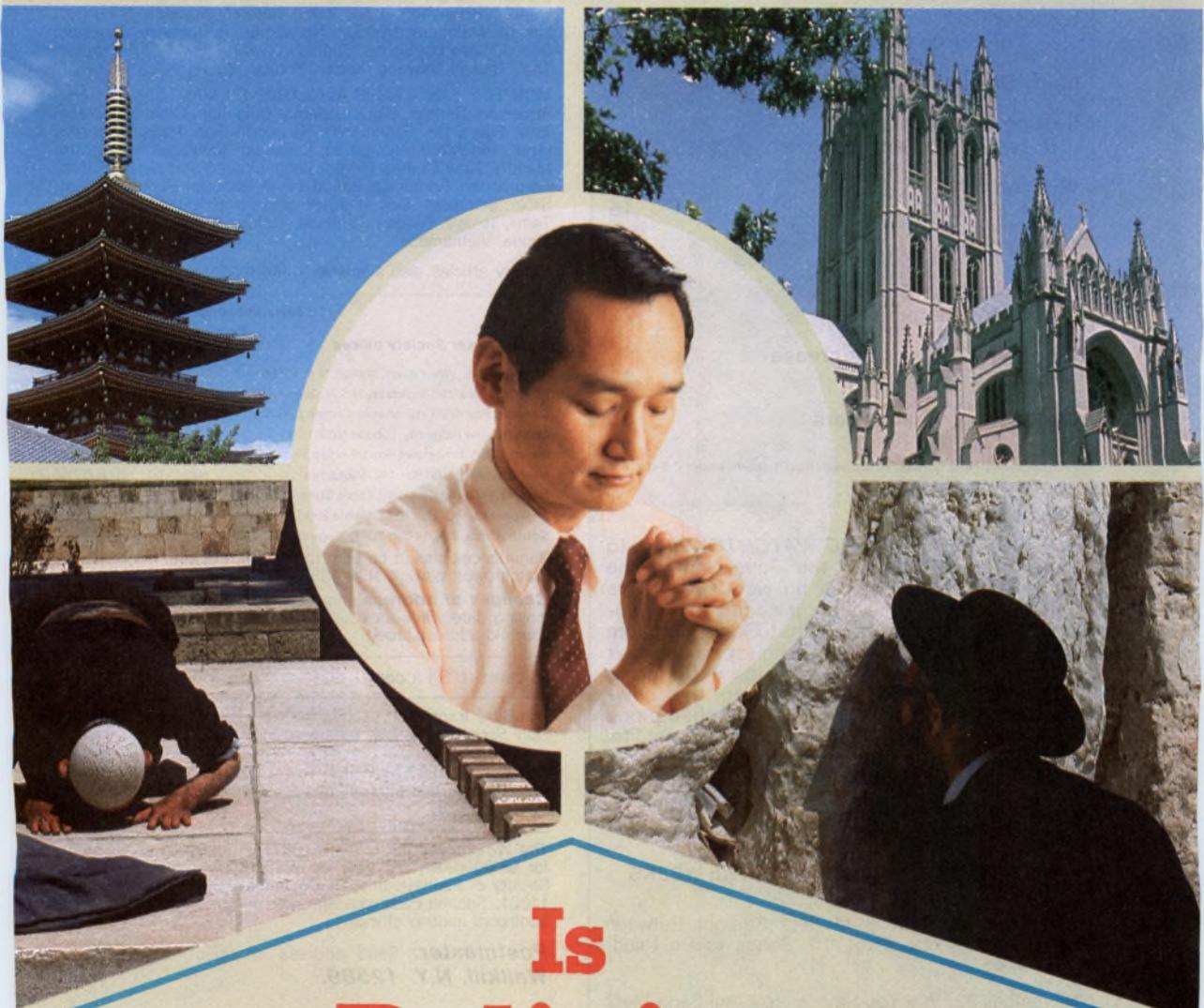


The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

October 15, 1987



Is
Religion
a Force for Moral Good?

In This Issue

Is Religion a Force for Moral Good?	3
Love for God —The Force for Moral Good	4
Many Disciples Quit Following Jesus	8
Setting Matters Straight Between God and You	10
Will You Say, "Here I Am! Send Me?"	15
Insight on the News	21
Talk About the Glory of God's Kingship	22
Opening the Way to Increase in Gibraltar	27
Questions From Readers	30

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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.

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- November 22: Will You Say, "Here I Am! Send Me"? Page 15. Songs to Be Used: 204, 57.
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Is Religion / a Force for Moral Good?



IN ANSWER to this question, millions would agree with George Bernard Shaw, who wrote: "Religion is a great force—the only real motive force in the world." Contrariwise, 19th-century English author John Ruskin, writing on the basis for honesty, satirized: "*A knave's religion is always the rottenest thing about him.*" Which view do you think is closer to the truth?

As evidence for religion's moral force, someone might point to an individual who became a "changed man" when he 'dedicated his life to Jesus Christ.' That is how an international magazine described the "conversion" of Charles Colson, who had been involved in the Watergate scandal. Someone else might point to those who claim that their religion saved them from a life of prostitution or alcoholism. In non-Christian lands, millions of Bibles have been distributed, which undoubtedly has helped

many people to improve their lives morally. Evidently, religion has exerted a good moral influence on such persons.

The Negative Side

On the other hand, Hitler's religion was not much of a deterrent to him. This led sincere persons to wonder why an appeal made to Pope Pius XII to excommunicate Hitler was never answered. The *Catholic Telegraph-Register* of Cincinnati, Ohio, under the heading "Reared as Catholic but Violates Faith Says Cable to Pope," reported: "An appeal has been made to Pius XII that Reichsfuehrer Adolph Hitler be excommunicated." If this action had been taken, might it have affected the outcome of the war and helped spare mankind much suffering? Sad to say, the pope never responded.

Concubinage is very common in some Catholic countries in South America. And in North America a monsignor wrote the editorial: "Legalize Prostitution—It's the Saintly Solution." (*Philadelphia Daily News*) Take a look also at the conditions in some Protestant countries where wife swapping, premarital sex, and sex without marriage are quite common. We find a reason for this suggested in the newspaper caption: "Pastors Silent on Premarital Sex." The article said: "The pastors of America have been sinfully silent in preaching on premarital sex . . . They are afraid they will lose some of their parishioners." (*Telegraph*, North Platte, Nebraska) So is all religion a force for moral good?

In Christendom, religion's lack of moral force is most evident during wartime. See what you think of these nice-sounding claims. In 1934 Walter W. Van Kirk, then secretary of a department of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, wrote: "Preachers and laymen have taken

a solemn stand against war . . . This peace crusade of the churches emerges from the conviction that war is absolutely contrary to the preaching and practice of Jesus." (*Religion Renounces War*) After citing several churches and clergymen, the book concluded: "The churches, in the main, have clearly stated that they are no longer to be regarded as allies in the business of killing and maiming humans. The preachers are . . . washing their hands of the blood of their fellows, they are parting company with Caesar."

However, those optimistic predictions regrettably did not come true. When World War II broke out, not one of the main religions of Christendom took a firm stand to 'renounce war.' Did the church in your area do so?

