

SEPTEMBER 15, 2002

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Can
“SAINTS”
Help
You?

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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Semimonthly

ENGLISH

The Modern Appeal of "Saints"

"Remember when we were supposed to be jaded about heroes?"

That didn't seem to affect the 4.2 million Americans who watched the funeral of Mother Teresa on Sept. 13. Since her death on Sept. 5, people have bombarded the Vatican with requests to have her formally declared a saint. Few people doubt it will happen."

—SUN-SENTINEL, UNITED STATES, OCTOBER 3, 1997.

THE humanitarian and charitable work of Catholic missionary Mother Teresa is looked upon by many as the essence of saintliness. Heroic figures exist among other religions. Perhaps none, however, are recognized officially as are those canonized by the Roman Catholic Church.

Pope John Paul II has canonized over 450 persons during his papal rule, more than the number canonized by all other popes of the 20th century combined.* Why is there such enduring devotion to "saints," many of whom are little known among Catholics in general?

Notre Dame University theologian Lawrence Cunningham explains: "People are interested by the notion of sanctity in the world. Saints show the possibility of a heroic life, even today." In addition, it is held that "saints" have special access to



God, making them effective intercessors for the living. When relics or bodily remains of a "saint" are found, these are venerated in the belief that power issues forth from them.

The Catechism of the Council of Trent, published in the 16th century to reaffirm Catholic dogma, decreed: "We are justified in concluding, that to honour the saints 'who sleep in the Lord,' to invoke their intercession, and to venerate their sacred relics and ashes, far from diminishing, tends considerably to increase the glory of God, in proportion as the Christian's hope is thus animated and fortified, and he himself excited to the imitation of their virtues." (*The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, 1905) True Christians certainly want to live virtuous lives, to approach God properly, and to receive divine help. (James 4:7, 8) According to God's Word, therefore, who qualify as genuine saints? And what role do they play?

* Canonization officially recognizes a deceased Roman Catholic as worthy of universal and obligatory veneration.

How Can True Saints Help You?

IN THE Scriptures, the Greek word rendered "saint" in some versions can be translated "holy one." To whom did the term apply? "In the plural, as used of believers," notes *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, "it designates all such and is not applied merely to persons of exceptional holiness, or to those who, having died, were characterized by exceptional acts of saintliness."

The apostle Paul therefore designated all early Christians as true saints, or holy ones. For instance, he addressed a letter penned in the first century C.E. "to the congregation of God that is in Corinth, together with all the holy ones who are in all of [the Roman province of] Achaia." (2 Corinthians 1:1) Later, Paul wrote a letter "to all those who are in Rome as God's beloved ones, called to be saints." (Romans 1:7, footnote) These holy ones had obviously not yet died, nor had they because of outstanding virtue been set apart above the rest of the believers. On what basis were they distinguished as saints?

Sanctified by God

God's Word shows that a person is not made a saint by men or by an organization. The Scriptures state: "[God] saved us and called us with a holy calling, not by reason of our works, but by reason of his own purpose and undeserved kindness." (2 Timothy 1:9) A holy one is sanctified by virtue of Jehovah's

calling, according to the undeserved kindness of God and in harmony with His purpose.

Holy ones of the Christian congregation are parties to "a new covenant." The shed blood of Jesus Christ validates this covenant and sanctifies its participants. (Hebrews 9:15; 10:29; 13:20, 24) Cleansed in God's eyes, they are 'a holy priesthood and offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.'—1 Peter 2:5, 9.

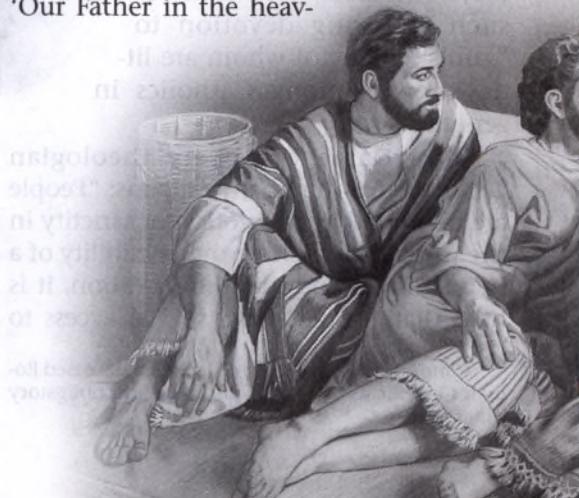


Paul wrote inspired letters to true saints

In the belief that "saints" can bestow special power on believers, millions venerate them by using relics or by invoking them

as intercessors. Is this a Bible teaching? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught his followers how to approach God, saying: "You must pray, then, this way: 'Our Father in the heav-

Invocation and Intercession of Saints



ens, let your name be sanctified.’” (Matthew 6:9) Prayers are properly addressed to Jehovah God alone.

In an effort to support the intercession of “saints,” some theologians cite Romans 15:30, where we read: “I exhort you, brothers, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the spirit, that you exert yourselves with me in prayers to God for me.” Was Paul encouraging those believers to pray to him or invoke his name in approach to God? No. While prayers offered *in behalf* of the true saints, or holy ones, are encouraged in the Bible, nowhere does God command us to pray *to or through* such holy ones.—Philippians 1:1, 3, 4.

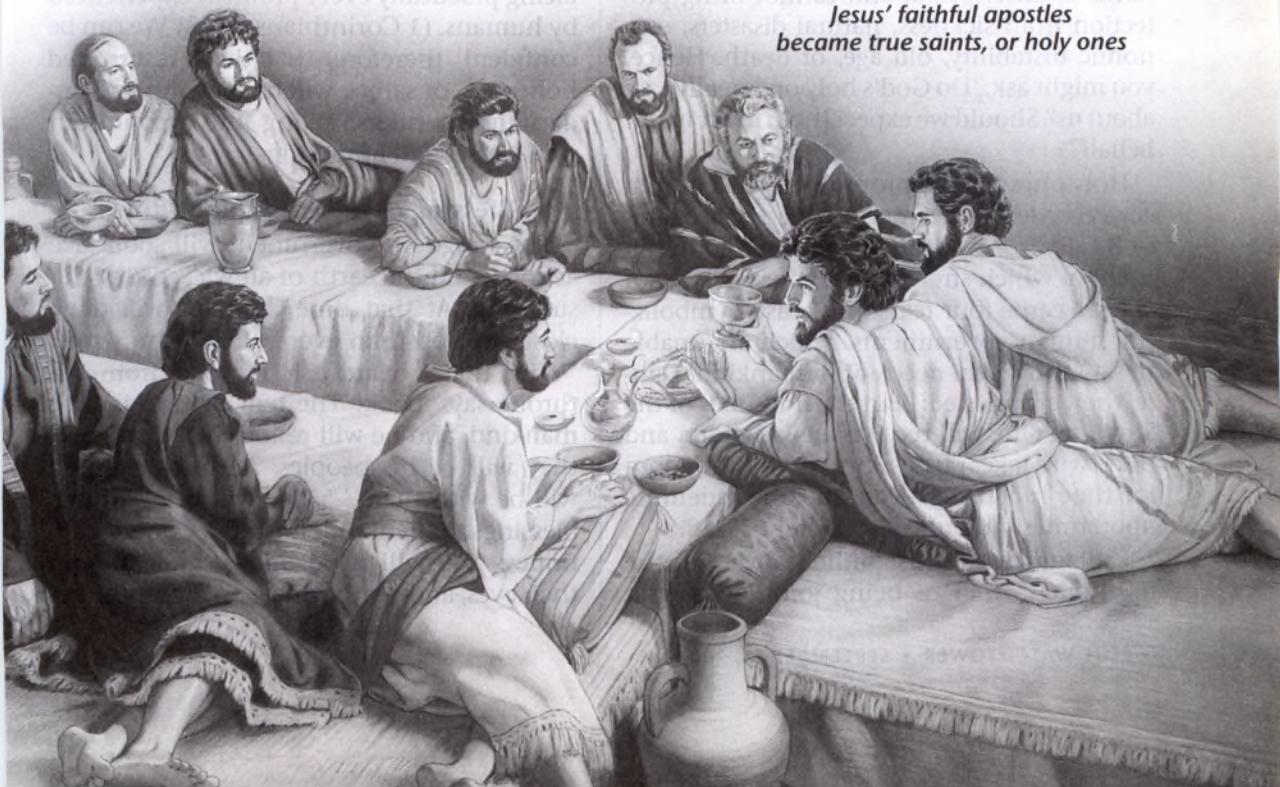
However, God has appointed an Intercessor for our prayers. “I am the way and the truth and the life,” said Jesus Christ. “No one comes to the Father except through me.” Jesus also stated: “Whatever it is that you ask in my name, I will do this, in order that the Father may be glorified in connection with the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will

do it.” (John 14:6, 13, 14) We can be confident of Jehovah’s willingness to hear prayers offered in Jesus’ name. Concerning Jesus, the Bible says: “He is able also to save completely those who are approaching God through him, because he is always alive to plead [“be interceding,” footnote] for them.”—Hebrews 7:25.

If Jesus is willing to intercede in our behalf, why are “saints” often invoked in prayer by worshipers in Christendom? In his book *The Age of Faith*, historian Will Durant traces the origin of this practice. While noting that Almighty God was feared and Jesus seemed more accessible, Durant states: “One hardly ventured to speak to [Jesus] face to face after so thoroughly ignoring His Beatitudes. It seemed wiser to lay one’s prayer before a saint certified by canonization to be in heaven, and to beg his or her intercession with Christ.” Are these concerns justified?

