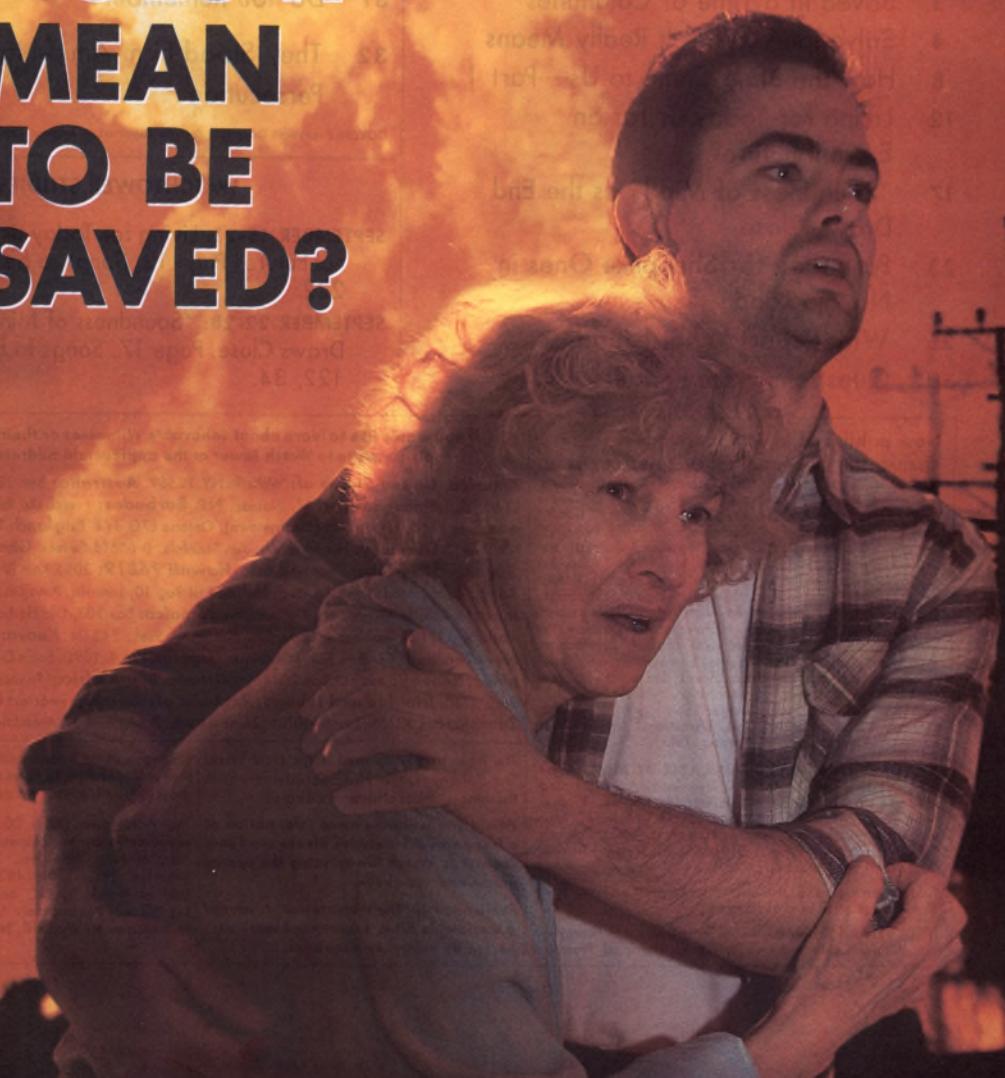


AUGUST 15, 1997

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE SAVED?



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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SAVED IN A TIME OF CALAMITIES

THE five-story department store in Seoul, Korea, collapsed suddenly, trapping hundreds of people inside! Rescue workers labored around the clock to save as many lives as possible. As the days passed, the chances of finding any more survivors buried in the mountain of concrete and steel began to fade.

Just as all hope had been abandoned, something astonishing occurred. A feeble, plaintive cry was heard from beneath the rubble. Rescuers dug frantically with their bare hands in order to free a 19-year-old woman who had been buried alive for 16 long days. A collapsed elevator shaft had formed a protective cavity over her and had shielded her from tons of falling concrete. Although badly dehydrated and cut, she had escaped death!

Nowadays, hardly a month passes without reports of some disaster, whether it be an earthquake, a violent storm, a volcanic eruption, an accident, or a famine. And spectacular stories of rescues and survivors intrigue and fascinate millions who follow the news. However, warning of a coming calamity—one greater than any other in human history—has by and large been ignored. (Matthew 24:21) The Bible describes this coming event in these words: “Look!



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A calamity is going forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest itself will be roused up from the remotest parts of the earth. And those slain by Jehovah will certainly come to be in that day from one end of the earth clear to the other end of the earth. They will not be bewailed, neither will they be gathered up or be buried. As manure on the surface of the ground they will become.”—Jeremiah 25:32, 33.

Startling words! But unlike natural disasters and accidents, this calamity will not be an indiscriminate slaughter. In fact, survival—*your survival*—is possible!

A Time of Urgency

To grasp this fact fully, one must understand why this global calamity will come about in the first place. Actually, it is the only real solution to mankind’s problems.

Few people today feel safe and secure. In spite of the best efforts of science, infectious diseases continue to ravage earth's population. Wars resulting from religious, tribal, and political differences claim human lives by the thousands. Famine adds to the misery and suffering of innocent men, women, and children. Moral decay eats away at the very foundation of society; even children have been corrupted.

With remarkable accuracy, a Bible prophecy written over 1,900 years ago describes our situation. It says: "You must realize that in the last days the times will be full of danger."—2 Timothy 3:1, *The New Testament in Modern English*, by J. B. Phillips; compare Matthew 24:3-22.

Does it seem reasonable to you that a loving God would be indifferent to our plight? The Bible says: "He the true God, the Former of the earth and the Maker of it, . . . did not create it simply for nothing, [he] formed it even to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18) Yes, rather than allow this beautiful planet to be ruined and all its inhabitants to come to an end, God will intervene. The question is, How will he do so?

SALVATION WHAT IT REALLY MEANS

ARE you saved?" Oftentimes, those who ask this question feel that they are saved because they have 'accepted Jesus as their personal Savior.' Yet others feel that there are various paths to salvation and that as long as 'Jesus is in your heart,' it does not matter what you believe or even what church you belong to.

Choose Life!

The Bible answers at Psalm 92:7: "When the wicked ones sprout as the vegetation and all the practitioners of what is hurtful blossom forth, it is that they may be annihilated forever." God's solution to earth's problems is the elimination of wickedness itself. Happily, this does not mean that all people need to be eliminated. Psalm 37:34 assures us: "Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it."

These words indicate that there is a chance of being saved through the greatest calamity that will ever befall mankind. God has given us a choice. The words with which Moses exhorted the Israelites as they were getting ready to enter the Promised Land are equally applicable to us today: "I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the malediction; and you must choose life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring." (Deuteronomy 30:19) But just how does one "choose life" and get saved? What does true salvation really mean?

The Bible says that it is God's will that "all sorts of men should be saved." (1 Timothy 2:3, 4) Salvation is thus available to all who will accept it. But just what does it mean to be saved? Is it really something that simply happens to you with little or no effort on your part?

The word "salvation" means "deliverance

from danger or destruction." True salvation thus involves more than a serene mental state. It means being saved from the destruction of this present wicked system of things and finally from death itself! But just who is it that God will save? In answer, let us examine what Jesus Christ taught on this subject. The results of our investigation may surprise you.

Salvation—Found in All Religions?

On one occasion, Jesus had a conversation with a Samaritan woman. Although she was not a Jew, she quite correctly believed that the Messiah would come "who is called Christ." (John 4:25) Was such belief sufficient for her to be saved? No, for Jesus boldly told the woman: "You worship what you do not know." Jesus knew that if this woman were to gain salvation, she would have to adjust her way of worship. Jesus therefore explained: "Nevertheless, the hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him." —John 4:22, 23.

Another occasion on which Jesus revealed his view of salvation involved the Pharisees, a prominent religious sect of Judaism. The Pharisees had built up a system of worship and believed that it had God's approval. But listen to Jesus' words to the Pharisees: "You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'" —Matthew 15:7-9, *New International Version*.

What about the many religious groups today that claim to believe in Christ? Would Jesus endorse them all as legitimate ways to gain salvation? We do not have to guess in this regard, for Jesus clearly said: "Not

everyone saying to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?' And yet then I will confess to them: I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness." —Matthew 7:21-23.

Accurate Knowledge of Jesus Vital to Salvation

These words of Jesus have sobering implications. They indicate that many devout people are failing to 'do the will of the Father.' How, then, can one gain true salvation? First Timothy 2:3, 4 answers: "[God's] will is that all sorts of men should be saved and come to an *accurate knowledge of truth*." —Compare Colossians 1:9, 10.

Such knowledge is critical to gaining salvation. When a Roman jailer asked the apostle Paul and his companion, Silas, "What must I do to get saved?" they replied: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will get saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:30, 31) Did that mean that all the jailer and his family needed to do was to have a certain feeling in their hearts? No, for one thing, they could not truly "believe on the Lord Jesus" unless they had *some* understanding of who Jesus was, what he did, and what he taught.

For example, Jesus taught the establishment of a heavenly government—"the kingdom of God." (Luke 4:43) He also set forth principles on Christian morality and behavior. (Matthew, chapters 5-7) He outlined the position his disciples would take when it came to political matters. (John 15:19) He established a global teaching program and commissioned his followers to share in it. (Matthew 24:14; Acts 1:8) Yes, to 'believe on

SALVATION RESULTS FROM ...

- Gaining accurate knowledge of God and Jesus.—John 17:3.
- Exercising faith.—Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6.
- Repenting and turning around.—Acts 3:19; Ephesians 4:22-24.
- Dedication and baptism.—Matthew 16:24; 28:19, 20.
- Continuing to make public declaration.—Matthew 24:14; Romans 10:10.

Jesus' meant understanding many things! No wonder, then, that Paul and Silas "spoke the word of Jehovah to [the jailer] together with all those in his house" before these new believers were baptized.—Acts 16:32, 33.

Accurate Knowledge of God Also Vital

A necessary part of truly believing in Jesus involves worshiping the God that Jesus himself worships. Jesus prayed: "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.

During his earthly ministry, the Son of God always directed attention to his Father and not to himself. He never claimed to be God Almighty. (John 12:49, 50) On numerous occasions Jesus made his position in God's arrangement clear by stating that he was subordinate to his Father. (Luke 22:41, 42; John 5:19) Why, Jesus declared: "The Father is greater than I am." (John 14:28) Has your church taught you the true relationship between God and Christ? Or have you been led to believe that Jesus himself is Almighty God? Your salvation depends upon having the correct understanding.

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus urged his disciples to pray: "Let your name be sancti-

fied." (Matthew 6:9) Most translations of the Bible have obscured God's name, rendering it "Lord." But in ancient copies of the "Old Testament," God's name appeared over six thousand times! Psalm 83:18 thus reads: "That people may know that you, whose name is *Jehovah*, you alone are the Most High over all the earth." Have you been taught to use God's name, Jehovah? If not, your salvation is in jeopardy, for "everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved!"—Acts 2:21; compare Joel 2:32.

