

AUGUST 15, 2015

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES

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ARGENTINA

COVER: Showing a video from jw.org, a young brother witnesses informally in the city of Esperanza

POPULATION

42,670,000

PUBLISHERS

150,171

REGULAR PIONEERS

18,538

BIBLE STUDIES

126,661

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE (2014)

307,654

STUDY ARTICLES

■ Meditate on Jehovah's Enduring Love

Jehovah's love for his people is enduring. This article focuses on how God has demonstrated his love. Meditating on Jehovah's love for you will help you to strengthen your relationship with him.

■ Keep in Expectation!

■ Prepare Now for Life in the New World

The passing of time should not cause us to lose hope that Kingdom blessings will be realized. There are solid reasons to keep our Scriptural expectations alive. These articles show how this can be done.

■ Watch Your Associations in These Last Days

Why is it so important to guard against bad associations in these critical last days? How does God's Word help us to do this? These and related questions are answered in this article.

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THE **WATCHTOWER**[®]
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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“Let the Many Islands Rejoice”

AS TOLD BY GEOFFREY JACKSON

It was a day I will long remember. I was with a number of brothers from different parts of the world, and we nervously waited in the Governing Body conference room. The Writing Committee was about to enter, and we had been assigned to make a presentation. During the preceding few weeks, we had analyzed problems that translators were facing, and now we had to recommend solutions. It was May 22, 2000. But why was this meeting so important? Before I explain, let me tell you something about my background.

Baptized in Queensland,
I enjoyed pioneering in Tasmania
and missionary work in Tuvalu,
Samoa, and Fiji

I WAS born in Queensland, Australia, in 1955. Shortly thereafter, my mother, Estelle, started studying the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. She got baptized the following year, and my father, Ron, came into the truth 13 years later. I was baptized in the Queensland outback in 1968.

Ever since I was young, I have loved reading and I have been fascinated by language. When we went on family road trips, it must have been frustrating for my parents to see me sitting in the backseat reading a book rather than looking at the scenery. But my love of reading helped me in school. In high school in Glenorchy, in the island state of Tasmania, I won several awards for academic achievement.

Then, however, it came time for a serious decision. Would I accept a scholarship to go to university? As much as I loved books and learning, I am grateful that my mother had helped me to acquire a stronger love—one for Jehovah. (1 Cor. 3: 18, 19) So with my parents’ consent, I left school and started pioneering in January 1971 at the age of 15, having received the required school certificate.





With Jenny in Tuvalu



Kingdom News No. 30
in Tuvalu

For the next eight years, I had the privilege of pioneering in Tasmania. During that time, I married a beautiful Tasmanian girl, Jenny Alcock, and for four years we served together as special pioneers in isolated assignments in Smithton and Queenstown.

OFF TO THE ISLANDS OF THE PACIFIC

In 1978 we went overseas for the first time to attend an international convention in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. I still remember listening to a missionary give one of the talks in Hiri Motu. Even though I could not understand a word of what he said, his talk motivated me to become a missionary, to learn other languages, and to give talks like that one. At last, I saw a way to combine my love for Jehovah with my love of language.

To our surprise, on arriving back in Australia, we were invited to serve as missionaries on the island of Funafuti, in Tuvalu, formerly called the Ellice Islands. We arrived in our new assignment in January 1979. There were only three other baptized publishers in all of Tuvalu.

Learning Tuvaluian was not easy. The only book available in the language was the “New Testa-

ment.” There were no dictionaries or language courses, so we decided to try to learn from 10 to 20 new words each day. But we soon realized that we did not understand the correct meaning of most of the words we were learning. Instead of telling people that divination was wrong, we were in fact telling them to avoid using measuring scales and walking sticks! We did, however, need to learn the language in order to conduct the numerous Bible studies that we had started, so we kept on trying. Years later, one of those with whom we studied in those early days told us: “We are so happy that you can speak our language now. At first, we didn’t have a clue what you were trying to say!”

On the other hand, we had what some might call the ideal situation for learning a new language. As there were no homes available to rent, we ended up living with a Witness family in the main village. This meant total immersion in the language and in village life. After we had not spoken English for a number of years, Tuvaluian became our main language.

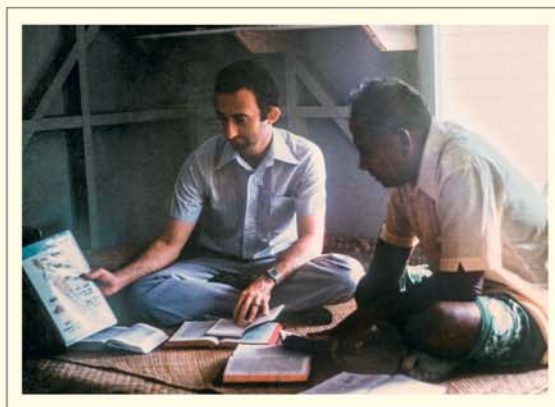
Before long, many started to show an interest in the truth. But what could we use to study with them? We had no publications in their lan-

guage. How could they do personal study? When they started coming to the meetings, what songs could they sing, what material could they use, and how could they even prepare for the meetings? How could they ever progress to baptism? These humble people needed spiritual food in their own language! (1 Cor. 14:9) We wondered, ‘Would publications ever be produced in Tuvaluan, a language spoken by fewer than 15,000 people?’ Jehovah answered those questions, proving to us two things: (1) He wants his Word proclaimed “among the islands far away,” and (2) he wants those whom the world views as “humble and lowly” to take refuge in his name. —Jer. 31:10; Zeph. 3:12.

TRANSLATING SPIRITUAL FOOD

In 1980 the branch office assigned us to work as translators—a work for which we felt totally unqualified. (1 Cor. 1:28, 29) At first, we were able to buy an old mimeograph machine from the government, and we used it to print material for our meetings. We even translated the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life* into Tuvaluan and printed it on this machine. I still remember the strong smell of ink and the effort required in the intense tropical heat to print all this literature by hand. At the time, we did not have electricity!

It was a challenge to translate into Tuvaluan, as we had very few reference works to help us. But sometimes help came from unexpected sources. One morning I called by mistake at the home of someone who was opposed to the truth. The householder, an older man who had been a teacher, was quick to remind me that we should not call at his home. Then, he said: “I just want to mention one thing. In your translation, you use the passive form too much. It is not used that often in Tuvaluan.” I checked with others, and he was correct. So we made the necessary adjustments. However, I was amazed that Jehovah had given us this help by means of an opposer who obviously read our literature!



Using Tuvaluan literature to help others



Baptism in a lagoon



Releasing the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* in Tuvaluan

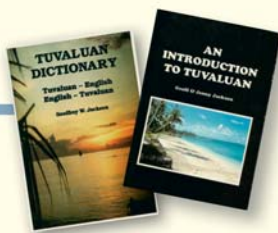
The first piece of literature printed in Tuvaluan for distribution to the public was a Memorial invitation. That was followed by *Kingdom News* No. 30, released simultaneously with the English. What a joy it was to give something to the people in their own language! Gradually, some brochures and even some books became available in Tuvaluan. In 1983 the Australia branch started to print a quarterly 24-page *Watchtower*, which gave us an average of seven paragraphs to study each week. What was the reaction in the community? Since people in Tuvalu love to read, our literature became very popular. The arrival of each new publication was announced in a news bulletin on the government radio station, sometimes even making headline news!*

The translation work started with pen and paper. Later, manuscripts were typed and retyped numerous times before being sent off to the printing branch in Australia. At one time, the branch had two different sisters enter every manuscript into the computer, even though they did not un-

* For examples of the reaction to our literature, see *The Watchtower*, December 15, 2000, p. 32; August 1, 1988, p. 22; and *Awake!* December 22, 2000, p. 9.

