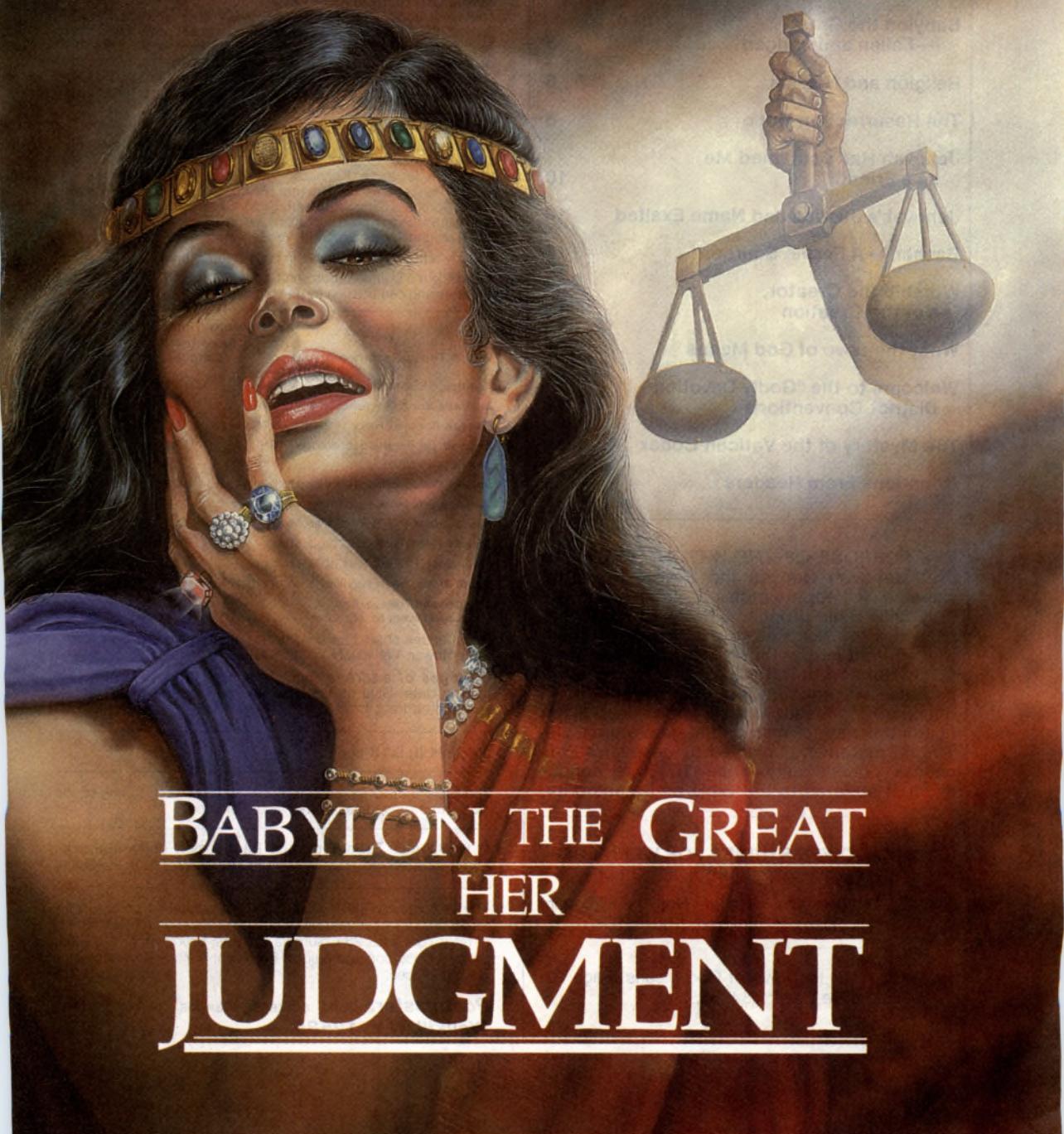


The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

May 1, 1989



BABYLON THE GREAT
HER
JUDGMENT

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as they fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in the now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

WATCHTOWER STUDIES FOR WEEKS OF

June 5: Worship the Creator, Not the Creation.
Page 18. Songs to Be Used: 100, 169.

June 12: What the Love of God Means. Page 23.
Songs to Be Used: 154, 85.

Average Printing Each Issue: 13,030,000

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<i>America</i> , U.S., Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589	\$5.00	\$2.50
<i>Australia</i> , Box 280, Ingleburn, N.S.W. 2565	A\$8.00	A\$4.00
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Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

25 cents (U.S.) a copy

The Bible translation used is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, unless otherwise indicated.

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The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly for \$5.00 (U.S.) per year by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Watchtower,
Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.

BABYLON THE GREAT FALLEN AND JUDGED

SHE has fallen! Babylon the Great has fallen, she who made all the nations drink of the wine of the anger of her fornication!" "Babylon the Great has fallen, and she has become a dwelling place of demons and a lurking place of every unclean exhalation and a lurking place of every unclean and hated bird!"—Revelation 14:8; 18:2.

What a startling prophecy! "Babylon the Great has fallen!" For centuries this symbolic statement has intrigued students of the Bible. Why should it interest you? Because, according to Bible prophecy, Babylon the Great's destiny will soon affect all mankind. As we have seen in the April 1 and April 15 issues of this magazine, this influential harlot is clearly identified as Satan's world empire of false religion.*

But in what way has she fallen? And when?

Babylon Fallen but Not Destroyed

To get the full significance of the fall of Babylon the Great, we have to understand what occurred when ancient Babylon fell in 539 B.C.E. At that time God's people, Israel, had been in captivity for nearly 70 years. Now they were expecting a release in accordance with the words of their prophets. (Jeremiah 25:11, 12; 29:10) How thrilled they must have been when Cyrus the Persian caused Babylon's down-

* Babylon the Great cannot symbolize politics and big business, as they are shown lamenting her fall. (Revelation 18:9-11) The only other major element of Satan's world system is religion. Her ties with spiritism serve to confirm the religious identification.—Revelation 18:23.

fall and released the Jews to trek back to their holy city, Jerusalem!—Isaiah 45:1-4.

However, although Babylon's power over the Jews was broken, it did not mean the end of ancient Babylon. Historian Joan Oates writes in her book *Babylon*: "Cyrus entered Babylon in triumph, forbade looting and appointed a Persian governor, leaving undisturbed the religious institutions and civil administration. . . . Indeed on the surface the private lives of Babylonian citizens appear to have changed very little under Persian rule. Religious forms were preserved and commercial activity prospered." Thus, in spite of her fall, Babylon continued to function, but with one big difference—God's people, Israel, were no longer held captive. They returned to Jerusalem to restore true worship there.

About 331 B.C.E. when Greek general Alexander the Great entered Babylon, he was given a warm welcome by the citizens. He decided he wanted to convert it into his eastern capital, but he died before he could fulfill his ambition. This shows that Babylon still flourished at that late date.

Thus, Babylon's fall in 539 B.C.E. did not mean that it ceased to exist. It continued to function for centuries. How has this been reflected in the modern fulfillment of prophecies involving Babylon the Great?

Babylon the Great Takes a Fall

It has its parallel in the fall of symbolic Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. In the early part of our 20th century prior to 1919, the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known,

had to be released from a form of spiritual captivity to the ideas and practices of false religion. Although having rejected such false teachings as the Trinity and the immortal soul, they were still tainted by Babylonish practices. Many had developed a self-righteous attitude in character development. Some were exalting creatures, indulging in a personality cult that focused on Charles T. Russell, the first president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Without any Biblical basis, they were observing birthdays and Christmas. The cross was still prominent in their thinking. Some even wore a cross-and-crown lapel emblem, while others sought the respectability accorded Christendom. Then, in 1917, shortly after the death of Russell, a significant change began to take place.

In that year the Watch Tower Society published a commentary on Revelation under the title *The Finished Mystery*. This book exposed the clergy of Christendom, including their involvement in the Great War that was then raging in Europe. Some of the Protestant clergy, a faction of Babylon the Great's representatives in Canada, took these quotes to their political cronies in the Canadian government and denounced the Bible Students as seditious. On February 12, 1918, the Watch Tower Society was banned in Canada.

The clergy in the United States were not slow to follow the example of their Canadian brethren. Within days, Watch Tower Bible publications were confiscated in Los Angeles, California, U.S.A. Then, in May 1918, warrants were issued for the arrest of J. F. Rutherford, the new president of the Watch Tower Society, and seven other Watch Tower associates. In June, with surprising swiftness, these Christian men were haled before a court and condemned. Seven were sentenced to

20 years in a penitentiary, and one to 10 years. What was the clergy's reaction? Martin Marty states in his book *Modern American Religion: The Irony of It All*: "The clergy turned against the Russellites [later known as Jehovah's Witnesses] and cheered to hear that twenty-year sentences were to be imposed upon convicted Jehovah's Witnesses leaders." The representatives of Babylon the Great were laughing. They overlooked that he who laughs last laughs best.

Thus, in 1918, symbolic captivity to Babylon also became a literal imprisonment for some of Jehovah's people. A wave of persecution of the Bible Students swept across the United States, Canada, and other countries. Nationalistic clergy organized mobs to chase them out of towns. Bible Students were tarred and feathered and beaten with clubs. A shameful record of injustice was established against this tiny minority of sincere Christians.*

Then, in 1919, an unexpected reversal of events occurred. The Great War had ended in November 1918. The sentences against the officials of the Watch Tower Society were appealed as being a miscarriage of justice. To the chagrin of their religious enemies, Rutherford and his companions were released from prison. As Marty states: "There were no cheers by the orthodox church members." Eventually, all the accused were totally exonerated. The biased Catholic judge, Martin T. Manton, who was later made a "knight of the order of St. Gregory the Great" by Pope Pius XI, had refused the eight Witnesses bail and thus caused their unjust imprisonment for nine months. His true colors were shown later, in 1939, when he was sent to prison for soliciting bribes!

On their release from prison in 1919,

* For more details of this persecution, see the 1975 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 94-119.

Rutherford and his associates returned to the Brooklyn headquarters of the Watch Tower Society. They then set about re-organizing for the biggest Kingdom-preaching campaign the world has ever known. The Bible Students had broken the shackles of the fear of man and now saw clearly where they stood in relation to all false religion. Babylon the Great was their relentless enemy and would have to be exposed as fallen. True worship would have to be restored among the nations.

Those intrepid Christians intensified their house-to-house ministry. They also paraded publicly, exposing false religion with placards that stated: "Religion Is a Snare and a Racket" and, "Serve God and Christ the King." False religion still continued to flourish and function, as it had done in ancient Babylon, but in relation to Jehovah's Witnesses, Babylon the Great had fallen in 1919. They were free from Babylonish restraint!

Babylon's Waning Influence

Now, 70 years later, we can see that in many parts of the earth, the influence of Babylon the Great has waned. True, religion still seems to prosper in the United States, where a more emotional sector of the populace is exploited by TV evangelists and religious psychologists. Yet, even some of these materialistic charlatans have recently been unmasked and disgraced. Religion appears to flourish in the Republic of Korea, where Christendom's churches have become deeply involved in politics. Evidently, Babylon the Great, although "fallen," is still functioning.

In the wake of the world wars, however, orthodox religion has lost its mass following in countries such as Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Britain. Even Catholic countries such as Italy, Spain, and France have noted a falling away from the traditional Catholic practices of confession and

attendance at Mass. The numbers of those studying for the priesthood have plummeted. And the very fact that the present pope feels the need to travel the world more than any other pope in history is a symptom of a church in crisis.

