

SEPTEMBER 15, 2012

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



STUDY EDITION



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SEPTEMBER 15, 2012

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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## PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

### STUDY ARTICLES 1, 2 PAGES 3-12

Momentous events are soon to take place. These articles highlight ten events we need to have in mind. Five are related to the dissolution of Satan's world and five to the establishment of the new world.

### STUDY ARTICLE 3 PAGES 18-22

We all long for the end of this wicked system of things that will bring about the foretold Paradise. Whether you have been waiting for months or for years, why is patience important? This article will help us to develop the needed patience.

### STUDY ARTICLE 4 PAGES 23-27

All God's people are eager for this wicked system to end. This article will show that there are benefits to not knowing the exact day or hour when the end will arrive.

### STUDY ARTICLE 5 PAGES 28-32

Conventions have long been an important feature of pure worship. This article examines some spiritual highlights of such in Biblical and modern times and focuses on the benefits we receive from attending conventions.

## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

### 13 THEOCRATIC SCHOOLS —EVIDENCE OF JEHOVAH'S LOVE



**COVER:** Brothers in the Philippines try to reach all people, such as this man on his motorbike with a sidecar in northern Luzon

## PHILIPPINES

### PUBLISHERS IN PHILIPPINES

**177,635**

### REGULAR PIONEERS

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### BAPTIZED DURING 2011

**8,586**

### LANGUAGES IN WHICH TRANSLATION IS DONE

**21**



# HOW THIS WORLD WILL COME TO AN END

*"You are not in darkness, so that that day should overtake you as it would thieves."*

—1 THESS. 5:4.

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## CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

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What yet unseen developments are indicated in the following scriptures?

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1 Thessalonians 5:3

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Revelation 17:16

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Daniel 2:44

**E**ARTHSHAKING events will soon occur. The fulfillment of Bible prophecies confirms this fact, so we need to keep on the watch. What will help us to do that? The apostle Paul urges us to "keep our eyes . . . on the things unseen." Yes, we need to bear in mind our reward of everlasting life, be it in heaven or on earth. As the context shows, Paul wrote these words to encourage fellow believers to focus on the happy outcome of their faithful course. Doing so would also help them to cope with trials and persecution.—2 Cor. 4:8, 9, 16-18; 5:7.

<sup>2</sup> Paul's admonition contains an important principle: To keep our hope firm, we must look beyond the things that are immediately before us. We need to focus on significant events that are as yet unseen. (Heb. 11:1; 12:1, 2) Let us, therefore, consider ten future events that are closely related to our hope of everlasting life.\*

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN JUST BEFORE THE END?

<sup>3</sup> One future development is mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians. (*Read 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3.*) He draws attention to "Jehovah's day." As used here, "Jehovah's day" refers to the period that will start with the destruction of false religion and will culminate in the war of Armageddon.

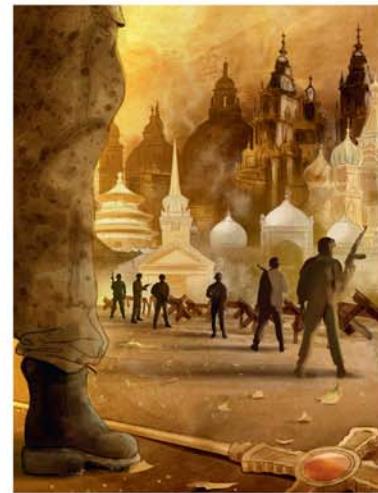
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\* The ten events are considered in this and the following article.

1. What will help us to keep on the watch and to cope with trials?
2. (a) To keep our hope firm, what must we do? (b) What will we consider in this and the following article?
3. (a) What development yet to take place is mentioned at 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3? (b) What will political leaders do, and who may join them?

## FIVE EVENTS TO COME:

- 1 Proclamation of "Peace and security!"
- 2 Nations attack and destroy "Babylon the Great"
- 3 Attack on Jehovah's people
- 4 War of Armageddon
- 5 Satan and his demons are abyssed



However, just before that day of Jehovah begins, world leaders will be saying "Peace and security!" This may refer to one event or to a series of events. Nations may think that they are close to solving some of their big problems. What about the religious leaders? They are part of the world, so it is possible that they will join the political leaders. (Rev. 17:1, 2) The clergy would thus be imitating the false prophets of ancient Judah. Jehovah said about them: "They [are] saying, 'There is peace! There is peace!' when there is no peace."—Jer. 6: 14; 23:16, 17.

4 No matter who will share in saying "Peace and security!" that development will indicate that Jehovah's day is to begin. Paul could therefore state: "Brothers, you are not in darkness, so that that day should overtake you as it would thieves, for you are all sons of light." (1 Thess. 5:4, 5) Unlike mankind in general, we discern the Scriptural significance of current events. How exactly will this prophecy about saying "Peace and security!" be fulfilled? We must wait and see. Therefore, let us be

4. Unlike mankind in general, what do we discern?

determined to "stay awake and keep our senses."—1 Thess. 5:6; Zeph. 3:8.

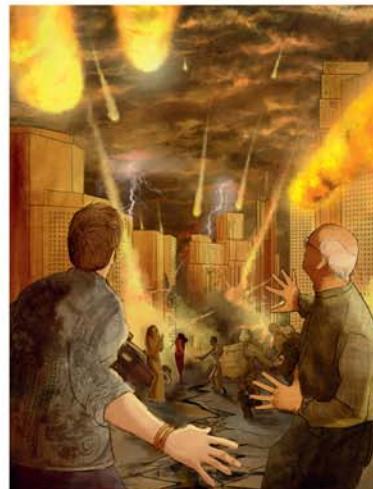
### "A QUEEN" WHO MISCALCULATES HER CHANCES

5 What yet unseen event will take place next? Paul stated: "Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' *then* sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them." The first phase of this "sudden destruction" is the attack against "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion, also known as "the harlot." (Rev. 17:5, 6, 15) That attack against all forms of false religion, including Christendom, is the start of the "great tribulation." (Matt. 24:21; 2 Thess. 2:8) For many, this event will come as a surprise. Why? Because up to that point, the harlot will confidently view herself as "a queen" who will "never see mourning." But she will suddenly discover that she has miscalculated her chances of survival. She will be wiped out rather quickly, as if "in one day."—Rev. 18:7, 8.

6 God's Word identifies the harlot's

5. (a) How will the "great tribulation" start?  
(b) What "queen" will miscalculate her chances of survival?

6. False religion will be destroyed by whom?



attacker as a “wild beast” with “ten horns.” A study of the book of Revelation shows that the wild beast refers to the United Nations (UN). “The ten horns” represent all present political powers that support this “scarlet-colored wild beast.”\* (Rev. 17:3, 5, 11, 12) How devastating will the attack be? The nations of the UN will plunder the harlot’s wealth, expose her real character, devour her, and “completely burn her.” Her destruction will be final.

—*Read Revelation 17:16.*

7 Bible prophecy also indicates what will trigger this attack. Somehow Jehovah will put it into the hearts of political rulers “to carry out his thought,” namely, to devastate the harlot. (Rev. 17:17) Warmongering religion continues to be a disruptive force in the world; hence, the nations may feel that destroying the harlot is in their own national interests. In fact, when the rulers attack, they will think that they are carrying out their own “one thought.” In reality, however, they act as God’s tool for obliterating

all false religion. Thus, in a stunning reversal, one part of Satan’s system will attack another part, and Satan will be powerless to prevent it.—Matt. 12:25, 26.

#### AN ATTACK ON GOD’S PEOPLE

8 After false religion has been destroyed, God’s servants will still be found “dwelling in security” and “without wall.” (Ezek. 38:11, 14) What will happen to this seemingly defenseless group of people who continue to worship Jehovah? It appears that they will become the object of an all-out assault by “many peoples.” God’s Word describes that development as the attack by “Gog of the land of Magog.” (*Read Ezekiel 38:2, 15, 16.*) How should we view that attack?

9 Knowing in advance about this attack on God’s people does not make us overly anxious. Rather, our main concern is, not our own salvation, but the sanctification of Jehovah’s name and the vindication of his sovereignty. In fact, Jehovah declared more than 60

\* See *Revelation—Its Grand Climax at Hand!* pages 251-258.

7. What will trigger the attack by the “wild beast”?

8. What is the attack by “Gog of the land of Magog”?

9. (a) What is a Christian’s main concern?  
(b) What steps should we take now to strengthen our faith?

times: "You will have to know that I am Jehovah." (Ezek. 6:7; see footnote.) Hence, we look forward with intense interest to the fulfillment of that outstanding aspect of Ezekiel's prophecy, trusting that "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial." (2 Pet. 2:9) Meanwhile, we want to use every opportunity to strengthen our faith so that we will be able to keep our integrity to Jehovah no matter what tests we may face. What should we do? We should pray, study God's Word and meditate on it, and share the Kingdom message with others. By doing so, we keep our hope of everlasting life firm, like "an anchor."—Heb. 6:19; Ps. 25:21.

#### THE NATIONS WILL HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE JEHOVAH

**10** What earthshaking event will be triggered by the attack on Jehovah's servants? Jehovah, by means of Jesus and the heavenly armies, will intervene in behalf of His people. (Rev. 19:11-16) That intervention will be "the war of the great day of God the Almighty"—Armageddon.—Rev. 16:14, 16.