Broken Moral Fences

Having considered some evidence on both sides, would you not agree that in all too many cases, the popular religions of the world have not been a strong force for moral good? *Look* magazine declared: "The churches . . . have failed to supply moral

leadership, and because their responsibility is the greatest, their failure is the worst." *The Courier-Mail* of Brisbane, Australia, commented on the failure of Christendom's religion to provide a restraint on sexual immorality: "When it comes to Bishops and Canons . . . writing that extramarital intercourse may be an act of charity that 'proclaims the Glory of God,' . . . that fornication is not bad in itself nor adultery necessarily wrong; then the ordinary man and woman, and particularly the adolescent boy and girl, become confused between right and wrong. The result of all this propaganda for the New Morality has been a breaking down of moral fences."

No, in the main, the world's religions are not a real force for moral good. On the contrary, they must take some responsibility for the sad state of morals today. However, since religion is supposed to mean "service and worship of God or the supernatural," should it not be a force for good in all countries where it prevails? What is lacking? How can your religion exert such a force today?

Love for God / The Force for Moral Good

REASONABLE people will readily admit that immorality needs to be restrained. As a minister of the United Church of Canada put it: "The consequences, when individuals and society ignore the moral law, are frightening; wars, inflation, Watergate, and anarchy." As shown in the previous article, the major religions of this world have not proved to be a strong force for moral good. So if we

individually want to live moral lives, we must look to another authority to provide such a force and then be willing to abide by that authority.

The influence of such a superior authority was evident in an incident in the life of Joseph, a Hebrew administrator for a court official in Egypt. When enticed by the official's wife to have sexual relations with her, Joseph resisted, saying: "How

could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?" (Genesis 39:7-9) Recognizing God's authority and desiring to please him gave Joseph the moral strength to resist her advances.

Two hundred years later, the nation of Israel, descendants of Joseph's father, Jacob, received the Ten Commandments as part of the Law given through Moses. Whereas disobedience incurred Jehovah God's displeasure, obedience to this Law brought divine blessings. So these commandments served as a moral guide for the nation.

The Ten Commandments —A Force for Good

How strong a force were the Ten Commandments? Their influence is still felt even in this 20th century. In 1962 the then governor-general of New Zealand said: "I suppose some people think the Ten Commandments are out of date. But it may not be without significance that if we all faithfully observed them today, the ordinary law of the land would be superfluous."

Nevertheless, in a conversation with a young Jewish ruler, Jesus Christ showed that something more than keeping the Ten Commandments was needed. The young man had asked: "What good must I do in order to get everlasting life?" When Jesus said that he should "observe the commandments continually," listing some of the Ten, the ruler answered: "I have kept all these; what yet am I lacking?" Jesus replied: "Go sell your belongings and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven, and come be my follower." The account continues: "When the young man heard this saying, he went away grieved, for he was holding many possessions."—Matthew 19:16-22.

A comparison of this account with a similar one in Luke 10:25-28 helps us to

discern the young ruler's basic problem. We read: "A certain man versed in the Law rose up, to test him [Jesus] out, and said: 'Teacher, by doing what shall I inherit everlasting life?' " Jesus helped him to reason on the matter, and as a result, the man was able to answer his own question, saying in substance: 'Love Jehovah God with your whole heart, soul, strength, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself.' Jesus then concluded: "Keep on doing this and you will get life."

Can you now see the problem of the young ruler mentioned previously? His love for God and for neighbor was eclipsed by his love for material possessions. How sad! In spite of his attempting to keep the Ten Commandments, he was in danger of losing everlasting life.

What Does Love for God Mean?

We live in a time when love for God and neighbor has been supplanted by love of self, material possessions, and sex. Why, even belief in God as a Creator has been replaced in many minds by belief in the unproved theory of evolution. What has brought all of this about?

For centuries, Christendom's clergy used the non-Biblical doctrine of a fearful hellfire in an attempt to dominate the morals of the people. The *Encyclopedia International* states: "The strongest force for good with ordinary men through the Middle Ages was undoubtedly the fear of hell, which made even Kings and Emperors subservient to the Church, and was probably the only restraint upon their unbridled passions." This hellfire doctrine created the impression that God was unloving, unmerciful, and vindictive. Even though the doctrine may have acted as a restraint to some people, it turned many others away from God, leaving them easy prey to unscriptural teachings and theories, such as that of evolution.

The Bible, however, does not teach that God tortures souls in hellfire. Instead, the apostle John tells us: "God is love." "He is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins." Moses wrote: "Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth." (1 John 4:8; 1:9; Exodus 34:6) These are just a few of God's wonderful qualities. They draw us to him. These qualities, especially his love, are what make us want to love him. "As for us, we love, because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19) It is this love for God that is the greatest force for moral good; it can lead to everlasting life!

Genuine love for God is not just an abstract quality. It moves a person to act in another's interest. The apostle Paul listed many ways that this love can be shown. To mention just a few: "Love is long-suffering and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, does not get puffed up, does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked." (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5) Our displaying this love is an attempt to imitate our heavenly Father. Jesus said: "These two commands [loving God and neighbor] sum up the whole of the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:40, *An American Translation*) In other words, if we show this love, we will not steal from our neighbor or murder him or commit adultery with his wife. The apostle John agreed, saying: "This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments."—1 John 5:3.

Love of God a Force for Good

Note the effect that love for God had on early Christians, as shown by Tertullian, of the second century. He challenged his opponents to point out one Christian among their criminals. When they could not, he added: "We, then, alone are without crime." The book *The Old Roman*

Concerning early Christians, the book "The Old Roman World" states: "We have testimony to their blameless lives, to their irreproachable morals." What was the force behind their "irreproachable morals"?

World supports this view, saying: "We have testimony to their blameless lives, to their irreproachable morals." Also, *Christianity Today* quotes church historian Roland Bainton: "From the end of the New Testament period to the decade 170-180 there is no evidence whatever of Christians in the army." Love for God moved them to obey him by living moral lives. You may wonder, though, 'Is there evidence of this beneficial moral force today?'

Indeed there is! Newspaper columnist Mike McManus wrote in the *Herald & Review* that he had never heard a sermon against premarital sex. A month later he reported that among the letters received in response was one from a 14-year-old, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, who wrote: "Just the thought of contracting these diseases should be enough to deter most people [from premarital sex]. But the reason Witnesses refrain is that Jehovah commands us to flee from fornication." (Italics ours.) Commenting on the letter, McManus asked: "How many 14-year-olds in your congregation could quote St. Paul so clearly (1 Cor. 6:18)?"

The same principle of obeying Jehovah's commands, cited by that young girl, is applied by the Witnesses in other areas. The essence of some of God's commands recorded in the Scriptures is: 'Be honest in all things,' 'Avoid idols,' 'Abstain from blood and fornication,' 'Be truthful,' 'Train your children in God's ways.' (Hebrews 13:18; 1 John 5:21; Acts 15:29; Ephesians 4:25; 6:4) Have you noted Jeho-

vah's Witnesses in your neighborhood or place of work trying to obey these commands? Have you ever wondered why they do so, why they reject blood transfusions, why they refuse to go to war, why they visit you at your home, in short, why they are different? Their love for God is the answer.