Furthermore, since 1917 most socialist countries have relegated religion to a minor role and cut off its former political influence. On a world scale, traditional religion is still the cause of so much hatred and bloodshed that many thinking people have turned away from all religion, whether Western or Oriental. Yes, the symbolic waters on which Babylon the Great sits, the peoples under her control, are drying up. Babylon the Great is being judged, and her execution is near.—Revelation 16:12; 17:1, 15.

Babylon—Why Judged

What basis does Jehovah have for judging the world empire of false religion? Surely, some might think, he should view with favor all the schools, hospitals, and charitable works that various religions have promoted. But how does all that measure up against the indictment that Jehovah levels against the world's religions? Let us briefly examine that indictment and the record of religion.*

"One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying: 'Come, I will show you the judgment upon the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, whereas those who inhabit the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.'" (Revelation 17:1, 2) As we have clearly shown in our issues of April 1 and April 15, 1989,

* For a detailed consideration of this subject, see the publication *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* pages 235-71, published in 1988 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

religion's complicity with national rulers, "the kings of the earth," to the detriment of the people down through history, may be compared to the behavior of a self-seeking, fornicating harlot. But the indictment continues.

"And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the holy ones and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus." "Yes, in her was found the blood of prophets and of holy ones and of all those who have been slaughtered on the earth." (Revelation 17:6; 18:24) Bloodguilt must be charged against Babylon the Great because of her martyring true Christians over the centuries, including a number who dared to translate the Bible into the language of the common people, and also many who dared to possess and read the Bible. Great Babylon is bloodguilty also on account of the true Christians who have been martyred more recently in prisons

and concentration camps, whether under Nazism, Fascism, or other dictatorships. Note that the indictment refers to "all those who have been slaughtered on the earth," which would include the hundreds of millions all over the world who have died in wars and vendettas that have been fought down through history by people claiming to be religious.—Compare Matthew 23:34-36; 2 Timothy 3:5.

God's judging of Babylon the Great addresses another aspect of her guilt. The judgment states: "By your spiritistic practice all the nations were misled." (Revelation 18:23) Interestingly, "spiritistic practice" translates the Greek *phar-ma-ki'a*, which "primarily signified the use of medicine, drugs, spells; then, poisoning; then, sorcery."* In a spiritual sense, false religion has poisoned the nations, misleading

* W. E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Volume IV, pages 51-2.

Religion and Nazism

"Hitler . . . had a Catholic as Vice-Chancellor and from practically the first day of the régime Franz von Papen became the drummer to attract the Catholic factions to a support of the new Reich. In every part of the Reich von Papen was to be heard exhorting the faithful to blind obedience to Adolf Hitler."

"In early 1933 the following official announcement was made by the body corporate of Catholic action and thought in Germany, then led by [Franz] von Papen: 'We German Catholics will stand, with all our soul and our full convictions, behind Adolf Hitler and his Government. We wonder at his love for fatherland, his energy and his statesmanly wisdom. . . . German Catholicism . . . must take an active part in the building-up of the Third Reich.'"

Franz von Papen was instrumental in achieving a concordat between the Nazi government he served in Germany and the Vatican in Rome. The concordat was signed July 20, 1933. A special communiqué stated: "Cardinal and Secretary of State Pacelli [later Pope Pius XII] to-day bestowed on Vice-Chancellor von Papen, the Grand Cross of the Order of Pius . . . Vice-Chancellor von Papen presented to the Cardinal Secretary of State a Madonna of White Meissen Porcelain as a gift of the Reichs Government. . . . All gifts bore the dedication: '*A memento of the Reich Concordat 1933.*'"—All quotes taken from *Franz von Papen—His Life and Times*, by H. W. Blood-Ryan.

them into believing in false gods and teachings that have diverted their attention from Jehovah and the issue of universal sovereignty. By its erroneous teaching of the immortality of the soul, false religion also laid the foundation for every kind of spiritism and sorcery, inspiring fear of the dead and worship of ancestors. God's condemnation of Babylon the Great is totally justified. As John wrote: "Her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind."—Revelation 18:5.

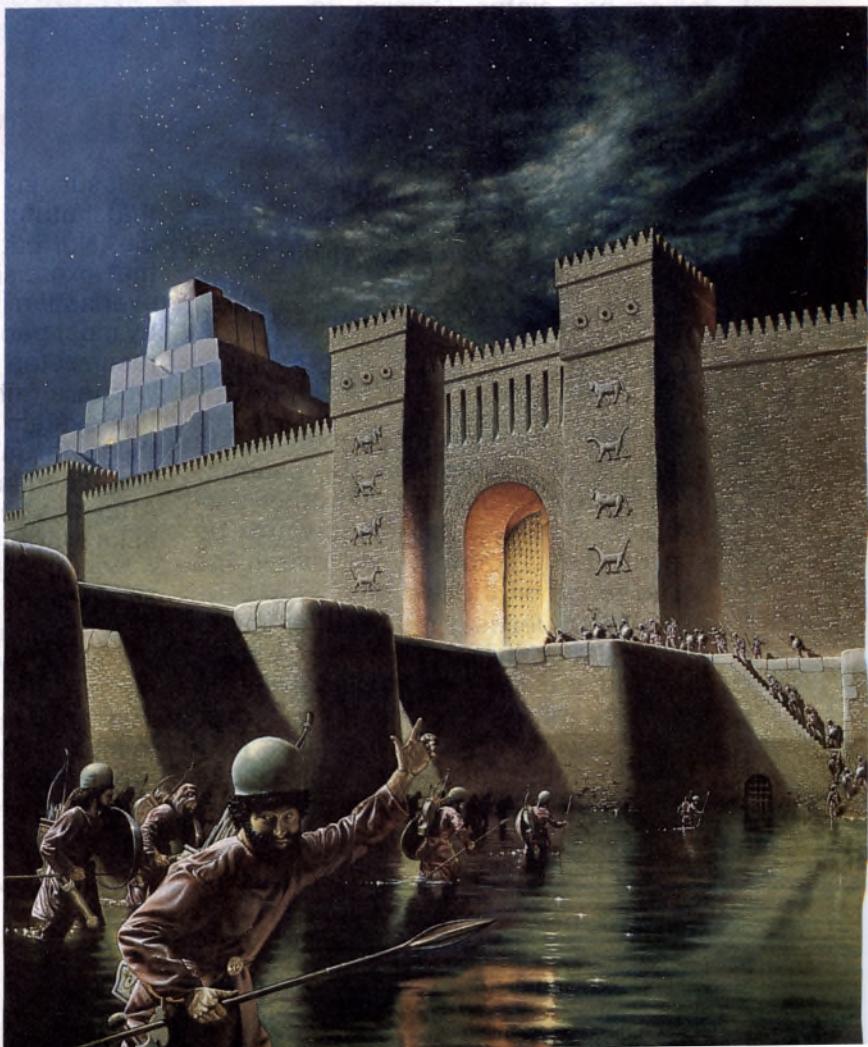
What Must We Do?

In view of the fallen state of Babylon the Great and her judged condition, what must sincere lovers of truth now do? Isaiah's prophecy relating to ancient Babylon applies with even greater force with regard to false religion today: "Turn away, turn away, get out of there, touch nothing unclean; get out from the midst of her, keep yourselves clean, you who are carrying the utensils of Jehovah." (Isaiah 52:11) This urgent call parallels that of Revelation 18:4: "And I heard another voice out of heaven say: 'Get out of her [Babylon the Great], my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues.'"

Even though Babylon fell in 539 B.C.E., it continued to function as a city for hundreds of years

Yes, it is time to sever all affiliations with false religion. But if we get out of Babylon the Great, where must we turn? To Jehovah's true worship in association with his witnesses. Already, millions from all the nations of the earth are streaming to the symbolic "mountain of Jehovah." You too are invited to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and join in this true worship.—Isaiah 2:2-4; 43:10-12.

Now the question remains, If Babylon the Great has fallen and been judged, what is next on the divine agenda? What is going to happen to Satan's world empire of false religion? Our next issue, May 15, will explore that question in line with Bible prophecy.



The Resurrection Hope

JESUS finally arrives at the outskirts of Bethany, a village about two miles from Jerusalem. It has only been a few days since Lazarus' death and burial. His sisters Mary and Martha are still mourning, and many have come to their home to console them.

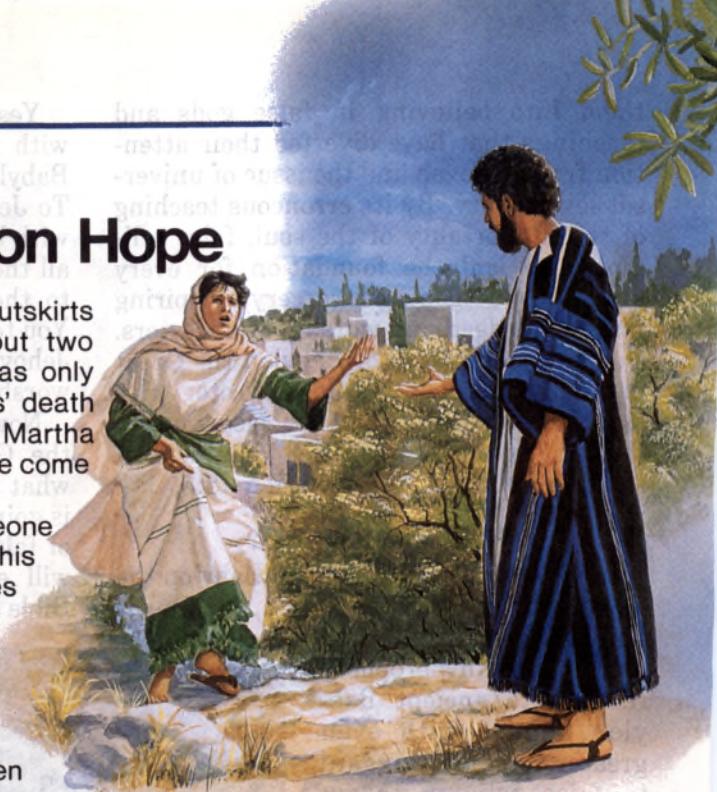
While they are mourning, someone informs Martha that Jesus is on his way. So she leaves and hurries to meet him, apparently without telling her sister. Coming to Jesus, Martha repeats what she and her sister must have said many times during the past four days: "If you had been here my brother would not have died."

Martha, however, expresses hope, hinting that Jesus might yet do something for her brother. "I know that as many things as you ask God for, God will give you," she says.

"Your brother will rise," Jesus promises.

Martha understands Jesus to be speaking of a future earthly resurrection, to which Abraham and other servants of God also looked forward. So she replies: "I know he will rise in the resurrection on the last day."

However, Jesus gives hope for immediate relief, replying: "I am the resurrection and the life." He reminds Martha that God has given him power over death, saying: "He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life; and everyone that is living and exercises faith in me will never die at all."



Jesus is not suggesting to Martha that faithful ones then alive will never die. No, but the point he is making is that exercising faith in him can lead to everlasting life. Such life will be enjoyed by most people as a result of their being resurrected on the last day. But others who are faithful will survive the end of this system of things on earth, and for these Jesus' words will be true in a very literal sense. They will never die at all! After this remarkable statement, Jesus asks Martha, "Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord," she answers. "I have believed that you are the Christ the Son of God, the One coming into the world."

