knew of their plight. By inspiration he caused the apostle Paul to be concerned with the circumstances they faced. And so Paul wrote to those faithful ones in Jerusalem, and the book of Hebrews contains his answer to the many charges that undoubtedly were made against first-century Christianity by its enemies.

<sup>11</sup> Taking the very claims of the Jews,

Paul shows the superiority of the Christian system and its priesthood when compared with Judaism. It was important for him to do this. Those Christians in Jerusalem were, no doubt, for the most part of Jewish birth. They were well acquainted with the law of Moses and the arguments of the Jewish leaders. For that reason Paul had the obligation to show them the counterarguments, the truth of matters and to expose the falsity of the charges laid against them by the Jewish religious leaders. For example, it was true that the law of Moses had been transmitted through angels. But how do angels compare with the Lord Jesus? Here is what Paul wrote at Hebrews 1:4-6: "So he [Jesus] has become better than the angels, to the extent that he has inherited a name more excellent than theirs. For example, to which one of the angels did he ever say: 'You are my son; I, today, I have become your father'? And again: 'I myself shall become his father, and he himself will become my son'? But when he again brings his Firstborn into the inhabited earth, he says: 'And let all God's angels do obeisance to him.'" Really, then, Paul points out, angels are servants, but Jesus is the Son of God.

<sup>12</sup> But what about the fact that God spoke mouth to mouth with Moses? There can be no doubt that this was a significant thing. But, concerning Jesus Christ, Paul writes: "For the latter [that is, Jesus] is counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who constructs it [the house] has more honor than the house. . . . And Moses as an attendant was faithful in all the house of that One . . . but Christ was faithful as a Son over the house of that One." Here, in effect, Paul was saying, 'Brothers, who is greater in a house—an attendant, such as Moses was, or the Son of the Owner of the house, as Jesus Christ is?' How strengthening it

10. Who knew of these problems facing Christians, and so who was inspired to write to upbuild them?

11, 12. (a) What line of argument did Paul now take, and why was this appropriate? (b) How did Paul show Jesus' superiority when compared with angels? (c) With Moses?

must have been to the Jewish Christians living there in Jerusalem to have this understanding of matters!—Heb. 3:3-6.

#### SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST AS HIGH PRIEST

<sup>13</sup> Paul now proceeds to another argument, that of the beautiful material temple in Jerusalem. And, indeed, it was beautiful and costly. But of what significance would a material temple be when compared to being in the very presence of God? It was King Solomon who built the first beautiful temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem back in the eleventh century before our Common Era, and at its dedication he said that Jehovah would not truly dwell in that man-made edifice. Rather, he said that the heaven of the heavens could not contain the Almighty God Jehovah, much less the temple he had built! (1 Ki. 8:27) So, to be in the very presence of Jehovah in heaven would be far, far grander than to serve in any earthly temple. Therefore Paul writes of Christ Jesus that he “passed through the heavens” into the presence of his Father, Jehovah. (Heb. 4:14) And as for the Aaronic priesthood, which in those days was serving in Jerusalem’s temple, Paul compares it with the priesthood of Christ and shows the latter to be far superior, for it is after the manner of Melchizedek. Paul’s words at Hebrews 5:5, 6 were: “Christ did not glorify himself by becoming a high priest, but was glorified by him who spoke with reference to him: ‘You are my son; I, today, I have become your father.’ . . . ‘You are a priest *forever* according to the manner of Melchizedek.’ ” Yes, a priest forever, and it was something dependent, not on any inheritance of sinful flesh, but on an oath from God. Paul’s words on this matter are recorded in Hebrews 7:19-22:

“For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in besides of a better hope did, through which we are drawing near to God. Also, to the extent that it was not without a sworn oath, . . . to that extent also Jesus has become the one given in pledge of a better covenant.” And as for continuing on without the necessity of a successor, Paul then says: “Furthermore, many had to become priests in succession [under the Jewish Law] because of being prevented by death from continuing as such, but he [Jesus] because of continuing alive forever has his priesthood *without* any successors. Consequently he is able also to save *completely* those who are approaching God through him, because he is always alive to plead for them.”—Heb. 7:23-25.