The Bible teaches us that through Jesus we can have “freeness of speech and an approach with confidence” in prayer to God.

Jesus’ faithful apostles became true saints, or holy ones



(Ephesians 3:11, 12) Almighty God is not too distant or removed from mankind to hear our prayers. The psalmist David confidently prayed: "O Hearer of prayer, even to you people of all flesh will come." (Psalm 65:2) Rather than transmitting power through the relics of deceased "saints," Jehovah pours out his holy spirit upon those asking for it in faith. Jesus reasoned: "If you, although being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!"—Luke 11:13.

The Role of the Holy Ones

The holy ones to whom Paul's letters were written died centuries ago and, in time, were to receive "the crown of life," a resurrection to heaven. (Revelation 2:10) Worshipers of Jehovah God realize that veneration of these true saints is unscriptural and cannot bring protection from sickness, natural disasters, economic instability, old age, or death. Hence, you might ask, 'Do God's holy ones really care about us? Should we expect them to act in our behalf?'

Holy ones figured prominently in a prophecy recorded by Daniel. In the sixth century B.C.E., he saw a stirring vision, the fulfillment of which stretches into our day. Out of the sea came four fearsome beasts symbolizing human governments, which are unable to satisfy the real needs of humankind. Daniel then prophesied: "But the holy ones of the Supreme One will receive the kingdom, and they will take possession of the kingdom for time indefinite, even for time indefinite upon times indefinite."—Daniel 7:17, 18.

Paul affirmed this "inheritance for the holy ones," that of being joint heirs with

Christ in the heavens. (Ephesians 1:18-21) The blood of Jesus opened the way for 144,000 holy ones to be resurrected to heavenly glory. The apostle John declared: "Happy and holy is anyone having part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years." (Revelation 20:4, 6; 14:1, 3) In vision, John heard a host of heavenly creatures sing before the glorified Jesus: "With your blood you bought persons for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth." (Revelation 5:9, 10) How reassuring! Jehovah God himself has carefully chosen these men and women. Moreover, they have served faithfully on earth,

facing practically every problem experienced by humans. (1 Corinthians 10:13) We can be confident, therefore, that these resurrected holy ones, or saints, will be merciful and understanding rulers, taking into account our weaknesses and limitations.

Blessings Under Kingdom Rule

The Kingdom government will soon take action to rid the earth of all wickedness and suffering. At that time, humans will draw closer to God than ever before. John wrote: "With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: 'Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them.'" This will bring untold blessings to mankind, for the prophecy continues: "He will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither



*We can confidently
pray to God through
Jesus Christ*

will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." —Revelation 21:3, 4.

What a time that will be! The results of the perfect rulership of Christ Jesus and the 144,000 holy ones are further described in these words recorded at Micah 4:3, 4: "[Jehovah] will certainly render judgment among many peoples, and set matters straight respecting mighty nations far away. And they will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. They will not lift up sword, nation against nation, neither will they learn war anymore. And they will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble; for the very mouth of Jehovah of armies has spoken it."

The invitation to partake of such blessings is held out by the holy ones. Symbolized by a bride, the true saints keep on saying: "Come!" The text continues: "And let anyone hearing say: 'Come!' And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free." (Revelation 22:17) What is included in "life's water"? Among other things, accurate knowledge of God's purposes. In prayer to God, Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) This knowledge is available through regular study of the Bible. How happy we can be that through God's Word we can discern the true identity of the holy ones and learn how he will use them to the eternal benefit of mankind!

The resurrected saints, or holy ones, will be compassionate rulers over the earth



Young People Who Are Like Refreshing Dewdrops

JESUS CHRIST undoubtedly included his younger followers when he said: "Come to me, . . . and I will refresh you." (Matthew 11:28) When people began bringing their young ones to him, his disciples tried to stop them. But Jesus said: "Let the young children come to me; do not try to stop them." Jesus even "took the children into his arms and began blessing them." (Mark 10:14-16) Jesus unquestionably viewed young ones as precious.

The Bible tells of faithful young men and women, as well as youths and small children, who set sterling examples in serving God. A "company of young men" as refreshing as dewdrops is foretold in the book of Psalms. It also tells of "young men" and "virgins" praising the name of Jehovah.—Psalm 110:3; 148:12, 13.



A Place for Youths to Thrive

The dewdrop simile is fitting, for dew is linked to abundance and blessing. (Genesis 27:28) Dewdrops are gentle and refreshing. In this time of Christ's presence, young Christians willingly and eagerly offer themselves in great numbers. Just like refreshing dewdrops, many young men and women cheerfully serve God and assist their fellow worshipers.

—Psalm 71:17.

Christian youths are not refreshing just to others; they themselves find refreshment in their service. God's organization provides an environment where they can thrive. Maintaining high morals, young men and women enjoy an intimate relationship with God. (Psalm 119:9) Within the congregation, they also engage in wholesome activities and find good friends—factors that contribute to a satisfying and meaningful life.

'A Healing and a Refreshment'

Do Christian youths themselves feel like "dewdrops"? Meet Tania, a young woman actively involved in the congregation and happily devoting more than 70 hours a month to the ministry. How does she feel? "I feel refreshed and uplifted," she says. "Having Jehovah and his earthly organization in my life has been 'a healing and a refreshment' to me."—Proverbs 3:8.

Ariel, another young full-time minister, appreciates the spiritual nourishment she receives within the congregation. "When I go to Christian meetings, conventions, and assemblies and I am able to feast at Jeho-



vah's spiritual table, this really refreshes me spiritually," she observes. "And it uplifts me to know that all over the world, I have fellow workers." Describing the ultimate source of refreshment, she says: "It's so refreshing to have Jehovah as a friend, especially when I hear or see the terrible effects that this system has on people."—James 2:23.

At 20 years of age, Abishai serves as a full-time evangelizer and a ministerial servant in the congregation. He describes his experience in these words: "I feel refreshed because I know how to deal with the many problems young ones face today. The truth from the Bible has helped me to keep focused on what I need to do in order to serve Jehovah whole-souled."

In his early teens, Antoine had a short temper. He once hit a fellow student with a chair, and he used a pencil to stab another one. Antoine was hardly a refreshing person! But instruction from the Bible changed his behavior. Now 19 years old and serving as a ministerial servant and a full-time minister in the congregation, he says: "I thank Jehovah for allowing me to gain knowledge of him and for helping me to see the need to exercise self-control and change my course. In this way, I have avoided many problems."

Others observe the refreshing attitude of young Christians. Matteo is a young Witness in Italy. His teacher decided that anyone in the class who used a foul word would have to pay a small fine. Some time later, the children asked that the rule be abolished because, they said, "it is impossible not to use bad language." "But," explains Matteo, "the teacher said that this was not so, and she used me, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, as an example, praising me before the whole class for my clean language."

In an unruly classroom in Thailand, the teacher called 11-year-old Racha up before the class and commended him on his behavior, saying: "Why don't all of you take him as an example? He is diligent in his studies and well behaved."

Then she told the students: "I guess you would have to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, like Racha, to improve your conduct."

It is delightful to see thousands of Christian youths get to know Jehovah better and do his will. Such fine young people show wisdom beyond their years. God can help them to make a success of their present life as well as give them a glorious future in the coming new world. (1 Timothy 4:8) In the spiritual wasteland of this present system of things, teeming with dissatisfied and frustrated youths, they provide a refreshing contrast!



"PAY MORE THAN THE USUAL ATTENTION"

"It is necessary for us to pay more than the usual attention to the things heard by us, that we may never drift away."—HEBREWS 2:1.

AUTO accidents claim the lives of some 37,000 people each year in the United States alone. Experts say that many of these deaths could be avoided if drivers paid more attention to the road. Some motorists are distracted by signs and billboards or by the use of their cell phone. There are also those who indulge in what has been called dashboard dining—eating while they drive. In all these situations, distraction can lead to disaster.

² Nearly 2,000 years before the automobile was invented, the apostle Paul identified a type of distraction that was proving disastrous to some Hebrew Christians. Paul emphasized that the resurrected Jesus Christ was

1. Illustrate how distraction can lead to disaster.
- 2, 3. What admonition did Paul give to the Hebrew Christians, and why was his counsel appropriate?

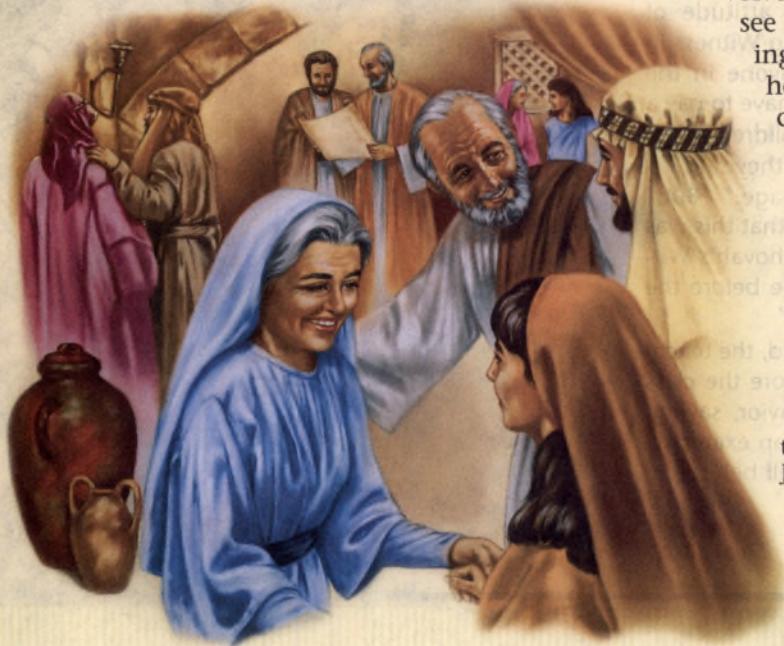
given a position superior to all the angels, for he was seated at God's right hand. The apostle then stated: "That is why it is necessary for us to pay more than the usual attention to the things heard by us, that we may never drift away."—Hebrews 2:1.