Martha then hurries back to summon her sister, telling her privately: "The Teacher is present and is calling you." Immediately Mary leaves the house. When others see her go, they follow, assuming that she is going to the memorial tomb.

Coming to Jesus, Mary falls at his feet weeping. "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died," she says. Jesus is deeply moved when he sees that Mary and the crowds of people following her are weeping. "Where have you laid him?" he asks.

"Lord, come and see," they answer.

Jesus too gives way to tears, causing the Jews to say: "See, what affection he used to have for him!"

Some recall that Jesus, during the Festival of Tabernacles a few months before, had healed a young man born blind, and they ask: "Was not this man that opened the eyes of the blind man able to prevent this one from dying?"

John 5:21; 6:40; 9:1-7; 11:17-37.

- ♦ When does Jesus finally arrive near Bethany, and what is the situation there?
- ♦ What basis does Martha have for belief in a resurrection?
- ♦ How is Jesus affected by Lazarus' death?



JEHOVAH HAS SUSTAINED ME AS A FRIEND

As told by Maria Hombach

AS A little girl of six, I learned in school the beautiful German folk song: "Do you know how many stars are in the blue sky? . . . God, the Lord, has counted all, not a single one is missing . . . Knows you too and loves you dearly." (Translated from German.) I was singing it one day when my mother said: "He knows and loves you too." From this moment on, God became like a friend to me. I decided to love him in return. This was before World War I when we lived in Bad Ems on the river Lahn.

Seventeen years later, during a vacation in 1924, I met a girl my own age. She was one of the Bible Students, to-

day known as Jehovah's Witnesses. For four weeks, we had heated discussions on religion. Then the subject of "hell" came up. "You wouldn't stick a live cat in a hot

oven, would you?" she asked. That hit me like a thunderbolt, and I recognized that I had been shamefully deceived. Now I could learn *all* about God—what he is really like, in fact, everything I had wanted to know about him since I was a child!

For me it was like discovering "a treasure hidden in the field." (Matthew 13:44) Back

home, I rushed enthusiastically to the neighbors, my heart bursting to share the new things learned. Shortly thereafter, I moved to the southern German town of Sindelfingen, where a group of about 20 Bible Students lived. I joined them zealously in this new evangelizing activity from house to house.

The first time I heard about pioneer service was in 1929



during a talk by a traveling minister brother. He asked who would be willing to become a pioneer. I spontaneously raised my hand. No ifs and buts for me. "Here I am! Send me," my heart said.—Isaiah 6:8.

I resigned from my office job and on October 1, 1929, started the special pioneer service, as it is called today, in southwestern Germany. In Limburg, in Bonn, on the international barges in Cologne harbor, and in other locations, we quickly and generously sowed the seed of truth in printed form.—Ecclesiastes 11:1.

Experiencing God's Friendship

When Adolf Hitler established his dictatorship in Germany in 1933, I had to quit the pioneer service and returned to Bad Ems. The authorities soon found out that I had not voted in the elections. Two days later, a couple of policemen came to search my room. Standing alone in one corner was the wastebasket into which, just one moment before, I had thrown all my addresses of fellow Witnesses. No time left to empty it! The policemen rummaged through everything—except this basket.

How I appreciated that my sister Anna had, in the meantime, also accepted friendship with the true God! Together, in 1934, we moved to the town of Freudenstadt and there carefully began circulating Bible literature. Once, during vacation, we managed a lightning visit by train to our hometown of Bad Ems, hurriedly circulated a full box of 240 brochures, and then disappeared. The Gestapo's harassment in Freudenstadt persuaded us to move to another city, and in 1936 we went to Stuttgart. There, I sought contact with our underground administration—and right away I was given "work" to do. I regularly received picture postcards containing greetings. Actually, they were hidden messages. My job was to

bring them to a secret place in the city. So as not to endanger this activity, I was told not to circulate any literature. Everything ran smoothly until August 1938.

One day, I received a card instructing me to stand in front of a well-known church on a certain evening. There I would receive further information. I went to the meeting place. It was pitch black. A man introduced himself as Julius Riffel. This, I knew, was the name of a faithful brother who worked in the underground. He hastily told me to travel to Bad Ems on a certain date in order to meet somebody. He quickly disappeared.

However, on the platform in Bad Ems, only the Gestapo was waiting for me. What had gone wrong? The man in front of the church—actually a former brother from Dresden, Hans Müller, who knew everything about the underground work in Germany and had begun to collaborate with the Gestapo—had set a trap for me. But it did not work. Shortly before, my mother had informed me that she had suffered a minor stroke, and I, in reply, had promised to visit her in Bad Ems on a certain date. This happily coincided with the "mission," and our letters provided an alibi at my later judicial hearing. To my surprise, I was acquitted. Yes, in February 1939, after five and a half months of detention, I was free again!

Responding to His Friendship

Of course, I did not plan to stay inactive, especially since most of the brothers were suffering in concentration camps or were under arrest elsewhere.

After the responsible German brothers had been arrested with the help of Müller, Ludwig Cyranek took over the distribution of spiritual food. This brother, formerly a Bethel worker in Magdeburg, had just been released from detention, and he visited me in Bad Ems. "Come on, Maria!

Let's keep working," he said. He brought me back to Stuttgart, where I got secular work. My real work, however, starting in March 1939, was that of distributing suitcases full of duplicated *Watchtower* magazines in Stuttgart and its surroundings. Other Witnesses courageously shared in this work.

Meanwhile, Brother Cyranek covered all but the northeastern part of the country. Since the Witnesses' residences were being watched, he had to move with great caution and sometimes even had to sleep in the woods. Express trains brought him from time to time to Stuttgart, where he dictated to me special reports about our situation in Germany. I wrote ordinary letters, putting these messages between the lines in invisible ink and then sent them, via a cover address, to the Netherlands Bethel.

Sad to say, a second brother had turned traitor in hopes of escaping detention. A year later, he betrayed the teams in Stuttgart and elsewhere to the Gestapo. On February 6, 1940, we were arrested. Ludwig Cyranek went to Müller's apartment in Dresden—thinking that Müller was still a fellow Witness—and was caught there. Brother Cyranek was later sentenced to death and was beheaded on July 3, 1941.*

Our enemies now believed that they had paralyzed our whole operation in Germany. But arrangements had already been made to ensure that the water of truth kept flowing, even if reduced to a trickle. For instance, the group in Holzgerlingen managed to keep active until the end of the war in 1945.

He Never Forsakes His Friends

Both Anna and I, together with other

faithful sisters, had been sent to the Stuttgart jail. Often I could hear prisoners being beaten. Solitary confinement with nothing to do is a horrible experience. But since we had never missed a Christian meeting and we were still young, we could recall almost all the *Watchtower* articles. Consequently, our faith kept strong, and we were able to endure.

One day, two Gestapo men came from Dresden to pick up my fellow prisoner Gertrud Pfisterer (now Wulle) and me for identification. Usually, prisoners were allowed to travel only on slow trains, which took days. But for us a whole compartment was reserved on an express train, despite the fact that it was overcrowded. "You are too important to us. We don't want to lose you," explained the officers.

In Dresden, the Gestapo confronted me with a third traitor from among our ranks. I sensed that something was wrong, so I kept quiet, not even greeting him. Then I was brought face-to-face with a tall, burly man in soldier's uniform: the traitor Müller, whom I had met in front of the church. I left the room without saying a word. The Gestapo got nothing from me.

These traitors each came to a bad end. As the Nazis said, they loved the betrayal but not the betrayer. All three were sent to the eastern front and never came back. How different it turned out for those who never gave up friendship with God and his people! Many of the loyal ones, among them Erich Frost and Konrad Franke, who suffered much for the Lord's sake and later became branch overseers in Germany, returned alive from the fiery furnace of persecution.*

The Gestapo in Stuttgart—very proud of their "catch"—asked their colleagues in Dresden in May 1940 to send us back. Our

* See 1974 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, pages 179-80.

* See *The Watchtower*, April 15, 1961, pages 244-9, and March 15, 1963, pages 180-3.

cases were to be tried in southern Germany. But the Gestapo in the north and in the south were apparently not on good terms, so the Dresden office refused, whereupon those from Stuttgart came and hauled us away personally. What now? The drive to the station became a pleasant trip along the river Elbe; in our cells we had not seen green trees and the blue sky for ages. As before, a whole train compartment was reserved for us alone, and we were even allowed to sing Kingdom songs. When we changed trains, we received a meal in the station restaurant. Imagine, in the morning we had had only a dry piece of bread, and now this!

My case came to court in Stuttgart on September 17, 1940. By writing and forwarding Ludwig Cyranek's letters, I had informed people living in foreign countries about our underground activity and our persecution. That was high treason, which carried the death penalty. It therefore seemed like a miracle that I, the principal defendant in Stuttgart, was sentenced to only three and a half years of solitary confinement! Obviously, a Gestapo official named Schlipf, who looked favorably upon us and whose conscience bothered him, had used his influence. He had once mentioned that he could no longer sleep because of us "girls." In Dresden I would not have got off so lightly.

Benefiting From a Lasting Friendship

Although the food in prison was not as bad as in the concentration camps, I did lose much weight and finally was just skin and bones. The years 1940 to 1942 passed, and I often thought: 'When your sentence is over, they will put you in a concentration camp where you can have the company of sisters and won't be alone anymore.' Little did I know.

The guards were totally surprised when an application for my release, requested

by my Catholic parents, was granted. (I had repeatedly refused to make such a personal request.) Whereas fellow believers were thrown into concentration camps, I—sentenced for high treason and without compromising at all—was to get off so easily! So I was free again in 1943 and thus in a position, using extreme care, to pick up theocratic material from Holzgerlingen. After having copied it, I hid it between the walls of a thermos flask full of coffee and carried it to brothers living along the Rhine River and in the Westerwald section of Germany. From that time to the end of the war, I was able to work undisturbed. Later I learned that friendly police officials who received denunciation notices against us did not forward them to the Gestapo.

And after 1945? I had the desire to pioneer again as soon as possible. Quite unexpectedly came the finest invitation I had ever received. Never in my wildest dreams had I thought of being invited to work at Bethel in Wiesbaden!

And since March 1, 1946, that is where I have been, in Bethel (now in Selters/Taunus). For many years I had the pleasure of working in an office supervised by former branch overseer Konrad Franke. I also worked joyfully in other departments, for example, in the laundry. Even today, at the age of 87, I still work there several hours a week folding towels. If you have ever toured our Bethel, we have perhaps seen each other.

In the course of time, I had the privilege of helping numerous people accept the truth, including my mother and another fleshly sister. Mother's words, "He knows and loves you," I have found to be true, just as were the words of the psalmist, "He himself will sustain you." (Psalm 55:22) What a joy it has been to love Jehovah while being sustained by him as a friend!

Jehovah's Justice and Name Exalted

Lessons From the Scriptures: Micah 1:1-7:20

THE prophet Micah lived in the eighth century B.C.E., a time of idolatry and injustice in Israel and Judah. Conditions then so closely parallel those prevailing today that Micah's messages and warnings are pertinent to our time. And the positive tidings he also presented give us real hope in a world dominated by Satan.

—1 John 5:19.

Micah's message is perhaps best summed up in the following three expressions: "Woe . . . to those practicing what is bad." "What is Jehovah asking back from you but to exercise justice and to love kindness and to be modest in walking with your God?" "We, for our part, shall walk in the name of Jehovah our God . . . forever."—Micah 2:1; 6:8; 4:5.