<sup>14</sup> Certainly these were strong arguments from their beloved apostle Paul to strengthen the Christians’ position and to aid them to remain firm in the faith. But that was not all. Paul continues showing the superiority of Jesus as high priest in Jehovah’s heavenly temple. He strikes to the very heart of the situation in giving additional arguments to the Christians. He compares the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus with those sacrifices offered by the Aaronic priesthood in which the Jewish leaders took such pride. In verses 26 to 28 of chapter seven Paul writes: “For such a high priest as this was suitable for us, loyal, guileless, undefiled, separated from the sinners, and become higher than the heavens. He does not need daily, as those high priests do, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for those of the people: (for this he did once for *all time* when he offered himself up;) for the Law appoints men high priests having weakness, but the word of the sworn oath that came after the Law appoints a Son, who is per-

13. (a) What could be better than the material temple in Jerusalem, and where was Christ Jesus? (b) How did Paul show the superiority of Christ’s priesthood when compared with Aaron’s?

14. Show how the superiority of Christ’s sacrifice must have brought encouragement to the Christians reading his letter.

fected forever." Think of the encouragement those words brought to the faithful ones in Jerusalem. Yes, Christ a high priest who offered his own perfect life for mankind is by God's sworn oath now a priest forever without successors.

#### NEW COVENANT

#### MAKES OLD ONE OBSOLETE

<sup>15</sup> Paul continues on to another argument now that will also benefit the Christians, and that concerns the Law covenant mediated by Moses as compared with the better covenant mediated by Christ between God and his faithful ones on this earth. Notice Paul's argument at Hebrews 8:7-13: "For if that first covenant had been faultless, no place would have been sought for a second." Had the first covenant been faultless? No, for it was Jehovah himself who said: "I will conclude with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant; not according to the covenant that I made with their forefathers in the day of my taking hold of their hand to bring them forth out of the land of Egypt, because they did not continue in my covenant." "For this is the covenant that I shall covenant with the house of Israel after those days," says Jehovah. "I will put my laws in their mind, and in their hearts I shall write them. And I will become their God, and they themselves will become my people." "In his saying 'a new covenant,'" Paul reasons, God "has made the former one obsolete. Now that which is made obsolete and growing old is near to vanishing away."—Compare Jeremiah 31:31-33.

<sup>16</sup> Think of how encouraging these words must have been: "Now that which is made obsolete and growing old is near to vanishing away." Who was it that could now

15. What is the thrust of Paul's argument in Hebrews 8:7-13 concerning a better covenant, and what is the logical conclusion concerning the old covenant?

16. Who now had reason to be encouraged? Who had reason to be discouraged? Why?

be happy and not sad and mournful? Why, the Christians, for they were adhering to a covenant that was replacing the obsolete one, the Law covenant. The sad and mournful ones would prove to be the religious boasters who were fighting Christianity. That on which they were depending no longer was God's way of dealing with his people. His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, resurrected to heavenly glory, had mediated a new and better covenant founded on better and more lasting promises, and validated by a more precious sacrifice, his own shed blood.

#### KINGDOM ESTABLISHED ON HEAVENLY MOUNT ZION

<sup>17</sup> But what about any claim that the Kingdom right belonged with the Jews and that Jerusalem was God's city from which divine rule would go forth? How did Paul handle this argument in his letter to the Hebrews? Very interestingly, he begins his argument, found in chapter twelve, verses 18-27, in this way: "For you have not approached that which can be felt and which has been set aflame with fire, and a dark cloud and thick darkness and a tempest." True, Christians had not approached ancient Mount Sinai, where the Law covenant for the nation of Israel was given. They had not approached something they could feel and from which they could see the flame of fire shooting forth. No, but beginning in verse 22, Paul's words are: "You have approached a Mount Zion and a city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, and myriads of angels, in general assembly, and the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens, and God the Judge of all, . . . and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant."

17. (a) In contrast with Moses' approaching Mount Sinai for the Law covenant, what were those Christians approaching? (b) How does heavenly Jerusalem compare with earthly Jerusalem?

Yes, that is what they had approached, the real seat of power and government, not earthly, but heavenly Jerusalem, with God, myriads of angels, the congregation of the firstborn and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. By comparison earthly Jerusalem, also Mount Sinai, as well as the temple and priesthood of the Jews, paled into insignificance.

<sup>18</sup> And how sturdy, long lasting, firmly founded are that Mount Zion and heavenly Jerusalem? We are not left in doubt, for Paul adds: "Wherefore, seeing that we are to receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us continue to have undeserved kindness, through which we may acceptably render God sacred service with godly fear and awe." (Heb. 12:28) There would be no shaking of that kingdom as earthly Jerusalem was severely shaken for seventy years, from 607 to 537 B.C.E., and would again be shaken in the not-too-distant future by the Roman armies under Titus.