³ Why did the Hebrew Christians need to "pay more than the usual attention to the things heard" concerning Jesus? Because almost 30 years had passed since Jesus had left the earthly scene. In the absence of their Master, some Hebrew Christians were starting to drift away from the true faith. They were being distracted by Judaism, their former way of worship.

They Needed to Pay Closer Attention

⁴ Why might a Christian have been tempted to return to Judaism? Well, the system of worship under the Law involved tangible things. People could see the priests and smell the burning sacrifices. In certain respects, however, Christianity was quite different. Christians had a High Priest, Jesus Christ, but he had not been seen on earth for three decades. (Hebrews 4:14) They had a temple, but its holy place was heaven itself. (Hebrews 9:24) Unlike physical circumcision under the Law, Christian circumcision was "that of the

4. Why may some Hebrew Christians have been tempted to return to Judaism?



heart by spirit." (Romans 2:29) To the Hebrew Christians, therefore, Christianity may have begun to seem rather abstract in nature.

⁵ The Hebrew Christians needed to realize something very significant about the system of worship instituted by Christ. It was based more on faith than on sight, yet it was superior to the Law handed down through the prophet Moses. "If the blood of goats and of bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who have been defiled sanctifies to the extent of cleanness of the flesh," Paul wrote, "how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through an everlasting spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works that we may render sacred service to the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13, 14) Yes, the forgiveness available through faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ is greatly superior in many ways to that provided by the sacrifices offered under the Law.—Hebrews 7:26-28.

⁶ There was another reason why the Hebrew Christians needed to pay strict attention to the things heard about Jesus. He had foretold that Jerusalem would be destroyed. Said Jesus: "The days will come upon you when your enemies will build around you a fortification with pointed stakes and will encircle you and distress you from every side, and

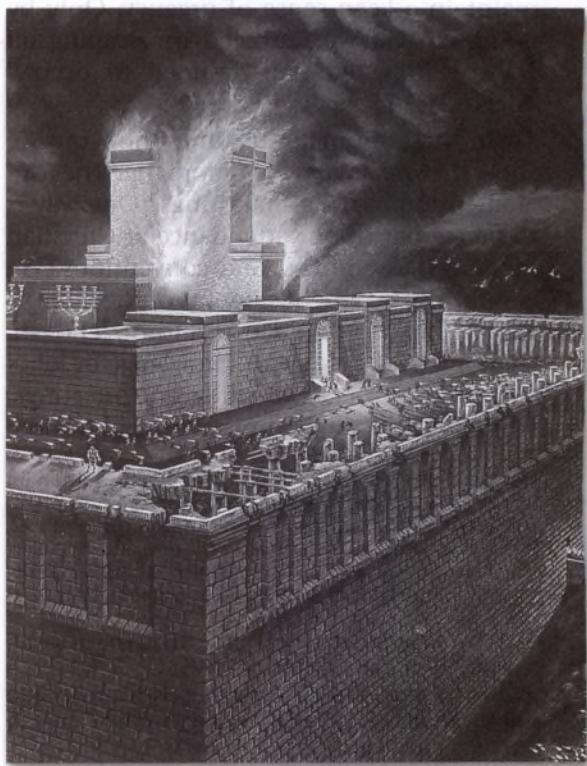
5. How did Paul show that the system of worship instituted by Jesus was superior to that under the Law?

6, 7. (a) What situation made it urgent that the Hebrew Christians "pay more than the usual attention to the things heard"? (b) When Paul wrote his letter to the Hebrews, how much time was left for Jerusalem? (See footnote.)

Hebrew Christians needed to be alert to Jerusalem's imminent destruction

they will dash you and your children within you to the ground, and they will not leave a stone upon a stone in you, because you did not discern the time of your being inspected."—Luke 19:43, 44.

⁷ When would this happen? Jesus did not reveal the day and hour. Rather, he gave this instruction: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her." (Luke 21:20, 21) During the 30 years after Jesus spoke those words, some Christians in Jerusalem lost their sense of urgency and became distracted. They took their eyes off the road, as it were. If they did not adjust their thinking, disaster was certain. Whether they thought so



or not, Jerusalem's destruction was imminent!* Hopefully, Paul's admonition provided a wake-up call to spiritually slumbering Christians in Jerusalem.

Paying "More Than the Usual Attention" Today

⁸ Like first-century Christians, we need to "pay more than the usual attention" to the truths of God's Word. Why? Because we too face an impending destruction, not of just one nation, but of an entire system of things. (Revelation 11:18; 16:14, 16) Of course, we do not know the precise day and hour when Jehovah will take this action. (Matthew 24:36) Nevertheless, we are eyewitnesses to the fulfillment of Bible prophecies that clearly indicate that we are living in "the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Hence, we should be on guard against anything that could distract us. We need to pay attention to God's Word and maintain a keen sense of urgency. Only by doing so will we "succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur." —Luke 21:36.

⁹ In these momentous times, how can we show that we are paying "more than the usual attention" to spiritual things? One way is to be regular in our attendance at Christian meetings, assemblies, and conventions. We should also be ardent students of the Bible so that we can draw close to its Author, Jehovah. (James 4:8) If we take in knowledge of Jehovah through personal study and meetings, we will be like the psalmist who said to God:

* The letter to the Hebrews was likely written in 61 C.E. If so, it was only some five years later that Jerusalem was surrounded by the encamped armies of Cestius Gallus. Soon those armies withdrew, allowing alert Christians to flee. Four years thereafter, the city was destroyed by the Roman armies under General Titus.

8. Why do we need to "pay more than the usual attention" to the truths of God's Word?

9, 10. (a) How can we show ourselves attentive to spiritual matters? (b) How is God's word 'a lamp to our foot' and 'a light to our roadway'?

"Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway."—Psalm 119:105.

¹⁰ The Bible serves as 'a light to our roadway' when it tells us God's purposes for the future. It is also 'a lamp to our foot.' In other words, it can help us with our next step when we face the trialsome problems of life. That is why it is vital that we "pay more than the usual attention" when we gather for instruction with fellow believers and when we personally read God's Word. The information we take in will help us to make wise and beneficial decisions that please Jehovah and make his heart rejoice. (Proverbs 27:11; Isaiah 48:17) How can we increase our attention span at meetings and during periods of personal study so that we get the most benefit from God's spiritual provisions?

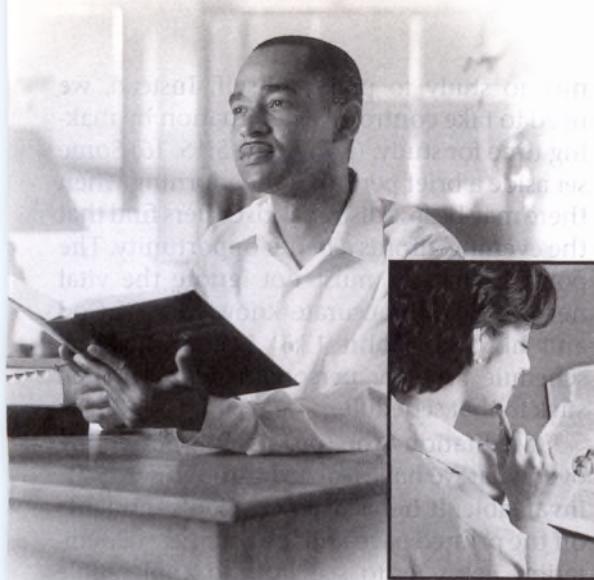
Improving Our Concentration at Meetings

¹¹ At times, paying attention at Christian meetings is a challenge. The mind can easily be distracted, perhaps by a crying infant or a latecomer looking for a seat. After a long day's work, we may simply be tired. The one who is speaking from the platform might not be the most captivating speaker, and before we realize it, we are daydreaming—maybe even dozing! In view of the vital information being presented, we would do well to improve our powers of concentration at congregation meetings. But how can we do this?

¹² It is usually easier to pay attention at meetings if we are well prepared. So, then, why not set aside time to give some advance thought to the material that will be considered? It takes just a few minutes each day to read and meditate on a portion of the assigned chapters for the week's Bible reading. With some planning, we can also find time to

11. Why is paying attention at Christian meetings challenging at times?

12. What can make it easier for us to pay attention at meetings?



prepare for the Congregation Book Study and the *Watchtower* Study. Whatever schedule we choose, one thing is certain: Preparation will help us to pay attention to the material being considered at congregation meetings.