A Rewarding Project

As a personal project, starting in 1979, I compiled a list of Tuvaluan words and their meanings. I worked on this project for one hour each morning for about 20 years. In time, this list became a full dictionary. In 2001 the Australian government printed it as a gift for the people of Tuvalu. In 1999, Jenny and I also produced a grammar book on the Tuvaluan language.



derstand Tuvaluan. This system of entering the text twice and then comparing the differences on the computer resulted in remarkably few mistakes. Composed pages were returned to us via air mail for checking and then sent back to the branch for printing.

How things have changed! Now translation teams enter the text directly into computers. In most cases, the corrected text is composed locally, producing files that can be sent to the printing branches via the Internet. No longer is there a frantic rush to the post office to send the manuscripts off by mail.

FURTHER ASSIGNMENTS

As the years went by, Jenny and I received various assignments throughout the Pacific. From Tuvalu we were assigned to the Samoa branch in 1985. There we assisted with translation into the Samoan, Tongan, and Tokelauan languages in addition to the work we were still doing in Tuvaluan.* Then in 1996 we were given a similar assignment in the Fiji branch, where we were able to give support to the translation work being done in the Fijian, Kiribati, Nauruan, Rotuman, and Tuvaluan languages.

I never cease to be amazed at the zeal shown by those who translate our literature. The work can be tedious and exhausting. However, these faithful ones try to reflect Jehovah's desire to get the good news preached "to every nation and tribe and tongue [or, "language," fn.] and people." (Rev. 14:6) For example, when the translation of the first *Watchtower* magazine into Tongan was being organized, I met with all the elders in Tonga and asked who could be trained as a translator. One of the elders, who had a good job as a mechanic, offered to resign the next day and start immediately as a translator. This was particularly heartwarming, since he was a family man and had no idea where his income would come from. But

* For further details concerning the translation work in Samoa, see the *2009 Yearbook*, pp. 120-121, 123-124.

Interviewing my parents,
Ron and Estelle,
at a convention in
Townsville, Australia,
in 2014



Jehovah cared for him and his family, and he remained in the translation work for many years.

Such devoted translators reflect the viewpoint of the members of the Governing Body, who care deeply about the spiritual needs of smaller language groups. For example, at one point a question was raised as to whether it was worth all the effort to provide literature in Tuvaluan. I was so encouraged to read this answer from the Governing Body: “We see absolutely no reason why you should discontinue translation work in the Tuvaluan language. Even though the Tuvaluan field may be small in comparison to other language groups, the people still need to be reached with the good news in their own language.”

In 2003, Jenny and I were transferred from the Translation Department in Fiji branch to Translation Services in Patterson, New York. It seemed like a dream come true! We became part of a team that helps to develop the translation of our literature into additional languages. For the next two years or so, we had the privilege of visiting various countries to help train translation teams.

SOME HISTORIC DECISIONS

Now let me return to that presentation mentioned at the outset. By the year 2000, the Governing Body saw the need to strengthen translation teams worldwide. Up to that point, most translators had very little training. After we made

that presentation to the Writing Committee, the Governing Body approved a worldwide training program for all translators. The program included training in English comprehension, translation techniques, and the cooperative team approach.

What has resulted from all this emphasis on translation? For one thing, the quality of the translation has improved. There has also been a dramatic increase in the number of languages in which we now publish literature. When we arrived in our first missionary assignment in 1979, the *Watchtower* magazine was available in only 82 languages. Most language editions appeared several months after the English edition. Now, however, *The Watchtower* is distributed in over 240 languages, most of which appear simultaneously with the English. Spiritual food is now available in one form or another in over 700 languages. This is something that we could only dream about years ago.

In 2004 the Governing Body made yet another landmark decision—namely, to speed up Bible translation. A few months after this, Bible translation was made part of the normal translation work, thus opening up the opportunity for the *New World Translation* to be made available in many more languages. As of 2014, this Bible has been printed in whole or in part in 128 languages—including a number of languages spoken in the South Pacific.

One of the highlights in my life was the privilege of being assigned to attend the convention in Tuvalu in 2011. For months, the whole country had been in the grip of an extreme drought, and it looked as if the convention would be canceled. However, the evening we arrived, the drought was broken by a tropical downpour, and the convention was held after all! I had the inestimable privilege of releasing the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* in Tuvaluan—the smallest language group ever to receive this beautiful gift. At the end of the convention, there was yet another downpour. So everyone finished the program with an abundance of spiritual and literal water!

Sadly, Jenny, my faithful companion for over 35 years, did not live to witness that memorable event. She succumbed to her ten-year battle with breast cancer in 2009. When she is resurrected, she will no doubt be overjoyed to hear the news about the release of the Tuvaluan Bible.

Since that time, Jehovah has blessed me with another beautiful companion, Loraini Sikivou. Loraini and Jenny worked together at Bethel in Fiji, and Loraini too served as a translator, with the Fijian language. So now I again have a faithful wife, and together we share in service to Jehovah and also in a love of language!

As I look back over the years, I am so encouraged to see how our loving heavenly Father, Jehovah, continues to care for the needs of language groups, both small and large. (Ps. 49:1-3) I have seen his love reflected in the joy on the faces of people when they first see some of our literature in their language or sing praises to Jehovah in the language of their hearts. (Acts 2:8, 11) I can still hear the words of Saulo Teasi, an elderly Tuvaluan brother. After he had sung a Kingdom song for the first time in his language, he said: “I think you should tell the Governing Body that these songs sound better in Tuvaluan than they do in English.”

Since September 2005, I have had the unexpected privilege of serving as a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses. While I can no longer serve as a translator, I thank Jehovah that he allows me to remain involved in supporting the worldwide translation work. What a joy it is to know that Jehovah cares for the spiritual needs of all his people—even those on isolated islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean! Yes, as the psalmist says, “Jehovah has become King! Let the earth be joyful. Let the many islands rejoice.”—Ps. 97:1.



With Loraini,
witnessing
in Fiji



Meditate on Jehovah's Enduring Love

"I will meditate on all your activity."—PS. 77:12.

WHY are you convinced that Jehovah loves his people? Before you answer that question, consider these examples: For several years, fellow believers kindly urged a sister named Taylene to be balanced and not to expect too much of herself. She comments: "If Jehovah didn't love me, his counsel would not have been so persistent." Brigitte, who raised two children alone after her husband died, states: "Raising children in Satan's system is one of the most difficult challenges, especially for a single parent. But I am convinced of Jehovah's love because he has guided me through tears and heartache, and he never let me experience more than I could endure." (1 Cor. 10:13) Sandra struggles with an incurable illness. At a convention, she was shown personal interest by the wife of a well-known brother. "Although we did not know her personally," says Sandra's husband, "her deep concern brought great joy to our hearts. Even small expressions of love from our brothers and sisters show me how much Jehovah loves us."

- 1, 2. (a) Why are you convinced that Jehovah loves his people?
(b) With what need were all humans created?

SONGS: 18, 61

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

With respect to Jehovah's love, what confidence can we have?

Why can we say that Jehovah has enduring love for his people?

How should we respond to God's love?

² Humans were created with the need to love and be loved. It is easy to become discouraged if this need is not satisfied because of unexpected events or disappointments, loss of health, financial setbacks, or a lack of success in the ministry. If we begin to feel that Jehovah no longer loves us, we do well to remember that we are precious to him and that he is there, “grasping [our] right hand” and helping us. He will never forget us if we are faithful to him.—Isa. 41:13; 49:15.

