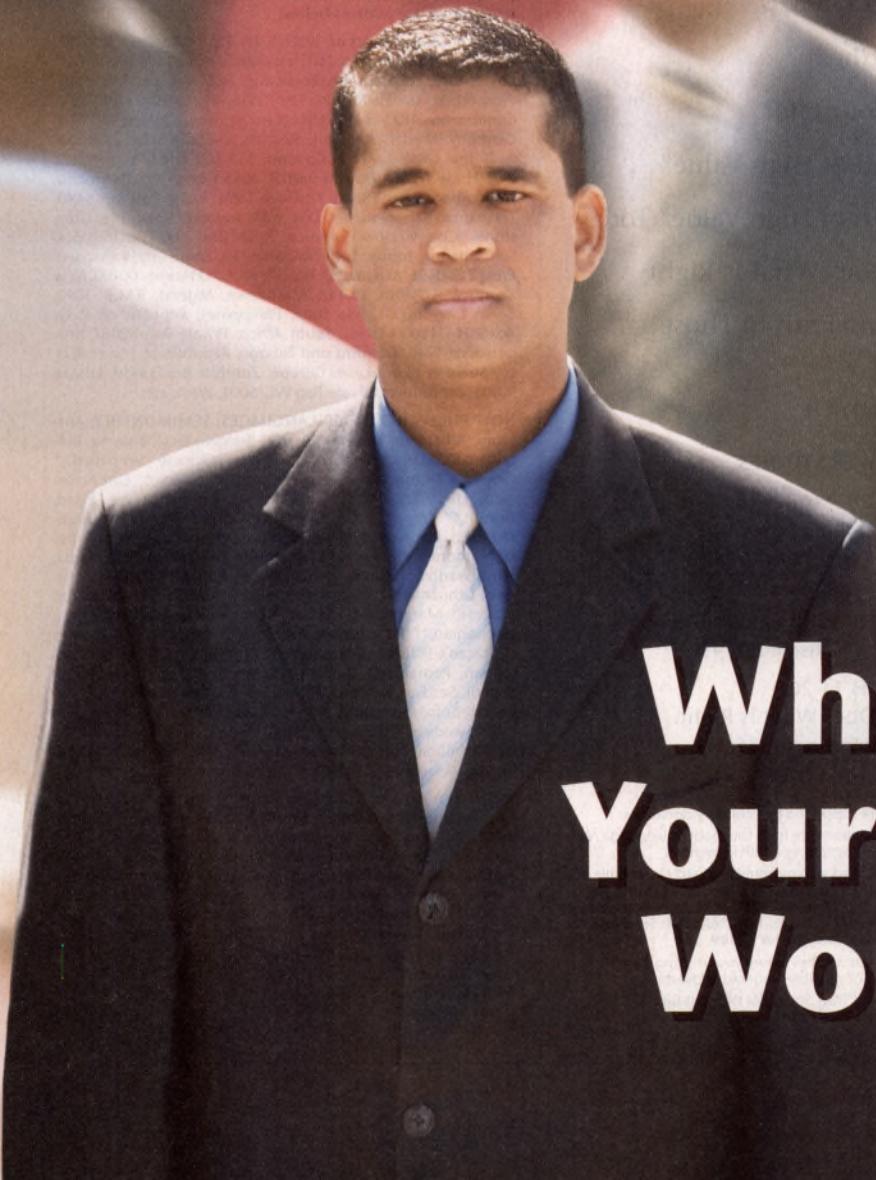


FEBRUARY 1, 2005

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**What Is
Your Life
Worth?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF THE WATCHTOWER is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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Life Precious or Cheap?

**"Since man is made in the image of God,
then the taking of a man's life is the destruction of the
most precious and the most holy thing in the world."**

—*The Plain Man's Guide to Ethics*, by William Barclay.

THE most precious thing in the world.' Do you share that view of life? From the way people behave, it is obvious that many do not agree with that writer. Millions of lives have been callously snuffed out by violent people who pursued selfish goals without any regard for the well-being of their fellowman.—Ecclesiastes 8:9.

Expendable and Disposable

World War I is a classic example. Time and again during that terrible conflict, "the bodies of men were sacrificed to no purpose," says historian A.J.P. Taylor. In pursuit of prestige and glory, military leaders used soldiers as if they were worthless and totally expendable. In the battle for Verdun in France, there were over half a million casualties. "There was no prize [of any strategic value] to be gained or lost," writes Taylor, "only men to be killed and glory to be won."—*The First World War*.

Such contempt for the value of life is still widespread. Scholar Kevin Bales points out that in recent times, a "population explosion [has] flooded the world's labor markets with millions of poor and vulnerable people." They face a lifelong struggle simply to survive in an oppressive commercial system in which "life becomes cheap." Those who exploit them, says Bales, treat

them as little more than slaves—"completely disposable tools for making money."—*Disposable People*.

"A Striving After Wind"

There are many other reasons why millions of people feel totally worthless and desperate—that no one really cares whether they live or die. Besides war and injustice, there are the ravages of drought, famine, disease, bereavement, and countless other things that plague all mankind, making people wonder if life is worth living at all.—Ecclesiastes 1:8, 14.

Not everyone, of course, faces a life of extreme deprivation and anguish. But even those who escape the worst of oppression have often echoed the words of King Solomon of ancient Israel, who asked: "What

does a man come to have for all his hard work and for the striving of his heart with which he is working hard under the sun?" On reflection, many come to the realization that much of what they did turned out to be "vanity and a striving after wind."—Ecclesiastes 2:22, 26.

"Is that it?" many ask as they look back on their life. Yes, how many are there who finish their life feeling genuinely 'satisfied with days,' as the patriarch Abraham did? (Genesis 25:8, footnote) Most have an abiding sense of futility. Yet, life need not be futile. God considers every human life precious and wants each one of us to live a truly full, satisfying life. How will that come about? Consider what the next article has to say on this subject.

How Precious Is Your Life?

WHILE countless lives were being sacrificed in Europe during World War I, amazing efforts were being made to save lives in Antarctica. Anglo-Irish explorer Ernest Shackleton and his companions suffered catastrophe when their ship, *Endurance*, was crushed and sunk by pack ice. Shackleton managed to get his men to a safe haven—of sorts—on Elephant Island in the South Atlantic Ocean. But they still faced extreme danger.

Shackleton realized that their only hope of survival lay in sending for help from a whaling station on the island of South Georgia. That was 700 miles away, and he had

only a 22-foot lifeboat that he had salvaged from *Endurance*. Their prospects were not good.

On May 10, 1916, however, after 17 harrowing days, Shackleton and a small party got to South Georgia, but terrible sea conditions forced them to land on the wrong side of the island. They were faced with a 20-mile



trek over uncharted, snow-covered mountains to reach their final destination. Against all odds—in subzero temperatures and without proper climbing equipment—Shackleton and his companions reached their destination, and he eventually rescued all his stranded men. Why did Shackleton put forth such strenuous effort? “His one ambition,” writes biographer Roland Huntford, was “to get every one of his men out alive.”

“Not One of Them Is Missing”

What saved Shackleton’s men from complete despair as they huddled and waited on what was just “a bleak and inaccessible patch of rock and ice twenty miles from end to end”? Their confidence that their leader would keep his promise to rescue them.

Mankind today is much like those men marooned on Elephant Island. Many live under unbelievably adverse conditions and struggle simply to survive. Yet, they can have complete confidence that God will “rescue the afflicted one” from oppression and distress. (Job 36:15) Be assured that God considers everyone’s life precious. “Call me in the day of distress,” says Jehovah God, the Creator, and “I shall rescue you.”—Psalm 50:15.

Do you find it difficult to believe that the Creator considers you—just one individual among earth’s billions—personally precious? Then note what the prophet Isaiah wrote about the billions of stars in the billions of galaxies in the vast universe around

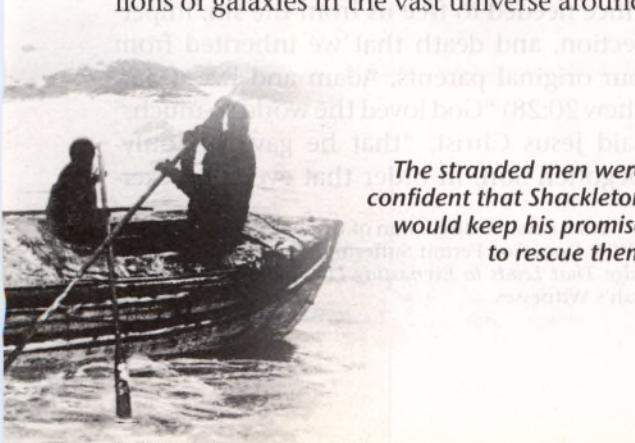
us. We read: “Raise your eyes high up and see. Who has created these things? It is the One who is bringing forth the army of them even by number, *all of whom he calls even by name*. Due to the abundance of dynamic energy, he also being vigorous in power, not one of them is missing.”—Isaiah 40:26.

Do you appreciate what that means? Our Milky Way galaxy—of which our solar system is only a part—contains at least 100 billion stars. And how many other galaxies are there? No one knows for sure, but some estimates put the figure at 125 billion. What a staggering number of stars there must be! Yet, the Bible tells us that the Creator of the universe knows each of the stars by name.

“The Very Hairs of Your Head Are All Numbered”

‘But,’ someone may object, ‘just knowing the names of billions of stars—or billions of people—does not necessarily mean caring about them individually.’ A computer with sufficient memory could register the names of billions of people. Yet, no one would suggest that the computer cares about any of them. The Bible shows, however, that Jehovah God not only *knows the names* of billions of people but also *cares about them as individuals*. “Throw all your anxiety upon him,” wrote the apostle Peter, “because he cares for you.”—1 Peter 5:7.

Jesus Christ stated: “Do not two sparrows sell for a coin of small value? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father’s knowledge. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore have no fear: you are worth more than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:29-31) Notice that Jesus did not say that God would simply be aware of what happened to sparrows and to men. He said: “You are worth more than many sparrows.” Why are you worth more? Because you are made “in God’s image”—with



The stranded men were confident that Shackleton would keep his promise to rescue them



"You are worth more than many sparrows"

the potential for cultivating and displaying moral, intellectual, and spiritual qualities that reflect God's own elevated qualities.
—Genesis 1:26, 27.

"The Product of Intelligent Activity"

Do not be misled by the assertions of people who deny that there is a Creator. According to them, blind, impersonal forces of nature made you. They claim that far from being made "in God's image," you are no different from all the other animal life on this planet—including the sparrows.

Does it really make sense to you that life got here simply by chance, or blind force? According to molecular biologist Michael J. Behe, the "staggeringly complicated biochemical processes" that govern life make that idea totally unreasonable. The evidence of biochemistry, he says, leads to the inescapable conclusion that "life on earth at its most fundamental level . . . is the product of intelligent activity."—*Darwin's Black Box*—*The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*.

The Bible tells us that life on earth at all levels is the product of intelligent activity. And it tells us that the Source of all this intelligent activity is Jehovah God, the Creator of the universe.—Psalm 36:9; Revelation 4:11.

Do not let the fact that we have to endure in a world filled with pain and suffering dissuade you from believing that there is a Creator and Designer of the earth and all life on it. Keep in mind two fundamental truths. One is that God did not design the imperfection that exists all around us. The other is that our Creator has good reasons for temporarily permitting it. As this magazine has often discussed, Jehovah God has permitted evil to exist for a limited time only in order to settle once and for all the moral issues that were raised at the time when humans first rejected his sovereignty.*—Genesis 3:1-7; Deuteronomy 32:4, 5; Ecclesiastes 7:29; 2 Peter 3:8, 9.