**11** Regarding that war, Jehovah declares by means of Ezekiel: "'I will call forth against [Gog] throughout all my mountainous region a sword,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. 'Against his own brother the sword of each one will come to be.'" Panic-stricken, those on Satan's side will be thrown into confusion and will turn their weapons against their own ranks—warrior against warrior. However, havoc is also to come Satan's way. Jeho-

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**10, 11.** What will signal the beginning of Armageddon, and what will take place during that time?

vah states: "Fire and sulphur I shall rain down upon [Gog] and upon his bands and upon the many peoples that will be with him." (Ezek. 38:21, 22) What will be the result of this divine action?

**12** The nations will have to realize that their crushing defeat is brought about by the order of Jehovah himself. Then, as did the ancient Egyptian attackers who pursued the Israelites at the Red Sea, Satan's forces may cry out in desperation: "Jehovah certainly fights for them!" (Ex. 14:25) Yes, the nations will be forced to acknowledge Jehovah. (*Read Ezekiel 38:23.*) How close are we to the start of this chain of events?

#### NO OTHER WORLD POWER WILL ARISE

**13** A prophecy in the book of Daniel enables us to establish where we are in the stream of time. Daniel describes an image in human form made up of different metals. (Dan. 2:28, 31-33) It represents successive world powers that have had a major influence on God's people, past and present. They are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome—and the last, in our time, another world power. A study of Daniel's prophecy shows that this final world power is depicted in the image as the feet and toes. During World War I, Britain and the United States forged a special partnership. Yes, the fifth part of Daniel's image is the Anglo-American World Power. The feet form the last part of the image, indicating that no other human world power will appear on the scene. That the feet and toes are made up of iron and

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**12.** The nations will be forced to do what?

**13.** What do we know about the fifth part of the image that Daniel describes?

clay pictures the weakened state of the Anglo-American World Power.

**14** The same prophecy indicates that God's Kingdom, pictured by a large stone, was cut from the mountain of Jehovah's sovereignty in 1914. That stone is now hurtling toward its target—the feet of the image. At Armageddon, the feet and the rest of the image will be smashed. (*Read Daniel 2:44, 45.*) Thus, the Anglo-American World Power will still be the dominant world power when Armageddon strikes. How thrilling it will be to witness the complete fulfillment of this prophecy!\* What, though, does Jehovah have in store for Satan himself?

#### HOW GOD'S CHIEF ADVERSARY WILL BE HANDLED

**15** First, Satan will have to witness from beginning to end his entire organization on earth being wiped out. Then, Satan himself becomes the focus of attention. The apostle John reports what happens next. (*Read Revelation 20:1-3.*) Jesus Christ—the “angel . . . with the key of the abyss”—will seize Satan and his demons, hurl them into the abyss, and keep them there for a thousand years. (Luke 8:30, 31; 1 John 3:8) That action constitutes the initial stage of the

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\* The phrase “put an end to all *these* kingdoms” at Daniel 2:44 refers to the kingdoms, or world powers, pictured by the parts of the image. However, a parallel Bible prophecy shows that “the kings of the *entire* inhabited earth” will be lined up against Jehovah on “the great day of God the Almighty.” (Rev. 16:14; 19:19-21) Hence, not only the kingdoms of the image but also all other kingdoms of this world will be destroyed at Armageddon.

**14.** Which world power will be the dominant one when Armageddon strikes?

**15.** After Armageddon, what will happen to Satan and his demons?

bruising of the serpent's head.\*—Gen. 3:15.

**16** What is “the abyss” into which Satan and the demons will be hurled? The Greek word *a'bys·sos* used by John means “very or exceedingly deep.” It is also translated “unfathomable, boundless,” and “the infinite void.” Thus, it is a place completely out of reach of anyone except Jehovah and his appointed angel “with the key of the abyss.” There, Satan will be in a state of deathlike inactivity so that “he might not mislead the nations anymore.” Truly, that “roaring lion” will be silenced!—1 Pet. 5:8.

#### EVENTS LEADING UP TO A TIME OF PEACE

**17** Significant developments and earthshaking events are ahead of us. We look forward to seeing how the saying of “Peace and security!” will come about. Then we will witness the destruction of Babylon the Great, the attack by Gog of Magog, the battle of Armageddon, and the hurling into the abyss of Satan and his demons. After these events, when all wickedness is gone, we will enter a new chapter in life—Christ’s Millennial Reign, during which we will enjoy an “abundance of peace.”—Ps. 37:10, 11.

**18** In addition to the five events we have examined so far, there are other “things unseen” on which we want to “keep our eyes.” These events will be considered in the following article.

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\* The final crushing of the serpent's head occurs after the end of the thousand years when Satan and his demons are hurled into “the lake of fire and sulphur.”—Rev. 20:7-10; Matt. 25:41.

**16.** What will it mean for Satan to be in “the abyss”?

**17, 18.** (a) What events that are yet unseen have we considered so far? (b) After these events, what time period will we enjoy?



*"That God may be all things to everyone."*

—1 COR. 15:28.

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#### CAN YOU EXPLAIN?

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What will the fulfillment of these texts mean to you?

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Micah 4:4

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Isaiah 11:6-9

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John 5:28, 29

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# PEACE FOR A THOUSAND YEARS —AND BEYOND!

CAN you imagine all the good that a powerful government under a just and compassionate ruler could do for its subjects in one thousand years? Wonderful events await the unnumbered “great crowd”—survivors of “the great tribulation,” which will bring a total end to the present wicked system of things.—Rev. 7:9, 14.

<sup>2</sup> During 6,000 years of human history, self-determination and self-rule have brought a tragic abundance of pain and suffering to mankind. The Bible long ago stated: “Man has dominated man to his injury.” (Eccl. 8:9) What do we see today? Aside from wars and uprisings, there are the devastating problems of poverty, disease, destruction of the environment, climate change, and more. Government officials have warned that if we do not change our business-as-usual attitude, the outcome will be disastrous.

<sup>3</sup> Under the Messianic King Jesus Christ and his 144,000 rulers, God’s Kingdom will take progressive steps to undo all the damage done to humans and their home, the planet Earth. The Thousand Year Reign will bring about the fulfillment of the heartwarming promise by Jehovah God: “I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart.” (Isa. 65:17) What wonderful, though still unseen, events await us? With the help of God’s prophetic Word, let us get a glimpse of the marvelous things yet “unseen.”—2 Cor. 4:18.

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1. What exciting prospect awaits the “great crowd”?
  2. What have humans experienced during the past 6,000 years?
  3. What will the Thousand Year Reign bring about?

## **'THEY WILL BUILD HOUSES AND PLANT VINEYARDS'**

**4** Who would not like to have a home of his own, a place where he and his family could feel safe and secure? In today's world, however, adequate housing is a serious problem. People are packed into crowded cities. Many have to manage with makeshift dwellings in shantytowns and city slums. Having a house of their own remains a mere dream for them.

**5** Under Kingdom rule, the desire of every resident to have his own home will be fulfilled, for it was prophesied through Isaiah: "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage." (Isa. 65:21) Yet, having a home of their own is not the only prospect. After all, some today live in their own home, a few even in a mansion or on a grand estate. But there is always the worry that the home can be lost through some financial reverses or that burglars—or worse—will break in. How different everything will be under Kingdom rule! The prophet Micah wrote: "They will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble."—Mic. 4:4.

**6** With that wonderful prospect in mind, what should we do? Of course, all of us need adequate housing. Nonetheless, rather than striving to acquire that dream house now—perhaps going heavily into debt to do so—would it not

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**4.** What housing conditions do many face today?

**5, 6.** (a) Isaiah 65:21 and Micah 4:4 will have what fulfillment? (b) How can we receive that blessing?

be wise for us to focus on Jehovah's promise? Recall what Jesus said of himself: "Foxes have dens and birds of heaven have roosts, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay down his head." (Luke 9:58) Jesus had the ability and the power to build or acquire the best house anyone could possibly have. Why did he not do so? Clearly, Jesus wanted to avoid any distraction and entanglement that would prevent him from putting the Kingdom first. Can we follow his example and keep our eye simple—free of materialistic entanglement and anxiety?—Matt. 6:33, 34.

## **"THE WOLF AND THE LAMB . . . WILL FEED AS ONE"**

**7** In the process of creation, Jehovah made humans last, the apex of his earthly works. To his Master Worker, his firstborn Son, Jehovah stated his specific purpose: "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and the domestic animals and all the earth and every moving animal that is moving upon the earth." (Gen. 1:26) Thus, Adam and Eve, and eventually all humans, were mandated to have dominion over the animal creation.

**8** Is it really possible for humans to have all the animals in subjection and to be at peace with them? Many people are very close to their pets, such as dogs and cats. What about wild animals, though? One report says: "Scientists who have lived closely with beasts and studied them have found that all mammals are emotional." Of course,

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**7.** What relationship between humans and animals was originally mandated by Jehovah?

**8.** What animal behavior is common today?

we see animals become frightened or ferocious when they are threatened, but are they capable of what some might describe as tender feelings? The report continues: "It is in the raising of their young that mammals reveal their greatest attribute—their tremendous capacity for warm affection."