³ The individuals quoted earlier were certain that God was with them in trying times. We too can have the conviction that he is on our side. (Ps. 118:6, 7) This article focuses on how God’s love is evident in connection with (1) his creative works, (2) his inspired Word, (3) prayer, and (4) the ransom. Meditating on the good things Jehovah has done will very likely increase our gratitude for his enduring love.—**Read Psalm 77:11, 12.**

MEDITATE ON JEHOVAH’S CREATIVE WORKS

⁴ Can we see Jehovah’s enduring love for us in what he has created? Yes, we can because the very act of creation was a manifestation of God’s love. (Rom. 1:20) He designed the earth with an ecosystem in which we can safely exist and thrive. However, he wants us to do more than merely exist. We need to eat to keep on living. Jehovah made sure that the earth could produce a seemingly endless variety of plants that can be

prepared as wholesome food. Why, he even made eating a delightful and satisfying experience! (Eccl. 9:7) A sister named Catherine finds great pleasure in observing creation, especially during the invigorating spring season in Canada. She remarks: “It is truly amazing how everything comes to life—flowers that are programmed to pop out of the ground and birds that return from their migration, including the tiny hummingbird that finds its way to the bird feeder outside my kitchen window. Jehovah must love us to give us so much delight.” Our loving heavenly Father takes pleasure in his creative works, and he wants us to enjoy them as well.—Acts 14:16, 17.

⁵ Jehovah created us with the ability to perform productive and meaningful work that adds to our enjoyment of life. (Eccl. 2:24) He purposed that humans fill the earth, subdue it, and have in subjection the fish, the birds, and other living creatures. (Gen. 1:26-28) And how loving of Jehovah to endow us with qualities that enable us to imitate him! —Eph. 5:1.

VALUE GOD’S INSPIRED WORD

⁶ God has shown great love in giving us his inspired Word. It reveals what we need to know about him and his dealings with mankind. For instance, the Scriptures tell us how he dealt with the Israelites, who frequently disobeyed him. Psalm 78:38 states: “He was merciful; he would forgive their error and not bring them to ruin. He often held back

3. What can help us to strengthen our conviction that Jehovah’s love for us is enduring?

4. What does meditation on Jehovah’s creative works reveal?

5. How is Jehovah’s love evident in the way humans are made?

6. Why should we have deep appreciation for God’s Word?

his anger instead of stirring up all his wrath.” Reflecting on that verse may help you to appreciate in a very personal way that Jehovah loves and cares for you. Be assured that you do matter to Jehovah.—**Read 1 Peter 5:6, 7.**

⁷ We should value the Bible highly because God communicates with us primarily by means of it. Meaningful and compassionate communication between parents and their children is essential to building mutual trust and developing a feeling of being loved. What can we expect of Jehovah? Although we have never seen him or heard his voice, he “speaks” to us through his inspired

7. Why should we have high regard for the Bible?

Word, and we need to listen. (Isa. 30: 20, 21) Jehovah desires to guide us, his dedicated people, and to protect us from harm. He also wants us to know him and to put our trust in him.—**Read Psalm 19:7-11; Proverbs 1:33.**

⁸ Jehovah wants us to know him as someone who loves us and looks beyond our imperfection. He searches for the good in us. (2 Chron. 16:9) For instance, he did so in the case of King Jehoshaphat of Judah. On one occasion, Jehoshaphat unwisely agreed to accompany King Ahab of Israel in a military venture to recover Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians. Although 400

8, 9. What does Jehovah want us to know? Illustrate this with a Bible example.

Although Jehu had to counsel Jehoshaphat, Jehovah found “good things” in the king
(See paragraphs 8, 9)



false prophets assured wicked Ahab of success, Jehovah's true prophet Micahiah foretold certain defeat. Ahab died in battle, and Jehoshaphat barely escaped with his life. Upon returning to Jerusalem, he was reproofed for allying himself with Ahab. Even so, Jehu, the son of Hanani the visionary, told Jehoshaphat: "There are good things that have been found in you."—2 Chron. 18: 4, 5, 18-22, 33, 34; 19:1-3.

⁹ Early in his reign, Jehoshaphat had directed that princes, Levites, and priests travel through all the cities of Judah to teach his subjects Jehovah's Law. The campaign was so effective that people of the surrounding nations began to fear Jehovah. (2 Chron. 17:3-10) Yes, Jehoshaphat committed a foolish act, but Jehovah was not blind to the good things he had done. This Bible account provides a reminder that despite our human imperfection, Jehovah will have enduring love for us if we wholeheartedly seek to please him.

APPRECIATE THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER

¹⁰ A loving father takes time to listen to his children when they want to talk to him. He wants to know their concerns and anxieties because he cares about what is in their heart. Our heavenly Father, Jehovah, listens to us when we approach him through the precious privilege of prayer.

¹¹ We can approach Jehovah in prayer at any time. He has placed no restrictions on us. He is our Friend who is always ready to give us a hearing ear. Taylene, quoted earlier, says: "You can say

10, 11. (a) Why is prayer a special provision from Jehovah? (b) How may God answer our prayers? (See opening image.)

anything and everything to him." When we express our most intimate thoughts to God in prayer, he may answer us through a Bible passage, an article in a magazine, or an encouraging word from a fellow believer. Jehovah hears our pleas and understands us even when no one else does. His response to our prayers is a beautiful expression of his enduring love for us.

¹² We can learn much from prayers recorded in God's Word. At times, therefore, we may find it very beneficial to consider such prayers during family worship. Reflecting on how Jehovah's servants of the past expressed their deepest thoughts to God may help us to enrich our own prayers. For instance, consider Jonah's contrite prayer from the belly of a huge fish. (Jonah 1:17-2: 10) Review Solomon's heartfelt prayer to Jehovah at the inauguration of the temple. (1 Ki. 8:22-53) Meditate on the model prayer that Jesus offered for our benefit. (Matt. 6:9-13) Above all, regularly "let your petitions be made known to God." As a result, "the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your mental powers." Our gratitude for Jehovah's enduring love will increase.—Phil. 4:6, 7.

SHOW GRATITUDE FOR THE RANSOM

¹³ The undeserved gift of Jesus' ransom sacrifice was given so that "we might gain life." (1 John 4:9) Referring to this superlative expression of God's love, the apostle Paul wrote: "Christ

12. Why should we take note of prayers recorded in the Bible? Give an example.

13. What opportunity is open to humans because of the loving provision of the ransom?

died for ungodly men at the appointed time. For hardly would anyone die for a righteous man; though perhaps for a good man someone may dare to die. But God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:6-8) This greatest expression of God’s love opened to mankind the prospect of having a favored standing with Jehovah.

¹⁴ A few feel Jehovah’s enduring love in a very special way. (John 1:12, 13; 3:5-7) Having been anointed by holy spirit, they have become “God’s children.” (Rom. 8:15, 16) Paul described anointed Christians as having been ‘raised up and seated together in the heavenly places in union with Christ Jesus.’ (Eph. 2:6) They occupy this spiritual position because they have been ‘sealed with the promised holy spirit, which is a token in advance of their inheritance,’ that is, ‘the hope reserved for them in the heavens.’—Eph. 1:13, 14; Col. 1:5.

¹⁵ For the vast majority of mankind who exercise faith in the ransom, the way is open to be Jehovah’s friends with the prospect of being adopted as children of God and living forever in the promised earthly Paradise. Thus, by means of the ransom, Jehovah shows his love for the world of mankind. (John 3:16) If we hope to live forever on earth and we continue to serve Jehovah faithfully, we can be assured that he will make life pleasant for us in the new world. How fitting it is that we view the ransom as the greatest evidence of God’s enduring love for us!

14, 15. What does the ransom mean for (a) anointed Christians? (b) those with the earthly hope?

RESPOND TO JEHOVAH’S LOVE

¹⁶ We can only endeavor to count the various manifestations of Jehovah’s unfailing love for us. The psalmist David sang: “To me, how precious your thoughts are! O God, how vast is the sum of them! If I try to count them, they outnumber the grains of sand.” (Ps. 139:17, 18) We should allow these thoughts to nurture in us a desire to love Jehovah deeply in return for his loving care for us. By all means, then, let us give our very best to him.

¹⁷ There are many ways to express our love for Jehovah. For example, we show love for God and neighbor by having a zealous share in the Kingdom-preaching work. (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) We show that we truly love Jehovah by enduring tests of faith as integrity keepers. **(Read Psalm 84:11; James 1:2-5.)** If our trials become severe, we can be sure that God is aware of our suffering and will help us, for we are precious to him.—Ps. 56:8.

