

# THE WATCHTOWER

JULY 1, 2002

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



can  
ICONS  
Bring You Closer  
to GOD?

# 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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# RELIGIOUS ICONS

## Their Ancient Roots

"Icons are a way of joining us to the goodness and holiness of God and His Saints."

GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE  
OF AUSTRALIA

ON THIS sultry August day, the sun's rays beat down on the cement steps that lead up to the monastery of the "Most Holy Mother of God," on the island of Tinos, in the Aegean Sea. The scorching heat does not dampen the determination of the more than 25,000 devout Greek Orthodox pilgrims who inch along trying to reach the heavily decorated icon of the mother of Jesus.

A young girl, lame, obviously in pain and with a desperate look on her face, crawls on her badly bleeding knees. Not far from her, an exhausted old lady who has traveled from the other end of the country struggles to keep her tired feet going. An eager middle-aged man perspires heavily as he anxiously tries to make his way through the jostling crowd. Their goal is to kiss an icon of Mary and prostrate themselves before it.

These deeply religious people are no doubt sincere in their desire to worship God. How many, though, realize that such devotion to religious icons traces its origins to practices predating Christianity by centuries?



© AFP/CORBIS

### The Prevalence of Icons

In the Orthodox world, icons are everywhere. In church buildings, icons of Jesus, Mary, and many "saints" occupy a central place. Believers often honor these icons with kisses, incense, and burning candles. Additionally, almost all Orthodox homes have their own icon corner, where prayers are uttered. It is not uncommon for Orthodox Christians to say that when they worship an icon, they connect with the divine. Many believe that icons are imbued with divine grace and miraculous powers.

Those believers would likely be surprised to learn that first-century Christians did not favor the use of icons in worship. The book *Byzantium* states: "The early Christians, inheriting from Judaism a repugnance toward idolatry, had looked askance at any veneration of pictures of holy persons." The same book observes: "From the Fifth Century on, icons or images . . . became increasingly prevalent in public and private worship." If not from first-century Christianity, from where did the use of religious icons originate?



*The use of  
images can be  
traced to pagan  
practices*

### Tracing Their Roots

Researcher Vitalij Ivanovich Petrenko wrote: "The use of images and its tradition comes from well before the Christian era and had an 'ancestry in paganism.'" Many historians agree, saying that the roots of icon worship are found in the religions of ancient Babylon, Egypt, and Greece. In ancient Greece, for example, religious images took the form of statues. These were believed to be invested with divine powers. People thought that some of these images were not made by hands but had fallen from heaven. During special festivals, such cult images were taken in a procession around the city, and sacrifices were offered to them. "The cult image was considered by the pious to be a deity himself, although attempts have been made... to dis-

tinguish between the deity and his image," said Petrenko.

How did such ideas and practices seep into Christianity? The same researcher observed that, in the centuries after the death of Christ's apostles, especially in Egypt, "Christian ideas were confronted by the 'pagan amalgam'—made out of Egyptian, Greek, Jewish, Oriental and Roman practices and beliefs which were practiced alongside Christian confession." As a result, "Christian artisans adapted [an interfaith] method and made use of pagan symbols, putting them within a new context, although not purifying them totally from pagan influence."

Soon icons became the focus of both private and public religious life. In the book *The Age of Faith*, historian Will Durant describes how this came about, saying: "As the number of worshiped saints multiplied, a need arose for identifying and remembering them; pictures of them and of Mary were produced in great number; and in the case of Christ not only His imagined form but His cross became objects of reverence—even, for simple minds, magic talismans. A natural freedom of fancy among the people

### What Is an Icon?

Unlike statues widely used in Roman Catholic worship, icons are two-dimensional images of Christ, Mary, "saints," angels, characters and events of the Bible, or events in the history of the Orthodox Church. Usually, they are painted on portable wooden boards.

According to the Orthodox Church, "in Icons of the Saints, the

pictures do not look like pictures of ordinary flesh and blood." Also, on icons "perspective is back to front"—the picture does not get narrower as it goes into the distance. Usually "there are no shadows, or ways of showing day and night." It is also believed that the wood and paint of an icon can "become filled with God's presence."



turned the holy relics, pictures, and statues into objects of adoration; people prostrated themselves before them, kissed them, burned candles and incense before them, crowned them with flowers, and sought miracles from their occult influence. . . . Fathers and councils of the Church repeatedly explained that the images were not deities, but only reminders thereof; the people did not care to make such distinctions.”

Today, many who use religious icons would similarly argue that images are merely objects of respect—not worship. They might claim that religious paintings are legitimate—even indispensable—aids in worshiping God. Perhaps you feel the same way. But the question is, How does God feel about this? Could it be that veneration of an icon really amounts to worshiping it? Can such practices actually pose hidden dangers?

# WORSHIP GOD “IN SPIRIT”

“To whom could you liken God?  
What image could you contrive of him?”

ISAIAH 40:18, “THE JERUSALEM BIBLE”

PERHAPS you are sincerely convinced that using icons is acceptable in worshiping God. You may feel that this draws you closer to the Hearer of prayer, who is invisible and may seem impersonal and abstract.

But are we totally free to choose our own method of approach to God? Should not God himself be the final authority on what is acceptable and what is not? Jesus explained God’s view of the matter when he said: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)\* Those words alone preclude the use of icons or any other sacred objects.

Yes, there is a specific kind of worship that Jehovah God accepts. And what is that? On another occasion, Jesus explained: “The hour will come—in fact it is here already—when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.”—John 4:23, 24.

Can God, who “is spirit,” be represented by a material image? No. Regardless of how imposing an icon may be, it can never match the glory of God. So an image of God could never be a truthful representation of him. (Romans 1:22, 23) Would a person be “worshiping in truth” if he approached God through some man-made icon?

\* Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the Catholic *Jerusalem Bible*.

## A Clear Bible Teaching

God's Law forbade making images as objects of worship. The second of the Ten Commandments decreed: "You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them." (Exodus 20: 4, 5) The inspired Christian Scriptures also command: "You must keep clear of idolatry."—1 Corinthians 10:14.

True, many insist that their use of images in worship is not idolatry. Orthodox Christians, for example, often deny that they actually worship the icons before which they bow, kneel, and pray. An Orthodox priest wrote: "We pay respect to them because they

are holy objects, and because we reverence what the Icons depict."

Still, the question remains: Does God approve the use of icons for the purpose of even so-called indirect veneration? Nowhere does the Bible authorize such a practice. When the Israelites set up an image of a calf, allegedly for the purpose of venerating Jehovah, he expressed his strong disapproval, saying that they had apostatized.—Exodus 32:4-7.

## The Hidden Danger

Using tangible objects in worship is a dangerous practice. It can easily tempt people to worship the object rather than the God the object is supposed to represent. In other words, the icon becomes a focus for idolatry.

## Helped to Worship "in Spirit"

Olivera was a devout member of the Orthodox Church in Albania. When the country outlawed religion in 1967, Olivera secretly continued her religious practices. She used most of her meager pension to purchase gold and silver icons, incense, and candles. She kept these hidden in her bed and often slept in a nearby chair for fear that they might be seen or stolen. When visited by Jehovah's Witnesses in the early 1990's, Olivera recognized the ring of Bible truth in their message. She saw what the Bible says about true worship being "in spirit," and she learned how God feels about the use

of icons. (John 4:24, *The Jerusalem Bible*) The Witness who studied the Bible with her noticed that there were fewer icons around each time she visited Olivera's home. Finally, there were none. After her baptism, Olivera commented: "Today, instead of useless icons, I have Jehovah's holy spirit. I am so thankful that his spirit does not need icons to reach me."

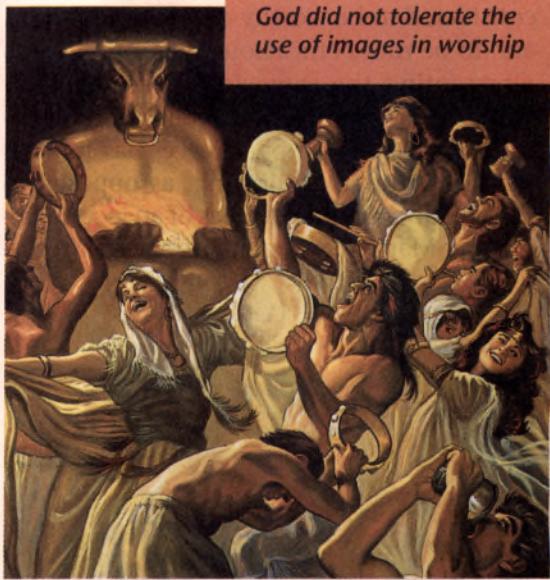
Athena, from the island of Lesbos in Greece, was an extremely active member of the Orthodox Church. She was a member of the choir and scrupulously followed religious tradition, including the use of icons. Jehovah's

Witnesses helped Athena to realize that not everything she had been taught was in agreement with the Bible. This included the use of icons and crosses in worship. Athena insisted on conducting her own research regarding the origin of these religious objects. After digging deep into various reference works, she was convinced that the roots of those objects were not Christian. Her desire to worship God "in spirit" led her to get rid of her icons, despite their monetary value. Athena, however, was happy to take any loss in order to worship God in a spiritually clean and acceptable way.—Acts 19:19.

That happened with a number of objects in the days of the Israelites. During their trek in the wilderness, for example, Moses made a copper snake. Originally, the representation of the snake on a pole served as a means of healing. Those punished with a snakebite could look at the copper snake and receive God's help. But after the people settled in the Promised Land, they seem to have turned this standard into an idol, as if the copper snake itself had the power to heal. They burned incense to it and even gave it a name, Nehushtan.—Numbers 21:8, 9; 2 Kings 18:4.