"He Will Deliver the Poor One Crying for Help"

Of course, even with the miserable conditions that many people have to suffer today, life is still a wonderful gift. And we do all we can to preserve it. The future life that God promises is much more than a struggle simply to survive in harsh and painful conditions—like Shackleton's men on Elephant Island. God's purpose is to rescue us from our current existence of pain and futility so that we can "get a firm hold on the real life" that God originally purposed for his human creation.—1 Timothy 6:19.

God will do all of this because each one of us is precious in his eyes. He arranged for his Son, Jesus Christ, to provide the ransom sacrifice needed to free us from the sin, imperfection, and death that we inherited from our original parents, Adam and Eve. (Matthew 20:28) "God loved the world so much," said Jesus Christ, "that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exer-

* For a detailed discussion of this point, see chapter 8, "Why Does God Permit Suffering?" in the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

cising faith in him might . . . have everlasting life.”—John 3:16.

What will God do for those whose life is now blighted by pain and oppression? Regarding his Son, God’s inspired Word tells us: “He will deliver the poor one crying for help, also the afflicted one and whoever has no helper. He will feel sorry for the lowly one and the poor one, and the souls of the poor ones he will save. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul.” Why will he do this? Because “their blood [or, their life] will be *precious in his eyes*.”—Psalm 72:12-14.

For centuries humanity has been toiling under the burden of sin and imperfection, as if “groaning” in much pain and suffering. God only permitted this with the knowledge that he could remedy any damage that would ensue. (Romans 8:18-22) Very soon now he will bring about the “restoration of all things” through the agency of his Kingdom government in the hands of his Son, Jesus Christ.—Acts 3:21; Matthew 6:9, 10.

That includes the resurrection of people who have suffered and died in the past. They are safe in God’s memory. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) Soon they will receive life “in abundance”—everlasting life in perfection on a paradise earth free from pain and suffering. (John 10:10; Revelation 21:3-5) Everyone living will be able to enjoy life to the full and cultivate the wonderful qualities and abilities that mark those who are made “in God’s image.”

Will you be on hand to enjoy the life that Jehovah has promised? That is up to you. We urge you to avail yourself of the provisions that God has made to bring about all these blessings. The publishers of this magazine will be happy to help you to do so.



"FINDING ONE PEARL OF HIGH VALUE"

"The kingdom of the heavens is the goal toward which men press, and those pressing forward are seizing it."—MATTHEW 11:12.

IS THERE something that you value so highly that you would give everything you own or sacrifice all that you have in order to gain possession of it? Though people speak about dedication in their pursuit of some goal—money, fame, power, or position—it is rare that a person comes across something so very desirable that he is willing to give up everything for it. Jesus Christ referred to this rare but admirable quality in one of his many thought-provoking parables about the Kingdom of God.

² It is a parable, or illustration, that Jesus told his disciples in private, one often referred to as the parable of the pearl of great price. This is what Jesus said: "The kingdom of the heavens is like a traveling merchant seeking fine pearls. Upon finding one pearl of high value, away he went and promptly sold all the things he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:36, 45, 46) What did Jesus want his listeners to learn from this illustration? And how can we benefit from Jesus' words?

High Value of Pearls

³ From antiquity, pearls have been valued as ornamental objects. One source observes

1, 2. (a) What rare quality did Jesus portray in one of his Kingdom parables? (b) What did Jesus say in the parable of the pearl of great price?

3. Why were fine pearls so valuable in ancient times?



that according to the Roman scholar Pliny the Elder, pearls occupied the "topmost rank among all things of price." Unlike gold, silver, or many gemstones, pearls are produced by living things. It is well-known that certain types of oysters can turn irritants—small fragments of stone, for instance—into lustrous pearls by enveloping them in layers of a secretion known as nacre. In ancient times, the finest pearls were harvested mainly from the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean—far from the land of Israel. This is no doubt the reason that Jesus spoke of "a traveling merchant seeking fine pearls." To find truly valuable pearls, a great deal of effort is involved.

⁴ Even though fine pearls have long commanded high prices, it is evidently not their

4. What is the central lesson of Jesus' parable of the traveling merchant?

monetary value that constituted the central lesson of Jesus' parable. In this parable, Jesus did not simply liken the Kingdom of God to a pearl of high value; he called attention to "a traveling merchant seeking fine pearls" and to his response upon finding one. Unlike an ordinary shopkeeper, a traveling pearl merchant, or dealer, was what might be called a connoisseur in the trade, one who had the keen eye or the sensibility needed to discern the aesthetic qualities and subtleties that mark a pearl as extraordinary. He would know the genuine article when he saw it and would not be fooled by inferior or counterfeit merchandise.

⁵ Something else about this particular merchant is worthy of note. A common merchant might first figure out the market value of the pearl so as to determine how much he would pay for it in order to make a profit. He might also consider if there was a market for such a pearl so that he could sell it quickly. In other words, he would be interested in making a quick return on his investment, not in owning the pearl. But not so with the merchant in Jesus' parable. His interest was not monetary or material. In fact, he was willing to sacrifice "all the things he had"—possibly all his personal belongings and properties—in order to acquire what he had been searching for.

⁶ In the eyes of most merchants, what that man in Jesus' parable did was probably unwise. An astute businessman would not think of undertaking such a risky venture. But the merchant in Jesus' parable had a different sense of values. His reward was, not any financial advantage, but the joy and satisfaction of possessing something of sur-

passing value. This point is made clear in a parallel illustration that Jesus gave. He said: "The kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and for the joy he has he goes and sells what things he has and buys that field." (Matthew 13:44) Yes, the joy that comes from discovering and owning the treasure was enough to move the man to give up everything he had. Are there individuals like that today? Is there a treasure worth such a sacrifice?

Those Who Appreciated the High Value

⁷ In telling his parable, Jesus was talking about "the kingdom of the heavens." He himself certainly appreciated the high value of the Kingdom. The Gospel accounts bear powerful testimony to that fact. After his baptism in 29 C.E., Jesus "commenced preaching and saying: 'Repent, you people, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" For three and a half years, he taught multitudes about the Kingdom. He traversed the length and breadth of the land, "journeying from city to city and from village to village, preaching and declaring the good news of the kingdom of God."

—Matthew 4:17; Luke 8:1.

⁸ By performing numerous miracles throughout the land—including healing the sick, feeding the hungry, subduing the elements, even raising the dead—Jesus also demonstrated what God's Kingdom will accomplish. (Matthew 14:14-21; Mark 4:37-39; Luke 7:11-17) Finally, he proved his loyalty to God and to the Kingdom by giving his life, dying a martyr's death on a torture stake. Just as that traveling merchant willingly gave everything he had for the "pearl

5, 6. (a) What is particularly noteworthy about the merchant in Jesus' parable? (b) The parable of the hidden treasure reveals what about the traveling merchant?

7. How did Jesus show that he keenly appreciated the high value of the Kingdom?
8. What did Jesus do to demonstrate what the Kingdom will accomplish?

of high value," Jesus lived and died for the Kingdom.—John 18:37.

⁹ Not only did Jesus focus his own life on the Kingdom but he also gathered together a small band of followers. These too were individuals who keenly appreciated the high value of the Kingdom. Among them was Andrew, who was originally a disciple of John the Baptizer. Upon hearing John's testimony that Jesus was "the Lamb of God," Andrew and another of John's disciples, most likely one of the sons of Zebedee also named John, were immediately drawn to Jesus and became believers. But matters did not stop there. Right away, Andrew went to his brother Simon and told him: "We have found the Messiah." In quick order, Simon (who became known as Cephas, or Peter) as well as Philip and his friend Nathanael also came to recognize Jesus as the Messiah. In fact, Nathanael was moved to say to Jesus: "You are the Son of God, you are King of Israel."—John 1:35-49.

9. What rare quality was seen among Jesus' early disciples?

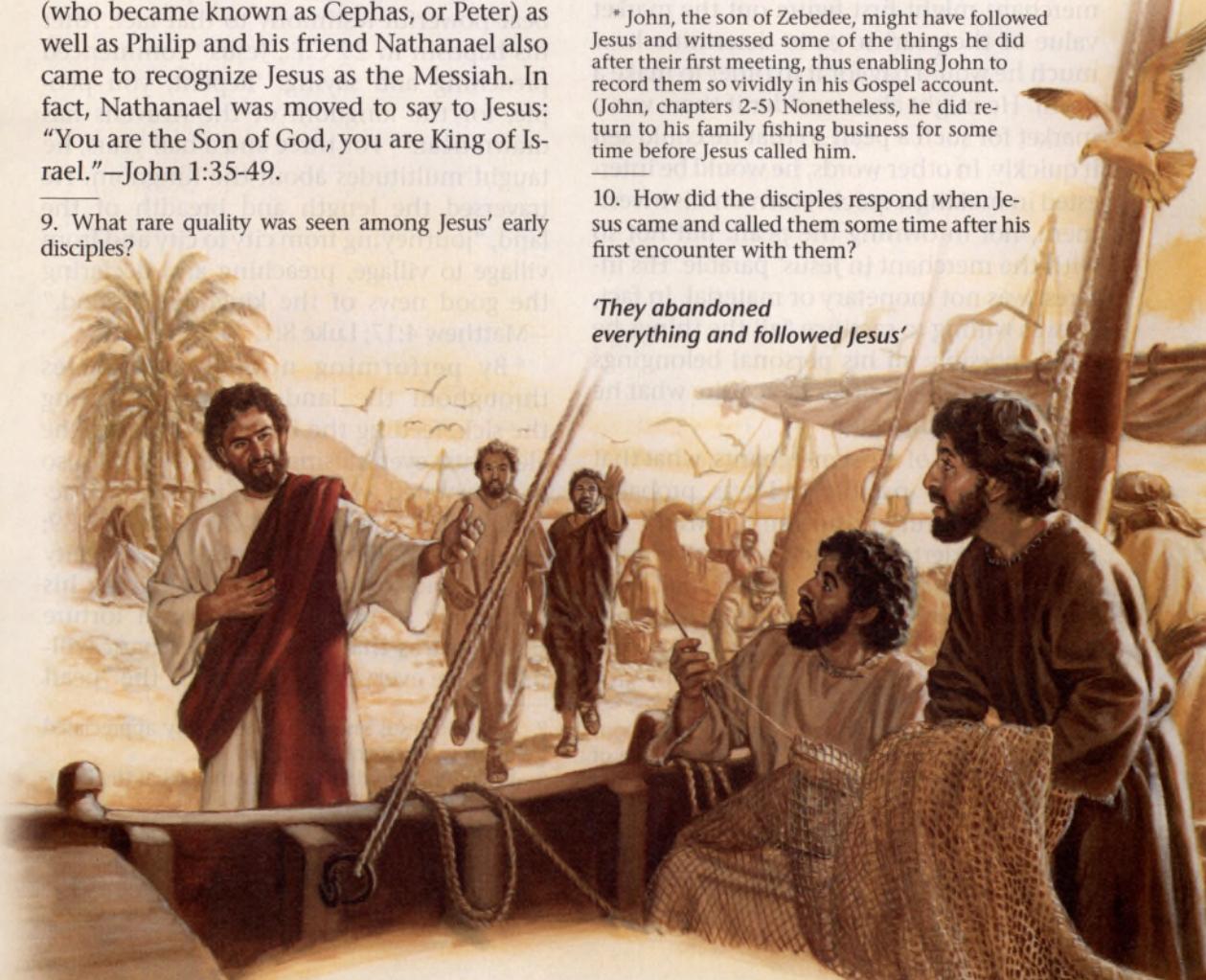
Stirred to Action

¹⁰ The excitement experienced by Andrew, Peter, John, and the others when they discovered the Messiah might be compared to that experienced by the traveling merchant when he found the pearl of high value. What would they do now? The Gospels do not tell us much about what they did immediately after this first encounter with Jesus. Apparently, most of them returned to their normal course of life. From about six months to a year later, however, Jesus once again came upon Andrew, Peter, John, and John's brother James at their fishing business by the Sea of Galilee.* Seeing them, Jesus said: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

* John, the son of Zebedee, might have followed Jesus and witnessed some of the things he did after their first meeting, thus enabling John to record them so vividly in his Gospel account. (John, chapters 2-5) Nonetheless, he did return to his family fishing business for some time before Jesus called him.