BIBLE TEXTS EXAMINED

o 1:16—In Israel, baldness was associated with shame, mourning, and distress. (Isaiah 3: 24-26; 15:2, 3; Jeremiah 47:5) Some pagan nations made a practice of shaving their heads bald in a time of sorrow for a dead relative. While natural baldness was not considered unclean under the Law, Israelites were not to shave their heads in mourning because they were "a holy people to Jehovah." (Deuteronomy 14:1, 2) However, Micah told Israel and Judah to shear off their hair because of their sinful idolatrous course that disqualified them as a holy people and made them and their offspring deserving of captivity. The Hebrew word here translated "eagle" may refer to the griffon vulture, which has only some soft white down on its head. Though not of the same species as the eagle, it is considered to be of the same family.

o 2:12—These words find present-day fulfillment in spiritual Israel. (Galatians 6:16) Particularly from 1919 onward, the way was made clear for the anointed remnant to escape from their captivity in religious Babylon the Great. (Revelation 18:2) As Micah foretold, they were gathered 'like a flock in the pen, like a drove in its pasture.' As they have been joined since 1935 by the "great crowd" of "other sheep," they have indeed become "noisy with men."—Revelation 7:9; John 10:16.

o 3:1-3—Here is a startling contrast between Jehovah, the kind Shepherd, and the cruel leaders of his ancient people in Micah's day. These failed in their commission to protect the flock by exercising justice. They cruelly exploited the figurative sheep not only by fleecing them but also by 'stripping off their skin'—like wolves. The wicked shepherds deprived the people of justice, subjecting them to "acts of bloodshed." (3:10) Through perverted judgments, the defenseless were defrauded of their homes and livelihood.

—2:2; compare Ezekiel 34:1-5.

o 4:3—These "many peoples" and "mighty nations" are not to be identified with the political nations and governments. Rather, these are individuals out of all nations, persons who break away from their nationalism and turn to united service in Jehovah's mountain of true worship. (Isaiah 2:2-4) Jehovah 'renders judgment and sets matters straight' in a spiritual way for these believers who take their stand for God's Kingdom. These persons of the "great crowd" conform to divine judgments, beating their swords into plowshares and thus living at peace with their fellow witnesses of Jehovah.

o 5:2—Bethlehem Ephrathah was probably identified as such because there were two towns named Bethlehem. Micah identifies the one in Judah, just south of Jerusalem. The other town was up north, in Zebulun. (Joshua 19:10, 15) "Ephrathah," or "Ephrath," was an early name for the Bethlehem in Judah or the area around it. (Genesis 48:7; Ruth 4:11) Such detailed identification underscores the accuracy of God's prophetic promises regarding the Messiah.

o 6:8—Micah was not minimizing the value of the sin-atoning sacrifices but was highlighting what was truly valuable in Jehovah's eyes. (Compare Deuteronomy 10:12.) For the sacrifices to be acceptable to Jehovah, the sinner had to manifest the qualities of justice, kindness, and modesty. Today, Jehovah looks for the same in our service.

—1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

o 7:4—The brier and the thorn hedge are plants that can snag clothing and rip the flesh. Micah was here describing the moral decay of the nation in his day. So he evidently meant that even the best among the wayward Israelites was as hurtful or painful as a brier or thorn hedge to anyone getting too close.

Idolatry Denounced

Jehovah does not endlessly tolerate wrongdoers. Idolatry and revolt are rampant in Israel and Judah. Hence, Jehovah serves as a witness against them. Their images will be crushed. The idolaters will become 'bald like an eagle' and will suffer exile.—1:1-16.

For the faithful, Jehovah proves to be the God of hope. Scheming despots are denounced as thieves and robbers. Calamity will strike them. Yet a promise of restoration is made to "the remaining ones of Israel." "In unity I shall set them, like a flock in the pen," says Jehovah.—2:1-13.

Jehovah expects justice to be practiced by those shouldering responsibility among his people. To the abusive leaders of Israel, it is said: "Is it not your business to know justice? You haters of what is good and lovers of badness, tearing off their skin from people and their organism from off their bones." Micah, "with the spirit of Jehovah, and of justice and mightiness," pronounces God's judgments against them. The unjust leaders, he says, judge for bribes, the priests instruct for a price, and the prophets practice divination for money. Therefore, Jerusalem "will become mere heaps of ruins."—3:1-12.

A Message of Hope

True worship will be practiced earth wide. Micah prophesies that "in the final part of the days," people of many nations will be instructed in Jehovah's ways. God will render judgment, and war will be no more. True worshipers 'shall walk in the name of Jehovah their God forever.' In spite of banishment and pain, his people will be delivered out of the palm of their enemies.—4:1-13.



Micah foretold Jesus' birthplace

We can have confidence in God's promised Deliverer. A ruler out of Bethlehem will shepherd in Jehovah's strength. "Deliverance from the Assyrian" is foretold. A remnant of true worshipers will become like refreshing dew and copious showers, and all forms of false religion and demonism will be uprooted.—5:1-15.

Jehovah's Justice Will Prevail

Jehovah expects his people to abide by his just and righteous standards. What has he done to deserve shabby worship? He has done good things for his people. 'And what is Jehovah asking back but that they exercise justice, love kindness, and be modest in walking with their God?' If they continue in their wicked violence and exploitation, they can expect only his adverse judgment.—6:1-16.

We should trust in Jehovah's justice and mercy. Even family members will become enemies. But Micah says: "I will show a waiting attitude for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me." The prophet trusts in Jehovah's justice, knowing that God "will certainly not hold onto his anger forever, for he is delighting in loving-kindness."—7:1-20.

Lessons for today: Jehovah expects his people to exercise justice. With reference to business practices, in effect the Christian must ask himself: "Can I be morally clean with wicked scales and with a bag of deceptive stone weights?" (6:11) In these last days, all of Jehovah's people must contribute to the unity of his earthly organization and accept instruction in his ways of peace. We should do everything possible to exalt Jehovah's name and promote true worship.—2:12; 4:1-4.

**Scenes From
the Promised Land**

BASHAN A FERTILE SOURCE



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

WHILE reading the Bible, have you not come across names of many places that you cannot picture? During May and June, Jehovah's Witnesses will read Micah through Zechariah. In following that schedule, you will find Bashan mentioned in three texts. (Micah 7:14; Nahum 1:4; Zechariah 11:2) Those and other interesting verses will mean more if you can see Bashan with your mind's eye.

Where was Bashan? Well, you can generally identify it with the Golan Heights, which you may have noted on newspaper maps. Bashan was east of both the Sea of Galilee and the upper Jordan Valley. It basically ran from the Yarmuk River (part of the current border between Jordan and Syria) north to Mount Hermon.

Before the ancient Israelites entered the Promised Land, they had to defeat the Canaanite army of giant Og, king of Bashan. After that, much of Bashan was occupied by the tribe of Manasseh. (Deuteronomy 3:1-7, 11, 13; Numbers 32:33; 34:14) What was this Biblical

area like? Though it had forests in its mountainous areas, most of Bashan was a plateau, high tableland.

In many respects Bashan was a veritable breadbasket. This was because fine grazing- or pasture-land covered much of the region. (Jeremiah 50:19) The accompanying photographs may bring to your mind some Biblical references to Bashan.* Many have read about the "bulls of Bashan." (Psalm 22:12, King James Version) Yes, in ancient times this region was famous for its cattle, including powerful young bulls. But other livestock thrived there too, such as sheep and goats that contributed to a rich supply of milk and butter. —Deuteronomy 32:14.

You may wonder what led to such fertility in Bashan, since it was east of the Jordan in an area many think of as very dry. The fact is, the hills of Galilee to the west are lower, so clouds from the Mediterranean could pass over them and bring ample rain to Bashan. Moreover, moist air and streams came down from Mount Hermon. Imagine the potential when that precious moisture combined with the rich volcanic soil found in Bashan! The area produced grain in abundance. Long before being a major granary for the Romans, Bashan supplied food for Solomon's tables. With good reason, then, God's provision for his delivered people could later be spoken of this way: "Let them feed on Bashan and Gilead as in the days of a long time ago." —Micah 7:14; 1 Kings 4:7, 13.

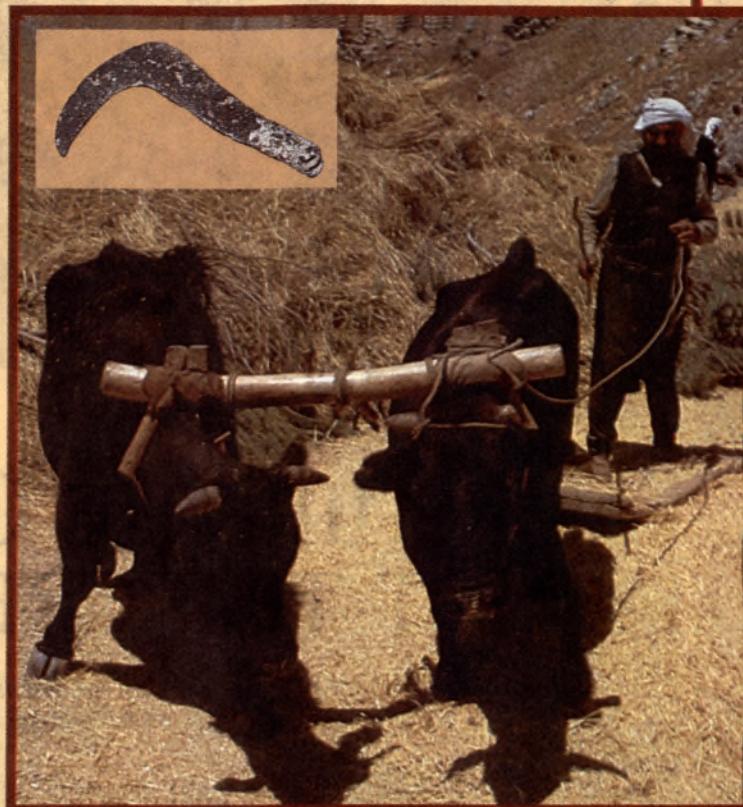
Knowing of such fruitfulness, you can appreciate Nahum's poignant description of what God's

* See also the 1989 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses.

disfavor would bring: "Bashan and Carmel [verdant hills near the Great Sea] have withered, and the very blossom of Lebanon has withered."—Nahum 1:4b.

This overview of Bashan can help you to picture more easily some close-up scenes in the Bible too. For example, you have likely read about harvesting grain, such as wheat that grew in much of Bashan. The wheat harvest came in the warm months of Iyyar and Sivan (Jewish calendar, corresponding to late April, May, and early June). During this period, the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost) occurred. As part of it, the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were offered up, and lambs, rams, and a bull were sacrificed. Might the animals have been brought from Bashan?—Exodus 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-18.