<sup>9</sup> So we should not be surprised when we read in the Bible that peace will come to prevail between humans and animals. (*Read Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25.*) Why not? Recall that when Noah and his family emerged from the ark after the Flood, Jehovah told them: "A fear of you and a terror of you will continue upon every living creature of the earth." That was for the animals' self-preservation. (Gen. 9:2, 3) Could not Jehovah remove a measure of that fear and terror, so that his original mandate would be fulfilled? (Hos. 2:18) What an enjoyable time awaits all who will survive to live on earth then!

#### "HE WILL WIPE OUT EVERY TEAR"

<sup>10</sup> When Solomon saw "all the acts of oppression that are being done under the sun," he lamented: "Look! the tears of those being oppressed, but they had no comforter." (Eccl. 4:1) Things are similar, if not worse, today. Who among us has not shed tears for some reason? True, at times they may be tears of joy. Generally, though, tears reflect the outpouring of an anguished heart.

<sup>11</sup> Recall the many touching and emotional scenes we read about in the Bi-

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9. Regarding the animals, what changes can we expect?

10. Why are tears common in human experience?

11. What Bible account particularly touches your heart?

ble. When Sarah died at the age of 127, "Abraham came in to bewail Sarah and to weep over her." (Gen. 23:1, 2) When Naomi said farewell to her two widowed daughters-in-law, "they began to raise their voices and weep," and then "they raised their voices and wept some more." (Ruth 1:9, 14) When King Hezekiah was afflicted with sickness and certain death, he prayed to God and "began to weep profusely," which evidently touched Jehovah. (2 Ki. 20:1-5) And who is not moved by the account of the apostle Peter denying Jesus? On hearing the cock crow, Peter "went outside and wept bitterly."—Matt. 26:75.

<sup>12</sup> Because of the tragic events—small and large—that befall us, mankind is sorely in need of comfort and relief. That is what the Thousand Year Reign will bring to its subjects: "[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." (Rev. 21:4) As wonderful as it is that mourning, outcry, and pain will be no more, God's promise even includes doing away with mankind's ultimate enemy—death. How is that to come about?

#### "ALL THOSE IN THE MEMORIAL TOMBS WILL . . . COME OUT"

<sup>13</sup> Ever since Adam sinned, death has ruled as a king over humanity. It has been an invincible enemy, the inescapable end for sinful humans, the source of immeasurable sorrow and grief. (Rom. 5:12, 14) In fact, "for fear of death," millions are "subject to slavery all through their lives."—Heb. 2:15.

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12. How will Kingdom rule bring true relief to mankind?

13. How has death affected humans since Adam's fall?

**14** The Bible points to the time when “as the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing.” (1 Cor. 15:26) Two groups can be mentioned who will come in line to benefit from that. For the “great crowd,” who live now, it will be possible to survive into the promised new world with unending life in view. For the billions who have already been snatched up by death, it will be possible to experience a resurrection. Can you imagine the joy and excitement when those in the former group welcome back the latter? A close look at some of the resurrection accounts in the Bible can give us a foretaste of what it might be like.—*Read Mark 5:38-42; Luke 7:11-17.*

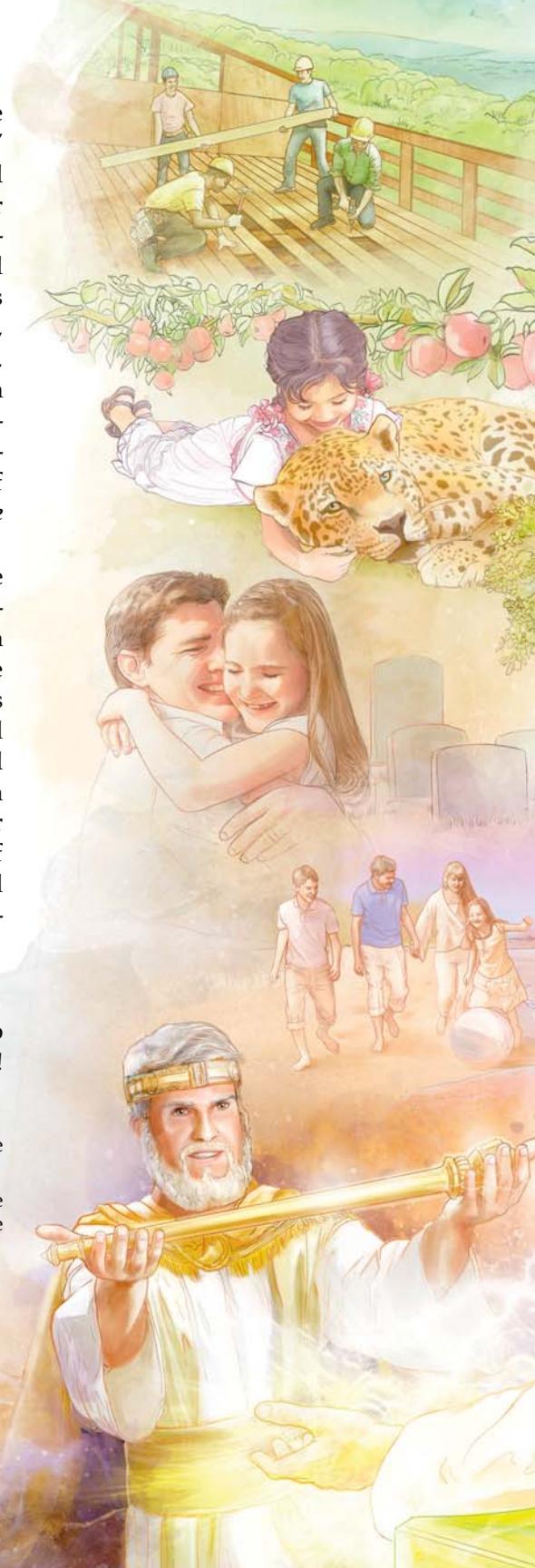
**15** Think of the expressions “they were beside themselves with great ecstasy” and “they began to glorify God.” If you had been present on those occasions, perhaps you would have felt the same way. Indeed, seeing our dead loved ones come back to life through the resurrection will produce in us a marvelous sensation of joy and exhilaration. Jesus said: “The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out.” (John 5:28, 29) None of us have ever seen such a thing take place; it will surely be one of the grandest of “the things unseen.”

#### GOD WILL BE “ALL THINGS TO EVERYONE”

**16** Yes, a glorious future awaits those who prove faithful to Jehovah in these critical times!

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- 14.** What will result when death is brought to nothing?
  - 15.** How would you likely react to seeing a loved one brought back to life?
  - 16.** (a) Why should we talk enthusiastically about the blessings yet unseen? (b) What did Paul say to encourage the Corinthian Christians?

Upon completion of his assignments as King, Jesus will humbly hand over the Kingdom to his Father



Though the grand blessings are yet unseen, keeping them clearly in mind will help us to focus on what is truly important and to avoid being sidetracked by the fleeting attractions of the present system of things. (Luke 21:34; 1 Tim. 6: 17-19) During family study and worship, in conversations with fellow believers, and in discussions with Bible students and interested ones, let us speak enthusiastically about our marvelous hope and prospects. This will help us to keep these vivid in our minds and hearts. The apostle Paul did just that in encouraging his fellow Christians. He took them, so to speak, all the way to the close of Christ's Thousand Year Reign. Try to imagine the full significance of Paul's words found at **1 Corinthians 15:24, 25, 28.—Read.**

**17** There can be no better description of the grand climax than the words "that God may be all things to everyone." What does that mean? Think back to the time in Eden when the perfect humans, Adam and Eve, were a part of Jehovah's peaceful and harmonious universal family. Jehovah, the Universal Sovereign, ruled directly over all his creation, angelic and human. They were able to communicate with him personally, worship him, and be blessed by him. He was "all things to everyone."

**18** That harmonious relationship was interrupted when humans, influenced by Satan, rebelled against Jehovah's sovereignty. Since 1914, however, the Messianic Kingdom has been taking progressive steps to restore that unity

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**17, 18.** (a) In what way was Jehovah "all things to everyone" at the outset of human history? (b) What will Jesus do to restore unity and harmony?

and harmony. (Eph. 1:9, 10) During the Thousand Year Reign, marvelous things presently "unseen" will be brought to reality. Then comes "the end," that is, the close of Christ's Millennial Reign. What will happen then? Though given "all authority . . . in heaven and on the earth," Jesus is not ambitious. He has no intention of usurping Jehovah's place. He humbly "hands over the kingdom to his God and Father." He will use his unique position and authority "to the glory of God."—Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11.

**19** By then, the earthly subjects of the Kingdom will have been brought to perfection. They will follow Jesus' example and humbly and willingly acknowledge Jehovah's sovereignty. They will have the opportunity to demonstrate their desire to do that by successfully passing the final test. (Rev. 20:7-10) Thereafter, all rebels—human and spirit—will be eliminated forever. What a joyful and jubilant time that will be! The entire universal family will happily praise Jehovah, who will be "all things to everyone."—*Read Psalm 99:1-3.*

**20** Will the glorious Kingdom realities just ahead motivate you to focus your attention and efforts on doing God's will? Can you avoid being sidetracked by the false hope and comfort that Satan's world offers? Will you strengthen your resolve to support and uphold Jehovah's sovereignty? May your actions prove that it is your desire to do so forever. Then it will be your privilege to enjoy peace and prosperity for a thousand years—and beyond!