10. How did the disciples respond when Jesus came and called them some time after his first encounter with them?

'They abandoned everything and followed Jesus'



What was their response? About Peter and Andrew, Matthew's account says: "At once abandoning the nets, they followed him." As for James and John, we read: "At once leaving the boat and their father, they followed him." Luke's account adds that they "abandoned everything and followed him."—Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11.

¹¹ Was the disciples' prompt response a spur-of-the-moment decision? Hardly! Even though they did return to their family fishing business after their first contact with Jesus, there is no doubt that what they had seen and heard on that occasion left a deep impression on their heart and mind. The passing of nearly a year would have allowed them plenty of time to reflect on such matters. Now the moment of decision had come. Would they be like the traveling merchant whose heart was so stirred by the discovery of the priceless pearl that, as Jesus described it, "away he went and promptly" did what he must to buy that pearl? Yes. What they had seen and heard stirred their heart. They recognized that the time for action had come. Thus, as the accounts tell us, without hesitation they gave up everything and became Jesus' followers.

¹² How different these faithful ones were from some others mentioned later in the Gospel accounts! Many were the ones who were cured or fed by Jesus but who simply went about their own business. (Luke 17:17, 18; John 6:26) Some even begged off when Jesus invited them to become his followers. (Luke 9:59-62) In sharp contrast, concerning the faithful ones, Jesus later said: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the

11. What likely accounts for the disciples' prompt response to Jesus' call?

12, 13. (a) In what way did many who heard Jesus respond? (b) What did Jesus say about his faithful disciples, and what do his words imply?

kingdom of the heavens is the goal toward which men press, and those pressing forward are seizing it."—Matthew 11:12.

¹³ "Press" and "pressing forward"—what do these terms imply? With regard to the Greek verb from which these expressions are derived, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* says: "The verb suggests forceful endeavour." And regarding this verse, Bible scholar Heinrich Meyer states: "In this way is described that eager, irresistible striving and struggling after the approaching Messianic kingdom . . . So eager and energetic (no longer calm and expectant) is the interest in regard to the kingdom." Like the traveling merchant, these few individuals quickly recognized what was truly precious, and they willingly gave up all they had for the sake of the Kingdom.—Matthew 19:27, 28; Philippians 3:8.

Others Joined the Search

¹⁴ As Jesus continued in his ministry, he trained and helped others to reach out for the Kingdom. First, he selected 12 from among his disciples and designated them as apostles, or ones sent forth by him. To these, Jesus gave detailed instructions on how they were to carry out their ministry as well as warnings about the challenges and hardships that lay ahead. (Matthew 10:1-42; Luke 6:12-16) For the next two years or so, they accompanied Jesus on his preaching tours throughout the land, enjoying a close relationship with him. They heard his sayings, witnessed his powerful works, and saw his personal example. (Matthew 13:16, 17) All of this no doubt touched them deeply, so much so that like the traveling merchant, they were zealous and wholehearted in their pursuit of the Kingdom.

14. How did Jesus prepare the apostles for the Kingdom-preaching work, and what was the result?

¹⁵ In addition to the 12 apostles, Jesus “designated seventy others and sent them forth by twos in advance of him into every city and place to which he himself was going to come.” He also told them about the trials and hardships ahead and instructed them to tell people: “The kingdom of God has come near to you.” (Luke 10:1-12) When the 70 returned, they were overjoyed and gave Jesus this report: “Lord, even the demons are made subject to us by the use of your name.” But perhaps to their surprise, Jesus revealed that an even greater joy was in store for them because of their zeal for the Kingdom. He told them: “Do not rejoice over this, that the spirits are made subject to you, but rejoice because your names have been inscribed in the heavens.”—Luke 10:17, 20.

¹⁶ Finally, on the last night that Jesus was with the apostles, Nisan 14, 33 C.E., he instituted what came to be known as the Lord’s Evening Meal and commanded them to commemorate the event. In the course of the evening, Jesus told the 11 who remained: “You are the ones that have stuck

15. What did Jesus say was the real reason his followers had for rejoicing?

16, 17. (a) What did Jesus tell his faithful apostles on the last night he was with them? (b) What joy and assurance did Jesus’ words bring to the apostles?

Can You Explain?

- What is the central lesson of the parable of the traveling merchant?
- How did Jesus show his keen appreciation for the high value of the Kingdom?
- What caused Andrew, Peter, John, and others to respond immediately when Jesus called them?
- What marvelous opportunity lies before people of all the nations?



Before ascending to heaven, Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples

with me in my trials; and I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.”—Luke 22:19, 20, 28-30.

¹⁷ What joy and satisfaction must have filled their heart when the apostles heard those words from Jesus! They were being offered the highest honor and privilege that any human could have. (Matthew 7:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:9) Like that traveling merchant, they had given up much to follow Jesus in pursuit of the Kingdom. Now they were assured that the sacrifices they had made thus far had not been in vain.

¹⁸ The apostles present with Jesus that night were not the only ones to benefit from the Kingdom. It was Jehovah’s will that a total of 144,000 be taken into the Kingdom covenant as co-rulers with Jesus Christ in the glorious heavenly Kingdom. In addition, the apostle John saw in vision “a great crowd, which no man was able to number, . . . standing before the throne and before the Lamb, . . . saying: ‘Salvation we owe to

18. Who besides the 11 apostles would also eventually benefit from the Kingdom?

our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb." These are the earthly subjects of the Kingdom.*—Revelation 7:9, 10; 14:1, 4.

¹⁹ Shortly before Jesus ascended to heaven, he commanded his faithful followers: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And,

* For more details, see chapter 10 of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

19, 20. (a) What opportunity is open to people of all the nations? (b) What question will be considered in the next article?

look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 28:19, 20) Thus, people out of all nations would come to be disciples of Jesus Christ. These too would set their heart on the Kingdom—whether for a heavenly or for an earthly reward—as the traveling merchant did with regard to the fine pearl.

²⁰ Jesus' words indicated that the task of disciple-making would be extended all the way to "the conclusion of the system of things." So in our day, are there still individuals like the traveling merchant, who are willing to give their all in the pursuit of God's Kingdom? This question will be considered in the next article.

PURSUING THE "PEARL OF HIGH VALUE" TODAY

"This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness."—MATTHEW 24:14.

THE Kingdom of God was a subject of intense interest among the Jews when Jesus came to earth. (Matthew 3:1, 2; 4:23-25; John 1:49) At first, however, most of them did not fully comprehend its scope and power; neither did they understand that it would be a heavenly government. (John 3:1-5) Even some who became Jesus' followers did not fully understand what God's Kingdom is or what they must do to receive the blessing of becoming associate rulers with Christ.—Matthew 20:20-22; Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6.

1, 2. (a) How did the Jews in Jesus' day feel about God's Kingdom? (b) What did Jesus do to impart proper understanding of the Kingdom, and with what results?

² As time went on, Jesus patiently taught his disciples many lessons, including the parable of the pearl of high value considered in the preceding article, pointing out to them the importance of exerting themselves in the pursuit of the heavenly Kingdom. (Matthew 6:33; 13:45, 46; Luke 13:23, 24) This must have touched their heart deeply because they soon became tireless and courageous proclaimers of the Kingdom good news to distant parts of the earth, to which fact the book of Acts amply testifies.—Acts 1:8; Colossians 1:23.

³ What, then, about today? The blessings

3. With reference to our time, what did Jesus say about the Kingdom?

of an earthly paradise under the Kingdom are set out before millions. In his great prophecy about "the conclusion of the system of things," Jesus specifically stated: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will

*"Truth . . .
attracts all kinds
of persons."*
—A. H. Macmillan



come." (Matthew 24:3, 14; Mark 13:10) He also explained that this monumental task is to be carried out in spite of formidable obstacles and challenges, even persecution. Nevertheless, he gave this assurance: "He that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved." (Matthew 24:9-13) All of this calls for the kind of self-sacrifice and dedication manifested by the traveling merchant in Jesus' parable. Are there individuals today who demonstrate such faith and zeal in the pursuit of the Kingdom?

The Joy of Discovering the Truth

⁴ The merchant in Jesus' parable was overjoyed when he found what he perceived to be a "pearl of high value." That joy moved him to do everything within his power to acquire the pearl. (Hebrews 12:1) Today, the truth about God and his Kingdom likewise draws and motivates people. This brings to mind the comments of Brother A. H. Macmillan, who wrote about his personal search for God and His purpose for mankind, in the

4. What effect does Kingdom truth have on people today?

book *Faith on the March*. He said: "What I have found thousands of people are still finding every year. And they are people just like you and me, because they come from all nationalities, races, walks of life and are of all ages. Truth is no respecter of persons. It attracts all kinds of persons."

⁵ The truth of those words is seen as year after year hundreds of thousands of honest-hearted individuals are moved by the good news of God's Kingdom to dedicate their life to Jehovah and to do his will. The 2004 service year, which ran from September 2003 to August 2004, was no exception. In those 12 months, 262,416 people publicly symbolized their dedication to Jehovah by water baptism. This took place in 235 lands, in which Jehovah's Witnesses are conducting 6,085,387 home Bible studies weekly in order to help people from all walks of life and out of many nations, tribes, and tongues to take in the life-giving truth from God's Word.—Revelation 7:9.

⁶ What made all of this possible? There is no doubt that Jehovah draws these rightly disposed ones to him. (John 6:65; Acts 13:48) However, not to be minimized are the selfless spirit and tireless efforts on the part of those who have expended themselves in the pursuit of the Kingdom. At age 79, Brother Macmillan wrote: "From my first glimpse of the promises held out to sick and dying mankind my hope in what that message of the Bible has revealed has not faded. Right there I determined to find out more about what the Bible teaches so that I might be able to help others like myself who are seeking knowledge about the Almighty God, Jehovah, and his good purposes toward mankind."

5. What fine results are seen in the 2004 service year report?

6. What accounts for the steady increases over the years?

⁷ That eagerness is also seen among Jehovah's servants today. Take, for example, Daniela from Vienna, Austria. She said: "Since my childhood, God has been my very best friend. I always wanted to know his name because for me 'God' was too impersonal. But I had to wait until I was 17 years of age, when Jehovah's Witnesses came to my door. They explained everything that I wanted to know about God. I had finally found the truth, and it was wonderful! I was so excited that I started to preach to everyone." Her enthusiastic approach soon brought ridicule from her schoolmates. "For me, though, it was like seeing Bible prophecy being fulfilled," Daniela continued, "because I had learned that Jesus said that his followers would be hated and persecuted for his name's sake. I was so happy and amazed." Soon, Daniela dedicated her life to Jehovah, was baptized, and started to pursue the goal of missionary service. After she was married, Daniela, together with her husband, Helmut, took up the preaching work among the African, Chinese, Filipino, and Indian populations in Vienna. Daniela and Helmut are now serving as missionaries in southwest Africa.