<sup>19</sup> How comforting and inspiring Paul's words must have been to those early Jewish Christians! Nineteen centuries later, the words are still alive and filled with meaning for us Christians in this twentieth century.

<sup>20</sup> So, at a time when Jewish opposers were relying on antiquity, material wealth, power, splendor of rites, ceremonies and the wisdom of this world, Christians were

18. (a) How long is heavenly Jerusalem to endure?  
(b) What already had happened to earthly Jerusalem and would happen a second time?

19, 20. What were those Jewish Christians to do now, and to what had Paul appealed in his arguments?

to grow in faith, in the assured expectation of things hoped for, in the evident demonstration of realities, though not beheld. How encouraging that letter must have been to God's faithful ones about the year 61 C.E.! Indeed, "The Way" to life with eternal blessings was clearly set before them. And Paul so wrote his letter that it would appeal to their reasoning and logic as natural-born Jews and cause them to be built up in the faith. The words of Paul in the book of Hebrews are likewise comforting for present-day Christians.

<sup>21</sup> To benefit fully from the Scriptures, we need to appreciate why they are written as they are. With the help of such books as *Aid to Bible Understanding*, as well as "*All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial*" and many other publications, we indeed have a storehouse of knowledge to help us to know how and why each book of the Bible is so written. With such a broadened outlook we certainly can become equipped for every good work that God may give us to perform. As we have done with the Bible book of Hebrews we can do with the other sixty-five books comprising God's Word, the Holy Bible. How appropriate are the words found in the concluding chapter of the letter to the Hebrews for all Christians today: "May the God of peace . . . equip you with every good thing to do his will, performing in us through Jesus Christ that which is well-pleasing in his sight!"—Heb. 13:20, 21.

21. As has been illustrated in our lesson, how can all of us increase our appreciation for God's Word, and for what reason?

## How True!

- In the book "*The Nations Shall Know that I Am Jehovah*"—*How?*, one of the many reasons given for Jehovah's wrath against Christendom is: "Jehovah hates being treated by religious hypocrites like a God who can be fooled." How true!

# THE WILDERNESS TRANSFORMED

into a

## Paradise

**N**O PART of the earth today is a paradise, free from all pollution and danger. Air and water are being polluted at an alarming rate. Vast areas of land are being transformed into eyesores. Fierce competition, rivalry and hatred are threatening man's happiness and welfare. Accidents, sickness and death contribute their share to the suffering and sadness that have long been the lot of the human family.

Will it ever be otherwise? Yes, the Holy Bible gives us the heart-cheering assurance that this earth will become a paradise free from all sickness, sorrow, pain and death. (Luke 23:43; Rev. 21:3-5) The One who has promised paradise, Jehovah God, has both the power and the wisdom to bring it about. In his loving-kindness he has also provided a record of his past dealings in fulfillment of his promises. This record in the Bible gives us a positive guarantee that nothing will prevent Jehovah's purpose from being realized.

The bringing about of a paradise is nothing new for Jehovah God. He placed the first humans, Adam and Eve, in a paradise in a section of the earth known as "Eden." Centuries later he saw to it that the land of Judah, which had become a



desolated wilderness after the Babylonian conquest, was transformed into a "garden of Eden," a paradise. And in this century Jehovah God has blessed his devoted people with a spiritual paradise.

### THE LAND OF JUDAH TRANSFORMED

It was over twenty-five centuries ago that the land of Judah became a desolate waste, without man or domestic animal. The transformation of that land into a paradise was not an easy thing. Surrounding nations did not want to see this happen. Nevertheless, Jehovah God said to his prophet Ezekiel:

"Prophesy concerning the mountains of Israel, and you must say, 'O mountains of Israel, hear the word of Jehovah. This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: "For the reason that the enemy has said against you, 'Aha! Even the high places of old time—as a possession it has become ours.'" Therefore prophesy, and you must say, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: "For the reason, even for the reason that there has been a lying desolate and a snapping at you from all sides, in order for you to become a possession to the remaining ones of the nations and you continue being talked about with the tongue and there is a bad report among people, therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the

word of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah! This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said to the mountains and to the hills, to the stream beds and to the valleys and to the devastated places that were laid desolate and to the abandoned cities that have come to be for plunder and for ridicule to the remaining ones of the nations that are round about; therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, 'Certainly in the fire of my zeal I will speak against the remaining ones of the nations and against Edom, all of it, those who have given my land to themselves as a possession with the rejoicing of all the heart, with scorn in the soul, for the sake of its pasture ground and for the plunder.''"—Ezek. 36:1-5.