Love Never Fails

Wanting to please God, Jehovah's Witnesses take to heart the counsel: "Be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2) When they learn what is the "will of God" for them, they want to *do it*. Their love for God is the force behind this desire. Do you feel that this is fanciful, impractical for our time? Ponder a moment on the following actual accounts.

Back in 1963, José, of São Paulo, Brazil, began living with Eugênia, who was already married. Two years later, they began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. From this study the couple learned that God requires that "marriage be honorable among all." (Hebrews 13:4) They realized that they should get married, but Brazil had no divorce law by which Eugênia could be freed to marry José. However, in 1977, when a divorce law went into effect, she applied for divorce, and in 1980 they were able to marry, fulfilling God's requirements. Their love for God had its reward.

Inire had tried all types of drugs in New York. He lived with his girlfriend, Ann. In need of money, he had her send pictures of herself to a well-known men's maga-



Love for God can help you to resist being tempted into wrongdoing

zine. She was offered a large sum of money to pose in the nude at a photo session. Meanwhile, Inire began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, and later Ann joined in. Inire stopped using drugs. After three weeks they, on their own accord, decided to get married. Then, learning from the Bible that a Christian must dress modestly, Ann decided that she could not conscientiously agree to the photo session, no matter how much money was offered. (1 Timothy 2:9) What do you think prompted such changes? Ann says that when she realized that being one of Jehovah's Witnesses was not just a matter of joining a religion but involved living a life devoted to God, she knew she had to make changes fast. Truly, love for God is a strong force for good.

Someone may feel, 'Well, these are isolated cases.' But they are not. Similar changes have occurred many times in places where Jehovah's Witnesses are active. Why not look into this further? Prove for yourself that love for God as expressed in true religion is still *the* force for moral good.

Many Disciples Quit Following Jesus

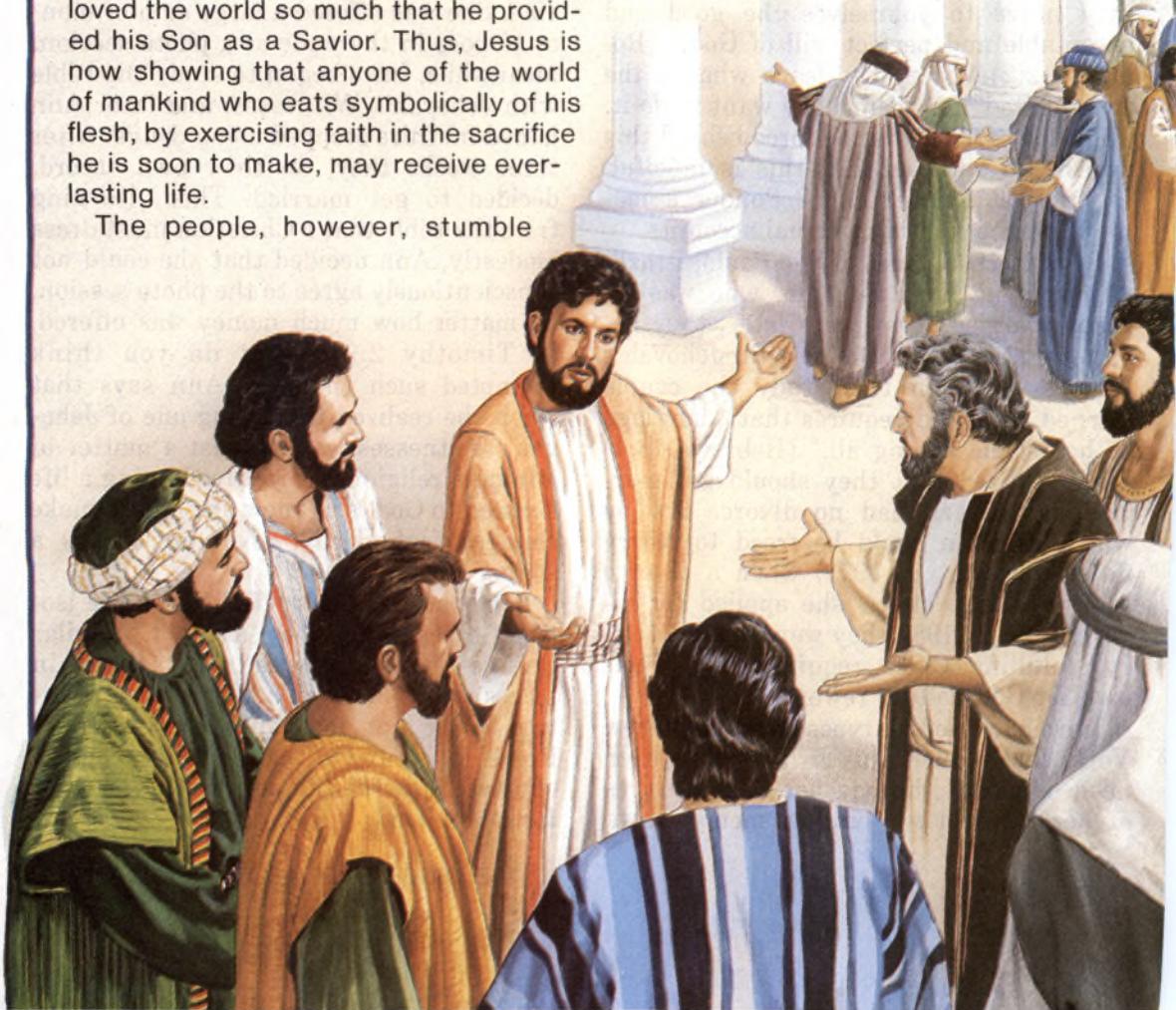
JESUS is teaching in a synagogue about his part as the true bread from heaven. His talk is evidently an extension of the discussion that began with the people when they found him on their return from the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, where they had eaten from the miraculously provided loaves and fishes.

Jesus continues his remarks, saying: "The bread that I shall give is my flesh in behalf of the life of the world." Just two years before, in the spring of 30 C.E., Jesus told Nicodemus that God loved the world so much that he provided his Son as a Savior. Thus, Jesus is now showing that anyone of the world of mankind who eats symbolically of his flesh, by exercising faith in the sacrifice he is soon to make, may receive everlasting life.

