

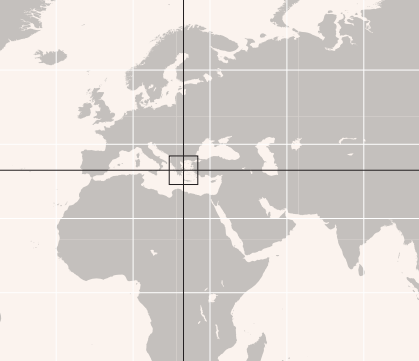
JUNE 2017

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY ARTICLES FOR:
JULY 31–AUGUST 27, 2017



COVER IMAGE:

GREECE

Greek families in the Athens area practice Kingdom songs during a Christian gathering

PUBLISHERS

28,816

BIBLE STUDIES

13,237

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE
(2016)

46,822

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Have you carefully read the recent issues of *The Watchtower*?
Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

When directions come from God's organization, what attitude should brothers, such as circuit overseers and congregation elders, have?

They should be quick to obey. They can ask themselves: 'Do I contribute to the spirituality of those around me? Am I quick to accept and support the directions received?'—w16.11, p. 11.

When did true Christians come into Babylonian captivity?

This happened shortly after the apostles died. At that time, a clergy class began to appear. Church and State promoted apostate Christianity and tried to drown out the voice of wheat-like Christians. But in the decades leading up to 1914, anointed ones began to break free.—w16.11, pp. 23-25.

Why was the work of Lefèvre d'Étaples significant?

During the 1520's, Lefèvre translated the Bible into French to make it available to the common people. His explanation of Bible passages influenced Martin Luther, William Tyndale, and John Calvin.—wp16.6, pp. 10-12.

What is the difference between "setting the mind on the flesh" and "setting the mind on the spirit"? (Rom. 8:6)

The one doing the former focuses on the desires and lean-

ings of the imperfect flesh, constantly talking about and glorifying things of the flesh. A person doing the latter centers his life on things related to God and his thoughts; such a Christian is dominated by holy spirit. The former leads to death, the latter to life and peace.—w16.12, pp. 15-17.

What are some practical ways to reduce anxiety?

Set appropriate priorities, have realistic expectations, daily make room for some quiet time, enjoy God's creation, keep a sense of humor, and get regular exercise and enough sleep.—w16.12, pp. 22-23.

"Enoch was transferred so as not to see death." (Heb. 11:5) How?

It seems that God transferred Enoch gently from life to death without his being aware that he was dying.—wp17.1, pp. 12-13.

Why is modesty still important?

Modesty involves having a proper estimate of ourselves and an awareness of our limitations. We need to be aware of how our behavior can affect others and not take ourselves too seriously.—w17.01, p. 18.

What evidence is there that God directed the governing

body in the first century just as he is directing those of the Governing Body today?

With the help of holy spirit, they grasped Scriptural truths. With angelic aid, they oversaw the preaching work, and they relied on God's Word when providing guidance. These factors are true today too.—w17.02, pp. 26-28.

What factors move us to view the ransom as precious?

Four factors are: Who gave it, why it was given, what sacrifice was involved, and what real need was filled. We should meditate on how those factors were involved.—wp17.2, pp. 4-6.

After deciding a matter, could a Christian change his mind?

We should keep our word. Yet, sometimes a decision deserves reconsideration. After the people repented, God changed his decision about Nineveh. On occasion, new circumstances or information may require our doing similarly.—w17.03, pp. 16-17.

Why is negative gossip so dangerous?

It can cause a problem to get out of control, making the problem worse. Whether we are right or wrong, engaging in hurtful speech will never improve matters.—w17.04, p. 21.



Jehovah Provides Comfort in All Our Trials

“The God of all comfort . . . comforts us in all our trials.”—2 COR. 1:3, 4.

SONGS: 33, 41

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why can we expect that marriage and family life will involve some trials?

How did prayer prove to be of comfort to some mentioned in the Bible?

What can you do to provide comfort to others?

A YOUNG single brother, whom we will call Eduardo, spoke of his concerns with Stephen, an older married elder. Eduardo had been thinking about what we read at 1 Corinthians 7: 28: “Those who [marry] will have tribulation in their flesh.” He asked, “What is this ‘tribulation,’ and how would I deal with it if I marry?” Before addressing that question, Stephen asked Eduardo to consider something else that the apostle Paul wrote, namely, that Jehovah is “the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our trials [“tribulation,” ftn.].” —2 Cor. 1:3, 4.

² Jehovah is indeed a loving Father, and he comforts us when we face difficulties. You may personally have had experiences in which God provided you with support and guidance, often through his Word. We can be sure that he wants the best for us, as he did for his servants in the past.—**Read Jeremiah 29:11, 12.**

1, 2. How does Jehovah comfort us in our trials, and what assurance does his Word provide?

³ Understandably, we are in a better position to cope if we can identify the causes of our problems or tribulations. And that is true of tribulation related to married life or to family life. What, then, are some of the realities that may bring on the ‘tribulation in the flesh’ that Paul mentioned? What examples from both Bible times and our time can help us to find the comfort we need? Knowing this will help us to cope.

TRIALS—‘TRIBULATION IN THE FLESH’

⁴ We can read what God said near the start of human history: “A man will leave his father and his mother and he will stick to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:24) Jehovah said that when he performed the first human marriage. Yet, under imperfect conditions, getting married and setting up a new household can strain family relationships. (Rom. 3:23) Usually, parental authority is being replaced by the authority of the husband. God authorizes him to exercise headship over his wife. (1 Cor. 11:3) Some new husbands and wives do not find this to be easy. According to God’s Word, a wife is to accept that she will be directed by her husband rather than by her parents. Relationships with in-laws may become strained and cause tribulation for the newlyweds.

⁵ New anxieties often surface after a wife announces to her husband, “We are going to have a baby.” Usually, a couple’s joy over their prospective child is tinged with some apprehension about medical issues that may arise during the pregnancy or later. And there will be an

economic impact to consider, both immediate and long-term. More adjustments become necessary when the baby arrives. The new mother’s time and attention may be focused on caring for her child. Many a husband has felt left out because his wife is occupied with her duties toward their baby. On the other hand, a new father has new responsibilities to shoulder. His duties increase because he has a new family member to care for and provide for.

⁶ A different sort of tribulation confronts some married couples. They desperately want children but remain childless. When the wife does not become pregnant, she may feel much emotional distress. Neither marriage nor childbearing guarantees freedom from cares, yet an unfulfilled desire for children is in its own way a ‘tribulation in the flesh.’ (Prov. 13:12) In Bible times, barrenness often carried a stigma. Rachel, Jacob’s wife, expressed anguish at seeing her sister have children. (Gen. 30:1, 2) Missionaries serving in lands where it is customary to have large families are often asked why they do not have children. Despite their logical and tactful explanation, the reaction may be, “Oh, we will pray for you!”

⁷ Or consider the case of a sister in England who very much wanted a child but whose hopes in that regard had not been fulfilled. Then she entered the change of life. She admitted that she felt devastated, for she realized that her desire would not be satisfied in this system of things. She and her husband decided to adopt a child. Nonetheless, she said: “I still went through a sort of grieving process. I

3. What questions will we address?

4, 5. What are some causes of ‘tribulation in the flesh’?

6-8. How can an unfulfilled desire to have children cause distress?

knew that adoption would not be exactly the same as giving birth to my own child.”

⁸ The Bible does mention a Christian woman’s being “kept safe through child-bearing.” (1 Tim. 2:15) But this does not mean that giving birth or having children results in gaining everlasting life. Rather, it refers to the fact that a woman’s having children to tend to, along with the other aspects of caring for a household, may keep her from falling into a pattern of gossiping and meddling in others’ affairs. (1 Tim. 5:13) However, she may still face tribulations linked to marriage and family life.