At harvesttime workers cut the standing wheat with a curved sickle like the one made of iron seen above, which lacks its wooden handle. (Deuteronomy 16:9, 10; 23:25) The stalks were then gathered and taken to a threshing floor, where a wooden sledge (having stones fixed underneath) was driven over them to remove the ker-



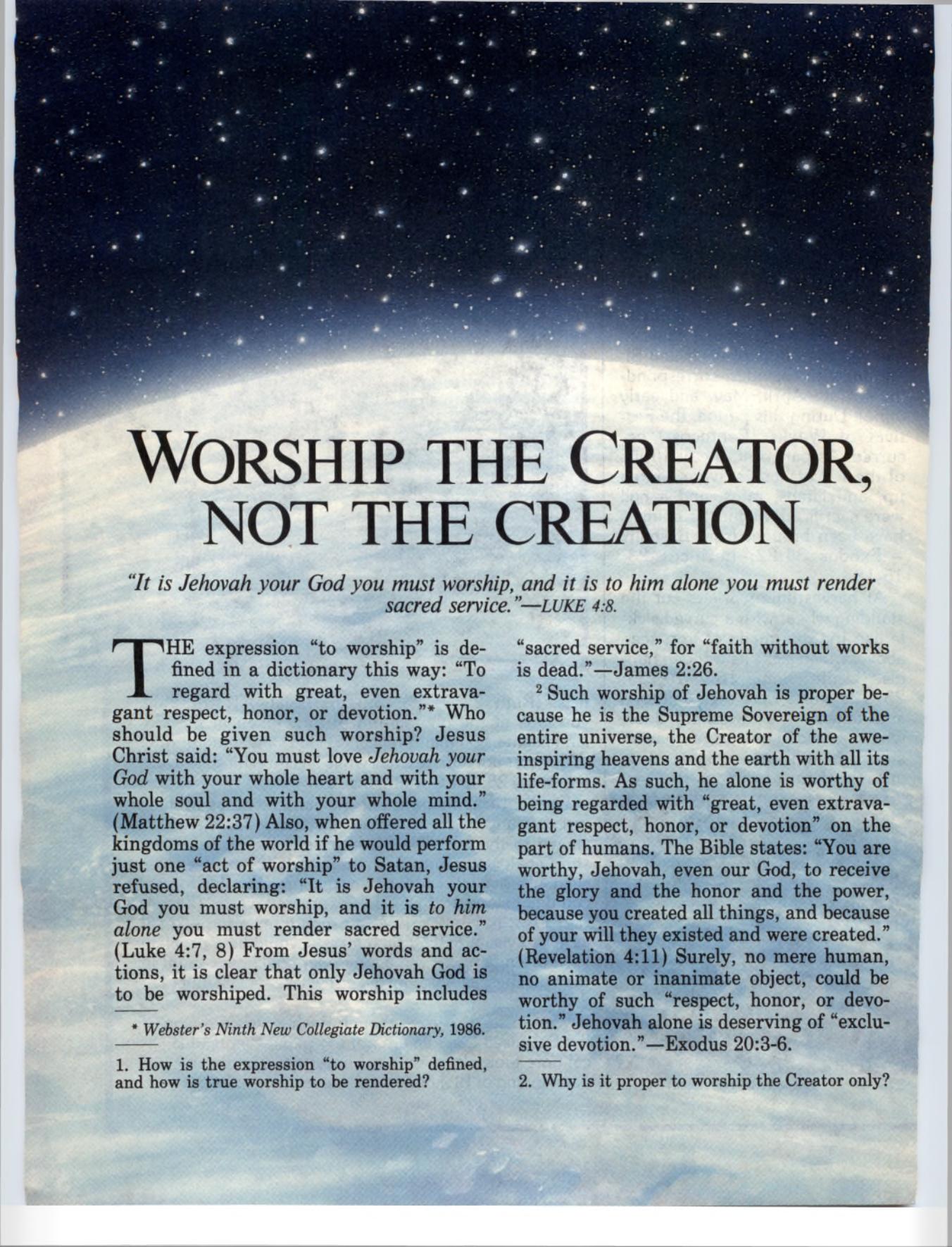
nels. (Ruth 2:2-7, 23; 3:3, 6; Isaiah 41:15) While you look at the photograph of this, taken in the Golan Heights, you might reflect on God's meaningful rule: "You must not muzzle a bull while it is threshing."—Deuteronomy 25:4; 1 Corinthians 9:9.

Finally, recall that ancient Bashan had areas of thick forest, many of the trees being massive oaks, such as shown to the left. The Phoenicians made oars out of sturdy oak wood from Bashan. (Ezekiel 27:6) Yet, even such 'massive trees of Bashan, the impenetrable forest,' could not stand against God's expressed wrath. (Zechariah 11:2; Isaiah 2:13) Seeing such trees also makes it easier to visualize why such forests would be a problem for a fleeing army. Even a lone rider could get caught in the branches, as Absalom did elsewhere.—2 Samuel 18:8, 9.

We can see that even though Bashan was a region of the Promised Land where not too many events of Biblical note took place, scenes from it do enhance our understanding of Bible references to it.



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.



WORSHIP THE CREATOR, NOT THE CREATION

"It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service."—LUKE 4:8.

THE expression "to worship" is defined in a dictionary this way: "To regard with great, even extravagant respect, honor, or devotion."^{*} Who should be given such worship? Jesus Christ said: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind." (Matthew 22:37) Also, when offered all the kingdoms of the world if he would perform just one "act of worship" to Satan, Jesus refused, declaring: "It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service." (Luke 4:7, 8) From Jesus' words and actions, it is clear that only Jehovah God is to be worshiped. This worship includes

"sacred service," for "faith without works is dead."—James 2:26.

² Such worship of Jehovah is proper because he is the Supreme Sovereign of the entire universe, the Creator of the awe-inspiring heavens and the earth with all its life-forms. As such, he alone is worthy of being regarded with "great, even extravagant respect, honor, or devotion" on the part of humans. The Bible states: "You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created." (Revelation 4:11) Surely, no mere human, no animate or inanimate object, could be worthy of such "respect, honor, or devotion." Jehovah alone is deserving of "exclusive devotion."—Exodus 20:3-6.

* Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1986.

1. How is the expression "to worship" defined, and how is true worship to be rendered?

2. Why is it proper to worship the Creator only?

A Special Urgency

³ Because we live in a judgment period, there is now a special urgency to worship God properly. Eternal destinies are being determined. God's prophetic Word tells us that in these "last days" of the present system of things, Christ Jesus has arrived in heavenly glory "and all the angels with him." For what purpose? Jesus himself foretold that purpose, saying: "All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." The sheep will depart "into everlasting life." The goats will depart "into everlasting cutting-off." —2 Timothy 3:1-5; Matthew 25:31, 32, 46.

⁴ The apostle Paul wrote about "the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9) Thus, everlasting destruction is the destiny of stubborn, goatlike people who do not want to know about God's purposes or who refuse to act when they have the opportunity. But "everlasting life" is the destiny of humble, sheeplike people who want to know about Jehovah, who listen to his instructions, and who then submit to his will. The Bible says: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever." —1 John 2:17; see also 2 Peter 2:12.

3. Why is there a special urgency for us to worship God?

4. (a) How does Paul identify those who are to be permanently destroyed at this world's end? (b) What attitude is shown by those who are to gain everlasting life?

⁵ Sheeplike people are willing to sacrifice time, energy, and material resources to search out the truth. They do what Proverbs 2:1-5 says: "My son, if you will receive my sayings and treasure up my own commandments with yourself, so as to pay attention to wisdom with your ear, that you may incline your heart to discernment; if, moreover, you call out for understanding itself and you give forth your voice for discernment itself, if you keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures you keep searching for it, in that case you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God."

⁶ The willingness to search for Jehovah is what separates sheeplike people from goatlike ones. "If you search for him, he will let himself be found by you; but if you leave him, he will cast you off forever." (1 Chronicles 28:9) Thus, no matter what a person's race or nationality, whatever his education, whether rich or poor, if he sincerely searches for the truth about God, he will find it. From their heavenly vantage point, Christ and his angels will see to it that the searcher comes in contact with the truth, no matter where that person lives. How rewarding will that search be? Jesus said: "*This means everlasting life*, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." —John 17:3; see also Ezekiel 9:4.

Avoiding Creature Worship

⁷ Many people throughout the earth regard humans—alive or dead—with

5, 6. (a) What must a person do to find the truth about Jehovah and his purposes? (b) Why can we be confident that truth seekers will come in contact with the truth regardless of their situation in life?

7, 8. (a) What danger is there in worshiping humans? (b) Describe the "extravagant respect, honor, or devotion" with which Mary is regarded.

"extravagant respect, honor, or devotion." While they may feel that this is part of their worship to God, it actually diverts them from true worship. This opens the way for them to believe doctrines and engage in practices that are contrary to God's will. One outstanding example is the way in which Mary, the mother of Jesus, is viewed by millions of people in both Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Catholic lands.

⁸ Images and icons of Mary are bowed down to in a worshipful attitude, and in official church doctrine, she is referred to as "the Virgin Mary Theotokos." The word *theo-to'kos* means "God-bearer" or "mother of God." The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says: "Mary is the mother of God. . . . If Mary is not truly the mother of God, then Christ is not true God as well as true man." Thus, as part of their Trinity doctrine, these religions teach that Jesus was Almighty God in human form, making Mary the "mother of God." The same source adds that devotion to Mary includes: "(1) veneration, or the reverent recognition of the dignity of the holy Virgin Mother of God; (2) invocation, or the calling upon our Lady for her motherly and queenly intercession; . . . and private prayers [to Mary]."

⁹ However, the word *theo-to'kos* does not appear in the inspired Scriptures. And nowhere does the Bible say that Mary was the "mother of God." Jesus did not teach it, nor did first-century Christians. Furthermore, the Bible plainly shows that Jesus was not God Almighty in human form but was God's Son.* Indeed, when Mary was notified by an angel that she would bear a son, she was told: "Holy spirit will come upon you, and power of

the Most High will overshadow you. For that reason also what is born will be called holy, God's Son." (Luke 1:35) So Jesus was God's Son, not God himself in human form. Hence, Mary was the mother of God's son Jesus, not the mother of God in human form. That is why neither Jesus nor his disciples ever called Mary the "mother of God."

¹⁰ The way Jesus viewed his mother indicates her relative position. At a marriage feast in Cana, the Bible account tells us: "When the wine ran short the mother of Jesus said to him: 'They have no wine.' But Jesus said to her. 'What have I to do with you, woman?'" Here the Roman Catholic Douay Version of the Bible reads: "Woman, what is that to me and to thee?" (John 2:3, 4) On another occasion, someone said to him: "Happy is the womb that carried you and the breasts that you sucked!" That was a fine opportunity for Jesus to give special honor to his mother and to show that others should do the same. Instead, Jesus said: "No, rather, Happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it!"—Luke 11:27, 28.

¹¹ Such references show that Jesus took care not to give devotion or undue honor to Mary or to address her by any special title. He did not allow their relationship to influence him. And the apostles and disciples followed his example, for nowhere in their inspired writings is Mary given any undue honor, title, or influence. While they respected her as the mother of Jesus, they did not go beyond that. Certainly they never referred to her as the "mother of God." They knew that Jesus was not Almighty God in human form and, hence, that Mary could not possibly be God's mother, a position far beyond what God's Word allows for Mary.

* See *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1988, pages 10-20.

9. Does the Bible teach that Mary was the "mother of God"?

10, 11. (a) What examples show how Jesus viewed his mother? (b) How did the apostles and disciples of Jesus view his mother?