With Spirit and Truth

Jesus Christ also directed attention to God's Word, the Bible. When expounding God's view of certain matters, he would often say: "It is written." (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; 11:10; 21:13) The night before he died, Jesus prayed regarding his disciples: "Sanctify them by means of the truth; your word is truth."—John 17:17.

Having an understanding of the teachings of God's Word, the Bible, is thus another requisite for salvation. (2 Timothy 3:16) Only the Bible answers such questions as: What is the meaning of life? Why has God allowed wickedness to continue for so long? What happens to a person when he dies? Does God really torture people in a fiery hell? What is God's purpose for the earth?* One cannot worship God properly without the correct understanding of those issues, for Jesus said: "True worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth."—John 4:23.

Faith Moves to Action

Salvation involves more than simply acquiring information. In a responsive heart, accurate knowledge of God produces faith.

* For a discussion of these subjects, please see *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

(Romans 10:10, 17; Hebrews 11:6) Such faith moves one to action. For example, the Bible admonishes: "Repent, therefore, and turn around so as to get your sins blotted out, that seasons of refreshing may come from the person of Jehovah."—Acts 3:19.

Yes, salvation also involves conforming oneself to God's standards of conduct and morality. Under the transforming influence of God's Word, lifelong habits of lying and deception give way to honesty and truthfulness. (Titus 2:10) Immoral practices, such as homosexuality, adultery, and fornication, are abandoned and replaced by chaste moral conduct. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) This is not a temporary abstinence based on emotion but a permanent change resulting from careful study and application of God's Word.—Ephesians 4:22-24.

In time, love and appreciation for God moves an honesthearted person to make a full dedication to God and to symbolize it by water baptism. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Romans 12:1) Baptized Christians are saved in the eyes of God. (1 Peter 3:21) During the coming destruction of this wicked world, God will save them completely by preserving

them through that tribulation.—Revelation 7:9, 14.

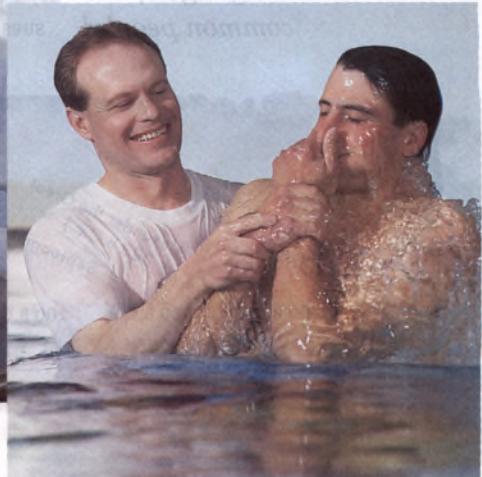
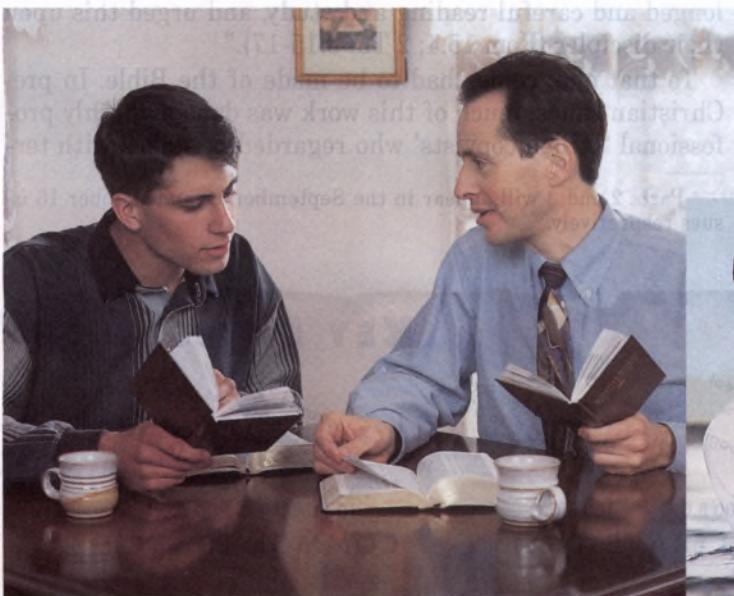
What Salvation Can Mean to You

It is clear from this brief discussion that gaining salvation involves more than 'having the Lord Jesus in your heart.' It means taking in accurate knowledge of Jehovah God and Jesus Christ and making needed changes in one's life. Doing this may sound formidable, but Jehovah's Witnesses are willing to help you in this endeavor. By means of a free home Bible study, they can help you to begin walking on the path to true salvation.*

In view of the nearness of God's coming day of judgment, doing so is more urgent than ever before! Now is the time to heed the prophet's words: "Before there comes upon you the day of Jehovah's anger, seek Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth, who have practiced His own judicial decision. Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger."—Zephaniah 2:2, 3.

* If you would like a home Bible study, please contact the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. Or you may write to the publishers of this magazine.

***Studying the Bible,
applying what is learned,
dedication, and baptism
are steps leading to
salvation***





HOW THE BIBLE CAME TO US



PART ONE *

In a small shop, a printer and his young apprentices rhythmically operate their wood-frame press, carefully placing blank sheets of paper over the type. As they withdraw them, they check the printed text. On cords strung from wall to wall, they hang the folded pages to dry. Suddenly, there is violent pounding on the door. Alarmed, the printer unbolts the door, and a band of armed soldiers barge in. They begin to search for the most condemned kind of illegal literature—the Bible in the language of the common people!

They have come too late. Warned of the danger, the translator and a helper have already raced to the shop, scooped up armloads of pages, and are now escaping up the Rhine River. At least they have saved part of their work.

The translator in this case was William Tyndale, trying to produce his banned English “New Testament” at Cologne, Germany, in 1525. His experience turned out to be far from unique. Throughout the nearly 1,900 years since the completion of the writing of the Bible, many men and women have risked everything to translate and distribute the Word of God. We today still benefit from their work. What did they do? How did the Bibles we now hold in our hands come to us?

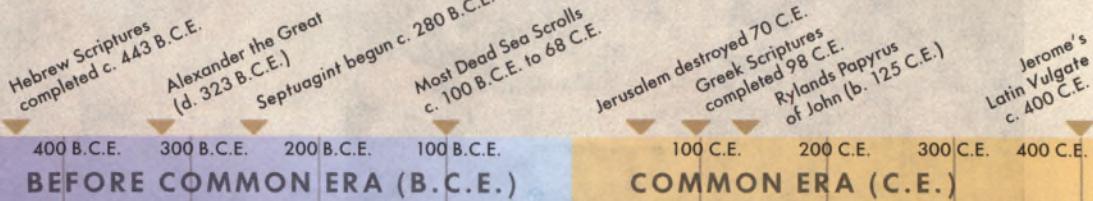
Early Bible Copying and Translation

True servants of God have always held his Word in highest esteem. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* acknowledges: “Like their Jewish ancestors, the early Christians valued the reading of the Sacred Books. Following the example of Jesus (Mt 4.4; 5.18; Lk 24.44; Jn 5.39), the Apostles enjoyed a familiarity with the O[ld] T[estament] that supposes prolonged and careful reading and study, and urged this upon their disciples (Rom 15.4; 2 Tm 3.15-17).”

To that end, copies had to be made of the Bible. In pre-Christian times, much of this work was done by highly professional ‘skilled copyists’ who regarded mistakes with ter-

* Parts 2 and 3 will appear in the September 15 and October 15 issues respectively.

KEY DATES IN THE

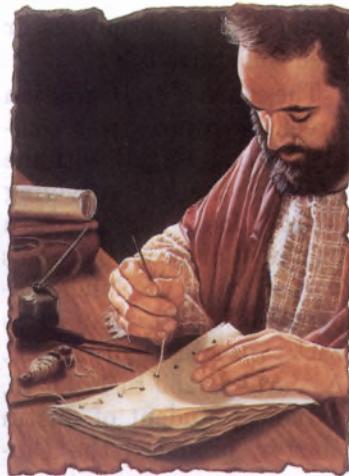


ror. (Ezra 7:6, 11, 12) Striving for perfection, they set a high standard for all later Bible copyists.

During the fourth century B.C.E., however, a challenge arose. Alexander the Great wanted all the world's people to be educated in Greek culture. His conquests confirmed common Greek, or Koine, as the universal language throughout the Middle East. As a result, many Jews grew up never learning to read Hebrew and so were unable to read the Scriptures. Therefore, about 280 B.C.E., a group of Hebrew scholars were gathered to Alexandria, Egypt, to translate the Hebrew Bible into the popular Koine. Their translation came to be known as the *Septuagint*, Latin for "Seventy," referring to the approximate number of translators believed involved. It was finished about 150 B.C.E.

In Jesus' time, Hebrew was still in use in Palestine. Yet it was Koine that dominated there and in the rest of the far-flung provinces of the Roman world. The Christian Bible writers, therefore, used this common form of Greek in order to reach as many people of the nations as possible. Also, they quoted freely from the *Septuagint* and employed many of its terms.

Since the early Christians were zealous missionaries, they quickly became adept at using the *Septuagint* to prove that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. This agitated the Jews and spurred them to produce certain new translations in Greek, designed to deprive the Christians of their arguments by revising their favorite proof texts. For example, at Isaiah 7:14 the *Septuagint* used a Greek word meaning "virgin," referring prophetically to the mother of the Messiah. The new translations used a different Greek word, which means "young woman." The continued use of the *Septuagint* by the Christians finally moved the Jews to abandon their tactic altogether and to promote a return to Hebrew. Ultimately, this action turned out to be a boon to later Bible translation because it helped to keep the Hebrew language alive.



Early Christians pioneered the use of the codex

The First Christian Book Publishers

The zealous early Christians set themselves to producing as many copies of the Bible as they could, all copied by hand. They also pioneered the use of the codex, which had pages like a modern book, instead of continuing to use scrolls. Besides being more convenient for finding scriptures quickly, a codex could contain more in a single volume than could be recorded in a single scroll—for example, all

TRANSMISSION OF THE BIBLE

Masoretic Text Prepared

Cyril in
Moravia
863 C.E.

Edict against
vernacular Bible
1079 C.E.

500 C.E. 600 C.E. 700 C.E. 800 C.E. 900 C.E. 1000 C.E. 1100 C.E. 1200 C.E. 1300 C.E.

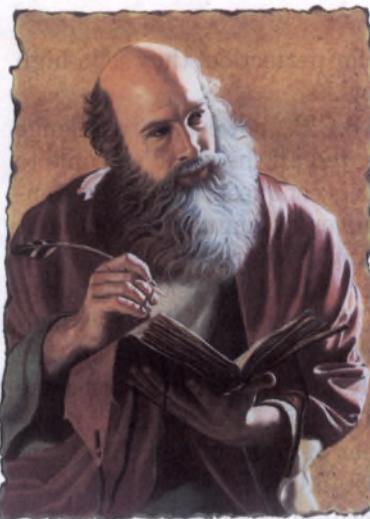
of the Greek Scriptures or even the entire Bible.

