

# THE WATCHTOWER

MARCH 15, 2005

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



## Lessons Jesus Taught Are They Practical for You?

# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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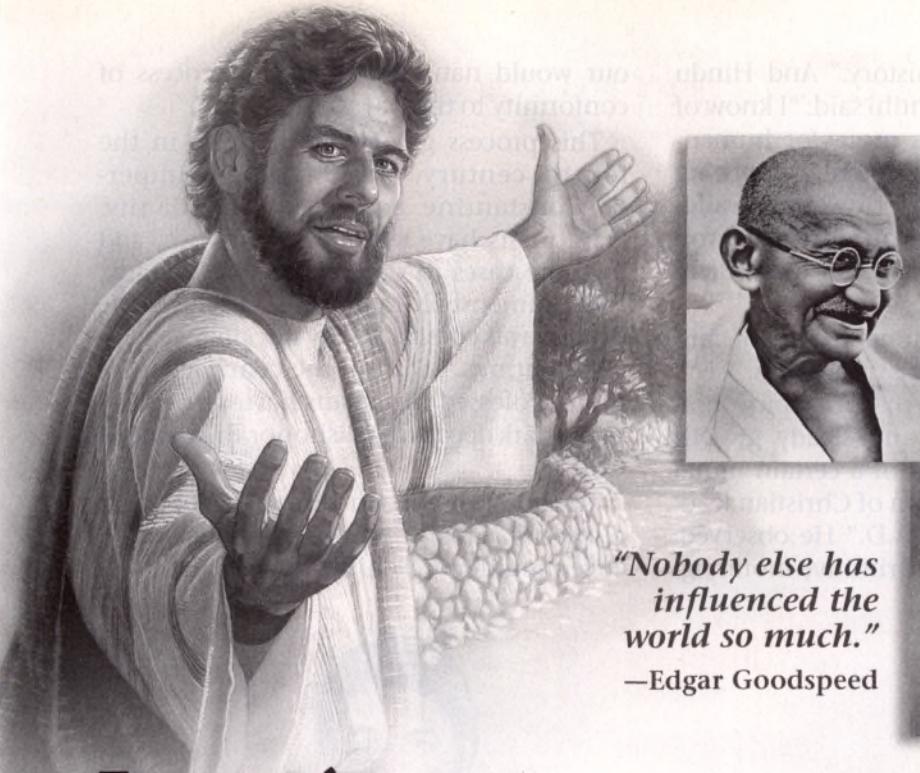
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***"I know of no one who has done more for humanity than Jesus."***

—Mohandas K. Gandhi



Culver Pictures

***"Nobody else has influenced the world so much."***

—Edgar Goodspeed

# Jesus' Worldwide Influence

**A**LL that the gospels report of what Jesus said, in private and in public, he could have uttered in two hours," wrote Bible translator Edgar Goodspeed. "Yet that little was so stirring, so moving and so penetrating that it is safe to say nobody else has influenced the world so much."

When Jesus Christ completed his earthly ministry in the year 33 C.E., his followers numbered at least some 120 men and women. (Acts 1:15) Today, more than two billion people claim to be Christians. Hundreds of millions more recognize Jesus as a prophet. His teachings have indeed had an extraordinary influence on mankind.

Jesus' worldwide influence has been acknowledged even by non-Christian leaders. For example, Jewish rabbi Hyman Enelow wrote: "Jesus has become the most popular, the most studied, the most influential figure in the religious history of mankind." Enelow also stated: "Who can compute all that Jesus has meant to humanity? The love he has inspired, the solace he has given, the good he has engendered, the hope and joy he has kindled—all that is unequalled in human history. Among the great and the good that the human race has produced, none has even approached Jesus in universality of appeal and sway. He has become the most

fascinating figure in history." And Hindu leader Mohandas K. Gandhi said: "I know of no one who has done more for humanity than Jesus. In fact, there is nothing wrong with Christianity." However, he added: "The trouble is with you Christians. You do not begin to live up to your own teachings."

Christendom has a long record of failure in living up to Jesus' teachings. Cecil John Cadoux, historian of Christianity, noted that "the gradual and steady growth throughout the Church of a certain moral laxity" had the "attention of Christian leaders as early as . . . 140 A.D." He observed: "This abatement of the primitive moral rig-

our would naturally assist the process of conformity to the ways of the world."

This process gained momentum in the fourth century, when Roman Emperor Constantine embraced Christianity. "Historians have not failed to notice, and in some cases to deplore," wrote Cadoux, "the immense compromise to which the Church was committed by her alliance with Constantius." During the centuries since then, professed Christians have carried out many dark deeds that dishonor the name of Christ.

The questions of concern, then, are: What did Jesus actually teach? And what influence should his teachings have on us?

# What Influence Does Jesus Christ Have on You?

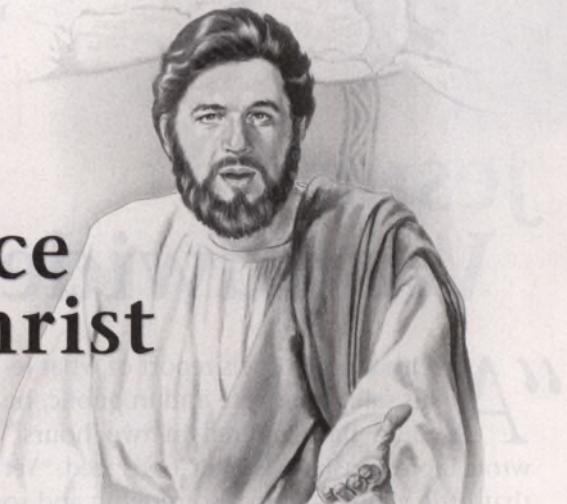
**I**N VIEW of what we considered in the preceding article, can there be any doubt that Jesus' teachings have had a worldwide impact? The question of importance, though, is, "What influence do Jesus' teachings have on me personally?"

Jesus' teachings touched on a vast array of subjects. The valuable lessons they convey can affect every aspect of your life. Let us focus on what Jesus taught about setting prior-

ities in life, cultivating friendship with God, establishing good relationships with others, solving problems, and refraining from acts of violence.

## Set Priorities in Life

The fast-paced world of today makes so many demands on our time and energies that spiritual considerations often get crowded out. Consider the case of a man in his 20's whom we will call Jerry. While Jerry enjoys



conversations on spiritual subjects and values what he learns from them, he laments: "I just do not have the time to engage in them consistently. I work six days a week. Sunday is my only day off. And after I take care of the things I must do, I am too tired." If you find yourself in a similar predicament, you can benefit from what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus said to the crowd who had gathered to hear him: "Stop being anxious about your souls as to what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your bodies as to what you will wear. Does not the soul mean more than food and the body than clothing? Observe intently the birds of heaven, because they do not sow seed or reap or gather into storehouses; still your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they are? . . . So never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' For all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:25-33) What do we learn from this?

Jesus was not implying that we should neglect taking care of our physical needs and those of our family members. "If anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household," states the Bible, "he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith." (1 Timothy 5:8) However, Jesus promised that if we put first things first and give priority to spiritual matters, God will make sure that other needs are met. The lesson here is about setting priorities. Following this advice leads to happiness, for "happy are those conscious of their spiritual need." —Matthew 5:3.



*"Your heavenly Father feeds them"*

### Cultivate Friendship With God

Those conscious of their spiritual need see the necessity of cultivating a good relationship with God. How do we establish a good relationship with anyone? Do we not try to get to know that person better? We must take time to learn about his views, attitudes, abilities, accomplishments, likes, and dislikes. The same is true when it comes to building a friendship with God. Accurate knowledge of him is required. When praying to God about his disciples, 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) Yes, cultivating intimacy with God requires that we come to know him. The only source of that knowledge is God's inspired Word, the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16) We must set aside time to study the Scriptures.

However, knowledge in itself is not enough. In the same prayer, Jesus said: "They [his disciples] have observed your word." (John 17:6) We must not only take in knowledge of God but also act in harmony with that knowledge. How else could we become God's friend? Can we really expect our friendship with anyone to grow if we willfully act in a manner that goes contrary to that one's ideas and principles? God's views and principles, then, ought to guide all our steps in life. Consider how two of his principles apply to our relationships with other humans.

## **Establish Good Relationships With Others**

On one occasion, Jesus related a short story in order to teach a valuable lesson in human relationships. He spoke of a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. One of them, though, had a huge debt and no means to repay it. The master ordered that the man, his wife, and his children be sold and payment made. The debtor fell down and begged: "Be patient with me and I will pay back everything to you." Moved with pity, the master canceled his debt. But that slave went off, found a fellow slave who owed him a modest sum, and demanded repayment. Though this fellow slave begged for mercy, the first slave had him thrown into prison until he paid off all that he owed. When the king heard of this, he became angry. "Ought you not . . . to have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I also had mercy on you?" he demanded. And he had the unforgiving slave imprisoned until he repaid all that he owed. Drawing a lesson from the story, Jesus said: "In like manner my heavenly Father will also deal with you if you do not forgive each one his brother from your hearts."—Matthew 18:23-35.

As imperfect humans, we have many faults. We can never pay back to God the huge debt we have accumulated because of transgressing against him. All we can do is seek his forgiveness. And Jehovah God is ready to forgive all our failings, provided we forgive our brothers for sins they have committed against us. What a forceful lesson that is! Jesus taught his followers to pray: "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."—Matthew 6:12.

## **Get to the Root of the Problem**

When it came to understanding human nature, Jesus was an expert. His counsel on

solving problems went to their very root. Consider the following two examples.

"You heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You must not murder; but whoever commits a murder will be accountable to the court of justice,'" said Jesus. "However, I say to you that everyone who continues wrathful with his brother will be accountable to the court of justice." (Matthew 5:21, 22) Jesus here showed that the root of the problem of murder lies at a level deeper than the violent act itself. It is in the attitude that grows in the murderer's heart. If people did not allow a feeling of resentment or anger to build up, premeditated violence would disappear. How much bloodshed would be avoided if this teaching was applied!

Notice how Jesus gets to the bottom of another problem that causes a great deal of heartache. He told the crowd: "You heard that it was said, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If, now, that right eye of yours is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you." (Matthew 5:27-29) Jesus taught that the problem goes deeper than the immoral behavior itself. It is in what precedes it—immoral desires. If a person refuses to dwell on improper longings and 'tears them out' of his mind, then he will overcome the potential problem of immoral behavior.

## **"Return Your Sword to Its Place"**

On the night of Jesus' betrayal and arrest, one of his disciples drew his sword to defend him. Jesus commanded him: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52) The following morning, Jesus told Pontius Pilate: "My kingdom is no part of

this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from this source." (John 18:36) Is this teaching impractical?

What was the attitude of the early Christians toward what Jesus taught about not resorting to violence? The book *The Early Christian Attitude to War* says: "Inasmuch as they [Jesus' teachings] ruled out as illicit all use of violence and injury against others, clearly implied [was] the illegitimacy of participation in war . . . The early Christians took Jesus at his word, and understood his inculcations of gentleness and non-resistance in their literal sense. They closely identified their religion with peace; they strongly condemned war for the bloodshed which it involved." How

different the course of history would have been had all those who claimed to be Christians actually followed this teaching!