The people, however, stumble

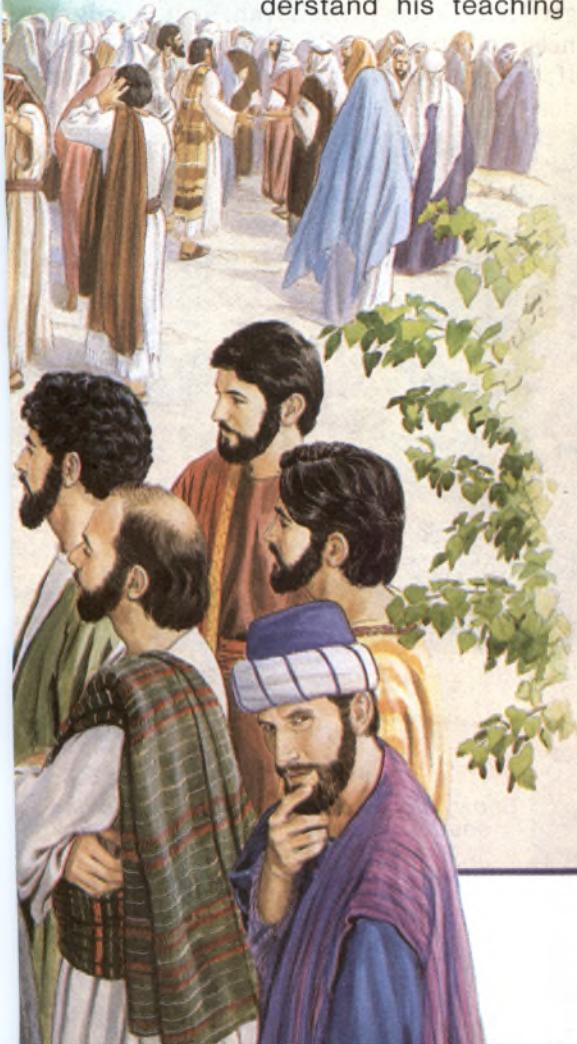
over Jesus' words. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they ask. Jesus wants his listeners to understand that the eating of his flesh would be done in a figurative way. So, to emphasize this, he says something still more objectionable if taken in a literal way.

"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood," Jesus declares, "you have no life in yourselves. He that feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life, and I shall resurrect him at the last day; for



my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. He that feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in union with me, and I in union with him."

True, if Jesus were here suggesting cannibalism, his teaching would sound most offensive. But, of course, Jesus is not advocating literally eating flesh or drinking blood. He is simply emphasizing that all who receive everlasting life must exercise faith in the sacrifice that he is to make when he offers up his perfect human body and pours out his lifeblood. Yet, even many of his disciples make no attempt to understand his teaching



and so object: "This speech is shocking; who can listen to it?"

Knowing that many of his disciples are murmuring, Jesus says: "Does this stumble you? What, therefore, if you should behold the Son of man ascending to where he was before? . . . The sayings that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. But there are some of you that do not believe."

Jesus continues: "This is why I have said to you, No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father." With that, many of his disciples leave and no longer follow him. So Jesus turns to his 12 apostles and asks: "You do not want to go also, do you?"

Peter responds: "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life; and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God." What a fine expression of loyalty, even though Peter and the other apostles may not have fully understood Jesus' teaching on this matter!

Although pleased by Peter's response, Jesus observes: "I chose you twelve, did I not? Yet one of you is a slanderer." He is speaking about Judas Iscariot. Possibly at this point Jesus detects in Judas a "beginning," or an outset, of a wrongful course.

Jesus has just disappointed the people by resisting their attempts to make him king, and they may reason, 'How can this be the Messiah if he will not assume the Messiah's rightful position?' This, too, would be a matter fresh in the people's minds. **John 6:51-71; 3:16.**

- ♦ For whom does Jesus give his flesh, and how do these 'eat his flesh'?
- ♦ What further words of Jesus shock the people, yet what is he emphasizing?
- ♦ When many quit following Jesus, what is Peter's response?

Setting Matters Straight Between God and You

"Though the sins of you people should prove to be as scarlet,
they will be made white just like snow."—ISAIAH 1:18.

IF, BECAUSE of some past error or unkindness, strained relations existed between you and another, how would you respond to these words: "Come now, and let us reason together"? That could be an invitation to sit down for a give-and-take, with mutual concessions and compromise. Each could present his view, and each

- 1, 2. (a) What might you imagine if someone said: "Come now, and let us reason together"?
- (b) Why ought we not expect to have a give-and-take with God?

might then concede some measure of fault or misunderstanding.

² But could you imagine that the Creator would in that sense plead, "Come now, and let us reason together," as Isaiah 1:18 reads in many Bibles? Not at all. None of us could expect to "argue it out" (*The New English Bible*) or to have a give-and-take with Jehovah, as if he might need to concede fault and to compromise. If, though, we want peace with God, what does Isaiah 1:18 require?



Snowy slopes of Mount Hermon, looking southwest across the upper Jordan Valley to the hills of Galilee

³ The Hebrew word rendered "reason together" basically means "decide, adjudge, prove." It has a legal flavor, implying more than two persons just reasoning together. A decision was involved.* (Genesis 31: 37, 42; Job 9:33; Psalm 50:21; Isaiah 2:4) Wilson's *Old Testament Word Studies* offers the meaning "to be right; to reason, to demonstrate what is right and true." God was commanding: "Come now, let us set things right" (*The New American Bible*) or, "Let us set matters straight."

⁴ Jehovah God used the prophet Isaiah to deliver this potent message. Who was Isaiah, and why was his message appropriate in his time? Moreover, how can we benefit from it?

⁵ At the mention of "prophet," many today might conjure up thoughts of some ascetic young man who was proclaiming his distorted view of reality. Others might think of an old eccentric who styles himself a judge of prevailing conditions. How different from such was the balanced and rational man Isaiah, whom Jehovah God used to write the Bible book bearing his name!

⁶ "Isaiah the son of Amoz" lived in Judah and actively served Jehovah "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah"—over 40 years. Modestly, Isaiah did not provide much information about himself. Tradition says that he was related to Judah's royal family. We know for sure that he was a family man whose wife bore him two sons. He may

* Dr. E. H. Plumptre explains: "The [rendering in the *King James Version*] suggests the thought of a discussion between equals. The Hebrew implies rather the tone of one who gives an authoritative *ultimatum*, as from a judge to the accused."

3. What is the proper sense of the Hebrew word sometimes translated "reason together" at Isaiah 1:18?

4-6. Who was Isaiah, and when did he serve as a prophet?

have remarried after she died, becoming father to another son, prophetically named Immanuel.—Isaiah 1:1; 7:3, 14; 8:3, 18.

⁷ There are similarities between Isaiah's time and ours. You have seen that we live in a time of international tension, of wars or threats thereof. While religious and political leaders who claim to worship God project themselves as examples to be followed, we regularly see press reports of their financial and moral scandals. How does God view such leaders, especially those linked with Christendom? What lies ahead for them and for those following them? In the book of Isaiah, we find divine comments that are most relevant to such current matters. We also find lessons for each of us as we personally strive to serve God.

Prophet to a Guilty Nation

⁸ Reading the book of Isaiah, you will find messages about the guilt of Judah and Jerusalem, historical details of enemy invasions, pronouncements of desolation for surrounding nations, and encouraging predictions of restoration and salvation for Israel. This is written in a vivid, gripping style. Dr. I. Slotki says: "Scholars pay wholehearted tribute to Isaiah's brilliance of imagination and his picturesque and graphic descriptions, his command of powerful metaphor, alliteration, assonance, and the fine balance and rhythmic flow of his sentences." Let us examine in particular the opening message of Isaiah—that found in chapter 1.