The canon of the Christian Greek Scriptures was completed about 98 C.E. with the books of the last surviving apostle, John. There exists a fragment of a copy of John's Gospel, called Rylands Papyrus 457 (P⁵²), that dates back to no later than 125 C.E. As early as 150 to 170 C.E., Tatian, a student of Justin Martyr, produced the *Diatessaron*, a composite account of Jesus' life compiled from the same four Gospels found in our present Bibles.*

This indicated that he considered only those Gospels to be authentic and that they were already in circulation. About 170 C.E., the earliest known catalog of "New Testament" books, called the Muratorian Fragment, was produced. It lists most of the books of the Christian Greek Scriptures.

The spread of Christian beliefs soon created a demand for translations of the Christian Greek Scriptures as well as the Hebrew Scriptures. Numerous versions in such languages as Armenian, Coptic, Georgian, and Syriac were eventually made. Often alphabets had to be devised just for that purpose. For instance, Ulfilas, a fourth-century bishop of the Roman Church, is said to have invented Gothic script to translate the Bible. But he left out the books of Kings because he thought they would encourage the warlike tendencies of the Goths. This action did not, however, prevent the "Christianized" Goths from sacking Rome in 410 C.E.!

* The book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., is a modern example of a harmony of the four Gospels.



Latin and Slavonic Bibles

Meanwhile, Latin gained importance, and several Old Latin versions appeared. But they varied in style and accuracy. So in 382 C.E., Pope Damasus commissioned his secretary, Jerome, to prepare an authoritative Latin Bible.

Jerome started by revising the Latin versions of the Christian Greek Scriptures. For the Hebrew Scriptures, however, he insisted on translating from the original Hebrew. Thus, in

386 C.E., he moved to Bethlehem to study Hebrew and to seek the assistance of a rabbi. For this, he aroused considerable controversy in church circles. Some, including Jerome's contemporary Augustine, believed the *Septuagint* to be inspired, and they accused Jerome of "going over to the Jews." Forging ahead, Jerome completed his work about 400 C.E. By getting close to the source of the original tongues and documents and by rendering them into the living language of the day, Jerome anticipated modern translation methods by a thousand years. His work came to be known as the *Vulgate*, or Common Version, and it benefited people for centuries.

In eastern Christendom many could still read the *Septuagint* and the Christian Greek Scriptures. Later on, however, languages and dialects of the Slavonic, or Slavic, family came into common use in the eastern parts of Europe. In 863 C.E., two Greek-speaking brothers, Cyril and Methodius, went to Moravia, now in the Czech Republic. They began to translate the Bible into Old Slavonic. To do so, they devised the Glagolitic alpha-

bet, which was later superseded by the Cyrillic alphabet, named after Cyril. This was the source of present-day Russian, Ukrainian, Serbian, and Bulgarian scripts. The Slavonic Bible served people of that area for generations. In time, though, as languages changed, it became incomprehensible to the average person.

The Hebrew Bible Survives

During this period, from about the sixth to the tenth centuries C.E., a group of Jews known as the Masoretes developed systematic copying methods to preserve the Hebrew Scripture text. They went so far as to count all the lines and even each individual letter, noting variations among manuscripts, all in an effort to preserve an authentic text. Their efforts were not in vain. To cite one example, comparison of modern Masoretic texts with the Dead Sea Scrolls, written between 250 B.C.E. and 50 C.E., shows no doctrinal change in over 1,000 years.*

In Europe the Middle Ages were broadly synonymous with the Dark Ages. Reading and learning were at a low point among the populace. Eventually, even the clergy, for the most part, became unable to read church Latin and often could not even read their own language. This was also the time in Europe when the Jews were herded into ghettos. Partly because of this isolation, Biblical Hebrew scholarship was preserved. However, because of prejudice and mistrust, the Jews' knowledge was often not accessible outside the ghetto. In western Europe, knowledge of Greek was also declining. The situation was further aggravated by the Western Church's veneration of Jerome's Latin *Vulgate*. It was generally regarded as the only authorized version, even though by the end of the Mas-

* See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, page 315, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

oretic period, Latin was becoming a dead language. Thus, as a desire to know the Bible slowly began to germinate, the stage was set for great conflict.

Bible Translation Meets Opposition

In 1079, Pope Gregory VII issued the first of many medieval church edicts banning the production and sometimes even the possession of vernacular versions. He revoked permission for Mass to be celebrated in Slavonic on the grounds that it would require portions of Holy Scripture to be translated. Completely contrary to the position of the early Christians, he wrote: "It [has] pleased Almighty God that holy scripture should be a secret in certain places." With this as the official position of the church, promoters of Bible reading were increasingly considered dangerous.

Despite the unfavorable climate, the copying and translating of the Bible into common languages continued. Versions in many languages circulated clandestinely in Europe. These were all hand copied, since movable-type printing would not be invented in Europe until the mid-1400's. But as copies were expensive and limited in number, an ordinary citizen might count himself happy to possess only a part of one book of the Bible or just a few pages. Some learned huge portions by heart, even the entire Christian Greek Scriptures!

In time, however, there were stirrings of broad movements for reform of the church. These were driven in part by renewed awareness of the importance of the Word of God in daily life. How would these movements and the development of printing affect the Bible? And what became of William Tyndale and his translation, mentioned at the outset? We will follow this fascinating story down to our own times in future issues.



LIVING FOR TODAY OR FOR AN ETERNAL FUTURE?

"We were saved in this hope." —ROMANS 8:24.

THE apostle Paul wrote to Christians living in Corinth: "How is it some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead?" (1 Corinthians 15:12) Apparently, the poisonous philosophy of the Greek sage Epicurus had made some inroads among the first-century Christians. Thus Paul drew attention to the Epicurean teaching: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die." (1 Corinthians 15:32) Disdaining any hope of a life after death, the philosopher's followers believed that fleshly pleasure was the sole or chief good in life. (Acts 17:18, 32) Epicurean philosophy was self-centered, cynical, and ultimately degrading.

² This denial of the resurrection had profound implications. Paul reasoned: "If, indeed, there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised up. But if Christ has not been raised up, our preaching is certainly in vain, and our faith is in vain. . . . If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied." (1 Corinthians 15:13-19) Yes, without the hope of an eternal future, Christianity would be "in vain." It would be without purpose. Little wonder, then, that under the influence of this pagan thinking, the Corinthian congregation had become a hotbed of problems. (1 Corinthians 1:11; 5:1; 6:1; 11:

1. What did the Epicureans teach, and how did that kind of philosophy affect some Christians?
2. (a) Why was it so dangerous to deny the resurrection? (b) How did Paul strengthen the faith of Corinthian Christians?

20-22) Paul, therefore, aimed to strengthen their faith in the resurrection. Using powerful logic, Scripture quotations, and illustrations, he proved beyond any doubt that the resurrection hope was not fiction but a reality certain of fulfillment. On this basis, he could urge his fellow believers: "Become steadfast, unmovable, always having plenty to do in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in connection with the Lord."—1 Corinthians 15:20-58.

"Keep on the Watch"

³ Today, many have a pessimistic, live-for-today attitude. (Ephesians 2:2) It is as the apostle Peter predicted. He spoke of "ridiculers with their ridicule . . . saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.'" (2 Peter 3:3, 4) If true worshipers succumbed to such a view, they might become "inactive or unfruitful." (2 Peter 1:8) Happily, that is not so with the majority of God's people today.

⁴ It is not wrong to be interested in the coming end of the present wicked system. Recall the interest that Jesus' own apostles showed: "Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?" Jesus replied: "It does not belong to you to get knowledge of

- 3, 4. (a) According to Peter, what dangerous attitude would engulf some during the last days? (b) Of what do we need to keep reminding ourselves?

the times or seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction.” (Acts 1:6, 7) Those words carry the basic message that he had conveyed on the Mount of Olives: “You do not know on what day your Lord is coming. . . . At an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man is coming.” (Matthew 24:42, 44) We need to keep reminding ourselves about that counsel! Some may be tempted with the attitude, ‘Maybe I should just slow down a bit and take things more casually.’ What a mistake that would be! Consider James and John, the “Sons of Thunder.”—Mark 3:17.

⁵ We know that James was an extremely zealous apostle. (Luke 9:51-55) Once the Christian congregation was established, he must have played an active role. But when James was still relatively young, Herod Agrippa I had him killed. (Acts 12:1-3) Do we think that James, seeing his life ending unexpectedly, felt sad that he had been so zealous, had exerted himself in his ministry? Hardly! Surely he was happy that he had spent the best years of his relatively short life in Jehovah’s service. Now, none of us can know whether our life might end unexpectedly. (Ecclesiastes 9:11; compare Luke 12:20, 21.) So it clearly is wise to keep at a high level our zeal and activity in serving Jehovah. That way we will maintain our good name with him and keep living with our eternal future in view.—Ecclesiastes 7:1.

⁶ There is a related lesson involving the apostle John, who was present when Jesus intensely urged, “Keep on the watch.” (Matthew 25:13; Mark 13:37; Luke 21:34-36) John took that to heart, serving with enthusiasm for many decades. In fact, it seems that he survived all the other apostles. When John was far advanced in years, able to look back on decades of faithful ac-

5, 6. What lessons can we draw from the examples of James and John?

tivity, did he view it as a mistake, a life misdirected or unbalanced? No, indeed! He was still eagerly looking to the future. When the resurrected Jesus said, “Yes; I am coming quickly,” John immediately replied, “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20) John certainly was not living for the present, longing for a slow and calm ‘normal life.’ He was determined to keep serving with all his life and strength, whenever the Lord might come. How about us?

Foundations for Belief in Everlasting Life

⁷ Be assured that the hope of everlasting life is no man-made dream or fantasy. As Titus 1:2 says, our godly devotion is based on “a hope of the everlasting life which God, who cannot lie, promised before times long lasting.” It was God’s original purpose for all obedient humans to live forever. (Genesis 1:28) Nothing, not even the rebellion of Adam and Eve, can thwart this purpose. As recorded at Genesis 3:15, God immediately promised a “seed” that would undo all the harm inflicted on mankind. When the “seed” or Messiah, Jesus, arrived, he made the hope of eternal life one of his basic teachings. (John 3:16; 6:47, 51; 10:28; 17:3) By laying down his perfect life as a ransom, Christ obtained the legal right to bestow everlasting life on mankind. (Matthew 20:28) Some of his disciples, 144,000 in all, will live forever in the heavens. (Revelation 14:1-4) Thus some once-mortal humans will “put on immortality”!—1 Corinthians 15:53.

⁸ “Immortality” means more than simply never dying. It involves “the power of an indestructible life.” (Hebrews 7:16; compare

7. (a) How was the hope of everlasting life “promised before times long lasting”? (b) How did Jesus shed light on the hope of eternal life?
8. (a) What is “immortality,” and why does Jehovah grant it to the 144,000? (b) What hope did Jesus hold out for the “other sheep”?