### You Can Benefit From All of Jesus' Teachings

The teachings of Jesus that we have considered are beautiful, simple, and powerful. Mankind can benefit from being acquainted with his teachings and putting them into practice.\*

Jehovah's Witnesses in your area will be happy to help you to see how you can benefit from the wisest teachings ever uttered by any human. You have our warm invitation to contact them or to write to the address on page 2 of this magazine.

\* For a systematic consideration of all of Jesus' teachings, see *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

**Jesus' teachings  
can have a fine  
influence on your life**



## Youths Who Praise Jehovah Enrich Their Lives

**"I** WANT the best that life has to offer!" That is how one teenage boy described his expectations. But how can a young person get the very best out of life? The Bible provides a straightforward answer: "Keep your Creator in mind while you are young!"—Ecclesiastes 12:1, *Contemporary English Version*.

Praising and serving Jehovah is not just for grown-ups. Samuel, a son of Elkanah and Hannah, was very young when he ministered to Jehovah at the tabernacle. (1 Samuel 1:19, 20, 24; 2:11) A Hebrew girl of tender age showed implicit faith in Jehovah when she suggested that the Syrian army chief Naaman go to the prophet Elisha in order to be healed of leprosy. (2 Kings 5:2, 3) At Psalm 148:7, 12, both boys and girls are commanded to praise Jehovah.\* When he was only 12 years of age, Jesus took a keen interest in the service of his Father. (Luke 2:41-49) Because of their training from the Scriptures, some boys who saw Jesus at the temple cried out: "Save, we pray, the Son of David!"—Matthew 21:15, 16.

### Praising Jehovah Today

Today, many youths among Jehovah's Witnesses take pride in their beliefs and courageously speak to others about them in schools and elsewhere. Consider two examples.

In Britain, 18-year-old Stephanie's class was discussing abortion and other ethical issues. The teacher asserted that abortions are now generally accepted and that no young girl would have reason to object to this practice. When everyone in the class agreed with this

viewpoint, Stephanie felt compelled to defend her Bible-based position. The opportunity to do so came when the teacher asked Stephanie for her opinion. Although she was nervous at first, Stephanie used the occasion to present the Scriptural view. She paraphrased Exodus 21:22-24 and explained that if it was wrong to injure an unborn child, then an abortion would obviously be contrary to God's will.

The teacher, a member of the clergy, had never read these verses. Stephanie's bold witness led to many fine discussions with her classmates on various subjects. One girl now regularly accepts the latest copies of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, and two others attended a district convention of Jehovah's Witnesses to see Stephanie get baptized in symbol of her dedication to God.

Six-year-old Vareta, living in Suriname, South America, seized the opportunity to praise God when her teacher needed comfort from the Scriptures. Upon returning after a three-day absence, the teacher asked her students if they knew why she was away. They answered, "You were sick, right?" "No,"

### JEHOVAH SUPPORTS YOUNG ONES

*"You are my hope, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah, my confidence from my youth."*  
—Psalm 71:5.

*"[God] is satisfying your lifetime with what is good; your youth keeps renewing itself just like that of an eagle."*  
—Psalm 103:5.

\* See the 2005 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses, March/April.

## *"Praise Jehovah from the earth, . . . you young men and also you virgins."*

—PSALM 148:7, 12

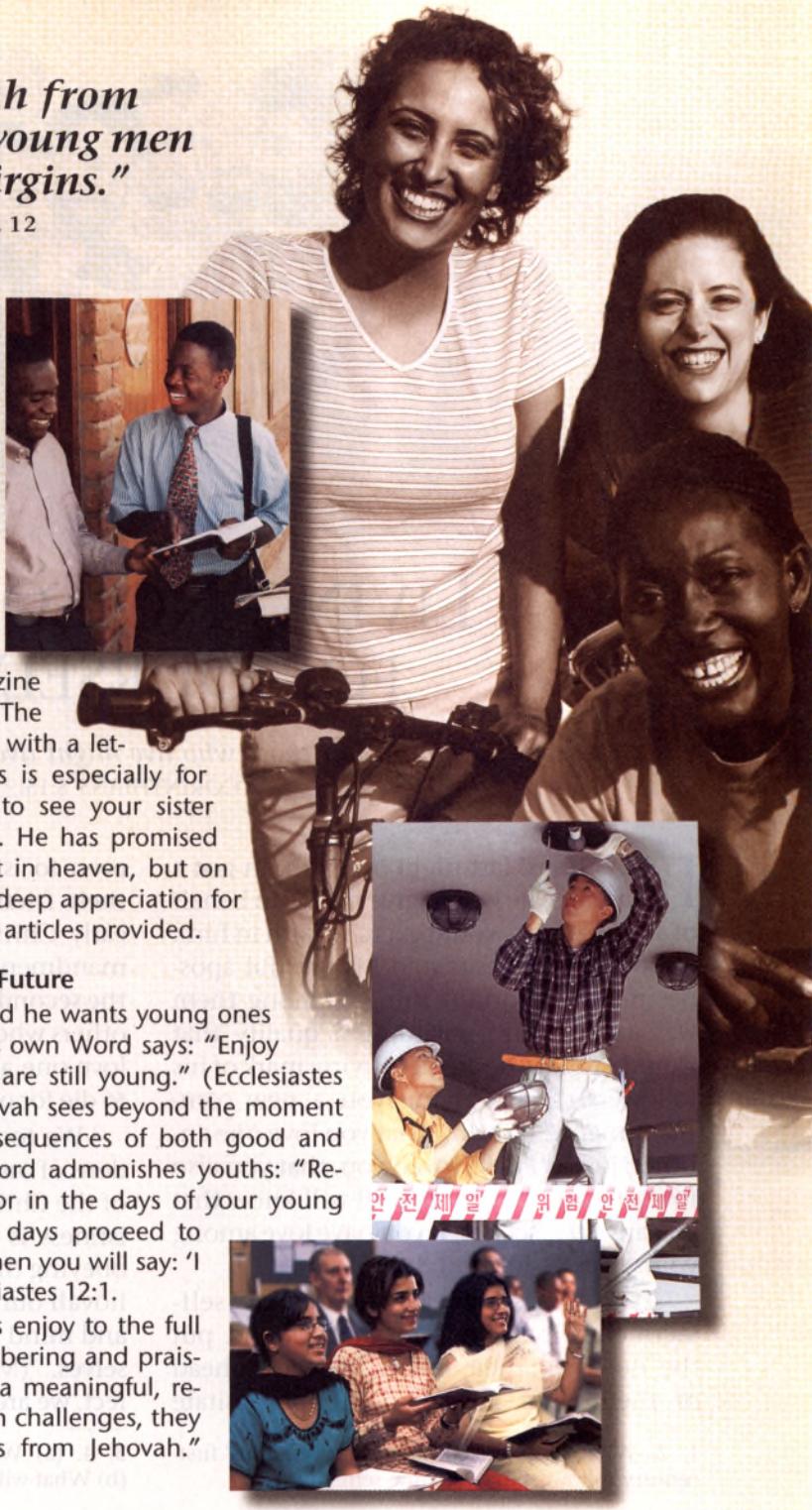
replied the teacher. "My sister died, and I feel very sad. So you have to be quiet."

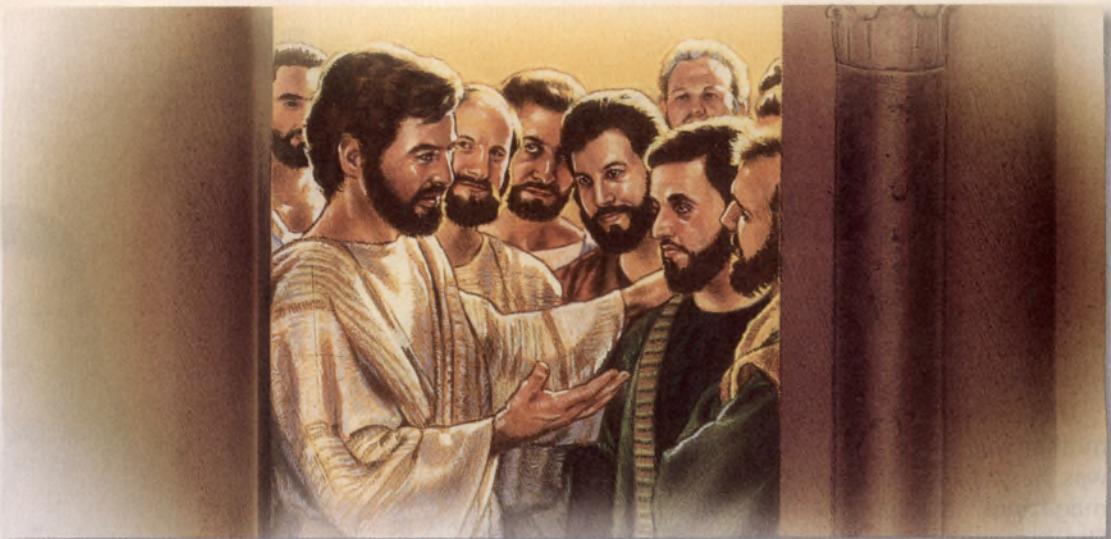
That afternoon while her mother was taking a nap, Vareta was busy leafing through older magazines, reading the titles. She came upon *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2001, with the title "Is There Life After Death?" Filled with enthusiasm, she awakened her mother and said, "Mommy, Mommy, look! I found a magazine about death for my teacher!" The magazine was sent to the teacher with a letter from Vareta. She wrote: "This is especially for you. In Paradise you are going to see your sister again because Jehovah never lies. He has promised that he will bring a paradise, not in heaven, but on earth." The teacher expressed her deep appreciation for the Bible-based comfort that these articles provided.

### **Building for the Future**

Jehovah is "the happy God," and he wants young ones to be happy. (1 Timothy 1:11) His own Word says: "Enjoy your youth. Be happy while you are still young." (Ecclesiastes 11:9, Today's English Version) Jehovah sees beyond the moment and perceives the long-term consequences of both good and bad behavior. That is why his Word admonishes youths: "Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood, before the calamitous days proceed to come, or the years have arrived when you will say: 'I have no delight in them.'"—Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Yes, Jehovah desires that youths enjoy to the full the precious gift of life. By remembering and praising God, young people can lead a meaningful, rewarding life. Even when faced with challenges, they can confidently say: "My help is from Jehovah."—Psalm 121:2.





## LIVING NO LONGER FOR OURSELVES

"[Christ] died for all that those who live might live no longer for themselves."

—2 CORINTHIANS 5:15.

IT WAS Jesus' last night on earth. In just a few hours, he would give his life in behalf of all those who would exercise faith in him. On that night, Jesus told his faithful apostles many important things. Among them was a command regarding a quality that would prove to be an identifying mark of his followers. "I am giving you a new commandment," he said, "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.