The enemy nations around the desolate land of Judah had their own selfish purpose regarding the vacant territory. But Jehovah had another purpose, and his purpose was going to be realized. The covetous nations round about were not going to get the land. Their greedy efforts would be blocked in that they themselves would experience calamity. No Edomites or other nationalities would be allowed to plunder the abandoned cities of Judah and use the land as pasture ground. Eventually Jehovah would see to it that the land, the "soil of Israel," would be transformed from a state of desolation and flourish like a paradise with repatriated Israelites and their domestic animals. Jehovah told Ezekiel:

"Prophesy concerning the soil of Israel, and you must say to the mountains and to the hills, to the stream beds and to the valleys, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said: "Look! I myself in my zeal and in my rage must speak, for the reason that humiliation by nations is what you have borne.'" Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, 'I myself have raised my hand in an oath that the nations that you have round about—they themselves will bear their own humiliation. And you yourselves, O mountains of Israel, will give forth your very own boughs and bear your own fruitage for my people Israel, for they have drawn near to the point of coming in. For here I am in favor of you, and I shall

certainly turn toward you, and you will actually be cultivated and sown with seed. And I will multiply upon you humankind, and the whole house of Israel, all of it, and the cities must become inhabited, and the devastated places themselves will be rebuilt. Yes, I will multiply upon you humankind and animalkind, and they will certainly multiply and become fruitful, and I shall actually cause you to be inhabited as in your former condition and I will do more good than in your initial state; and you will have to know that I am Jehovah. And upon you I will cause humankind to walk, even my people Israel, and they must take possession of you, and you must become a hereditary possession to them, and you will not bereave them again of any more children.'"—Ezek. 36:6-12.

Back in the days of the prophet Ezekiel the fulfillment of Jehovah's sworn oath was something yet to be sought and searched for, with decades of Babylonian exile remaining. As Jehovah declared through Ezekiel:

"This is what I shall yet let myself be searched for by the house of Israel to do for them: I shall multiply them like a flock with men. Like a flock of holy persons, like the flock of Jerusalem in her festal seasons, thus the cities that had been a waste will become full of a flock of men; and people will have to know that I am Jehovah."—Ezek. 36:37, 38.

That repeopling of the devastated cities of the land of Judah needed to be searched for from Jehovah by those exiled Jews who repented and who desired the fulfillment of Jehovah's merciful promises. A number of those exiled Jews did survive and return to their homeland to see the realization of Jehovah's promises. In 537 B.C.E., the conqueror of Babylon, Cyrus, issued a decree that permitted Jewish exiles to return to their homeland and rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. (Ezra 3:1, 2, 12) With the Israelites back in their cities and starting rebuilding and planting work, the nations had to acknowledge that Jehovah had brought about a marvelous transformation. It was just as

Jehovah had declared through Ezekiel: "People will certainly say: 'That land yonder which was laid desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the cities that were a waste and that were laid desolate and that were torn down are fortified; they have become inhabited.'" (Ezek. 36:33-36) The Edomites, however, eventually became a displaced people and, after the second destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., ceased to exist as a people.

#### A SPIRITUAL PARADISE PRODUCED

In modern times the anointed remnant of spiritual Israel, Jehovah's Christian witnesses, have undergone experiences comparable to those of the natural Israelites in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E. During World War I they experienced religious persecution and oppression and came into a state of captivity. Jehovah God allowed this to happen because of error on the part of the remnant of spiritual Israel. But it was not his purpose for their spiritual estate to remain desolate, with Christendom taking over the whole religious field during the post-war period.

Like Edom and other nations that anciently surrounded Israel, Christendom experienced great humiliation in 1919 C.E. This was because the humiliating things that she had predicted and hoped for against the persecuted remnant of spiritual Israelites failed to be realized. In that year this spiritual estate began to become alive with spiritual Israelites.

While church membership and seminary enrollments have noticeably declined in recent years, Jehovah's Christian witnesses from 1919 onward have enjoyed marvelous increases until today. The "mountains" of their spiritual estate have become alive with many devoted worshipers of Jehovah God. By the year 1935 the "great crowd" of the Fine Shepherd's

"other sheep" began to get associated with the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites and thus became active upon the symbolic "mountains of Israel." Even the worldwide persecutions during World War II did not bereave the symbolic "mountains of Israel" of its population or even reduce it. While back in 1928 only 44,080 were publicly proclaiming the "good news" of God's kingdom, in 1972 the number of such proclaimers reached a peak of 1,658,990 in 28,407 congregations in 208 lands.