The Cult of the Mother-Goddess

¹² Where, then, did this idea originate? It gradually crept into apostate Christendom in the third and fourth centuries of our Common Era. Especially was this the case after the year 325 C.E. when the Council of Nicaea adopted the unscriptural doctrine that Christ was God. Once that erroneous idea was accepted, it became easier to teach that Mary was the "mother of God." Regarding this, *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* states: "The title ['mother of God'] seems to have arisen in devotional usage, probably in Alexandria, sometime in the 3rd or 4th century . . . By the end of the 4th century, the Theotokos had successfully established itself in various sections of the church." The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* notes that the doctrine was accepted officially "since the Council of Ephesus in 431."

¹³ Of interest is where that council met and why. The book *The Cult of the Mother-Goddess*, by E. O. James, states: "The Council of Ephesus assembled in the basilica of the Theotokos in 431. There, if anywhere, in the city so notorious for its devotion to Artemis, or Diana as the Romans called her, where her image was said to have fallen from heaven, under the shadow of the great temple dedicated to the Magna Mater [Great Mother] since 330 B.C. and containing, according to tradition, a temporary residence of Mary, the title 'God-bearer' hardly could fail to be upheld."

¹⁴ So just as with the Trinity, the "mother of God" doctrine is a pagan teaching masquerading as a Christian belief. It was prominent in pagan religions centuries be-

12. Where and when did the idea develop that Mary was the "mother of God"?

13. What likely influenced the Council of Ephesus in 431 C.E. officially to proclaim Mary to be the "mother of God"?

14. How does history verify that this doctrine is of pagan origin?

fore Christ. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* states under the heading "mother goddess": "Any of a variety of feminine deities and maternal symbols of creativity, birth, fertility, sexual union, nurturing, and the cycle of growth. The term also has been applied to figures as diverse as the so-called Stone Age Venuses and the Virgin Mary. . . . There is no culture that has not employed some maternal symbolism in depicting its deities. . . . She is the protector and nourisher of a divine child and, by extension, of all mankind." Thus, Catholic priest Andrew Greely says in his book *The Making of the Popes 1978*: "The Mary symbol links Christianity directly to the ancient [pagan] religions of mother goddesses."

Improper Worship

¹⁵ To claim that Mary was the "mother of God" elevates her to a position where humans would tend to worship her, and that is what has happened for centuries. Hundreds of millions of people in many lands have prayed to her or through her and have given worshipful devotion to images and icons of her. While theologians may try to excuse this by saying that such veneration of Mary is only an indirect way of worshiping God, that is not the way God views it. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1, 2) Jesus himself said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."—John 14:6.

¹⁶ Giving Mary devotion directly or indirectly, praying to her, bowing down to images and icons of her, is worshiping the creation rather than the Creator. It is

15. (a) What developed in Christendom regarding Mary? (b) According to the Bible, who alone can intercede with God for us?

16. How did Peter and John make clear that only Jehovah is to be worshiped?

idolatrous, and Christians are instructed to "flee from idolatry." (1 Corinthians 10:14) When the Gentile Cornelius bowed reverently to the apostle Peter, note what happened: "As Peter entered, Cornelius met him, fell down at his feet and did obeisance to him. But Peter lifted him up, saying: 'Rise; I myself am also a man.'" (Acts 10:25, 26) Bowing worshipfully to a human was improper, and Peter would not accept it. Also, after receiving a vision from an angel, the apostle John reports: "I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that had been showing me these things. But he tells me: 'Be careful! Do not do that! All I am is a fellow slave of you and of your brothers who are prophets and of those who are observing the words of this scroll. Worship God.'" (Revelation 22:8, 9) If not even an angel of God is to be worshiped, how much less humans or images of them.

¹⁷ That such devotion to Mary may result in improper worship is acknowledged by *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. An early edition of this work stated: "That popular devotion to the Blessed Virgin was often attended with extravagance and abuses, it is impossible to deny."

¹⁸ From what source would such an unscriptural doctrine come? The underlying source has to be God's Adversary, Satan the Devil. (John 8:44) Why would he promote such a teaching? To belittle and downgrade the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, to elevate humans, and to cause confusion. It diverts people from true worship and causes them to look instead to creatures for salvation. For centuries it also enhanced the power of the clergy over the common people, who were taught that they must be totally subservient to their

17. What does a Catholic encyclopedia admit may be the result of venerating Mary?

18. From what source would such an unscriptural doctrine come?

religious leaders because the clergy alone had knowledge of such complicated theology.

¹⁹ However, Jesus foretold: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) And Jehovah promises that by means of the Kingdom preaching, he will gather all sheeplike people to 'instruct them about his ways so that they can walk in his paths.' (Isaiah 2:2-4) Because they are gathered to the pure worship of Jehovah, Jesus said of them: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32) So those who search for the truth will find it and will be freed from false religious teachings that hinder people from doing the Creator's will.

²⁰ There are other commonly accepted religious teachings and practices that have diverted people from the true worship of the Creator, giving devotion to the creation. What are some of these, and what has resulted from them? What does true worship involve? The next article will examine these questions.

19, 20. (a) Why can we be sure that before God's judgments are executed, sheeplike people will find the truth? (b) What questions will be developed in the next article?

How Would You Answer?

- How did Jesus clearly show that Jehovah alone is to be worshiped?
- Why is there now a special urgency in worshiping properly?
- Why should Mary not be given undue honor?
- From where did the idea develop that Mary is the "mother of God"?
- How did the apostles Peter and John emphasize that Jehovah alone is to be worshiped?

WHAT THE LOVE OF GOD MEANS

"This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments."

—1 JOHN 5:3.

REGARDING the obligation that humans have to worship God, Jesus said: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind." (Matthew 22:37) How should we demonstrate this love? The Bible answers: "This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments." (1 John 5:3) With what fine result to those who do? John said: "He that remains in love remains in union with God."—1 John 4:16b.

² If we love God, we will not give our worship to any creature, alive or dead, but to God only. (Luke 4:7, 8) The apostle Peter, and even an angel, refused to accept worship from humans. (Acts 10: 25, 26; Revelation 22:8, 9) Also, Jesus showed that his mother, Mary, should not be given any worshipful honor, for such belongs only to God. (Luke 11:27, 28; John 2:3, 4; Revelation 4:11) Misdirecting one's worship will result in conflict with God's commandments, for "no one can slave for two masters."—Matthew 6:24.

Use of the Cross in Religion

³ There are also inanimate objects that if venerated may lead to breaking God's commandments. Among the most prominent is the cross. For centuries it has been used by people in Christendom as part of their worship. *The New Encyclopaedia Bri-*

1. How should we demonstrate love for God, and what will result?
2. Who only should receive our worship?
3. How does Christendom view the use of the cross?

tannica calls the cross "the principal symbol of the Christian religion." In a court case in Greece, the Greek Orthodox Church even asserted that those who reject the 'Holy Cross' are not Christian. But is the cross really a Christian symbol? Where did it originate?

⁴ The instrument of Jesus' death is noted in Bible passages, such as at Matthew 27:32 and 40. There the Greek word *stauros'* is translated "cross" in various English Bibles. But what did *stau·ros'* mean in the first century when the Greek Scriptures were written? *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, by W. E. Vine, says: "Stauros . . . denotes, primarily, an upright pale or stake. On such malefactors were nailed for execution. Both the noun [*stau·ros'*] and the verb *stauroō*, to fasten to a stake or pale, are originally to be distinguished from the ecclesiastical form of a two beamed cross. The shape of the latter had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as the symbol of the god Tammuz (being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and in adjacent lands, including Egypt."

⁵ Vine goes on to say: "By the middle of the 3rd cent. A.D. the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate

- 4, 5. (a) What does a dictionary say about the word *stau·ros'*, translated "cross" in some English Bibles? (b) Where did the use of the cross originate?

ecclesiastical system pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ."

⁶ *The Companion Bible*, under the heading "The Cross and Crucifixion," notes: "Our English word 'cross' is the translation of the Latin *crux*; but the Greek *stauros* no more means a *crux* than the word 'stick' means a 'crutch.' Homer uses the word *stauros* of an ordinary pole or stake, or a single piece of timber. And this is the meaning and usage of the word throughout the Greek classics. It never means two pieces of timber placed across one another. . . . There is nothing in the Greek of the N[ew] T[estament] even to imply two pieces of timber."

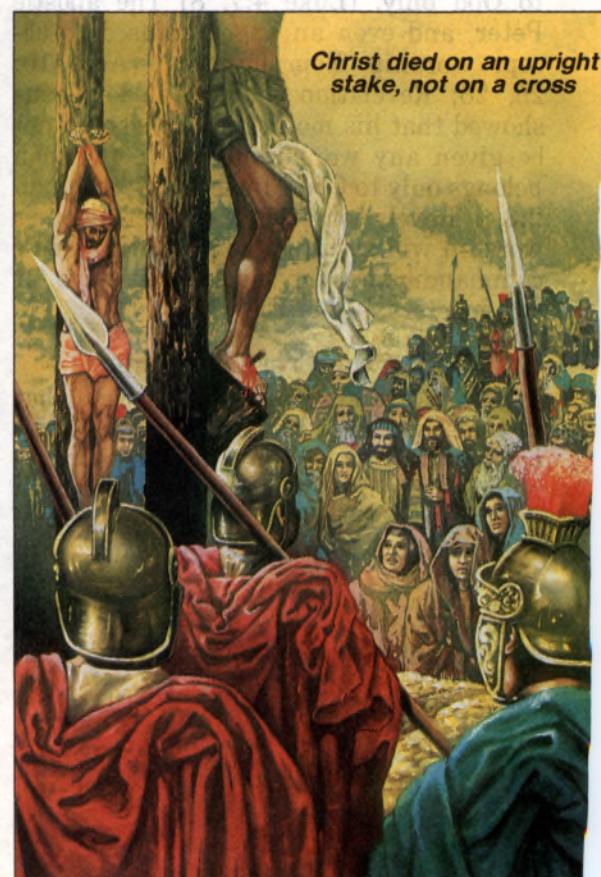
⁷ Another Greek word, *xy'lon*, is used in the Bible to refer to the instrument upon which Jesus died. This word helps to show that *stauros* was an upright stake without a crossbeam. As *The Companion Bible* states: "The word [*xy'lon*] . . . generally denotes a piece of a dead log of wood, or timber, for fuel or for any other purpose. . . . As this latter word [*xy'lon*] is used for the former *stauros*, it shows us that the meaning of each is exactly the same. . . . Hence the use of the word [*xy'lon*] . . . in connection with the manner of our Lord's death, and rendered 'tree' in Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24 [King James Version]."

⁸ The French *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique Universel* (Encyclopedic Universal Dictionary) says: "For a long time we be-

6, 7. (a) From where does the word "cross" come, and why is its use in English Bibles not justified? (b) How does the Bible's use of the word *xy'lon* verify that *stauros* was an upright stake?

8. What do other sources say about the cross and its origin?

lieved that the cross, considered a religious symbol, was specifically for Christians. This is not the case." The book *Dual Heritage—The Bible and the British Museum* states: "It may come as a shock to know that there is no word such as 'cross' in the Greek of the New Testament. The word translated 'cross' is always the Greek word [*stauros*] meaning a 'stake' or 'upright pale.' The cross was not originally a Christian symbol; it is derived from Egypt and Constantine." The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says: "The representation of Christ's redemptive death on Golgotha does not occur in the symbolic art of the first Christian centuries. The early Christians, influenced by the Old Testament prohibition of graven images, were reluctant to depict even the instrument of the Lord's [death]. . . . The cross comes to be represented in the time of Constantine."