Revelation 20:6.) What, though, does God accomplish in granting such a remarkable gift? Recall Satan's challenge that none of God's creatures could be trusted. (Job 1:9-11; 2:4, 5) By granting the 144,000 immortality, God indicates his complete confidence in this group that has so outstandingly answered Satan's challenge. But what of the rest of mankind? Jesus told the initial members of this "little flock" of Kingdom heirs that they would "sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 12:32; 22:30) This implies that others will receive everlasting life on earth as subjects of his Kingdom. While these "other sheep" are not given immortality, they do receive "everlasting life." (John 10:16; Matthew 25:46) Everlasting life is thus the hope of all Christians. It is no fantasy but something solemnly promised by "God, who cannot lie," and paid for with the precious blood of Jesus.—Titus 1:2.

In the Distant Future?

⁹ The apostle Paul foretold that "critical times hard to deal with" would indicate that we had arrived indisputably at "the last days." As human society around us crumbles into a state of lovelessness, greed, self-gratification, and ungodliness, do we not realize that Jehovah's day for executing his judgments on this wicked world system is fast approaching? As violence and hatred escalate, do we not see all around us the fulfillment of Paul's further words: "Wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse"? (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13) Some may optimistically utter cries of "Peace and security," but all prospects of peace will evaporate, for "sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape." We have not been left in

^{9, 10. What clear indications are there that we are near the end?}

darkness as to the meaning of our times. So, "let us stay awake and keep our senses." —1 Thessalonians 5:1-6.

¹⁰ Further, the Bible indicates that the last days are "a short period of time." (Revelation 12:12; compare 17:10.) Most of that "short period" has apparently elapsed. Daniel's prophecy, for example, accurately describes the conflict between "the king of the north" and "the king of the south" that has extended into this century. (Daniel 11:5, 6) All that is left to be fulfilled is the final attack of "the king of the north," described at Daniel 11:44, 45.—See *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1987, and November 1, 1993, for a discussion of this prophecy.

¹¹ There is also Jesus' prediction that "this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) Today, Jehovah's Witnesses carry out their work in 233 lands, island groups, and territories. True, untouched territories still exist, and perhaps in Jehovah's due time, a door of opportunity will open. (1 Corinthians 16:9) Still, Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 10:23 are sobering: "You will by no means complete the circuit of the cities of Israel until the Son of man arrives." While the good news will surely be announced throughout the earth, we will not in person reach all parts of the earth with the Kingdom message before Jesus "arrives" as Executioner.

¹² Consider the text at Revelation 7:1, 3, which says that the "four winds" of destruction are held back "until after we have sealed the slaves of our God in their fore-

11. (a) To what extent has Matthew 24:14 been fulfilled? (b) What do Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 10:23 indicate?

12. (a) What 'sealing' is referred to at Revelation 7:3? (b) What is the significance of the diminishing number of anointed ones on earth?

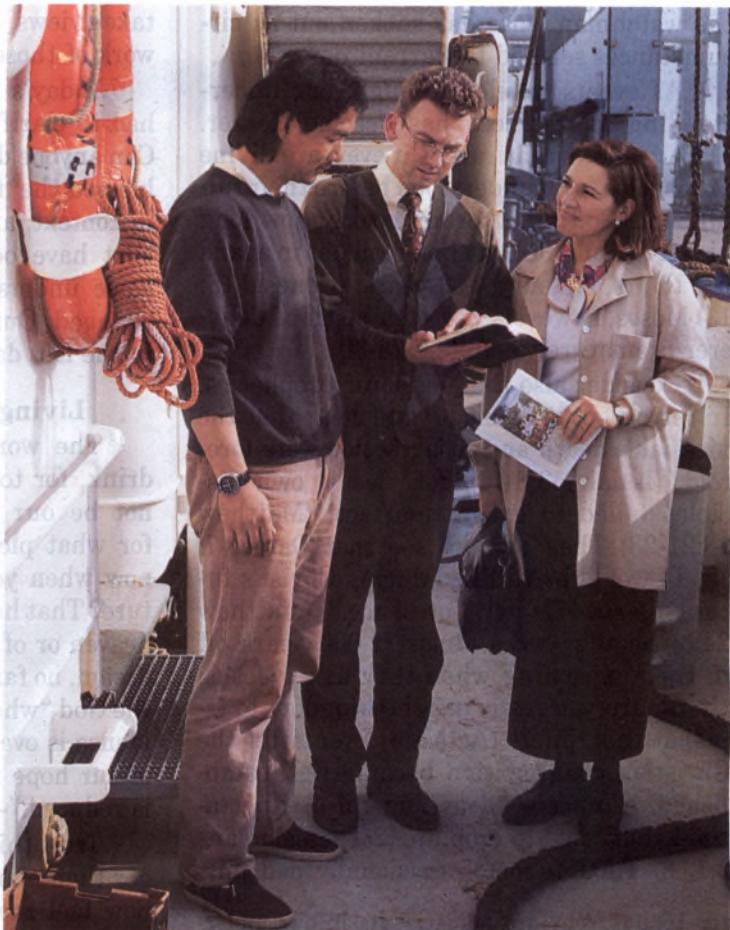
heads." This is not referring to the initial sealing, which takes place when those of the 144,000 receive the heavenly calling. (Ephesians 1:13) It refers to the final sealing, when they are irrevocably identified as tried and faithful "slaves of our God." The number of genuine anointed sons of God surviving on earth is greatly diminished. Furthermore, the Bible clearly states that it is "on account of the chosen ones" that the opening phase of the great tribulation will be "cut short." (Matthew 24:21, 22) Most of those professing to be of the anointed are quite elderly. Again, would this not indicate that the end is close at hand?

A Faithful Watchman

¹³ In the meantime, we do well to heed the direction given by the 'faithful slave.' (Matthew 24:45) For over a hundred years, the modern-day "slave" has faithfully served as a "watchman." (Ezekiel 3:17-21) *The Watchtower* of January 1, 1984, explained: "This watchman observes how events are developing on earth in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, sounds the warning of an impending 'great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning' and publishes 'good news of something better.'" —Matthew 24:21; Isaiah 52:7.

¹⁴ Remember: It is a watchman's job to

13, 14. What is the responsibility of the watchman class?



***The global preaching work
must be completed before the end comes***

call out "just what he sees." (Isaiah 21:6-8) In Bible times a watchman would sound a warning even when the potential threat was too far in the distance to be clearly identified. (2 Kings 9:17, 18) False alarms surely occurred back then. But a good watchman would not hold back out of fear of embarrassment. If your house was on fire, how would you feel if the firemen failed to appear because they figured it might be a false alarm? No, we expect such men to respond quickly to any sign of danger! In a similar manner,

the watchman class has spoken out as circumstances seemed to warrant doing so.

¹⁵ As events develop, though, our understanding of prophecy has become clearer. History shows that rarely, if ever, are divine prophecies fully understood before their fulfillment. God told Abram exactly how long his seed would be “an alien resident in a land not theirs,” namely, 400 years. (Genesis 15:13) Moses, however, offered himself as deliverer prematurely.—Acts 7:23-30.

¹⁶ Consider also the Messianic prophecies. In retrospect it seems crystal clear that the Messiah’s death and resurrection were foretold. (Isaiah 53:8-10) Yet, Jesus’ own disciples failed to grasp this fact. (Matthew 16:21-23) They did not see that Daniel 7:13, 14 would be fulfilled during Christ’s future *pa·rou·si’ā*, or “presence.” (Matthew 24:3) So they were almost 2,000 years off in their reckoning when they asked Jesus: “Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?” (Acts 1:6) Even after the Christian congregation became well established, erroneous ideas and false expectations continued to crop up. (2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2) Though some occasionally had mis-

15, 16. (a) Why are adjustments in our understanding of prophecy made? (b) What can we learn from faithful servants of God who had a mistaken understanding of certain prophecies?

Points for Review

- How have a few today been affected by the seeming delay of the end of this system of things?
- What is the basis for our hope of everlasting life?
- How should we view sacrifices that we have made for Kingdom interests?

taken views, Jehovah undeniably blessed the work of those first-century believers!

¹⁷ Today’s watchman class has likewise had to clarify its views from time to time. Can anyone doubt, though, that Jehovah has blessed the ‘faithful slave’? Besides, viewed in context, are not most of the adjustments that have occurred relatively small? Our basic understanding of the Bible has not changed. Our conviction that we are living in the last days is stronger than ever!

Living for an Eternal Future

¹⁸ The world may say, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die,’ but this must not be our attitude. Why strive in vain for what pleasures you can get out of life now when you can work for an eternal future? That hope, whether of immortal life in heaven or of everlasting life on earth, is no dream, no fantasy. It is a reality promised by the God “who cannot lie.” (Titus 1:2) The evidence is overwhelming that the realization of our hope is near at hand! “The time left is reduced.”—1 Corinthians 7:29.

¹⁹ True, this system has already lasted longer than many thought it would. A few may now feel that had they known this before, they might not have made certain sacrifices. But one should not regret having done so. After all, making sacrifices is a fundamental part of being a Christian. Christians ‘disown themselves.’ (Matthew 16:24) Never should we feel that our efforts to please God have been in vain. Jesus promised: “No one has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not

- 17. What should be our view of adjustments in our understanding of Scripture?
- 18. Why must we avoid living for today only?
- 19, 20. (a) How does Jehovah view the sacrifices that we have made for the sake of the Kingdom? (b) Why must we live with eternity in view?

get a hundredfold now... and in the coming system of things everlasting life." (Mark 10: 29, 30) A thousand years from now, how significant will your job, house, or bank account seem? Still, the sacrifices you have made for Jehovah will be meaningful a million years from now—a billion years from now! "For God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work."—Hebrews 6:10.

²⁰ Let us, therefore, live with eternity in view, keeping our eyes, "not on the things seen, but on the things unseen. For the

things seen are temporary, but the things unseen are everlasting." (2 Corinthians 4: 18) The prophet Habakkuk wrote: "The vision is yet for the appointed time, and it keeps panting on to the end, and it will not tell a lie. Even if it should delay, keep in expectation of it; for it will without fail come true. It will not be late." (Habakkuk 2:3) How does 'keeping in expectation' of the end affect the way we carry out our personal and family responsibilities? Our next article will address these issues.

"SOUNDNESS OF MIND" AS THE END DRAWS CLOSE

"The end of all things has drawn close. Be sound in mind, therefore."

—1 PETER 4:7.

THE above words of the apostle Peter should have a profound effect upon the way Christians live their lives. However, Peter did not tell his readers to retreat from the mundane responsibilities and cares of life; nor did he encourage a sense of hysteria over the impending destruction. Rather, he urged: "Be sound in mind." To be "sound in mind" involves showing good judgment, being sensible, discreet, rational in our speech and actions. It means letting God's Word rule our thinking and actions. (Romans 12:2) Since we live "among a crooked and twisted generation," a sound mind is needed to avert problems and difficulties.—Philippians 2:15.

1. What is involved in being "sound in mind"?

² "Soundness of mind" also helps us to have a sober, realistic view of ourselves. (Titus 2:12; Romans 12:3) This is essential in view of the words recorded at 2 Peter 3:9: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." Note that Jehovah is being patient, not only with unbelievers, but also "with you"—members of the Christian congregation. Why? Because "he does not desire any to be destroyed." Perhaps some still need to make changes and adjustments in order to qualify for the gift of everlasting

2. How does Jehovah's patience benefit Christians today?

life. Let us therefore look at areas where some adjustments might be needed.