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**19, 20.** (a) How will all Kingdom subjects demonstrate whether they accept Jehovah's sovereignty? (b) What grand prospect awaits us?

# THEOCRATIC SCHOOLS

## Evidence of Jehovah's Love

JEHOVAH is our "Grand Instructor." (Isa. 30:20) Love motivates him to educate and train others. For example, moved by deep love, Jehovah shows Jesus "all the things he himself does." (John 5:20) Love for us, his Witnesses, moves Jehovah to give us "the tongue of the taught ones," as we put forth every effort to honor him and help others.—Isa. 50:4.

In imitation of Jehovah's pattern of love, the Teaching Committee of the Governing Body uses

ten theocratic schools to train ones who have both the *desire* and the *circumstances* to enroll. Do you view these schools as an evidence of Jehovah's love?

Enjoy an overview of the current theocratic schools and comments from some who have attended them. Then ask yourself, 'How can I benefit from this divine education?'

### THEOCRATIC SCHOOLS OVERVIEW

#### Theocratic Ministry School



**Purpose:** To train publishers to be effective preachers and teachers of the good news.

**Duration:** Continuous.

**Location:** Local Kingdom Hall.

**Qualifications:** All who are regularly associating with the congregation, who agree with the teachings of the Bible, and whose lives are in harmony with Christian principles.

**Enrollment:** The Theocratic Ministry School overseer enrolls students.

Sharon, who is paralyzed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), says: "*The Theocratic Ministry School has taught me to do*

*research and to present information logically. I have also learned to focus on the spiritual needs of others—not just my own.*"

Arnie, a longtime traveling overseer, comments: "*I grew up stuttering and had trouble making eye contact with others. This school has helped me gain confidence and self-worth. With Jehovah's help through this training, I have learned breathing and concentration techniques. I am very grateful for the ability to praise God in the congregation and in my ministry.*"

## Bethel Entrants' School

**Purpose:** To help new arrivals to Bethel to make a success of their service.

**Duration:** 45 minutes each week for 16 weeks.

**Location:** Bethel.

**Qualifications:** Must be a permanent member of the Bethel family or a temporary volunteer who has been approved to serve at Bethel for a year or longer.

**Enrollment:** New members of the Bethel family are automatically enrolled.

Demetrius, who attended this school in the 1980's, says: "*This course improved my study habits and helped prepare me for a long Bethel career. The instructors, curriculum, and practical counsel convinced me of Jehovah's loving concern and of his*

*desire to help me to succeed in my Bethel service.*"

Kaitlyn comments: "I was helped to focus on what is most important—being a spiritual person. Entrants' School has enhanced my appreciation for Jehovah, his house, and his organization."

## Kingdom Ministry School

**Purpose:** To train traveling overseers, elders, and, at times, ministerial servants to care for their oversight and organizational responsibilities. (Acts 20:28) Current situations, trends, and immediate needs of the congregations are covered. This school is held every few years as decided by the Governing Body.

**Duration:** In recent years, this school has been conducted for two to two and a half days for traveling overseers, one and a half days for elders, and one day for ministerial servants.

**Location:** Usually at a Kingdom Hall or an Assembly Hall.

**Qualifications:** Must be a traveling overseer, an elder, or a ministerial servant.

**Enrollment:** Elders and ministerial servants receive an invitation from the circuit overseer. The branch office invites traveling overseers.

*"The school, though compact and concise, invigorates elders and helps them to maintain joy and 'carry on as men' in Jehovah's service. Both new and longtime elders learn to shepherd effectively and to be fitly united in the 'same line of thought.'”—Quinn (below).*

*"This training struck the perfect balance between building our spiritual appreciation, warning us of dangers, and providing us with practical suggestions to care for the flock. How kind of Jehovah to help us."—Michael.*



## Pioneer Service School

**Purpose:** To help pioneers ‘fully accomplish their ministry.’

—2 Tim. 4:5.

**Duration:** Two weeks.

**Location:** Decided by the branch office; usually at a Kingdom Hall.

**Qualifications:** Must have been a regular pioneer for a year or longer.\*

**Enrollment:** Eligible pioneers are automatically enrolled and are informed by their circuit overseer.

\* If a class does not have a full complement of new pioneers, some pioneers who have not attended in the last five years may be invited to attend again.

*“That school has helped me deal with challenges in the ministry and in my life,” says Lily (right).*

*“The way I study, teach, and use the Bible has greatly improved. I am better prepared to help others, support the elders, and contribute to the growth of the congregation.”*

Brenda, who has attended the school twice, notes: *“It allowed me to be 100 percent absorbed in spiritual things, to strengthen my conscience, and to focus on helping others. Clearly, Jehovah is generous!”*



## School for Congregation Elders

**Purpose:** To help elders care for their responsibilities in the congregation and to deepen their spirituality.

**Duration:** Five days.

**Location:** Decided by the branch office; usually at a Kingdom Hall or an Assembly Hall.

**Qualifications:** Must be an appointed elder.

**Enrollment:** The branch office invites elders.

Note comments from some in the 92nd class in the United States:

*“The school has benefited me greatly, helping me to look at myself and see how I can take care of Jehovah’s sheep.”*

*“I am ready to be more encouraging to all by stressing the main points in the Scriptures.”*

*“I will carry this training with me for the rest of my life.”*

## School for Traveling Overseers and Their Wives

**Purpose:** To help circuit and district overseers to be more effective in serving congregations as they “work hard in speaking and teaching.”—1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3.

**Duration:** Two months.

**Location:** Determined by the branch office.

**Qualifications:** Brother must be a circuit or a district overseer.

**Enrollment:** The branch office invites traveling overseers and their wives.

*“Our appreciation for Jesus’ headship over the organization was enhanced. We saw the need to encourage the brothers we*

*serve and to strengthen the unity of each congregation. The course impressed on our minds that while the traveling overseer offers advice and even correction on occasion, his main goal is to help the brothers to see that Jehovah loves them.”—Joel, 1st class, 1999.*

## Bible School for Single Brothers

**Purpose:** To prepare single elders and ministerial servants to care for additional responsibilities in Jehovah's organization. Many graduates will receive an assignment in their home country, wherever there is a need. Others may be assigned to another country if they make themselves available. Some graduates may serve as temporary special pioneers to open up and expand the work in remote and isolated areas.

**Duration:** Two months.

**Location:** Decided by the branch office; usually at a Kingdom Hall or an Assembly Hall.

**Qualifications:** Single brothers between 23 and 62 years of age who are in good health and who want to serve wherever there is a greater need. (Mark 10:29, 30) They must have served as regular pioneers for at least two years and have served for at least two continuous years as elders or ministerial servants.

**Enrollment:** A meeting is held at the circuit assembly to provide information for those interested.

*"Being immersed in this course allowed Jehovah's spirit to make changes deep within me," says Rick, from the 23rd class in the United States. "When Jehovah*

*extends an assignment, he supports you in that assignment.*

*I learned that if I focus on God's will and not on myself, he will strengthen me."*

*"I learned to appreciate God's organization as a modern-day miracle," notes Andreas, who serves in Germany. "The training helped prepare me for the work ahead. Also, many Bible examples taught me this fundamental truth: Serving my brothers and Jehovah leads to true happiness."*

## Bible School for Christian Couples

**Purpose:** To give married couples specialized training so that they can be used more fully by Jehovah and his organization. Many graduates will be assigned to serve where there is a greater need in their home country. Some may receive an assignment in another country if they make themselves available. Graduates may serve as temporary special pioneers to open up and expand the work in remote and isolated areas.

**Duration:** Two months.

**Location:** This school is conducted in the United States, and beginning in September 2012, it also will be held in selected branch territories worldwide, usually at a Kingdom Hall or an Assembly Hall.

**Qualifications:** Married couples between 25 and 50 years of age who are in good health, who have the circumstances to serve wherever there is a greater need, and who have the attitude: "Here I am! Send me." (Isa. 6:8) They must have been married for at least two years and have been in the full-time service for at least two years without interruption. The husband must have been an elder or a ministerial servant for at least two consecutive years.

**Enrollment:** A meeting is held at the district convention to provide information for those interested in enrolling. If there is no meeting at conventions in your country and you would like to apply, you may write your branch office for further information.

*"What a life-changing eight weeks and a great opportunity for couples wanting to reach out! We are determined to keep a balanced life that will enable us to use our time wisely."—Eric and Corina (below), 1st class, 2011.*



## Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

**Purpose:** To train students to serve as field missionaries in densely populated areas, to be traveling overseers, or to be Bethelites. The goal is to strengthen and stabilize field and branch organization.

**Duration:** Five months.

**Location:** Watchtower Educational Center, Patterson, New York, U.S.A.

**Qualifications:** Married couples who are already serving in some

form of special full-time service—that is, as field missionaries who have not attended the school, special pioneers, traveling overseers, or Bethelites. They must have been in such service together for at least three years without interruption. They need to speak, read, and write English fluently.

**Enrollment:** Couples may be invited by their Branch Committee to apply.

Lade and Monique from the United States now serve in Africa.