¹³ In addition to being well prepared, some find that they are more attentive at meetings when they sit close to the front of the Kingdom Hall. Maintaining eye contact with the speaker, following along in the Bible when a

~~meeting does not go to the front of the hall~~ ¹³ What may help us to remain focused on the material being discussed at meetings?



scripture is read, and taking notes are other ways to keep our mind from wandering. However, having a prepared heart is far more important than any particular concentration technique. We need to appreciate the purpose of our gathering together. We meet with fellow believers primarily to worship Jehovah. (Psalm 26:12; Luke 2:36, 37) Meetings are an important way in which we are fed spiritually. (Matthew 24:45-47) Furthermore, they provide us with opportunities to ‘incite one another to love and fine works.’ —Hebrews 10:24, 25.

¹⁴ Some may tend to gauge the quality of a meeting by the teaching abilities of the participants. If the speakers are very capable, it may be called a good meeting. But if effective teaching seems to be lacking, we might take an opposite view. It is true that those on the program should do their utmost to employ the art of teaching and especially to reach hearts. (1 Timothy 4:16) Yet, we who are listening should not be unduly critical. Though the teaching ability of participants is important, it is not the sole factor contributing to a meeting’s success. Do you not agree that our prime concern should be, not how well the speaker delivers his talk,

14. What really makes a meeting a success?

Parents can help their children to benefit from Christian meetings

but how well we incline our ear? When we attend meetings and pay attention to what is being presented, we are worshiping God in harmony with his will. That is what makes the meeting a success. If we are eager to take in the knowledge of God, we will benefit from meetings, regardless of a speaker's abilities. (Proverbs 2:1-5) By all means, then, let us be determined to "pay more than the usual attention" at our meetings.

Fully Benefit From Personal Study

¹⁵ We benefit greatly from 'paying more than the usual attention' during periods of personal study and meditation. Reading and pondering over the Bible and Christian publications will furnish us precious opportunities to imbed the truths of God's Word in our heart. This, in turn, will have a profound effect on the way we think and act. Indeed, it will help us to find delight in doing Jehovah's will. (Psalm 1:2; 40:8) Therefore, we need to develop our powers of concentration so that they serve us well when we study. It is so easy to be distracted! Minor interruptions—a phone call or a noise may cause us to lose focus. Or we may have a short attention span to begin with. We may sit down with good intentions of feeding spiritually, but before long the mind may, in effect, be grazing in other pastures. How can we "pay more than the usual attention" during personal study of God's Word?

¹⁶ It is beneficial to make a schedule and choose a setting most conducive to study. For most of us, time and privacy are rare commodities. We may feel as if the rush of daily events is sweeping us along like a twig in a swift stream. Really, we need to fight the current, as it were, and seek a small island of calm. We cannot simply wait for an opportu-

15. How can study and meditation benefit us?
16. (a) Why is it important for us to schedule time for personal study? (b) How have you made time for studying God's Word?

nity to study to present itself. Instead, we need to take control of the situation by making time for study. (Ephesians 5:15, 16) Some set aside a brief period in the morning when there may be less distraction. Others find that the evening affords a better opportunity. The point is that we must not ignore the vital need to take in accurate knowledge of God and his Son. (John 17:3) Let us therefore schedule time for personal study and then stick to that schedule.

¹⁷ Meditation—the process of pondering over what we have learned through study—is invaluable. It helps us to get God's thoughts off the printed page and into our heart. Meditation helps us to see how to apply Bible counsel so that we become "doers of the word, and not hearers only." (James 1:22-25) Moreover, meditation helps us to draw ever closer to Jehovah, for it enables us to reflect on his qualities and how they are highlighted in the material being considered during periods of study.

¹⁸ To benefit fully from study and meditation, we must keep the mind clear of distractions. In order to make room for new information when we meditate, we need to shut out the distractions of present-day living. Doing this takes time and solitude, yet, how refreshing it is to partake of the spiritual food and the waters of truth found in God's Word!

17. What is meditation, and how can it benefit us?
18. What conditions are needed for effective meditation?

Do You Remember?

- Why were some Hebrew Christians drifting away from the true faith?
- How can we remain attentive at Christian meetings?
- What will help us to benefit from personal Bible study and meditation?

¹⁹ What if our attention span is short and our mind starts to wander after a brief period of study? Some have found that they can increase their powers of concentration while studying by starting out with shorter periods of study and gradually lengthening them. Our goal should be to linger in study rather than to rush through it. We need to cultivate an avid interest in the subject under consideration. And we can do further research using the vast amount of material provided by the faithful and discreet slave class. There is great value in peering into "the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10) Doing so enables us to enhance our knowledge of God and to

19. (a) With regard to personal study, what has helped some to increase their attention span? (b) What should be our attitude toward study, and what benefits can we derive from this important activity?

develop our perceptive powers. (Hebrews 5:14) If we are diligent students of God's Word, we will also be "adequately qualified to teach others."—2 Timothy 2:2.

²⁰ Attending Christian meetings and engaging in personal study will go a long way in helping us to develop and maintain an intimate relationship with Jehovah. Evidently, that was the case with the psalmist who said to God: "How I do love your law! All day long it is my concern." (Psalm 119:97) By all means, then, let us regularly attend meetings, assemblies, and conventions. And may we buy out time for Bible study and meditation. We will be richly rewarded for thus paying "more than the usual attention" to God's Word.

20. How can we develop and maintain an intimate relationship with Jehovah God?

KEEP PRACTICING THE THINGS YOU HAVE LEARNED

"The things that you learned as well as accepted and heard and saw in connection with me, practice these; and the God of peace will be with you."—PHILIPPIANS 4:9.

RELIGION Is Gaining Ground, but Morality Is Losing Ground." This headline in the newsletter *Emerging Trends* summarized the results of a nationwide poll in the United States. Evidently, that country has seen an increase in the number of people who attend church and say that religion holds an important place in their life. However, the report says: "Despite these impres-

1. In general, is the Bible exerting an influence in the lives of people who consider themselves to be religious? Explain.

sive figures, many Americans clearly question the impact religious faith is having on individual lives and society as a whole."

² This situation is not unique to just one country. Throughout the world, many people who say that they accept the Bible and are religious are not letting the Scriptures exert any real influence in their life. (2 Timothy 3:5) "We still hold the Bible in high regard," stated the head of one research group, "but in terms of actually spending time reading it, studying it and applying it—that is a thing of the past."

³ With genuine Christians, however, the situation is different. The application of counsel from God's Word has brought about changes in their thinking and conduct. And the new personality that they display is readily noted by others. (Colossians 3:5-10) For followers of Jesus, the Bible is not an unused book that gathers dust on a shelf. On the contrary, the apostle Paul told Christians in Philippi: "The things that you learned as well as accepted and heard and saw in connection with me, *practice these*; and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:9) Christians do more than accept the truth of God's Word. They act on what they learn, continually applying the Bible's counsel—in the family, on the job, in the congregation, and in all other areas of life.

⁴ Putting God's laws and principles into practice is not easy. We live in a world that is under the power of Satan the Devil, whom the Bible calls "the god of this system of things." (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19) Therefore, it is essential to be on guard against anything that would hinder us from pursuing a course of integrity to Jehovah God. How can we be integrity keepers?

Hold to "the Pattern of Healthful Words"

⁵ One aspect of practicing what we have learned entails loyally upholding true worship, despite opposition from unbelievers. Endurance calls for effort. "If anyone wants to come after me," said Jesus, "let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and continually follow me." (Matthew 16:24) Jesus did not say that we should follow him for

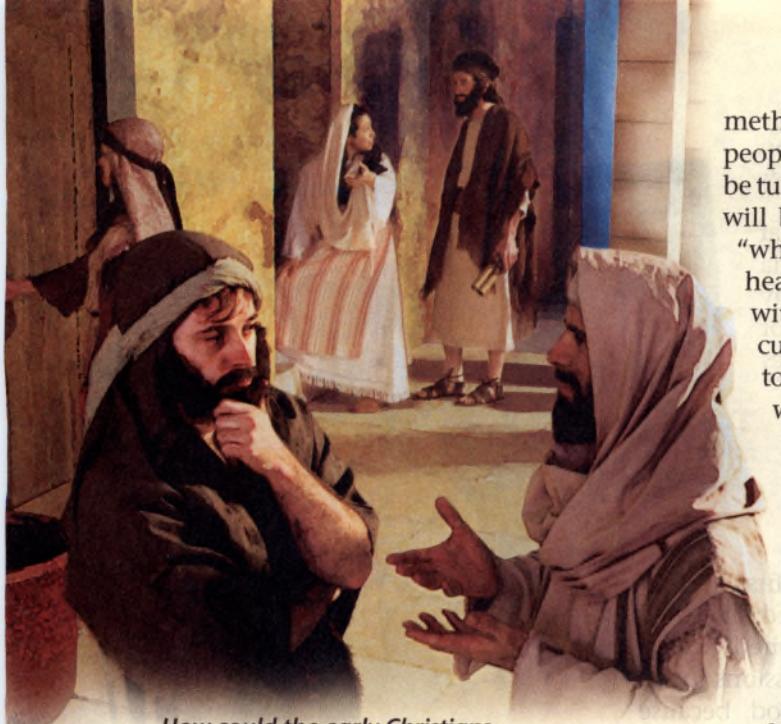
3. (a) How does the Bible affect those who become genuine Christians? (b) How do Jesus' followers apply Paul's counsel recorded at Philippians 4:9?
4. Why is it a challenge to put God's laws into practice?
5. What is implied by Jesus' statement: "Continually follow me"?

only a week, a month, or a year. Rather, he said: "Continually follow me." His words indicate that our discipleship cannot be a mere phase of our life or a passing devotion that is here today and gone tomorrow. Loyally upholding true worship means that we faithfully endure in the course we have chosen, come what may. How can we do that?