"Soundness of Mind" in Our Personal Relationships

³ The home should be a haven of peace. But with some it is "a house full of . . . quarreling." (Proverbs 17:1) How about your family? Is your home free of "wrath and screaming and abusive speech"? (Ephesians 4:31) What about your children? Do they feel loved and appreciated? (Compare Luke 3:22.) Are you taking the time to instruct and train them? Do you 'discipline in righteousness' instead of in rage and anger? (2 Timothy 3:16) Since children are "an inheritance from Jehovah," he is intensely interested in how they are treated.—Psalm 127:3.

⁴ What about our marriage mate? "Husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, for no man ever hated his own flesh; but he feeds and cherishes it, as the Christ also does the congregation." (Ephesians 5:28, 29) An abusive, domineering, or unreasonable man not only jeopardizes the tranquillity of his home but undermines his relationship with God. (1 Peter 3:7) What about wives? They likewise should "be in subjection to their husbands as to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:22) Thinking in terms of pleasing God can help a wife overlook her husband's shortcomings and be subject to him without resentment. At times, a wife may feel obliged to speak her mind. Proverbs 31:26 says of the capable wife: "Her mouth she has opened in wisdom, and the law of loving

3. What questions might parents ask themselves regarding their children?

4. (a) What can result if a husband treats his wife in a harsh manner? (b) How can wives promote peace with God and happiness in the entire family?



When a husband and wife mistreat each other, they undermine their relationship with Jehovah

kindness is upon her tongue." By treating her husband in a kind, respectful way, she maintains peace with God, and she promotes the happiness of the whole family.—Proverbs 14:1.

⁵ Young ones, how do you treat your parents? Do you use the sarcastic, disrespectful speech that is often tolerated by the world? Or are you obeying the Bible's command: "Children, be obedient to your parents in union with the Lord, for this is righteous: 'Honor your father and your mother'; which is the first command with a promise: 'That it may go well with you and you may endure a long time on the earth'"?—Ephesians 6:1-3.

5. Why should youths follow the Bible's counsel regarding the treatment of their parents?

⁶ We also demonstrate “soundness of mind” when we “seek peace and pursue it” with fellow worshipers. (1 Peter 3:11) Disagreements and misunderstandings arise from time to time. (James 3:2) If animosities are allowed to fester, the peace of the whole congregation can be put at risk. (Galatians 5:15) So settle disputes quickly; seek peaceful solutions.—Matthew 5:23-25; Ephesians 4:26; Colossians 3:13, 14.

“Soundness of Mind” and Family Responsibilities

⁷ The apostle Paul advised Christians “to live with soundness of mind.” (Titus 2:12) It is of interest that, in the context, Paul exhorts women “to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sound in mind, chaste, workers at home.” (Titus 2:4, 5) Paul wrote that in the years 61-64 C.E., a few years before the end of the Jewish system of things. Yet, mundane matters, such as housework, were still important. Both husbands and wives should therefore maintain a healthy, positive view of their domestic responsibilities so that “the word of God may not be spoken of abusively.” One family head apologized to a visitor for the embarrassing appearance of his home. He explained that it was in disrepair “because he was pioneering.” It is commendable when we make sacrifices in behalf of the Kingdom, but care must be taken not to sacrifice the welfare of our families.

⁸ The Bible urges fathers to give their families priority, saying that one who fails to provide for his family “has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without

6. How can we seek peace with fellow worshipers?

7. (a) How did Paul encourage showing “soundness of mind” in mundane matters? (b) What attitude should Christian husbands and wives have toward domestic responsibilities?

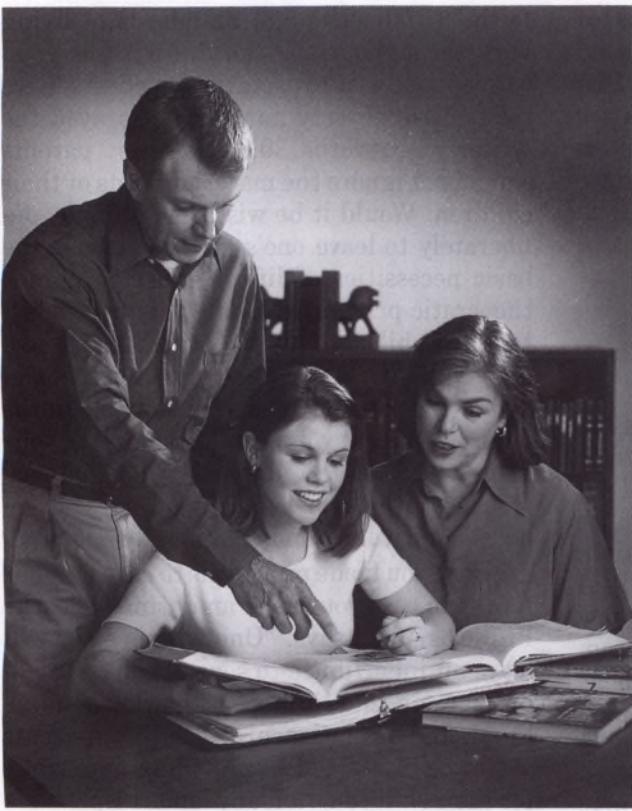
8. How can family heads care for the needs of their families in a balanced way?

faith.” (1 Timothy 5:8) Standards of living vary throughout the world, and it is good to keep material expectations modest. “Give me neither poverty nor riches,” prayed the writer of Proverbs 30:8. However, parents should not ignore the material needs of their children. Would it be wise, for example, deliberately to leave one’s family without the basic necessities of life in order to pursue theocratic privileges? Could this not embitter one’s children? On the other hand, Proverbs 24:27 says: “Prepare your work out of doors, and make it ready for yourself in the field. Afterward you must also build up your household.” Yes, while concern for material things has its place, ‘building up one’s household’—spiritually and emotionally—is vital.

⁹ Have you made provisions to care for your family in case you suffer an untimely death? Proverbs 13:22 says: “One who is good will leave an inheritance to sons of sons.” In addition to an inheritance of knowledge of Jehovah and a relationship with him, parents would be interested in providing materially for their children. In many lands responsible family heads will try to have some savings, a legal will, and insurance. After all, God’s people are not immune to “time and unforeseen occurrence.” (Ecclesiastes 9:11) Money is “for a protection,” and careful planning can often avert hardship. (Ecclesiastes 7:12) In lands where medical care is not paid for by the government, some may choose to set aside funds for health needs or arrange for some type of health coverage.*

* In the United States, for example, many carry health insurance, although such tends to be expensive. Some Witness families have found that certain doctors are more willing to consider nonblood alternatives when families have medical coverage. Many physicians will accept the amount of payment permitted under limited insurance plans or government health coverage.

9. Why is it wise for family heads to consider the possibility of their death or illness?



Parents should take an interest in the education of their children

¹⁰ The Scriptures also say: “Children ought not to lay up for their parents, but the parents for their children.” (2 Corinthians 12:14) In the world it is common for parents to lay up money for their children’s future education and marriage so as to give them a good start in life. Have you given thought to laying up for your child’s spiritual future? Suppose, for example, that a grown child is pursuing the full-time ministry. While full-time servants should neither demand nor expect outside support, loving parents might choose to ‘share with him according to his needs’ in order to help him remain in full-time service.—Romans 12:13; 1 Samuel 2:18, 19; Philippians 4:14-18.

10. How might Christian parents “lay up” for their children?

¹¹ Having a realistic view of money does not indicate a lack of faith that Satan’s wicked system is near its end. It is simply a matter of showing “practical wisdom” and sound judgment. (Proverbs 2:7; 3:21) Jesus once said that “the sons of this system of things are wiser in a practical way . . . than the sons of the light are” in their use of money. (Luke 16:8) No wonder, then, that some have seen the need to make adjustments in the way they use their assets, so that they can better care for the needs of their families.

“Soundness of Mind” in Our View of Education

¹² “The scene of this world is changing,” and sweeping economic changes and technological developments are rapidly taking place. (1 Corinthians 7:31) However, Jesus taught his disciples to be adaptable. He told them when he sent them out on their first preaching campaign: “Do not procure gold or silver or copper for your girdle purses, or a food pouch for the trip, or two undergarments, or sandals or a staff; for the worker deserves his food.” (Matthew 10:9, 10) On a later occasion, though, Jesus said: “Let the one that has a purse take it up, likewise also a food pouch.” (Luke 22:36) What had changed? The circumstances. The religious environment had become more hostile, and now they had to make provisions for themselves.

11. Does having a realistic view of money indicate a lack of faith? Explain.
12. How did Jesus teach his disciples to adapt to new circumstances?

¹³ Likewise today, parents may need to take into account today's economic realities. For example, are you seeing to it that your children are receiving adequate schooling? The main purpose of education should be to equip a youth to be an effective minister of Jehovah. And the most important education of all is a spiritual education. (Isaiah 54:13) Parents are also concerned about the ability of their children to support themselves financially. So give your children guidance, help them to choose appropriate school subjects, and discuss with them whether it is wise to pursue any supplementary education or not. Such decisions are a family responsibility, and others should not criticize the course taken. (Proverbs 22:6) What about those who have chosen to educate their children at home?^{*} While many have done a commendable job, some have found the task more difficult than they imagined, and their children have suffered. So if you are considering home schooling, be sure to count the cost, realistically assessing if you have both the skills and the self-discipline needed to follow through.—Luke 14:28.

'Do Not Seek Great Things'

¹⁴ Since the end of this system has not yet come, some might be inclined to seek what the world has to offer—prestigious careers, lucrative jobs, and wealth. Consider Jeremiah's secretary, Baruch. He lamented: "Woe, now, to me, for Jehovah has added grief to my pain! I have grown weary because

* Whether one pursues home schooling is a personal decision. See the article "Home Schooling—Is It for You?", appearing in the April 8, 1993, issue of *Awake!*

13. What is the main purpose of education, and how can parents be supportive of their children in this regard?

14, 15. (a) How did Baruch lose his spiritual balance? (b) Why was it foolish for him to 'seek great things'?

of my sighing, and no resting-place have I found." (Jeremiah 45:3) Baruch was tired. Serving as Jeremiah's secretary was a difficult, stressful job. (Jeremiah 36:14-26) And no end to the stress was in sight. It would be 18 years before Jerusalem was destroyed.

¹⁵ Jehovah told Baruch: "Look! What I have built up I am tearing down, and what I have planted I am uprooting, even all the land itself. But as for you, you keep seeking great things for yourself. Do not keep on seeking." Baruch had lost his balance. He had begun 'seeking great things for himself,' perhaps wealth, prominence, or material security. Since Jehovah was "uprooting, even all the land itself," what sense did it make to seek such things? Jehovah therefore gave Baruch this sobering reminder: "For here I am bringing in a calamity upon all flesh . . . , and I will give you your soul as a spoil in all the places to which you may go." Material possessions would not survive the destruction of Jerusalem! Jehovah guaranteed only the salvation of his "soul as a spoil."—Jeremiah 45:4, 5.