They Do Not Give Up

⁸ Indeed, the missionary service is one of the ways in which Jehovah's people today demonstrate their love for God and loyalty to his Kingdom. Like the merchant in Jesus' parable, those who take up this service are willing to travel to faraway places for the sake of the Kingdom. Of course, these mis-

7. What experience typifies the joy and eagerness of those finding Bible truth?

8. What is one rewarding way in which many have demonstrated their love for God and loyalty to his Kingdom?



Daniela and Helmut preached in the foreign-language field in Vienna

sionaries are not traveling to find the Kingdom good news; they are taking it to people living in the far-flung corners of the earth, teaching and helping them to become disciples of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:19, 20) In many lands, they have to endure extraordinary hardship. But their endurance is richly rewarded.

⁹ Take, for example, the Central African Republic, where last year the attendance at the Memorial of Christ's death was 16,184, about seven times the number of Kingdom publishers in that land. Since many parts of that country are without electricity, the people usually do their daily chores out-of-doors under the shade of a tree. So it is only

¹⁰ 9, 10. What exciting experiences are enjoyed by missionaries in such faraway places as Central African Republic?



*Like the traveling merchant,
missionaries today are richly blessed*

natural for the missionaries to do their work the same way—conduct Bible studies out-of-doors under a shady tree. Not only is it brighter and cooler outside but there is also another advantage. The people have a natural love for the Bible, and discussing religious subjects is as common as talking about sports or the weather in other cultures. Often, passersby take note of what is happening and simply join in the study.

¹⁰ Thus, when one missionary was conducting a Bible study out-of-doors, a young man who lived across the street came over and said that since he had not been called on, the missionary should come over and study the Bible with him too. Of course, the missionary was happy to comply, and the young man is making rapid progress. In that country, the police often flag down the Witnesses on the road, not to give them a summons or a fine, but to ask for the latest issues of the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines or to thank them for an article that they particularly enjoyed.

¹¹ Many of those who entered the missionary service 40 or 50 years ago are still

11. In spite of trials, how do longtime missionaries feel about their service?

faithfully serving in the field. What an example of faith and perseverance for all of us! Over the past 42 years, one couple has served together as missionaries in three different countries. The husband says: "There have been difficulties. For example, we battled malaria for 35 years. Yet, we never regretted our decision to be missionaries." His wife adds: "There has always been so much to be grateful for. The field ministry is such a joy, and it is easy to start Bible studies. When you see the students come to the meetings and get to know one another, it is like a family get-together each time."

They "Consider All Things to Be Loss"

¹² When the traveling merchant found a pearl of high value, "away he went and promptly sold all the things he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:46) This willingness to give up what may be held as valuable is characteristic of those who truly appreciate the value of the Kingdom. As one who would have a share with Christ in Kingdom glory, the apostle Paul said: "I do indeed also consider all things to be loss on account of

12. How is true appreciation for the value of the Kingdom expressed?



the excelling value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. On account of him I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ."—Philippians 3:8.

¹³ In the same way, many today are willing to make major changes in their life in order to gain the blessings of the Kingdom. For example, in October 2003, the 60-year-old headmaster of a school in the Czech Republic came across the Bible study aid *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*. After reading it, he immediately contacted Jehovah's Witnesses in his area to have a Bible study. He made fine spiritual progress and soon started to attend all the meetings. What, though, about his plans to run for the office of mayor and to enter the race for election to be a senator? He chose to enter a different race—the race for life, as a Kingdom proclaimer. He said, "I was able to place a lot of Bible literature with my students." He symbolized his dedication to Jehovah by water immersion at a convention in July 2004.

¹⁴ Millions of others around the world have responded to the Kingdom good news

"Your people will offer themselves willingly"

in a similar way. They have come out of the wicked world, put off their old personality, left their former associates, and given up their worldly pursuits. (John 15:19; Ephesians 4:22-24; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17) Why do they do all of this? Because they esteem the blessings of God's Kingdom over and above anything that the present system of things can offer. Do you feel the same way about the Kingdom good news? Are you motivated by it to make the necessary changes to bring your life-style, values, and goals into harmony with what Jehovah requires? Doing so will result in rich blessings for you, now and in the future.

The Harvest Reaching Its Climax

¹⁵ The psalmist wrote: "Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day of your military force." Those who have offered themselves include the "company of young men just like dewdrops" and "a large army" of "women telling the good news." (Psalm 68:11; 110:3) What has been the result of the diligence and self-sacrifice on the part of Jehovah's people—men and women, young and old—in these final days?

¹⁶ A pioneer, or full-time Kingdom proclaimer, in India wondered how the more than two million deaf people in that land might be helped to learn about the Kingdom. (Isaiah 35:5) She decided to enroll in an institute in Bangalore to learn sign language. There she was able to share the Kingdom hope with many deaf ones, and Bible

13. How did one individual in the Czech Republic demonstrate his love for the Kingdom?

14. (a) What has the Kingdom good news moved millions to do? (b) What sobering questions could each of us ask himself?

15. What was prophesied that God's people would do in the final days?

16. Give an example of how God's servants are reaching out to help others learn about the Kingdom.

study groups were formed. Within a few weeks, over a dozen people began to come to the meetings at the Kingdom Hall. Later, at a wedding reception, the pioneer met a young deaf man from Calcutta who had many questions and showed a keen interest in knowing more about Jehovah. However, there was a problem. The young man was to return to Calcutta, some 1,000 miles away, to start college, and there were no Witnesses there who knew sign language. With much effort, he persuaded his father to allow him to go to school in Bangalore instead so that he could continue his Bible study. He made fine spiritual progress, and after about a year, he dedicated his life to Jehovah. He, in turn, studied the Bible with a number of deaf individuals, including a childhood friend. The branch office in India is now arranging for pioneers to learn sign language to help in that field.

¹⁷ On pages 19 to 22 of this magazine, you will find the worldwide report of the field activity of Jehovah's Witnesses for the 2004 service year. Take a little time to examine it, and see for yourself the evidence that Jehovah's people around the earth are intensely

17. Relate what you find particularly encouraging about the 2004 service year report on pages 19 to 22.

Do You Recall?

- Over the years, what has contributed to the increase among true worshippers?
- What spirit is seen among those serving as missionaries?
- What changes have individuals made because of the Kingdom good news?
- What valuable lesson can we learn from Jesus' parable of the pearl of high value?

focused on pursuing the "pearl of high value" today.

Keep "Seeking First the Kingdom"

¹⁸ Coming back once again to Jesus' parable of the traveling merchant, we note that Jesus did not say anything about how the merchant was going to maintain his livelihood after having sold all that he had. Realistically, some might ask: 'How would the merchant find food, clothing, and shelter now that he had nothing to fall back on? What good would that precious pearl be for him?' Those would be reasonable questions from a fleshly point of view. But did Jesus not urge his disciples: "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you"? (Matthew 6:31-33) The main point of the parable is the need to demonstrate wholehearted devotion to God and zeal for the Kingdom. Is there a lesson in this for us?

¹⁹ Whether we have just learned about the wonderful good news or we have been pursuing the Kingdom and telling others about its blessings for decades, we must continue to make the Kingdom the focus of our interest and attention. These are difficult times, but we have solid reasons for believing that what we are pursuing is real and beyond compare—like the pearl that the merchant came upon. World events and fulfilled Bible prophecies provide convincing proof that we are living in "the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 24:3) Let us, like the traveling merchant, demonstrate wholehearted zeal for God's Kingdom and rejoice in the privilege of proclaiming the good news.—Psalm 9:1, 2.

18. What information did Jesus not include in the parable of the traveling merchant, and why not?

19. What key lesson can we learn from Jesus' parable of the pearl of high value?

2004 SERVICE YEAR REPORT OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WORLDWIDE

Country or Territory	Population	2004 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Publisher to Pubs.	2004 Av. Over 2003	% Inc. Over 2003	2003 Av. Pubs.	2004 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Congs.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attendance
Alaska	660,000	2,309	286	2,225	-1	2,238	69	242	26	361,425	933	4,766
Albania	3,070,000	3,419	898	3,268	12	2,906	359	983	75	1,253,202	6,046	15,412
American Samoa	57,902	202	287	182	0	182	9	23	2	36,272	207	791
Andorra	72,320	175	413	154	11	139	2	20	2	29,191	67	306
Angola	13,000,000	54,652	238	52,218	6	49,475	4,470	5,822	779	11,773,671	136,697	256,072
Anguilla	11,430	35	327	34	3	33	7	1	9,740	63	261	
Antigua	75,741	404	187	385	7	360	16	39	5	74,734	393	1,330
Argentina	36,223,947	130,156	278	127,579	1	125,897	5,384	17,431	1,751	26,373,300	99,537	287,887
Armenia	3,312,400	8,690	381	8,343	6	7,870	555	1,753	64	2,342,020	7,891	20,317
Aruba	96,856	720	135	707	2	692	30	60	10	116,279	659	2,356
Australia	20,061,774	62,011	324	60,533	0	60,510	2,176	5,019	768	9,461,142	20,911	114,373
Austria	8,065,166	20,322	397	20,156	0	20,148	428	1,587	298	3,269,452	9,752	34,700
Azerbaijan	8,265,700	452	18,287	423	19	355	55	92	2	132,140	636	983
Azores	243,068	611	398	587	4	564	33	76	15	125,175	609	1,457
Bahamas	304,913	1,511	202	1,435	3	1,400	53	183	27	302,176	1,565	4,043
Bangladesh	141,340,476	106	1,333,401	99	4	95	3	18	2	23,085	128	258
Barbados	277,264	2,362	117	2,327	-1	2,346	42	227	29	374,178	1,778	6,151
Belarus	9,849,100	3,756	2,622	3,637	5	3,449	186	774	38	1,011,121	3,290	8,323
Belau	20,164	98	206	93	0	93	2	30	1	32,747	197	385
Belgium	10,396,421	24,985	416	23,909	0	24,022	483	1,626	374	3,461,999	8,320	45,991
Belize	270,000	1,628	166	1,538	10	1,400	120	256	35	383,357	2,332	6,986
Benin	6,769,914	7,971	849	7,498	7	7,038	463	1,262	153	1,970,425	14,565	34,522
Bermuda	64,935	482	135	454	3	442	8	72	5	102,340	332	1,135
Bolivia	8,879,600	17,459	509	16,905	1	16,693	1,011	2,658	206	4,313,330	22,407	61,121
Bonaire	12,849	66	195	59	13	52	1	4	1	11,454	69	196
Bosnia & Herzegovina	4,130,000	1,134	3,642	1,093	2	1,069	64	258	14	353,364	641	2,268
Botswana	1,680,863	1,451	1,158	1,333	6	1,253	42	163	36	293,520	2,009	4,374
Brazil	181,586,030	621,541	292	596,355	4	576,069	33,029	67,957	9,415	114,225,153	745,629	1,622,652
Britain	58,081,288	125,546	463	120,514	0	120,478	2,573	10,576	1,492	18,115,252	46,866	219,231
Bulgaria	7,928,901	1,410	5,623	1,383	5	1,316	96	258	21	379,551	1,513	3,724
Burkina Faso	12,202,704	1,137	10,732	1,085	5	1,037	50	155	26	299,158	1,876	3,506
Burundi	7,457,000	5,459	1,366	5,234	11	4,698	476	928	94	1,669,589	13,507	19,612
Cambodia	13,542,410	193	70,168	172	19	145	16	77	3	89,908	494	790
Cameroon	17,211,280	30,059	573	29,249	3	28,435	1,380	2,821	632	5,622,781	43,997	93,341
Canada	31,793,904	110,221	288	108,012	0	108,409	2,210	11,320	1,325	18,849,112	40,157	187,649
Cape Verde	467,680	1,590	294	1,569	0	1,571	75	313	31	421,620	3,317	6,680
Cayman Islands	42,599	182	234	170	4	163	5	16	3	28,938	189	614
Central Afr. Rep.	3,800,000	2,426	1,566	2,350	1	2,338	132	411	53	630,205	4,813	16,184
Chad	8,000,000	637	12,559	586	-3	606	19	90	18	161,400	935	4,787
Chile	15,116,435	70,522	214	64,079	2	62,869	3,294	9,444	743	13,663,764	59,686	168,917
Chuuk	63,525	66	963	61	5	58	4	34	3	38,115	264	701
Colombia	45,888,729	125,922	364	120,175	2	117,774	6,171	15,748	1,812	24,095,560	156,847	414,205
Congo, Dem. Rep. of	53,400,000	126,912	421	122,976	5	117,230	8,260	13,632	2,943	25,386,360	262,707	783,731
Congo, Rep. of	3,800,000	4,615	823	4,252	3	4,130	290	486	78	1,063,406	15,732	24,959
Cook Islands	19,200	186	103	167	5	159	11	22	2	33,051	189	590
Costa Rica	4,133,001	20,637	200	19,694	1	19,542	865	1,581	267	3,038,624	18,434	53,919
Côte d'Ivoire	18,671,609	6,776	2,756	6,528	4	6,263	447	1,041	157	1,837,116	15,833	27,006
Croatia	4,437,460	5,471	811	5,409	0	5,394	119	655	71	1,129,227	2,327	10,190