⁶ Paul urged his coworker Timothy: "Keep holding the pattern of healthful words that you heard from me with the faith and love that are in connection with Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 1:13) What did Paul mean? The Greek word here rendered "pattern" literally refers to an artist's sketch. Although not overly detailed, such a representation has well-defined boundaries so that a discerning viewer can perceive the overall picture. Similarly, the pattern of truth that Paul taught Timothy and others was not designed to give a specific answer to every conceivable question. Yet, this body of teaching provides sufficient guidance—an outline, as it were—so that honesthearted ones can perceive what Jehovah requires of them. To please God, of course, they would need to keep holding to that pattern of truth by practicing what they have learned.

⁷ In the first century, such individuals as Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Philetus were advocating ideas that did not fit "the pattern of healthful words." (1 Timothy 1:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:16, 17) How could the early Christians avoid being led astray by apostates? By carefully studying the inspired writings and applying them in life. Those walking in accord with the example they had in Paul and other faithful ones were able to recognize and reject anything that did not conform to the pattern of truth they had been taught. (Philippians 3:17; Hebrews 5:14) In

6. What is the pattern of healthful words that first-century Christians learned from Paul?
7. How can Christians stick to the pattern of healthful words?



*How could the early Christians
avoid being led astray by apostates?*

stead of being "mentally diseased over questionings and debates about words," they continued moving ahead in their positive course of godly devotion. (1 Timothy 6:3-6) We do the same thing when we keep on putting into practice the truths we have learned. How faith-strengthening it is to see that the millions serving Jehovah throughout the earth are maintaining a firm hold on the pattern of Bible truth they have been taught.—1 Thessalonians 1:2-5.

Reject "False Stories"

⁸ Satan tries to break our integrity through the sowing of doubts about what we have been taught. Today, as in the first century, apostates and others seek to destroy the faith of guileless ones. (Galatians 2:4; 5:7, 8) Sometimes they use the media to spread distorted information or even outright lies about the

8. (a) How does Satan seek to destroy our faith today? (b) What warning by Paul is found at 2 Timothy 4:3, 4?

methods and motives of Jehovah's people. Paul warned that some would be turned away from the truth. "There will be a period of time," he wrote, "when they will not put up with the healthful teaching, but, in accord with their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves to have their ears tickled; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, whereas they will be turned aside to false stories."

—2 Timothy 4:3, 4.

⁹ Instead of holding to the pattern of healthful words, some were intrigued by "false stories." What were these false stories? Perhaps Paul had in mind fanciful legends, such as those found in the apocryphal book of Tobit.* False stories may also have included sensational and speculative rumors. Then, too, some—"in accord with their own desires"—may have been intellectually seduced by those who endorsed a permissive view of God's standards or who were critical of those taking the lead in the congregation. (3 John 9, 10; Jude 4) Whatever stumbling blocks were involved, some evidently preferred falsehoods over the truths of God's Word. Soon they stopped practicing the things they had learned, and this was to their own spiritual detriment.—2 Peter 3: 15, 16.

¹⁰ We can avoid turning aside to false stories today if we scrutinize and are selective

* Tobit, possibly written in the third century B.C.E., includes the superstition-filled tale of a Jew named Tobias. He was said to have the ability to obtain curative and demon-exorcising powers by the use of the heart, the gall, and the liver of a monstrous fish.

9. What may Paul have had in mind when he referred to "false stories"?
10. What are some present-day false stories, and how did John highlight a need for caution?

Seeds of doubt can be sown by the media, through the Internet, and by modern-day apostates

about what we listen to and what we read. For example, the media often promote immorality. Many people encourage agnosticism or outright atheism. Higher critics ridicule the Bible's claim to divine inspiration. And modern-day apostates keep on trying to sow seeds of doubt in order to subvert the faith of Christians. Regarding a comparable danger posed by false prophets in the first century, the apostle John warned: "Beloved ones, do not believe every inspired expression, but test the inspired expressions to see whether they originate with God, because many false prophets have gone forth into the world." (1 John 4:1) So we need to be careful.

¹¹ In this regard, Paul wrote: "Keep testing whether you are in the faith." (2 Corinthians 13:5) The apostle urged us to keep testing ourselves to determine whether we are adhering to the body of Christian beliefs. If our ears are inclined toward disgruntled ones, we need to analyze ourselves prayerfully. (Psalm 139:23, 24) Are we inclined to find fault with Jehovah's people? If so, why? Have we been hurt by the words or actions of someone? If so, are we keeping things in proper perspective? Any tribulation we face in this system of things is temporary. (2 Corinthians 4:17) Even if we experience some trial in the congregation, why should we quit serving God? If we are upset over something, is it not far better to do what we can to resolve the matter and then leave it in Jehovah's hands?—Psalm 4:4; Proverbs 3:5, 6; Ephesians 4:26.

¹² Rather than being critical, let us main-

11. What is one way to test and see if we are in the faith?

12. How did the Bereans set a fine example for us?



tain a spiritually healthy view of the information received through personal study and congregation meetings. (1 Corinthians 2:14, 15) And instead of questioning God's Word, how much wiser it is to have the attitude of the first-century Bereans who examined the Scriptures closely! (Acts 17:10, 11) Then, let us act on what we learn, turning down false stories and clinging to the truth.

¹³ There is another type of false story that we need to be on guard against. A great many sensational tales circulate, often by means of E-mail. It is wise to be cautious about such tales, especially if we do not know the original source of the information. Even if an experience or story was sent by a reputable Christian, that individual may not have first-hand knowledge of the facts. That is why it is important to be cautious about repeating or forwarding unverified accounts. We surely would not want to repeat "godless myths," or "false stories which violate what is holy." (1 Timothy 4:7; New International Version)

13. How might we unwittingly be spreading false stories?

Since we also have an obligation to speak truthfully to one another, we are acting wisely by avoiding anything that would cause us even unwittingly to spread untruths.—Ephesians 4:25.

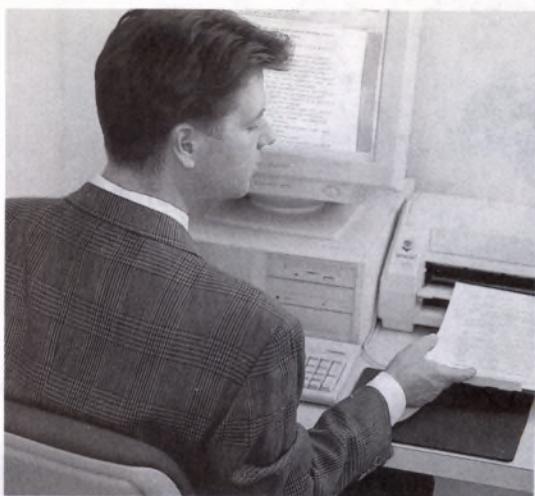
Positive Results of Practicing the Truth

¹⁴ Practicing what we learn through personal Bible study and Christian meetings will bring many benefits. For example, we might find that our relationships with those related to us in the faith improve. (Galatians 6:10) Our own disposition will change for the better when we apply Bible principles. (Psalm 19:8) Moreover, by practicing what we learn, we ‘adorn the teaching of God’ and are likely to attract others to true worship.—Titus 2:6-10.

¹⁵ Among Jehovah’s Witnesses are many young people who practice what they have learned through personal study of the Bible and Christian publications as well as by regular presence at congregation meetings. Their fine conduct is a powerful witness to teachers and fellow students at school. (1 Peter 2:12) Consider Leslie, a 13-year-old girl in the United States. She admits that she used to find it hard to speak to schoolmates about her faith, but one day that changed. “The class talked about how people try to sell you things. One girl raised her hand and mentioned Jehovah’s Witnesses.” As a Witness, how did Leslie react? “I defended my faith,” she says, “which I’m sure surprised everyone, since I’m usually so quiet in school.” The result of Leslie’s boldness? “I was able to place a brochure and a tract with the student, since she had other questions,” Leslie says. How Jehovah must rejoice when young ones who practice what they have learned muster up courage!

14. What benefits result from practicing the things we have learned from God’s Word?

15. (a) How did one young person muster up courage to witness at school? (b) What did you learn from this experience?



It is unwise to circulate unverified reports

age to witness at school!—Proverbs 27:11; Hebrews 6:10.

¹⁶ Another example is that of Elizabeth. Beginning at age seven and throughout her years in elementary school, this young girl invited her teachers to the Kingdom Hall whenever she had an assignment in the Theocratic Ministry School. If a teacher could not attend, Elizabeth stayed after school and presented the talk to the teacher. In her last year of high school, Elizabeth wrote a ten-page report on the benefits of the Theocratic Ministry School and made a presentation before a panel of four teachers. She was also invited to give a model Theocratic Ministry School talk, for which she chose the subject “Why Does God Permit Wickedness?” Elizabeth has benefited from the educational program carried on by Jehovah’s Witnesses in the Theocratic Ministry School. She is just one of many young Christians who bring praise to Jehovah by practicing the things they have learned from his Word.

¹⁷ The Bible admonishes Christians to

16. How has the Theocratic Ministry School benefited one young Witness?

17, 18. (a) The Bible offers what counsel regarding honesty? (b) How was one man affected by the honest conduct of one of Jehovah’s Witnesses?



**At work, at school,
and elsewhere, Jehovah's
Witnesses apply what
they read in God's Word**

conduct themselves honestly in all things. (Hebrews 13:18) Dishonesty can ruin our relationship with others and, more important, with Jehovah himself. (Proverbs 12:22) Our trustworthy conduct gives evidence that we are practicing the things we have learned, and it has caused many to have greater respect for Jehovah's Witnesses.