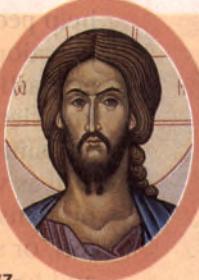
The Israelites also tried to use the ark of the covenant as a charm against their enemies, with disastrous results. (1 Samuel 4:3, 4; 5:11) And in Jeremiah's day, the citizens of

God did not tolerate the use of images in worship



## Icons as Art?

In recent years, Orthodox icons have been collected around the world. Collectors usually regard the icon, not as a sacred religious object, but as a work of art reflecting Byzantine culture. It is not unusual to find many such religious icons decorating the home or the office of someone who claims to be an atheist.



Sincere Christians, however, do not forget the primary purpose of the icon. It is an object of worship. While Christians do not challenge the right of others to own icons, personally they do not have icons in their possession, even as collector's items. This in harmony with the principle found at Deuteronomy 7:26, *The Jerusalem Bible*: "You must not bring any detestable thing [images used in worship] into your house or you, like it, will come under the ban too. You must regard them as unclean and loathsome."

Jerusalem cared more about the temple than they did about the God worshiped there.—Jeremiah 7:12-15.

The tendency to worship things in place of God is still very much alive. Researcher Vitalij Ivanovich Petrenko said: "The icon . . . becomes the object of worship and in danger of idolatry . . . One must admit that this is an essentially pagan idea brought into icon-worship through the popular beliefs." Similarly, Greek Orthodox priest Demetrios Constantelos says in his book *Understanding the Greek Orthodox Church*: "It is possible for a Christian to make an icon the object of worship."

The claim that icons are only aids to relative worship is highly questionable. Why? Well, is it not true that certain icons of Mary or of "saints" may be

considered to be worthy of greater devotion and to be more efficacious than other icons representing the same long-deceased individual? For example, a certain icon representing Mary at Tinos, Greece, has its own devout Orthodox following, as opposed to the equally faithful devotees of an icon representing Mary in Soumela, northern Greece.



**Knowledge from the Bible helps us to worship God in spirit**

Both groups believe that their own icon is superior, performing more impressive miracles than the other one, even though both represent the same long-deceased individual. Thus, in practice, people attribute real powers to certain icons and worship them.

#### Approaching the “Saints” or Mary?

What, though, about the veneration of individuals, such as Mary or “saints”? Jesus, responding to a temptation from Satan, referred to Deuteronomy 6:13 and said: “You

must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.” (Matthew 4:10) He later said that true worshipers would worship “the Father,” no one else. (John 4:23) Realizing this, an angel reprimanded the apostle John for attempting to worship him, saying: “Don’t do that . . . It is God that you must worship.”—Revelation 22:9.

Is it proper to pray to Jesus’ earthly mother, Mary, or to particular “saints,” asking them to intercede with God in one’s behalf? The Bible’s direct answer is: “There is only one mediator between God and mankind, himself a man, Christ Jesus.”—1 Timothy 2:5.

#### Safeguard Your Relationship With God

The use of icons in worship, being against the clear teaching of the Bible, cannot help people to win God’s approval and gain salvation. On the contrary, Jesus said that everlasting life depends upon our taking in knowledge of the only true God, becoming acquainted with his matchless personality as well as with his purposes and dealings with humans. (John 17:3) Icons that do not see, feel, or speak do not help one to know God and to worship him acceptably. (Psalm 115:4-8) That most important education is available only through a study of God’s Word, the Bible.

Besides affording no benefit, icon worship may be spiritually dangerous. How so? First and foremost, it can cause a breach in one’s relationship with Jehovah. Regarding Israel, who “angered him with abominable idols,” God foretold: “I will hide my face from them.” (Deuteronomy 32:16, 20, *The New American Bible*) Rebuilding their relationship with God meant their ‘spurning sinful idols.’—Isaiah 31:6, 7, NAB.

How appropriate, therefore, the Scriptural counsel: “My little children, be on your guard against idols”!—1 John 5:21, NAB.

# JEHOVAH BEAUTIFIES HIS PEOPLE WITH LIGHT

*"Arise, O woman, shed forth light, for your light has come and upon you the very glory of Jehovah has shone forth."—ISAIAH 60:1.*

**O**H, for an Isaiah or a Saint Paul!" Such was the plaintive cry of U.S. President Harry Truman back in the 1940's. Why did he utter those words? Because he felt the need for moral leaders of the highest caliber in the world of his time. Mankind had just passed through the darkest period of the 20th century, the second world war. Even though the war was over, however, the world was not at peace. Darkness persisted. Indeed, 57 years after the end of that war, the world is still in darkness. If President Truman were alive today, doubtless he would still see the need for moral leaders of the caliber of Isaiah or the apostle Paul.

<sup>2</sup> Whether President Truman knew it or not, the apostle Paul spoke of the darkness afflicting mankind, and he warned about it in his writings. For example, he warned fellow believers: "We have a wrestling, not against blood and flesh, but against the governments, against the authorities, *against the world rulers of this darkness*, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12) With these words Paul showed not only that he was aware of the spiritual darkness enveloping the world but also that he knew the true source—powerful demonic forces described as "world rulers." Since powerful spirits are behind the world's darkness, what can mere humans do to dispel it?

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah likewise spoke of the darkness af-

1, 2. (a) What is the condition of mankind? (b) Who is behind mankind's darkness?

3. Despite the dark condition of mankind, what did Isaiah foretell for faithful ones?

flicting mankind. (Isaiah 8:22; 59:9) However, looking forward to our day, he foretold under inspiration that even in these dark times, Jehovah would brighten the outlook of those who love light. Yes, although we do not have Paul or Isaiah with us in person, we do have their inspired writings to guide us. To see what a blessing that is for those who love Jehovah, let us consider the prophetic words of Isaiah found in the 60th chapter of his book.

## A Prophetic Woman Sheds Forth Light

<sup>4</sup> The first words of Isaiah 60 are addressed to a woman in a very sad condition—in darkness, lying prostrate on the ground. Suddenly, light pierces the gloom, and Jehovah calls out: "Arise, O woman, shed forth light, for your light has come and upon you the very glory of Jehovah has shone forth." (Isaiah 60:1) The time has come for the woman to stand up and reflect God's light, his glory. Why? We see the answer in the following verse: "Look! darkness itself will cover the earth, and thick gloom the national groups; but upon you Jehovah will shine forth, and upon you his own glory will be seen." (Isaiah 60:2) When the woman obeys Jehovah's command, she is assured of a wonderful result. Jehovah says: "Nations will certainly go to your light, and kings to the brightness of your shining forth."—Isaiah 60:3.

<sup>4, 5. (a)</sup> What does Jehovah command a woman to do, and what promise does he make? (b) What thrilling information does Isaiah chapter 60 contain?

*Jehovah's "woman" is commanded to arise*

<sup>5</sup> The thrilling words in these three verses are both an introduction to and a summary of what the rest of Isaiah chapter 60 contains. It foretells the experiences of a prophetic woman and explains how we can dwell in Jehovah's light despite the darkness that has settled on mankind. What, though, do the symbols in these three introductory verses stand for?

<sup>6</sup> The woman of Isaiah 60:1-3 is Zion, Jehovah's celestial organization of spirit creatures. Today, Zion is represented on earth by the remaining ones of "the Israel of God," the international congregation of spirit-anointed Christians, who have the hope of ruling with Christ in heaven. (Galatians 6:16) This spiritual nation comes to have a total of 144,000 members, and the modern fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 60 centers on those alive on earth during "the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1; Revelation 14:1) The prophecy also has much to say about the companions of these anointed Christians, the "great crowd" of "other sheep."—Revelation 7:9; John 10:16.

<sup>7</sup> Was there a time when "the Israel of God" was lying in darkness, as foreshadowed by that prophetic woman? Yes, this happened more than 80 years ago. During the first world war, anointed Christians had struggled hard to keep the witness work going. But in 1918, the final year of the war, the organized preaching work virtually

6. Who is the woman of Isaiah chapter 60, and who represent her on earth?

7. What was the condition of Zion in 1918, and how had this been prophesied?



stopped. Joseph F. Rutherford, who was overseeing the worldwide preaching work, and other prominent Christians were given long prison sentences on trumped-up charges. In the book of Revelation, anointed Christians then on earth were prophetically described as corpses lying "on the broad way of the great city which is in a spiritual sense called Sodom and Egypt." (Revelation 11:8) That was truly a dark time for Zion, as represented by her anointed children on earth!

<sup>8</sup> However, the year 1919 saw a dramatic change. Jehovah shed light upon Zion! Surviving ones of the Israel of God stood up in order to reflect God's light, fearlessly taking up once again the proclamation of the

8. What dramatic change occurred in 1919, with what result?

good news. (Matthew 5:14-16) Thanks to the reborn zeal of these Christians, others were drawn to Jehovah's light. To start with, the newcomers were anointed as additional members of the Israel of God. They are called kings at Isaiah 60:3, since they are to be co-heirs with Christ in God's heavenly Kingdom. (Revelation 20:6) Later, a great crowd of other sheep began to be drawn to Jehovah's light. These are the "nations" mentioned in the prophecy.

### The Woman's Children Come Home!

<sup>9</sup> Now, Jehovah begins to flesh out, as it were, the information outlined at Isaiah 60:1-3. He gives the woman another command. Listen to what he says: "Raise your eyes all around and see!" The woman obeys, and what a heartwarming sight greets her! Her children are coming home. The scripture goes on to say: "They have all of them been collected together; they have come to you. From far away your own sons keep coming, and your daughters who will be taken care of on the flank." (Isaiah 60:4) The worldwide Kingdom proclamation that began in 1919 drew in thousands of new ones to Jehovah's service. These too became "sons" and "daughters" of Zion, anointed members of the Israel of God. Thus, Jehovah has beautified Zion by bringing the final ones of the 144,000 to the light.