¹⁶ Baruch heeded Jehovah's correction, and, true to Jehovah's promise, Baruch escaped with his life. (Jeremiah 43:6, 7) What a powerful lesson for Jehovah's people today! This is no time to 'seek great things for ourselves.' Why? Because "the world is passing away and so is its desire."—1 John 2:17.

The Best Use of the Remaining Time

¹⁷ How, then, can we best use the remaining time? Learn from the experience of the prophet Jonah. He "went to Nineveh . . . , and he kept proclaiming and saying: 'Only forty days more, and Nineveh will

16. What lesson can Jehovah's people today learn from Baruch's experience?

17, 18. (a) How did Jonah react when the Ninevites repented? (b) What lesson did Jehovah teach Jonah?

be overthrown.’’ To Jonah’s surprise, the Ninevites responded to his message and repented! Jehovah refrained from destroying the city. Jonah’s reaction? ‘‘O Jehovah, take away, please, my soul from me, for my dying is better than my being alive.’’—Jonah 3:3, 4; 4:3.

¹⁸ Jehovah then taught Jonah an important lesson. He ‘‘appointed a bottle-gourd plant, that it should come up over Jonah, in order to become a shade over his head . . . And Jonah began to rejoice greatly over the bottle-gourd plant.’’ Jonah’s rejoicing was short-lived, however, as the plant quickly dried up. Jonah became ‘‘hot with anger’’ over his discomfort. Jehovah drove home His point, saying: ‘‘You, for your part, felt sorry for the bottle-gourd plant . . . Ought I not to feel sorry for Nineveh the great city, in which there exist more than one hundred and twenty thousand men who do not at all know the difference between their right hand and their left, besides many domestic animals?’’—Jonah 4:6, 7, 9-11.

¹⁹ How self-centered Jonah’s reasoning was! He could feel sorry for a plant, but he felt not a twinge of compassion for the

19. What self-centered line of thinking would we want to avoid?

Points for Review

- How can we show ‘‘soundness of mind’’ in our personal relationships?
- How can we show balance in caring for our family responsibilities?
- Why must parents take an interest in the secular education of their children?
- What lessons do we learn from Baruch and Jonah?

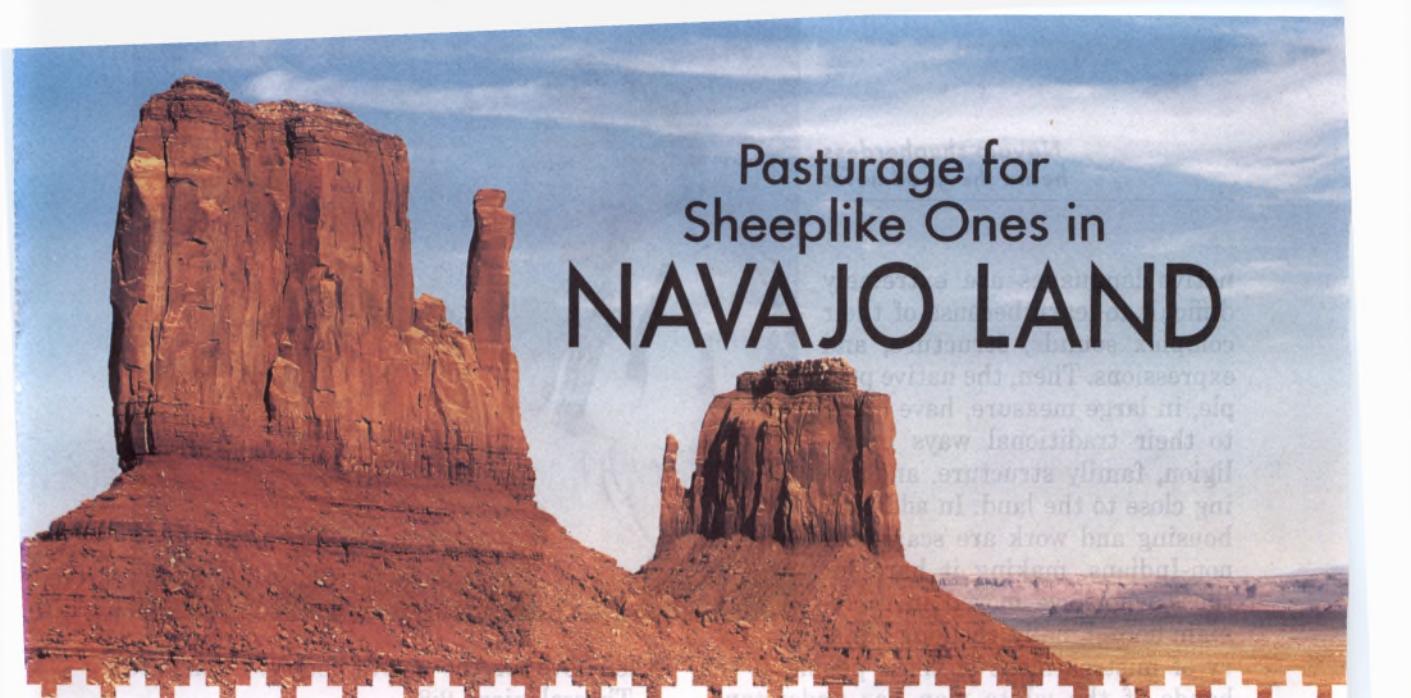
people of Nineveh—people who, spiritually speaking, ‘did not know the difference between their right hand and their left.’ We may likewise yearn for the destruction of this wicked world and rightly so! (2 Thessalonians 1:8) While waiting, however, we have a responsibility to help honesthearted people who, spiritually speaking, do not ‘know their right hand from their left.’ (Matthew 9:36; Romans 10:13-15) Will you use the short time remaining to help as many as possible to gain the precious knowledge of Jehovah? What job could ever match the joy of helping someone to gain life?

Continue Living With ‘‘Soundness of Mind’’

²⁰ As Satan’s system continues its plunge toward destruction, new challenges are sure to face us. Second Timothy 3:13 predicts: ‘‘Wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse.’’ But do not ‘get tired and give out in your souls.’ (Hebrews 12:3) Lean upon Jehovah for strength. (Philippians 4:13) Learn to be flexible, to adapt to these worsening circumstances, instead of dwelling on the past. (Ecclesiastes 7:10) Use practical wisdom, keeping up with the direction ‘the faithful and discreet slave’ provides. —Matthew 24:45-47.

²¹ How much time is left remaining we do not know. Yet, we can say with confidence that ‘‘the end of all things has drawn close.’’ Until that end comes, let us live with ‘soundness of mind’ in our dealings with one another, in the way we care for our families, and in our secular responsibilities. By doing so, we all can have confidence that we will finally be found ‘spotless and unblemished and in peace’!—2 Peter 3:14.

20, 21. (a) What are some ways in which we can demonstrate ‘soundness of mind’ during the days ahead? (b) What blessings will come from living with ‘soundness of mind’?



Pasturage for Sheeplike Ones in **NAVAJO LAND**

HÓZHÓNÍ, in the language of the Navajo Indians, means "beautiful," and that is how the Navajo people describe their land. Since 1868 the United States government has apportioned to the Navajo some 24,000 square miles of reservation land in northeastern Arizona, around what is called four corners, where the four states of Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah meet. Monument Valley, made famous by Western movies, is now preserved as a Navajo Tribal Park and attracts tourists from all over the world. The valley features spectacular thousand-foot-high red sandstone monoliths that tower in splendid isolation over the high desert plains. Aptly, the Navajo term for the valley means "the space between the rocks."

The Navajo people as a whole are known for their humble manners, warm hospitality, and close-knit extended families. The 170,000 residents on the reservation live mainly in isolated settlements, following traditional ways. Some still raise sheep and occupy earth-covered log huts called hogans. Navajo arts and crafts have gained

widespread popularity. Especially prized are their rugs and blankets with colorful geometric or traditional designs, woven from sheep's wool. Equally well-known is the Navajo silver jewelry with turquoise and other natural materials.

Bringing the Good News to Navajo Land

For more than 30 years, Jehovah's Witnesses have come to Navajo land not just to sightsee but also to bring the good news of God's Kingdom to the people in this remote area. (Matthew 24:14) Regular and special pioneer ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses have taken the lead in the preaching work. Many of them have come in response to calls from traveling overseers and local Witnesses to help where the need has been greater. Some have come from congregations nearby, while others, including members of different Native American tribes, have come from various parts of the United States.

These self-sacrificing men and women have compared their ministry here to a missionary assignment. Why? First of all, the

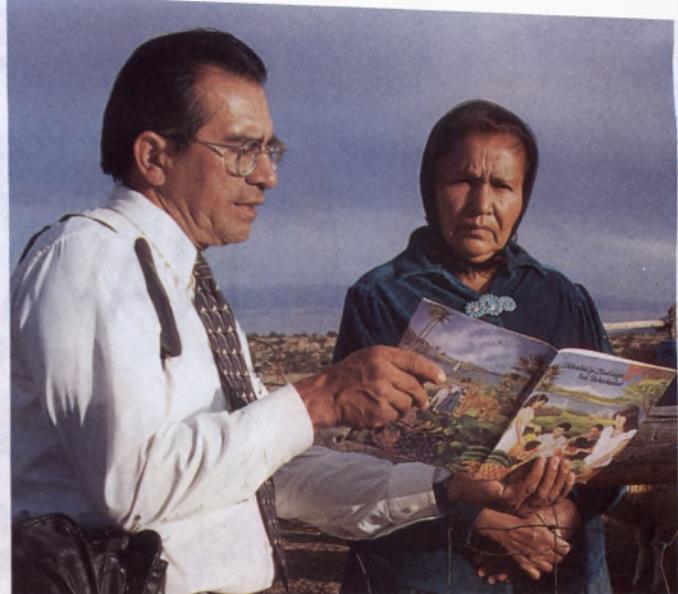
**Navajo shepherdess
hears the good news**

native languages are extremely difficult to learn because of their complex sounds, structure, and expressions. Then, the native people, in large measure, have clung to their traditional ways in religion, family structure, and living close to the land. In addition, housing and work are scarce for non-Indians, making it hard for those who have moved in to remain here. Finally, the long history of mistreatment of these people at the hands of the white man has understandably instilled in them a degree of distrust of outsiders.*

At first, when the Witnesses went calling from house to house dressed up and wearing neckties, they were mistaken for Mormons, and many would not open the door. When they switched to wearing more casual attire, they were welcomed in, often for an hour or more. Now the people recognize Jehovah's Witnesses, even though business attire is once again used in the ministry.

Just getting to the people who live on the Navajo reservation is a real challenge. Driving many miles over unmarked roads that may be rocky, sandy, and muddy is the norm. Naturally, this puts extra wear and tear on the vehicles and the passengers. Vehicles may also get stuck, but passersby are usually ready to lend a helping hand. Calling on interested ones, going to a home Bible study, or taking someone to a Christian meeting often requires a round-trip of several hours. But the Witnesses willingly expend themselves, thus demonstrating

* See May 8, 1948; February 22, 1952; June 22, 1954; and September 8, 1996, issues of *Awake!*



their love for the native people.—Compare 1 Thessalonians 2:8.