Do You Remember?

- What is "the pattern of healthful words," and how can we keep holding it?
- What "false stories" do we need to reject?
- What benefits come to those who practice the things they learn from God's Word?



¹⁸ Consider the experience of a military man named Phillip. He misplaced a blank, signed check and did not realize this until it was returned to him in the mail. The check was found by one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and a note attached to it said that the finder's religious beliefs had motivated the return. Phillip was stunned. "They could have cleaned me out for \$9,000!" he said. He had been disappointed on another occasion when his hat was stolen in church. Apparently, an acquaintance had taken his hat, whereas a stranger had returned a check worth thousands of dollars! Truly, honest Christians bring honor to Jehovah God!

**Continue Practicing
What You Have Learned**

¹⁹ Those who practice what they have learned from God's Word reap numerous benefits. The disciple James wrote: "He who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and who persists in it, this man, because he has become, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, will be happy in his doing it." (James 1:25) Yes, if we act in accord with the Scriptural things that we learn, we will have genuine happiness and will be better able to cope with life's pressures. Most of all, we will have Jehovah's blessing and the prospect of everlasting life!—Proverbs 10:22; 1 Timothy 6:6.

²⁰ By all means, then, continue to apply yourself to the study of God's Word. Regularly assemble with worshipers of Jehovah, and pay attention to the material presented at Christian meetings. Apply what you learn, keep practicing it, and "the God of peace will be with you."—Philippians 4:9.

19, 20. How will we benefit from acting in accord with the Scriptural things that we learn?

"SALVATION BELONGS TO JEHOVAH"

AT TIMES of national crisis and international tension, people look to their government for safety and security. Governments for their part step up programs designed to rally the support of the populace. The more the feeling of patriotism is fostered by such programs, the more spirited and frequent become the observances of patriotic ceremonies.

During a national emergency, patriotic fervor often gives people a sense of unity and strength and may promote a spirit of cooperation and civic-mindedness among them. However, "patriotism is as volatile as any emotion," states an article in *The New York Times Magazine*, since "once released, it can assume ugly forms." Expressions of it may take a turn that can encroach on the civil liberties and religious freedom of certain citizens of the country. True Christians particularly come under pressure to compromise their beliefs. How do they conduct themselves when such an atmosphere engulfs the world around them? What Scriptural principles help them to act with insight and to maintain integrity to God?

"You Must Not Bow Down to Them"

At times, saluting a national flag becomes a popular expression of patriotic feelings. But flags often bear representations of things in the heavens, such as stars, as well as things on the earth. God expressed his view of bowing down to such objects when he commanded

his people: "You must not make for yourself a carved image or a form like anything that is in the heavens above or that is on the earth underneath or that is in the waters under the earth. You must not bow down to them nor be induced to serve them, because I Jehovah your God am a God exacting exclusive devotion."—Exodus 20:4, 5.

Does saluting or kneeling before a flag representing the State really go against giving Jehovah God exclusive devotion? The ancient Israelites did have "signs," or standards, around which their three-tribe divisions gathered while in the wilderness. (Numbers 2:1, 2) Commenting on the Hebrew words denoting such standards, McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopaedia* says: "Neither of them, however, expresses the idea which 'standard' conveys to our minds, viz. a *flag*." Furthermore, Israel's standards were not viewed as sacred, nor were any ceremonies associated with their use. They simply served the practical purpose of signs, showing the people where to gather.

The representations of cherubs in the tabernacle and in Solomon's temple primarily served as a picture of the heavenly cherubs. (Exodus 25:18; 26:1, 31, 33; 1 Kings 6:23, 28, 29; Hebrews 9:23, 24) That these artistic likenesses were not to be venerated is evident from the fact that the people in general never saw them and that angels themselves are not to be worshiped.—Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:10; 22:8, 9.

Consider also the figure of a copper serpent that the prophet Moses made during the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness. That figure, or image, served as a symbol and had prophetic significance. (Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14, 15) It was not adored or used for worship. Centuries after Moses' day, however, the Israelites improperly began worshiping that same image, even burning incense to it. Hence, Judean King Hezekiah had it crushed to pieces.—2 Kings 18:1-4.

Are national flags simply signs serving some utilitarian function? What do they symbolize? "Nationalism's chief symbol of faith and central object of worship is the flag," stated author J. Paul Williams. *The Encyclopedia Americana* says: "The flag, like the cross, is sacred." The flag is the symbol of the State. Therefore, bowing down to it or saluting it is a religious ceremony that gives reverence to the State. Such an act ascribes salvation to the State and does not harmonize with what the Bible says about idolatry.

The Scriptures clearly state: "Salvation belongs to Jehovah." (Psalm 3:8) Salvation is not to be ascribed to human institutions or their symbols. The apostle Paul admonished fellow Christians: "My beloved ones, flee from idolatry." (1 Corinthians 10:14) The early Christians did not participate in acts of worship of the State. In the book *Those About to Die*, Daniel P. Mannix observes: "Christians refused to . . . sacrifice to the [Roman] emperor's genius—roughly equivalent today to refusing to salute the flag." So it is with true Christians today. In order to render Jehovah exclusive devotion, they refrain from saluting the flag of any nation. By doing so, they put God first while maintaining respect for governments and their rulers. Indeed, they recognize their responsibility to be in subjection to the governmental "superior authorities." (Romans 13:1-7) What, though, is

the Scriptural view of singing patriotic songs, such as national anthems?

What Are National Anthems?

"National anthems are expressions of patriotic feeling and often include an invocation for divine guidance and protection of the people or their rulers," says *The Encyclopedia Americana*. A national anthem is, in effect, a hymn or a prayer in behalf of a nation. It usually asks that the nation experience material prosperity and long duration. Should true Christians join in such prayerful sentiments?

The prophet Jeremiah lived among people who professed to serve God. Yet, Jehovah commanded him: "Do not pray in behalf of this people, neither raise in their behalf an entreating cry or a prayer nor beseech me, for I shall not be listening to you." (Jeremiah 7:16; 11:14; 14:11) Why was Jeremiah given this command? Because their society was permeated with stealing, murdering, the committing of adultery, false swearing, and idolatry.—Jeremiah 7:9.

Jesus Christ set a precedent when he said: "I make request, not concerning the world, but concerning those you have given me." (John 17:9) The Scriptures say that "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one" and "is passing away." (1 John 2:17; 5:19) How, then, can true Christians conscientiously pray for the prosperity and longevity of such a system?

Of course, not all national anthems include petitions to God. "The sentiments of national anthems vary," says the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "from prayers for the monarch to allusions to nationally important battles or uprisings . . . to expressions of patriotic feeling." But can those who seek to please God actually exult over the wars and revolutions of any nation? Concerning true worshipers, Isaiah foretold: "They will have



Resolute but respectful, three Hebrews chose to please God

to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears." (Isaiah 2:4) "Though we walk in the flesh," wrote the apostle Paul, "we do not wage warfare according to what we are in the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly."—2 Corinthians 10:3, 4.

National anthems often express feelings of national pride or superiority. This outlook has no Scriptural basis. In his speech on the Areopagus, the apostle Paul said: "[Jehovah God] made out of one man every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth." (Acts 17:26) "God is not partial," stated the apostle Peter, "but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him."—Acts 10:34, 35.

Because of their understanding of the Bible, many make a personal decision to refrain from participating in the flag salute and in the singing of patriotic songs. But how do they conduct themselves when confronted with situations that bring them face-to-face with these issues?

Refrain Respectfully

In an effort to strengthen the unity of his empire, King Nebuchadnezzar of ancient Babylon set up a huge golden image on the plain of Dura. He then arranged for an inauguration ceremony to which he invited his satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, and other high officials. At the sound of music, all gathered were to bow down and worship the image. Among those who had to be present were three young Hebrews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. How did they show that they were not participating in this religious ceremony? As the music began and those gathered prostrated themselves before the image, the three Hebrews remained standing.—Daniel 3:1-12.

Today, flags are usually saluted with outstretched arm or with the hand held to the forehead or over the heart. At times, some special bodily position may be assumed. In some lands, children at school are expected to kneel and kiss the flag. By standing quietly while others salute the flag, true Christians



*How should a Christian act
during a patriotic ceremony?*

make it evident that they are respectful observers.

What if a flag ceremony is conducted in such a way that simply standing gives evidence of participation? For example, suppose one student in a school is selected to represent the whole school and he salutes the flag outside at a flag pole while the other students are expected to stand at attention inside the classroom. The mere act of standing in this instance signifies agreement with having the student on the outside act as a personal representative in saluting the flag. Standing in any manner would then denote joining in the ceremony. If this is the case, those desiring to be only respectful observers would remain quietly seated. What if the class is already standing as such a ceremony starts? In this case, participation would not be indicated if we were to remain standing.

Suppose one is not asked to salute the flag but merely to hold it, either in a parade or in

a classroom or elsewhere, so that others can salute. Rather than 'fleeing from idolatry,' as commanded in the Scriptures, this would actually mean being at the very center of the ceremony. The same is true of marching in patriotic parades. Because doing this would mean giving support to what is honored by the parade, true Christians conscientiously decline.