*“Gilead School prepared us to go anywhere in the world, roll up our sleeves, and work with our dear brothers,” says Lade.*

Monique adds: *“As I apply what I’ve learned from God’s Word, I find great joy in my assignment. I see that joy as further proof of Jehovah’s love.”*

## School for Branch Committee Members and Their Wives

**Purpose:** To help those on Branch Committees to supervise Bethel homes, to give attention to service matters affecting congregations, and to oversee circuits and districts. They also learn about translating, printing, and the shipping of literature.

**Duration:** Two months.

**Location:** Watchtower Educational Center, Patterson, New York, U.S.A.

**Qualifications:** Brother must be a Branch Committee or a Country Committee member or being assigned as such.

**Enrollment:** The Governing Body invites brothers and their wives.

Lowell and Cara, from the 25th class, serve in Nigeria. *“I was reminded that no matter how busy I am or what work I have been given, the key to pleasing Jehovah is spirituality,”*

says Lowell. *“The course also stressed that how we treat others must revolve around the love that Jehovah shows his servants.”*

*“One comment I have meditated on is this,” adds Cara. “If I cannot state a point simply, I need to study the subject before trying to teach others.”*

## BENEFIT FROM THEOCRATIC TRAINING

As “the God of love,” Jehovah provides training that adds meaning to our lives, prepares us to overcome challenges, and helps us to experience great joy in our ministry. (2 Cor. 13:11) Like first-century disciples, we are well-equipped to help others, “teaching them to observe all the things” we have been commanded.—Matt. 28:20.

Although we may not be able to attend *all* of these schools, we can benefit from one or more of them. And we can apply the Bible-based instruc-

tion thus available. We can also increase our effectiveness in the ministry by working alongside well-trained servants of Jehovah.

Ask yourself, ‘Do my circumstances allow me to reach out for attending any of these schools?’

Jehovah’s worshippers consider it a privilege to support these valuable schools and to be taught there. May the training you receive draw you closer to God and equip you to fulfill your responsibilities before him, especially the urgent commission to preach the good news.



*"Consider the patience of our Lord as salvation."* –2 PET. 3:15.

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#### HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

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How has Jehovah shown that he is patient?

Why has Jesus had to be patient for a long time?

What steps can we take to strengthen godly patience?

# LEARN FROM THE PATIENCE OF JEHOVAH AND JESUS

A FAITHFUL sister who endured many challenges throughout several decades humbly asked, "Will I see the end before I die?" Some who have long served Jehovah wonder about the same thing. We yearn for the day when God makes all things new, removing the problems we now face. (Rev. 21:5) Though we have ample reason for believing that the end of Satan's system is very near, it can be difficult to wait patiently for that day.

<sup>2</sup> Yet, the Bible shows that we must have patience. Like God's servants before us, we will receive what God has promised if we have strong faith and wait patiently for his time to fulfill those promises. (*Read Hebrews 6:11, 12.*) Jehovah himself has been patient. He could have put an end to wickedness at any time, but he is waiting for the right time. (Rom. 9:20-24) Why is he so patient? How has Jesus been an example of godly patience? What benefits will come to us if we cultivate godly patience? The answers to these questions can help us to build patience and strong faith, even if it might seem to us that Jehovah is delaying.

#### WHY DOES JEHOVAH SHOW PATIENCE?

<sup>3</sup> Jehovah has good reason for showing patience. It is true that he holds ultimate authority over the universe at all times; still, the rebellion in Eden raised questions of universal importance. Jehovah has been patient, knowing that it would take time to answer those questions perfectly. Having thorough

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1. What do some faithful ones wonder about?
  2. What questions about godly patience will we consider?
  - 3, 4. (a) Why has Jehovah shown patience in carrying out his purpose for the earth? (b) How did Jehovah respond to the rebellion in Eden?

knowledge of the deeds and attitudes of individuals in heaven and on earth, he certainly is acting in our best interests. —Heb. 4:13.

**4** It was Jehovah's purpose that the descendants of Adam and Eve fill the earth. When Satan seduced Eve and then Adam disobeyed, God did not abandon his purpose. He did not panic, make hasty decisions, or overreact, giving up on the human family. Instead, he conceived a way to accomplish what he purposed for humans and for planet Earth. (Isa. 55:11) To fulfill his purpose and vindicate his sovereignty, Jehovah has exercised great self-control and patience, even waiting thousands of years for some aspects of his purpose to work out the best way.

**5** Another reason why Jehovah has waited patiently is so that more people can have everlasting life. Right now, he is making preparations to save "a great crowd." (Rev. 7:9, 14; 14:6) Jehovah reaches out to people by means of our preaching work, inviting them to learn about his Kingdom and his righteous standards. The Kingdom message is the best possible news for humankind—yes, it is "good news." (Matt. 24:14) Each person whom Jehovah draws becomes part of a worldwide congregation of genuine friends who love what is right. (John 6: 44-47) Our loving God helps such ones to gain his approval. He has also been selecting from among humankind prospective members of his heavenly government. Upon gaining their heavenly position, these devoted ones will help obedient humans to reach perfection and endless life. Clearly, even while he is patiently waiting, Jehovah has been

working to fulfill his promises—for our good.

**6** Jehovah is patient despite extreme provocation, as we can see from the way he dealt with wickedness before the Flood. The earth was then filled with immorality and violence, and Jehovah was "hurt at his heart" because of the degenerate condition of man. (Gen. 6:2-8) He would not tolerate that situation forever, so he determined to bring a flood upon disobedient mankind. While "the patience of God was waiting in Noah's days," Jehovah made preparations to save Noah and his family. (1 Pet. 3:20) At the appropriate time, Jehovah informed Noah of this decision and assigned him to build an ark. (Gen. 6:14-22) In addition, Noah was "a preacher of righteousness," telling his neighbors of the impending destruction. (2 Pet. 2:5) Jesus said that our time is similar to the days of Noah. Jehovah has decided when he will bring this wicked system to an end. No human knows the "day and hour" when that will come. (Matt. 24:36) At this time, we have the God-given work of warning people and telling them how they can be saved.

**7** Clearly, Jehovah's patience does not mean that he is simply waiting for time to pass. No, we should never confuse his patience with inattentiveness or apathy! Realistically, though, it can be challenging to keep this in mind as we grow older or suffer in this wicked system. We might become discouraged or feel that God is slow to fulfill his promises. (Heb. 10:36) Never forget that he has good

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6. (a) In what sense did Jehovah show patience in Noah's day? (b) How is Jehovah showing patience in our day?

7. Is Jehovah slow to fulfill his promises? Explain.

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**5. Jehovah's patience allows for what blessing?**

reasons for being patient and that he is employing the intervening time for the benefit of his loyal servants. (2 Pet. 2:3; 3:9) Consider, too, how Jesus exercised godly patience.

### HOW HAS JESUS SET A FINE EXAMPLE OF PATIENCE?

**8** Jesus is doing the will of God and has eagerly done so for untold millenniums. When Satan rebelled, Jehovah decided that his only-begotten Son would come to earth as the Messiah. Think of what that meant for Jesus—patiently waiting thousands of years till the time had come. (*Read Galatians 4:4*) He was not passively waiting all that time; rather, he was occupied with the work that his Father assigned him. When he eventually came to earth, he knew that he would have to die at the hands of Satan, as prophesied. (Gen. 3:15; Matt. 16:21) He patiently submitted to God's will, though this meant suffering agonizing pain. His was loyalty of the highest kind. He was not focusing on himself and his position, and we can benefit from that.—Heb. 5:8, 9.

**9** After his resurrection, Jesus received authority in heaven and on earth. (Matt. 28:18) He uses that authority to accomplish Jehovah's purpose according to the timetable God has set. Jesus patiently waited at God's right hand until 1914 for his enemies to be placed as a stool for his feet. (Ps. 110:1, 2; Heb. 10:12, 13) He soon will go into action to bring an end to Satan's system. Meanwhile, Jesus patiently works with people and leads them to "waters of life."—Rev. 7:17.

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**8.** Under what circumstances did Jesus show patience?

**9, 10.** (a) What has Jesus been doing while patiently waiting for Jehovah to act? (b) How should we view Jehovah's timetable?

**10** Do you see in Jesus' example the way you should view Jehovah's timetable? Jesus was no doubt eager to do whatever his Father asked of him; still, he was willing to wait for God's time. As we await the end of Satan's wicked system, we all need godly patience, never running ahead of God or giving up because we are discouraged. What can we do to build such godly patience?

### HOW DO I CULTIVATE GODLY PATIENCE?

**11** Before Jesus came to earth, the prophets and other faithful servants set an example of how even imperfect humans can endure patiently. There was a direct link between their *faith* and their *patience*. (*Read James 5:10, 11*) If they did not truly believe what Jehovah had told them—if they lacked faith—would they have waited patiently for the fulfillment of his promises? Time and again, they met frightening or challenging tests of faith, confident that God would eventually do what he had promised. (Heb. 11:13, 35-40) We have even more reason for having solid faith, for Jesus now serves as the "Perfecter of our faith." (Heb. 12:2) He fulfilled prophecy and revealed God's purposes in a way that gives us valid reasons for having faith.