Constantine's Cross

⁹ Constantine was the Roman emperor who convened the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. and influenced it to adopt the unscriptural doctrine that Christ was God. He did this to solidify his empire of pagans and apostate Christians. Of him *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* says: "On the eve of Constantine's victory over Maxentius in 312, he saw a vision of the 'heavenly sign' of the cross, which he believed to be a divine pledge of his triumph." It also says that thereafter Constantine promoted the veneration of the cross.

¹⁰ However, would God give a sign to a pagan leader who was not doing God's

9. How is Emperor Constantine connected with the cross?

10. Why is it not reasonable or Scriptural to believe that God or Christ gave Constantine a "sign" involving a cross?

ORIGINS OF THE CROSS

Long before the Christian era, cross forms were used in nearly every part of the earth as religious symbols



The *Crux Ansata* was used by the ancient Egyptians as a symbol of future life



The *Crux Quadrata* symbolized the four elements out of which all things were believed to be created



The *Crux Gammata* is thought to have been a symbol of fire or the sun; hence, of life



The *Latin cross* popular in Christendom



This cross is a monogram of the first two Greek letters in the word "Christ"

will, and a pagan sign at that? Jesus rebuked his own countrymen for wanting signs. (Matthew 12:38-40) Furthermore, this pagan ruler was shedding innocent blood with carnal weapons for political supremacy and, in political intrigues, arranged the murder of relatives and other associates. In contrast, Jesus said: "My kingdom is no part of this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought." (John 18:36) That is why he commanded Peter: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword."—Matthew 26:52.

¹¹ The book *Strange Survivals* says of Constantine and his cross: "That there was policy in his conduct we can hardly doubt; the symbol he set up gratified the Christians in his army on one side, and the [pagan] Gauls on the other. . . . To the latter it was the token of the favour of their solar deity," the sun god they worshiped. No, Constantine's 'heavenly sign' had nothing to do with God or Christ but is steeped in paganism.

Venerate the Instrument of Death?

¹² Even if we ignore the evidence and assume that Jesus was killed on a cross, should it be venerated? No, for Jesus was executed as a criminal, like the men impaled alongside him, and his manner of death misrepresented him in the worst way. First-century Christians would not have viewed the instrument of his execution as sacred. Venerating it would have meant glorifying the wrong deed committed on it, the murder of Jesus.

¹³ If your dearest friend were executed on false charges, would you make an image of the instrument of execution (say a

11. What motivated Constantine to promote the use of the cross?

12, 13. For what other reasons should the cross not be venerated?

hangman's noose or an electric chair or the rifle of a firing squad) and then kiss that replica, burn candles before it, or wear it around your neck as a sacred ornament? That would be unthinkable. So, too, with the adoration of the cross. The fact that the cross is of pagan origin only makes the matter worse.

¹⁴ The veneration of the cross is not Christian. It does not show love for God or Christ but mocks what they stand for. It violates God's commandments against idolatry. It reveres a pagan symbol masquerading as Christian. (Exodus 20:4, 5; Psalm 115:4-8; 1 Corinthians 10:14) To consider a pagan symbol as sacred violates God's command: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? . . . 'Quit touching the unclean thing.'" —2 Corinthians 6:14, 17.

Holding to the Inspired Word

¹⁵ The churches say that practices such as venerating the cross are part of "sacred tradition." But when tradition conflicts with God's Word, those who love God reject the tradition. What we really need for true worship is already included in God's Word. As Paul wrote Timothy: "From infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through the faith in connection with Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:15-17) Nowhere does the Bible say that traditions that contradict

14. What conclusion regarding the cross must we reach in view of secular and Biblical evidence?

15. Why should we reject traditions that conflict with God's Word?

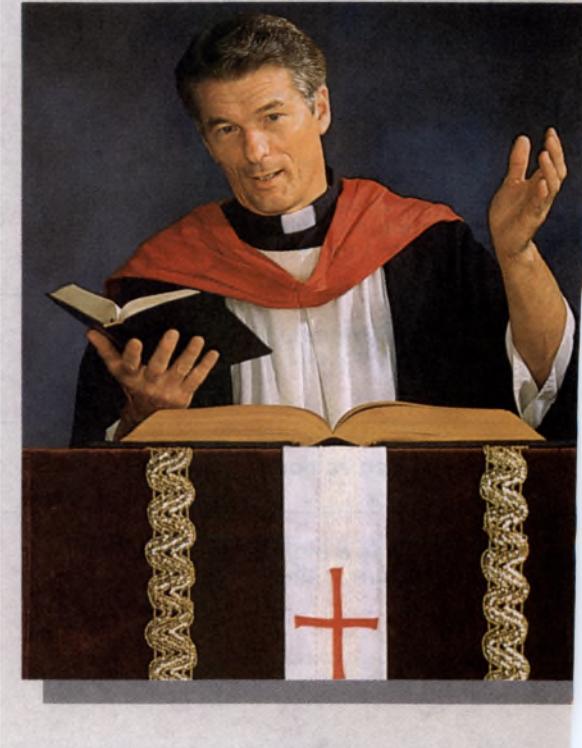
God's Word are indispensable for salvation.

¹⁶ The conflict between the Scriptures and human tradition is not new. During the period from the completing of the inspired Hebrew Scriptures to the coming of Jesus, the Jewish religious leaders added many oral traditions, which they later committed to writing that was not inspired by God. Those traditions often conflicted with the Scriptures. So Jesus told the religious leaders: "Why is it you also overstep the commandment of God because of your tradition? . . . You have made the word of God invalid because of your tradition." He applied God's Word to them when it said: "It is in vain that they keep worshiping me, because they teach commands of men as doctrines." (Matthew 15:1-6, 9) In his teachings, Jesus never

16. What did Jesus say to Jewish religious leaders regarding their traditions?

"They publicly declare they know God, but they disown him by their works."

—Titus 1:16



quoted from such traditions. His appeal was to the inspired written Word of God.—Matthew 4:4-10; Mark 12:10; Luke 10:26.

¹⁷ God did not leave the preservation of "the word of life" in the insecure hands of religious traditionalists. (Philippians 2:16) Instead, by his powerful holy spirit, he inspired the writing of the Bible so that "through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4) To say that the Bible is incomplete and that we need to rely also on the unstable thinking of imperfect, uninspired men is to deny the power of God. Surely, the almighty, awesome Creator of the universe could author a book! And he did this so that we could have a solid anchor for our hope and not have to depend on human traditions that lead people to violate God's

17. Why can we have confidence in the Bible as a solid anchor for our hope?



commandments. Hence, God's Word says: "Do not go beyond the things that are written." (1 Corinthians 4:6) Those who truly love God will observe that counsel.—See also Proverbs 30:5, 6.

"Observe His Commandments"

¹⁸ "This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments," states 1 John 5:3. When religious leaders water down those commandments, or ignore them, or substitute conflicting traditions of men, then they lead their followers contrary to God's will. As an example, consider a fundamental principle of Christianity: love. It was a vital part of Jesus' teaching. He said: "You must love your neighbor as yourself."—Matthew 22:39.

¹⁹ How important is this neighbor love? Jesus taught that true Christians can be identified by the love they have among themselves. He said: "I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:34, 35) True, the Law to ancient Israel included a commandment to "love your fellow as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18) But what was new about Jesus' command was his expression, "just as I have loved you." This gave greater power to Christian love, for a Christian must even be willing to lay down his life for fellow believers, just as Jesus did.

²⁰ Thus, true servants of God today can be identified by an unbreakable, unifying

18. If we truly love God, what commandment must we obey?

19. (a) How vital is it for true Christians to love one another? (b) In what way did the "new commandment" that Jesus gave regarding love differ from the old one?

20. Whom does the record of this century's history identify as obeying the commandment to "love one another"?

In Our Next Issue

- Babylon the Great
—Her Execution
- Showing Love and Respect
as a Husband
- Salvation Possible When
God Takes Vengeance

bond of love on an international scale. Who in our time demonstrate such obedience to God's commandments on love? Who have been persecuted, imprisoned, thrown into concentration camps, or executed because they would not take up weapons against fellow believers—or even unbelievers—of other nations? The record of this century's history answers: only Jehovah's Witnesses.

²¹ On the other hand, Christendom's religions have regularly broken God's commandments regarding love. In all the wars of this century, the clergy of Christendom's churches have led their people to meet on opposing sides of battlefields and to slaughter one another by the millions. Protestants killed fellow Protestants, Catholics killed fellow Catholics, yet all claimed to be Christian. But God's Word declares: "If anyone makes the statement: 'I love God,' and yet is hating his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot be loving God, whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that the one who loves God should be loving his brother also."—1 John 4:20, 21.

21. What record have the churches of Christendom made regarding the commandment to love fellow believers?

²² God's Word also says: "The children of God and the children of the Devil are evident by this fact: Everyone who does not carry on righteousness does not originate with God, neither does he who does not love his brother. . . . We should have love for one another; not like Cain, who originated with the wicked one and slaughtered his brother." (1 John 3:10-12) The churches of Christendom claim to be children of God, but they cannot be, for they grossly disobey God's commandments on love and 'slaughter their brother.' They can only be children of "the wicked one." Hence, God's Word urges sincere ones in such religions: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues." (Revelation 18:4) Soon God will execute his judgments against all false religions. Those who cling to them will suffer their fate. (Revelation 17:16) On the other hand, "he that does the will of God remains forever."—1 John 2:17.

22. According to the definition at 1 John 3:10-12, whose children are the churches of Christendom, and why?

How Would You Answer

- Why is the English word "cross" a mistranslation of the Greek word *stau·ros*?
- Where did veneration of the cross originate, and why should we reject it?
- What pattern did Jesus set regarding religious traditions?
- What evidence identifies those who obey the commandments regarding brotherly love?

WELCOME TO THE "GODLY DEVOTION" DISTRICT CONVENTIONS

WHAT a fine theme we have for this year's district convention: "Godly Devotion"! And what a fine example of godly devotion Jesus Christ set for us! No wonder that the apostle Paul was inspired to write regarding him: "Indeed, the sacred secret of this godly devotion is admittedly great: 'He was made manifest in flesh, was declared righteous in spirit, appeared to angels, was preached about among nations, was believed upon in the world, was received up in glory.'"—1 Timothy 3:16.

Our district convention will strengthen us to be persons of true godly devotion, as was Jesus. So, first of all, we want to make sure that we let absolutely nothing interfere with our taking in this spiritual feast. Therefore, let us be in our seats Friday morning at 10:20 to enjoy the musical presentation and thus be in the right frame of mind to benefit fully from the program that follows. The theme chosen for the first day is "Serving a God Exacting Exclusive Devotion," based on Exodus 20:5. The chairman's address is most fitting: "Welcome, You People of Godly Devotion!" On the first day, we will also be edified by talks that show why Jehovah insists on godly devotion and why we need to learn the secret of godly devotion. There will also be exciting information about the identity of the true God. Also, in view of the problems that our youths face, there will be a special message for them.

Saturday's theme is "Godly Devotion Means Great Gain," based on 1 Timothy 6:6. In the morning, we will receive instruction on just what it takes to pursue godly devotion. And, of course, there will

be a talk on baptism for those ready to enter a life course of godly devotion. Saturday afternoon we will have impressed upon us the need of loyalty to "the faithful and discreet slave," and then we will learn how we can manifest deeds of godly devotion in the family circle.