⁹ When referring to tribulations associated with marriage, there is one that may not readily come to mind. The death of a loved one. Yes, a distinct trial that many have faced is that of losing a beloved marriage mate in death. This is a trial that the survivor may not have expected to face in this system of things. Christians firmly believe Jesus’ promise of a coming resurrection. (John 5:28, 29) What does that prospect do for the surviving mate? It offers a considerable amount of comfort. This is another way that our loving Father, through his Word, offers support and comfort to those experiencing tribulation. Let us now consider how some servants of God have felt—and benefited from—the comfort that Jehovah provides.

COMFORT WHEN WE FACE TRIALS

¹⁰ Hannah, a beloved wife of Elkanah, faced a particular trial. She re-

9. How is losing a marriage mate in death a distinct trial?

10. How did Hannah find relief from distress? (See opening picture.)

mained barren while Elkanah’s other wife, Peninnah, produced offspring. **(Read 1 Samuel 1:4-7.)** Hannah was taunted by Peninnah “year after year.” That caused Hannah great anguish and distress. She sought relief by taking the matter to Jehovah in prayer. Indeed, “she prayed for a long time before Jehovah.” Did she expect Jehovah to grant her request? She must have hoped so. In any event, “her face was no longer downcast.” (1 Sam. 1:12, 17, 18) She trusted that Jehovah would either put an end to her barrenness or fill the lack in some other way.

¹¹ Trials and tribulations will continue as long as we are imperfect and are in this system under Satan’s control. (1 John 5:19) How good it is to know, though, that Jehovah is “the God of all comfort”! One way that we can receive help to deal with our personal trials or tribulations is through prayer. Hannah poured out her heart to Jehovah. Similarly, in the face of tribulation, we need to do more than simply *mention* to Jehovah how we feel. We need to *supplicate him*, yes, to convey our feelings by praying intensely from the heart.—Phil. 4: 6, 7.

¹² Even if we feel a deep void in our life—whether from childlessness or from the death of a loved one—we can still gain comfort. In Jesus’ day, the prophetess Anna lost her husband after only seven years of marriage. The Bible account makes no mention of any children. What was Anna still doing at 84 years of age? Luke 2:37 states: “She was never missing from the temple, render-

11. How can prayer provide us with comfort?

12. What helped the widow Anna to find joy?

ing sacred service night and day with fasting and supplications.” Yes, Anna found comfort as well as joy in worshipping Jehovah.

¹³ When we associate closely with our brothers and sisters, we find true friends and close companions. (Prov. 18:24) Paula recalls how sad she felt at the age of five when her mother fell away from the truth. Overcoming this trial was not easy. But she was greatly encouraged when Ann, a pioneer sister in the congregation, took a keen personal interest in her spiritual welfare. “Even though

13. Give an example of how true friends can bring comfort even when close relatives fail to do so.

Ann was not related to me, I found her loving concern to be such a help,” Paula explains. “It helped me to keep serving Jehovah.” Paula continues to serve faithfully. She is also very happy to be once again serving alongside her mother in the congregation. Ann too is happy, for she has been like a spiritual mother to Paula.

¹⁴ Interestingly, when we show loving personal interest in others, we may actually let go of some of our own negative feelings. Sisters, married or unmarried, know for a fact that they find great joy in sharing the good news as fellow workers

14. Those who give comfort can experience what blessings?

How can a person cope with the loss of a loved one?

(See paragraphs 9, 12)



with God. Their goal is to honor God by doing his will. Some even view their participation in the ministry as therapy. Certainly, all of us contribute to a close bond in the congregation when we show concern for others, those in our territory and those in the congregation. (Phil. 2:4) The apostle Paul was a fine example. He became like “a nursing mother” to those in the Thessalonian congregation; he was also like a spiritual father.—**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 11, 12.**

COMFORT IN THE FAMILY

¹⁵ One area that merits attention is the comfort and help we offer to families. On occasion, new ones ask mature publishers to help them teach their children the truth, even to conduct a Bible study with the youngsters. Scripturally, the primary responsibility to teach and train young ones lies with the parents. (Prov. 23:22; Eph. 6:1-4) In some cases help from others is needed and much appreciated. Yet, that does not negate the parents’ responsibility. Their regular communication in the family is essential.

¹⁶ If a parent decides to have someone study with the children, the one who does so should not try to take over the role of the parents. There have been instances when a Witness was asked to study with children whose parents were not interested in the truth. The Witness needs to bear in mind, though, that in providing spiritual help, he or she does not become the children’s parent. And if

such a study is conducted, it would be wise to do so either in the children’s home with the parents or another mature Witness around or in a suitable public area. Thus no one would have a basis to misconstrue what is occurring. It is to be hoped that the parents will, in time, fulfill their God-given responsibility to care spiritually for their children.

¹⁷ Young ones who learn to love the true God and to follow his counsel can become a source of comfort in a family. They can do so by showing respect for their parents and by helping in material ways. They can also make a valuable spiritual contribution. Before the Flood, Seth’s descendant Lamech worshipped Jehovah. That family man said of his son Noah: “[He] will bring us comfort from our labor and from the painful toil of our hands because of the ground that Jehovah has cursed.” That prophecy was fulfilled when the curse on the ground was lifted. (Gen. 5:29; 8:21) On a more personal level, children who pursue true worship can prove to be sources of comfort in their families, helping all to endure present trials and then to survive something greater than the Flood.

¹⁸ Prayer, meditation on examples found in the Bible, and close association with Jehovah’s people are helping millions right now to gain comfort in all their trials. (**Read Psalm 145:18, 19.**) Knowing that Jehovah is the Source of lasting comfort will surely help us to endure courageously whatever tribulations we face—now and in the future.

15. Who are primarily responsible for teaching young ones the truth?

16. In helping children, what should be borne in mind?

17. How can children become a source of comfort?

18. What can help us to endure courageously despite any tribulations or trials we face?



Set Your Heart on Spiritual Treasures

“Where your treasure is, there your hearts will be also.”

—LUKE 12:34.

JEHOVAH is the wealthiest Person in the universe. (1 Chron. 29:11, 12) As a generous Father, he openhandedly shares his spiritual riches with all who discern their excelling value. How grateful we are that Jehovah has given us spiritual treasures, which include (1) God’s Kingdom, (2) our lifesaving ministry, and (3) the precious truths found in his Word! If we are not careful, though, we could lose appreciation for these treasures and, in effect, throw them away. To hold on to them, we must use them well and constantly renew our love for them. Jesus said: “Where your treasure is, there your hearts will be also.”—Luke 12:34.

² Let us consider how we can develop and maintain our love and appreciation for the Kingdom, the ministry, and the truth. As we do so, meditate on how you personally can deepen your love for these spiritual treasures.

1, 2. (a) What are three spiritual treasures that Jehovah has given to us? (b) What will we consider in this article?

SONGS: 76, 59

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

If we treasure God’s Kingdom in our heart, what will we be motivated to do?

What are you determined to do to show your love for our lifesaving ministry?

How do we fill our treasure store with revealed truths, and what are the benefits of doing so?

GOD'S KINGDOM —LIKE A PRICELESS PEARL

³ **Read Matthew 13:45, 46.** Jesus told an illustration about a merchant who was seeking pearls. Over the years, the merchant had no doubt bought and sold hundreds of pearls. Yet, now he had found the one pearl that was so magnificent that just seeing it made his heart rejoice. But to buy it would mean that he would have to sell everything else that he owned. Can you imagine how precious that pearl was to him?