Country or Territory	Population	2004 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, 1 Pub- lisher to Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 2003	2003 Av. Pubs.	2004 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Congs.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attendance
Cuba	11,217,100	88,940	126	88,472	1	87,185	3,415	11,298	16,678,481	140,367	196,869
Curaçao	133,700	1,431	93	1,398	1	1,382	42	141	20	241,474	4,218
Cyprus	730,400	1,938	377	1,904	2	1,866	66	233	351,822	1,019	3,671
Czech Republic	10,210,168	15,779	647	15,649	0	15,657	302	1,171	2,331,705	6,576	29,281
Denmark	5,397,640	14,422	374	14,309	-1	14,438	201	1,093	2,087,548	4,370	22,539
Dominica	71,794	358	201	337	7	314	19	48	82,547	493	1,076
Dominican Rep.	8,949,725	25,635	349	25,055	2	24,535	1,129	4,690	359	6,492,565	45,402
East Timor	800,000	42	19,048	38	0	38	5	21	1	28,456	124
Ecuador	12,842,576	51,007	252	48,560	6	45,997	3,035	8,175	641	11,879,036	80,847
El Salvador	6,757,408	30,215	224	28,946	1	28,539	1,182	2,393	525	5,000,519	30,036
Equatorial Guinea	1,085,000	906	1,198	835	6	789	66	179	14	239,825	2,333
Estonia	1,366,723	4,079	335	4,037	2	3,967	196	555	49	787,259	2,925
Ethiopia	70,000,000	7,307	9,580	7,191	5	6,867	493	1,484	141	2,178,181	6,151
Faeroe Islands	47,704	91	524	89	-1	90	2	30	4	28,918	85
Falkland Islands	2,967	5	593	5	0	5			1	460	3
Fiji	806,217	2,007	402	1,949	2	1,909	97	244	34	384,059	2,097
Finland	5,219,732	19,247	271	19,094	0	19,187	339	1,912	300	2,773,374	8,372
France	60,434,000	118,228	511	113,038	1	112,308	2,483	9,147	1,491	18,062,599	39,793
French Guiana	172,500	1,680	103	1,621	5	1,549	99	212	27	384,326	3,199
Gabon	1,318,000	2,725	484	2,356	5	2,254	149	310	36	584,789	6,177
Gambia, The	1,500,000	165	9,091	159	7	148	1	34	3	52,985	297
Georgia	4,371,535	15,689	279	14,863	1	14,742	697	2,261	149	2,996,738	7,578
Germany	82,488,700	165,201	499	163,092	0	162,943	3,877	12,008	2,196	25,133,391	73,307
Ghana	20,363,349	75,005	271	72,624	3	70,196	4,110	6,607	1,178	13,656,413	170,008
Gibraltar	28,605	104	275	91	2	89	1	8	2	15,019	28
Greece	10,539,771	28,044	376	27,959	0	28,036	620	3,349	378	4,952,654	10,477
Greenland	56,854	137	415	127	-7	137	1	23	7	29,821	103
Grenada	89,258	601	149	584	-3	600	13	74	9	116,334	624
Guadeloupe	422,496	7,673	55	7,508	0	7,477	212	582	112	1,197,030	8,050
Guam	154,805	635	244	617	0	615	27	154	10	172,002	925
Guatemala	11,514,755	23,064	499	22,217	2	21,696	1,109	2,349	332	4,266,970	22,019
Guinea	9,246,462	873	10,592	729	6	685	63	130	20	228,984	1,837
Guinea-Bissau	1,300,000	103	12,621	94	13	83	12	33	4	53,586	412
Guyana	777,648	2,163	360	2,093	0	2,085	100	238	37	375,317	2,385
Haiti	8,304,062	13,275	626	12,311	2	12,012	845	1,551	213	2,660,789	21,180
Hawaii	1,257,608	7,897	159	7,698	0	7,691	344	1,244	98	1,672,475	5,526
Honduras	7,361,931	15,210	484	14,454	5	13,824	834	1,877	221	3,311,721	20,206
Hong Kong	6,600,000	4,578	1,442	4,507	0	4,506	146	883	48	1,192,386	5,371
Hungary	10,103,000	21,979	460	20,876	0	20,863	659	1,665	251	3,361,177	11,500
Iceland	290,570	284	1,023	278	-1	281	7	30	6	49,343	174
India	1,070,471,400	25,353	42,223	23,583	3	22,838	1,214	1,735	435	3,319,282	17,227
Indonesia	215,768,324	18,500	11,663	17,564	5	16,754	1,056	1,712	407	3,616,989	19,407
Ireland	5,746,428	4,897	1,173	4,757	2	4,666	122	629	114	951,874	2,348
Israel	10,608,000	1,247	8,507	1,201	-3	1,238	59	92	16	207,412	816
Italy	57,888,245	233,527	248	230,880	0	229,920	5,107	32,826	3,049	48,254,558	100,684
Jamaica	2,599,000	11,078	235	10,685	1	10,627	401	1,121	196	1,827,878	11,732
Japan	126,824,166	217,555	583	217,097	0	217,020	6,055	71,158	3,163	72,574,886	159,434
Kazakhstan	15,000,000	14,181	1,058	13,606	4	13,075	1,116	2,189	144	3,166,746	12,292
Kenya	32,000,000	19,314	1,657	18,044	5	17,115	1,450	3,224	453	5,143,040	30,939
Kiribati	78,300	76	1,030	64	-9	70	3	13	1	23,560	181
Korea, Republic of	48,199,277	90,936	530	90,282	1	89,097	2,973	39,314	1,396	38,499,102	60,274
Kosovo	2,350,000	124	18,952	115	26	91	22	40	4	52,381	138,323
Kosrae	9,728	30	324	25	4	24		6	1	6,669	534
Kyrgyzstan	5,081,429	3,891	1,306	3,622	6	3,415	266	639	36	830,908	4,058
Latvia	2,311,400	2,345	986	2,281	2	2,233	127	461	38	635,708	2,394

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Lebanon	3,653,000	3,567	1,024	3,535 1	3,493	90	241	70	556,684	1,770	6,635
Lesotho	2,333,846	3,133	745	2,978 2	2,918	151	387	63	676,232	4,172	8,198
Liberia	3,390,635	4,356	778	4,008 12	3,572	408	829	79	1,398,052	15,527	27,926
Liechtenstein	34,294	57	602	49 2	48	2	1	1	4,544	18	95
Lithuania	3,500,000	2,854	1,226	2,732 1	2,694	142	464	37	679,079	2,159	5,887
Luxembourg	521,719	1,785	292	1,752 0	1,747	28	131	32	276,039	806	3,524
Macao	500,000	109	4,587	107 -2	109	2	20	2	33,826	109	285
Macedonia	2,000,000	1,087	1,840	1,060 3	1,033	35	145	16	251,968	598	3,059
Madagascar	16,681,000	14,716	1,134	14,282 8	13,247	1,343	2,741	311	3,905,598	35,112	78,210
Madeira	246,334	1,113	221	1,089 0	1,091	27	82	18	168,524	718	2,134
Malawi	11,937,934	63,592	188	58,620 6	55,384	4,581	7,161	965	11,689,285	55,562	193,063
Malaysia	24,698,000	2,490	9,919	2,427 3	2,354	136	442	54	631,726	3,740	6,557
Mali	12,400,000	244	50,820	215 8	200	8	53	7	87,347	568	963
Malta	386,350	574	673	545 -1	549	9	52	7	89,099	200	983
Marshall Islands	71,056	212	335	206 1	204	10	62	5	76,390	631	1,278
Martinique	380,460	4,111	93	4,024 0	4,020	105	445	52	772,130	3,984	9,846
Mauritius	1,169,303	1,514	772	1,477 3	1,435	40	134	25	277,284	1,351	3,641
Mayotte	160,265	62	2,585	50 -2	51	5	1	9,397	65	122	
Mexico	105,441,657	585,865	180	581,651 5	555,653	22,608	72,392	11,047	113,844,257	659,218	1,753,645
Moldova	4,228,900	18,107	234	17,702 -1	17,836	801	1,764	224	2,631,899	9,045	41,053
Mongolia	2,540,000	91	27,912	84 22	69	11	31	1	43,048	231	460
Montserrat	3,000	11	273	8 14	7	1	1	1	962	8	43
Mozambique	18,972,396	40,456	469	38,260 1	37,747	2,845	5,768	901	8,574,383	52,984	179,218
Myanmar	53,490,000	3,086	17,333	2,938 0	2,935	81	240	97	483,364	1,800	7,014
Namibia	1,830,330	1,293	1,416	1,189 4	1,143	66	146	27	267,208	1,605	3,786
Nauru	10,600	3	3,533	2 -33	3	1	1	77	2	38	
Nepal	25,100,000	663	37,858	630 9	579	68	113	9	161,940	1,179	2,518
Netherlands	16,280,801	31,390	519	29,632 0	29,603	677	1,853	421	3,993,636	9,979	53,830
Nevis	10,080	53	190	49 -6	52	1	3	1	10,124	36	197
New Caledonia	220,000	1,636	134	1,563 1	1,551	65	169	22	299,630	1,844	5,453
New Zealand	4,061,000	13,632	298	12,943 1	12,822	383	1,166	168	2,064,041	6,117	26,850
Nicaragua	5,450,000	18,159	300	16,977 5	16,163	979	2,264	321	3,901,547	29,580	74,275
Niger	11,360,538	243	46,751	227 4	218	22	48	7	73,821	416	1,348
Nigeria	126,635,626	270,608	468	256,024 2	251,031	11,180	33,075	4,676	48,873,898	445,803	637,091
Niue	1,400	29	48	27 4	26	1	4	1	5,855	27	89
Norfolk Island	2,601	13	200	13 0	13	1	1	1	1,626	4	20
Norway	4,582,600	10,018	457	9,638 0	9,661	193	643	174	1,244,703	3,506	16,607
Pakistan	159,196,336	826	192,732	692 6	654	65	68	14	118,290	608	2,823
Panama	3,172,380	11,262	282	10,592 3	10,332	519	1,545	230	2,311,495	14,389	36,258
Papua New Guinea	5,774,507	3,579	1,613	3,110 1	3,066	125	349	54	603,108	3,381	19,539
Paraguay	6,100,181	8,412	725	7,667 3	7,458	451	1,173	110	1,753,765	9,560	20,157
Peru	27,545,400	93,145	296	83,755 5	79,498	5,687	22,061	954	25,524,066	138,537	292,575
Philippines	82,000,000	144,738	567	142,313 1	141,420	6,415	27,744	3,419	28,121,517	111,624	438,418
Pohnpei	39,721	82	484	75 10	68	1	18	1	20,947	199	422
Poland	38,632,453	128,616	300	127,377 1	126,573	4,261	8,539	1,794	15,329,731	48,545	237,134
Portugal	9,922,638	48,555	204	47,896 0	47,835	1,266	4,153	653	7,840,354	24,575	99,910
Puerto Rico	3,937,316	25,014	157	24,752 0	24,849	741	2,790	325	4,349,289	14,551	59,818
Réunion	766,214	2,625	292	2,567 -1	2,581	73	254	35	478,662	1,960	5,766
Rodrigues	36,085	38	950	33 10	30	3	1	6,242	19	74	
Romania	21,680,974	38,636	561	38,361 -1	38,595	1,310	3,529	567	5,956,006	19,557	84,201
Rota	2,899	9	322	7 17	6	2	1	2,442	18	37	
Russia	143,782,338	138,552	1,038	132,978 5	126,896	7,745	23,771	1,342	33,473,341	120,140	283,110
Rwanda	8,162,715	12,704	643	11,431 8	10,553	1,117	2,611	261	4,361,930	28,982	54,866
Saba	1,600	6	267	4 33	3	1	1	1,797	14	20	