"Repudiate Ungodliness and Live With Godly Devotion," taken from Titus 2:12, is the theme for Sunday. In the morning, we will receive some timely instruction warning us against "the man of lawlessness" and against going astray in matters of food and drink, grooming, and recreation. (2 Thessalonians 2:3) This will be followed by a modern-day drama stressing the importance of subjecting ourselves to God. The public talk in the afternoon will present the good news that deliverance is near for people of godly devotion. Our spiritual feast will close with a discussion showing that "Our Continued Training With Godly Devotion Is Beneficial."

So come prepared to follow in your Bible the references of the speakers and to jot down salient points from the talks in a notebook. Taking notes is a great aid to concentration and to benefit fully from what one hears. And let us never overlook the fact that much work is required for a convention to function efficiently and smoothly and that many hands make light work. By volunteering to help, we will realize the greater happiness of giving.—Acts 20:35.

So may our godly devotion impel us to come to this convention and motivate us to get the most out of it. May we leave strengthened and determined to lead lives of godly devotion ever more fully.

CODEX Vaticanus 1209 appears in the first catalog of the Vatican Library, prepared in the year 1475. How it got there nobody knows. It is one of the three great Greek codices to have survived to today, ranking with its contemporary, the fourth-century *Sinaiticus*, and the early fifth-century *Alexandrinus*.

The Mystery of the Vatican Codex

Although the importance of this Vatican manuscript was well-known to scholars early in the 16th century, few were ever permitted to examine it. The Vatican Library did prepare a collation of various readings of the manuscript in 1669, but this was lost and not rediscovered until 1819.

Emperor Napoleon of France captured Rome in 1809 and took the prized manuscript to Paris, where

it was examined by Leonhard Hug, a celebrated scholar, but with Napoleon's downfall the codex was returned to the Vatican in 1815. For the next 75 years it was again a mystery object, concealed by the Vatican.

Konstantin von Tischendorf, one of the world's greatest manuscript scholars, was permitted to examine the manuscript in 1843 for a mere six hours, after being kept waiting for a number of months. Two years later, English scholar Dr. S. P. Tregelles was allowed to *see* the codex but not to study it. He stated: "It is true that I often *saw* the MS., but they would not allow me to use it; and they would not let me open it without searching my pockets, and depriving me of pen, ink, and paper; and at the same time two *prelati* [priests] kept me in constant conversation in Latin, and if I looked at a passage too long, they would snatch the book out of my hand."

Why was the Roman Catholic Church so reluctant to show the world its priceless manuscript?

Why Hidden?

For the Roman Catholic Church, the Latin *Vulgata* version of the Holy Scriptures remains its "pre-eminent authority." According to the encyclical letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pius XII, published in the year 1943, this fourth-century Latin translation by Jerome is also viewed as being "entirely immune from any error in matters of faith and morals." What of the Hebrew and Greek texts from which the *Vulgata* was translated? These, the encyclical says, are of value to 'corroborate' the authority of the *Vulgata*. So any Greek manuscript, even the Vatican Codex, has never been considered to be as authoritative as the Latin *Vulgata*. This stand taken by the Roman Catholic Church has naturally caused problems.

For example, when the 16th-century scholar Erasmus translated his Greek "New Testament," he appealed to the authority of the Vatican Codex to omit the spurious words from 1 John chapter 5, verses 7 and 8. Erasmus was right, yet as late as 1897 Pope Leo XIII upheld the corrupted Latin text of the *Vulgata*. Only with the publication of modern Roman Catholic translations has this textual error been acknowledged.

When the Codex *Sinaiticus* was revealed to the world in the latter part of the 19th century, it became apparent to the Roman Catholic authorities that their Codex

Vaticanus was in danger of being eclipsed. By the turn of the century, good photographic copies were finally available.

The manuscript consists of 759 leaves. It lacks most of Genesis, some psalms, and the concluding parts of the Christian Greek Scriptures. It is written on very fine, thin parchment, thought to be from antelope skins, in a simple, elegant style. Its official designation is Codex B, and it can be seen today in the Vatican Library. It is hidden no longer, and its value is at last understood and appreciated throughout the world.

The important Codex Vaticanus 1209 was hidden by the Vatican for centuries



Facsimile from *Codices E Vaticanis Selecti*

Questions From Readers

■ Does Jehovah use trickery or deception with people, including his servants, as Jeremiah 4:10 and 20:7 seem to suggest?

No, the Creator is not deceptive, devious, or cunning in his dealings. He can and does, though, accomplish his righteous will despite what humans might expect.

We see one aspect of this from Jeremiah 4:10, where the prophet said: "Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! Truly you have absolutely deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'Peace itself will become yours; and the sword has reached clear to the soul.'

Jehovah used Jeremiah to foretell the coming calamity for the renegade nation that was supposedly serving Him. (Jeremiah 1:10, 15-19; 4:5-8; 5:20-30) Yet, there were others claiming to be prophets. (Jeremiah 4:9) What did the people hear from such so-called prophets? God classified it this way: "The prophets themselves actually prophesy in falsehood . . . And my own people have loved it that way." —Jeremiah 5:31; 20:6.

While Jehovah did not send those false prophets, neither did he prevent them from circulating messages, such as: "Peace is what you people will come to have" and, "No calamity will come upon you people." (Jeremiah 23: 16, 17, 25-28, 32) The people had to choose—accept the hard but true prophecies delivered by Jeremiah or let themselves be misled by false, self-made prophets, such as Hananiah and Shemaiah. (Jeremiah 28:1-4, 11; 29:30-32) Because God did not stop these misleading prophets, it might be said of him: "You have absolutely deceived this people and Jerusalem, saying, 'Peace itself will become yours.'"

In a different sense, Jeremiah was fooled. "You have fooled me, O Jehovah, so that I was fooled. You used your strength against me, so that you prevailed. I became an object of laughter all day long; everyone is holding me in derision." —Jeremiah 20:7.

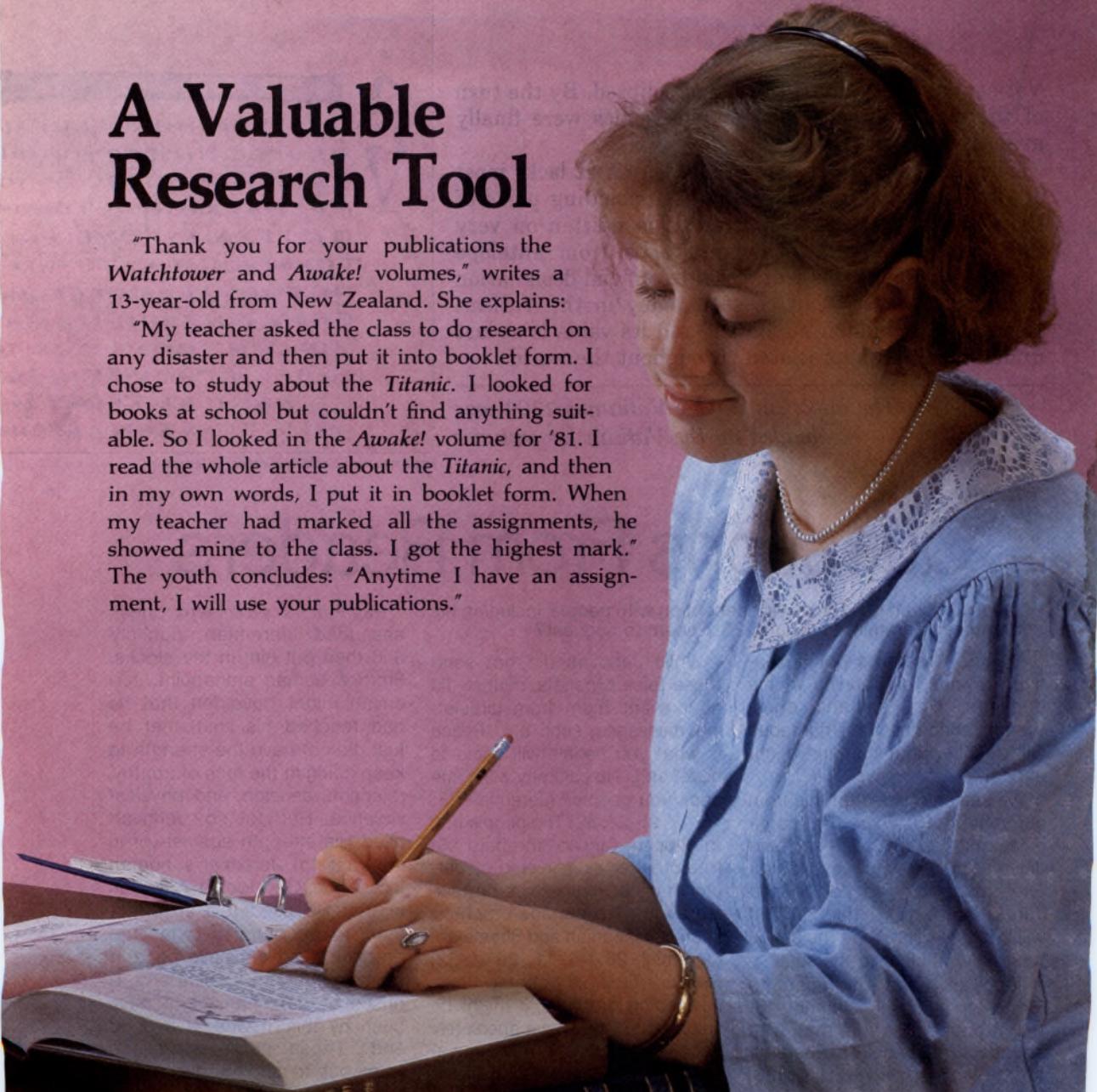
Pashhur, a prominent priest, assaulted Jeremiah publicly and then put him in the stocks. From a human standpoint, Jeremiah might have felt that he had reached his limit, that he just did not have the strength to keep going in the face of apathy, rejection, derision, and physical violence. But not so. Jehovah used His strength against (or in contrast to) Jeremiah's human inclination. God fooled Jeremiah in that He used this imperfect man to accomplish what the prophet could not have done in his own strength. Fooled or surprised as Jeremiah might have been by this, it was to a good end: Those persecuting him were put to shame, and God's message was delivered.—Jeremiah 20:11.

Understood in context, then, Jeremiah 4:10 and 20:7 harmonize with Elihu's conclusion: "God himself does not act wickedly, and the Almighty himself does not pervert judgment." —Job 34:12.

A Valuable Research Tool

"Thank you for your publications the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* volumes," writes a 13-year-old from New Zealand. She explains:

"My teacher asked the class to do research on any disaster and then put it into booklet form. I chose to study about the *Titanic*. I looked for books at school but couldn't find anything suitable. So I looked in the *Awake!* volume for '81. I read the whole article about the *Titanic*, and then in my own words, I put it in booklet form. When my teacher had marked all the assignments, he showed mine to the class. I got the highest mark." The youth concludes: "Anytime I have an assignment, I will use your publications."



the direction of God's Word. And the God-given knowledge which now comes from the Son of God, however, has a different aim. This knowledge, however, has a spe-

cial end:

—1991 MARCH 15, PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

rience, we have no intangible aims. We have definite aims," Dr. Koontz says. "We can't be satisfied. Our message depends very heavily on our aims. If we allowed our aim to go off course, if we allowed our message to go off course, we would be lost."

"It is important," Koontz re-

minds his students, "that we do not let our aims become so broad that we cannot be successful. We must be specific. We must be clear. We must be definite. We must be exact. We must be able to measure our success."

—1991 NOVEMBER