**12** What practical steps can we take to strengthen our faith, building up our patience? It is key that we apply God's counsel. For instance, reflect on reasons that you have for putting the Kingdom first in your life. Can you put forth increased effort to apply the coun-

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**11.** (a) In what way is there a connection between faith and patience? (b) Why do we have valid reasons for having strong faith?

**12.** What might we do to build our faith?

sel found at Matthew 6:33? That might mean spending more time in the ministry or adjusting some aspects of your lifestyle. Do not overlook how Jehovah has blessed your efforts up till now. He might have enabled you to conduct a new Bible study or helped you to receive "the peace of God that excels all thought." (*Read Philippians 4:7*) As you thus focus on benefits that you personally have received from following Jehovah's instructions, you will increase your appreciation for patience.—Ps. 34:8.

**13** This process is similar to the cycle in the natural world of sowing, cultivating, and reaping. Each time a farmer reaps bountifully, he becomes more confident about sowing seed the next season. Of course, he then will have to wait patiently for the harvest, but that will not hold him back from planting seed, perhaps even sowing seed in more fields than he did the season before. He trusts that he will reap. Similarly, as we repeat this cycle of learning Jehovah's counsel, following it, and then reaping the benefits, our trust in Jehovah grows. Our faith likewise grows, and it becomes easier to wait for the blessings we know will come.—*Read James 5:7, 8.*

**14** Another way to develop patience is by considering how we should view the world and our personal circumstances. Try to look at matters as Jehovah does. For example, think about how he views human suffering. He has long been pained when humans suffer; yet, he has not been overcome with grief, incapable of doing good. He sent his only-begotten

**13.** How might we illustrate the process of building faith and patience?

**14, 15.** We need to have what view of human suffering?




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Godly patience will help you to focus on Kingdom interests and reap blessings!

Son “to break up the works of the Devil” and undo all the damage Satan has brought upon humans. (1 John 3:8) In reality, the suffering will prove to have been temporary, but God’s solution is eternal. Similarly, instead of letting ourselves become overwhelmed by the present wickedness of Satan’s rule or impatient about when it will end, let us put faith in the unseen things that will last forever. Jehovah has set a specific limit for wickedness, and he will act right on time.—Isa. 46:13; Nah. 1:9.

**15** During these difficult final days of this system of things, we may experience special challenges to our faith. Instead of responding angrily if we become victims of violence or when our loved ones suffer, we need to be resolved to trust completely in Jehovah. We are imperfect, so it is not easy to do that. Recall, though, what Jesus did, as recorded at **Matthew 26:39**.—*Read.*

**16** Something that interferes with our manifesting godly patience is a wait-and-see attitude. What does that mean? Well, a person who lacks confidence that the end is near might start to make alternate arrangements, so to speak, in case things do not work out as Jehovah said they would. In other words, he might be thinking, ‘I will wait and see if Jehovah really is true to his word.’ He might then try to make a name for himself in this world, to seek financial security instead of putting God’s Kingdom first, or to trust in higher education to secure a comfortable life now. Really, though, would that not be evidence of a lack of faith? Remember that Paul urged us to become imitators of those faithful

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**16.** We need to avoid doing what during the time that remains?

ones who received promises from Jehovah “through faith and patience.” (Heb. 6:12) Jehovah will not allow this wicked system to exist any longer than is absolutely necessary according to his purpose. (Hab. 2:3) In the interim, we must avoid just going through the motions of serving Jehovah. Rather, we need to remain alert and work diligently at preaching the good news, which is a source of incomparable satisfaction even now.  
—Luke 21:36.

#### WHAT BLESSINGS DOES PATIENCE BRING?

**17** Whether we have served God for a few months or for several decades, we want to serve him forever. Patience helps us to endure until we gain salvation, no matter how much time remains in this system. Jehovah is now giving us the opportunity to prove our complete trust in his decisions and—if necessary—to be willing to suffer evil for the sake of his name. (1 Pet. 4:13, 14) God is also giving us training that can help us to have the patience needed for salvation.  
—1 Pet. 5:10.

**18** Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, and nothing can snatch you away from his protective care—except you. (John 10:28, 29) There is no need to fear the future or even death. Those who patiently endure to the end will be saved. So we must make sure that we do not allow the world to seduce us and make us stop relying on Jehovah. Instead, we must be determined to grow in faith and use the time of God’s patience wisely.—Matt. 24:13; *read 2 Peter 3:17, 18.*

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**17, 18.** (a) We now have what opportunity involving patience? (b) We will receive what blessings from manifesting patience now?



# "YOU KNOW NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR"

*"Keep on the watch, therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour."*

—MATT. 25:13.

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## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

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What are some ways that we benefit from not knowing the day or the hour of the end?

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How have the anointed kept on the watch?

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In what ways can we show that we are ready for Christ's arrival?

**I**MAGINE that a prominent official asks you to drive him to an important appointment. A few minutes before leaving to pick him up for the meeting, however, you realize that there is not enough fuel in your vehicle to make the trip. You need to rush off to purchase some. As you do, the official arrives. He looks around but cannot find you. He cannot wait, so he asks someone else to drive him. You soon get back and realize that the official has left without you. How would you feel?

<sup>2</sup> Now imagine that you are the official and you have selected three capable men to handle some important business. You explain the assignment, and all three willingly accept. Yet, when you return a while later, you learn that only two of them have handled their task. What is more, the one who did not is making excuses. Actually, he did not even try. How would you feel?

<sup>3</sup> In his parables of the virgins and the talents, Jesus used similar situations to illustrate why during the time of the end, some anointed Christians would prove to be faithful and discreet, but others would not.\* (Matt. 25:1-30) He emphasized his point by saying: "Keep on the watch, therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour"—that is, when Jesus would actually execute God's judgment on Satan's world. (Matt. 25:13) We can apply that counsel today. How can we benefit from keeping on the watch, as Jesus encouraged us to do? Who have proved themselves ready for survival? And what must we do now to stay on the watch?

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\* See *The Watchtower* of March 1, 2004, pages 14-18.

- 1-3. (a) What situations illustrate the point of two of Jesus' parables? (b) We need to answer what questions?

## BENEFIT BY KEEPING ON THE WATCH

**4** Some activities, such as working in a factory, visiting a doctor, or taking public transportation, require that we respect a schedule. In other activities, though, like fighting a fire or doing rescue work after a disaster has struck, watching the clock can be a distraction, or worse, a danger. Under such circumstances, it is far more important to focus on the work at hand than to keep to a schedule. As the end of this system draws ever closer, the work of pointing to Jehovah's provisions for salvation has never been more important. Staying awake as Christians does not mean watching the clock. In fact, there are at least five ways that we benefit from *not* knowing the exact day or hour when the end will come.

**5** First, our not knowing when the end will arrive allows us to reveal what is really in our heart. In fact, not knowing dignifies us, allowing us to use our free will in manifesting our loyalty to Jehovah. Although we look forward to surviving the end of this system, we serve Jehovah because we love him, not merely to get life. (*Read Psalm 37:4.*) We find pleasure in doing his will, and we realize that God is teaching us to benefit ourselves. (Isa. 48:17) No, we do not find his commandments burdensome.  
—1 John 5:3.

**6** A second benefit of our not knowing the day or the hour is that we thus have the opportunity to make Jehovah's heart glad. When we serve him out of

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- 4.** Why does 'staying awake' not mean watching the clock?
  - 5.** How may not knowing the day or the hour help reveal what is in our heart?
  - 6.** When we serve God out of love, how does he feel, and why?

love—not because of a date or solely because of a reward—we contribute to Jehovah's answer to the baseless taunts of his adversary, Satan. (Job 2:4, 5; *read Proverbs 27:11.*) Considering all the pain and sorrow that the Devil has caused, we gladly stand up for Jehovah's sovereignty and reject Satan's wicked rule.

**7** Third, our serving without a specific date in mind encourages us to pursue a life of self-sacrifice. Some today who do not know God also believe that the world as we know it cannot go on for much longer. Being afraid of some impending disaster, they have the attitude: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die." (1 Cor. 15:32) We, on the other hand, are not fearful. We refuse to isolate ourselves so as to cater to our own selfish longings. (Prov. 18:1) Rather, we disown ourselves and freely make use of our time, energy, and other assets to share the good news of God's Kingdom with others. (*Read Matthew 16:24.*) We find pleasure in serving God, especially in helping others come to know him.

**8** A fourth benefit to our not knowing the day or the hour is that it helps us to rely more fully on Jehovah and to be diligent in applying his Word in our life. One prominent aspect of our sinful human nature is our tendency to rely on ourselves. Paul admonished all Christians: "Let him that thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall." Twenty-three thousand lost Jehovah's favor shortly before Joshua was to lead God's people into the Promised Land.

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- 7.** Why do you think that pursuing a life of self-sacrifice is desirable?
  - 8.** What Bible example shows why we need to rely more fully on Jehovah and his Word?

"These things," says Paul, "were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived."  
—1 Cor. 10:8, 11, 12.

**9** A fifth way that we benefit from not knowing when the end will come is that it allows present adversities to refine us. (*Read Psalm 119:71.*) The last days of this system are indeed "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Tim. 3:1-5) Many in Satan's world hate us, so we may be persecuted for our faith. (John 15:19; 16:2) If we humble ourselves and seek God's direction during such trials, our faith will be refined, or purified, as though through fire. We do not give out. Rather, we will draw closer to Jehovah than we may have imagined possible.  
—Jas. 1:2-4; 4:8.