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St. Eustatius	2,900	18	161	15	25	12	3	1	2,907	17	68	
St. Helena	3,863	136	28	129	4	124	2	3	13,164	82	326	
St. Kitts	31,800	171	186	161	5	153	6	21	37,520	199	589	
St. Lucia	162,157	709	229	662	-3	681	31	102	144,901	880	2,066	
St. Maarten	40,000	298	134	276	3	268	15	56	75,406	400	1,067	
St. Pierre & Miquelon	6,316	16	395	16	-6	17	2	1	2,962	8	28	
St. Vincent	109,022	311	351	301	4	290	22	44	74,590	361	1,035	
Saipan	71,400	161	443	157	1	155	7	35	44,704	304	562	
Samoa	177,714	403	441	370	6	348	13	63	89,716	444	1,815	
San Marino	26,266	181	145	179	-1	180	6	24	41,449	80	334	
São Tomé & Príncipe	180,888	404	448	389	6	367	24	93	132,820	1,490	1,651	
Senegal	10,260,000	1,000	10,260	966	3	937	44	192	313,342	1,657	2,787	
Serbia & Montenegro	8,129,395	3,999	2,033	3,936	2	3,855	109	584	892,978	1,952	8,820	
Seychelles	79,879	254	314	230	6	218	17	34	57,442	357	758	
Sierra Leone	5,883,889	1,422	4,138	1,257	9	1,149	69	163	311,038	2,729	7,594	
Slovakia	5,380,053	12,100	445	11,933	-1	12,083	261	478	1,361,505	3,425	23,146	
Slovenia	1,996,370	1,876	1,064	1,853	1	1,835	42	225	384,333	777	3,114	
Solomon Islands	460,110	1,890	243	1,844	3	1,794	89	332	430,107	1,854	7,349	
South Africa	46,586,607	76,406	610	73,047	1	72,053	3,088	9,155	14,936,587	87,972	193,661	
Spain	42,717,064	105,255	406	98,922	1	97,806	1,735	11,680	19,475,008	40,055	178,818	
Sri Lanka	19,300,000	3,708	5,205	3,613	1	3,578	222	401	640,883	3,288	9,071	
Suriname	438,026	2,004	219	1,990	0	1,999	66	272	417,843	2,652	7,218	
Swaziland	929,718	2,269	410	2,122	3	2,067	96	280	485,816	2,845	7,001	
Sweden	8,997,335	22,458	401	22,178	-1	22,409	414	2,077	3,190,659	8,463	36,609	
Switzerland	7,379,200	17,815	414	17,079	0	17,127	348	996	2,386,429	7,137	30,564	
Tahiti	245,516	1,746	141	1,722	1	1,709	86	154	307,423	1,815	5,788	
Taiwan	22,653,642	5,281	4,290	5,091	7	4,753	288	1,413	1,752,615	6,815	12,548	
Tajikistan	6,127,000	468	13,092	422	17	360	105	122	146,054	619	1,149	
Tanzania	36,510,219	13,416	2,721	12,049	7	11,214	1,143	2,099	366	3,214,684	21,003	51,323
Thailand	64,870,000	2,166	29,949	2,122	3	2,065	76	385	518,889	2,482	5,246	
Tinian	2,740	15	183	14	-7	15	5	1	6,363	42	50	
Togo	5,025,540	13,375	376	12,796	4	12,276	798	1,624	213	2,903,067	31,672	53,884
Tonga	102,371	196	522	181	3	175	14	29	5	46,460	258	621
Trinidad & Tobago	1,289,141	8,185	158	8,069	0	8,059	256	1,273	101	1,600,256	9,196	23,199
Turkey	67,803,927	1,740	38,968	1,697	3	1,653	79	215	356,592	934	3,298	
Turks & Caicos Isls.	19,956	139	144	125	6	118	5	17	3	30,543	234	486
Tuvalu	9,403	54	174	43	13	38	2	3	5,712	33	117	
Uganda	25,000,000	3,743	6,679	3,513	10	3,204	358	604	974,493	7,606	13,248	
Ukraine	47,441,000	133,152	356	127,761	3	123,798	6,652	17,562	1,401	26,227,508	89,933	279,353
U.S. of America	288,903,351	1,019,696	283	992,809	0	988,236	30,576	125,982	12,078	189,740,398	519,648	2,303,015
Uruguay	3,030,000	11,008	275	10,877	2	10,706	497	846	153	1,524,742	8,727	25,699
Vanuatu	211,000	311	678	289	0	290	6	32	7	58,892	497	1,980
Venezuela	26,011,853	97,022	268	93,979	3	91,512	4,003	15,989	1,294	22,913,682	137,247	341,806
Virgin Isls. (Brit.)	20,647	191	108	180	-2	184	4	31	3	35,542	197	708
Virgin Isls. (U.S.)	109,343	640	171	607	0	607	18	106	9	140,195	631	1,834
Wallis & Futuna Isls.	15,880	77	206	69	19	58	6	8	1	15,567	98	472
Yap	11,241	27	416	25	-11	28	1	10	1	9,070	52	134
Zambia	12,476,082	123,579	101	118,068	3	114,757	7,758	12,942	2,136	21,929,242	182,706	570,381
Zimbabwe	11,374,540	31,134	365	29,745	2	29,242	2,160	3,969	888	6,355,158	48,939	78,449
29 Other Lands		12,325		11,376	7.0	10,633	1,376	2,195	262	3,192,626	14,031	28,129
GRAND TOTAL (235 Lands)		6,513,132		6,308,341	2.0	6,184,046	262,416	858,461	96,894	1,282,234,887	6,085,387	16,760,607

During the 2004 service year, Jehovah's Witnesses spent over \$93 million in caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and traveling overseers in their field service assignments.

MEMORIAL PARTAKERS WORLDWIDE: 8,570

JEHOVAH ALWAYS DOES WHAT IS RIGHT

"Jehovah is righteous in all his ways."—PSALM 145:17.

HAS someone ever drawn the wrong conclusion about you, perhaps questioning your actions or motives, without having all the facts? If so, you likely felt hurt—and understandably so. From this, we can learn an important lesson: It is wise to avoid jumping to conclusions when we do not have the whole picture.

² We do well to keep this lesson in mind when it comes to reaching conclusions about Jehovah God. Why is that? Because there are certain Bible accounts that may at first seem puzzling. These accounts—perhaps about the actions of some of God's worshipers or God's past judgments—may not contain enough details to answer all our questions. Sadly, some take exception to such accounts, even questioning whether God is righteous and just. Yet, the Bible tells us that "Jehovah is righteous in all his ways." (Psalm 145:17) His Word also assures us that he "does not act wickedly." (Job 34:12; Psalm 37:28) Imagine, then, how he must feel when others draw wrong conclusions about him!

³ Let us consider five reasons why we should accept Jehovah's judgments. Then, with those reasons in mind, we will examine two Bible accounts that some may find difficult to understand.

1. How do you react when someone draws a wrong conclusion about you, and what lesson can we learn from such an experience?
- 2, 3. How do some react to Bible accounts that do not contain enough details to answer every question, yet what does the Bible tell us about Jehovah?

Why Accept Jehovah's Judgments?

⁴ First, because Jehovah knows all the facts involved and we do not, we should be modest when considering God's actions. To illustrate: Imagine that a judge with an outstanding record of making fair-minded decisions has handed down a sentence in a court case. What would you think about someone who without knowing all the facts or really understanding the laws involved criticized the judge's decision? It would be foolish for someone to pass judgment on a matter without being fully informed about it. (Proverbs 18:13) How much more foolish it would be for mere humans to criticize "the Judge of all the earth"!—Genesis 18:25.

⁵ A second reason to accept God's judgments is that unlike humans, God can read hearts. (1 Samuel 16:7) His Word states: "I, Jehovah, am searching the heart, examining the kidneys, even to give to each one according to his ways, according to the fruitage of his dealings." (Jeremiah 17:10) Hence, when we read Bible accounts about God's judgments upon certain individuals, let us not forget that his all-seeing eyes took into account hidden thoughts, motives, and intentions that went unrecorded in his Word.—1 Chronicles 28:9.

4. Why should we be modest when considering God's actions? Illustrate.
5. What should we not forget when we read Bible accounts about executions of God's judgments upon certain individuals?

⁶ Note a third reason to accept Jehovah's judgments: He holds to his righteous standards even at great personal cost. Consider an example. In giving his Son as a ransom for delivering obedient mankind from sin and death, Jehovah satisfied his just and righteous standards. (Romans 5:18, 19) Yet, seeing his beloved Son suffer and die on a torture stake must have caused Jehovah the greatest possible pain. What does this tell us about God? Regarding "the ransom paid by Christ Jesus," the Bible says: "This was in order to exhibit [God's] own righteousness." (Romans 3:24-26) Another translation of Romans 3:25 reads: "This showed that God always does what is right and fair." (*New Century Version*) Yes, the extent to which Jehovah was willing to go in order to provide the ransom shows that he has the highest regard for "what is right and fair."

⁷ So, then, if we read something in the Bible that causes some to wonder whether God acted in a just or right way, we should remember this: Because of his loyalty to his standards of righteousness and justice, Jehovah did not spare his own Son from undergoing a painful death. Would he compromise those standards in other matters? The truth is, Jehovah *never* violates his righteous and just standards. We thus have ample reason to be convinced that he always does what is right and fair.—Job 37:23.

⁸ Consider a fourth reason why we should accept Jehovah's judgments: Jehovah made man in His image. (Genesis 1:27) Humans

6, 7. (a) How has Jehovah demonstrated that he holds to his just and righteous standards even at great personal cost? (b) What should we remember if we read something in the Bible that causes us to wonder whether God acted in a just or right way?