⁴ What is the lesson for us? The truth of God's Kingdom is like that priceless pearl. If we love it as much as the merchant loved that pearl, we will be willing to give up everything in order to become and to remain one of the subjects of the Kingdom. (**Read Mark 10:28-30.**) Consider two individuals who did just that.

⁵ Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector who had become rich by extorting money. (Luke 19:1-9) Yet, when that unrighteous man heard Jesus preach about the Kingdom, he recognized the excelling value of what he was hearing and took immediate action. He exclaimed: "Look! The half of my belongings, Lord, I am giving to the poor, and whatever I extorted from anyone, I am restoring four times over." He gladly gave up his ill-gotten riches and abandoned his greed for material things.

3. What was the merchant in Jesus' illustration willing to do to gain the priceless pearl? (See opening picture.)

4. If we love God's Kingdom as much as the merchant loved the pearl, what will we do?

5. How did Zacchaeus show his determination to gain God's Kingdom?

⁶ Some years ago, when someone we will call Rose heard the Kingdom message, she was involved in a lesbian relationship. She was president of an organization fighting for the rights of homosexuals. As Rose studied the Bible, however, she discerned the excelling value of the truth about God's Kingdom. But she realized that she would have to make major adjustments. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10) Her heart moved her to resign from her position and to end her lesbian relationship. Rose was baptized in 2009, and the next year, she began to serve as a regular pioneer. Her love for Jehovah and his Kingdom was stronger than any fleshly desires.—Mark 12:29, 30.

⁷ Granted, many of us have made life-transforming changes to become subjects of God's Kingdom. (Rom. 12:2) Even so, our work is not finished. We must remain alert to things that actively compete for our affection, including the desire for material things and any immoral sexual desires. (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 5:27-29) To help us maintain our wholehearted love for God's Kingdom, Jehovah has given us another priceless treasure.

OUR LIFESAVING MINISTRY

⁸ Recall that Jesus has assigned us to preach and teach the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matt. 28:19, 20) The apostle Paul recognized the high value

6. What changes did Rose make to become a subject of God's Kingdom, and why did she do so?

7. How can we maintain wholehearted love for God's Kingdom?

8. (a) Why did the apostle Paul describe our ministry as a "treasure in earthen vessels"? (b) How did Paul demonstrate that he treasured his ministry?

of the ministry. He described the ministry of the new covenant as a “treasure in earthen vessels.” (2 Cor. 4:7; 1 Tim. 1:12) Although we are simply imperfect earthen vessels, the message we preach can bring everlasting life to us and to those who listen to us. Knowing this, Paul said: “I do all things for the sake of the good news, in order to share it with others.” (1 Cor. 9:23) Yes, Paul’s love for the ministry moved him to work hard at making disciples. **(Read Romans 1:14, 15; 2 Timothy 4:2.)** That helped him to endure severe opposition. (1 Thess. 2:2) How can we demonstrate such love for the ministry?

⁹ One way that Paul demonstrated appreciation for the ministry was by being alert to opportunities to speak to others. Like the apostles and early Christians, we preach informally, publicly, and from house to house. (Acts 5:42; 20:20) As our circumstances allow, we look for ways to expand our ministry, perhaps by serving as an auxiliary or a regular pioneer. We might also learn another language, move to another area in our own country, or even move to another land.—Acts 16:9, 10.

¹⁰ Consider the example of Irene, a single sister in the United States. She had a deep desire to preach to Russian-speaking immigrants. When she began doing so in 1993, there were only about 20 publishers in the Russian-language group in New York City. For some 20 years, Irene has worked hard in that language field. “I still do not speak Russian perfectly,” Irene admits. Yet, Jeho-

9. What are some ways that we can demonstrate our appreciation for the ministry?

10. How was Irene blessed for her determination to share the good news?



Do you view your ministry as a treasure and manifest that in your weekly schedule?
(See paragraphs 11, 12)

vah has blessed her zealous spirit and that of others like her. Today, there are six Russian congregations in New York City. Fifteen of those with whom Irene studied got baptized. Some of them serve as Bethelites, pioneers, and elders. Irene says, “When I think of other goals I could have pursued, I can’t imagine one that would have brought me more joy.” Yes, she treasures her ministry!

¹¹ If we treasure our ministry, we will be like the apostle Paul, continuing to preach despite persecution. (Acts 14:19-22) During the 1930’s and early 1940’s, our brothers in the United States faced tremendous opposition. Yet, like Paul, they stood firm and continued preaching. To protect our right to do that, the

11. What positive results come from continuing to preach despite persecution?

brothers fought many legal battles. In 1943, Brother Nathan H. Knorr, when commenting on one victory in the U.S. Supreme Court, stated: “The victories won are due to your fight. If the publisher had not kept on in the field, there would not be any cases in the Supreme Court; but it is because you, the publisher, the brothers all over the world, keep on and will not quit that the defeat of persecution is brought about. It is this victory of the Lord’s people standing firm that finally brings that decision.” This same firm stand by brothers in other countries has led to similar victories. Yes, our love for the ministry can defeat persecution.

¹² When we view the ministry as a priceless treasure from Jehovah, we will never be content with simply “counting time.” Rather, we will do everything in our power “to bear thorough witness to the good news.” (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:5) But what will we teach to others? Consider another treasure from God.

OUR TREASURE STORE OF REVEALED TRUTHS

¹³ A third spiritual treasure is our repository of revealed truths. Jehovah is the God of truth. (2 Sam. 7:28; Ps. 31:5) As a generous Father, he shares divine truths with those who fear him. From the time that we first heard the truth, we have had the opportunity to collect truths from his Word, the Bible, from our Christian publications, and from our conventions, assemblies, and weekly meetings. Over time, we develop what

12. What is your determination with regard to your ministry?

13, 14. What is the “treasure store” that Jesus referred to at Matthew 13:52, and how do we fill it?

Jesus described as a “treasure store” of old and new truths. **(Read Matthew 13: 52.)** Jehovah will help us to collect precious new truths into our “treasure store” if we search for them as for hidden treasures. **(Read Proverbs 2:4-7.)** How do we do that?

¹⁴ We must develop good personal study habits and do careful research in God’s Word and in our publications. This will help us to discover truths that may be “new” in the sense that we did not know them before. (Josh. 1:8, 9; Ps. 1:2, 3) The very first issue of this magazine, published in July 1879, stated: “Truth, like a modest little flower in the wilderness of life, is surrounded and *almost* choked by the luxuriant growth of the weeds of error. If you would find it you must be ever on the lookout. . . . If you would possess it you must stoop to get it. Be not content with *one* flower of truth. . . . Gather ever, seek for more.” Yes, we must be eager to enrich our own treasure store of divine truths.

¹⁵ We discovered some priceless truths when we first began to associate with God’s people. These could well be described as “old,” in that we have known and appreciated them from the beginning of our Christian course. What do such precious truths include? We learned that Jehovah is our Creator and Life-Giver and that he has a purpose for mankind. We also learned that God lovingly provided the ransom sacrifice of his Son so that we might be freed from sin and death. We further learned that his Kingdom will end all suffering and that we have the prospect of living for-

15. Why might we refer to some truths as “old,” and what are some that you especially treasure?

ever in peace and happiness under Kingdom rule.—John 3:16; Rev. 4:11; 21:3, 4.

¹⁶ From time to time, our understanding of a Bible prophecy or some Scriptural passage may be adjusted. When such new understandings are provided, we ought to take time to study the information carefully and meditate on it. (Acts 17:11; 1 Tim. 4:15) We seek to understand clearly not only the major adjustments but also the subtle differences between the old understanding and the new one. In this way, we are certain to place the new truth securely in our own treasure store. Why are such efforts worthwhile?