<sup>2</sup> True Christians are to display self-sacrificing love for one another and put the needs of their fellow believers ahead of their own. They should not hesitate

even to 'surrender their soul in behalf of their friends.' (John 15:13) How did the early Christians respond to the new commandment? In his famous work *Apology*, the second-century writer Tertullian quoted others who said of Christians: 'See how they love one another; how they are ready even to die for one another.'

<sup>3</sup> We too must "go on carrying the burdens of one another, and thus fulfill the law of the Christ." (Galatians 6:2) However, selfishness is one of the greatest obstacles to obeying the law of the Christ and 'loving Jehovah our God with our whole heart, soul, and mind and loving our neighbors as ourselves.' (Matthew 22:37-39) Being imperfect, we are inclined to be self-centered. Add

1, 2. What Scriptural command moved Jesus' first-century followers to overcome selfishness?

3, 4. (a) Why should we counteract selfishness? (b) What will we consider in this article?

to this the stress of everyday life, the competitive atmosphere at school or in the workplace, and the struggle to make ends meet, and this natural tendency is intensified. This inclination toward selfishness is not on the wane. The apostle Paul warned: "In the last days . . . men will become utterly self-centred."

—2 Timothy 3:1, 2, Phillips.

<sup>4</sup> Toward the last part of his earthly ministry, Jesus gave his disciples a three-step process that could help them to overcome selfishness. What was it, and how can we benefit from his instructions?

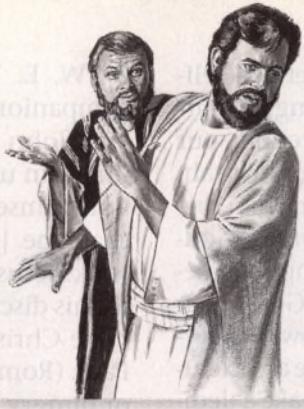
### A Sure Antidote!

<sup>5</sup> Jesus was preaching near Caesarea Philippi in northern Galilee. This peaceful, picturesque area may have seemed more suitable for leisure than for self-denial. While there, however, Jesus began to show his disciples that "he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the older men and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised up." (Matthew 16: 21) How shocking this disclosure must have been to Jesus' disciples, for up to then they had expected their Leader to establish his Kingdom on the earth!—Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6.

<sup>6</sup> Peter immediately "took [Jesus] aside and commenced rebuking him, saying: 'Be kind to yourself, Lord; you will not have this destiny at all.'" How did Jesus respond? "Turning his back, he said to Peter: 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you think, not

5. While preaching in northern Galilee, what did Jesus disclose to his disciples, and why was that shocking to them?

6. Why did Jesus strongly rebuke Peter?



"Be kind to yourself, Lord"

God's thoughts, but those of men.' " What a contrast there was between the two outlooks! Jesus willingly accepted the self-sacrificing course God had assigned him—one that would lead to his death on a torture stake within a few months. Peter recommended a comfortable course. "Be kind to yourself," he said. Peter undoubtedly had good intentions. Still, Jesus rebuked him because Peter had on that occasion allowed himself to be influenced by Satan. Peter had "not God's mind, but that of men."

—Matthew 16:22, 23; footnote.

<sup>7</sup> Echoes of Peter's words to Jesus can be heard today. The world commonly urges a person to 'be good to yourself' or 'follow the course of least resistance.' On the other hand, Jesus recommended a completely different mental attitude. He told his disciples: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and continually follow me." (Matthew 16: 24) "These words are not an invitation to discipleship for outsiders," states *The New Interpreter's Bible*, "but reflection on the meaning of discipleship for those who have already responded to the call of Christ." The three steps that Jesus outlined, as recorded in that scripture, are to be taken by believers. Let us consider each step separately.

<sup>8</sup> First, we must *disown ourselves*. The Greek word for "to disown oneself" indicates a willingness to say no to selfish desires or personal convenience. Disowning ourselves is not just a matter of our occasionally forgoing certain pleasures; neither

7. As recorded at Matthew 16:24, what course did Jesus outline for his followers to take?

8. Explain what it means to disown yourself.

does it mean that we become ascetic or self-destructive. We no longer 'belong to ourselves' in that we willingly surrender our whole life and everything in it to Jehovah. (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20) Rather than being self-oriented, our life becomes God-oriented. Disowning ourselves implies a determination to do the will of God, even though this may go against our own imperfect inclinations. We show that we are exclusively devoted to God when we make a dedication to him and get baptized. We then strive to live up to our dedication for the rest of our life.

<sup>9</sup> The second step is that we must *pick up our torture stake*. In the first century, a torture stake represented suffering, shame, and death. Normally, only criminals were executed on a torture stake or had their dead bodies hung on a stake. By this expression, Jesus showed that a Christian must be prepared to accept persecution, contempt, or even death, since he is no part of the world. (John 15:18-20) Our Christian standards set us apart, so the world may 'speak abusively of us.' (1 Peter 4:4) This could happen at school, at our place of work, or even within the family. (Luke 9:23) Nevertheless, we are willing to endure the world's contempt because we no longer live for ourselves. Jesus said: "Happy are you when people reproach you and persecute you and lyingly say every sort of wicked thing against you for my sake. Rejoice and leap for joy, since your reward is great in the heavens." (Matthew 5:11, 12) Indeed, having God's favor is what matters.

<sup>10</sup> Third, Jesus Christ said that we must *continually follow him*. According to *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*,

9. (a) When Jesus was on earth, what did a torture stake represent? (b) In what way do we pick up our torture stake?
10. What is involved in following Jesus continually?

by W. E. Vine, to follow means to be a companion—"one going in the same way." First John 2:6 states: "He that says he remains in union with [God] is under obligation himself also to go on walking just as that one [Christ] walked." How did Jesus walk? Jesus' love for his heavenly Father and for his disciples left no room for selfishness. "The Christ did not please himself," wrote Paul. (Romans 15:3) Even when he felt tired or hungry, Jesus put the needs of others before his own. (Mark 6:31-34) Jesus also exerted himself vigorously in the Kingdom preaching and teaching work. Should we not imitate him as we zealously fulfill our commission to 'make disciples of people of all the nations, teaching them to observe all the things Jesus has commanded'? (Matthew 28:19, 20) In all of this, Christ left a model for us, and we must "follow his steps closely."—1 Peter 2:21.

<sup>11</sup> It is vital that we disown ourselves, pick up our torture stake, and continually follow our Exemplar. Our doing so counteracts selfishness—a sure obstacle to displaying self-sacrificing love. Moreover, Jesus said: "Whoever wants to save his soul will lose it; but whoever loses his soul for my sake will find it. For what benefit will it be to a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul? or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"—Matthew 16:25, 26.

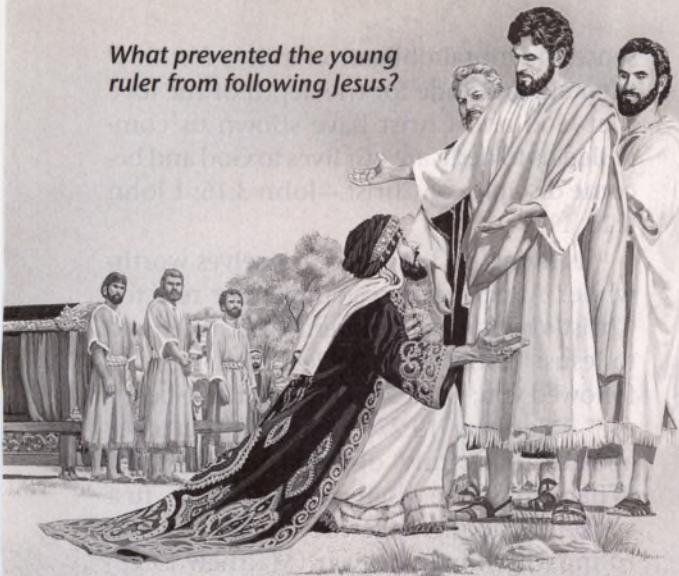
### We Cannot Serve Two Masters

<sup>12</sup> Some months after Jesus emphasized the need for his disciples to disown themselves, a rich young ruler came up to him and said: "Teacher, what good must I do in

11. Why is it important that we disown ourselves, pick up our torture stake, and continually follow Jesus Christ?

12, 13. (a) What was a matter of concern to the young ruler who asked for Jesus' advice? (b) What counsel did Jesus give the young man, and why?

*What prevented the young ruler from following Jesus?*



order to get everlasting life?" Jesus told him to "observe the commandments continually" and then cited some of them. The young man said: "I have kept all these." The man was apparently sincere and had done his best to obey the commandments of the Law. So he asked: "What yet am I lacking?" In response, Jesus extended to the young man a unique invitation, saying: "If you want to be perfect [“complete,” *New American Standard Bible*], go sell your belongings and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, and come be my follower." —Matthew 19:16-21.

<sup>13</sup> Jesus saw that for the young man to serve Jehovah whole-souled, he needed to get rid of the big distraction in his life—his material wealth. A true disciple of Christ cannot serve two masters. He "cannot slave for God and for Riches." (Matthew 6:24) He needs a 'simple eye' that is focused on spiritual matters. (Matthew 6:22) Getting rid of one's belongings and giving them to the poor is an act of self-sacrifice. In exchange for this material sacrifice, Jesus offered the

young ruler the priceless privilege of amassing treasure in heaven—a treasure that would mean everlasting life for him and would lead to the prospect of eventually ruling with Christ in heaven. The young man was not ready to disown himself. "He went away grieved, for he was holding many possessions." (Matthew 19:22) Other followers of Jesus, however, responded differently.

<sup>14</sup> Some two years earlier, Jesus had extended a similar invitation to four fishermen named Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Two of them were fishing at the time, and the other two were busy mending their nets. Jesus said to them: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." All four ultimately abandoned their fishing business and followed Jesus for the rest of their life.—Matthew 4:18-22.

<sup>15</sup> Many Christians today have imitated the example of the four fishermen rather than that of the rich young ruler. They have sacrificed wealth and opportunity in this world in order to serve Jehovah. "When I was 22, I had to make a big decision," says Deborah. She explains: "I had studied the Bible for about six months, and I wanted to dedicate my life to Jehovah, but my family were very much opposed. They were multi-millionaires, and they felt that my becoming a Witness would bring them social disgrace. They gave me 24 hours to decide which I preferred—a life of luxury or the truth. If I didn't cut off all contact with the Witnesses, my family would disinherit me.

- 
14. How did four fishermen respond to Jesus' invitation to follow him?
  15. How did one modern-day Witness of Jehovah make sacrifices to follow Jesus?

Jehovah helped me make the right decision and gave me the strength to carry it out. I have spent the last 42 years in full-time service, and I have no regrets whatsoever. By turning my back on a selfish, pleasure-oriented life-style, I escaped the emptiness and unhappiness I see among my family members. Along with my husband, I have helped over a hundred people to learn the truth. These spiritual children are much more precious to me than any material riches." Millions of other Witnesses of Jehovah share her sentiments. What about you?

<sup>16</sup> The desire to live no longer for themselves has moved thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses to serve as pioneers, or full-time Kingdom proclaimers. Others, whose circumstances do not allow them to share in the full-time ministry, cultivate the pioneer spirit and support the Kingdom-preaching work to the best of their ability. Parents show a similar spirit when they devote much of their time and they sacrifice personal interests in order to give spiritual training to their children. In one way or another, all of us can show that Kingdom interests come first in our lives.—Matthew 6:33.