⁹ The prophet does not state exactly when he wrote this chapter. Isaiah 6:1-13

7. Why should we be interested in Isaiah's prophecy?

8. What does the book of Isaiah contain, and in what style was it written?

9. What do we know about the time and circumstances of the writing of Isaiah chapter 1?

dates from the year that King Uzziah died. So if it was earlier that Isaiah recorded his opening chapters, they may reflect the situation below the surface during Uzziah's kingship. Basically, Uzziah (829-777 B.C.E.) "kept doing what was right in Jehovah's eyes," so God blessed his reign with prosperity. Yet, we know that all was not well, for "the people were still sacrificing and making sacrificial smoke on the high places" before God struck Uzziah (or, Azariah) with leprosy for presumptuously offering incense in the temple. (2 Chronicles 26:1-5, 16-23; 2 Kings 15:1-5) The underlying badness in Uzziah's time may have led to the crop of wickedness we read about involving his grandson King Ahaz (762-745 B.C.E.), which also might be what Isaiah was describing. But more important than a specific date for chapter 1 is what moved God to say: "Let us set matters straight between us."

¹⁰ Isaiah frankly proclaimed: "Woe to the sinful nation, the people heavy with error, an evildoing seed, ruinous sons! They have left Jehovah, they have treated the Holy One of Israel with disrespect, they have turned backwards. . . . The whole head is in a sick condition, and the whole heart is feeble. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no sound spot in it." (Isaiah 1:4-6) King Ahaz' 16-year rule was marked by rank idolatry. He burned "his sons [as sacrifices] in the fire, according to the detestable things of the nations . . . And he regularly . . . made sacrificial smoke on the high places and upon the hills and under every sort of luxuriant tree." (2 Chronicles 28:1-4; 2 Kings 16:3, 4) Injustice, bribery, and immorality were rife among the princes, who were more fit to be rulers in ancient

10. During King Ahaz' reign, what situation prevailed in Judah, especially among the leaders?

Sodom. (Isaiah 1:10, 21-23; Genesis 18:20, 21) Certainly, God could not approve of them. And with such leaders, how would the people fare?

¹¹ The prophet Isaiah illustrated the deplorable situation of the people by mentioning the sacred trees and gardens where they offered idolatrous sacrifices and burned incense to pagan deities. These "mighty trees" would become a cause for shame. (Isaiah 1:29; 65:3) Transferring the imagery to the idolaters themselves, Isaiah wrote: "You will become like a big tree the foliage of which is withering, and like a garden that has no water." (Isaiah 1:30) Yes, people leaving Jehovah would "come to their finish." They would become like tow (combustible pieces of flax), and their idols would become a spark—both to be consumed.—Isaiah 1:28, 31.

¹² Now compare that with the situation today. Within a month's time, the press in the United States reported: A leading presidential candidate withdrew in a scandal over reports of his "womanizing"; a prominent clergyman was replaced after confessing to adultery and being accused of homosexuality, wife swapping, and misusing funds to pay hush money. (He "reportedly had drawn an astounding \$4.6 million in compensation since 1984." *Time*, May 11, 1987) In Austria last year, the Abbot of Rein 'was dismissed and charged with squandering \$6 million on a hunting lodge and parties for members of the former ruling family and for young women of less noble background.' You probably could give other examples of such leaders. What do you think God's view of them is?

¹³ As to the people in general, there is

11. How should we understand Isaiah 1:29, 30?
12, 13. What similarities can be drawn between our time and Isaiah's?



Isaiah said that 'an ass knows its owner's manger.' What lesson is there in this?

increasing religious polarization. Some turn from religion in disgust or apathy. For instance, merely 3 percent of England's population attend the established church. At the other pole, we find extreme religiousness. This is evident in the growing charismatic churches, with their emotional appeal of being "saved," speaking in tongues, or seeing the sick "healed." Crowds flock to shrines hoping for miracles. Others make sacrifices as acts of "faith," such as crawling on bleeding knees to see the Virgin of Guadalupe [Mexico City]. A newspaper said: "While to outsiders her existence and the fervor with which she is worshiped might seem a blatant mixing of Christianity and paganism, the Virgin is arguably the most important figure in Mexican Catholicism."

How Can You Gain His Favor?

¹⁴ Jehovah God leaves no confusion as to his view of those who claim to be on

14. Through Isaiah, how did Jehovah make it clear that He does not accept all who claim to worship Him?

his side but who will not "worship the Father with spirit and truth." (John 4:23) If a nation, a religious group, or a person is not acting in accord with God's revealed standards, any religious displays are pointless. For instance, religious festivals and sacrifices were a required part of true worship in ancient Israel. (Leviticus, chapters 1-7, 23) Yet, Isaiah set out God's view—displeasure with the unfaith-

ful Jews keeping those observances. God said: "When you spread out your palms, I hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I am not listening." (Isaiah 1:11-15) That is just as true today. Rather than mere religious ceremonies or memorized creeds and prayers, God wants prayers and right deeds that come from the heart.

¹⁵ Our knowing that provides the basis for hope. Humans can win God's favor. How? Isaiah urged: "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the badness of your dealings from in front of my eyes; cease to do bad. Learn to do good; search for justice." At this point Isaiah presented God's command: "Come, now, you people, and let us set matters straight between us." So Jehovah was not asking for a session between equals who would sit down for a give-and-take. God knew what was right, or straight. His judgment was:

15. Why does Isaiah 1:18 give us reason for hope, and what is the meaning of the words, 'Come and let us set matters straight'?

Any changes that are needed are to be on the part of humans, who needed to conform to his just and righteous standards. That is so today too. Change is possible, with resulting favor. Even someone whose course has been unquestionably bad can change. Isaiah wrote: "Though the sins of you people should prove to be as scarlet, they will be made white just like snow." —Isaiah 1:16-18.

¹⁶ There is a tendency, however, to note such counsel but to think that it applies to others. Evidently, many in Isaiah's day did that. Actually, each individual should examine himself. If a Christian is guilty of serious sin, be it lying, fraud, sexual immorality, or other grave wrongs, repentance and works befitting repentance are vital. (Acts 26:20) Commendably, some have acted to 'set matters straight between them and Jehovah.' For example, *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1985, discussed the matter of rectifying faults that might be secret to outsiders but are observed by God. (Matthew 6:6; Philippians 4:13) Three areas for attention were mentioned: secretly accepting a blood transfusion, masturbation, and alcohol abuse. Af-

16. How have some responded to Bible-based advice concerning wrongdoing?

Points for Review

- What was meant by the command to 'come and set matters straight' with God?
- How was Isaiah's time similar to ours?
- What did Isaiah show was needed for individuals to gain God's favor?
- Aside from gross sin, in what areas might we need to set matters straight between us and God?

ter considering that material, quite a number of readers wrote letters of appreciation; they admitted that they had had those faults, but they had been moved to repent and change.