¹⁸ Our love for Jehovah moves us to meditate on his creative works and other marvelous deeds. We show that we love God and highly value his Word by diligently studying the Bible. Love for Jehovah draws us ever closer to him in prayer. And our love for God grows deeper as we reflect on the ransom sacrifice he provided for our sins. (1 John 2:1, 2) These are just some of the many reasons we have for loving Jehovah in response to his enduring love for us.

16. What does meditation on the many ways that Jehovah has shown his love do for us?

17, 18. What are some ways that we can show our love for God?



Keep in Expectation!

“Even if it should delay, keep in expectation of it!”—HAB. 2:3.

SONGS: 128, 45

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What reasons do we have for being confident that we are living in the last days?

Why should the passing of time not prevent us from keeping on the watch?

How can we show that we are keeping in expectation of the end of this system of things?

JEHOVAH’S worshippers have long lived in expectation of the fulfillment of inspired prophecies. For example, Jeremiah prophesied that Judah would be desolated, and that is what occurred at Babylonian hands in 607 B.C.E. (Jer. 25:8-11) Isaiah, who was inspired to foretell that Jehovah would bring about a restoration, declared: “Happy are all those keeping in expectation of him.” (Isa. 30:18) Micah, whose prophecies also involved God’s ancient people, personally resolved: “I will keep on the lookout for Jehovah.” (Mic. 7:7) For centuries, God’s servants also lived in expectation of the fulfillment of prophecies concerning the Messiah, or Christ. —Luke 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:10-12.*

² God’s present-day servants also keep in expectation, for prophecies about the Messiah are still undergoing fulfillment. Through the Messianic Kingdom, Jehovah will soon put an end to human suffering by destroying the wicked and delivering his people from this unstable world lying in Satan’s power. (1 John 5:19) Let us therefore remain alert and fully aware

* For a list of some Bible prophecies regarding the Messiah and their fulfillments, see page 200 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

1, 2. What attitude has long characterized worshippers of Jehovah?

that this system is rapidly nearing its end.

³ As Jehovah's servants, we yearn to see God's will "take place, as in heaven, also on earth." (Matt. 6:10) After looking forward to the end of this system for what may seem to be a long time, however, some may wonder, 'Do we still have sound reasons to *keep* in expectation?' Let us see.

WHY KEEP IN EXPECTATION?

⁴ The Bible leaves no doubt about what our attitude should be toward the impending destruction of this system of things. Jesus told his followers to "keep on the watch" and to "keep awake." (Matt. 24:42; Luke 21:34-36) That in itself is a good reason to remain in expectation—Jesus told us to do so! In this regard, Jehovah's organization has set an example. Its publications have consistently exhorted us to "await and keep close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah" and to fix our hope on God's promised new world.—**Read 2 Peter 3:11-13.**

⁵ Although keeping in expectation was appropriate for Christians living centuries ago, it is particularly important for us. Why? Because we are living during Christ's presence. The sign of his presence has been in evidence since 1914. And the multifeatured sign, which includes worsening world conditions and global Kingdom preaching, means that we are living in "the conclusion of the

system of things." (Matt. 24:3, 7-14) Since Jesus did not say how long that period of time would go on before the end arrived, we need to be especially vigilant, watchful.

⁶ We might ask: Could not "the conclusion of the system of things" refer to a future time when world conditions will become even worse? The Bible does indicate that wickedness will greatly increase "in the last days." (2 Tim. 3:1, 13; Matt. 24:21; Rev. 12:12) So we can expect that world conditions, bad as they are now, will continue to decline.

⁷ But how bad do you expect conditions to become before "the great tribulation"? (Rev. 7:14) For example, do you expect that there will be a war in every country, no food on anyone's table, and illness in every household? Under those conditions, even skeptics would likely feel compelled to admit that Bible prophecy was undergoing fulfillment. However, Jesus said that most people would take "no note" of his presence, carrying on with life's normal activities until it is too late. (**Read Matthew 24:37-39.**) Thus, the Scriptures indicate that world conditions during the last days would not become so extreme that people would be forced to believe that the end is near.—Luke 17:20; 2 Pet. 3:3, 4.

⁸ On the other hand, for the composite sign to serve its purpose, the fulfillment of it would have to be obvious enough to command the attention of

3. What question might arise if we have been waiting for years for the end to come?

4. What is a primary reason for us to keep on the watch?

5. Why is there a special need to be watchful in our time?

6. Why can we expect world conditions to worsen as we draw closer to the end?

7. What does Matthew 24:37-39 indicate about world conditions during the last days?

8. What is evident to those who are heeding Jesus' command to "keep on the watch"?

those who have been obeying Jesus' counsel to "keep on the watch." (Matt. 24:27, 42) And that has been the case since 1914. From that time onward, the features of the sign have been undergoing fulfillment. Clearly, we are *now* living in "the conclusion of the system of things"—a limited period of time leading up to and including the destruction of this wicked system.

⁹ Why, then, should Christians today keep in expectation? Out of obedience to Jesus Christ, we remain in expectation. Also, we recognize the sign of his presence. Our expectations are based, not on a naive readiness to believe anything, but on solid Scriptural evidence that compels us to remain vigilant, awake, watchful and, yes, in expectation of this wicked system's end.

HOW LONG?

¹⁰ Many of us have been keeping awake spiritually for decades. However, let us not allow the passing of time to weaken our resolve to keep in expectation. We need to be ready for Jesus' arrival as Executioner to end this system of things. Remember that Jesus exhorted his followers: "Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is. It is like a man traveling abroad who left his house and gave the authority to his slaves, to each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to keep on the watch. Keep on the watch, therefore, for you do not know when the master of

the house is coming, whether late in the day or at midnight or at dawn or early in the morning, in order that when he comes suddenly, he does not find you sleeping. But what I say to you, I say to all: Keep on the watch."—Mark 13:33-37.

¹¹ Upon recognizing that Christ's presence began in 1914, Jesus' followers rightly prepared for a possible early arrival of the end. They did so by intensifying their Kingdom-preaching work. Jesus indicated that he might come later—"at dawn or early in the morning." If that happened, how were his followers to respond? He said: "Keep on the watch." So a long wait would not justify mentally postponing the end or totally dismissing their expectations.

¹² Consider the prophet Habakkuk, who was commissioned to foretell the destruction of Jerusalem. By the time he arrived on the scene, warnings of that city's desolation had already been sounded for years. Conditions had reached the point where 'the wicked surrounded the righteous and justice was perverted.' So it is not surprising that Habakkuk asked: "How long, O Jehovah, must I cry for help?" Instead of answering that question directly, Jehovah assured his faithful prophet that the foretold destruction would "not be late." God told Habakkuk to "keep in expectation."—**Read Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:3.**

¹³ Suppose Habakkuk had become discouraged and thought: 'I have been hearing about Jerusalem's destruction for years. What if it is still a long way off? It does not seem realistic to keep proph-

⁹. For what reasons should we remain in expectation of this system's end?

^{10, 11}. (a) Jesus prepared his disciples for what possibilities? (b) What did Jesus tell his followers to do if their wait for the end proved to be longer than they had anticipated? (See opening image.)

¹². What did Habakkuk ask Jehovah, and how did God respond?

¹³. What attitude could Habakkuk have had, and why would that have been unwise?



Do you zealously share in preaching the good news?
(See paragraph 15)

esying as if the city might suddenly be destroyed. I will leave that to others.’ If Habakkuk had entertained such ideas, he would have lost his favored position before Jehovah—and possibly his life during the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians!