¹⁷ Jesus taught that God’s spirit can bring back to our mind things that we have learned. (John 14:25, 26) How can this help us as public instructors of the good news? Consider the experience of a brother named Peter. In 1970 he was 19 years old and had recently begun serving at Bethel in Britain. While preaching from door to door, he met a bearded middle-aged man. Peter asked the man if he would like to understand the Bible. Somewhat shocked, the man responded that this was a house of Jewish rabbis. To test Peter, the rabbi asked, “So, my boy, what language was the book of Daniel written in?” Peter replied, “Part of it was written in Aramaic.” “The rabbi,” Peter recalls, “was surprised that I knew the answer—but not as surprised as I was! How did I know the answer? When I went home and checked the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines from the previous months, I found an article explaining that Daniel

was written in Aramaic.” (Dan. 2:4, fn.) Yes, the holy spirit can bring back to our mind thoughts we previously read and securely placed in our treasure store.—Luke 12:11, 12; 21:13-15.

¹⁸ If we treasure the wisdom from Jehovah, our heart will motivate us to fill up our treasure store with truths—both new and old. As our love and appreciation for Jehovah’s wisdom continue to grow, we will be well-equipped as public instructors.

SAFEGUARD YOUR TREASURES

¹⁹ Satan and his world are constantly seeking to weaken or destroy our appreciation for the spiritual treasures we have discussed in this article. We are not immune to these tactics. We could easily be enticed by promises of a lucrative career, dreams of a lavish lifestyle, or the desire for a showy display of material riches. The apostle John reminds us that this world is passing away and so is its desire. (1 John 2:15-17) Therefore, we must work hard to safeguard our affections and protect our love and appreciation for spiritual riches.

²⁰ Be willing to give up anything that could replace your wholehearted love for God’s Kingdom. Continue to preach zealously, never losing appreciation for our lifesaving ministry. Earnestly continue to search for divine truths. As you do this, you will build up “treasure in the heavens, where no thief gets near and no moth consumes. For where your treasure is, there your hearts will be also.”—Luke 12:33, 34.

16. What do we need to do when we receive an adjusted understanding of a truth?

17, 18. How can holy spirit help us?

19. Why must we safeguard our spiritual treasures?

20. What are you resolved to do to safeguard your spiritual riches?



Can You Look Beyond Outward Appearances?

DON, one of Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada, makes a special effort to talk to people living on the street. Regarding one of these individuals, Don relates: "A homeless man named Peter was one of the dirtiest men I had ever seen in the back alleys. He was obnoxious and had a knack for keeping people away from him. He repeatedly rejected many acts of human kindness." Still, off and on for more than 14 years, Don patiently worked to be kind to this homeless man.

One day, Peter asked Don: "Why do you bother with me? Everyone else just leaves me alone. Why do you care?" Don tactfully used three scriptures in an effort to reach Peter's heart. First, he asked Peter if he knew that God has a personal name and asked him to read it directly from the Bible at Psalm 83:18. Next, to show why he cared, Don had Peter read Romans 10:13, 14, which

explains that "everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved." Finally, Don read Matthew 9:36 and then asked Peter to read it for himself. That verse says: "On seeing the crowds, [Jesus] felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd." At that, with tears in his eyes, Peter asked: "Am I one of these sheep?"

Peter began to change. He bathed, neatly trimmed his beard, and put on the better clothes that Don offered him. Peter continued to maintain a clean appearance.

Peter kept a diary. The early sections of his journal were dark and gloomy, but his more recent entries were different. One entry read: "I learned God's name today. Now when I pray, I can pray to Jehovah. It's wonderful to know his name. Don says that Jehovah can be my personal Friend, someone



who always has time to listen to me, no matter when or what.”

Peter’s last comments were addressed to his siblings. He wrote:

“I’m not feeling well today. I think that age has caught up with me. But even if this is my last day, I know that I will see my friend [Don] again in Paradise. If you are reading this, I am no longer around. But if you see a man at my funeral who does not seem to belong there, talk to him, and please read this little blue book [referring to the Bible study aid “The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life” that he had received years before]. It says that I will once again see my friend in Paradise. I believe this with all my heart. Your loving brother, Peter.”*

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

After the funeral, Peter’s sister Ummi explained: “About two years ago, Peter contacted me. For the first time in years, he seemed happy. He even smiled.” She told Don: “I will read the book because anything that could reach my brother must be something special.” Ummi also agreed to discuss the more recent book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* with one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

We too can look beyond outward appearances, express genuine love, and be patient with people of all sorts. (1 Tim. 2:3, 4) As we do so, we may be able to move people who, like Peter, may not be attractive to human eyes but who have a good heart. We can be sure that God, who “sees into the heart,” will make the truth grow in the hearts of rightly disposed ones.—1 Sam. 16:7; John 6:44.



Will You Resolve Conflicts and Promote Peace?

JEHOVAH GOD urges Christians to cherish peace, to make peace a key aspect of life. The result of our being peaceable is that true worshippers enjoy an abundance of peace. This helps to make the Christian congregation attractive to others who wish to be free of conflict.

For instance, a prominent witch doctor in Madagascar observed the harmony enjoyed by Jehovah's Witnesses. He said to himself, 'If ever I wanted to follow a religion, this would be the one.' In time, he quit his spiritistic practices, spent months straightening out his unscriptural marital situation, and became a worshipper of Jehovah, the God of peace.

Like that man, thousands of people every year find in the Christian congregation the peace that they so desperately desire. However, the Bible makes it clear that the presence of "bitter jealousy and contentiousness" in the congregation can destroy friendships and create trouble. (Jas. 3:14-16) Happily, the Bible also provides us with positive advice on how we can avoid those problems and strengthen peace. To set the stage for doing so, let us consider some real-life situations.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

"I had trouble getting along with a brother who worked with me. Once when we were yelling at each other, two people came in and witnessed our blowup."—CHRIS.

"A sister with whom I often preached suddenly ended our arrangements for the ministry. Then she stopped talking to me altogether. I had no idea why."—JANET.

"I was on a three-person phone call. One of the others said good-bye, and I thought he was off the line. I then said unkind things about him to the other person on the phone, but the first person had not hung up."—MICHAEL.

"In our congregation, two pioneers began having problems. One took to scolding the other. Their bickering was discouraging to others."—GARY.

You might feel that those incidents appear minor. Still, each had the potential for causing lasting emotional and spiritual injury to those involved. You will be pleased to know, though, that peace was restored by those brothers and sisters, who all used the Bible as their guide. What Bible guidelines do you think they applied successfully?



“Do not become upset with one another on the way.” (Gen. 45:24) Joseph gave that advice to his brothers who were returning to their father. How wise his words were! When a person does not control his feelings and gets upset easily, he may provoke others to anger. Chris came to see that his weaknesses were pride and a reluctance to accept direction. Wanting to change, he apologized to the brother with whom he had been arguing and then worked hard to control his temper. Noting Chris’ effort to change, the workmate also made adjustments. Now they enjoy serving Jehovah together.

“Plans fail when there is no consultation.” (Prov. 15:22) Janet concluded that she needed to take that truth more to heart. She decided to ‘consult,’ or speak with, the other sister. During their conversation, Janet tactfully invited the sister to open up regarding her resentment. At first, the conversation was somewhat tense, but things improved as they discussed their problem in a calm way. The sister discovered that she had misunderstood a matter that did not even involve Janet. She apologized, and they are once again serving Jehovah as a team.

“If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away. First make your peace with your brother.” (Matt. 5:23, 24) You may recall that advice Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount. Michael felt devastated when he realized how inconsiderate and unkind he had been. He was determined to make an effort to restore peace. He humbly apologized face-to-face to the brother he had hurt. With what result? Michael says, “My brother genuinely forgave me.” Their friendship was restored.

“Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely even if anyone has a cause for complaint against another.” (Col. 3:12-14) In the case of the two longtime pioneers, a kind elder helped them to reflect on such questions as these: ‘Do the two of us have the right to make others sad because of our disagreement? Do we truly have a valid reason not to put up with each other and go on serving Jehovah peacefully?’ They accepted the elder’s counsel and applied it. Now they get along well as they preach the good news.

Applying the Bible instruction just cited, Colossians 3:12-14, may be a good starting point if someone hurts you. Many have found that, with humility, they can just forgive and forget. If after some effort it seems that more is needed, could Matthew 18:15 be applied in principle? Jesus' counsel here refers to the step to take when someone has committed a serious sin against another. But in principle it may be the course you need to follow. Simply approach your brother or sister and kindly and humbly try to discuss the matter and settle it.

Of course, the Bible provides other practical suggestions. Underlying many of them is your displaying "the fruitage of the spirit . . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control." (Gal. 5:22, 23) Like oil that lubricates a machine, those godly qualities allow for a smooth peacemaking process.

A MIX OF PERSONALITIES ENRICHES THE CONGREGATION

Personality—the unique set of traits that each of us has and that varies from one person to another—can make for rich friendships. Differences in personality can also lead to conflicts. An experienced elder gives this example: "Someone who is shy can have a difficult time being around an outgoing, backslapping person. That difference may seem unimportant; yet, it can lead to serious problems." Do you feel, however, that people who have distinctly different personalities are bound to have problems? Well, consider two of the apostles. What was Peter like? You may think of him as outspoken and impulsive. What of John? We may think of him as loving and usually measured in his speech and actions. There may be some basis for such ideas about those two apostles. It seems that they differed in personality.



Paul and Barnabas Brothers Despite Differences

To say that the man had intense emotions is an understatement. Before he became a Christian, Paul was "breathing threat and murder against the disciples of the Lord." (Acts 9:1) In time, he described his former feelings toward Christ's followers: "I was extremely furious with them."—Acts 26:11.

Paul made major changes after his baptism, but notoriety followed him. Some time after he became a Christian, the brothers in Jerusalem "were all afraid of him, because they did not believe he was a disciple."—Acts 9:26.

The congregation might have continued to be wary of Paul were it not for a Christian from Cyprus named Joseph. His loving manner was well-known, and the brothers gave him the descriptive name "Barnabas"—"Son of Comfort." (Acts 4:36, 37) Those taking the lead respected him, and he helped Paul. We read: "Barnabas came to his aid and led him to the apostles, and he told them in detail how on the road he had seen the

Still, they worked well together. (Acts 8:14; Gal. 2:9) Accordingly, it is possible for Christians with quite different personalities to work together today.

Perhaps there is in your congregation a brother whose speech and actions irritate you. Still, you realize that Christ died for that person and you are to show love. (John 13:34, 35; Rom. 5:6-8) So rather than write off any friendship with that one or tend to avoid him, ask yourself: ‘Is my brother doing something that is clearly wrong Scripturally? Is he maliciously trying to cause me discomfort? Or do we just have different personalities?’ Also, of great importance is the question: ‘Which of his good qualities can I benefit from?’

That last question is key. If the person is a talker and you are quiet, think of the ease with which he starts conversations in the ministry. You might offer to work with the

person in the ministry and see what you can learn. If he has often shown generosity to others, whereas you tend to be a bit tight-fisted, why not note the joy that comes from giving to the elderly, the sick, or the needy? The point is, even though you have different personalities, you and your brother may be able to draw closer by focusing on the positive. Your doing so may not turn you into close companions, but it can help to draw you together and increase peace—in you and in the congregation as a whole.

Euodia and Syntyche may have had distinctly different ways or personalities. Yet, the apostle Paul encouraged them “to be of the same mind in the Lord.” (Phil. 4:2) Will you similarly work toward that goal and the related goal of peace?

DO NOT ALLOW CONFLICT TO CONTINUE

Like weeds growing wild in a flower garden, bad feelings toward others will likely

Lord, . . . and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.” (Acts 9:26-28) On hearing Barnabas’ testimony, the Jerusalem congregation accepted Paul. Soon, those two men began serving together as missionaries.—Acts 13:2, 3.

Barnabas must have seen good in Paul’s intense drive and direct approach. On the other hand, Paul certainly would have appreciated Barnabas’ kindness and compassion.

The Bible does mention that at one point they had “a sharp burst of anger.” Why? The account does not suggest that it was the result of a personality conflict. Rather, it reflected their differing opinions of John Mark’s qualifications for missionary service.—Acts 15:36-40.

Despite the different personalities of Paul and Barnabas, they had been able to serve together before that event. And we read that Paul and Mark later worked together again. (Col. 4:10) Thus, different personalities need not produce conflict—not then, not today.





If you humble yourself
and strive to make peace,
you may obtain
excellent results

get worse unless we strive to uproot them. Once bitterness overpowers a person's heart, it can even impact the spirit of the congregation. If we love Jehovah and our brothers, we will do all we can to keep personal differences from disturbing or diminishing the peace of God's people.

When we address conflicts or differences with the goal of making peace, we may be surprised at the excellent results. Consider the experience of one Witness: "I felt that one sister was treating me as if I were a child. It really bothered me. As my irritation grew, I started being curt with her. I thought, 'She does not show me the respect I deserve, so I am not going to show her respect.'"

This Witness then began to think about her own actions. "I began seeing my own personality flaws, and I was very disappointed in myself. I realized that I had to adjust my thinking. After praying to Jehovah about the matter, I bought the sister a small gift and wrote her a card to apologize for my bad attitude. We hugged each other and agreed to put the matter behind us. We have not had any more problems."

People desperately need peace. However, when they face threats to their position and pride, many start acting in a way that is not peaceable. That is true of many who do not worship Jehovah, but among his name worshippers, peace and unity should prevail. He inspired Paul to write: "I . . . appeal to you to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all humility and mildness, with patience, putting up with one another in love, earnestly endeavoring to maintain the oneness of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace." (Eph. 4:1-3) That "uniting bond of peace" is priceless. Let us strengthen it and be determined to resolve any differences that may surface among us.

“Blessed Be Your Good Sense!”

THE above words were spoken by David of ancient Israel in praise of a woman whom he encountered. Her name was Abigail. What prompted David to praise her, and how can we benefit from her example?

David met this married woman at a time when he was fleeing from King Saul. Abigail was married to Nabal, a wealthy man who pastured his large flocks in the mountainous region of southern Judah. David and his men had been “like a protective wall” for Nabal’s shepherds and flocks. David later sent messengers to Nabal, asking for ‘whatever he could spare’ in the way of food supplies. (1 Sam. 25:8, 15, 16) That was hardly an unreasonable request, considering how David and his men had protected Nabal’s interests.

But Nabal, whose name means “Senseless” or “Stupid,” lived up to his name. He replied in a harsh and insulting way, denying David’s request. So David prepared to punish Nabal for his offensive and unreasonable response. Nabal and his household would pay for his stupidity.—1 Sam. 25:2-13, 21, 22.

Discerning the grave consequences of the hasty action being planned, Abigail courageously intervened. She respectfully appealed to David on the basis of his relationship with Jehovah. And she provided ample food supplies to David, who would be the next king, and to his men. David, in turn, acknowledged that Jehovah had used her to restrain him from doing what would have made him guilty before God. David said to Abigail: “Blessed be your good sense! May you be blessed for restraining me this day from incurring bloodguilt.”—1 Sam. 25:18, 19, 23-35.