<sup>10</sup> Can you imagine Zion's joy at having her children with her? Yet, Jehovah gives Zion additional reasons for joy. We read: "At that time you will see and certainly become radiant, and your heart will actually quiver and expand, because to you the wealthiness of the sea will direct itself; the very resources of the nations will come to you." (Isaiah 60:5)

9, 10. (a) What remarkable sight greeted the woman, and what did this prefigure? (b) What reason has Zion had for joy?

In harmony with those prophetic words, since the 1930's, multitudes of Christians whose hope is to live on earth forever have flocked to Zion. They have come out of "the sea" of mankind alienated from God and represent the resources of the nations. They are "the desirable things of all the nations." (Haggai 2:7; Isaiah 57:20) Notice, too, that these "desirable things" do not go off to serve Jehovah each one in his own way. No, they add to the beauty of Zion by coming to worship in association with their anointed brothers, becoming "one flock" with them under "one shepherd."—John 10:16.

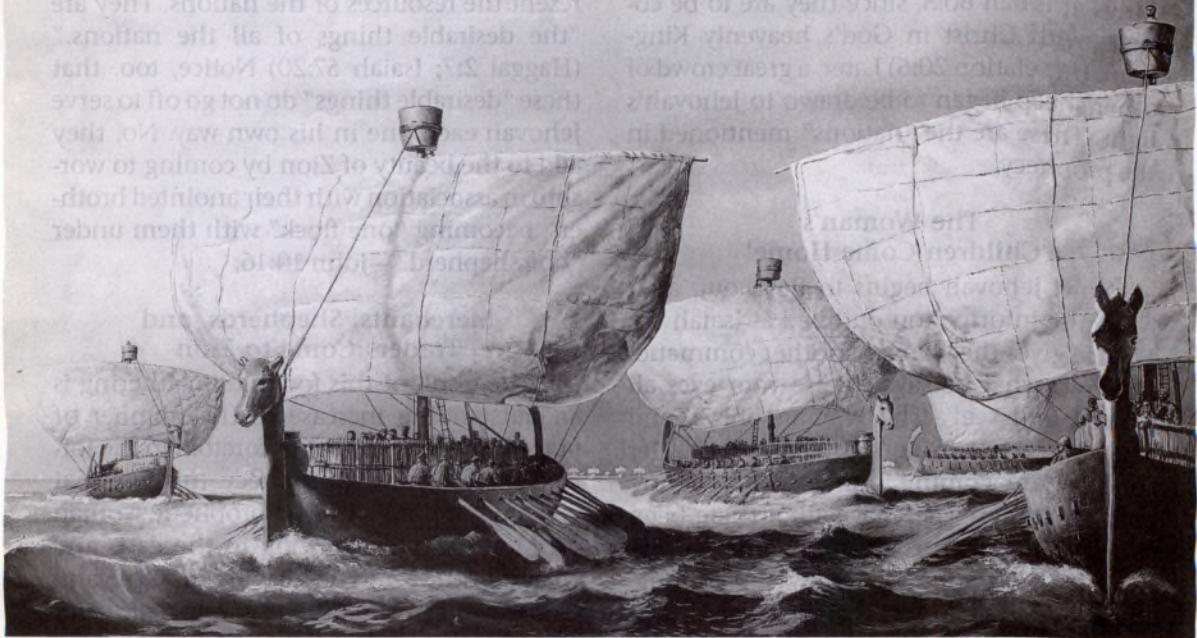
### Merchants, Shepherds, and Traders Come to Zion

<sup>11</sup> The result of this foretold ingathering is an outstanding increase in the number of praisers of Jehovah. This is foretold in the following words of the prophecy. Imagine that you are standing with the prophetic woman on Mount Zion. You look to the east, and what do you see? "The heaving mass of camels itself will cover you, the young male camels of Midian and of Ephah. All those from Sheba—they will come. Gold and frankincense they will carry. And the praises of Jehovah they will announce." (Isaiah 60:6) Crowds of merchants guide their camel caravans along the trails leading to Jerusalem. Why, the camels are like a flood covering the land! The traders bear valuable gifts, "gold and frankincense." And these merchants come to God's light in order to laud him publicly, "to announce the praises of Jehovah."

<sup>12</sup> Merchants are not the only ones on the move. Shepherds too are flocking to Zion. The prophecy goes on to say: "All the flocks of Kedar—they will be collected together to you. The rams of Nebaioth—they will

11, 12. Describe the crowds seen moving toward Zion.

**The fleet of ships looks like doves on the horizon**



minister to you." (Isaiah 60:7a) Pastoral tribes are coming to the holy city to offer the best from their flocks to Jehovah. They even offer themselves to minister to Zion! How does Jehovah receive these foreigners? God himself answers: "With approval they will come up upon my altar, and I shall beautify my own house of beauty." (Isaiah 60:7b) Jehovah graciously accepts the offerings and the service of these foreigners. Their presence beautifies his temple.

<sup>13</sup> Now turn your head and scan the western horizon. What do you see? In the far distance, there is what looks like a white cloud spread over the surface of the sea. Jehovah asks the question that is on your mind: "Who are these that come flying just like a cloud, 13, 14. What is seen coming from the west?

and like doves to their birdhouse holes?" (Isaiah 60:8) Jehovah answers his own question: "In me the islands themselves will keep hoping, the ships of Tarshish also as at the first, in order to bring your sons from far away, their silver and their gold being with them, to the name of Jehovah your God and to the Holy One of Israel, for he will have beautified you."—Isaiah 60:9.

<sup>14</sup> Can you visualize the scene? That white cloud has come closer and now looks like a cluster of dots far off to the west. It looks like a flock of birds skimming the waves. But as they come closer still, you see that they are ships with their sails unfurled to catch the wind. So many vessels are sailing toward Jerusalem that they resemble a flock of doves. From distant ports, the fleet is traveling at top

speed, bringing believers to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah.

### Jehovah's Organization Expands

<sup>15</sup> What a vivid prophetic picture verses 4 to 9 paint of the worldwide expansion that has taken place since 1919! Why did Jehovah bless Zion with such increase? Because since 1919, the Israel of God has obediently and consistently shed forth Jehovah's light. Did you notice, though, that according to verse 7, the new arrivals "come up upon [God's] altar"? An altar is where sacrifices are made, and this feature of the prophecy reminds us that Jehovah's service involves sacrifice. The apostle Paul wrote: "I entreat you . . . to present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason." (Romans 12:1) In harmony with Paul's words, genuine Christians are not satisfied with merely attending religious services once a week. They give of their time, energy, and resources to promote pure worship. Does not the presence of such devoted worshipers beautify Jehovah's house? Isaiah's prophecy said that it would. And we can be sure that such zealous worshipers are, in turn, beautiful in Jehovah's eyes.

<sup>16</sup> The newcomers want to work. The prophecy goes on to say: "Foreigners will actually build your walls, and their own kings will minister to you." (Isaiah 60:10) In the first fulfillment of these words back in the days of the return from Babylonian exile, kings and others from the nations did actually help in the rebuilding of the temple and the city of Jerusalem. (Ezra 3:7; Nehemiah 3:26) In the modern fulfillment, the great crowd has supported the anointed rem-

15. (a) What increase do the words of Isaiah 60:4-9 foretell? (b) Genuine Christians manifest what spirit?

16. Who contributed to the rebuilding work in ancient times, and who have done so in modern times?

nant in building up true worship. They have helped to build up Christian congregations and thus strengthen the citylike "walls" of Jehovah's organization. They also share in a literal building work—the construction of Kingdom Halls, Assembly Halls, and Bethel facilities. In all these ways, they support their anointed brothers in caring for the needs of Jehovah's expanding organization!

<sup>17</sup> How encouraging are the final words of Isaiah 60:10! Jehovah says: "In my indignation I shall have struck you, but in my goodwill I shall certainly have mercy upon you." Yes, back in 1918/19, Jehovah did discipline his people. But that is in the past. Now is the time for Jehovah to express mercy to his anointed servants and their other sheep companions. The evidence that this is so is the extraordinary increase with which he has blessed them, 'beautifying them,' as it were.

<sup>18</sup> Each year, hundreds of thousands of additional "foreigners" associate with Jehovah's organization, and the way will remain open for many more to follow them. Jehovah says to Zion: "Your gates will actually be kept

17. What is one way that Jehovah beautifies his people?

18, 19. (a) What promise does Jehovah make as to new ones coming into his organization? (b) What do the remaining verses of Isaiah chapter 60 tell us?

### Can You Explain?

- Who is God's "woman," and who represent her on earth?
- When were the children of Zion lying prostrate, and when and how did they "arise"?
- Using different symbols, how did Jehovah foretell today's increase in Kingdom preachers?
- In what ways has Jehovah caused his light to shine on his people?

open constantly; they will not be closed even by day or by night, in order to bring to you the resources of the nations, and their kings will be taking the lead." (Isaiah 60:11) Some opposers try to close those "gates," but we know that they cannot succeed. Jehovah himself has said that one way or another, the

gates will stay open. The increase will continue.

<sup>19</sup> There are still other ways that Jehovah has blessed his people, making them beautiful, in these last days. The remaining verses of Isaiah 60 prophetically reveal what those ways are.

## JEHOVAH'S GLORY SHINES ON HIS PEOPLE

*"Jehovah himself will become for you an indefinitely lasting light."*—ISAIAH 60:20.