**10** The passing of time is relative. When we are busy and involved instead of watching the clock, time seems to fly by. Likewise, if we become absorbed in the exciting work Jehovah has given us to do, that day and hour may well arrive before we realize it. In this connection, most anointed ones have set a wonderful example. Let us briefly review what happened after Jesus was installed as King in 1914 and see how some proved themselves ready while others did not.

### ANOINTED ONES PROVE THEMSELVES READY

**11** Recall Jesus' parables of the virgins and the talents. If the virgins or the slaves in those parables had known when the bridegroom or the master was arriving, they would not have needed

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**9.** How can adversities refine us and draw us closer to God?

**10.** What makes time seem to pass by quickly?

**11.** After 1914, why did some of the anointed conclude that the Lord was delaying?

to keep on the watch. But they did not know, so they needed to keep ready. Although the anointed had for decades looked to 1914 as a marked year, they did not clearly understand what would happen. When things did not take place as they expected, it could have looked as if the Bridegroom were delaying. One brother later recalled, "A few of us seriously thought we were going to heaven during the first week of that October [1914]."

**12** Just think how discouraging it could have been to expect the end and for it not to occur! Moreover, the brothers faced opposition related to World War I. A period of relative inactivity, like sleep, set in. But in 1919, there was a call to wake up! Jesus had come to God's spiritual temple, and a time for inspection arrived. Some, however, failed that inspection and consequently lost their privilege to continue in the King's "business." (Matt. 25:16) It was as if they were not diligent in replenishing their supply of spiritual oil, like the foolish virgins. And like the sluggish slave, they were unwilling to make personal sacrifices for the sake of the Kingdom. The majority of anointed ones, though, showed unshakable loyalty and a strong desire to serve their Master even during the difficult war years.

**13** After 1914, *The Watchtower* made this significant statement: "Brethren, those of us who are in the right attitude toward God are not disappointed at any of His arrangements. We did not wish our own will to be done; so when we

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**12.** How did anointed ones prove themselves faithful and discreet?

**13.** What was the attitude of the slave class following 1914, and what is it today?



Even in difficult situations, seek spiritual food

found out that we were expecting the wrong thing in October, 1914, then we were glad that the Lord did not change His Plan to suit us. We did not wish Him to do so. We merely wish to be able to apprehend His plans and purposes." This attitude of humility and devotion still characterizes the Lord's anointed. They do not claim to be inspired, but they are determined to conduct the Lord's "business" on earth. And now "a great crowd" of "other sheep," Christians with an earthly hope, are imitating

their watchfulness and zeal.—Rev. 7:9; John 10:16.

#### PROVING OURSELVES READY

**14** Just as anointed Christians do, alert members of the great crowd are sticking close to God's appointed channel for dispensing spiritual food. As a result, it is as if they too are replenishing their supply of spiritual oil from God's Word and spirit. (*Read Psalm 119:130; John 16:13.*) Thus strengthened, they too prove themselves ready for Christ's return, staying active even under serious trial. In one Nazi prison camp, for example, at first the brothers had only one copy of the Bible. So they prayed for further spiritual food. Shortly thereafter they learned that a newly imprisoned brother had managed to smuggle a few new issues of *The Watchtower* into the camp inside his wooden leg. Among the survivors was an anointed brother named Ernst Wauer, who later recalled: "Jehovah helped us in a marvelous way to commit to memory the fortifying thoughts in the articles." Then he said: "Nowadays, it is so easy to get spiritual food, but do we always appreciate it? I am confident that Jehovah has abundant blessings in store for those who trust in him, stay loyal, and feed at his table."

**15** The other sheep also stay busy in the Master's work, in full support of Christ's brothers. (Matt. 25:40) Unlike the wicked and sluggish slave in Jesus' parable, they are willing to make sacrifices and expend personal effort in put-

**14.** How will sticking close to God's channel for dispensing spiritual food safeguard us?

**15, 16.** How was one couple's zeal for the Christian ministry rewarded, and what can you learn from such experiences?

ting Kingdom interests first. For example, when Jon and Masako were invited to help with the Chinese-speaking field in Kenya, they initially had some reservations. But after prayerfully considering their circumstances, they decided to relocate there.

**16** They were amply rewarded for their effort. "The ministry here is amazing," they said. They started seven Bible studies. Many more exciting experiences followed. They concluded, "We thank Jehovah every day for allowing us to be here." There are, of course, many other brothers and sisters who have reflected in their decisions their determination to be fully occupied in God's service whenever the end comes. Think of the thousands who have graduated from Gilead School and taken up the missionary service. Why not get a glimpse of that special service by reading the article "We Do the Best We Can!" that appeared in *The Watchtower* of October 15, 2001? As you review that fascinating account about a day in the missionary work, think about ways in which you might increase your service to God's praise and, as a result, your joy.

#### YOU TOO KEEP ON THE WATCH

**17** Clearly, our not knowing the exact day or hour when this system will end has been a blessing for us. Rather than being frustrated or disappointed, we find ourselves drawn ever closer to Jehovah, our loving Father, as we immerse ourselves in doing his will. Keeping our hand to the plow, so to speak, and avoiding distractions has led to abundant joy in our Master's service.  
—Luke 9:62.

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**17.** How has not knowing the day or the hour been a blessing?



Time passes quickly when we are focused on Christian activities

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**18** We are fast approaching God's day of judgment. None of us want to disappoint Jehovah or Jesus. They have entrusted us with precious privileges of service in these last days. How we cherish the confidence they have in us!  
—*Read 1 Timothy 1:12.*

**19** Regardless of whether our hope is to enjoy life in heaven or in Paradise on earth, let us be determined to stay faithful to our God-given assignment to preach and make disciples. We still do not know the exact day or hour that Jehovah's day will arrive, and do we really need to know? We can and will continue to prove ourselves ready. (Matt. 24:36, 44) We are confident that as long as we fully trust in Jehovah and put his Kingdom first, we will not be disappointed.  
—Rom. 10:11.

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**18.** Why do we not want to give out in our faith?

**19.** How can we prove ourselves ready?



# JEHOVAH CONGREGATES HIS JOYFUL PEOPLE

*"Congregate the people, the men and the women and the little ones and your alien resident."*—DEUT. 31:12.

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## HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

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Why can it be said that conventions have been landmarks in the history of Jehovah's people?

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What efforts did many ancient Israelites have to make to attend the festivals in Jerusalem?

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Why should you not miss a convention?

**I**NTERNATIONAL and district conventions have been a feature of the modern-day history of Jehovah's Witnesses for as long as most of us can remember. Many of us have attended a number of these joyful events, perhaps scores of them over the decades.

**2** Thousands of years ago, God's people also held holy conventions. We will review some Scriptural precedents for modern-day conventions, note similarities between ancient and modern features of such gatherings, and focus on benefits received from attending them.—Ps. 44:1; Rom. 15:4.

### LANDMARK CONVENTIONS, ANCIENT AND MODERN

**3** The assembly at the base of Mount Sinai was the first large gathering of God's people for spiritual instruction on record. It truly was a landmark event in the history of pure worship. On that thrilling occasion, which participants no doubt never forgot, Jehovah gave the Israelites a demonstration of his power when he gave them his Law. (Ex. 19:2-9, 16-19; *read Exodus 20:18; Deuteronomy 4:9, 10.*) That event was key to God's subsequent dealings with Israel. Not long thereafter, Jehovah established a means by which to summon his people. He ordered Moses to make two silver trumpets that would be used to call "the whole assembly" to meet "at the entrance of the tent of meeting." (Num. 10:1-4) Try to imagine the excitement on such occasions!

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**1, 2.** What aspects of theocratic conventions merit our attention?

**3. (a)** What characterized the first convention of Jehovah's people that we have on record? (b) How were the Israelites called to assemble together?

**4** Toward the end of Israel's 40-year sojourn in the wilderness, at a critical moment in that relatively new nation's history, Moses assembled his fellow Israelites. They were poised to enter the Promised Land. This was the right time for Moses to remind his brothers of all that Jehovah had done for them and all that he would still do for them.—Deut. 29:1-15; 30:15-20; 31:30.

**5** Perhaps at that same convention, Moses referred to the regular provision for the assembly and education of God's people. In Sabbath years during the Festival of Booths, the men, women, children, and alien residents of Israel were to congregate in the place Jehovah chose 'in order for them to listen and in order for them to learn to fear Jehovah and take care to carry out all the words of the law.' (*Read Deuteronomy 31:1, 10-12.*) So at this early stage in the history of God's people, it was clear that they were to gather frequently to consider Jehovah's word and purposes. When the Israelites had completed the conquest of the Promised Land but were still surrounded by pagan nations, Joshua assembled all Israel with the aim of fortifying their resolve to remain loyal to Jehovah. In response, the people made an oath to serve God.—Josh. 23:1, 2; 24:1, 15, 21-24.

**6** In the modern history of Jehovah's people, there have also been landmark conventions—events that marked major developments in theocratic activities or Scriptural understanding. (Prov. 4:18) The first major convention that the Bi-

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**4, 5.** Why were conventions that were held by Moses and Joshua particularly significant?