### Whose Love Compels Us?

<sup>17</sup> Displaying self-sacrificing love is not the easiest course to follow. But think of what it is that compels us. Paul wrote: "The love the Christ has compels us, because this is what we have judged, that one man died for all . . . And he died for all that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised up." (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15) It is the love of the Christ that compels us to live no longer for ourselves. What a powerful motivation that is! Since Christ died for us, do we not

16. How can we show that we no longer live for ourselves?

17. What motivates us to make sacrifices?

sense the moral obligation to live for him? After all, gratitude for the depth of the love that God and Christ have shown us compelled us to dedicate our lives to God and become disciples of Christ.—John 3:16; 1 John 4:10, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Is living no longer for ourselves worthwhile? After the rich young ruler rejected Christ's invitation and went away, Peter said to Jesus: "Look! We have left all things and followed you; what actually will there be for us?" (Matthew 19:27) Peter and the other apostles had truly disowned themselves. What would be their reward? Jesus first spoke of the privilege they would have of ruling with him in heaven. (Matthew 19:28) On the same occasion, Jesus referred to blessings that every one of his followers could enjoy. He said: "No one has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for my sake and for the sake of the good news who will not get a hundredfold now in this period of time . . . and in the coming system of things everlasting life." (Mark 10:29, 30) We receive much more than what we have sacrificed. Are not our spiritual fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and children much more valuable than anything we have renounced for the sake of

18. Why is a self-sacrificing course worthwhile?

### Do You Recall?

- Why should we counteract our selfish tendencies?
- What does it mean to disown ourselves, pick up our torture stake, and follow Jesus continually?
- What motivates us to live no longer for ourselves?
- Why is living a life of self-sacrifice worthwhile?



*Love compels  
Jehovah's Witnesses  
to serve as zealous  
Kingdom proclaimers*

the Kingdom? Who had the most rewarding life—Peter or the rich young ruler?

<sup>19</sup> By his words and deeds, Jesus showed that happiness comes from giving and from serving, not from selfishness. (Matthew 20:28; Acts 20:35) When we no longer live for

19. (a) On what does true happiness depend?  
(b) What will we consider in the following article?

ourselves but follow Christ continually, we find great satisfaction in life now and have the prospect of eternal life in the future. Of course, when we disown ourselves, Jehovah becomes our Owner. We thus become slaves of God. Why is this slavery rewarding? How does it affect the decisions we make in life? The next article will discuss these questions.

## “YOU WERE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE”

*“You were bought with a price. By all means, glorify God.”—1 CORINTHIANS 6:20.*

“SLAVERY was prevalent and widely accepted in the ancient world,” states the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. It adds: “The economy of Egypt, Greece, and Rome was based on slave labor. In the first Christian century, one out of three persons in Italy and one out of five elsewhere was a slave.”

<sup>2</sup> Although slavery also existed in ancient Israel, the Mosaic Law ensured that Hebrew slaves received protection. For instance, the

- 1, 2. (a) According to the Mosaic Law, how were Israelite slaves to be treated? (b) What choice did the slave who loved his master have?

Law required that an Israelite could serve as a slave for no more than six years. In the seventh year, he was to “go out as one set free without charge.” But the regulations concerning the treatment of slaves were so fair and humane that the Law of Moses made the following provision: “If the slave should insistently say, ‘I really love my master, my wife and my sons; I do not want to go out as one set free,’ then his master must bring him near to the true God and must bring him up against the door or the doorpost; and his master must pierce his ear through with an awl, and he must be his slave to time



*The provision of voluntary slavery in Israel was a foregleam of Christian servitude*

indefinite."—Exodus 21:2-6; Leviticus 25:42, 43; Deuteronomy 15:12-18.

<sup>3</sup> The provision of voluntary servitude provided a foregleam of the type of slavery that true Christians are under. For example, the Bible writers Paul, James, Peter, and Jude identified themselves as slaves of God and of Christ. (Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1) Paul reminded the Thessalonian Christians that they had "turned to God from [their] idols to slave for a living and true God." (1 Thessalonians 1:9) What moved those Christians to become willing slaves of God? Well, what was the motivating force in the case of the Israelite slave who renounced his personal freedom? Was it not love for his master? Christian slavery is based on love for God. When we come to know and love the true and living God, we are moved to serve him "with all [our] heart and all [our] soul." (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13) What, though, does becoming slaves of God and of Christ involve? How does this affect our daily lives?

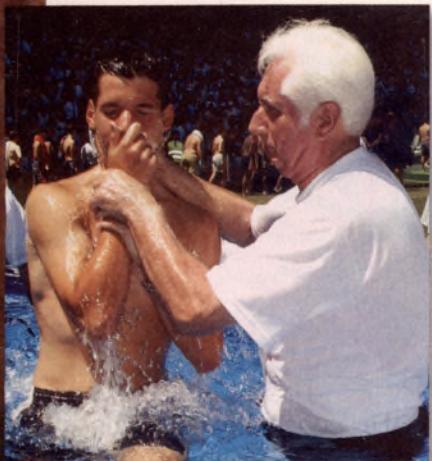
3. (a) What type of slavery did first-century Christians accept? (b) What moves us to serve God?

#### **"Do All Things for God's Glory"**

<sup>4</sup> A slave has been defined as "a person who is the legal property of another or others and is bound to absolute obedience." We become Jehovah's legal property when we dedicate our lives to him and get baptized. "You do not belong to yourselves, for you were bought with a price," explains the apostle Paul. (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20) That price, of course, is Jesus Christ's ransom sacrifice, since on that basis God accepts us as his servants, whether we are anointed Christians or we are their companions with an earthly hope. (Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Revelation 5:9) Thus, from the time of our baptism, "we belong to Jehovah." (Romans 14:8) Since we have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, we also become his slaves and are under obligation to keep his commandments.—1 Peter 1:18, 19.

<sup>5</sup> Slaves must obey their master. Our servitude is voluntary and stems from our love

4. How do we become slaves of God and of Christ?
5. As slaves of Jehovah, what primary obligation do we have, and how can we fulfill it?



**We become God's slaves  
when we get baptized**



**Christians put God's will first**

for the Master. "This is what the love of God means," states 1 John 5:3, "that we observe his commandments; and yet his commandments are not burdensome." For us, then, our obedience is proof of our love as well as our submission. It is evident in everything we do. "Whether you are eating or drinking or doing anything else," said Paul, "do all things for God's glory." (1 Corinthians 10:31) In everyday life, even in small ways, we want to show that we "slave for Jehovah." —Romans 12:11.

6 When making decisions, for example, we want to be careful to take into account the will of our heavenly Master, Jehovah. (Malachi 1:6) Difficult decisions may test our obedience to God. Will we then heed his counsel rather than follow the inclinations of our "treacherous" and "desperate" heart? (Jeremiah 17:9) Melisa, a single Christian, had been baptized for only a short time when a young man began to take an interest in her. He seemed to be a nice person, and

6. How does being slaves of God affect the decisions we make in life? Illustrate this with an example.

he was already studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Nevertheless, an elder spoke to Melisa about the wisdom of following Jehovah's command to marry "only in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14) "It was not easy for me to follow this advice," Melisa admits. "But I decided that since I had made a dedication to God to do his will, I would obey his clear instructions." Reflecting on what transpired, she says: "I am so glad that I followed the advice. The man soon stopped studying. If I had pursued that relationship, I would now be married to an unbeliever."

7 As slaves of God, we must not become slaves of men. (1 Corinthians 7:23) True, none of us like to be unpopular, but we must bear in mind that Christians have standards that are different from those in the world. Paul asked: "Am I seeking to please men?" His conclusion was: "If I were yet pleasing men, I would not be Christ's slave."

7, 8. (a) Why should we not be overly concerned about pleasing men? (b) Illustrate how fear of man can be overcome.

*Moses was reluctant to accept his assignment*

(Galatians 1:10) We simply cannot give in to peer pressure and become men pleasers. What, then, can we do when confronted with pressures to conform?

<sup>8</sup> Consider the example of Elena, a young Christian in Spain. She had several classmates who were blood donors. They knew that Elena, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, would not donate blood or accept blood transfusions. When an opportunity arose to explain her position to the whole class, Elena volunteered to give a presentation. "Frankly, I felt very nervous about doing this," Elena explains. "But I prepared well, and the results were surprising. I won the respect of many of my fellow students, and the teacher told me that he admired the work I was doing. Above all, I felt satisfied that I had defended the name of Jehovah and had been able to explain clearly the reasons for my Scriptural stand." (Genesis 9:3, 4; Acts 15:28, 29) Yes, as slaves of God and of Christ, we stand out as different. However, we may well win people's respect if we are prepared to defend our beliefs respectfully.—1 Peter 3:15.

<sup>9</sup> Remembering that we are slaves of God can also help to keep us humble. On one occasion, the apostle John felt so impressed by a magnificent vision of heavenly Jerusalem that he fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who had served as God's spokesman. "Be careful!" the angel told him. "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) What a fine example the angel set for all of God's slaves! Certain Christians may be in

9. What do we learn from an angel who appeared to the apostle John?



positions of special responsibility in the congregation. Nevertheless, Jesus said: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your minister, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave." (Matthew 20:26, 27) As Jesus' followers, all of us are slaves.

**"What We Have Done Is  
What We Ought to Have Done"**

<sup>10</sup> Doing God's will is not always easy for imperfect humans. The prophet Moses was reluctant to obey when Jehovah asked him to go and bring the sons of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. (Exodus 3:10, 11; 4:1, 10) Upon receiving an assignment to proclaim a judgment message to the people of Nineveh, Jonah "proceeded to get up and run away to Tarshish from before Jehovah." (Jonah 1:2, 3) Baruch, the scribal secretary of the prophet Jeremiah, complained of growing weary. (Jeremiah 45:2, 3) How should we respond when our personal desire or preference conflicts with the doing of God's will? An illustration that Jesus gave provides the answer.

<sup>11</sup> Jesus spoke of a slave who had been caring for his master's flock all day in the field.

10. Give Scriptural examples to show that faithful servants of God did not always find it easy to do his will.

11, 12. (a) Briefly relate Jesus' illustration recorded at Luke 17:7-10. (b) What lesson do we derive from Jesus' illustration?

When the slave arrived home, weary from some 12 hours of hard work, his master did not invite him to sit down and enjoy a good supper. Instead, the master said: "Get something ready for me to have my evening meal, and put on an apron and minister to me until I am through eating and drinking, and afterward you can eat and drink." The slave could attend to his own needs only after he had served his master. Jesus concluded the illustration by saying: "So you, also, when you have done all the things assigned to you, say, 'We are good-for-nothing slaves. What we have done is what we ought to have done.'"—Luke 17:7-10.

<sup>12</sup> Jesus did not give this illustration to show that Jehovah does not appreciate what we do in his service. The Bible clearly states: "God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name." (Hebrews 6:10) Rather, the point of Jesus' parable is that a slave cannot please himself or concentrate on his own comforts. When we dedicated ourselves to God and chose to be his slaves, we agreed to put his will ahead of our own. We must subject our own will to the will of God.