¹⁴ In the new world, we will have reason to reflect on the fact that all the foretold events associated with the conclusion of the system of things did indeed take place. Meditating on how matters actually turned out will further strengthen our confidence in Jehovah and his promises yet to be fulfilled. **(Read Joshua 23:14.)** We will surely be thankful that God, who ‘has placed times and seasons in his own jurisdiction,’ exhorted us

14. Why can we be certain that by keeping in expectation, we will not come to disappointment?

to live with an awareness that ‘the end of all things had drawn close.’—Acts 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:7.

EXPECTATION MEANS ACTION!

¹⁵ We can expect that Jehovah’s organization will continue to remind us that we should serve God with a sense of urgency. Such reminders are provided not merely to keep us busy in God’s service but to help us remain aware that the sign of Christ’s presence is now undergoing fulfillment. What is the most sensible response to the times in which we are living? Why, it is for us to keep on seeking first the Kingdom and God’s righteousness by having a zealous share in preaching the good news!—Matt. 6:33; Mark 13:10.

¹⁶ One sister commented: “By preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom, we . . . can help to rescue persons from sure death in the coming world catastrophe.” She knows something about being rescued, for she and her husband were survivors of one of the worst maritime disasters in history—the sinking of the luxury liner *Wilhelm Gustloff* in 1945. Even in the face of such peril, a person could have the wrong view of what is truly important. The sister recalled that one woman kept wailing: “My suitcases! My suitcases! My jewelry! All my jewelry is down there in the cabin. I have lost everything!” By contrast, several passengers who were moved by a spirit of helpfulness risked their lives working hard to rescue people who had fallen into the icy seas. Like those unselfish passengers, we do our utmost to help people. We keep the urgency of our

15, 16. Why is intensified preaching the most sensible response to the times in which we live?

preaching work in mind and help others to become survivors of the impending world catastrophe before it is too late.

¹⁷ Events on the world scene clearly indicate that Bible prophecy is now being fulfilled and that the end of this wicked system of things is imminent. Therefore,

17. What reasons do we have to believe that the end could come at any time?



we should not assume that much time is needed for the state of this world to develop to the point where “the ten horns” and “the wild beast” of Revelation 17:16 turn on Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. Let us bear in mind that God will “put it into their hearts” to make that move—and this could happen swiftly and at any time! (Rev. 17:17) The end of this entire system of things is not far off. With good reason, we should heed Jesus’ warning: “Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare.” (Luke 21: 34, 35; Rev. 16:15) Let us be resolved to serve Jehovah with a sense of urgency, confident that he “acts in behalf of those who keep in expectation of him.”—Isa. 64:4.

¹⁸ As we await the end of the present wicked system of things, let us heed the disciple Jude’s inspired words: “Beloved ones, build yourselves up on your most holy faith, and pray with holy spirit, in order to keep yourselves in God’s love, while you await the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ with everlasting life in view.” (Jude 20, 21) How, though, can we show that we are living in expectation of God’s promised new world and are really looking forward to it? That will be the subject of our next article.

18. What question will be considered in the next article?

Do you make wise decisions so that no distractions rob you of a sense of urgency?

(See paragraph 17)



Prepare Now for Life in the New World

“Tell them to work at good, . . . so that they may get a firm hold on the real life.”—1 TIM. 6:18, 19.

“THE REAL LIFE.” For most of us, that expression calls to mind the hope of everlasting life in Paradise on earth. In fact, the apostle Paul linked “everlasting life” with “the real life.” **(Read 1 Timothy 6:12, 19.)** We are in expectation of life that will go on forever and that will bring us lasting satisfaction and joy. It is hard to imagine how we will feel on awakening each day in excellent physical, mental, and emotional health. (Isa. 35:5, 6) Think of how pleasant it will be to associate with our loved ones and friends, including those who have been resurrected! (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) We will also have the opportunity to sharpen our skills in science, music, architecture, or some other field of knowledge.

² As much as we look forward to such good things, the primary blessings in the new world will be spiritual. How deeply satisfying it will be to know that Jehovah’s name has been sanctified and his sovereignty vindicated! (Matt. 6:9, 10) We will be thrilled to see Jehovah’s original purpose for mankind

1, 2. (a) What physical blessings of the earthly Paradise do you look forward to the most? (See opening image.) (b) What spiritual blessings will there be in the new world?

SONGS: 125, 40

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

We can expect to enjoy what spiritual conditions in the new world?

What are some ways to prepare now for life in the new world?

How can spiritual goals help us to prepare for life in God’s promised new world?

and the earth being fulfilled. And just think how much easier it will be to draw closer to Jehovah as we approach, and finally reach, perfection!—Ps. 73:28; Jas. 4:8.

³ These blessings can be ours, for Jesus assures us that “with God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:25, 26) But if we expect to live in that new world—and to keep living beyond Christ’s Thousand Year Reign—we must act now to “get a firm hold” on everlasting life. We must live in expectation of the end of this wicked world, and we need to take positive steps right now to prepare for life in the new world. How can we do this while we are still in this wicked system of things?

HOW TO PREPARE

⁴ How might we prepare now for life in God’s new world? Well, suppose we were planning to move to another country. How could we prepare for that change? We might start learning the language of the people who live there. Learning about their customs would be beneficial. We might sample some of their foods. To a certain extent, we would begin to live as if we were already residents of that land. After all, that is the way we expect to live once we arrive there. Similarly, we can prepare for life in the new world by living now, to the extent possible, as we expect to live then. In this regard, consider the following examples.

⁵ In the new world, God’s sovereignty will be fully upheld. What a refreshing

contrast that will be to the self-rule promoted in this world under Satan’s domination! Independence and an unreasonable insistence on personal preference may be highly regarded by some, but what has been the result? Failure to accept God’s direction has led to suffering, misery, even tragedy. (Jer. 10:23) How we look forward to the time when all mankind will submit to Jehovah’s loving sovereignty!

⁶ It will be a pleasure to be under Jehovah’s arrangements in the new world as we work toward beautifying the earth, teaching resurrected ones, and doing Jehovah’s will for mankind. But what if we were directed to perform a particular aspect of the work that did not appeal to us? Would we submit to that direction by doing our best to carry out and even enjoy our assignment? Most of us would answer yes! Consistently, then, are we submitting to theocratic direction *now*? If we are doing so, we are preparing for everlasting life under Jehovah’s rulership.

⁷ We can prepare for life in the new world not only by submitting to Jehovah’s present-day arrangements but also by working now to cultivate contentment and a spirit of cooperation. If we cooperate with those taking the lead today, perhaps finding contentment and joy in new assignments of service, we are likely to have the same attitude in the new world. **(Read Hebrews 13:17.)** In the Promised Land, the inheritances of the Israelites were apportioned by lot. (Num. 26:52-56; Josh. 14:1, 2) Today, of

7, 8. (a) Why should we cultivate a spirit of cooperation? (b) What changes have some Christians experienced? (c) We can be sure of what regarding life on earth in the new world?

3. What should we be preparing for now?

4. Illustrate how we might prepare now for life in the new world.

5, 6. How will learning to submit to theocratic arrangements help to train us for life in the new world?

course, we do not know where each one of us may be assigned to live in the new system of things. However, cooperation will bring us contentment and great happiness as we do Jehovah's will wherever we live on earth at that time.

⁸ The privilege of living under Kingdom rule is well worth any effort we make to cooperate with Jehovah's organization and care for theocratic assignments. Of course, our circumstances may change with the passing of time. For instance, some members of the Bethel family in the United States have been reassigned to the field and are now enjoying abundant blessings in other forms of the full-time ministry. Because of advancing age or other factors, others who were in the traveling work have now received special pioneer assignments. If we cultivate contentment, pray for God's help, and do all we can in his service, we will experience joy and will receive many blessings even in these critical last days. **(Read Proverbs 10:22.)** What about our future prospects? We may have ideas about where we would like to live in the new world, but we may be asked to move to a different area. Regardless of where we will then serve and what we will do, we can be sure that we will be grateful and contented, brimming with joy.—Neh. 8:10.