¹⁷ Of course, most Christians who are considering this matter are not guilty of gross misconduct. Nevertheless, Isaiah's message still ought to move us to a heart-searching examination. Might we need to set some matter straight with God? An essential element of Isaiah's message was right heart motive. Regarding prayer, one might ask: 'Do my prayers come from my heart, and to the best of my ability, are my actions consistent with my prayers?' Some making such an examination have seen room for improvement. They had been praying for increased knowledge of God's will, yet they spent little time studying the Bible and Christian publications. Others had been praying to have a greater share in the ministry, but they pursued a life-style that allowed for no cutback in their income by reducing their secular work. Or have you prayed that God bless your disciple making? To what extent, then, do you work at being a more effective teacher? Have you conscientiously increased your making of return visits and been willing to commit time to conducting a regular Bible study with another? Exerting yourself in line with your prayers will show that you sincerely want God to listen.

¹⁸ It is altogether proper that each of us strive to have all aspects of our life 'set straight' with God, our Creator. Note how Isaiah reasoned along this line: "A bull well knows its buyer, and the ass the manger of its owner; Israel itself has not

17. Even if we are not committing gross wrongs, how can Isaiah 1:18 apply to us and help us?

18. Why should we give attention to setting things straight between us and God?

known, my own people have not behaved understandingly." (Isaiah 1:3) None of us would like to be depicted as less knowing or appreciative than a bull or an ass. That description would apply, though, if we felt that we did not need to work at learning about our Life-Giver and his requirements and then earnestly trying to live accordingly.

¹⁹ Isaiah offered his people reason for optimism. He said that their standing before Jehovah could be transformed into a pure one. It could be like a crimson-red cloth that would become as white as wool

19. What prospect did Isaiah outline for those setting matters straight with God, and what meaning does this have for us?

or as the snow blanketing Mount Hermon's peak. (Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 51:7; Daniel 7:9; Revelation 19:8) Even if the majority did not respond, and thus the nation was given to the sword and into captivity, a faithful remnant could return. Likewise, we can gain Jehovah's favor, perhaps with the assistance of conscientious overseers, who serve in the congregation as loving 'judges and counselors.' (Isaiah 1:20, 24-27; 1 Peter 5:2-4; Galatians 6:1, 2) So be assured, you can set matters straight between God and you. Or, if you already have God's favor, you can strengthen your relationship with him. That truly is worth your every effort.

Will You Say, "Here I Am! Send Me"?

"Jehovah [said]: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I proceeded to say: 'Here I am! Send me.'"—ISAIAH 6:8.

WE ARE happy to send our letter of acceptance to go to Colombia. We have enjoyed our privilege of service here in Ecuador much more than this typewriter can describe." Thus began a letter from two of Jehovah's Witnesses who had gone to Ecuador where a new branch office for the Watch Tower Society was being built.

² These ministers went to Ecuador to do more than help on the building; they could also help as Christian teachers. They write: "We have found that the field service is one of the most important things. Just three weeks ago, eight of us went out

to an open market and placed 73 books and over 40 magazines. The week before, we started two new Bible studies. We can truly see the need for the new branch. My wife and I would like to thank you for the privilege to continue in this special form of full-time service" now in Colombia.

³ This couple, and hundreds of others who have offered to be sent to a foreign country, reflect a spirit similar to the prophet Isaiah's. When he heard Jehovah say: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah replied: "Here I am! Send me." God then commanded: "Go, and you

1, 2. What special reason for happiness did one couple have?

3. How have many reflected a spirit similar to that which Isaiah showed?

must say to this people, 'Hear again and again, O men, but do not understand.'" (Isaiah 6:8, 9) For what was Isaiah volunteering to be sent, and what resulted therefrom? And what can we learn from this account in terms of modern parallels and of any personal lessons for us?

Isaiah's Commission to Preach

⁴ Jehovah God asked Isaiah, "Whom shall I send?" in the year that King Uzziah died. (Isaiah 6:1) That was 777 B.C.E., or about a century and three quarters before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and desolated the land of Judah. Jehovah could see that sad development coming, and he commissioned Isaiah to deliver a message about it. What can we learn from his preaching commission?

⁵ As we would have been, so Isaiah must have been profoundly impressed by the setting in which he received his commission. He wrote: "I . . . got to see Jehovah, sitting on a throne lofty and lifted up, and his skirts were filling the temple. Seraphs were standing above him. Each one had six wings. With two he kept his face covered, and with two he kept his feet covered, and with two he would fly about. And this one called to that one and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of armies. The fullness of all the earth is his glory.'"—Isaiah 6:1-3.

⁶ Isaiah knew that Uzziah had been struck with leprosy when he, not being of the priestly tribe, presumptuously invaded the Holy of the temple to offer incense. So, what a privilege for Isaiah to view the very presence of God! Isaiah, an imperfect human, did not literally see Jehovah, but he was permitted to see Him in a vision. (Exodus 33:20-23) The grandness of this

4, 5. (a) What situation prevailed when Isaiah received the vision recorded in chapter 6?
(b) What did Isaiah see in this vision?

6. Why was it a privilege for Isaiah to see what he did?

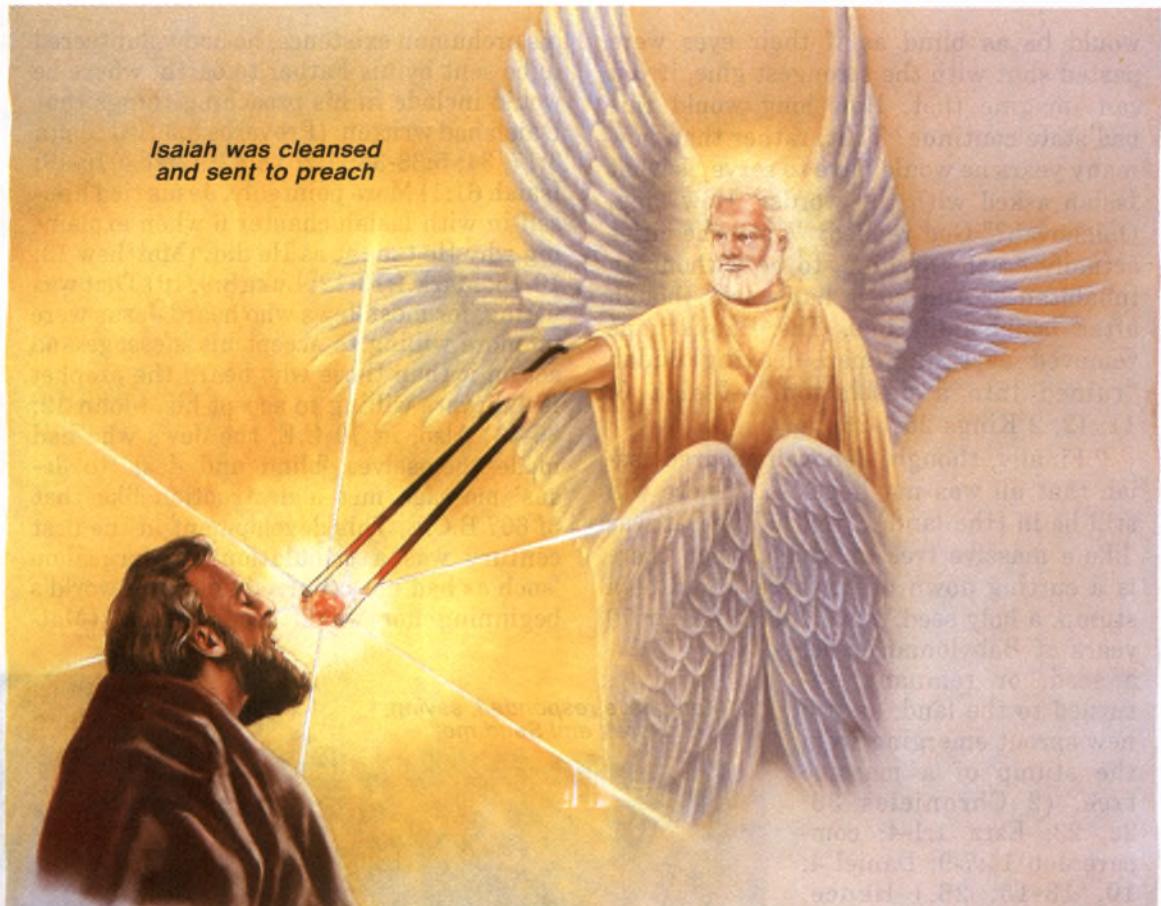
was highlighted by angels of high rank (seraphs) who attended at Jehovah's throne. They, sensing God's holiness, respectfully covered their 'faces.' Beyond this self-effacing act, they emphatically proclaimed God's holiness. What effect do you imagine that all of this would have on a human?