From 1919 C.E. onward the congregations of the restored remnant of spiritual Israelites were like the cities of ancient Israel. They became "fortified" especially by the better organization of them for activity in carrying out Jesus' prophecy to preach the good news of God's established kingdom. (Matt. 24:14) They became more fully fortified in the year 1938 when the centralized theocratic rule, rather than the local congregational rule, of organization was applied to all the congregations around the globe.

Truly Jehovah God has filled the spiritual estate of his Christian witnesses with a vast "flock of men." (Ezek. 36:11, 37, 38) As the twelve tribes of Israel used to flock to Jerusalem and its temple during the three "festal seasons" (Passover, Pentecost and the Festival of Booths), so Jehovah's Christian witnesses have enjoyed flocking together, not only to their local Kingdom Halls, but, in an amazing manner, to their regular circuit, district, national and international assemblies.

Pressures in this age of anarchy and violence have not caused the restored spiritual Israelites to disappear from their newly occupied spiritual estate, as if they were devoured, swallowed up by invading aggressors or by a famine in their land. Their experience has been like that described at Ezekiel 36:13-15, where Jehovah speaks further to the soil of Israel:

"This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, 'For the reason that there are those saying to you: "A devourer of humankind is what you yourself are, and a land bereaving your nations of children is what you have become,"' 'therefore humankind you will no more devour, and your nations you will no more bereave of children,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. 'And I shall cause no further humiliating talk by the nations to be heard concerning you, and reproach by peoples you will bear no more, and your nations you will no more cause to stumble,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah."

The land of Canaan had a bad reputation respecting the destruction of its peoples as if being devoured by the land. (Num. 13:32) When Jehovah brought the Israelites into the land of Canaan in 1473 B.C.E. and they proceeded to destroy seven nations, it was as if the land ate up, devoured those inhabitants.

In 607 B.C.E. the king of Babylon conquered the land of Judah and deported many hundreds of surviving Jews, and the land became desolate without man and domestic beast. It again appeared as if the land had devoured its inhabitants and had bereaved the nation of the Kingdom of Judah of its children. Earlier, in 740 B.C.E., it had bereaved the nation of the Kingdom of Israel of its children. But by Jehovah's special blessing and protection the once desolated land was not to have another experience like this in connection with the remnant of faithful Israelites that were restored from exile in Babylon in 537 B.C.E. and thereafter. So too it has been with the spiritual estate to which a remnant were restored in the postwar year of 1919 C.E. They are still there, alive, fruitful, multiplying. The spiritual paradise enjoyed by God's people is here to stay.

**GOD'S NAME INVOLVED**  
Why did Jehovah God bring about these grand things? It was not because of

worthiness or merit on the part of the typical remnant in 537 B.C.E. and afterward and on the part of the antitypical remnant in 1919 C.E. and afterward. God's own holy name was involved. We read:

"The word of Jehovah continued to occur to me, saying: 'Son of man, the house of Israel were dwelling upon their soil, and they kept making it unclean with their way and with their dealings. Like the uncleanness of menstruation their way has become before me. And I proceeded to pour out my rage upon them on account of the blood that they had poured out upon the land, which land they had made unclean with their dungy idols. And I proceeded to scatter them among the nations, so that they were dispersed among the lands. According to their way and according to their dealings I judged them. So they came in to the nations where they came in, and people proceeded to profane my holy name in saying with reference to them, "These are the people of Jehovah, and from his land they have gone out." And I shall have compassion on my holy name, which the house of Israel have profaned among the nations where they have come in.'"—Ezek. 36:16-21.

Because the Israelites had gone out from Jehovah's land as exiles, it appeared that Jehovah, their professed God, was not able to protect them against their enemies. This brought reproach upon his holy name. It caused the Gentile nations to speak profanely of his name. Similarly, when the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites were brought into bondage to Babylon the Great and her political and military paramours during World War I, it made it seem as if they as members of the International Bible Students Association were not genuine Christians. It seemed as if the true God was not on their side and was not protecting them. This brought reproach upon the name of the God to whom they were dedicated. Hence, Jehovah was obliged to show self-respect by having compassion on his own name. It was a holy name and did not deserve to be profaned by worldlings. Because he had

a devoted remnant who were connected with his name, then whatever he did in compassion on his name would call for compassion on that remnant.