<sup>13</sup> Regularly studying God's Word and the publications of "the faithful and discreet slave" may require great effort on our part. (Matthew 24:45) This may be the case especially if reading has always been difficult for us or if a publication is discussing "the deep things of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10) Should we not, though, make time for personal study? We may have to discipline ourselves to sit down and spend time with the study material. Yet, without doing so, how would we acquire a taste for "solid food [that] belongs to mature people"?—Hebrews 5:14.

13, 14. (a) In what circumstances may we have to override our own inclinations? (b) Why should we let God's will prevail?

<sup>14</sup> What about the times when we come home tired after a long day's work? We might have to push ourselves to attend Christian meetings. Or preaching to strangers may go against our natural inclination. Paul himself recognized that there could be times when we declare the good news 'against our will.' (1 Corinthians 9:17) However, we do these things because Jehovah—our heavenly Master, whom we love—tells us that we should. And do we not invariably feel satisfied and refreshed after we have put forth the effort to study, to attend meetings, and to preach?—Psalm 1:1, 2; 122:1; 145:10-13.

#### **Do Not Look at "the Things Behind"**

<sup>15</sup> Jesus Christ demonstrated his submission to his heavenly Father in a superlative way. "I have come down from heaven to do, not my will, but the will of him that sent me," Jesus told his disciples. (John 6:38) When in anguish in the garden of Gethsemane, he prayed: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me. Yet, not as I will, but as you will."—Matthew 26:39.

<sup>16</sup> Jesus Christ wants us to keep faithful to our decision to be slaves of God. He said: "No man that has put his hand to a plow and looks at the things behind is well fitted for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62) Dwelling on what we have left behind is definitely not the right thing to do when slaving for God. Instead, we should treasure what we have gained by choosing to be God's slaves. To the Philippians, Paul wrote: "I do indeed also consider all things to be loss on account of the excelling value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. On account of him

15. How did Jesus set an example of submission to God?

16, 17. (a) How should we view the things we have left behind? (b) Show how Paul was realistic in assessing his worldly prospects as "a lot of refuse."

I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ.”—Philippians 3:8.

<sup>17</sup> Think of all that Paul considered a lot of refuse and abandoned in favor of the spiritual rewards as a slave of God. He left behind not only the comforts of the world but also the possibility of becoming a future leader of Judaism. If Paul had continued to practice Judaism, he may well have risen to a position similar to that of Simeon, the son of Paul’s educator, Gamaliel. (Acts 22:3; Galatians 1:14) Simeon became a leader of the Pharisees and played a prominent role—despite some reservations—in the Jewish rebellion against Rome in 66-70 C.E. He died in that conflagration, at the hands of either Jewish extremists or the Roman army.

<sup>18</sup> Many of Jehovah’s Witnesses have followed Paul’s example. “Within a few years after leaving school, I got a job as an executive secretary for a prominent London solicitor,” says Jean. “I enjoyed my work and earned good money, but in my heart I knew that I could do more to serve Jehovah. Finally, I handed in my resignation and started pioneering. I am so thankful that I took that step nearly 20 years ago! My full-time service has enriched my life more than any secretarial job ever could have. Nothing gives greater satisfaction than seeing how Jehovah’s Word can change a person’s life. To have a part in that process is wonderful. What we give to Jehovah is nothing compared with what we receive.”

<sup>19</sup> Our circumstances may change with time. However, our dedication to God remains the same. We are still Jehovah’s slaves, and he leaves it up to us to decide how we can best use our time, energy, talents, and other assets. Hence, the decisions we

18. Give an example to show how spiritual achievements bring rewards.

19. What should be our resolve, and why?

make in this regard can reflect our love for God. They also show the extent to which we are willing to make personal sacrifices. (Matthew 6:33) Regardless of our circumstances, should we not be determined to give Jehovah our best? Paul wrote: “If the readiness is there first, it is especially acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what a person does not have.”—2 Corinthians 8:12.

### **“You Are Having Your Fruit”**

<sup>20</sup> Being slaves of God is not oppressive. On the contrary, it provides an escape from a pernicious form of slavery that robs us of happiness. “Because you were set free from sin but became slaves to God,” wrote Paul, “you are having your fruit in the way of holiness, and the end everlasting life.” (Romans 6:22) Our slaving for God bears fruit in the way of holiness in that we reap the benefits of holy, or morally clean, conduct. Moreover, it leads to everlasting life in the future.

<sup>21</sup> Jehovah is generous to his slaves. When we do our best in his service, he opens to us “the floodgates of the heavens” and pours out upon us “a blessing until there is no more want.” (Malachi 3:10) What a delight it will be to continue to serve as Jehovah’s slaves for all eternity!

20, 21. (a) What fruitage is produced by slaves of God? (b) How does Jehovah reward those who give him their best?

### **Do You Recall?**

- Why do we become slaves of God?
- How do we demonstrate our submission to the will of God?
- Why should we be prepared to put Jehovah’s will ahead of our own?
- Why should we not ‘look at the things behind’?

# Jehovah's Word Is Alive

## Highlights From the Book of First Samuel

THE year is 1117 B.C.E. Some three hundred years have elapsed since Joshua completed the conquest of the Promised Land. The older men of Israel come to Jehovah's prophet with a remarkable request. The prophet takes the matter up in prayer, and Jehovah allows them to have their way. This marks the end of the period of the Judges and the beginning of the era of human kings. The Bible book of First Samuel narrates exciting events surrounding that turning point in the history of the nation of Israel.

Written by Samuel, Nathan, and Gad, First Samuel covers a period of 102 years—from 1180 to 1078 B.C.E. (1 Chronicles 29:29) It is an account of four leaders of Israel. Two serve as judges, two as kings; two are obedient to Jehovah, two are not. We also meet two exemplary women and a valiant but gentle warrior. Such examples provide valuable lessons about attitudes and actions to imitate and to avoid. The contents of First Samuel can thus exert power on our thoughts and deeds.—Hebrews 4:12.

### ELI'S JUDGESHIP GIVES WAY TO SAMUEL'S (1 Samuel 1:1–7:17)

It is time for the Festival of Ingathering, and Hannah, who lives in Ramah, is beside herself with joy.\* Jehovah has answered her prayers, and she has given birth to a son. To fulfill her vow, Hannah presents her son Samuel for service at "the house of Jehovah." There the boy becomes "a minister of Jehovah."

\* For locations of various places mentioned in the book of First Samuel, see pages 18-19 of the brochure "*See the Good Land*," published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

vah before Eli the priest." (1 Samuel 1:24; 2:11) When Samuel is still of tender age, Jehovah speaks to him, pronouncing judgment against the house of Eli. As Samuel grows older, all the people of Israel come to recognize him as a prophet of Jehovah.

In time, the Philistines come up against Israel. They capture the Ark and slay Eli's two sons. Upon hearing the news, aged Eli dies, having "judged Israel forty years." (1 Samuel 4:18) Possession of the Ark proves to be disastrous for the Philistines, so they return it to the Israelites. Samuel now judges Israel, and there is peace in the land.

### Scriptural Questions Answered:

**2:10—Why did Hannah pray that Jehovah "give strength to his king" when there was no human king over Israel?** That the Israelites would have a human king was foretold in the Mosaic Law. (Deuteronomy 17:14-18) In his deathbed prophecy, Jacob said: "The scepter [a symbol of royal authority] will not turn aside from Judah." (Genesis 49:10) Moreover, concerning Sarah—the ancestress of the Israelites—Jehovah said: "Kings of peoples will come from her." (Genesis 17:16) Hannah, then, was praying about a future king.

**3:3—Did Samuel actually sleep in the Most Holy?** No, he did not. Samuel was a Levite of the nonpriestly family of the Kohathites. (1 Chronicles 6:33-38) As such, he was not permitted to "come in to see the holy things." (Numbers 4:17-20) The only part of the sanctuary that Samuel had access to was the tabernacle courtyard. That is where he must have slept. Apparently, Eli also slept

somewhere in the courtyard. The expression "where the ark of God was" evidently refers to the tabernacle area.

**7:7-9, 17—Why did Samuel offer up a burnt offering at Mizpah and set up an altar in Ramah, since sacrifices were to be offered on a regular basis only at the place of Jehovah's choosing? (Deuteronomy 12:4-7, 13, 14; Joshua 22:19)** After the removal of the sacred Ark from the tabernacle at Shiloh, Jehovah's presence was no longer evident there. So as God's representative, Samuel offered a burnt offering at Mizpah and also set up an altar in Ramah. These actions were apparently approved by Jehovah.

#### **Lessons for Us:**

**1:11, 12, 21-23; 2:19.** Hannah's prayerful attitude, her humility, her appreciation for Jehovah's kindness, and her lasting motherly affection are exemplary for all God-fearing women.

**1:8.** What an example Elkanah set in strengthening others with words! (Job 16:5) He first asked depressed Hannah the unaccusing question: "Why does your heart feel bad?" This encouraged her to talk about her feelings. Then Elkanah reassured her of his affection, saying: "Am I not better to you than ten sons?"

**2:26; 3:5-8, 15, 19.** By sticking to our God-assigned work, by taking advantage of spiritual training, and by being polite and respectful, we become "more likable" both to God and to men.

**4:3, 4, 10.** Even an object as holy as the ark of the covenant did not prove to be a charm for protection. We must 'guard ourselves from idols.'—1 John 5:21.

#### **ISRAEL'S FIRST KING —A SUCCESS OR A FAILURE? (1 Samuel 8:1-15:35)**

Samuel is faithful to Jehovah all his life, but his sons do not walk in godly ways. When

the older men of Israel request a human king, Jehovah permits them to have one. Samuel follows Jehovah's direction and anoints Saul, a handsome Benjaminite, as king. Saul strengthens his position as king by defeating the Ammonites.

Saul's valiant son Jonathan strikes down a Philistine garrison. The Philistines come up against Israel with a huge army. Saul panics and disobediently offers a burnt sacrifice himself. Taking along only his armor-bearer, courageous Jonathan attacks another Philistine outpost. Saul's rash oath, however, weakens the force of the victory. Saul goes "warring round about" against all his enemies. (1 Samuel 14:47) Upon defeating the Amalekites, though, he disobeys Jehovah by sparing what had been "devoted to destruction." (Leviticus 27:28, 29) Consequently, Jehovah rejects Saul as king.

#### **Scriptural Questions Answered:**

**9:9—What is significant about the expression "the prophet of today used to be called a seer in former times"?** These words may indicate that as the prophets became more prominent in the days of Samuel and during the era of the kings in Israel, the word "seer" came to be replaced by the term "prophet." Samuel is considered the first of the line of the prophets.—Acts 3:24.

**14:24-32, 44, 45—Did Jonathan lose God's favor for eating honey in violation of Saul's oath?** This act does not seem to have placed Jonathan in God's disfavor. First of all, Jonathan did not know about his father's oath. Moreover, the oath, prompted either by false zeal or by a wrong view of kingly power, caused problems for the people. How could such an oath have God's approval? Although Jonathan was willing to accept the consequences of breaking the oath, his life was spared.