**J**EHOVAH is taking pleasure in his people. He beautifies the meek ones with salvation." (Psalm 149:4) So said the psalmist of old, and history has borne out the truth of his words. When Jehovah's people are faithful, he cares for them, makes them fruitful, and protects them. In ancient times, he gave them victory over their enemies. Today, he keeps them spiritually strong and assures them of salvation on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice. (Romans 5:9) He does this because they are beautiful in his eyes.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, in a world immersed in darkness, those who "live with godly devotion" will meet opposition. (2 Timothy 3:12) Nevertheless, Jehovah takes note of the opposers, and he warns them: "Any nation and any kingdom that will not serve you will perish; and the nations themselves will without fail come to devastation." (Isaiah 60:12) Today, opposition takes many forms. In some lands, opposers try to limit or ban the worship that sincere Christians render to Jehovah.

1. How does Jehovah bless his faithful people?
2. Although they meet with opposition, of what are God's people confident?

vah. In others, fanatics physically assault Jehovah's worshipers and burn their property. Remember, though, that Jehovah has already determined the outcome of any opposition to the fulfilling of his will. Opponents will fail. Those who fight against Zion, as represented by her children on earth, cannot succeed. Is that not a heartening assurance from our great God, Jehovah?

### Blessed Beyond Expectation

<sup>3</sup> The truth is that during the last days of this system of things, Jehovah has blessed his people beyond their expectations. Especially has he progressively beautified his place of worship and those within who bear his name. According to Isaiah's prophecy, he says to Zion: "To you the very glory of Lebanon will come, the juniper tree, the ash tree and the cypress at the same time, in order to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I shall glorify the very place of my feet." (Isaiah 60:13) Mountains covered with flourishing forests are a magnificent sight. So luxuriant trees are fitting symbols of the

3. How is the beauty and fruitfulness of Jehovah's worshipers illustrated?

beauty and fruitfulness of Jehovah's worshippers.—Isaiah 41:19; 55:13.

<sup>4</sup> What are the "sanctuary" and the "place of [Jehovah's] feet" mentioned at Isaiah 60:13? These terms refer to the courtyards of Jehovah's great spiritual temple, which is the arrangement for approaching him in worship through Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:2-10, 23) Jehovah has stated his purpose to glorify that spiritual temple by bringing people out of all nations to come and worship there. (Haggai 2:7) Isaiah himself had earlier seen crowds from all nations streaming to Jehovah's elevated mountain of worship. (Isaiah 2:1-4) Hundreds of years later, the apostle John saw in vision "a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." These stood "before the throne of God . . . , rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple." (Revelation 7:9, 15) As these prophecies have been fulfilled in our day, Jehovah's house has been beautified before our very eyes.

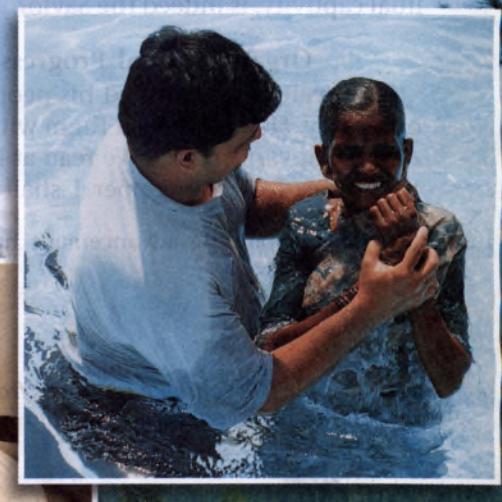
<sup>5</sup> What a great change for the better all of this has been for Zion! Jehovah says: "Instead of your proving to be one left entirely and hated, with nobody passing through, I will even set you as a thing of pride to time indefinite, an exultation for generation after generation." (Isaiah 60:15) Toward the end of the first world war, "the Israel of God" did indeed experience a period of desolation. (Galatians 6:16) She did feel "left entirely," for her children on earth did not clearly discern God's will for them. Then, in 1919, Jehovah revived his anoint-

ed servants, and since then he has blessed them with wonderful spiritual prosperity. Moreover, is not the promise in this verse exhilarating? Jehovah will view Zion as "a thing of pride." Yes, Zion's children, and Jehovah himself, will be proud of Zion. She will be "an exultation," a cause for unbounded joy. And that will not be merely for a short while. The favored condition of Zion, as represented by her earthly children, will last "for generation after generation." It will never cease.

<sup>6</sup> Listen, now, to another divine promise. Speaking to Zion, Jehovah says: "You will

6. How do true Christians use resources from the nations?

*In the face of violent opposition, 'Jehovah beautifies his people with salvation'*



4. What are the "sanctuary" and the "place of [Jehovah's] feet," and how have these been beautified?

5. What great change for the better did the children of Zion experience?

actually suck the milk of nations, and the breast of kings you will suck; and you will be certain to know that I, Jehovah, am your Savior, and the Powerful One of Jacob is your Repurchaser." (Isaiah 60:16) How does Zion feed on "the milk of nations" and suck "the breast of kings"? In that anointed Christians and their "other sheep" companions use valuable resources from the nations in order to advance pure worship. (John 10:16) Freely given financial contributions help to make possible a great international preaching and teaching work. Wise use of modern technology facilitates the publishing of Bibles and Bible literature in hundreds of languages. Today, Bible truth is available to more people than ever before in history. Citizens of many, many nations are learning that Jehovah, who repurchased his anointed servants out of spiritual captivity, is indeed the Savior.

### Organizational Progress

<sup>7</sup> Jehovah has beautified his people in another way. He has blessed them with organizational advancement. We read at Isaiah 60:17: "Instead of the copper I shall bring in

7. What outstanding advancement have Zion's children experienced?

gold, and instead of the iron I shall bring in silver, and instead of the wood, copper, and instead of the stones, iron; and I will appoint peace as your overseers and righteousness as your task assigners." Replacing copper with gold is an improvement, and the same is true of the other materials mentioned. In harmony with this, the Israel of God has experienced ongoing organizational improvements throughout the last days. Consider a few examples.

<sup>8</sup> Before 1919, congregations of God's people were administered by elders and deacons, all of whom were democratically elected by members of the congregation. Starting in that year, "the faithful and discreet slave" appointed a service director in each congregation to supervise field service activities. (Matthew 24:45-47) However, in many congregations that arrangement did not work out so well because some elective elders did not fully support the evangelizing work. Hence, in 1932, congregations were instructed to discontinue the electing of elders and deacons. Instead, they were to elect men to

8-10. Describe some organizational improvements that have occurred since 1919.

**God's people use valuable resources from the nations to advance pure worship**



**Jehovah has blessed his people  
with organizational advancement  
and peace**

serve on a service committee along with the service director. That was like "copper" instead of "wood"—a big improvement!

<sup>9</sup> In 1938, congregations around the world resolved to accept an improved arrangement, one that was more in harmony with Scriptural precedent. Congregation administration was entrusted to a company servant and other servants, all appointed under the oversight of the faithful and discreet slave. No more elections! Thus congregation appointments were made in a theocratic way. That was like "iron" instead of "stones" or "gold" instead of "copper."

<sup>10</sup> Since then progress has continued. For example, in 1972 it was seen that having congregations overseen by a cooperating body of theocratically appointed elders, with no one elder exercising authority over the rest, was even closer to the way that first-century Christian congregations were administered. Further, about two years ago, there was another step forward. An adjustment was made in the directorship of certain legal corporations, making it possible for the Governing Body to concentrate more fully on the spiritual interests of God's people rather than being distracted by day-to-day legal matters.

<sup>11</sup> Who is behind these progressive changes? None other than Jehovah God. He is the one who says: "I shall bring in gold." And he is the one who goes on to say: "I will appoint peace as your overseers and righteousness as your task assigners." Yes, Jehovah is responsi-

11. Who has been behind the organizational changes among Jehovah's people, and what have these changes resulted in?



ble for the oversight of his people. The foretold organizational advancement is another way that he is beautifying his people. And Jehovah's Witnesses have been blessed in many ways as a result. At Isaiah 60:18, we read: "No more will violence be heard in your land, despoiling or breakdown within your boundaries. And you will certainly call your own walls Salvation and your gates Praise." How beautiful those words are! But how have they been fulfilled?

<sup>12</sup> True Christians look intently to Jehovah for instruction and guidance, and the result is as foretold by Isaiah: "All your sons will be persons taught by Jehovah, and the peace of your sons will be abundant." (Isaiah 54:13) Further, Jehovah's spirit operates upon his people, and part of the fruitage of that spirit is peace. (Galatians 5:22, 23) The resulting peaceableness of Jehovah's people makes them a refreshing oasis in a violent world. Their peaceful state, based on the love that true Christians have for one another, is a foretaste of new world living. (John 15:17; Colossians 3:14) Surely each of us is thrilled to enjoy and to contribute to that peace, which brings praise and honor to our God and

12. How has peace come to reign among true Christians?

which is a major component of our spiritual paradise!—Isaiah 11:9.

### Jehovah's Light Will Continue to Shine

<sup>13</sup> Will Jehovah's light continue to shine on his people? Yes! At Isaiah 60:19, 20, we read: "For you the sun will no more prove to be a light by day, and for brightness the moon it-

13. Why can we be sure that Jehovah's light will never cease to shine upon his people?

self will no more give you light. And Jehovah must become to you an indefinitely lasting light, and your God your beauty. No more will your sun set, nor will your moon go on the wane; for Jehovah himself will become for you an indefinitely lasting light, and the days of your mourning will have come to completion." Once the "mourning" of the spiritual exiles came to a completion in 1919, Jehovah's light began to shine upon them. More than 80 years later, they are still enjoying Jehovah's favor as his light continues to shine. And it will not stop. With regard to his worshipers, our God will not "set" like the sun or "wane" like the moon. Rather, he will shed light upon them throughout eternity. What a wonderful assurance that is for us who are living during the last days of this darkened world!