The Navajo enjoy having Bible discussions. Usually they will gather together the whole family—children, parents, and grandparents—to hear about the hope of a future paradise home for mankind. When asked what he thought Paradise would be like, one Navajo man answered, "Green, with lots of sheep," reflecting their love of the land and their flocks. They also appreciate Bible literature, showing this at times by donating beads, a bar of soap, canned milk, and the like in support of the Kingdom ministry. One special pioneer obtained some 200 subscriptions to the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines in a year, including two from a man on horseback.

Setting Up a "Sheep Camp"

When summer comes, it is time for a Navajo shepherd to move his or her flock to a sheep camp. This summer home for the sheep, chosen for its proximity to green pastures and a good water source, helps the flock to thrive. In a figurative sense, a Kingdom Hall can be likened to such a camp—a spiritual pasturage and a source of waters

of truth. People who come can find spiritual nourishment that makes them spiritually healthy and strong.

For some time, meetings were held in a school classroom in Kayenta, Arizona. Then in August 1992, with the help of hundreds of Witness volunteers from several states, a new Kingdom Hall was built in Kayenta. This Kingdom Hall and several others in the region impart a sense of permanence to the preaching work in the minds of the local people. Other Kingdom Halls serving this vast territory include those in Tuba City and Chinle, both on the reservation, one in Keams Canyon on Hopi tribal land within the Navajo reservation, and several others in towns bordering the reservation. What has been the outcome?

Overwhelming Response to the Kingdom Message

In Kayenta more than a dozen local people have been baptized since the Kingdom Hall was built, indicating Jehovah's blessing on this place of true worship. The hall gives evidence that Jehovah's Witnesses are here to stay and builds confidence in the Kingdom good news they preach. Recently the first public Bible discourse in the Navajo language was given there. The 40 members of the congregation were pleased to welcome 245 to the talk on the responsibilities of parenthood. With appreciative hearts, one family of eight traveled three hours each way to hear this talk—their first visit ever to a Kingdom Hall.

Another useful tool that Jehovah has provided is the brochure *Enjoy Life on Earth Forever!* in the Navajo language. Translating the brochure into Navajo, an extremely complex language, posed a formidable challenge. The translators collectively spent more than 1,000 hours to ensure that the brochure properly conveys the Kingdom message. Since its release in late 1995, lo-

cal Witnesses have placed several thousand copies of it, resulting in dozens of Bible studies with truth seekers.

Increasingly, the Navajo language is being used in the ministry as Kingdom publishers learn it. Congregations in the area have begun to use Navajo in the Theocratic Ministry School, and Navajo language classes are held to train the publishers. In addition, the program at local assemblies is also translated into Navajo. All these efforts will surely lead to even greater response on the reservation.

Not to be overlooked among the Kingdom fruitage on this Indian reservation are the sterling spiritual qualities manifested by our Navajo brothers. For seven years, Jimmy and Sandra brought their five children 75 miles each way to attend the weekly meetings. The family has fond memories of singing Kingdom songs and studying the Bible together during their long journeys. The parents' love and zeal for the truth motivated the children to follow their example in becoming dedicated praisers of Jehovah. Four of them now serve as regular pioneers, and Jimmy is an elder. To add to this family's joy, Jimmy's sister Elsie recently became the first person who speaks only Navajo to be baptized.

Local shepherds and their flocks add a touch of pastoral serenity to the stone monuments that adorn the Navajo reservation. The prophet Isaiah long ago foretold of Jehovah: "Like a shepherd he will shepherd his own drove. With his arm he will collect together the lambs; and in his bosom he will carry them. Those giving suck he will conduct with care." (Isaiah 40:11) Through his Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ, Jehovah is gathering into his spiritual pasturage all those on the Navajo reservation who desire to hear the Kingdom good news and to come in line for his everlasting blessing.

WHY REPORT WHAT IS BAD?

"HE WHO brings a matter out in the open becomes an enemy of the people," some say in West Africa. That was what happened to Olu when he accused his older brother of committing incest with his sister. "You are a liar!" screamed the brother. He then viciously beat Olu, drove him from the family house, and burned all Olu's clothes. The villagers supported the brother. No longer welcome in the village, Olu had to leave. Only after the girl was observed to be pregnant did the people realize that Olu had told the truth. The brother confessed, and Olu was restored to favor. Things could have turned out quite differently. Olu could have been killed.

Clearly, those who have no love for Jehovah are not likely to appreciate having their error brought to light. The sinful human tendency is to resist reproof and resent whoever gives it. (Compare John 7:7.) Little wonder that many are as silent as stones when it comes to revealing the wrongs of others to those who have the authority to correct them.

Appreciating the Value of Reproof

Among Jehovah's people, however, there is a different attitude toward reproof. God-

ly men and women deeply appreciate the arrangement Jehovah has made to help erring ones inside the Christian congregation. They recognize such discipline as an expression of his loving-kindness.—Hebrews 12: 6-11.

This may be illustrated with an incident in the life of King David. Although he was a righteous man from his youth on, there came a time when he fell into serious wrongdoing. First, he committed adultery. Then, in an attempt to cover up his wrong, he arranged to have the woman's husband killed. But Jehovah revealed David's sin to Nathan the prophet, who courageously confronted David about the matter. Using a powerful illustration, Nathan asked David what should be done to a rich man who had many sheep but took and slaughtered the only lamb, a treasured pet, of a poor man to entertain his friend. David, a former shepherd, was roused to indignation and anger. He said: "The man doing this deserves to die!" Nathan then applied the illustration to David, saying: "You yourself are the man!"—2 Samuel 12:1-7.

David did not become angry with Nathan; neither did he try to defend himself nor did he resort to recriminations. Instead, Nathan's rebuke deeply moved his conscience.



It shows love to encourage an erring Witness to speak with the elders

Cut to the heart, David confessed: "I have sinned against Jehovah."—2 Samuel 12:13.

Nathan's exposure of David's sin, followed by godly reproof, bore good results. Though David was not shielded from the consequences of his wrong, he repented and became reconciled to Jehovah. How did David feel about such reproof? He wrote: "Should the righteous one strike me, it would be a loving-kindness; and should he reprove me, it would be oil upon the head, which my head would not want to refuse."—Psalm 141:5.

In our day too, Jehovah's servants can become involved in serious wrongdoing, even those who have been faithful for many years. Recognizing that the elders can assist, most take the initiative to approach them for help. (James 5:13-16) But sometimes a wrongdoer may try to cover up his sin, as did King David. What should we do if we come to know about serious wrongdoing in the congregation?

Whose Responsibility Is It?

When elders learn about serious wrongdoing, they approach the individual involved to give needed help and correction. It is the elders' responsibility to judge such ones inside the Christian congregation. Keeping a close watch on its spiritual condition, they assist and admonish anyone who is taking an unwise or wrong step.—1 Corinthians 5:12, 13; 2 Timothy 4:2; 1 Peter 5:1, 2.

But what if you are not an elder and you come to know about some serious wrongdoing on the part of another Christian? Guidelines are found in the Law that Jehovah gave to the nation of Israel. The Law stated that if a person was a witness to apostate acts, sedition, murder, or certain other serious crimes, it was his responsibility to report it and to testify to what he knew. Leviticus 5:1 states: "Now in case a soul sins

in that he has heard public cursing and he is a witness or he has seen it or has come to know of it, if he does not report it, then he must answer for his error."—Compare Deuteronomy 13:6-8; Esther 6:2; Proverbs 29:24.

Though not under the Mosaic Law, Christians today can be guided by the principles behind it. (Psalm 19:7, 8) So if you learn about the serious wrongdoing of a fellow Christian, what should you do?

Handling the Matter

First of all, it is important that there is valid reason to believe that serious wrongdoing has really occurred. "Do not become a witness against your fellowman without grounds," stated the wise man. "Then you would have to be foolish with your lips."—Proverbs 24:28.

You may decide to go directly to the elders. It is not wrong to do so. Usually, however, the most loving course is to approach the person involved. Perhaps the facts are not as they appear to be. Or perhaps the situation is already being handled by the elders. Calmly discuss the matter with the person. If there remains reason to believe that a serious wrong has been committed, encourage him or her to approach the elders for help, and explain the wisdom of doing so. Do not talk to others about the matter, for that would be gossip.

If the person does not report to the elders within a reasonable period of time, then you should. One or two elders will then discuss the matter with the accused. The elders need to "search and investigate and inquire thoroughly" to see if wrong has been done. If it has, they will handle the case according to Scriptural guidelines.—Deuteronomy 13:12-14.

At least two witnesses are required to establish a charge of wrongdoing. (John 8:17; Hebrews 10:28) If the person denies the

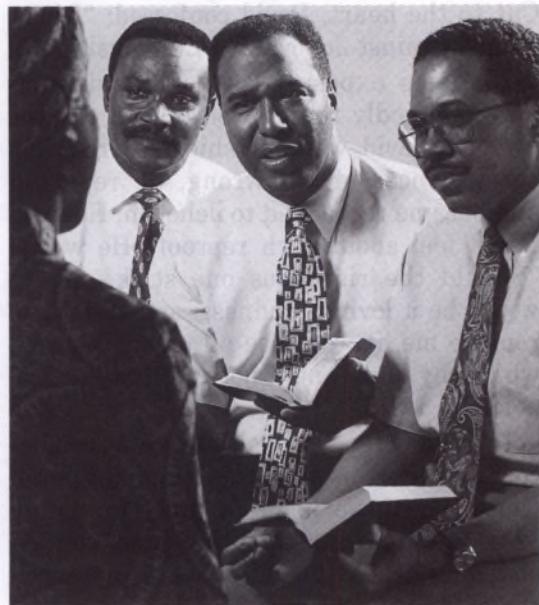
charge and your testimony is the only one, the matter will be left in Jehovah's hands. (1 Timothy 5:19, 24, 25) This is done in the knowledge that all things are "openly exposed" to Jehovah and that if the person is guilty, eventually his sins will "catch up" with him.—Hebrews 4:13; Numbers 32:23.

But suppose the person does deny the charge and you are the only witness against him. Could you now be open to a counter-charge of slander? No, not unless you have gossiped to those not involved in the matter. It is not slanderous to report conditions affecting a congregation to those having authority and responsibility to oversee and correct matters. It is, in fact, in line with our desire always to do what is correct and loyal.—Compare Luke 1:74, 75.

Maintaining Holiness in the Congregation

One reason for reporting wrongdoing is that it works to preserve the cleanliness of the congregation. Jehovah is a clean God, a holy God. He requires all those who worship him to be spiritually and morally clean. His inspired Word admonishes: "As obedient children, quit being fashioned according to the desires you formerly had in your ignorance, but, in accord with the Holy One who called you, do you also become holy yourselves in all your conduct, because it is written: 'You must be holy, because I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:14-16) Individuals who practice uncleanness or wrongdoing can bring defilement and Jehovah's disfavor upon an entire congregation unless action is taken to correct or remove them.—Compare Joshua, chapter 7.

The apostle Paul's letters to the Christian congregation at Corinth show how the reporting of wrongdoing worked toward the cleansing of God's people there. In his first letter, Paul wrote: "Actually fornication is



Elders help restore erring ones to God's favor

reported among you, and such fornication as is not even among the nations, that a wife a certain man has of his father."—1 Corinthians 5:1.