⁹ In the new world, there may be times when we will need to exercise patience. For example, we may hear of individuals who, to the delight of their relatives and friends, have been raised from the dead. However, we ourselves may have to wait for the resurrection of our loved ones. If

that is the case, will we rejoice with others and be patient? (Rom. 12:15) Learning to wait patiently for the fulfillment of Jehovah's promises *now* will help us to exercise patience *then*.—Eccl. 7:8.

¹⁰ We can also prepare for life in the new world by exercising patience regarding revealed truth. Are we studious and patient as our understanding of Bible truth is progressively clarified today? If so, we will likely have no difficulty showing patience in the new world as Jehovah makes known his requirements for mankind.—Prov. 4:18; John 16:12.

¹¹ Another quality that will stand us in good stead for life in the new world is a forgiving spirit. During Christ's Thousand Year Reign, it may take some time for the righteous and the unrighteous to shed imperfect traits. (Acts 24:15) Will we be able to deal lovingly with one another during that time? If we learn to forgive freely and if we avoid strained relations now, it will be easier for us to do so then.—**Read Colossians 3:12-14.**

¹² Life in the new world may not mean that we will always get what we want when we want it. Instead, that life will involve being appreciative and content in any situation as we benefit from submitting to Jehovah's loving sovereignty. It will mean putting into practice the very qualities that Jehovah is teaching us to cultivate now. By learning to live now as we expect to live then, we are developing qualities that we will need to manifest for all eternity. We are strengthening our

11. What is Jehovah now teaching us about human relationships, and how will this benefit us in the new world?

12. Explain the connection between our expectations for the future and our way of life now.

9, 10. (a) In what areas might there be a need to exercise patience in the new world? (b) How can we show that we are patient?



Have a meaningful share in the ministry

Participate in theocratic activities

faith in the reality of “the inhabited earth to come.” (Heb. 2:5; 11:1) Moreover, we are showing how deeply we yearn for the righteous conditions that will then exist on earth. Indeed, we are preparing for everlasting life in God’s new world.

FOCUS NOW ON SPIRITUAL PURSUITS

¹³ Consider one more way for us to prepare for the real life ahead. Although we are promised an abundance of food and other necessities on earth in the new world, we will derive the greatest pleasure from having our spiritual need filled. (Matt. 5:3) Spiritual activities will be our highest priority, and we will demonstrate that we are finding exquisite delight in Jehovah. (Ps. 37:4) By giving spiritual things priority now, we are preparing for the real life in the future. —**Read Matthew 6:19-21.**

¹⁴ How can we increase our joy in theocratic activities? One way is by setting spiritual goals. If you are young and are giving serious consideration to a career

in Jehovah’s service, why not review some of the material that has been published about various avenues of the full-time ministry and set one of these as a goal?* You might talk with some who have spent many years in the full-time service. By making the ministry your career, you are preparing for continued service to God in the new world, where your theocratic training and experience will be of great value.

¹⁵ As Kingdom proclaimers, what spiritual goals can we set for ourselves? We could make it a goal to sharpen our skill in a certain feature of the ministry. Or we might strive to improve our understanding of Bible principles and their application. What about developing greater effectiveness in public reading and speaking or in making comments at meetings? No doubt you can think of other possibilities. The point is this: Setting spiritual goals will increase your enthusiasm for theocratic activities, and this will help you to prepare yourself for life in the new world.

* See *Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Vol. 2, pp. 311-318.

13. What sort of activities will take top priority in the new world?

14. What spiritual goals can help young ones to keep eternal life in view?

15. What spiritual goals might be attainable by Kingdom proclaimers?



Show appreciation for spiritual food



Look for Scriptural direction

OUR BLESSINGS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN!

¹⁶ Does spending our time preparing for God's new world mean forfeiting a better or more fulfilling way of life today? By no means! Serving Jehovah is the most satisfying way of life there is. It is not a matter of servitude under duress just so that we can pass through the great tribulation. It is the way we are designed to live, the way that yields the greatest joy. Having Jehovah's guidance and experiencing his loyal love are far better than life apart from intimacy with him. **(Read Psalm 63:1-3.)** Of course, we need not wait for the new world in order to enjoy spiritual blessings that result from wholehearted service to Jehovah—they are available to us right now! Indeed, some of us have been reaping such blessings for decades, and we know from experience that no other life course could produce greater satisfaction.—Ps. 1:1-3; Isa. 58:13, 14.

¹⁷ Personal interests and pleasures will have their place in God's new world. After all, why did Jehovah create us with

16. Why is serving Jehovah the best way of life?

17. What place will personal interests and pleasures have in Paradise?

a hunger for personal accomplishment and wholesome pleasures if he did not intend to have us satisfy these desires to the full? (Eccl. 2:24) In this and other ways, Jehovah will always “satisfy the desire of every living thing.” (Ps. 145:16) Recreation and relaxation have their place, but the pleasure derived from them is increased when we put our relationship with Jehovah first. It will also be that way in the earthly Paradise. How wise it is for us to learn to keep personal interests in their proper place while we seek first the Kingdom and focus on the spiritual blessings now available to Jehovah's people!—Matt. 6:33.

¹⁸ In the coming Paradise, we will attain happiness on a level that we have never before experienced. May we show the intensity of our desire for the real life by preparing for it now. Let us cultivate godly qualities and find great joy in sharing zealously in the Kingdom-preaching work that we have been given to do. May we make the pursuit of spiritual interests our exquisite delight. And with full faith in Jehovah's promises, let us live now in expectation of life in the new world!

18. How can we show that we are preparing for everlasting life in Paradise?



Watch Your Associations in These Last Days

“Bad associations spoil useful habits.”—1 COR. 15:33.

SONGS: 73, 119

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

What effect did bad associations have on the Israelites?

Why should Jehovah’s servants marry “only in the Lord”?

With whom should we associate?

WE ARE living in very difficult times. The Bible calls the era that began in 1914 “the last days.” These “critical times hard to deal with” are marked by conditions that are far worse than any experienced by mankind prior to that climactic year. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) Moreover, the world will continue to deteriorate, for Bible prophecy foretold that “wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse.” —2 Tim. 3:13.

² For entertainment, many people view or practice things that the Bible identifies as violent, sexually immoral, spiritistic, or ungodly in other ways. For instance, the Internet, television programs, movies, novels, and magazine articles often present violence and immorality in a favorable light. Behavior once considered unacceptable has even been legalized in some places. But that does not make such conduct acceptable to God.—**Read Romans 1:28-32.**

1. In what time period are we now living?
2. What is characteristic of this world’s entertainment? (See opening image.)

³ In the first century, Jesus' followers shunned unclean entertainment. Because of this and their godly conduct in general, they were maligned and persecuted by others. "They are puzzled that you [Christians] do not continue running with them in the same decadent course of debauchery," wrote the apostle Peter, "so they speak abusively of you." (1 Pet. 4:4) Today, too, those who live by God's standards are considered peculiar by the world. Furthermore, "all those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted."—2 Tim. 3:12.

"BAD ASSOCIATIONS SPOIL USEFUL HABITS"

⁴ The Scriptures counsel those who want to do God's will not to love this world and its practices. **(Read 1 John 2:15, 16.)** The religious, political, and commercial elements of this world—including their information channels—are under the influence of "the god of this system of things," Satan the Devil. (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19) As Christians, therefore, we need to watch our associations. God's inspired Word declares this fundamental truth: "Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits."—1 Cor. 15:33.

⁵ To avoid spoiling our useful habits, we must not have as close associates those who practice bad things. This applies not only to associating with unbelieving wrongdoers but also to associat-

ing with those who claim to worship Jehovah but who deliberately violate his laws. If such professing Christians engage in serious wrongdoing and do not repent, we do not continue to associate with them.—Rom. 16:17, 18.