<sup>14</sup> Hear, now, yet another promise that Jehovah utters regarding Zion's earthly representative, the Israel of God. Isaiah 60:21 says: "As for your people, all of them will be righteous; to time indefinite they will hold possession of the land, the sprout of my planting, the work of my hands, for me to be beautified." In 1919 when anointed Christians were restored to activity, they were an unusual group of people. In a decidedly sinful world, they had been "declared righteous" on the basis of their unshakable faith in the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus. (Romans 3:24; 5:1) Then, like the Israelites released from Babylonian captivity, they took possession of a "land," a spiritual land, or realm of activity, wherein they would enjoy a spiritual paradise. (Isaiah 66:8) The paradisaic beauty of that land will never fade because, unlike ancient Israel, the Israel of God as a nation will not prove unfaithful. Their faith,

14, 15. (a) In what way are all of God's people "righteous"? (b) With regard to Isaiah 60:21, to what important fulfillment do the other sheep look forward?

### ISAIAH'S PROPHECY Light for All Mankind

The substance of the material in these articles was presented in a discourse during the 2001/02 "Teachers of God's Word" District Conventions. At the end of the talk, in most locations the speaker released a new publication entitled *Isaiah's Prophecy—Light for All Mankind*, Volume Two. The preceding year, *Isaiah's Prophecy—Light for All Mankind*, Volume One had been released. With the release of this new publication, there is now available an up-to-date discussion of nearly every verse in the book of Isaiah. These volumes are proving to be a fine help in deepening our understanding of and appreciation for the faith-inspiring prophetic book of Isaiah.

ISAIAH'S  
PROPHECY  
Light for All Mankind



their endurance, and their zeal will never cease to bring honor to God's name.

<sup>15</sup> All members of that spiritual nation have come into the new covenant. All have Jehovah's law written on their hearts, and Jehovah, on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice, has forgiven their sins. (Jeremiah 31:31-34) He declares them righteous as "sons" and deals with them as if they were perfect. (Romans 8:15, 16, 29, 30) Their other sheep companions have also had their sins forgiven on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice and, like Abraham, have been declared righteous as friends of God by means of faith. "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." And these other sheep companions look forward to another outstanding blessing. After surviving "the great tribulation" or after being resurrected, they will see a physical fulfillment of the words of Isaiah 60:21 when the whole earth becomes a paradise. (Revelation 7:14; Romans 4:1-3) At that time, "the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:11, 29.

### The Increase Continues

<sup>16</sup> In the last verse of Isaiah 60, we read Jehovah's final promise in this chapter. He says to Zion: "The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time." (Isaiah 60:22) In our day, Jehovah has kept his word. When anointed Christians were restored to activity in 1919, they were few in number—truly, a "little one." Their number increased as additional spiritual Israelites were brought in. And then the other sheep started to flock to them in ever-increasing numbers. The peaceful condition of God's people, the spiritual paradise existing on their "land," has attracted so many

16. What remarkable promise did Jehovah make, and how has it been fulfilled?

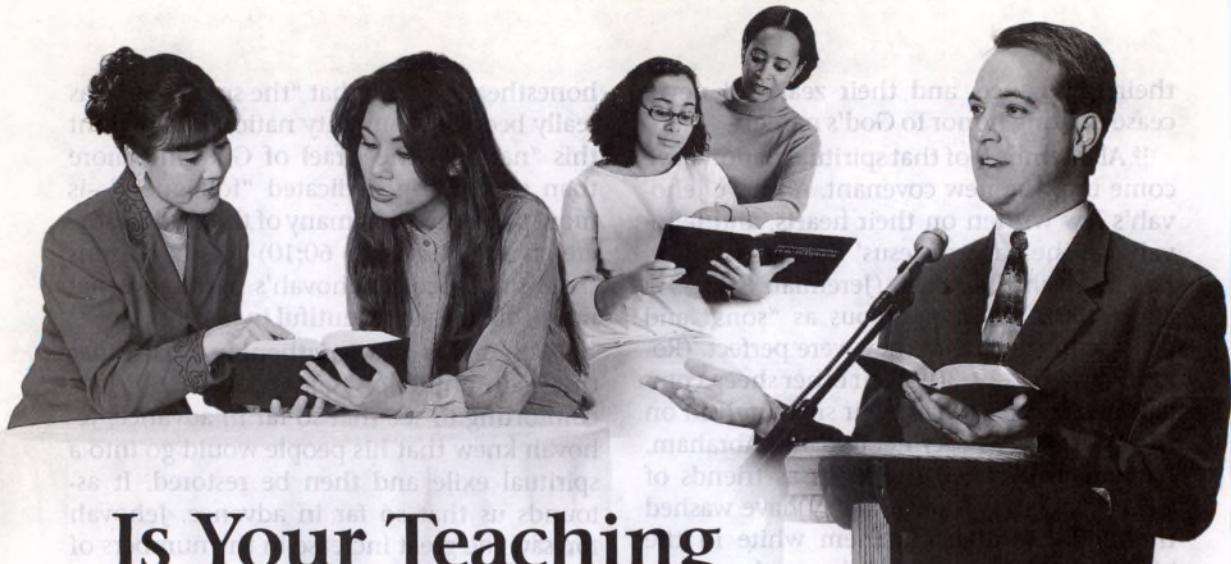
honesthearted ones that "the small one" has really become "a mighty nation." At present this "nation"—the Israel of God and more than six million dedicated "foreigners"—is more populous than many of the world's sovereign states. (Isaiah 60:10) All its citizens share in reflecting Jehovah's light, and that makes all of them beautiful in his eyes.

<sup>17</sup> Yes, it is faith-strengthening to consider the main points of Isaiah chapter 60. It is comforting to see that so far in advance, Jehovah knew that his people would go into a spiritual exile and then be restored. It astounds us that so far in advance, Jehovah foresaw the great increase in the numbers of true worshipers in our day. Moreover, how comforting it is to remember that Jehovah will not leave us! How loving the assurance that the gates of "the city" will always stay open to receive hospitably those who are "rightly disposed for everlasting life"! (Acts 13:48) Jehovah will continue to shine upon his people. Zion will continue to be a cause of pride as her children let their light shine brighter and brighter. (Matthew 5:16) Surely we are more determined than ever to stay close to the Israel of God and to cherish our privilege of reflecting Jehovah's light!

17. How has this discussion of Isaiah chapter 60 affected you?

### Can You Explain?

- With regard to opposition, of what are we confident?
- How have Zion's children 'sucked the milk of nations'?
- In what ways has Jehovah 'brought in copper instead of wood'?
- What two qualities are highlighted at Isaiah 60:17, 21?
- How has "the small one" become "a mighty nation"?



# Is Your Teaching Effective?

PARENTS, elders, proclaimers of the good news—all are required to be teachers. Parents teach their children, elders teach members of the Christian congregation, and preachers of the good news teach newly interested ones. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7; Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Timothy 4:13, 16) What can you do to make your teaching more effective? For one thing, you can imitate the example and method of capable teachers mentioned in God's Word. Ezra was such a teacher.

## Learning From Ezra's Example

Ezra was an Aaronic priest who lived some 2,500 years ago in Babylon. In the year 468 B.C.E., he went to Jerusalem in order to advance pure worship among the Jews living there. (Ezra 7:1, 6, 12, 13) This task required him to teach the people God's Law. What did Ezra do to ensure that his teaching was effective? He took several necessary steps. Note these steps as recorded at Ezra 7:10:

"Ezra himself had [1] *prepared* his heart [2] to *consult* the law of Jehovah and [3] to *do*

it and [4] to *teach* in Israel regulation and justice." Let us briefly look at each of these steps and see what we can learn from them.

### "Ezra Himself Had Prepared His Heart"

Just as the farmer first prepares the soil by using a plow before sowing seed, Ezra prayerfully prepared his heart to receive the word of God. (Ezra 10:1) In other words, he 'inclined his heart' to Jehovah's teaching.—Proverbs 2:2.

Similarly, the Bible states that King Jehoshaphat "prepared [his] heart to search for the true God." (2 Chronicles 19:3) In contrast, a generation of Israel "who had not prepared their heart" is described as "stubborn and rebellious." (Psalm 78:8) Jehovah sees "the secret person of the heart." (1 Peter 3:4) Yes, "he will teach the meek ones his way." (Psalm 25:9) How important it is, therefore, that teachers today follow Ezra's example by first prayerfully bringing their heart into the proper condition!

## "To Consult the Law of Jehovah"

To be a capable teacher, Ezra consulted God's Word. If you were to consult a doctor, would you not listen attentively and make sure that you understood all that he was saying or prescribing? No doubt you would, for your health is at stake. How much more, therefore, should we give profound attention to the things Jehovah is telling us, or prescribing, through his Word, the Bible, and through "the faithful and discreet slave." After all, his counsel concerns our very life! (Matthew 4:4; 24:45-47) Of course, a doctor can be wrong, but "the law of Jehovah is perfect." (Psalm 19:7) We will never be in need of a second opinion.

The Bible books of Chronicles (which Ezra originally wrote as one volume) show that Ezra was indeed a thorough student. To write those books, he referred to numerous sources.\* The Jews, who had recently arrived from Babylon, were in need of a summary of their nation's history. They had insufficient knowledge of the observances of their religion, the service in the temple, and the tasks of the Levites. Genealogical records were of vital importance for them. Ezra paid special attention to those matters. Until the coming of the Messiah, the Jews were to remain as a nation with its own land, a temple, a priesthood, and a governor. Thanks to the information Ezra had gathered, unity and true worship could be preserved.