We can easily see that we would never want to be like Nabal, unappreciative of good things done for us. In addition, when we see a bad situation developing, we do well to do what we can to defuse it. Yes, we can echo the sentiment of the psalmist who told God: “Teach me good sense and knowledge.”—Ps. 119:66.

Others may note the wisdom, or good sense, in our actions. Whether they verbalize it or not, they may feel like David, who said: “Blessed be your good sense!”





Keep Your Eyes on the Big Issue

“May people know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth.”—PS. 83:18.

SONGS: 9, 22

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

Why is the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty an important issue facing mankind?

How did Job’s integrity under trial support Jehovah’s sovereignty; yet, in what way did Job fall short?

What are some important ways that we show support for Jehovah’s sovereignty?

FOR many people today, money is the big issue. They are focused on accumulating wealth or on holding on to what they have. Others consider their big issue to be family, health, or personal accomplishments.

² However, a very big issue facing all of us is the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty. We need to guard against losing sight of this vital issue. How could that happen? We could become so absorbed in the demands of our day-to-day life that we forget just how important the vindication of God’s sovereignty really is. Or we could allow the weight of our personal trials to eclipse that great issue. On the other hand, the keener our appreciation for the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty, the better equipped we are to meet challenges in our daily lives. And such appreciation will draw us closer to Jehovah.

WHY SO IMPORTANT?

³ The action of Satan the Devil has raised the question of

- 1, 2. (a) What big issue faces all mankind? (b) How important is appreciation for that issue?
3. What are Satan’s claims with regard to God’s rulership?

the rightfulness of Jehovah's sovereignty. He contends that God's rulership is corrupt and that Jehovah withholds the best from his creatures. According to the Devil, humans would be far happier and better off ruling themselves. (Gen. 3:1-5) Satan has also implied that no human at heart is loyal to God—that under sufficient pressure, anyone will reject Jehovah's rulership. (Job 2:4, 5) In connection with the Devil's challenge, Jehovah is allowing time for human experience to reveal the unsavory truth about life outside of God's righteous rule.

⁴ Of course, Jehovah knows that the Devil's allegations are false. So why has God chosen to allow the issue to go on, giving Satan time to try to prove his point? The answer involves all intelligent creatures. **(Read Psalm 83:18.)** After all, the first human couple rejected Jehovah's rulership, and so have many others since then. This could lead some to wonder whether there might be validity to the Devil's claim. As long as the question remains unsettled in the minds of humans or angels, discord among nations, races, tribes, families, and individuals will exist. But after Jehovah's sovereignty is vindicated, all will submit everlastingly to his righteous rule. Universal peace will be restored.—Eph. 1: 9, 10.

⁵ The rightfulness of God's sovereignty will be vindicated and rule by Satan and humans will utterly fail and be removed. Rule by God through his Messianic Kingdom will succeed, and integrity-keepers will have proved that

humans can take their stand for God's rulership. (Isa. 45:23, 24) Do you want to be among those who go on record as integrity-keeping supporters of Jehovah's sovereignty? No doubt you do. To be integrity-keepers, we need to fix our eyes on that big issue and comprehend how important it really is.

VINDICATION—MORE IMPORTANT THAN SALVATION

⁶ As stated, the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty is a vital issue involving mankind. It is more important than the personal happiness of any individual. Does that fact undermine the value of our salvation or imply that Jehovah does not really care for us? Not at all. Why not?

⁷ Jehovah deeply loves and values mankind. He was willing to use the blood of his Son to make possible our eternal salvation. (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9) Were Jehovah to fail to fulfill his promises, the Devil would have an excuse to call God a liar who withholds good and thus rules in an unfair way. It would also vindicate opposers who mockingly ask: "Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as they were from creation's beginning." (2 Pet. 3:3, 4) Hence, Jehovah will see to it that the vindication of his sovereignty includes the salvation of obedient humans! **(Read Isaiah 55:10, 11.)** Furthermore, Jehovah's love characterizes his sovereignty. So we can be sure that he

4. Why must the issue of sovereignty be settled?

5. What is our role in supporting Jehovah's side of the issue of sovereignty?

6. How important is the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty?

7, 8. Why does the vindication of God's sovereignty include the fulfillment of his promises?



will always love, value, and appreciate his loyal servants.—Ex. 34:6.

⁸ In acknowledging the importance of Jehovah’s sovereignty, we are not belittling our salvation or our worth in his eyes. We are merely keeping sovereignty and salvation in proper perspective. That correct perspective is important if we are to keep our eyes on this big issue and take our stand for Jehovah’s righteous rule.

A LESSON IN PERSPECTIVE

⁹ The need for proper perspective is made quite clear in the book of Job, one of the earliest Bible books to be written. There we learn of Satan’s contention that if subjected to intense suffering, Job would reject God. Satan suggested that God personally afflict Job. Jehovah did not do that, but he allowed Satan to test Job, stating: “Everything that he has is in *your* hand.” **(Read Job 1:7-12.)** In a short time, Job lost his servants, his means of livelihood, and his ten beloved children. Satan accomplished this in a way that made it appear as if *God himself* had been the cause of Job’s troubles. (Job 1:13-19) Satan next afflicted Job

with a painful and repulsive illness. (Job 2:7) His despair was deepened further by the disheartening words of his wife and of three companions who acted as if they were his friends.—Job 2:9; 3:11; 16:2.

¹⁰ The result? Satan’s claim was shown to be completely false. Job refused to turn his back on God. (Job 27:5) However, Job temporarily lost the proper perspective. He became absorbed in establishing his own righteousness, even demanding a reason for his suffering. (Job 7:20; 13:24) We might think that would be understandable in the light of all that he had suffered. Yet, God saw the need to correct Job’s thinking. What did Jehovah tell him?

¹¹ God’s words to Job fill four chapters in the book of Job—chapters 38 through 41. Nowhere do we read of God’s telling Job specifically the reason behind his suffering. The main point of Jehovah’s words was not to explain to Job *why* he was suffering, as if God had to justify himself. Rather, Jehovah

10. (a) What did Job do that showed his integrity to God? (b) In what way did he fall short?

11, 12. What did Jehovah help Job to appreciate, and how did Job respond?

9. What was Satan’s claim with regard to Job? (See opening picture.)



Can we look past our own problems
and see the real issue?
(See paragraph 14)

wanted to help Job recognize his insignificance in comparison with God's greatness. And he helped Job to see that there were greater issues with which to be concerned. **(Read Job 38:18-21.)** This helped Job regain the proper perspective.

¹² Was Jehovah harsh in giving such straightforward counsel after Job had endured so severe a trial? God was not, and Job did not think so. Despite his ordeal, Job finally began to speak appreciatively. He even stated: "I take back what I said, and I repent in dust and ashes." Such was the effect of Jehovah's pointed but refreshing counsel. (Job 42:1-6) Earlier, Job had also received corrective counsel from young Elihu. (Job 32:5-10) After Job responded to God's reproof and corrected his view, Jehovah expressed to others his approval of Job's faithfulness under trial.—Job 42:7, 8.

¹³ Jehovah's counsel would continue to benefit Job even after his trials were over. How so? Well, though "Jehovah blessed the last part of Job's life more than the beginning," restoration and recovery must have taken time. He later

13. How would Jehovah's counsel benefit Job long after his trials?

"came to have seven more sons and three more daughters." (Job 42:12-14) Surely Job missed his children who died earlier at Satan's hand. For some time, he likely experienced vivid memories of his suffering. Even if he eventually better understood the reason for his trials, he may on occasion have thought about why it was necessary for him to suffer to *such* an extent. Whatever his thoughts, he could reflect on God's counsel. Doing so would help him maintain the proper perspective and, in turn, provide comfort.—Ps. 94:19, ftn.