⁷ Let Isaiah answer. "I proceeded to say: 'Woe to me! For I am as good as brought to silence, because a man unclean in lips I am, and in among a people unclean in lips I am dwelling; for my eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of armies, himself!'" (Isaiah 6:5) Isaiah knew that he was a spokesman for God, yet this vision impressed on him that he was unclean, not having the pure lips that would befit a spokesman of this glorious and holy King. Some of us, too, may at times have been struck by our sinfulness, not feeling worthy to approach God in prayer, much less to have his name called upon us. Isaiah's further experience should, then, be encouraging.

⁸ One of the attending seraphs flew to him with a fiery coal from the altar of animal sacrifice. Touching the coal to Isaiah's mouth, the angel said: "Look! This has touched your lips, and your error has departed and your sin itself is atoned for." (Isaiah 6:6, 7) In the days of Solomon, fire from heaven evidenced that Jehovah had accepted the altar of sacrifice, even though the offerings could not make even the priests completely clean before God. (2 Chronicles 7:1-3; Hebrews 10:1-4, 11) Still, when Isaiah had his uncleanness cauterized away by the fiery coal, he could accept Jehovah's judgment that his sinfulness was atoned for to the extent needed to receive a special preaching commission. What interesting portents

7. How did Isaiah react, and why might we have felt similarly?
8. An angel performed what service, with what effect?

*Isaiah was cleansed
and sent to preach*



does this suggest regarding the future?

⁹ This amazing experience led up to the prophet's receiving the preaching commission mentioned. (Isaiah 6:8, 9) But why was Isaiah to say that the people would repeatedly hear but still not get any knowledge? God's voice added: "Make the heart of this people unreceptive, and make their very ears unresponsive, and paste their very eyes together, that they may not see . . . and that they may not actually turn back and get healing." (Isaiah 6:10) Does that mean that Isaiah, by bluntness or tactlessness, should repel the Jews so that they would remain at odds with Jeho-

9. What was the tenor of Isaiah's message?

vah? No. This was simply an indication of how most Jews would respond no matter how faithfully and thoroughly Isaiah fulfilled the preaching task for which he had volunteered by saying, "Here I am! Send me."

¹⁰ The fault lay with the people. Despite Isaiah's allowing them to "hear again and again," they would not take in knowledge or gain understanding. God stated beforehand that most, because of their stubborn and unspiritual attitude, would not respond. A minority might. But the majority

10. (a) Where did the fault lie as to the people's being as if blind and deaf? (b) What did Isaiah mean by asking, "How long?"

would be as blind as if their eyes were pasted shut with the strongest glue, if you can imagine that. How long would this bad state continue? That, rather than how many years he would have to serve, is what Isaiah asked with the words: "How long, O Jehovah?" God replied: "Until the cities actually crash in ruins, to be without an inhabitant." And so it happened, though after Isaiah's lifetime. The Babylonians removed earthling men, leaving Judah "ruined into a desolation."—Isaiah 6: 11, 12; 2 Kings 25:1-26.

¹¹ Finally, though, Jehovah assured Isaiah that all was not hopeless. "There will still be in [the land] a tenth." Yes, it was 'like a massive tree in which, when there is a cutting down of it, there would be a stump, a holy seed.' (Isaiah 6:13) After 70 years of Babylonian exile, a seed, or remnant, returned to the land, as if a new sprout emerging from the stump of a massive tree. (2 Chronicles 36: 22, 23; Ezra 1:1-4; compare Job 14:7-9; Daniel 4: 10, 13-15, 26.) Hence, while Isaiah's message was somber, it contained a consoling element. There is Scriptural reason, though, for us to view Isaiah as a pattern for future developments. How so?

Greater Fulfillments

¹² Centuries after Isaiah's death, one came whom we might call the Greater Isaiah—Jesus Christ. In

11. How did Isaiah's preaching offer consolation?
12. What Scriptural basis is there for calling Jesus the Greater Isaiah?

his prehuman existence, he had volunteered to be sent by his Father to earth, where he would include in his preaching things that Isaiah had written. (Proverbs 8:30, 31; John 3:17, 34; 5:36-38; 7:28; 8:42; Luke 4:16-19; Isaiah 61:1) More pointedly, Jesus tied himself in with Isaiah chapter 6 when explaining why He taught as He did. (Matthew 13: 10-15; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9, 10) That was fitting, for most Jews who heard Jesus were no more willing to accept his message and act on it than those who heard the prophet Isaiah were willing to accept his. (John 12: 36-43) Also, in 70 C.E. the Jews who had made themselves 'blind and deaf' to Jesus' message met a destruction like that of 607 B.C.E. This development in the first century was a tribulation on Jerusalem 'such as had not occurred since the world's beginning nor would occur again.' (Mat-

*Many have responded, saying,
"Here I am! Send me"*



thew 24:21) Yet, as Isaiah prophesied, a remnant, or "holy seed," exercised faith. These were formed into a spiritual nation, the anointed "Israel of God."—Galatians 6:16.

¹³ We now come to another Bible-based fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 6. As a key to understanding this, consider the words of the apostle Paul around the year 60 C.E. He explained why many Jews who heard him in Rome would not accept his "witness concerning the kingdom of God." The reason was that Isaiah 6:9, 10 was again being fulfilled. (Acts 28:17-27) Does this mean that after Jesus left the earthly scene, his anointed disciples were to carry out a commission comparable to Isaiah's? Yes, indeed!