**15:6—Why did the Kenites receive special consideration from Saul?** The Kenites were



***Israel's first king changed from a humble and modest ruler to a proud and presumptuous monarch***

the sons of Moses' father-in-law. They assisted the Israelites after these pulled away from Mount Sinai. (Numbers 10:29-32) In the land of Canaan, the Kenites also took up dwelling with the sons of Judah for a time. (Judges 1:16) Even though they later resided among the Amalekites and various other peoples, the Kenites remained on friendly terms with Israel. For good reason, then, Saul spared the Kenites.

**Lessons for Us:**

**9:21; 10:22, 27.** The modesty and humility that Saul had when he first became king safeguarded him from acting rashly when some "good-for-nothing men" did not accept his kingship. What a protection such a mindset is against irrational actions!

**12:20, 21.** Never allow "the unrealities," such as trust in men, confidence in the military might of nations, or idolatry, to turn you aside from serving Jehovah.

**12:24.** A key to maintaining reverential fear of Jehovah and serving him with all our heart is to "see what great things he has

done" for his people in ancient as well as modern times.

**13:10-14; 15:22-25, 30.** Be on guard against presumptuousness—whether expressed through disobedient acts or a proud attitude.—Proverbs 11:2.

**A SHEPHERD BOY IS CHOSEN FOR THE KINGSHIP  
(1 Samuel 16:1-31:13)**

Samuel anoints David of the tribe of Judah to be the future king. Shortly thereafter, David slays the Philistine giant Goliath with a single slingstone. A bond of friendship develops between David and Jonathan. Saul places David over his warriors. In response to David's many victories, the women of Israel sing: "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." (1 Samuel 18:7) Consumed with envy, Saul seeks to kill David. After three attacks by Saul, David flees and becomes a fugitive.

During his years as a runaway, David spares Saul's life twice. He also meets and eventually marries beautiful Abigail. As the Philistines come up against Israel, Saul inquires of Jehovah. But Jehovah has left him. Samuel has died. Desperate, Saul consults a spirit medium, only to hear that he will be killed in the battle against the Philistines. During that battle, Saul is severely wounded, and his sons are killed. The account closes with Saul dying as a failure. David is still in hiding.

**Scriptural Questions Answered:**

**16:14—What bad spirit terrorized Saul?** The bad spirit that deprived Saul of his peace of mind was the bad inclination of his mind and heart—his inward urge to do wrong. When Jehovah withdrew his holy spirit, Saul lost its protection and came to be dominated by his own bad spirit. Since God permitted that spirit to replace His holy spirit, this bad spirit is termed "a bad spirit from Jehovah."

**17:55-58—In view of 1 Samuel 16:17-23, why did Saul ask whose son David was?**

Saul's inquiry was not just about the name of David's father. Very likely, he wanted to know what kind of man fathered a boy who had just accomplished the amazing feat of slaying a giant.

#### Lessons for Us:

**16:6, 7.** Rather than being impressed by the outward appearance of others or judging them hastily, we must try to see them as Jehovah sees them.

**17:47-50.** We can courageously face opposition or persecution from Goliathlike enemies because "to Jehovah belongs the battle."

**18:1, 3; 20:41, 42.** True friends can be found among those who love Jehovah.

**21:12, 13.** Jehovah expects us to use our mental faculties and abilities to deal with difficult situations in life. He has given us his inspired Word, which imparts prudence, knowledge, and thinking ability. (Proverbs 1:4) We also have the help of appointed Christian elders.

**24:6; 26:11.** What a fine example David provides of genuine respect for the anointed of Jehovah!

**25:23-33.** Abigail's sensibleness is exemplary.

*Of what can we be confident  
when we face opposition  
from Goliathlike enemies?*

**28:8-19.** In their efforts to misguide or harm people, wicked spirits can pretend to be certain dead individuals. We must keep free from all forms of spiritism.—Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

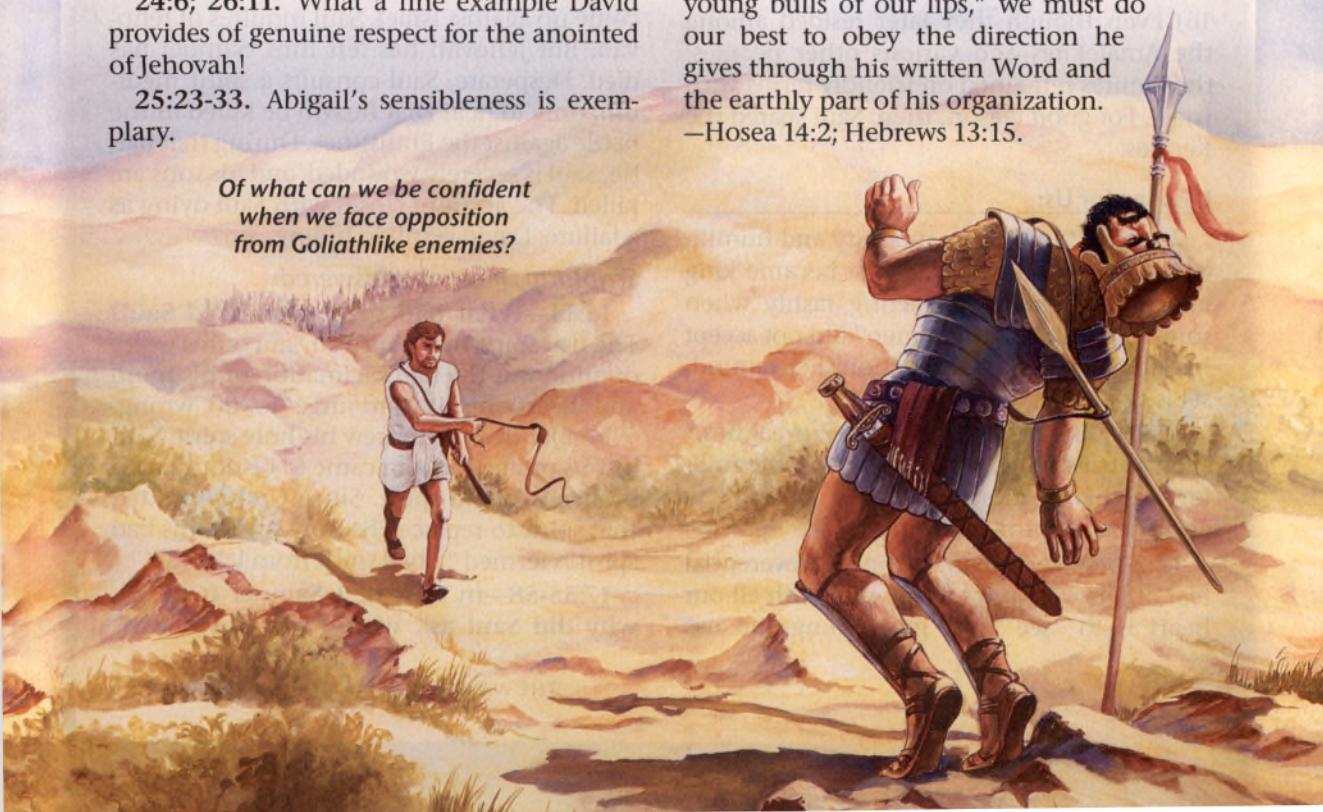
**30:23, 24.** This decision, based on Numbers 31:27, shows that Jehovah values those who serve in supportive roles in the congregation. Whatever we are doing, then, let us "work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men."—Colossians 3:23.

#### What Is "Better Than a Sacrifice"?

What fundamental truth is emphasized by the experiences of Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David? It is this: "To obey is better than a sacrifice, to pay attention than the fat of rams; for rebelliousness is the same as the sin of divination, and pushing ahead presumptuously the same as using uncanny power and teraphim."—1 Samuel 15:22, 23.

What a privilege we have to share in the worldwide Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work! As we offer to Jehovah "the young bulls of our lips," we must do our best to obey the direction he gives through his written Word and the earthly part of his organization.

—Hosea 14:2; Hebrews 13:15.



# SAMSON TRIUMPHS IN THE STRENGTH OF JEHOVAH!

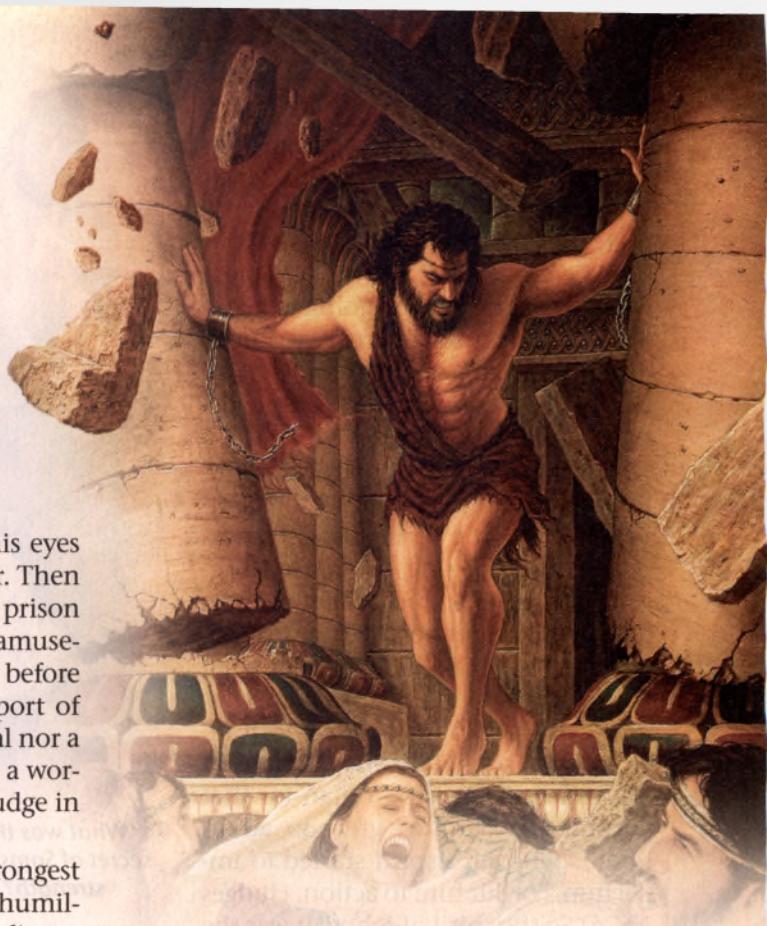
**V**INDICTIVE captors bore out his eyes and consign him to hard labor. Then they bring him out of the prison house into a pagan temple to provide amusement for the crowd. They parade him before thousands of onlookers and make sport of him. The prisoner is neither a criminal nor a commander of an enemy army. He is a worshiper of Jehovah and has served as judge in Israel for 20 years.

How did Samson—physically the strongest man who ever lived—end up in such a humiliating situation? Would his extraordinary strength save him? What was the secret of Samson's strength? What, if anything, can we learn from his life story?