¹⁴ We too can acquire proper perspective and gain comfort from the account of Job. After all, Jehovah had it preserved "for *our* instruction, so that through *our* endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures *we* might have hope." (Rom. 15:4) What is the lesson for us? Primarily this: Let us not become so absorbed in our own lives that we lose sight of this big issue—the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty. And let us appreciate that our role in this vital issue entails remaining faithful even under difficult circumstances, as did Job.

14. What can we learn from Job's experience?

¹⁵ Why is it comforting to reflect on the value of our faithfulness? Because it means that our trials serve a purpose. Far from indicating Jehovah's displeasure, they provide for us a means to show that we support God's sovereignty. (Prov. 27:11) Our endurance produces "an approved condition" and strengthens our hope. **(Read Romans 5:3-5.)** The record of Job bears out that "Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful." (Jas. 5:11) So we can be sure that he will reward us and all who uphold his sovereignty. Knowing this helps us "endure fully with patience and joy." —Col. 1:11.

REMAINING FOCUSED

¹⁶ Granted, keeping our eyes on the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty can be challenging. Our problems may seem to overwhelm us at times. Even relatively minor ones can loom large in our mind if we dwell on them. Therefore, we do well to remind ourselves regularly of the importance of supporting God's sovereignty when we face difficult circumstances.

¹⁷ Continuing to have a regular share in Jehovah's work can help us to stay focused on the big issue. For example, a Witness named Renee suffered a stroke and struggled with chronic pain and cancer. While being treated at medical facilities, she witnessed to hospital staff, patients, and visitors. At one facility,

she spent 80 hours witnessing in just two and a half weeks. Even as she approached death, Renee never lost sight of Jehovah's sovereignty. That, in turn, mitigated some of her distress.

¹⁸ Of course, we want to stay focused on Jehovah's sovereignty also in the face of day-to-day pressures and inconveniences. Jennifer spent three days at an airport waiting for a flight home. One flight after another got canceled. Feeling alone and exhausted, she could easily have surrendered to self-pity. Instead, she prayed to see how she might be of spiritual help to others experiencing similar frustration. With what result? She witnessed to many people and placed much literature. She says, "I felt that Jehovah blessed me despite the trying experience and gave me enough strength to carry his name in a worthwhile way." Indeed, she stayed focused on Jehovah's purpose.

¹⁹ Appreciation for Jehovah's sovereignty has distinguished true religion from false. God's people have long upheld his sovereignty. As supporters of true worship, we individually should endeavor to maintain that same Scriptural perspective.

²⁰ Be assured that Jehovah treasures your efforts to uphold his sovereignty by your faithful service and endurance of trials. (Ps. 18:25) The next article will consider further why Jehovah's sovereignty is deserving of your wholehearted support and how you can uphold it.

15. What does our faithfulness under trial accomplish?

16. Why must we remind ourselves of the importance of the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty?

17. How can having a regular share in Jehovah's work help us remain focused on the big issue?

18. How did one sister's experience illustrate the benefit of upholding Jehovah's sovereignty?

19. Where do Jehovah's people stand regarding his sovereignty?

20. How does Jehovah feel about your efforts to uphold his sovereignty?



Uphold Jehovah's Sovereignty!

“You are worthy, Jehovah our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things.”—REV. 4:11.

AS DISCUSSED in the preceding article, the Devil contends that Jehovah exercises his sovereignty in an unworthy way and that mankind would be better off ruling themselves. Is Satan right? Suppose that humans who chose self-rule could live forever. Would they be better off without God's rulership? Would *you* be happier if you had absolute independence *and* everlasting life?

² No one can answer those questions for you. Each person should think the matter through. In doing so, it should become evident that God's sovereignty is right. It is the best rulership. And it deserves our wholehearted support. The Bible provides a basis for such conviction. Consider, for example, what the Scriptures tell us about the *rightfulness* of Jehovah's sovereignty.

JEHOVAH HAS THE RIGHT TO RULE

³ Jehovah is the rightful Sovereign of the universe because he is ***the almighty God and Creator***. (1 Chron. 29:11; Acts 4:24) At Revelation 4:11, Christ's 144,000 heavenly

SONGS: 12, 150

HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

Why is Jehovah the rightful Sovereign of the universe?

Why is Jehovah's rulership the best possible?

How can we uphold Jehovah's sovereignty now?

-
- 1, 2. Of what must each of us be convinced? (See opening picture.)
 3. Why is Jehovah the only rightful Sovereign?

corulers are depicted in a vision, saying: “You are worthy, Jehovah our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they came into existence and were created.” Yes, because Jehovah created all things, he has full right to rule over humans as well as spirit creatures.

⁴ Satan has created nothing. Consequently, he has no rightful claim to universal rulership. In rebelling against Jehovah’s sovereignty, he and the first human couple acted arrogantly. (Jer. 10:23) True, as creatures with free will, they could choose independence from God. But did that give them the *right* to do so? No. Free will enables people to make many appropriate choices daily. However, it does not entitle them to rebel against their Creator and Life-Giver. Clearly, taking a stand against Jehovah is a *misuse* of free will. As humans, our place is under Jehovah’s righteous rule.

⁵ Jehovah is the rightful Sovereign for yet another reason. He exercises his authority with **perfect justice**. He declares: “I am Jehovah, the One showing loyal love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I take delight.” (Jer. 9:24) He does not look to any written code of laws made by imperfect men as a basis for determining what is just and fair. His perfect sense of justice emanates from his own being, and on that basis, he provided written laws for humans. “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of [his] throne,” so we can be confident that all of his laws,

principles, and decisions are righteous. (Ps. 89:14; 119:128) In contrast, despite his allegation that Jehovah’s sovereignty is deficient, Satan has been unable to produce a world wherein justice always prevails.

⁶ Moreover, Jehovah is the rightful Sovereign because he has the **knowledge and wisdom** needed to care for the universe. Consider, for example, the fact that God enabled his Son to heal diseases that doctors could not cure. (Matt. 4: 23, 24; Mark 5:25-29) From Jehovah’s standpoint, this was no miracle. He understands the processes involved and has the ability to undo any damage. The same is true with regard to his ability to raise the dead and prevent natural disasters.

⁷ The world under Satan’s influence is still searching for a way to settle national and international disputes. Jehovah alone has the wisdom to bring about world peace. (Isa. 2:3, 4; 54:13) As we learn of Jehovah’s knowledge and wisdom, we feel as did the apostle Paul, who wrote under inspiration: “O the depth of God’s riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and beyond tracing out his ways are!”—Rom. 11:33.

JEHOVAH’S RULERSHIP IS BEST

⁸ The Bible does more than establish Jehovah’s right to rule. It shows why his sovereignty is superior to that of others. One reason is that he **rules with love**. In-

4. Why is opposing God’s sovereignty a misuse of free will?

5. Why can we be sure that God’s decisions are just?

6. What is one reason why Jehovah has the right to govern the world?

7. How is Jehovah’s wisdom far superior to that of the world under Satan’s dominion?

8. What touches your heart about Jehovah’s way of ruling?

deed, our hearts are touched by how he chooses to exercise his sovereignty. He is “merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and abundant in loyal love and truth.” (Ex. 34:6) God treats his human servants with dignity and respect. He cares for us better than we can care for ourselves. Contrary to what the Devil claims, Jehovah does not hold back anything good from his faithful worshippers. Why, he even gave his precious Son so that we could have the prospect of endless life!—**Read Psalm 84:11; Romans 8:32.**

⁹ Jehovah’s concern extends beyond the welfare of his people as a whole. He also ***shows keen interest in each individual.*** Consider, for example, the three centuries during which Jehovah was raising up and empowering judges to deliver the nation of Israel from their oppressors. During that turbulent period, he did not fail to notice one non-Israelite named Ruth. At considerable sacrifice, she converted to true worship. Jehovah blessed Ruth with a husband and a son. But that is not all. When she is resurrected, Ruth will learn that her son was part of the line that led to the Messiah. And imagine how moved she will be to discover that her life story was preserved in a Bible book bearing her name!—Ruth 4:13; Matt. 1:5, 16.