**6, 7.** How can it be said that modern conventions of Jehovah's people have been important milestones?

ble Students held after World War I was in 1919 in Cedar Point, Ohio, U.S.A. That gathering, attended by some 7,000, was marked by the launching of a global preaching campaign. In 1922, during a nine-day convention at the same location, dramatic impetus was given to this activity by Joseph F. Rutherford, who urged his attentive audience: "Be faithful and true witnesses for the Lord. Go forward in the fight until every vestige of Babylon lies desolate. Herald the message far and wide. The world must know that Jehovah is God and that Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. This is the day of all days. Behold, the King reigns! You are his publicity agents. Therefore *advertise, advertise, advertise,* the King and his kingdom." Attendees, and indeed God's people worldwide, joyfully embraced that exhortation.

**7** In Columbus, Ohio, in 1931, the Bible Students were absolutely thrilled to accept the name Jehovah's Witnesses. Then in 1935, in Washington, D.C., Brother Rutherford identified the "great crowd," described in Revelation as "standing before the throne and before the Lamb." (Rev. 7:9-17) In 1942, in the midst of World War II, Nathan H. Knorr delivered the thrilling discourse "Peace—Can It Last?" In it, he identified the "scarlet-colored wild beast" of Revelation 17 and indicated that there would still be much preaching to do after the war.

**8** Especially notable at the 1946 "Glad Nations" Theocratic Assembly in Cleveland, Ohio, was Brother Knorr's discourse "The Problems of Reconstruction and Expansion." Capturing the

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**8, 9.** Why have certain conventions proved to be particularly moving?

excitement generated by that talk, one attendee wrote: "I had the privilege of being behind him on the platform that evening, and as he outlined the work and then told about the plans for enlarging the Brooklyn Bethel home and factory, the applause from the vast audience surged in renewed outbursts. While one could see no distinct face from the platform, it was easy to sense their joy." At an international convention in New York City in 1950, the audience was delighted to receive the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, the first installment of a modern-language Bible that restored God's name to its rightful place in his Word.—Jer. 16:21.

**9** Conventions at which Jehovah gathered his faithful Witnesses after periods of persecution or ban were also intensely moving. Adolf Hitler had vowed to destroy Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany, but 107,000 of them filled his former parade grounds in Nuremberg during a convention in 1955. Many of those present could not hold back their tears of joy! Among the 166,518 delegates at three "Godly Devotion" conventions held in Poland in 1989 were large numbers of delegates from what were then the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, and from other Eastern European countries. For some, it was the first time they had attended a gathering of more than 15 or 20 of God's people. And imagine the joy at the 1993 "Divine Teaching" International Convention in Kiev, Ukraine, where 7,402 were immersed—the largest baptism of Jehovah's Witnesses on record.—Isa. 60:22; Hag. 2:7.

**10** Perhaps there are district conven-

**10.** Which conventions have been especially memorable for you, and why?



1950 international convention, New York City

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tions or international conventions that stand out in your mind. Do you remember your first convention or perhaps the one at which you were baptized? These were landmark spiritual events for you. Treasure those memories!—Ps. 42:4.

#### REGULAR OCCASIONS FOR REJOICING

**11** Jehovah required that the Israelites assemble in Jerusalem for three seasonal festivals each year—the Festival of Unfermented Cakes, the Festival of Weeks (later called Pentecost), and the Festival of Booths. Concerning these, God commanded: "On three occasions in the year every male of yours will appear before the face of the true Lord, Jehovah." (Ex. 23:14-17) Recognizing the great spiritual value of these festivals, many family heads attended with their entire family.—1 Sam. 1:1-7; Luke 2:41, 42.

**12** Think about what it meant for an Israelite family to make that journey. Joseph and Mary, for example, would trav-

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**11.** What arrangement for regular seasonal festivals did God institute in ancient Israel?

**12, 13.** Attendance at the annual festivals meant what for many Israelites?

el about 60 miles (100 km) one way from Nazareth to Jerusalem. How long do you think it would take you to complete such a trip, walking with small children? The account of Jesus' visit to Jerusalem as a boy reveals that relatives and acquaintances might make such trips as a group. It must have been quite an experience for them to travel and prepare meals together and to organize suitable sleeping arrangements in unfamiliar locations. Yet, conditions were safe enough for a 12-year-old like Jesus to be allowed a certain amount of freedom. Think how unforgettable that would have been, especially for the youngsters!—Luke 2:44-46.

<sup>13</sup> When the Israelites were widely dispersed outside the borders of their homeland, those attending the festivals came from many nations. At Pentecost of the year 33 C.E., appreciative Jews and proselytes traveled to Jerusalem from such places as Italy, Libya, Crete, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia.—Acts 2: 5-11; 20:16.

<sup>14</sup> For faithful Israelites, the high point and focus of such trips was the spiritual aspect—their eagerly worshiping Jehovah alongside thousands of appreciative celebrants. What would be the effect on those who attended? An answer can be found in Jehovah's directions to his people regarding the Festival of Booths: "You must rejoice during your festival, you and your son and your daughter and your man slave and your slave girl and the Levite and the alien resident and the fatherless boy and the widow, who are inside your gates. Seven days you will celebrate the festival to

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**14.** How did the Israelites benefit from attending the annual festivals?

Jehovah your God in the place that Jehovah will choose, because Jehovah your God will bless you in all your produce and in every deed of your hand, and you must become nothing but joyful."—Deut. 16:14, 15; *read Matthew 5:3.*

### WHY APPRECIATE MODERN CONVENTIONS?

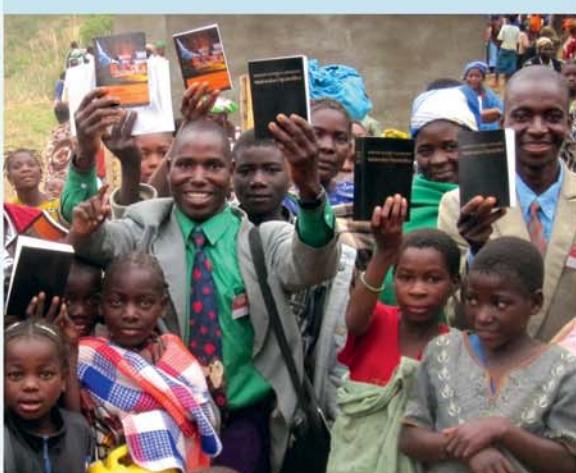
<sup>15</sup> What excellent examples these ancient gatherings provide for God's people today! Although many things have changed over the centuries, the essential aspects of conventions have not. In Bible times, conventioners had to make sacrifices to attend. So do many today. Yet, the benefits are well worth the effort. These events were—and still are—important spiritual occasions. They provide us with information and understanding that are critical to our maintaining a close relationship with God. Conventions motivate us to apply what we learn, help us to avoid problems, and encourage us to stay focused on pursuits and interests that will refresh us rather than weigh us down.—Ps. 122:1-4.

<sup>16</sup> Joy is a recurring experience among conventioners. A report on a large convention in 1946 noted: "It was a thrilling sight to observe the many thousands of witnesses comfortably accommodated, and even more joyous to listen as a large orchestra joined with the voices of the multitudes to make the stands ring with gladsome Kingdom songs of praise to Jehovah." The report added: "The Volunteer Service Department registered workers from among the delegates to man all [the] departments, purely out of the joy of serving their fellow

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**15, 16.** What sacrifices have you had to make in order to attend conventions? Why is the effort worthwhile?

MOZAMBIQUE



SOUTH KOREA



witnesses.” Have you too felt such excitement at district conventions or international conventions?—Ps. 110:3; Isa. 42: 10-12.

**17** Certain things have changed in the way conventions are organized. For example, some of God’s people remember when conventions might last eight days! There were morning, afternoon, and evening sessions. Field service was a regular part of the program. A few parts began at nine in the morning, and there were often sessions until nine at night. Volunteers worked long and hard to prepare breakfast, lunch, and supper for attendees. Now the schedule provides for shorter convention days, and food preparation done by families and individuals ahead of time allows them to give more attention to the spiritual feeding program.

**18** Convention features that have long been part of the program are widely anticipated. Spiritual “food at the prop-

**17.** How has the organization of conventions been modified in recent times?

**18, 19.** What aspects of conventions do you look forward to, and why?

er time,” giving us a better understanding of Bible prophecies and teachings, has come not only from discourses but also through new publications released at conventions. (Matt. 24:45) Such releases are often tools that help sincere individuals appreciate Scriptural truths. Stimulating Bible-based dramas encourage both young and old to examine their motives and guard against the pressures exerted by the world’s ungodly thinking. The baptism talk likewise offers all of us an opportunity to review our priorities in life and to experience the joy of seeing others symbolize their dedication to Jehovah.

**19** Yes, long a part of pure worship, conventions equip Jehovah’s joyful people to serve him appropriately in challenging times. Such gatherings provide spiritual stimulus, offer opportunities to meet new friends, help us to appreciate our worldwide association of brothers, and are a key means by which Jehovah blesses and cares for his people. Surely, each one of us will want to organize his affairs so as to attend and benefit from every session of each convention. —Prov. 10:22.