⁶ If we were to associate with those who do not obey God's laws, we might have the tendency to do what they do in order to be accepted by them. For example, if we were to have close association with sexually immoral people, we might be tempted to practice immorality. That has happened to some dedicated Christians, and some of them were disfellowshipped because they were not repentant. (1 Cor. 5:11-13) Unless they repent, their condition can become like that described by Peter.—**Read 2 Peter 2: 20-22.**

⁷ Although we want to be kind even to those who do not follow God's laws, we should not become their intimate associates or close friends. It would therefore be wrong for one of Jehovah's Witnesses who is a single person to date such an individual who is not dedicated and faithful to God and who does not respect His high standards. Maintaining Christian integrity is far more important than becoming popular with people who do not live by Jehovah's laws. Our close associates should be those who do God's will. Jesus said: "Whoever does the will of God, this one is my brother and sister and mother."—Mark 3:35.

⁸ The disastrous results of bad associations were experienced by the Israelites. When Jehovah rescued them from Egyptian slavery and was leading them to the

3. How are those who live by Scriptural standards often viewed?

4. What do the Scriptures counsel us not to do with regard to this world?

5, 6. We should avoid companionship with whom, and why?

7. Whom should we choose as close friends?

8. How did bad associations affect the people of ancient Israel?

Promised Land, he said this about their dealings with its inhabitants: “You must not bow down to their gods or be persuaded to serve them, and you must not imitate their practices. Instead, you must demolish them and smash their sacred pillars. You must serve Jehovah your God.” (Ex. 23:24, 25) Ultimately, most of the Israelites did not obey God’s instructions. (Ps. 106:35-39) Because they became unfaithful to God, Jesus later told them: “Look! Your house is abandoned to you.” (Matt. 23:38) Jehovah cast off Israel, transferring his blessing to the newly formed Christian congregation.—Acts 2:1-4.

CAREFULLY CONSIDER WHAT YOU READ AND WATCH

⁹ Much of what is produced by this world’s media can be spiritually dangerous to Christians. Such material is not designed to build faith in Jehovah and his promises. Instead, it reflects Satan’s evil world and its goals. Therefore, we need to exercise great caution so that we do not choose material that could arouse “worldly desires.”—Titus 2:12.

¹⁰ Soon, harmful reading and viewing material will no longer exist. All of it will be removed when the world that it represents—Satan’s world—is destroyed. God’s Word states: “The world is passing away and so is its desire, but the one who does the will of God remains forever.” (1 John 2:17) Similarly, the psalmist sang: “Evil men will be done away with, but those hoping in Jehovah will possess the earth. But the meek will possess the earth, and they will find exquisite delight

in the abundance of peace.” For how long? “The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.” —Ps. 37:9, 11, 29.

¹¹ In contrast with what the world produces, the material produced by Jehovah’s organization in these last days encourages conduct that leads to eternal life. In prayer to Jehovah, Jesus said: “This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) Through his organization, our heavenly Father is providing an abundance of upbuilding spiritual food. How blessed we are to have magazines, brochures, books, videos, and Web pages that promote true worship! God’s organization also provides regular meetings in more than 110,000 congregations worldwide. At those meetings and at assemblies and conventions, we consider Bible-based material that builds faith in God and his promises.—Heb. 10:24, 25.

MARRY “ONLY IN THE LORD”

¹² Watching their associations is particularly important for single Christians who want to get married. God’s Word clearly counsels: “Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what sharing does light have with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14) The Bible counsels God’s servants who are seeking a marriage mate to marry “only in the Lord,” that is, to marry only a dedicated, baptized worshipper of Jehovah who lives according to Scriptural teach-

9. Why can this world’s media be dangerous?

10. What will happen to this world’s harmful reading and viewing material?

11. How does God provide good spiritual food for his people?

12. Explain the Bible’s counsel to marry “only in the Lord.”

ings. (1 Cor. 7:39) By marrying fellow believers, Christians gain companions who are dedicated to Jehovah and will help them maintain their integrity to him.

¹³ Jehovah knows what is best for his servants, and he has been consistent in stating his viewpoint regarding marriage. Note his easily understood command to Israel through Moses. With reference to the inhabitants of surrounding nations—people who did not serve Jehovah—the Israelites were instructed: “You must not form any marriage alliances with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods; then Jehovah’s anger will blaze against you, and he will swiftly annihilate you.”—Deut. 7:3, 4.

¹⁴ Early in the kingship of David’s son Solomon, the younger man prayed for wisdom, and God gave it to him in abundance. King Solomon thus became famous as the wise ruler of a prosperous land. In fact, when the queen of Sheba visited Solomon, she exclaimed: “I did not put faith in the reports until I had come and had seen it with my own eyes. And look! I had not been told the half. You have far surpassed in wisdom and prosperity the report that I heard.” (1 Ki. 10:7) But Solomon became a sad example of what can happen when a person ignores God’s command not to marry an unbeliever.—Eccl. 4:13.

¹⁵ Despite everything that God had done for him, Solomon ignored the divine command not to marry women

from surrounding nations, individuals who did not worship Jehovah. Solomon “loved many foreign women” and eventually had 700 wives and 300 concubines. What was the result? In Solomon’s old age, his pagan wives “inclined his heart to follow other gods, . . . and Solomon did what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah.” (1 Ki. 11:1-6) Solomon’s bad associations undermined his wisdom and caused him to fall away from true worship. What a warning that is for Christians who might think about marrying someone who does not love Jehovah!

¹⁶ What if someone becomes a worshipper of God while married to an unbeliever? The Bible says: “You wives, be in subjection to your husbands, so that if any are not obedient to the word, they may be won without a word through the conduct of their wives.” (1 Pet. 3:1) Those words are addressed to Christian wives, but the same words apply to a husband who becomes a worshipper of Jehovah while married to an unbeliever. The Bible’s counsel is clear: Be a good mate, and live up to God’s high standards for marriage. Many unbelieving mates have accepted the truth because of observing a husband or a wife who changed after complying with God’s requirements.

ASSOCIATE WITH THOSE WHO LOVE JEHOVAH

¹⁷ Although bad associations spoil useful habits, good associations produce fine results. Consider Noah, who lived in an evil world but had no desire to

13. What command regarding marriage did God give the Israelites?

14, 15. How did ignoring Jehovah’s direction affect Solomon?

16. What Scriptural counsel applies to a servant of God who is married to an unbeliever?

17, 18. Why did Noah and first-century Christians survive the end of the system in which they lived?

make its inhabitants his close friends. At that time, “Jehovah saw that man’s wickedness was great on the earth and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only bad all the time.” (Gen. 6:5) God therefore determined to wipe out that evil system and its supporters by means of a global deluge. However, “Noah was a righteous man. He proved himself faultless among his contemporaries. Noah walked with the true God.” —Gen. 6:7-9.

¹⁸ Noah certainly did not seek the companionship of ungodly people. He and the seven members of his family occupied themselves with the doing of God-given work, which included building an ark. Meanwhile, Noah was also “a preacher of righteousness.” (2 Pet. 2:5) Noah’s preaching, his work on the ark, and his association with his family kept him busy doing good things that pleased God. As a result, Noah and his immediate family survived the Flood. We should be grateful to them because all of us today are the descendants of those who

served Jehovah—faithful Noah, Noah’s wife, his sons, and their wives. Similarly, loyal and obedient first-century Christians kept themselves separate from ungodly people and survived the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish system of things in 70 C.E.—Luke 21:20-22.

¹⁹ As worshippers of Jehovah, we need to imitate Noah and his family and obedient first-century Christians. We must keep separate from the wicked system of things around us and seek upbuilding associates among the millions of our faithful brothers and sisters. Sticking with those who are guided by God-given wisdom will help us to “stand firm in the faith” during these very difficult times. (1 Cor. 16:13; Prov. 13:20) And just think of our wonderful prospects! If we watch our associations in these last days, we may personally live right through the end of this evil system and into Jehovah’s righteous new world now so near at hand!