When national anthems are played, usually all a person has to do to show that he shares the sentiments of the song is to stand up. In such cases, Christians remain seated. If they are already standing when the national anthem is played, however, there is no need for them to take the special action of sitting down. It is not as though they had specifically chosen to stand for the anthem. On the other hand, if a group are expected to stand and sing, then merely standing up out of respect but not singing would not constitute sharing in the sentiments of the song.

"Hold a Good Conscience"

After describing the ineffectiveness of man-made objects of veneration, the psalmist said: "Those making them will become just like them, all those who are trusting in them." (Psalm 115:4-8) Obviously, then, any employment that directly involves manufacturing objects of adoration, including national flags, would be unacceptable to Jehovah's worshipers. (1 John 5:21) Other employment situations may also arise when Christians respectfully show that they worship neither the flag nor what it represents but only Jehovah.

An employer, for example, may ask an employee to raise or lower a flag displayed at a building. Whether an individual would do so or not depends on his personal view of the circumstances. If raising or lowering the flag is part of a special ceremony, with people standing at attention or saluting the flag, then performing this act amounts to sharing in the ceremony.

On the other hand, if no ceremony accompanies the raising or lowering of the flag, then these actions constitute nothing more than performing such tasks as preparing the building for use, unlocking and locking the doors, and opening and closing the windows. In such instances, the flag is simply an emblem of the State, and raising or lowering it among other routine tasks is a matter for personal decision based on the dictates of one's Bible-trained conscience. (Galatians 6:5) The conscience of one person might move him to ask his supervisor to have some other employee put up and take down the flag. Another Christian might feel that his conscience would permit him to handle the flag as long as no ceremony is involved. Whatever the decision, true worshipers should "hold a good conscience" before God.—1 Peter 3:16.

There is no Scriptural objection to working in or being in public buildings, such as municipal offices and schools, where the nation-

al flag is displayed. A flag might also appear on postage stamps, automobile license plates, or other government-produced items. Using such objects does not in itself make individuals participants in devotional acts. What is significant here is, not the presence of a flag or a replica thereof, but how one acts toward it.

Flags are often displayed on windows, doors, cars, desks, or other objects. Clothing with the motif of a flag imprinted on it can also be purchased. In some countries, it is illegal to wear such items. Even if doing so would not violate the law, what would it indicate relative to a person's position with regard to the world? Concerning his followers, Jesus Christ said: "They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world." (John 17:16) Not to be overlooked is the effect such an action could have on fellow believers. Could it injure the conscience of some? Might their resolve to remain firm in the faith be weakened? Paul counseled Christians: "Make sure of the more important things, so that you may be flawless and not be stumbling others."—Philippians 1:10.

"Gentle Toward All"

As world conditions deteriorate in these "critical times," feelings of patriotism are likely to intensify. (2 Timothy 3:1) May those who love God never forget that salvation belongs only to Jehovah. He deserves exclusive devotion. When asked to do something out of harmony with Jehovah's will, Jesus' apostles said: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 5:29.

"A slave of the Lord does not need to fight," wrote the apostle Paul, "but needs to be gentle toward all." (2 Timothy 2:24) Thus, Christians endeavor to be peaceable, respectful, and gentle as they rely on their Bible-trained conscience in making personal decisions regarding flag salute and the singing of a national anthem.



The “Septuagint” Useful in the Past and the Present

AN INFLUENTIAL man from Ethiopia was journeying homeward from Jerusalem. While traveling along a desert road in his chariot, he was reading aloud from a religious scroll. The explanation of the words he

read had such an impact on him that his life changed from that time on. (Acts 8:26-38) The man had been reading Isaiah 53:7, 8 from the very first translation of the Bible —the Greek *Septuagint*. This work has played

The disciple Philip explained a passage that was read from the “Septuagint”



such an important role in the spreading of the Bible's message throughout the centuries that it has been called a Bible translation that changed the world.

When and under what circumstances was the *Septuagint* prepared? Why was there a need for such a translation? How useful has it proved to be over the centuries? What, if anything, can the *Septuagint* teach us today?

Made for the Greek-Speaking Jews

In 332 B.C.E. when Alexander the Great marched into Egypt after destroying the Phoenician city of Tyre, he was greeted as a deliverer. There he founded the city of Alexandria, a center of learning in the ancient world. Desiring to spread Greek culture to people living in the conquered lands, Alexander introduced common Greek (Koine) throughout his vast realm.

In the third century B.C.E., Alexandria came to have a large population of Jews. Many Jews who after the Babylonian exile had been living in scattered colonies outside Palestine migrated to Alexandria. How well did these Jews know the Hebrew language? McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia* states: "It is well known that after the Jews returned from the captivity of Babylon, having lost in great measure the familiar knowledge of the ancient Hebrew, the readings from the books of Moses in the synagogues of Palestine were explained to them in the Chaldaic tongue . . . The Jews of Alexandria had probably still less knowledge of Hebrew; their familiar language was Alexandrian Greek." Evidently, in Alexandria the climate was right for a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek.

Aristobulus, a Jew who lived in the second century B.C.E., wrote that a version of the Hebrew law was translated into Greek and was completed during the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.E.). Opinions vary as to what Aristobulus meant by the "law." Some think that he was referring

merely to the Pentateuch, while others say that he may have had in mind the entire Hebrew Scriptures.

In any case, tradition has it that about 72 Jewish scholars were involved in that first written translation of the Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek. Later, the round figure 70 began to be used. Hence, the version was called the *Septuagint*, meaning "70," and is designated LXX, the Roman numeral for 70. By the end of the second century B.C.E., all books of the Hebrew Scriptures could be read in Greek. Thus, the name *Septuagint* came to refer to the entire Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek.

Useful in the First Century

The *Septuagint* was used extensively by Greek-speaking Jews prior to and during the time of Jesus Christ and his apostles. Many of the Jews and proselytes who gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E. were from the district of Asia, Egypt, Libya, Rome, and Crete—areas in which people spoke Greek. No doubt, they customarily read from the *Septuagint*. (Acts 2:9-11) Thus, this version proved to be influential in spreading the good news in the first century.

For example, when speaking with men from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia, the disciple Stephen said: "Joseph sent out and called Jacob his father and all his relatives from that place [Canaan], to the number of seventy-five souls." (Acts 6:8-10; 7:12-14) The Hebrew text in Genesis chapter 46 says that the number of Joseph's relatives was seventy. But the *Septuagint* uses the number seventy-five. Apparently, Stephen quoted from the *Septuagint*.—Genesis 46:20, 26, 27, footnote.

As the apostle Paul traveled throughout Asia Minor and Greece during his second and third missionary tours, he preached to many Gentiles who feared God and to "Greeks who

worshiped God." (Acts 13:16, 26; 17:4) These people had come to fear God or to worship him because they had gained some knowledge of him from the *Septuagint*. In preaching to these Greek-speaking people, Paul often quoted or paraphrased portions of that translation.—Genesis 22:18, footnote; Galatians 3:8.

The Christian Greek Scriptures contain some 320 direct quotations and a combined total of perhaps 890 quotations and references from the Hebrew Scriptures. Most of these are based on the *Septuagint*. As a result, the quotations taken from that translation and not from the Hebrew manuscripts became part of the inspired Christian Greek Scriptures. What a significant fact this was! Jesus had foretold that the good news of the Kingdom would be preached in all the inhabited earth. (Matthew 24:14) To accomplish this, Jehovah would allow his inspired Word to be translated into the various languages read by people worldwide.

Useful Today

The *Septuagint* remains valuable today and is used to help uncover copyists' errors that might have crept into Hebrew manuscripts copied at a later date. For example, the account at Genesis 4:8 reads: "After that Cain said to Abel his brother: ['Let us go over into the field.'] So it came about that while they were in the field Cain proceeded to assault Abel his brother and kill him."

The bracketed clause "let us go over into the field" is not found in Hebrew manuscripts dating from the tenth century C.E. However, it is included in older *Septuagint* manuscripts and in a few other early references. The Hebrew text has the word that usually introduces speech, but no words follow. What could have happened? Genesis 4:8 contains two consecutive clauses that end with the expression "in(to) the field." McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia* suggests:

"The Hebrew transcriber's eye was probably misled by the [same] word . . . terminating both the clauses." Thus the transcriber may have skipped over the earlier instance of the clause ending with the expression "into the field." Clearly, the *Septuagint*, as well as other older extant manuscripts, can be useful in identifying errors in later copies of the Hebrew text.

On the other hand, copies of the *Septuagint* are also subject to error, and at times the Hebrew text is referred to in correcting the Greek. Thus, comparing the Hebrew manuscripts with the Greek and with other language translations results in finding translation errors as well as copyists' mistakes and assures us of an accurate rendering of God's Word.

Complete copies of the *Septuagint* existing today date from as far back as the fourth century C.E. Such manuscripts and later copies do not contain the divine name, Jehovah, represented in Hebrew by the Tetragrammaton (YHWH). These copies have substituted the Greek words for "God" and "Lord" wherever the Tetragrammaton occurred in the Hebrew text. However, a discovery in Palestine some 50 years ago shed light on this matter. A team exploring caves near the west shore of the Dead Sea uncovered fragments from an ancient leather scroll of the 12 prophets (Hosea through Malachi) written in Greek. These writings were dated between 50 B.C.E. and 50 C.E. In these earlier fragments, the Tetragrammaton had not been replaced by the Greek words for "God" and "Lord." Hence, the use of the divine name in the early *Septuagint* version of the Scriptures was confirmed.