The Bible does not tell us from whom the apostle received this report. It may be that Paul learned about the situation from Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who had traveled from Corinth to Ephesus where Paul was staying. Paul had also received a letter of inquiry from the Christian congregation in Corinth. Whatever the source, once the situation had been reported to Paul by reliable witnesses, he was then able to give direction on the matter. "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves," he wrote. The man was expelled from the congregation.—1 Corinthians 5:13; 16:17, 18.

Did Paul's instruction bring good results? Indeed it did! Evidently, the wrongdoer came to his senses. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul urged that the congre-

gation "kindly forgive and comfort" the repentant man. (2 Corinthians 2:6-8) Thus the reporting of wrongdoing led to action that resulted in cleansing the congregation and restoring to God's favor a person who had damaged his relationship with God.

We find another example in Paul's first letter to the Christian congregation at Corinth. This time the apostle names the witnesses who reported the matter. He wrote: "The disclosure was made to me about you, my brothers, by those of the house of Chloe, that dissensions exist among you." (1 Corinthians 1:11) Paul knew that this dissension, along with giving undue honor to men, had created a sectarian attitude that threatened to destroy the congregation's unity. Hence, out of deep regard for the spiritual welfare of his fellow believers there, Paul acted quickly and wrote corrective counsel to the congregation.

Today, the vast majority of brothers and sisters in congregations throughout the earth work hard to preserve the spiritual cleanliness of the congregation by individually maintaining an approved standing before God. Some suffer to do so; others have even died in order to keep integrity. Surely to condone or cover up wrongdoing would show a lack of appreciation for these efforts.

Help for Erring Ones

Why do some who have fallen into gross sin hold back from approaching the congregation elders? Often it is because they are not aware of the benefits of going to the elders. Some incorrectly believe that if they confess, their sin will be exposed to the entire congregation. Others delude themselves as to the gravity of their course. Still others think they can readjust themselves without the aid of the elders.

But such wrongdoers need loving help from the congregation elders. James wrote: "Is there anyone sick among you? Let him

call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, greasing him with oil in the name of Jehovah. And the prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well, and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him."—James 5:14, 15.

What a wonderful provision to help erring ones to restore their spirituality! By applying soothing counsel from God's Word and by praying in their behalf, the elders can help the spiritually ailing ones to recover from their erroneous ways. Thus, rather than feeling condemned, repentant ones often feel refreshed and relieved when they meet with loving elders. A young West African man had committed fornication and had covered his sin for some months. After his sin became manifest, he said to the elders: "How I wish someone would have asked about my involvement with that girl! It's such a relief to bring this thing into the open."—Compare Psalm 32:3-5.

An Act of Principled Love

Baptized servants of God have "passed over from death to life." (1 John 3:14) But if they commit serious sin, they have turned back to the way of death. If they are not helped, they may become hardened in wrongdoing, not desiring to repent and

In Our Next Issue

The Rewards of
Honoring Elderly Parents

Let Us Hold Fast
to Our Precious Faith!

Keep Jehovah's Day Close in Mind

return to the worship of the true God.—Hebrews 10:26-29.

The reporting of wrongdoing is an act of genuine concern for the wrongdoer. James wrote: “My brothers, if anyone among you is misled from the truth and another turns him back, know that he who turns a sinner back from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”—James 5:19, 20.

So, then, why report what is bad? Because of your love for your brother, and because it is right to do so.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Is the Tetragrammaton (the four Hebrew letters of God's name) found in the Hebrew text of Matthew copied by the 14th-century Jewish physician Shem-Tob ben Isaac Ibn Shaprut?

No, it is not. However, this text of Matthew does use hash-Shem' (written out or abbreviated) 19 times, as pointed out on page 13 of *The Watchtower* of August 15, 1996.

The Hebrew hash-Shem' means “the Name,” which certainly refers to the divine name. For example, in Shem-Tob’s text, an abbreviated form of hash-Shem' appears at Matthew 3:3, a passage in which Matthew quoted Isaiah 40:3. It is reasonable to conclude that when Matthew quoted a verse from the Hebrew Scriptures where the Tetragrammaton is found, he incorporated the divine name in his Gospel. So while the Hebrew text that Shem-Tob presented does not use the Tetragrammaton, its use of “the Name,” as at Matthew 3:3, supports the use of “Jehovah” in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

Shem-Tob copied the Hebrew text of Matthew in his polemical work ‘E’ven bo’chan. What, though, was the source of that Hebrew text? Professor George Howard, who has researched this matter extensively, suggests that “Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew dates somewhere within the first four

centuries of the Christian era.”* Others may disagree with him on this.

Howard notes: “The Hebrew Matthew incorporated in this text is characterized especially by its many differences from the canonical Greek Matthew.” For example, according to Shem-Tob’s text, Jesus said about John: “Truly, I say to you, among all those born of women none has risen greater than John the Baptizer.” It omits Jesus’ next words: “But a person that is a lesser one in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than he is.” (Matthew 11:11) In a rather similar way, there are many differences between the extant Hebrew text of the Hebrew Scriptures and the wording in the corresponding text of the Greek Septuagint version. While we acknowledge their differences, such ancient texts have some place in comparative study.

As mentioned, Shem-Tob’s text of Matthew includes “the Name” where there is good reason to believe that Matthew actually used the Tetragrammaton. Thus, since 1950, Shem-Tob’s text has been used as a support for employing the divine name in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and it still is cited in *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.[#]

* See also *New Testament Studies*, Volume 43, Number 1, January 1997, pages 58-71.

[#] Published in 1984 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Have you found the recent issues of *The Watchtower* of practical value to you? Then why not test your memory with the following questions?

- What will Armageddon be like? (Revelation 16:14, 16)** It will not be a nuclear apocalypse or a disaster provoked by humans. No, it is God's war to end all human wars, to annihilate all those who promote such wars, and to bring in true peace for those who love peace. It will not delay. (*Habakkuk 2:3*)—4/15, page 17.
- What kind of wedding honors Jehovah?** A wedding where spiritual aspects dominate over worldly ways will truly honor Jehovah. Christians will enjoy the occasion if they avoid debased worldly customs, superstitions, and excesses; if they do not let it interfere with regular theocratic activities; and if they manifest modesty instead of a showy display.—4/15, page 26.
- What characterizes a man of integrity?** A man of integrity can be trusted, not just by his fellowman but, more important, by God. Such a person's purity of heart is seen in his actions. He is free from hypocrisy. He is not devious or corrupt. (*2 Corinthians 4:2*)—5/1, page 6.
- Why did Jeremiah say: "Good it is for an able-bodied man that he should carry the yoke during his youth"? (Lamentations 3:27)** Learning to cope with trials while young helps prepare one to meet the challenges of adulthood. (*2 Timothy 3:12*) The benefits of faithfulness far outweigh any temporary relief that compromise might bring.—5/1, page 32.
- What was foreshadowed by the appearance of Moses and Elijah in the transfiguration vision?** In the context of the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah were fitting symbols of Jesus' anointed brothers. That they, as well as Jesus, "appeared with glory" symbolized that faithful anointed Christians would be "glorified together" with Jesus in the heavenly Kingdom arrangement. (*Luke 9:30, 31; Romans 8:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:10*)—5/15, pages 12, 14.
- What is God's "sacred secret"? (1 Corinthians 2:7)** God's "sacred secret" centers on Jesus Christ. (*Ephesians 1:9, 10*) However, it is not simply the identification of Jesus as being the promised Messiah. It involves a heavenly government, God's Messianic Kingdom, and includes the role Jesus is assigned to play in God's purpose.—6/1, page 13.
- How should a Christian view advancing age or illness?** Instead of viewing such trials as limiting his service to Jehovah, he should look upon them as an opportunity to increase his reliance on him. He should also remember that the value of a Christian is gauged not only by his level of activity but also by his faith and depth of love. (*Mark 12:41-44*)—6/1, page 26.
- How did Jehovah's use of humans instead of angels to write the Bible show his great wisdom?** If the human element were completely lacking, we might have difficulty grasping the Bible's message. Also, the Bible has the warmth, variety, and appeal that the human element gives it.—6/15, page 8.
- What is the secret of family happiness?** The secret lies in the pages of God's Word, the Bible, and in the application of its principles, such as self-control, recognition of headship, good communication, and love.—6/15, pages 23, 24.
- How was the healing performed by Jesus far different from what is commonly done by those who claim to have healing powers today?** There was no strong emotional display from the crowds and no dramatic frenzy on the part of Jesus. In addition, Jesus never failed to heal the infirm on the pretext that their offering had not been generous enough or that they lacked faith.—7/1, page 5.
- How has Jehovah helped his people to have a place in his divine purpose regarding his name and Kingdom?** First, Jehovah entrusted his people with the truth. Second, he gave them his holy spirit. And third, we have our worldwide brotherhood and Jehovah's organizational arrangement for worship.—7/1, pages 19, 20.
- What is virtue?** Virtue is moral excellence, goodness, right action and thinking. It is not a passive quality but an active, positive one. Virtue means more than avoiding sin; it means pursuing what is good. (*1 Timothy 6:11*)—7/15, page 14.
- What is the most valuable inheritance that parents can pass on to their children?** The most valuable inheritance is their own example of showing love to others. Outstandingly, children need to see and hear their parents express and show genuine love of God in everything they do.—7/15, page 21.
- What are some essentials for an effective family study?** A family study must be regular. You must 'buy out the time' for the study. (*Ephesians 5:15-17*) Make study periods lively for the children by making the Bible come alive. For children to enjoy it, they must feel involved in it.—8/1, pages 26, 28.

They Stood Firm Amid Nazi Persecution



THE fearless integrity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nazi Germany stands out in stark contrast to the position taken by churches of Christendom. This is noted by professor of history John Weiss in his book *Ideology of Death*. He writes:

"In 1934 the Evangelical church insisted the Nazis must be 'welcomed by Lutheranism,' and thanked 'the Lord God' for giving the Germans a 'pious and trusty overlord.' . . . A Protestant bishop wrote to his clergy, '[Hitler] has been sent to us by God.' " Weiss continues: "The German Methodist church . . . agreed with Bishop Dibelius that Hitler had saved Germany from an imminent Bolshevik revolution, bringing peace and stability. . . . The Mormon church advised its faithful that opposing Hitler was a violation of Mormon law." And he adds: "Catholics were told it was a sacred duty to obey the new state, a duty never withdrawn even after the full horrors in the east were known to the clergy."

But what about Jehovah's Witnesses? Professor Weiss points out that "as a group, only the Jehovah's Witnesses resisted the Nazis." Thousands of them were incarcerated, continues Professor Weiss, "yet any Witness sent to a concentration camp could have been released simply by signing a paper renouncing his or her faith."

Regarding the integrity of Jehovah's Witnesses, Professor Weiss comments: "Their example illustrates the uniquely stubborn and heroic power early Christianity had before institutionalization and commitments to the social order overwhelmed the desire to live an uncompromising life. As a Protestant pastor wrote of them, 'Not the great churches, but these slandered and scoffed-at people were the ones who stood up first against the rage of the Nazi demon, and who dared to make opposition according to their faith.'

—John Weiss, *Ideology of Death*, page 58