19. To gain God’s favor, what must we do?



Wholesome association with fellow believers gives us a taste of new world living (See paragraph 19)



What We Can Learn From Joanna

MANY people know that Jesus had 12 apostles. But they may not be aware that his disciples also included women who were closely associated with him. Joanna was one of those women.—Matt. 27: 55; Luke 8:3.

What role did Joanna play in Jesus’ ministry, and what can we learn from her example?

WHO WAS JOANNA?

Joanna was “the wife of Chuza, Herod’s man in charge.” Chuza may have been the steward of domestic affairs for Herod Antipas. Joanna was one of several women whom Jesus cured of their infirmities. Along with the other women, Joanna traveled with Jesus and his apostles.—Luke 8:1-3.

The Jewish rabbis taught that women should not socialize with men who were not their relatives, much less travel with them. In fact, Jewish men were to say little to women. Disregarding such traditions, Jesus allowed Joanna and the other believing women to accompany his group.

Joanna risked social disapproval by associating with Jesus and the apostles. All who set out with him had to be prepared to make adjustments in

their everyday life. Regarding such followers, though, Jesus said: “My mother and my brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.” (Luke 8:19-21; 18:28-30) Are you not encouraged to know that Jesus feels so close to those who make sacrifices in order to follow him?

SHE MINISTERED FROM HER BELONGINGS

“From their belongings,” Joanna and many other women ministered to Jesus and the Twelve. (Luke 8:3) “Luke is not telling his readers that the women cooked the meals, washed the dishes, and mended the clothes,” notes one writer. “Perhaps they did . . . , but it is not what Luke says.” Apparently, the women used their money, goods, or property to provide for their companions.

Neither Jesus nor his apostles did secular work during their preaching tours. Hence, they probably did not have the means to pay for all the food and other things needed by a group of perhaps 20 people. Although they may have been received hospitably, the fact that Christ and his apostles carried a “money box” suggests that they did not always rely on hospitality. (John 12:6; 13:28, 29)

Joanna and the other women may have made contributions to cover expenses.

Some object that a Jewish woman would not have financial assets. However, contemporary texts indicate that among the Jews, a woman may have acquired resources in various ways: (1) as an inheritance if her father died without sons, (2) as property given to her, (3) as money stipulated in a marriage contract as due her in case of divorce, (4) as maintenance from a deceased husband's estate, or (5) as personal earnings.

Undoubtedly, Jesus' followers contributed what they could. His entourage may have included wealthy women. Because Joanna was or had been the wife of Herod's steward, some conclude that she was well-off. Someone like her may have provided the expensive seamless garment that Jesus wore. One writer points out that this was an item that "fishermen's wives could not have supplied."—John 19:23, 24.

The Scriptures do not specifically say that Joanna made financial contributions. However, she did what she could, and this can teach us a lesson. What we give to promote Kingdom interests—or whether we choose to give—is up to us. What matters to God is that we joyfully do what we can.—Matt. 6:33; Mark 14:8; 2 Cor. 9:7.

AT JESUS' DEATH AND THEREAFTER

Apparently, Joanna was present at Jesus' execution, along with other women "who used to

accompany him and minister to him when he was in Galilee, and many other women who had come up together with him to Jerusalem." (Mark 15:41) When Jesus' body was removed from the stake for burial, "the women who had come with him from Galilee followed along and took a look at the tomb and saw how his body was laid, and they went back to prepare spices and perfumed oils." These women—whom Luke identifies as "Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James"—returned after the sabbath and saw angels who told them of Jesus' resurrection.—Luke 23:55–24:10.

It is possible that Joanna was among the disciples, including Jesus' mother and brothers, who gathered together in Jerusalem at Pentecost 33 C.E. (Acts 1:12–14) Because of her court connections, Joanna may have been the source of what some consider to be Luke's inside information about Herod Antipas, especially since Luke is the only Gospel writer who mentions her by name.—Luke 8:3; 9:7–9; 23:8–12; 24:10.

The story of Joanna provides us with some thought-provoking lessons. She served Jesus the best way she could. She must have been happy if her funds helped him, the Twelve, and other disciples to travel and preach together. Joanna ministered to Jesus and was loyal to him through trials. Christian women would do well to imitate her godly spirit.



Joanna and other believing women did what they could for their Lord

“Jehovah Brought You to France to Learn the Truth”

AS A boy, Antoine Skalecki had a pony or a horse as a constant companion. Together they trudged through dimly lit tunnels, transporting loads of coal in a mine 1,600 feet (500 m) below ground. Antoine's father was injured in a mine collapse, leaving the family no choice but to send Antoine to toil in the mines nine hours a day. On one occasion, Antoine almost lost his life in a cave-in.

Antoine was one of many children born in France to Polish parents in the 1920's and 1930's. Why did Polish immigrants come to France? When Poland's independence was restored following World War I, overpopulation became a serious problem. France, on the other hand, had lost more than a million men in the war and was in desperate need of coal miners. Therefore, the French and Polish governments signed an immigration agreement in September 1919. By 1931 the Polish population in France had reached 507,800, with many Polish people settling in the mining regions in the north.

The hardworking Polish immigrants brought along their distinct culture, including deep religious sentiment. “My grandfather Joseph spoke of the Holy Scriptures with a reverence that had been implanted by his own father,” recalls Antoine, now 90. On Sundays, Polish mining families donned their best clothes for church, just as they had done back home, much to the disdain of certain secular-minded French locals.

It was in Nord-Pas-de-Calais that many Polish residents first came in contact with the Bible Students, who had been preaching zealously in the region since 1904. By 1915, *The Watch Tower* began to be printed in Polish each month, and *The Golden Age* (now *Awake!*) became available in that language in 1925. Many families were receptive to the Scriptural contents of these magazines, as well as to the book *The Harp of God* in Polish.

Antoine's family learned of the Bible Students through his uncle, who attended his first meeting in 1924. That same year, in Bruay-en-Artois, the Bible Students held their first assembly in the

Tools used by the Polish miners, and the mine at Dechy, near Sin-le-Noble, where Antoine Skalecki worked





Polish brothers and sisters in France on their way to a convention. The sign reads “Jehovah’s Witnesses”

Polish language. Less than a month later in the same town, a representative of world headquarters, Joseph F. Rutherford, held a public meeting, where 2,000 gathered. Moved by the large, mostly Polish attendance, Brother Rutherford told them: “Jehovah brought you to France to learn the truth. Now you and your children must help the French! A great preaching work is still to be done, and Jehovah will raise up publishers for that work.”

And Jehovah God did just that! These Polish Christians were as wholehearted about preaching as they were hardworking in the mines! Indeed, some of them returned to their native Poland to share the precious truths they had learned. Teofil Piaskowski, Szczepan Kosiak, and Jan Zabuda were among those who left France to spread the good news throughout large areas of Poland.

But many Polish-speaking evangelizers remained in France and continued to preach zealously alongside their French brothers and sisters. At the 1926 general assembly in Sin-le-Noble, 1,000 attended the Polish session, along with 300 at the French. The 1929 *Yearbook* reported: “During the year 332 Polish brethren have symbolized

their consecration [dedication] by baptism.” Before World War II broke out, 32 of the 84 congregations in France were Polish-speaking.

In 1947 many Witnesses of Jehovah accepted an invitation by the Polish government to return to Poland. Even after their departure, however, the fruitage of their efforts and those of their French fellow believers could be seen in the 10 percent increase in Kingdom publishers that year. This was followed by increases of 20, 23, and even 40 percent in the years from 1948 to 1950! To help train these new publishers, the France branch appointed the first circuit overseers in 1948. Of the five selected, four were Polish, and Antoine Skalecki was one of them.

Many of Jehovah’s Witnesses in France still have the Polish surnames of their forebears, who worked hard both in the mines and in the field ministry. Today, too, multitudes of immigrants are learning the truth in France. Whether evangelizers from other countries return to their native lands or settle in their new home, they are zealously following the course of Kingdom proclaimers such as their Polish predecessors.—*From our archives in France.*



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