How do your study habits compare with those of Ezra? Studying the Bible diligently will aid you in teaching the Bible effectively.

## "Consult the Law of Jehovah" as a Family

Consulting the law of Jehovah is not restricted to personal study. Family study is an excellent opportunity to do this as well.

\* A listing of 20 sources can be found in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, pages 444-5, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Jan and Julia, a couple in the Netherlands, have read out loud to their two sons from the very day the children were born. Today, Ivo is 15 years old, and Edo is 14. Once a week, they still have their family study. Jan explains: "Our main objective is not that we cover a lot of material during the study but that the boys grasp what is discussed." He adds: "The boys do a lot of research. They check unfamiliar words and Bible personalities—when they lived, who they were, what their occupation was, and so forth. Ever since they learned to read, they have consulted such books as *Insight on the Scriptures*, dictionaries, and encyclopedias. This makes the family study much more enjoyable. The boys are always waiting and ready to go." As a fringe benefit, both boys now also are at the head of their classes in linguistic abilities.

John and Tini, another couple in the Netherlands, studied with their son, Esli (now 24 years old and pioneering in another congregation), and their daughter, Linda (now 20 years old and married to a fine young brother). However, instead of studying a certain publication by means of the usual question-and-answer method, they tailored the family study to the age and needs of the children. What method did they use?

John explains that his son and daughter chose an interesting subject from "Questions From Readers" (from *The Watchtower*) and "The Bible's Viewpoint" (from *Awake!*). Later, they presented what they had prepared, which always resulted in interesting family discussions. In this way the young ones gained experience in doing research and in discussing the results of their study. Do you "consult the law of Jehovah" with your children? This not only will enhance your personal teaching ability but will also help your children to become more effective teachers.

## WHAT MADE EZRA'S TEACHING EFFECTIVE?

1. He brought his heart into a proper condition
2. He consulted the Law of Jehovah
3. He set a good example in applying what he learned
4. He applied himself to teaching the Scriptural view



### "To Do It"

Ezra applied what he learned. For instance, while still in Babylon, he may have lived a settled life. Nevertheless, when he realized that he could help his people abroad, he exchanged the comforts of Babylon for the distant city of Jerusalem, with all its inconveniences, problems, and perils. Clearly, not only had Ezra been gathering Bible knowledge but he was ready to act on what he had learned.—1 Timothy 3:13.

Later, while living in Jerusalem, Ezra again showed that he applied what he had learned and was teaching. This became evident when he heard of the marriages of Israelite men to heathen women. The Bible record tells us that he ‘ripped apart his garment and his sleeveless coat and pulled out some of the hair of his head and of his beard and kept sitting stunned until the evening.’ He even felt ‘ashamed and embarrassed to raise up his face’ to Jehovah.—Ezra 9:1-6.

How his study of God’s Law had affected him! Ezra had a clear view of the terrible consequences of the people’s disobedience. The number of the repatriated Jews was small. If they entered into mixed marriages, they might eventually merge with the surrounding pagan nations, and pure worship could easily vanish from the face of the earth!

Happily, Ezra’s example of devoted fear and zeal moved the Israelites to correct their ways. They got rid of their foreign wives. Within three months all was set straight.

Ezra’s personal loyalty to God’s Law did much to make his teaching effective.

The same is true today. One Christian father said: “Children do not do as you say; they do as you do!” The same principle applies within the Christian congregation. Elders who set a fine example may expect that the congregation will respond to their teachings.

### "To Teach in Israel Regulation and Justice"

There is yet another reason why Ezra’s teaching was effective. He did not teach his own ideas, but he taught “regulation and justice.” That is, the regulations, or laws, of Jehovah. This was his priestly responsibility. (Malachi 2:7) He also taught justice, and he provided an example of what he taught by sticking to what is right in a fair and impartial way, according to a standard. When those having authority show justice, stability is built and permanent results are produced. (Proverbs 29:4) Similarly, Christian elders, parents, and Kingdom proclaimers who are well-acquainted with God’s Word will build up spiritual stability when they teach Jehovah’s regulations and justice in the congregation, in their families, and to interested ones.

Do you not agree that your teaching may become more effective when you imitate to the full the example of faithful Ezra? Therefore, *‘prepare your heart, consult the law of Jehovah, do it, and teach Jehovah’s regulation and justice.’*—Ezra 7:10.



## STRENGTHENED BY OUR WORLDWIDE BROTHERHOOD

AS TOLD BY  
**THOMSON KANGALE**

On April 24, 1993, I was invited to attend the dedication program of a new branch office complex, which included 13 buildings, in Lusaka, Zambia. Since I had difficulty walking, the Christian sister giving us a tour of the facilities kindly asked, "Would you like me to carry a chair for you so that you can rest occasionally?" I am black, and she is white, but that made no difference to her. Deeply moved, I thanked her, since her kindness made it possible for me to tour all the branch facilities.

OVER the years, experiences like this have warmed my heart, reaffirming my conviction that within the Christian association of Jehovah's Witnesses, there exists the love that Christ said would identify his genuine followers. (John 13:35; 1 Peter 2:17) Let me tell you how I became acquainted with these Christians back in 1931, the year when they publicly declared their desire to be

known by the Bible-based name Jehovah's Witnesses.—Isaiah 43:12.

### Early Ministry in Africa

In November 1931, I was 22 years old and living in Kitwe, located in the Copperbelt region of Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). A friend with whom I played soccer introduced me to the Witnesses. I attended some of their

meetings and wrote to the branch office in Cape Town, South Africa, requesting the Bible study aid *The Harp of God*.\* The book was in English, and I found it difficult to understand, since I did not know that language very well.

The Copperbelt region, located about 150 miles southwest of Lake Bangweulu, near which I grew up, employed many from other provinces in the copper mines. Several groups of Witnesses met there regularly for Bible study. After a while, I moved from Kitwe to the nearby town of Ndola and began to associate with a group of Witnesses there. At the time, I was captain of a soccer team called Prince of Wales. I also worked as a house servant for a white manager of the African Lakes Corporation, a company that had a chain of stores in central Africa.

I had limited formal schooling and picked up the little English I knew from Europeans for whom I worked. Still, I was eager to further my secular education and applied to

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses but now out of print.

*Thomson with the Zambia branch  
in the background*



study in a school in Plumtree, Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). In the meantime, however, I wrote to the Cape Town branch office a second time. I let them know that I had received *The Harp of God* and wanted to serve Jehovah full-time.

I was surprised to receive their reply, which said: "We appreciate your desire to serve Jehovah. We would like to encourage you to make it a matter of prayer, and Jehovah will help you to have a better understanding of the truth, and he will find a place for you to serve him." After reading the letter several times, I asked a number of Witnesses what I should do. They said: "If it really is your desire to serve Jehovah, go ahead and do it right away."

For a whole week, I prayed about the matter and finally decided to forgo my secular education and continue to pursue my Bible study with the Witnesses. The following year, in January 1932, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah God by water baptism. After moving from Ndola to the nearby city of Luan-

shya, I met Jeanette, a fellow believer, and we were married in September 1934. When we married, Jeanette already had a son and a daughter.

Gradually, I made spiritual progress, and in 1937, I entered the full-time ministry. Shortly afterward I was appointed to serve as a traveling minister, now called a circuit overseer. Traveling overseers visit congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses to strengthen them spiritually.

#### **Preaching in Early Years**

In January 1938, I was directed to visit an African chief named Sokontwe,

who had requested that Jehovah's Witnesses call on him. I rode for three days on a bicycle to reach his area. When I told him that I had been sent in response to his letter to our Cape Town office, he was genuinely appreciative.

I went from hut to hut among his people and invited them to the *insaka* (public booth). When they had gathered, I spoke to the crowd. As a result, many Bible studies were started. The village chief and his clerk were the first to become overseers of congregations there. Today, there are over 50 congregations in that area, which is now known as Samfya district.

From 1942 to 1947, I served in the region around Lake Bangweulu. I spent ten days with each congregation. Since workers engaged in the spiritual harvest were then few, we felt just as our Lord, Jesus Christ, did when he said: "Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest." (Matthew 9:36-38) In those early days, traveling was difficult, so Jeanette usually remained in Luanshya with the children while I visited congregations. By then, Jeanette and I had two more children, but one of them died at ten months of age.

Automobiles were few in those days and so, of course, were roads. One day, I set off riding Jeanette's bicycle on a journey of over 120 miles. Sometimes when I had to cross a small river, I put the bicycle on my shoulders, held it with one hand, and swam using the other. Incidentally, the number of Witnesses grew dramatically in Luanshya, and in 1946, 1,850 attended the Memorial of Christ's death.

### Facing Opposition to Our Work

On one occasion during World War II, the district commissioner in Kawambwa summoned me and said: "I want you to stop using the books of the Watch Tower Society because they are now under ban. But I can give

you tools that you can use for writing other books for use in your work."

"I am satisfied with the literature we have," I responded. "I need nothing more."

"You don't know the Americans," he said (our literature was then printed in the United States). "They will mislead you."

"No, the ones I deal with won't," I replied.

Then he asked: "Can't you encourage your congregations to make monetary donations to help out with the war as the other religions are doing?"

"That work is for government messengers," I answered.

"Why don't you go home and think about it?" he said.

"At Exodus 20:13 and 2 Timothy 2:24, the Bible commands us not to murder and not to fight," I responded.