The year 1971 saw the release for publication of fragments of an ancient papyrus scroll (Fouad 266 papyri). What did these portions of the *Septuagint*, dating back to the second or first century B.C.E., reveal? The divine

name was preserved in them also. These early fragments of the *Septuagint* provide strong evidence that Jesus and his first-century disciples knew and used God's name.

Today, the Bible is the most widely translated book in history. Over 90 percent of the hu-

man family have access to at least part of it in their own language. We are particularly grateful for an accurate modern-language translation, the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, now available in whole or in part in over 40 languages. The *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References* contains hundreds of footnote references to the *Septuagint* and to other ancient manuscripts. Indeed, the *Septuagint* continues to be of interest and value to Bible students in our day.

The apostle Paul often quoted from the "Septuagint"



Questions From Readers

• Is Lucifer a name that the Bible uses for Satan?

The name Lucifer occurs once in the Scriptures and only in some versions of the Bible. For example, the *King James Version* renders Isaiah 14:12: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"

The Hebrew word translated "Lucifer" means "shining one." The *Septuagint* uses the Greek word that means "bringer of dawn." Hence, some translations render the original Hebrew "morning star" or "Daystar." But Jerome's Latin *Vulgate* uses "Lucifer" (light bearer), and this accounts for the appearance of that term in various versions of the Bible.

Who is this Lucifer? The expression "shining one," or "Lucifer," is found in what Isaiah prophetically commanded the Israelites to pronounce as a "proverbial saying against the king of Babylon." Thus, it is part of a saying primarily directed at the Babylonian dynasty. That the description "shining one" is given to a man and not to a spirit creature is further seen by the statement: "Down to Sheol you will be brought." Sheol is the common grave of mankind—not a place occupied by Satan the Devil. Moreover, those seeing Lucifer brought into this condition ask: "Is this the

man that was agitating the earth?" Clearly, "Lucifer" refers to a human, not to a spirit creature.—Isaiah 14:4, 15, 16.

Why is such an eminent description given to the Babylonian dynasty? We must realize that the king of Babylon was to be called the shining one only after his fall and in a taunting way. (Isaiah 14:3) Selfish pride prompted Babylon's kings to elevate themselves above those around them. So great was the arrogance of the dynasty that it is portrayed as bragging: "To the heavens I shall go up. Above the stars of God I shall lift up my throne, and I shall sit down upon the mountain of meeting, in the remotest parts of the north. . . . I shall make myself resemble the Most High."—Isaiah 14:13, 14.

"The stars of God" are the kings of the royal line of David. (Numbers 24:17) From David onward, these "stars" ruled from Mount Zion. After Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, the name Zion came to apply to the whole city. Under the Law covenant, all male Israelites were obliged to travel to Zion three times a year. Thus, it became "the mountain of meeting." By determining to subjugate the Judean kings and then remove them from that mountain, Nebuchadnezzar is declaring his intention to put himself above those "stars." Instead of giving Jehovah credit for the victory over them, he arrogantly puts himself in Jehovah's place. So it is after being cut down to the earth that the Babylonian dynasty is mockingly referred to as the "shining one."

The pride of the Babylonian rulers indeed reflected the attitude of "the god of this system of things"—Satan the Devil. (2 Corinthians 4:4) He too lusts for power and longs to place himself above Jehovah God. But Lucifer is not a name Scripturally given to Satan.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Youths Who Love the Truth

Jehovah Blesses and Protects Those
Who Are Obedient

"Be Training Yourself"

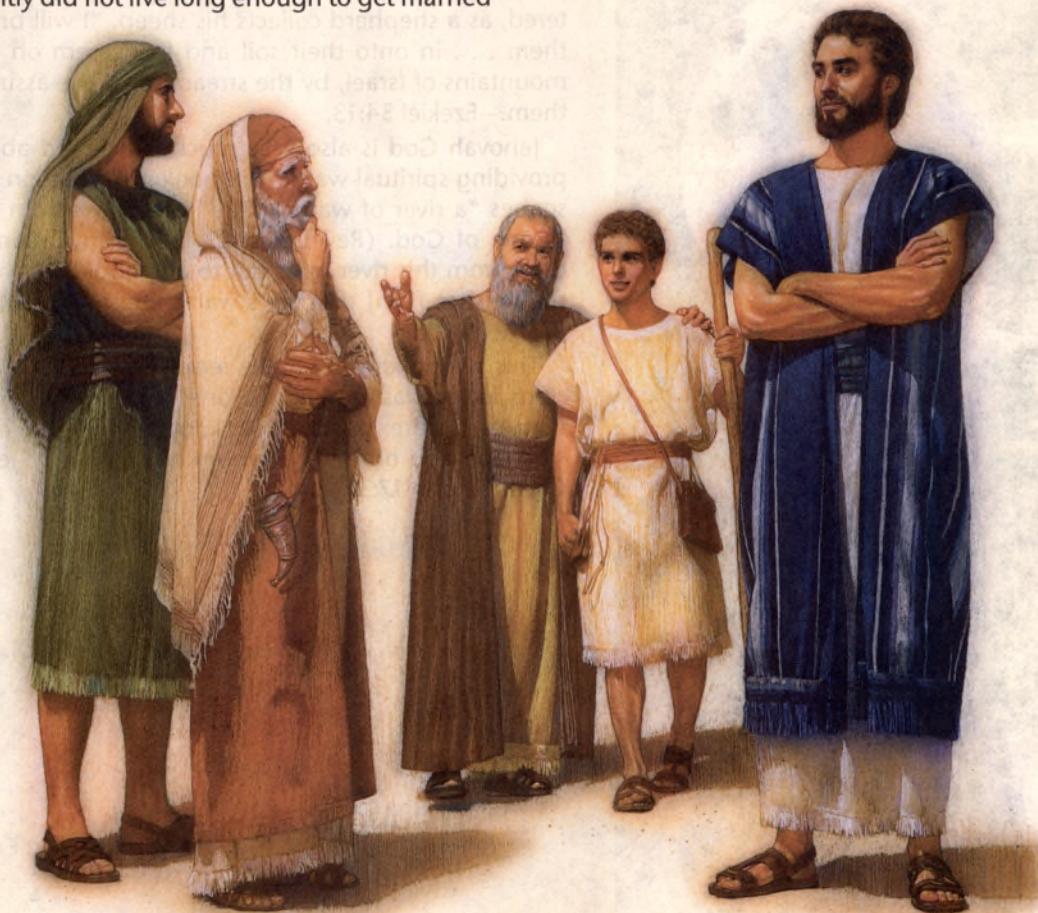
- Why does 1 Chronicles 2:13-15 refer to David as the seventh son of Jesse, whereas 1 Samuel 16:10, 11 indicates that he was the eighth?

After King Saul of ancient Israel turned away from true worship, Jehovah God sent the prophet Samuel to anoint one of Jesse's sons as king. The divine record of this historical event, written by Samuel himself in the 11th century B.C.E., presents David as the eighth son of Jesse. (1 Samuel 16:10-13) Yet, the account penned by Ezra the priest some 600 years later says: "Jesse, in turn, became father to his firstborn Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimea the third, Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, Ozem the sixth, David the seventh." (1 Chronicles 2:13-15) What happened to one of David's brothers, and why does Ezra omit his name?

The Scriptures state that Jesse "had eight sons." (1 Samuel 17:12) One of his sons evidently did not live long enough to get married

and have children. Having no descendants, he would have no claim in tribal inheritance nor any bearing on genealogical records of Jesse's lineage.

Now let us think of Ezra's day. Consider the setting under which he compiled Chronicles. The exile in Babylon ended about 77 years earlier, and the Jews were resettled in their land. The king of Persia had authorized Ezra to appoint judges and teachers of the Law of God and to beautify the house of Jehovah. There was a need for accurate genealogical lists to confirm the tribal inheritances and to ensure that only authorized people served in the priesthood. So Ezra prepared a full account of the nation's history, including a clear and dependable record of the lineage of Judah and of David. The name of the son of Jesse who died childless would be irrelevant. Hence, Ezra omitted his name.



"He Leads Me Beside Quiet Waters"



IN THE hot climate of the Bible lands, sheep need to drink every day. Therefore, a vital part of a shepherd's job is to provide water for his flock. Sometimes shepherds water their flocks from a well, pouring the water into troughs so that the sheep can drink. (Genesis 29:1-3) Particularly in the rainy season, however, the area around small streams and rivers provides peaceful, "well-watered resting-places."—Psalm 23:2.

A good shepherd has to know where to find both water and suitable pasturage for his flock. His intimate knowledge of an area guarantees the survival of his sheep. David, who spent many years herding sheep in the Judean hills, compared God's spiritual guidance to that of a shepherd who leads his sheep to good pastures and to life-giving water. "He leads me beside quiet waters," said David according to one rendition.—Psalm 23:1-3, *New International Version*.

Years later, through his prophet Ezekiel, Jehovah used a similar illustration. He promised to collect his people from the lands to which they had been scattered, as a shepherd collects his sheep. "I will bring them . . . in onto their soil and feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streambeds," he assured them.—Ezekiel 34:13.

Jehovah God is also very much concerned about providing spiritual water. The book of Revelation describes "a river of water of life" that flows from the throne of God. (Revelation 22:1) The invitation to drink from this river goes out to all people. "Anyone that wishes [can] take life's water free."—Revelation 22:17.

This symbolic water of life represents God's provisions for everlasting life. Anyone can begin to drink from such water by 'taking in knowledge of the only true God and of the one whom he sent forth, Jesus Christ.'—John 17:3.