## He Will “Take the Lead in Saving Israel”

The sons of Israel had a history of turning away from true worship. So when they “engaged again in doing what was bad in Jehovah's eyes, . . . Jehovah gave them into the hand of the Philistines for forty years.” —Judges 13:1.

Samson's story began when Jehovah's angel appeared to the barren wife of an Israelite named Manoah and informed her that she would give birth to a son. “No razor should come upon his head,” the angel instructed her, “because a Nazirite of God is what the child will become on leaving the belly; and



he it is who will take the lead in saving Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:2-5) Before Samson was conceived, Jehovah determined that Samson was to have a specific task. From the moment of his birth, he was to be a Nazirite—one singled out for a special kind of sacred service.

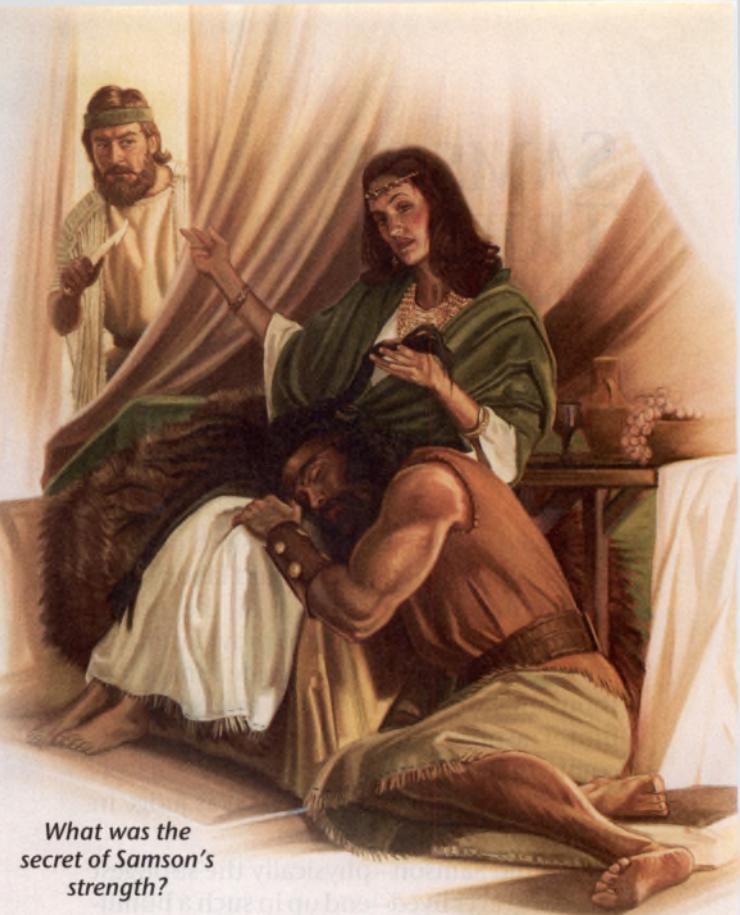
## She Is “Just Right in My Eyes”

As Samson kept growing, “Jehovah continued to bless him.” (Judges 13:24) One day Samson came to his father and mother and said: “There is a woman that I have seen in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines, and now get her for me as a wife.” (Judges 14:2) Imagine their surprise. Instead of freeing Israel from the hands of the oppressors, their son wanted to form a marriage alliance with them. Taking a wife

from among worshipers of pagan gods was against God's Law. (Exodus 34:11-16) Hence, the parents objected: "Is there not among the daughters of your brothers and among all my people a woman, so that you are going to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" Still, Samson insisted: "Get just her for me, because she is the one just right in my eyes."—Judges 14:3.

In what way was this particular Philistine woman "just right" for Samson? Not in the sense that she was "beautiful, engaging, attractive," suggests McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia*, "but right relative to an end, purpose, or object." Relative to what end? Judges 14:4 explains that Samson "was looking for an opportunity against the Philistines." Samson was interested in the woman for that purpose. As Samson grew to adulthood, "Jehovah's spirit started to impel him," or stir him to action. (Judges 13:25) So the spirit of Jehovah was the driving force behind Samson's unusual request for a wife as well as his entire career as judge over Israel. Did Samson get the opportunity he was seeking? Let us first consider how Jehovah assured him of divine backing.

Samson was en route to his future bride's city, Timnah. "When he got as far as the vineyards of Timnah," the Scriptural account relates, "why, look! a maned young lion roaring upon meeting him. Then Jehovah's spirit became operative upon him, so that he tore it in two." This remarkable manifestation of strength came when Samson was alone. There were no eyewitnesses. Was this Jehovah's way of assuring Samson that he as a Nazirite was capable of fulfilling his God-given commission? The Bible does not say, but Samson surely realized that such unusual power was not his. It must have come from



*What was the secret of Samson's strength?*

God. He could rely upon Jehovah to assist him in the work ahead. Fortified by the incident with the lion, Samson "continued on his way down and began to speak to the woman; and she was still right in [his] eyes."—Judges 14:5-7.

When Samson later went back to take the woman home, "he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion, and there there was a swarm of bees in the lion's corpse, and honey." Noting this, Samson posed this riddle to 30 Philistine groomsmen at his wedding: "Out of the eater something to eat came forth, and out of the strong something sweet came forth." If they guessed the meaning of the riddle, Samson would give them 30 undergarments and outfits of clothes. If not, they would have to give the same to him. The Philistines were baffled by the riddle for

three days. On the fourth day, they resorted to threatening the woman. They told her: "Fool your husband that he may tell us the riddle. Otherwise we shall burn you and the house of your father with fire." How cruel! If the Philistines treated their own people this way, imagine the plight of the oppressed Israelites!—Judges 14:8-15.

The terrified woman pressured Samson into disclosing the answer. Displaying lack of love and loyalty to Samson, she promptly informed the groomsmen. They solved the riddle, and Samson knew why. He said to them: "If you had not plowed with my young cow, you would not have solved my riddle." The opportunity that Samson had been waiting for now presented itself. "Jehovah's spirit became operative upon him, so that he went down to Ashkelon and struck down thirty men of theirs and took what he stripped off them and gave the outfits to the tellers of the riddle."—Judges 14:18, 19.

Was Samson's action at Ashkelon prompted by a desire for revenge on his part? No. It was an act of God through his chosen deliverer. Through Samson, Jehovah initiated a fight against the cruel oppressors of his people. This campaign was to continue. The next opportunity arose when Samson came to visit his wife.

### Single-Handed Warfare

Upon returning to Timnah, Samson discovered that his wife's father had married the woman off to another man, believing that Samson hated her. Samson was outwardly offended. He caught 300 foxes and tied them in twos with a torch between their tails. When freed, they set ablaze fields, vineyards, and olive groves, destroying Philistia's three main crops for the year. The irate Philistines displayed cruelty. They considered Samson's wife and her father responsible and burned them. Their barbaric revenge

served Samson's purpose. He, in turn, went smiting them with a great slaughter.—Judges 15:1-8.

Did the Israelites see that Jehovah God was blessing Samson and therefore unite with him to bring an end to the Philistine domination? Hardly. To avoid trouble, the men of Judah sent 3,000 men to arrest God's chosen leader and surrender him to his enemies. This Israelite disloyalty, however, offered Samson an occasion to inflict further losses on his enemies. As he was about to be delivered to the Philistines, "Jehovah's spirit became operative upon him, and the ropes that were upon his arms came to be like linen threads that have been scorched with fire, so that his fetters melted off his hands." He then picked up the jawbone of an ass and struck down a thousand foes with it.—Judges 15:10-15.

Calling on Jehovah, Samson said: "It was you that gave this great salvation into the hand of your servant, and now shall I die of thirst and must I fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" Jehovah heard Samson's prayer and answered it. "God split open a mortar-shaped hollow . . . , and water began to come out of it, and he proceeded to drink, after which his spirit returned and he revived."—Judges 15:18, 19.

Samson was single-minded in the pursuit of his objective, his fight against the Philistines. His staying at the house of a prostitute at Gaza was for the purpose of fighting against God's enemies. Samson needed a lodging place for the night in an enemy city, and it could be found in the house of a prostitute. Samson had no immoral purpose in mind. He left the woman's house at midnight, grabbed the city gates and the two side posts, and carried them to the top of a mountain near Hebron, which was some 37 miles away. This was done with divine approval and God-given strength.—Judges 16:1-3.

The way the holy spirit operated in Samson's case was unique because of the unusual circumstances. Faithful servants of God today can rely on the same spirit to empower them. Jesus assured his followers that Jehovah will "give holy spirit to those asking him."—Luke 11:13.

### Why Did Jehovah 'Depart From Samson'?

It came about that Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah. The five axis lords of the Philistines were so eager to eliminate Samson that they enlisted her help. They approached Delilah and said to her: "Fool him and see in what his great power is and with what we can prevail over him." As a bribe, each of the five axis lords offered her "one thousand one hundred silver pieces."—Judges 16:4, 5.

If the silver pieces were shekels, the offer of 5,500 shekels was a huge bribe. Abraham paid 400 shekels for a burial place for his wife, and a slave sold for just 30. (Genesis 23:14-20; Exodus 21:32) The fact that the axis lords—rulers of five Philistine cities—appealed to Delilah's greed and not to her ethnic loyalty suggests that she was perhaps an Israelite woman. In any case, Delilah accepted the offer.

Three times Samson gave Delilah misleading answers to her inquiry, and three times she betrayed him by trying to deliver him to his enemies. But "it came about that because she pressured him with her words all the time and kept urging him, his soul got to be impatient to the point of dying." Samson finally revealed the truth—his hair had never been cut. Were it to be cut, he would grow weak and become like all other men.—Judges 16:6-17.

That was Samson's downfall. Delilah maneuvered him into a situation to have his head shaved. Samson's power, however, was not literally in his hair. His hair merely repre-

sented his special relationship with God as a Nazirite. When Samson allowed himself to get into a situation that affected his Nazirite-ship because of the shaving of his head, 'Jehovah departed from him.' Philistines now overpowered Samson, blinded him, and put him in prison.—Judges 16:18-21.

What a powerful lesson this teaches us! Should we not value our relationship with Jehovah as something very precious? If we compromise our Christian dedication in any way, how can we expect God to go on blessing us?

### "Let My Soul Die With the Philistines"

Exultant Philistines thanked their god Dagon for Samson's defeat. In celebration of their victory, they led their captive to the temple of Dagon. But Samson knew the real reason for his downfall. He knew why Jehovah had left him, and Samson repented of his having failed. While Samson was in the prison house, his hair had begun to grow luxuriantly. Now that he was in front of thousands of Philistines, what action would he take?

"Sovereign Lord Jehovah," prayed Samson, "remember me, please, and strengthen me, please, just this once, O you the true God, and let me avenge myself upon the Philistines with vengeance for one of my two eyes." Then he braced himself against the two center columns of the building, and "he bent himself with power." The result? "The house went falling upon the axis lords and upon all the people that were in it, so that the dead that he put to death in his own death came to be more than those he had put to death during his lifetime."—Judges 16:22-30.