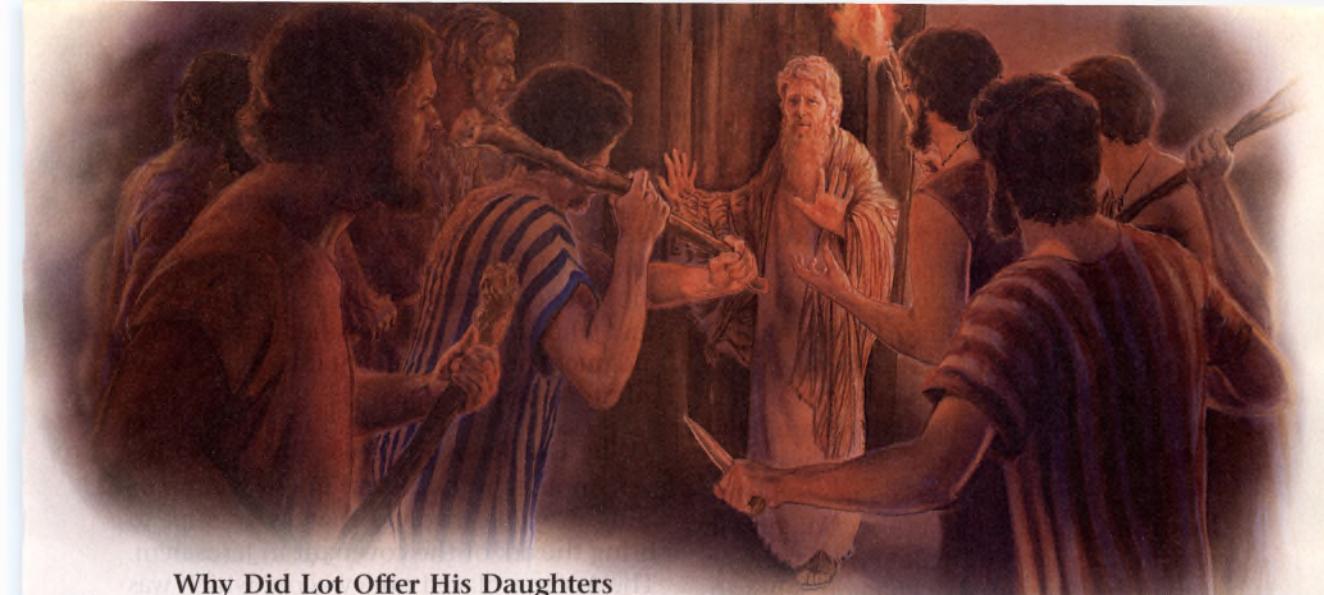
8. Why would it be inconsistent for humans to imagine that justice and righteousness could somehow be lacking in Jehovah?

are thus endowed with attributes like those of God, including a sense of justice and righteousness. It would be inconsistent if our sense of justice and righteousness caused us to imagine that those same qualities could somehow be lacking in Jehovah. If we become troubled over a particular Bible account, we need to remember that because of our inherited sin, our sense of what is just and right is imperfect. Jehovah God, in whose image we were made, is perfect in justice and righteousness. (Deuteronomy 32:4) It would be absurd even to imagine that humans could be more just and righteous than God!—Romans 3:4, 5; 9:14.

⁹ A fifth reason for accepting Jehovah's judgments is that he is "the Most High over all the earth." (Psalm 83:18) As such, he is not obligated to explain or justify his actions to humans. He is the Great Potter, and we are like clay that has been shaped into vessels, for him to deal with as he pleases. (Romans 9:19-21) Who are we—the pottery of his hand—to question his decisions or actions? When the patriarch Job misunderstood God's dealings with mankind, Jehovah corrected him, asking: "Really, will you invalidate my justice? Will you pronounce me wicked in order that you may be in the right?" Realizing that he had spoken without understanding, Job later repented. (Job 40:8; 42:6) May we never make the mistake of finding fault with God!

¹⁰ Clearly, we have sound reasons to believe that Jehovah always does what is right. With this foundation for understanding Jehovah's ways, let us examine two Bible accounts that some may find puzzling. The first involves the actions of one of God's worshipers, and the other, an execution of judgment by God himself.

9, 10. Why is Jehovah not obligated to explain or justify his actions to humans?



Why Did Lot Offer His Daughters to an Angry Mob?

¹¹ In Genesis chapter 19, we find the account of what happened when God sent two materialized angels to Sodom. Lot insisted that the visitors stay in his home. That night, however, a mob of men from the city surrounded the house and demanded that the visitors be brought out to them for immoral purposes. Lot tried to reason with the mob, but to no avail. Seeking to protect his guests, Lot said: "Please, my brothers, do not act badly. Please, here I have two daughters who have never had intercourse with a man. Please, let me bring them out to you. Then do to them as is good in your eyes. Only to these men do not do a thing, because that is why they have come under the shadow of my roof." The mob would not listen and almost broke down the door. Finally, the angelic visitors struck that frenzied crowd with blindness.—Genesis 19:1-11.

¹² Understandably, this account has raised questions in the mind of some. They wonder: 'How could Lot seek to protect his guests by offering his daughters to a lustful mob? Did he not act improperly, even cowardly?'

11, 12. (a) Relate what happened when God sent two materialized angels to Sodom. (b) This account has raised what questions in the mind of some?

In view of this account, why would God inspire Peter to call Lot a "righteous man"? Did Lot act with God's approval? (2 Peter 2:7, 8) Let us reason on this matter so that we do not draw the wrong conclusion.

¹³ To begin with, it should be noted that rather than condoning or condemning Lot's actions, the Bible simply reports what took place. The Bible also does not tell us what Lot was thinking or what motivated him to act as he did. When he comes back in the "resurrection of . . . the righteous," perhaps he will reveal the details.—Acts 24:15.

¹⁴ Lot was hardly a coward. He was placed in a difficult situation. By saying that the visitors had "come under the shadow" of his roof, Lot indicated that he felt compelled to provide protection and refuge for them. But this would not be easy. Jewish historian Josephus reports that the Sodomites were "unjust towards men, and impious towards God . . . They hated strangers, and abused themselves with Sodomitical practices." Yet, Lot did not shrink back from the hateful mob.

13, 14. (a) What should be noted about the Bible account regarding Lot's actions? (b) What shows that Lot did not act in a cowardly way?

On the contrary, he went out and reasoned with those angry men. He even "shut the door behind him."—Genesis 19:6.

¹⁵ 'Still,' some may ask, 'why would Lot offer his daughters to the mob?' Instead of assuming that his motives were bad, why not consider some possibilities? First of all, Lot may well have acted in faith. How so? No doubt Lot was aware of how Jehovah had protected Sarah, the wife of Abraham, Lot's uncle. Recall that because Sarah was very beautiful, Abraham had asked her to identify him as her brother, lest others kill him in order to take her.* Subsequently, Sarah was taken to the household of Pharaoh. Jehovah, however, intervened, preventing Pharaoh from violating Sarah. (Genesis 12:11-20) It is possible that Lot had faith that his daughters could be similarly protected. Significantly, Jehovah through his angels *did* intervene, and the young women were kept safe.

¹⁶ Consider another possibility. Lot may also have been trying to shock or confuse the men. He may have believed that his daughters would not be desired by the crowd because of the homosexual lust of the Sodomites. (Jude 7) In addition, the young women were engaged to men of the city, so relatives, friends, or business associates of his prospective sons-in-law might well have been in the crowd. (Genesis 19:14) Lot may have hoped that by reason of such ties, some men in that mob would speak up in defense of his daughters. A mob thus divided would not be nearly so dangerous.[#]

* Abraham's fear was valid, for an ancient papyrus tells of a Pharaoh who had armed men seize a beautiful woman and kill her husband.

[#] For additional observations, see *The Watchtower* of December 1, 1979, page 31.

15. Why can it be said that Lot may well have acted in faith?

16, 17. (a) In what way may Lot have been trying to shock or confuse the men of Sodom? (b) Whatever Lot's reasoning, of what can we be sure?

¹⁷ Whatever Lot's reasoning and motives, we can be sure of this: Since Jehovah always does what is right, he must have had good reason to view Lot as a "righteous man." And judging from the actions of the crazed mob of Sodomites, can there be any doubt that Jehovah was fully justified in executing judgment upon the inhabitants of that wicked city?—Genesis 19:23-25.

Why Did Jehovah Strike Uzzah Dead?

¹⁸ Another account that might seem puzzling to some involves David's attempt to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. The Ark was placed on a wagon, which was led by Uzzah and his brother. The Bible states: "They came gradually as far as the threshing floor of Nacon, and Uzzah now thrust his hand out to the ark of the true God and grabbed hold of it, for the cattle nearly caused an upset. At that Jehovah's anger blazed against Uzzah and the true God struck him down there for the irreverent act, so that he died there close by the ark of the true God." Some months later, a second attempt succeeded when the Ark was transported in the God-appointed way, carried on the shoulders of Kohathite Levites. (2 Samuel 6:6, 7; Numbers 4:15; 7:9; 1 Chronicles 15:1-14) Some may ask: 'Why did Jehovah react so strongly? Uzzah was only trying to save the Ark.' Lest we draw the wrong conclusion, we do well to note some helpful details.

¹⁹ We need to remember that it is impossible for Jehovah to act unjustly. (Job 34:10) For him to do so would be unloving, and we know from our study of the Bible as a whole that "God is love." (1 John 4:8) In addition, the Scriptures tell us that "righteousness

18. (a) What happened when David attempted to bring the Ark to Jerusalem? (b) What question does this account raise?

19. Why is it impossible for Jehovah to act unjustly?

and judgment are the established place of [God's] throne." (Psalm 89:14) How, then, could Jehovah ever act unjustly? If he were to do so, he would be undermining the very foundation of his sovereignty.

²⁰ Keep in mind that Uzzah should have known better. The Ark was associated with Jehovah's presence. The Law specified that it was not to be touched by unauthorized individuals, explicitly warning that violators would be punished by death. (Numbers 4: 18-20; 7:89) Therefore, the transfer of that sacred chest was not a task to be treated lightly. Uzzah evidently was a Levite (though not a priest), so he should have been familiar with the Law. Besides, years earlier the Ark had been moved to the house of his father for safekeeping. (1 Samuel 6:20-7:1) It had stayed there for some 70 years, until David chose to move it. So from childhood on, Uzzah had likely been aware of the laws regarding the Ark.

²¹ As mentioned earlier, Jehovah can read hearts. Since his Word calls Uzzah's deed an "irreverent act," Jehovah may have seen some selfish motive that is not expressly revealed in the account. Was Uzzah perhaps a presumptuous man, prone to overstep due bounds? (Proverbs 11:2) Did leading in public the Ark that his family had guarded in private give him an inflated sense of self-importance? (Proverbs 8:13) Was Uzzah so faithless as to think that Jehovah's hand was too short to steady the sacred chest that symbolized His presence? Whatever the case, we can be sure that Jehovah did what was right. He likely saw something in Uzzah's heart that caused Him to render swift judgment.—Proverbs 21:2.

20. For what reasons should Uzzah have been aware of the regulations regarding the Ark?

21. In the case of Uzzah, why is it important to remember that Jehovah sees the motives of the heart?

A Sound Basis for Confidence

²² Jehovah's incomparable wisdom is seen in that his Word at times omits certain details. Jehovah thereby gives us an opportunity to show that we trust him. From what we have considered, is it not clear that we have sound reasons to accept Jehovah's judgments? Yes, when we study God's Word with a sincere heart and an open mind, we learn more than enough about Jehovah to be convinced that he always does what is just and right. Hence, if some Bible account raises questions to which we cannot find immediate explicit answers, let us have full confidence that Jehovah did what was right.

²³ We can have similar confidence regarding Jehovah's future actions. Hence, we may rest assured that when he comes to execute judgment at the approaching great tribulation, he will not "sweep away the righteous with the wicked." (Genesis 18:23) His love of righteousness and justice will never allow him to do that. We can also have full confidence that in the coming new world, he will satisfy all our needs in the best possible way.
—Psalm 145:16.