Although I was allowed to leave, I was later summoned by the district commissioner in Fort Rosebery, a town now called Mansa. "I called you here to let you know that the government has banned your books," he said.

"Yes, I have heard about it," I said.

"So you should go to all your congregations and tell the people you worship with to bring all the books here. Understand?"

"That is not my work," I replied. "It is the responsibility of government messengers."

### An Encounter Yields Fruitage

After the war, we kept right on preaching. In 1947, I had just finished serving a congregation in the village of Mwanza when I inquired about where I could buy a cup of tea. I was directed to the house of a Mr. Nkonde, where there was a tearoom. Mr. Nkonde and his wife received me warmly. I asked Mr. Nkonde if, while I drank my tea, he would read the chapter "Hell, a Place of Rest in Hope" in the book *"Let God Be True."*

"So how do you understand hell?" I asked after I had finished my tea. Amazed by what

he had read, he began to study the Bible with the Witnesses and later was baptized along with his wife. Although he did not remain a Witness, his wife and a number of his children did. In fact, one of his children, Pilney, is still serving at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Zambia. And although Pilney's mother is now quite elderly, she is still a faithful Witness.

### A Taste of East Africa

Our branch office in Northern Rhodesia, which was established early in 1948 in Lusaka, assigned me to Tanganyika (now Tanzania). Another Witness accompanied my wife and me on our journey through mountainous territory on foot. The trip took us three days and was very tiring. While I carried the bundle of books, my wife carried our clothes, and the other Witness carried our bedding.

When we arrived in Mbeya in March 1948, there was much to do to help the brothers make adjustments to conform more fully to Bible teachings. For one thing, we were known in that area as Watchtower people. Although the name Jehovah's Witnesses had been accepted by the brothers, it had not been featured publicly. In addition, some Witnesses needed to abandon certain customs connected with honoring the dead. But probably the most difficult adjustment for many was to register their marriages legally, making them honorable before all.—Hebrews 13:4.

Later, I had the privilege of serving other areas in East Africa, including Uganda. I spent

some six weeks in Entebbe and Kampala, where many were helped to a knowledge of Bible truth.

### Invitation to New York City

After serving in Uganda for some time, I arrived early in 1956 in Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanganyika. There a letter from the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses awaited me. It contained instructions to start preparing to come to New York to attend an international convention that would be held from July 27 to August 3, 1958. Needless to say, I was excited at the prospect.

When the time came, another traveling overseer, Luka Mwango, and I flew from Ndola to Salisbury (now Harare), Southern Rhodesia, then on to Nairobi, Kenya. From there we flew to London, England, where we were warmly received. When we went to bed the night of our arrival in England, we were excited and kept talking about how we Africans had been received so hospitably by white people. We were extremely encouraged by the experience.

Finally, we arrived in New York, where the convention was held. One day during the convention, I gave a report about the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Northern Rhodesia. On that day the audience consisted of nearly 200,000 gathered at New York City's Polo Grounds and Yankee Stadium. I couldn't sleep that night because of thinking about the wonderful privilege I had enjoyed.

All too soon the convention was over and we returned home. On our homeward jour-

*The Zambia branch today*



ney, we again experienced the loving hospitality of our brothers and sisters in England. The unity of Jehovah's people, regardless of race or nationality, was unforgettable demonstrated to us during that trip!

#### Continued Service and Trials

In 1967, I was appointed to be a district servant—a minister who travels from circuit to circuit. By then the number of Witnesses in Zambia had increased to over 35,000. Later, because of deteriorating health, I was again assigned as a circuit overseer in the Copperbelt. Eventually, Jeanette developed health problems and in December 1984 died faithful to Jehovah.

After her death, I was deeply hurt when unbelieving in-laws accused me of causing her death by employing witchcraft. But some who knew of Jeanette's illness and had talked with her doctor explained to these relatives the truth of the matter. Then came a further trial. Some relatives wanted me to comply with the traditional custom called *ukupyanika*. In the region from which I come, this custom demands that when a spouse dies, the surviving mate have sexual relations with a close relative of the deceased. Of course, I refused.

Eventually, the pressure from relatives ended. I was grateful that Jehovah had helped me to take a firm stand. A month after the burial of my wife, one brother came up to me and said: "Brother Kangale, you were really an encouragement to us at the death of your wife because there wasn't a single ungodly tradition to which you succumbed. We want to thank you so much."

#### A Marvelous Harvest

It has now been 65 years since I began my full-time ministry as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. What a joy it has been during these years to see hundreds of congregations formed and many Kingdom Halls built in

areas where I once served as a traveling overseer! From the some 2,800 Witnesses in 1943, we have now increased to over 122,000 Kingdom proclaimers in Zambia. Indeed, last year over 514,000 attended the Memorial in this country, which has a population of fewer than 11 million.

In the meantime, Jehovah takes good care of me. When I need medical attention, a Christian brother takes me to the hospital. Congregations still invite me to give public discourses, and this provides me with many upbuilding moments. The congregation I associate with arranges for Christian sisters to take turns to clean my house, and brothers volunteer to escort me to meetings every week. I know I would never have enjoyed such loving care if I were not serving Jehovah. I thank him for continuing to use me in the full-time ministry and for the many responsibilities I have been able to shoulder up until now.

My eyesight has grown dim, and when I walk to the Kingdom Hall, I have to rest a number of times on the way. My book bag seems heavier these days, so I lighten it by taking out any books I may not need at the meeting. My field ministry consists mostly of conducting Bible studies with those who come to my house. Yet, what a pleasure it is to look back over the years and to be able to reflect on the marvelous growth that has occurred! I have served in a field where Jehovah's words recorded at Isaiah 60:22 have had an outstanding fulfillment. There it says: "The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time." Indeed, I have lived to see that very thing happen not only in Zambia but throughout the world.\*

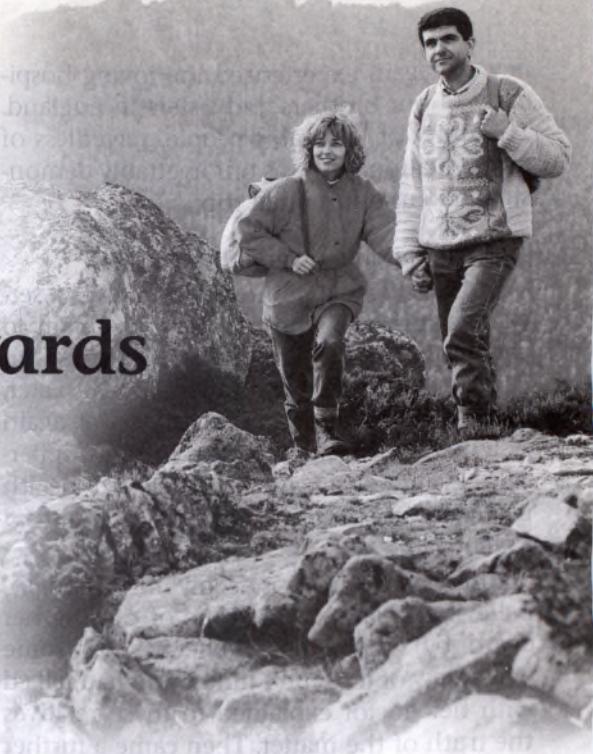
\* Sadly, Brother Kangale's strength finally gave out, and he died faithful while this article was being prepared for publication.

# Walking in Jehovah's Paths Brings Rich Rewards

HAVE you ever hiked in the mountains? If you have, you likely felt as if you were on the roof of the world. How delightful it was to breathe the fresh air, to see far into the distance, to absorb the natural beauty! Perhaps the cares of the world below seemed a little less important.

For most people such excursions are few and far between, but if you are a dedicated Christian, you may have been walking in high country for some time—in a spiritual sense. Like the psalmist of old, you have no doubt prayed: "Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths." (Psalm 25:4) Do you remember how you felt when you first went up to the mountain of the house of Jehovah and began to tread in high places? (Micah 4:2; Habakkuk 3:19) Doubtless, you soon realized that walking along these elevated paths of pure worship brought you protection and joy. You came to share the psalmist's feelings: "Happy are the people knowing the joyful shouting, O Jehovah, in the light of your face they keep walking."—Psalm 89:15.

Sometimes, though, hikers in mountainous terrain have to contend with long, steep slopes. Their legs begin to ache, and they become weary. We too can experience difficulties in our godly service. Recently, our steps may have been a little labored. How can we



regain our vigor and our joy? A first step is to recognize the supremacy of Jehovah's ways.

## Jehovah's Elevated Laws

Jehovah's ways are 'higher than man's ways,' and his worship has been 'firmly established above the mountains and lifted up above the hills.' (Isaiah 55:9; Micah 4:1) Jehovah's wisdom is "the wisdom from above." (James 3:17) His laws are superior to all others. For example, at a time when the Canaanites practiced cruel child sacrifice, Jehovah gave the Israelites laws that were morally elevated and marked by compassion. He told them: "You must not treat the lowly with partiality, and you must not prefer the person of a great one. . . . The alien resident . . . should become to you like a native of yours; and you must love him as yourself."—Leviticus 19:15, 34.

Fifteen centuries later, Jesus gave more examples of Jehovah's 'majestic law.' (Isaiah

42:21) In the Sermon on the Mount, he told his disciples: "Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you; that you may prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens." (Matthew 5: 44, 45) "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them," he added. "This, in fact, is what the Law and the Prophets mean."—Matthew 7:12.