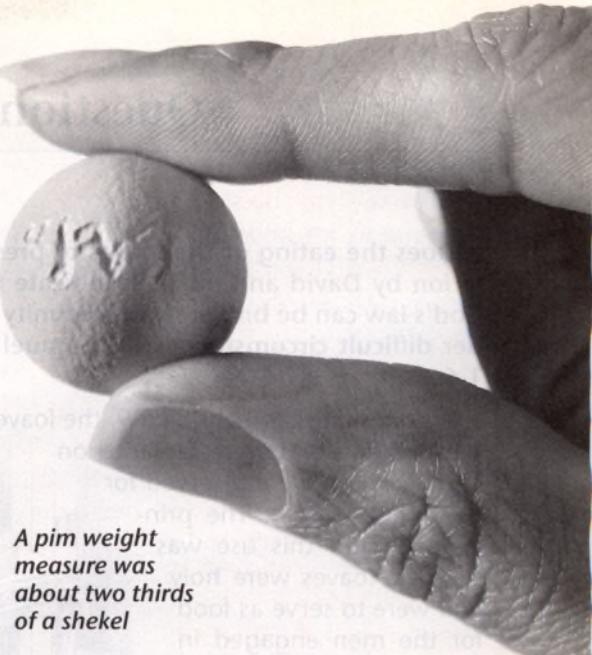
For physical strength, Samson was without equal among men. His mighty acts were notable indeed. But most important, Jehovah's Word counts Samson among those strong in faith.—Hebrews 11:32-34.

# A “Pim” Testifies to the Bible’s Historicity

THE word “pim” occurs only once in the Bible. In the days of King Saul, the Israelites had to get their metal tools sharpened by Philistine smiths. “The price for sharpening proved to be a pim for the plowshares and for the mattocks and for the three-toothed instruments and for the axes and for fixing fast the oxgoad,” states the Bible. —1 Samuel 13:21.

What was a pim? The answer to that question remained a mystery until 1907 C.E. when the first pim weight stone was excavated at the ancient city of Gezer. Bible translators of earlier dates had difficulty translating the word “pim.” The *King James Version*, for example, rendered 1 Samuel 13:21: “Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads.”

Scholars today know that a pim was a weight measure averaging 7.82 grams, or approximately two thirds of a shekel, the basic Hebrew unit of weight. A pim measure of silver scrap was the price the Philistines charged the Israelites for sharpening their tools. The shekel weight system went out of use with the fall of the kingdom of Judah and its capital, Jerusalem, in 607 B.C.E. So how does the pim measure testify to the historicity of the Hebrew text?



*A pim weight measure was about two thirds of a shekel*

Some scholars argue that the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures, including the book of First Samuel, date to the Hellenistic-Roman era, even as late as from the second to the first century B.C.E. It is claimed, therefore, that “they are . . . ‘unhistorical,’ of little or no value for reconstructing a ‘biblical’ or an ‘ancient Israel,’ both of which are simply modern Jewish and Christian literary constructs.”

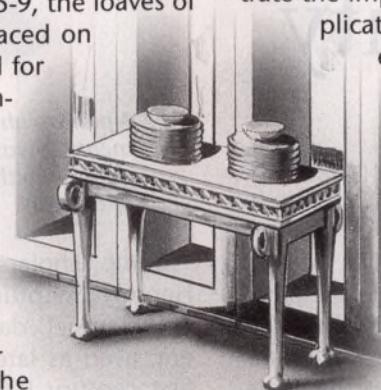
Referring to the pim measure mentioned at 1 Samuel 13:21, however, William G. Dever, professor of Near Eastern archaeology and anthropology, says: “[It] cannot possibly have been ‘invented’ by writers living in the Hellenistic-Roman period several centuries after these weights had disappeared and had been forgotten. In fact, this bit of biblical text . . . would not be understood until the early 20th century A.D., when the first actual archaeological examples turned up, reading *pîm* in Hebrew.” The professor continues: “If the biblical stories are all ‘literary inventions’ of the Hellenistic-Roman era, how did this particular story come to be in the Hebrew Bible? One may object, of course, that the *pîm* incident is ‘only a detail.’ To be sure; but as is well known, ‘history is in the details.’”

## Questions From Readers

**Does the eating of the loaves of presentation by David and his men indicate that God's law can be broken with impunity under difficult circumstances?—1 Samuel 21: 1-6.**

According to Leviticus 24:5-9, the loaves of presentation that were replaced on each Sabbath were reserved for the priests to eat. The principle behind this use was that the loaves were holy and were to serve as food for the men engaged in God's service—the priests. Giving them to a common laborer or eating them just for pleasure would definitely be wrong. However, the priest Ahimelech did nothing sinful when he shared the showbread with David and his men.

David appeared to be on a special assignment from King Saul. David and his men were hungry. Ahimelech determined that they were ceremonially clean. While their eating of the loaves of presen-



*New loaves of presentation were placed inside the tabernacle each Sabbath*

tation was technically unlawful, it was in harmony with the basic designated use of the showbread. This consideration permitted Ahimelech to make an exception to the rule. Jesus Christ himself used this incident to illustrate the impropriety of the unduly rigid application of the Sabbath law demanded by the Pharisaic interpretation of it.—Matthew 12:1-8.

The foregoing, however, does not mean that God's law can be violated when circumstances become difficult. For example, a seemingly critical situation developed when Israelite warriors were fighting the Philistines. King Saul had said: "Cursed is the man that eats bread before the evening and until I have taken vengeance upon my enemies!" The Bible says:

"On that day they kept striking down the Philistines." The soldiers were battle-weary and hungry, 'and the people began slaughtering animals on the earth and fell to eating along with the blood.' (1 Samuel 14:24, 31-33) They sinned against Jehovah by violating his law on blood. Their actions were not in accord with the only God-designated use of blood, namely "to make atonement" for sins. (Leviticus 17:10-12; Genesis 9:3, 4) Mercifully, Jehovah accepted special sacrifices in behalf of those who had sinned.—1 Samuel 14: 34, 35.

Yes, Jehovah expects us to obey his laws under all circumstances. "This is what the love of God means," says the apostle John, "that we observe his commandments."—1 John 5:3.

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Science and the Bible—Do They Really Contradict Each Other?

Parents, Protect Your Precious Inheritance

Making Jehovah Your God



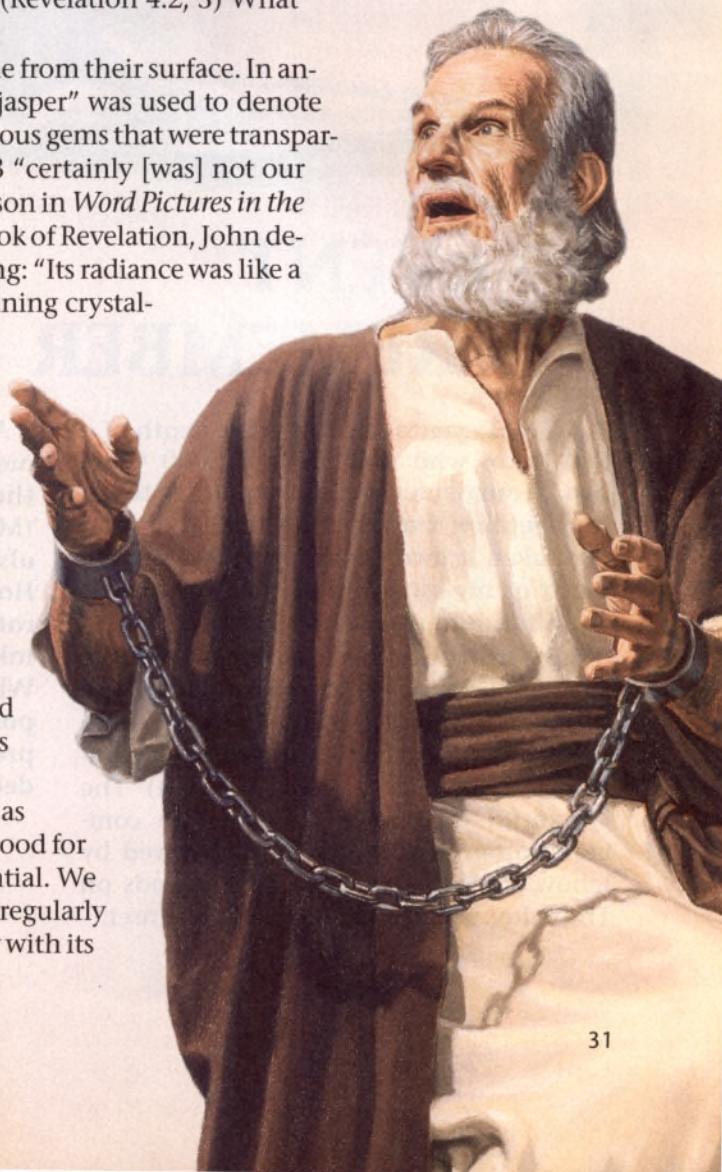
## 'Like a Precious Red-Colored Stone'

THE apostle John had a vision of a glorious throne in heaven. The One seated upon the throne looked "like a jasper stone." He was also like "a precious red-colored stone." (Revelation 4:2, 3) What stones were these?

These were not opaque stones that shine from their surface. In ancient times, the Greek word translated "jasper" was used to denote stones of different colors, including precious gems that were transparent. The "jasper stone" of Revelation 4:3 "certainly [was] not our cheap modern jasper," states A. T. Robertson in *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Moreover, later in the book of Revelation, John describes the heavenly city, Jerusalem, saying: "Its radiance was like a most precious stone, as a jasper stone shining crystal-clear." (Revelation 21:10, 11) The stones John refers to were apparently translucent, allowing light to pass through them.

The one represented as being seated upon the throne in John's vision is the most glorious Person in the universe, Jehovah God. He is pure and holy to a superlative degree. In harmony with that, the apostle John wrote: "God is light and there is no darkness at all in union with him." (1 John 1:5) Hence, John urged his fellow believers to 'purify themselves just as Jehovah is pure.'—1 John 3:3.

What must we do to be viewed by God as pure? Our having faith in Christ's shed blood for forgiveness of our sins is absolutely essential. We must also keep "walking in the light" by regularly studying the Bible and living in harmony with its teachings.—1 John 1:7.





## An EVENT to REMEMBER

**W**HAT event is this? It is the death of a man who died nearly 2,000 years ago. "I surrender my soul, in order that I may receive it again," he said. "No man has taken it away from me, but I surrender it of my own initiative." (John 10:17, 18) That man was Jesus Christ.

Jesus instructed his followers to observe the Memorial of his sacrificial death. The occasion is also called "the Lord's evening meal," or "the Lord's supper." (1 Corinthians 11:20; King James Version) The Memorial that Jesus instituted to commemorate his death will be observed by Jehovah's Witnesses and their friends on Thursday, March 24, 2005, after sunset.

A Bible-based talk will explain the meaning of the unleavened bread and the red wine used for the occasion. (Matthew 26:26-28) The discourse will also answer such questions as these: How often should Christians commemorate this event? Who should rightly partake of the emblems of bread and wine? Who benefit from Jesus' death? This important observance will help all to appreciate the purpose of Jesus' life and death.