22. How is Jehovah's wisdom seen in that his Word at times omits certain details?

23. What confidence can we have regarding Jehovah's future actions?

Do You Recall?

- For what reasons should we accept Jehovah's judgments?
- What can help us to avoid reaching the wrong conclusion about Lot's offering his daughters to the angry mob?
- What factors can help us to understand why Jehovah struck Uzzah dead?
- What confidence can we have regarding Jehovah's future actions?



Is the Truth Bearing Fruit in Those You Teach?

WHEN young Eric announced that he no longer wanted to be known as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, his parents were crushed. They had not seen it coming. As a boy, Eric had shared in the family Bible study, attended Christian meetings, and joined in the preaching work with the congregation. He had seemed to be in the truth, so to speak. But now that he was gone, his parents realized that Bible truth had not been in him. That realization came as both a shock and a disappointment to them.

Others have experienced similar feelings of loss when a Bible student unexpectedly quits studying. At such times, people often ask themselves, 'Why did I not see this coming?' Well, is it possible to determine before spiritual disaster strikes whether the truth is bearing fruit in those we teach? For that matter, how can we be certain that the truth is working in us as well as in those we teach? In his familiar parable of the sower, Jesus provided a clue to the answer to these questions.

The Truth Must Reach the Heart

"The seed is the word of God," Jesus said. "As for that [sown] on the fine soil, these are the ones that, after hearing the word with a fine and good heart, retain it and bear fruit with endurance." (Luke 8:11, 15) So before Kingdom truth can produce any results in our students, it has to take root in their figurative heart. Jesus assures us that like

good seed in fine soil, once divine truth has touched a good heart, it immediately goes to work and bears fruit. What should we look for?

We must take note of heart qualities, not just outward show. Merely keeping up a routine of worship does not always reveal what is really going on in someone's heart. (Jeremiah 17:9, 10; Matthew 15:7-9) We need to look deeper. There should be a definite change in the person's desires, motives, and priorities. The individual should be developing the new personality, which conforms to God's will. (Ephesians 4:20-24) To illustrate: When the Thessalonians heard the good news, Paul said that they readily accepted it as the word of God. But it was their subsequent endurance, faithfulness, and love that confirmed to him that the truth was "also at work in [them]."—1 Thessalonians 2:13, 14; 3:6.

Of course, whatever is in a student's heart will sooner or later be revealed in his behavior, as Eric's example illustrates. (Mark 7:21, 22; James 1:14, 15) Unfortunately, by the time certain bad traits become fully evident in a person's actions, it might be too late. The challenge, then, is to try to identify specific weaknesses before they become spiritual stumbling blocks. We need a way to look into the figurative heart. How can we do that?

Learn From Jesus

Jesus, of course, was able to read hearts unerringly. (Matthew 12:25) None of us

can do that. Yet, he showed us that we too can discern a person's desires, motives, and priorities. Just as a qualified doctor uses various diagnostic techniques to see what is wrong with a patient's physical heart, Jesus used God's Word to 'draw up' and expose the "thoughts and intentions of the heart," even when they were still hidden from general observation.—Proverbs 20:5; Hebrews 4:12.

For example, on one occasion Jesus helped Peter to become aware of a weakness that later did become a stumbling block. Jesus knew that Peter loved him. In fact, Jesus had just entrusted Peter with "the keys of the kingdom." (Matthew 16:13-19) Jesus also knew, however, that Satan had his eye on the apostles. In the days ahead, they would come under intense pressure to compromise. Jesus evidently discerned that some of his disciples had weaknesses in their faith. So he did not shy away from pointing out what they needed to work on. Consider how he brought the matter up for discussion.

Matthew 16:21 says: "From that time forward Jesus Christ commenced showing his disciples that he must . . . suffer . . . and be killed." Notice that Jesus *showed* them, not just told them, what would happen to him. Most likely he used Bible verses, such as Psalm 22:14-18 or Isaiah 53:10-12, that indicate that the Messiah would have to suffer and die. At any rate, by reading or quoting directly from the Scriptures, Jesus gave Peter and the others an opportunity to respond

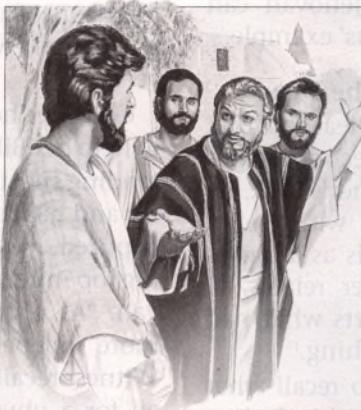
from their hearts. How would they react to the prospect of persecution?

Surprisingly, as bold and zealous as Peter had shown himself to be, his rash response on this occasion revealed a critical flaw in his thinking. "Be kind to yourself, Lord," he said, "you will not have this destiny at all." Peter's way of thinking was clearly misguided, for as Jesus pointed out, Peter was thinking, "not God's thoughts, but those of men"—a serious fault that could lead to grave consequences. What, then, did Jesus do? After rebuking Peter, Jesus told him and the rest of the disciples: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and continually follow me." Drawing on thoughts found at Psalm 49:8 and 62:12, he kindly reminded them that their

everlasting prospects lay, not with men, who could not provide salvation, but with God.—Matthew 16:22-28.

Though Peter later temporarily succumbed to fear and denied Jesus three times, this discussion and others no doubt helped to prepare him for a rapid spiritual recovery. (John 21:15-19) Just 50 days later, Peter boldly stood up before the crowds in Jerusalem to testify to Jesus' resurrection. In the weeks, months, and years to follow, he courageously faced repeated arrests, beatings, and incarceration, setting an outstanding example of fearless integrity.—Acts 2:14-36; 4:18-21; 5:29-32, 40-42; 12:3-5.

What do we learn from this? Can you see what Jesus did to draw up and expose what



Jesus' words revealed a weakness in Peter



was in Peter's heart? First, he selected appropriate scriptures to focus Peter's attention on the specific area of concern. Next, he gave Peter an opportunity to respond from the heart. Finally, he provided further Scriptural counsel to help Peter adjust his thinking and feelings. You might feel that this level of teaching is beyond your ability, but let us consider two experiences that illustrate how preparation and reliance on Jehovah can help any one of us to follow Jesus' example.

Drawing Up What Is in the Heart

When one Christian father learned that his two sons in the first and second grades had taken candy from the teacher's desk, he sat them down and reasoned with them. Rather than simply dismiss this as a harmless, childish prank, the father relates, "I tried to draw out of their hearts what had motivated them to do this bad thing."

The father asked the boys to recall what happened to Achan, as recounted in Joshua chapter 7. The boys immediately got the point and confessed. Their consciences had already been bothering them. So the father had them read Ephesians 4:28, which says: "Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work . . . that he may have something to distribute to someone in need." Having the children make compensation by

buying candy and presenting it to the teacher reinforced the Scriptural counsel.

"We tried to root out any bad motives once these were discerned," the father says, "and replace them with good and pure motives by reasoning with the children." By imitating Jesus when teaching their children, these parents certainly had good results over time. Both sons were eventually invited to become members of the headquarters staff at Brooklyn Bethel, where one still serves after 25 years.

Consider how another Christian was able to help her Bible student. The student was attending meetings and sharing in the ministry and had already expressed a desire to get baptized. However, she appeared to be relying too much on herself rather than on Jehovah. "As a single woman, she had become more independent than she realized," the Witness recalls. "I worried that she was headed for a physical breakdown or a spiritual fall."

So the Witness took the initiative to reason with the student on Matthew 6:33, encouraging her to adjust her priorities, put the Kingdom first, and trust in Jehovah to work matters out for the best. She asked her frankly: "Does living on your own sometimes make it difficult for you to rely on others, including Jehovah?" The student admitted that she had almost quit praying. The publisher then encouraged her to follow the advice found at Psalm 55:22 and throw her burden on Jehovah because, as 1 Peter 5:7 assures us, "he cares for you." Those words touched her heart. The Witness says, "That was one of the few times that I saw her cry."

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Miracles That You Have Seen!

Safeguarding Our Christian Identity

Do You Measure Yourself Against
Others?

Keep the Truth Working in You

Seeing those we teach respond to Bible truth brings us great joy. If our efforts to help



Use the Bible to draw up what is in the heart

others are to have success, though, we have to set a good example ourselves. (Jude 22, 23) All of us need to “keep working out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12) That includes regularly letting the light of the Scriptures shine on our own hearts, searching for attitudes, desires, and affections that might need correction.—2 Peter 1:19.

For instance, has your zeal for Christian activities diminished lately? If so, why? One reason might be that you are relying too much on yourself. How can you tell whether this is so? Read Haggai 1:2-11, and honestly reflect on Jehovah’s line of reasoning with the repatriated Jews. Then ask yourself: ‘Am I overly concerned with financial security and material comforts? Do I really trust Jehovah to care for my family if I give spiritual things priority? Or do I feel that I have to take care of myself first?’ If adjustments in your thinking or feelings are needed, do not hesitate to make them. Scriptural counsel, such as that found at Matthew 6:25-33, Luke 12:13-21, and 1 Timothy 6:6-12, provides the basis for a balanced view of material needs and pos-

sessions, one that secures Jehovah’s continued blessing.
—Malachi 3:10.

This kind of frank self-examination can be sobering. Admitting to specific weaknesses when they are pointed out to us can be hard emotionally. Yet, when you lovingly take the initiative to help your child, your Bible student, or even yourself—no matter how personal or sensitive a matter might be—you may well be taking the first step toward saving his life or your own.—Galatians 6:1.

What, though, if your efforts do not seem to be producing good results? Do not give up quickly. Adjusting an imperfect heart can be a delicate, time-consuming, and sometimes frustrating endeavor. But it can also be rewarding.

Young Eric, mentioned at the outset, eventually came to his senses and again started “walking in the truth.” (2 John 4) “It wasn’t until I realized what I had lost that I turned back to Jehovah,” he says. With the help of his parents, Eric is now serving God faithfully. Although he once resented his parents’ repeated efforts to get him to search his heart, now he deeply appreciates what they did. “My parents are wonderful,” he says. “They never stopped loving me.”

Shining the light of God’s Word on the heart of those we teach is an expression of loving-kindness. (Psalm 141:5) Continue to search the heart of your children and your Bible students for evidence that the new Christian personality is actually taking hold in them. Keep the truth working in others and in yourself by “handling the word of the truth aright.”—2 Timothy 2:15.



"Keep on the Watch"

IN ANCIENT times, gatekeepers served at city and temple entrances and, in some instances, at the doorways of private homes. Besides ensuring that the gates were closed at night, gatekeepers also served as watchmen. This was a very responsible assignment, for the safety of the city depended on their calling out to warn the people of any impending danger.

Jesus Christ was acquainted with the role of gatekeepers, also called doorkeepers. On one occasion, he likened his disciples to doorkeepers and encouraged them to keep on the watch with respect to the conclusion of the Jewish system of things. He said: "Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is. It is like a man traveling abroad that left his house and . . . commanded the doorkeeper to keep on the watch. Therefore keep on the watch, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming." —Mark 13:33-35.

Likewise, for over 125 years now, this journal, *The Watchtower*, has passed on Jesus' encouragement

to "keep on the watch." How? As stated on page 2 of this magazine, "It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise." With a worldwide circulation of more than 26,000,000 copies in 150 languages, *The Watchtower* is the most widely distributed religious magazine in the world. By means of it, Jehovah's Witnesses, like the ancient gatekeepers, are urging people everywhere to "keep awake" spiritually because the Master, Jesus Christ, is about to return and execute judgment on this system of things.—Mark 13:26, 37.