These elevated laws have an effect on the hearts of responsive people, motivating them to imitate the God they worship. (Ephesians 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:13) Think of the transformation that occurred in the case of Paul. When we first hear of him, he "was approving of the murder of" Stephen and dealing "outrageously with the congregation." Just a few years later, he was dealing gently with the Christians in Thessalonica like "a nursing mother [who] cherishes her own children." Divine teaching changed Paul from a persecutor to a caring Christian. (Acts 8:1, 3; 1 Thessalonians 2:7) He was certainly grateful that his personality had been molded by Christ's teaching. (1 Timothy 1: 12, 13) How can a similar appreciation help us keep walking along God's elevated paths?

### Walking Appreciatively

Hikers delight in the spectacular views that high country affords. They also learn to savor small things alongside the footpath, such as an unusual rock, a pretty flower, or a glimpse of a wild animal. Spiritually, we need to be alert to the rewards—large and small—that come from walking with God. This awareness can put a spring in our step and transform a tiresome trudge into an invigorating walk. We will echo the words of David: "In the morning cause me to hear your loving-kindness, for in you I have put my trust. Make known to me the way in which I should walk."—Psalm 143:8.

Mary, who has walked for many years in Jehovah's paths, says: "When I look at Jehovah's creation, I see not only the intricate design but God's warm personality. Whether it be an animal, a bird, or an insect, each one is a little world, full of fascination. The same enjoyment comes from spiritual truths that become clearer over the years."

How can we deepen our appreciation? In part, by not taking for granted what Jehovah does for us. "Pray incessantly," Paul wrote. "In connection with everything give thanks."—1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18; Psalm 119:62.

Personal study contributes to a grateful spirit. Paul urged the Colossian Christians: "Go on walking in union with [Christ Jesus], . . . overflowing with faith in thanksgiving." (Colossians 2:6, 7) Reading the Bible and meditating on what we read strengthens our faith and draws us closer to the Bible's Author. Throughout its pages are treasures that can incite us to 'overflow in thanksgiving.'

Serving Jehovah alongside our brothers also makes the way easier. The psalmist said of himself: "A partner I am of all those who do fear you." (Psalm 119:63) Some of our happiest moments are spent at Christian assemblies or otherwise in the company of our brothers. We recognize that our precious worldwide Christian family owes its

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

What Has Happened to Hellfire?

Christians Worship With Spirit  
and Truth

Sow Righteousness, Reap God's  
Loving-Kindness

existence to Jehovah and his elevated ways.  
—Psalm 144:15b.

Besides appreciation, a sense of responsibility will strengthen us to keep progressing along Jehovah's elevated paths.

### Walking Responsibly

Hikers with a sense of responsibility recognize the need to walk carefully if they are to avoid getting lost or straying too close to steep drops. As free moral agents, Jehovah allows us a fair measure of freedom and initiative. But such freedom requires a sense of responsibility as we fulfill our Christian obligations.

For example, Jehovah trusts his servants to fulfill their obligations responsibly. He does not state how much energy and time we should expend in Christian activities or how much we should contribute financially or in other ways. Rather, Paul's words to the Corinthians apply to us all: "Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart."—2 Corinthians 9:7; Hebrews 13:15, 16.

Responsible Christian giving includes sharing the good news with others. We also show that we are responsible by contributing to the worldwide Kingdom work. Gerhardt, an elder, explains that he and his wife increased their contributions significantly after visiting an assembly in Eastern Europe. "We saw that our brothers there have so little in a material way; yet they appreciate our Bible literature so much," he says, "so we decided that we wanted to give as much support as we could to our needy brothers in other lands."

### Increasing Our Endurance

Walking in high country demands stamina. Hikers exercise whenever they can, and many take short walks to prepare themselves for long hikes. Similarly, Paul recommended that we keep busy in theocratic activities

in order to maintain our spiritual fitness. Those who wish "to walk worthily of Jehovah" and to be "made powerful," Paul said, should "go on bearing fruit in every good work."—Colossians 1:10, 11.

Motivation contributes to the hiker's staying power. How? Keeping focused on a clear objective, such as a distant mountain, has a stimulating effect. And when the hiker arrives at intermediate landmarks, he can measure his progress toward his ultimate goal. As he looks back at the distance already traveled, he feels satisfied.

Likewise, our hope of everlasting life sustains and impels us. (Romans 12:12) Meanwhile, as we walk in Jehovah's ways, we find accomplishment in setting and then attaining Christian goals. And what joy we feel when we look back on years of faithful service or observe the changes that we have made in our personality!—Psalm 16:11.

To cover long distances and conserve energy, walkers move at a steady pace. Similarly, a good routine that includes regular meetings and field service will keep us moving intently toward our goal. Thus, Paul encouraged fellow Christians: "Let us go on walking orderly in this same routine."—Philippians 3:16.

Of course, we do not walk alone along Jehovah's paths. "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds," Paul writes. (Hebrews 10:24, New International Version) Good spiritual company will make it easier to keep up the pace as we walk with fellow believers.—Proverbs 13:20.

Finally, and most important, we must never forget the power that Jehovah gives. Those whose strength is in Jehovah will "walk on from vital energy to vital energy." (Psalm 84:5, 7) Though we at times must traverse rough terrain, with Jehovah's assistance we can do it.

## International Conventions in 2003

ON Saturday, October 6, 2001, the annual meeting of members of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania was held in Jersey City, New Jersey, U.S.A. After that meeting, a special program was enjoyed by the members and their guests. The following day, at supplemental meetings held in four cities in Canada and the United States, members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses made the following announcement after their closing talk:<sup>19</sup>

"As we look to the future, it is highly important that all of God's people not forsake the assembling of themselves together. The apostle Paul exhorted that this, along with encouraging one another, be done all the more so as we behold Jehovah's great and fear-inspiring day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) In harmony with this Scriptural injunction, we hope to have district conventions in all parts of the world next year [2002]. Then in the year 2003, if it be Jehovah's will, it may be possible to hold special international conventions in certain regions of the world. Now is the time to stay awake and keep on the watch, discerning how events on the world scene develop."

Despite the mounting uncertainty and tensions as this present system nears its end, the activity of God's people must move ahead. The Kingdom good news, including the Bible's warning message, must be declared to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, calling upon them to 'fear God and give him glory because his judgment hour draws ever closer.' (Revelation 14:6, 7) Therefore, according to our heavenly Father's will and good pleasure, international conventions are being planned in various regions of the world for the year 2003.

To begin with, such gatherings are tentatively scheduled for a few cities in North America and shortly thereafter in Europe. A little later in 2003, arrangements will be in place for groups of delegates to travel to a few cities in Asia; and toward the end of the year, additional groups will go to Africa, South America, and the Pacific area. Certain branches will be requested to send a limited

number of delegates to specific convention locations, so it will not be possible to give everyone an open invitation to attend. Nevertheless, it will be encouraging to have limited delegations representing different countries at each place.

Congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses will soon be receiving information concerning these gatherings. Information about the exact dates and specific cities where invited delegates are able to attend will be provided by their respective branches. Hence, it is requested that you do not write or make inquiries about this matter at this time.

Those eventually selected as delegates will be limited to dedicated and baptized Witnesses who will be fine examples and show brotherly affection to the local brothers. These, in turn, will have fine opportunities to extend to the visitors a loving welcome and genuine hospitality. (Hebrews 13:1, 2) This will result in "an interchange of encouragement." (Romans 1:11, 12) Further details regarding these arrangements will be supplied by the branches that are invited to send delegates to a particular country or countries.

Three-day district conventions for the year 2003 will be arranged in most countries as usual. By assembling together, all will have the opportunity to 'listen, learn, and be encouraged.' (Deuteronomy 31:12; 1 Corinthians 14:31) This will afford all of God's people an opportunity to "taste and see that Jehovah is good." (Psalm 34:8) At all international conventions, as well as at many of the district conventions, missionaries will be present, some of whom will be featured on the program.

During this calendar year, we are enjoying the "Zealous Kingdom Proclaimers" District Conventions, which stimulate us to give a greater witness. As we do this, our anticipation will surely grow for what Jehovah has in store for the coming year. This will help us to 'keep on the watch, stay awake, and prove ourselves ready' in view of these critical and momentous times.  
—Matthew 24:42-44.

# Avoid Being Deceived

**D**ECEPTION is almost as old as mankind. One of the first events in recorded history was an act of deception. That was when Satan deceived Eve in the garden of Eden.—Genesis 3:13; 1 Timothy 2:14.

Although there has never been a time since then when deception was not rampant in the earth, it is particularly prevalent today. Looking forward to modern times, the Bible warned: "Wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse, misleading and being misled."—2 Timothy 3:13.

People are deceived for all kinds of reasons. Tricksters and confidence men deceive victims to get their money. Some politicians deceive their constituents, determined to stay in power at any cost. People even deceive themselves. Rather than face unpleasant truths, they convince themselves that there is no harm in pursuing dangerous practices, such as smoking, drug abuse, or sexual immorality.

Then there is deception in religious matters. The religious leaders of Jesus' day deceived the people. Of those deceivers, Jesus said: "Blind guides is what they are. If, then, a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a trap."

(Matthew 15:14) Moreover, people deceive themselves in religious matters. Proverbs 14:12 states: "There exists a way that is upright before a man, but the ways of death are the end of it afterward."

As in Jesus' time, many today are deceived in religious matters and no wonder! The apostle Paul said that Satan "has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, that the illumination of the glorious good news about the Christ, who is the image of God, might not shine through."—2 Corinthians 4:4.

If we are deceived by a swindler, we lose money. If a politician deceives us, we may lose some of our freedom as a result. But if Satan deceives us so that we reject the truth about Jesus Christ, we lose out on everlasting life! So avoid being deceived. Open your mind and heart to the one indisputable source of religious truth, the Bible. There is too much at stake to do otherwise.—John 17:3.