¹⁰ Jehovah’s way of ruling is neither oppressive nor rigid. It ***allows for freedom and promotes joy.*** (2 Cor. 3:17) David expressed it this way: “In his [God’s] presence are majesty and splendor; strength and joy are in his dwelling

place.” (1 Chron. 16:7, 27) Similarly, the psalmist Ethan wrote: “Happy are the people who know the joyful shouting. O Jehovah, they walk in the light of your face. They rejoice in your name all day long, and in your righteousness they are exalted.”—Ps. 89:15, 16.

¹¹ Frequent meditation on Jehovah’s goodness can strengthen our conviction that his rulership is best. We come to feel as did the psalmist: “A day in your courtyards is better than a thousand anywhere else!” (Ps. 84:10) How could it be otherwise? As our loving Designer and Creator, Jehovah knows what we need in order to be truly happy, and he fills that need abundantly. Whatever he requires of us is for our benefit and ultimately results in our greatest joy. That is so even if his requirements involve our making some sacrifices.—**Read Isaiah 48:17.**

¹² The Bible indicates that after the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, some people will choose to rebel against Jehovah’s sovereignty. (Rev. 20:7, 8) What might induce them to do such a thing? The Devil, released from imprisonment and intent on misleading mankind, will no doubt appeal to selfishness. He has always done that. He may attempt to convince people that there is a way to live forever without obeying Jehovah. Of course, that could never be true. But more to the point: Will such a false claim hold any appeal for us? If we love Jehovah and serve him because of his goodness and because of his being the right-ful Sovereign of the universe, then such

9. How do we know that God’s concern extends to individuals?

10. Why is Jehovah’s sovereignty not unduly restrictive?

11. How can we strengthen our conviction that Jehovah’s sovereignty is best?

12. What is our primary motive for upholding Jehovah’s sovereignty?



Uphold God's
sovereignty in
making decisions
and in family
activities

(See paragraphs 16-18)



a devilish claim will be repulsive. We will never desire life other than life under Jehovah's rightful and loving sovereignty.

LOYALLY UPHOLD GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

¹³ Surely Jehovah's sovereignty merits our wholehearted support. As we have seen, he has the right to rule, and his way of ruling is the best. We can uphold Jehovah's sovereignty by maintaining our integrity and by serving God faithfully. How else can we show our support? We can do so by doing things Jehovah's way. When we handle matters as Jehovah would, we show that we love and uphold his way of ruling.—**Read Ephesians 5:1, 2.**

¹⁴ We learn from our study of the Bible

13. How does imitating God show support for him?

14. How can elders and family heads imitate Jehovah?

that Jehovah exercises authority in a loving manner. In harmony with that, family heads and elders who love his sovereignty will not be demanding, as if exercising a small sovereignty of their own. Instead, they will imitate Jehovah. Paul was just such an imitator of God and his Son. (1 Cor. 11:1) Paul did not embarrass others or pressure them into taking a desired course of action. Rather, he *appealed* to them. (Rom. 12:1; Eph. 4:1; Philem. 8-10) That is Jehovah's way of handling matters. Thus, that should be the way of all who love and uphold his way of ruling.

¹⁵ What is our response to divinely authorized headship? By our respectful cooperation, we show our support for Jehovah's sovereignty. Even if we do not fully understand or agree with a decision, we will still want to support theo-

15. How does respect for theocratic headship reveal our love for Jehovah's way of ruling?

cratic order. That is quite different from the way of the world, but it is the way of life under Jehovah's rulership. (Eph. 5: 22, 23; 6:1-3; Heb. 13:17) We benefit from doing so, for God has our interests at heart.

¹⁶ We can also show our support of God's sovereignty by our personal decisions. It is not Jehovah's way to provide a specific command for every situation. Instead, in guiding us he reveals his thinking. For example, he does not provide a detailed dress code for Christians. Rather, he reveals his desire that we select styles of dress and grooming that show modesty and that befit Christian ministers. (1 Tim. 2:9, 10) He is also concerned that we do not stumble others or disturb them by our decisions. (1 Cor. 10:31-33) When we guide our steps, not solely by preference, but primarily by Jehovah's thinking and concerns, we show that we love and support his way of ruling.

¹⁷ Consider an area wherein Christian married couples can support Jehovah's ways and thereby uphold his sovereignty. What if married life proves to be more challenging than expected? Suppose that it even seems disappointing. Why not pause to reflect on Jehovah's dealings with Israel. He referred to himself as being like a husband to that ancient nation. (Isa. 54:5; 62:4) What a difficult "marriage" that proved to be! Yet, Jehovah was not quick to give up on it. He repeatedly showed mercy to-

ward the nation and loyalty to his covenant with them. **(Read Psalm 106:43-45.)** Are we not drawn to Jehovah by such loyal love?

¹⁸ Accordingly, married couples who love Jehovah's ways imitate him. They do not seek an unscriptural way out of a difficult marriage. They realize that Jehovah has yoked them together and that he wants them to "stick" to each other. The only Scriptural ground for divorce that might free one to remarry is sexual immorality. (Matt. 19:5, 6, 9) By making the best of their situation and even seeking to improve it, they uphold Jehovah's righteous way of ruling.

¹⁹ Being imperfect, we will on occasion do things that disappoint Jehovah. He knows this and has lovingly made provision for us by means of Christ's ransom. Thus, when we fall short in some respect, we should ask Jehovah for forgiveness. (1 John 2:1, 2) Rather than continually berate ourselves, we should endeavor to learn from the mistake. If we stay close to Jehovah, he will forgive us and help us to heal and to handle similar situations successfully in the future.—Ps. 103:3.

²⁰ In the new world, all will come under Jehovah's sovereignty and learn his righteous ways. (Isa. 11:9) We, however, receive much of that education *now*. And the settling of the issue of sovereignty is well under way. Now is the time to uphold God's sovereignty by our integrity, our service, and our earnest endeavors to imitate him in all we do.

16. How do supporters of God's sovereignty make personal decisions?

17, 18. What are some ways in which married couples can show that they uphold Jehovah's sovereignty?

19. If we fall short of upholding God's sovereignty, what should we do?

20. Why show support for Jehovah's sovereignty now?

Could the merchants who sold animals in Jerusalem's temple rightly be called "robbers"?



ACCORDING to the account of Matthew's Gospel, "Jesus entered the temple and threw out all those selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. And he said to them: 'It is written, "My house will be called a house of prayer," but you are making it a cave of robbers.'"—Matt. 21:12, 13.

Jewish historical records show that temple merchants exploited their customers by charging exorbitant prices. For example, the Mishnah (Keritot 1:7) records an occasion in the first century C.E. when the price of a pair of sacrificial pigeons rose to a golden denar. That was the equivalent of what an unskilled laborer might earn for 25 days' work. Pigeons or doves were an acceptable sacrifice of the poor; yet, the price even of these birds had become prohibitive. (Lev. 1:14; 5:7; 12:6-8) Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel, outraged by this state of affairs, reduced the number of obligatory sacrifices, upon which the price of two pigeons immediately fell to a hundredth of the former price.

In light of the above, Jesus was justified in calling the temple merchants "robbers" on account of their exploitation and greed.