What Jehovah God has done in restoring his people in modern times has fulfilled the words of Ezekiel's prophecy. (Ezek. 36:22-24) Jehovah has indeed sanctified his name among the nations by producing a dedicated people who regard his name as holy. (Ezek. 36:38) They are concerned about bringing glory to that name and in no way reproaching it due to any misconduct on their part. They choose to obey God as Ruler rather than men when there is any conflict between God's law and laws framed by God-ignoring men.—Acts 5:29.

Jehovah has cleansed his restored remnant from religious uncleanness by his cleansing agencies, like sprinkling clean water upon them. Cleansed from "dungy idols," they refuse to idolize political, military or religious dignitaries or to make idolatrous gestures and attitudes toward images, statues or emblems. Jehovah has taken away from them any stoniness of heart and given them a "heart of flesh," a heart moved by the love and affection to do his will. The "new spirit" Jehovah has put inside them is his holy spirit. This has caused them to produce the spirit's fruitage—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control."—Ezek. 36:25-28; Gal. 5:22, 23.

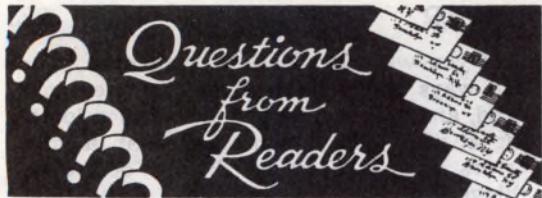
In order to correct any misimpression that the nations got about him because of his disciplining his people, Jehovah has richly blessed them since 1919. It has been just as He promised through Ezekiel:

"'And I will save you from all your impurities and call to the grain and make it abound, and I shall put upon you no famine. And I shall certainly make the fruitage of the tree abound, and the produce of the field, in order that you may no more receive among the nations the reproach of famine.'

And you will be bound to remember your bad ways and your dealings that were not good, and you will be bound to feel a loathing at your own person on account of your errors and on account of your detestable things. Not for your sakes am I doing this,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, 'let it be known to you. Be ashamed and feel humiliation because of your ways, O house of Israel.'”—Ezek. 36:29-32.

Because of such divine goodness to them, the members of the anointed remnant feel a loathing of themselves when they look back at what they were in the past. It makes them ashamed, it makes them feel humiliated, just to think about it. This attitude takes away from them any inclination to engage in spiritual and immoral impurities once again, willingly. Because of the effect that Jehovah's undeserved kindness has upon them in their restored estate, he saves them from all their impurities. They keenly appreciate that it was not for any past goodness of theirs, not for their sakes, that, figuratively speaking, he called for the life-sustaining grain to sprout up from the ground and produce so abundantly, so that worldly nations cannot reproach them for having any famine of spiritual food provisions. They are thankful for God's letting it be known to them that for the sake of his holy name he has done all this for them. So in all humility they sanctify his name.

All this illustrates that the promises of Jehovah associated with his holy name will be fulfilled. It being his purpose to transform this earth into a paradise, we can be certain that this will come about. The "good news" for today is that Bible prophecy points to this generation as the one to see the end of man's ruining the earth. So now is the time for honest-hearted persons to take their stand for true worship in association with Jehovah's Christian witnesses, who are now enjoying the blessings of a spiritual paradise.



## Questions from Readers

- Must fish be bled before they are eaten?  
—U.S.A.

The Bible does not specifically mention the bleeding of fish. Only in the case of land animals or fowl do we read: "As for any man . . . who in hunting catches a wild beast or a fowl that may be eaten, he must in that case pour its blood out and cover it with dust."—Lev. 17:13.

Fish that were suitable for food according to the terms of the Mosaic law did not contain a quantity of blood sufficient to be poured out

and covered with dust. Evidently for this reason the Law set forth no precise statement about bleeding fish.

There being no Scriptural stipulation to squeeze or soak meat to remove blood, no one is under obligation to take extreme measures to extract blood from fish. Of course, the blood of every sort of creature represents its life and is therefore sacred. So, if, on cutting a fish open, a person sees an accumulation of blood, he should remove it.

### "WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

- April 29: "Happy Is He Who Reads Aloud." Page 201. Songs to Be Used: 24, 50.  
May 6: "Handling the Word of the Truth Aright." Page 207. Songs to Be Used: 32, 89.  
May 13: Why Was It Written in That Way? Page 213. Songs to Be Used: 100, 111.