¹⁴ Before the Greater Isaiah ascended to heaven, he said that his disciples would receive holy spirit and would thereafter "be witnesses of [him] both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Just as the sacrificial altar supplied what was needed for Isaiah's error to depart, so Jesus' sacrifice was the basis for his disciples' having their 'sin itself atoned for.' (Leviticus 6:12, 13; Hebrews 10:5-10; 13: 10-15) Thus, God could anoint them with holy spirit, which would also empower them to be 'witnesses to the most distant part of the earth.' Both the prophet Isaiah and the Greater Isaiah had been sent to proclaim God's message. Similarly, Jesus' anointed followers were "sent from God . . . in company with Christ."—2 Corinthians 2:17.

¹⁵ In modern times, particularly since the close of World War I, anointed Chris-

13. Why can we expect yet another fulfillment of Isaiah 6?

14. How were Jesus' disciples to do a work like Isaiah's?

15. What has been the general response to the preaching like that of Isaiah in our time, pointing to what future?

tians have seen the need to declare God's message. This includes the sobering fact that "the day of vengeance on the part of our God" is near. (Isaiah 61:2) Its devastation will be a blow especially to Christendom, which has long professed to be God's people, as did Israel of old. Despite decades of loyal preaching by God's anointed witnesses, most in Christendom have 'made their heart unreceptive and their ears unresponsive; their eyes are pasted together.' Isaiah's prophecy indicates that this will continue to be the case "until the cities actually crash in ruins, to be without an inhabitant, and the houses be without earthling man, and the ground itself is ruined into a desolation." This will mark the end of this wicked system of things.
—Isaiah 6:10-12.

"Send Me"

¹⁶ Today, there are millions of devoted Christians who have the Biblical hope of living everlasting on a paradise earth. On the basis of Jesus' sacrificial blood, this "great crowd" can have their sins forgiven to the extent now necessary. They also receive power and support through God's spirit as they join with the remaining number of anointed Christians in saying, "Here I am! Send me." Send them to do what? Paul says at Romans 10:13-15: "Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved." However, how will they call on him in whom they have not put faith? How, in turn, will they put faith in him of whom they have not heard? How, in turn, will they hear without someone to preach? How, in turn, will they preach unless they have been sent forth? Just as it is written [at Isaiah 52:7]: 'How comely are the feet of those who declare good news of good things!'”—Revelation 7:9-15.

16. Why can it be said that the "great crowd" are sharing in a work like that of Isaiah?

¹⁷ Recall that it was before he knew the full content of the message that Isaiah said, "Here I am! Send me." In contrast, we know what God wants declared now by those responding to his invitation: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" It includes forewarning about "the day of vengeance on the part of our God." Yet, the message also includes "good news of good things." For instance, those who are "sent forth" share in proclaiming "liberty to those taken captive and the wide opening of the eyes even to the prisoners." Should not doing that be a source of great satisfaction?—Isaiah 61:1, 2.

¹⁸ If you already are declaring "good news of good things," this review of Isaiah chapter 6 might prompt you to ask: How might I respond more fully in the spirit of Isaiah 6:8? As with the couple mentioned at the outset, hundreds have shared in the International Volunteer Construction Workers program. Many others, who lack construction skills, have moved to lands where the need for Kingdom preachers is greater. This is best done after seeking advice from the branch office of the Watch Tower Society. Of course, planning is vital, for language, living standards, job prospects, and other things may be vastly different in a foreign land. Yet, do not dismiss the possibility out of hand just because major adjustments might be required. Many who have the attitude "Here I am! Send me" have made such moves and have been richly blessed by God for so doing.—Compare Proverbs 24:27; Luke 14:28-30.

¹⁹ Still others—single brothers or sisters, married couples, even whole families—have moved elsewhere within their

17. Comparable to Isaiah's prophecy, what is the content of our message?

18, 19. In what special ways are many saying, "Send me"?

own land or area where there is a greater need for Kingdom preachers or for Christian overseers. (Acts 16:9, 10) Doing this may have required making sacrifices, such as obtaining another kind of secular work, perhaps one that paid less. Some have taken early retirement with a limited pension and found part-time work so as to have more time for the ministry. How fine it is when entire families say, "Here we are! Send us." This, too, reflects Isaiah's situation. His wife actively shared in doing God's will as a prophetess, and his sons were involved in prophetic messages. —Isaiah 7:3, 14-17; 8:3, 4.

²⁰ Even if your present circumstances do not permit such major changes, you can consider, 'Am I doing all I can where I am, imitating Isaiah's responsiveness?' Exert yourself in declaring God's message, even in inclement weather or in the face of public indifference; certainly, Isaiah did the same. Be zealous in speaking to others about the "good news of good things!" Jehovah has said, "Whom shall I send?" Prove that, like Isaiah of old, your response is, "Here I am! Send me" to proclaim His message.

20. With Isaiah 6:8 in mind, what should you consider?

Points for Review

- In what circumstances did Isaiah receive the vision of chapter 6, and what did he see?
- What kind of commission did Isaiah receive?
- Why can Jesus be called the Greater Isaiah, and how are his disciples involved in a work like Isaiah's?
- How can you display a spirit like that of Isaiah?

Insight on the News

Recipe for Disaster

"During the early days of television, violence was depicted less frequently and less realistically than it is today," notes Dr. Paul Wilson of the Australian Institute of Criminology. However, in describing what he considers to be the recipe for social disaster and anarchy, Wilson adds: "Now, blood gushes from body gashes and the death agony is captured in its lingering harshness. . . . Teenagers are axed to death and choke slowly from slashed necks and their death gurgles are lovingly captured by the camera."

In his article appearing in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Dr. Wilson commented on the difficulty news reporters experienced in capturing Australian public interest over the recent bloodless coup d'état in nearby Fiji. The reason? "Violence is the benchmark of modern entertainment," says Wilson. The news coverage by TV and press was accurate, carefully analyzed, and factual, but there were no "pulsating television images of violence and newspaper paragraphs describing riots," he explained.

How well this escalating lust to be entertained by violence fits the Bible's description of those living in "the last days" of the present system of things! In this critical final generation, men are described as being "without self-control,

fierce, without love of goodness."—2 Timothy 3:1, 3.

Monogamy or Polygamy?

Should the church accept members who have more than one marriage mate? To resolve this question, the Anglican Church in Uganda has appointed a group to study "polygamy and the Christian family." The Ecumenical Press Service reports that, according to one study-group member, Bishop Christopher Ssenyonyo, having more mates is not only acceptable but also beneficial. Why does he feel that way? Polygamous marriages, he claims, can help to curb the spread of the disease AIDS. On top of that, he asserts that polygamy is optional for Christians, saying that Christ will "transform our stale and tasteless marriages into sweet wine, be they monogamous or polygamous."

Yet, the Bible clearly shows that Jehovah God, the Originator of monogamous marriage, disagrees. He inspired the apostle Paul to write: "Let each man have his own wife and each woman have her own husband." (1 Corinthians 7:2) Significantly, Paul later wrote regarding the qualifications of those who shepherd the flock: "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife."—1 Timothy 3:2, King James Version.

Hence, true Christians in Africa, as elsewhere, view polygamy for what it is—a violation of God's law.

Preaching for a Price

Priests of the Lutheran Church of Sweden have been unhappy with their paychecks because, as reported, their salaries are "low in comparison with those paid to other professions with much shorter studies or training behind them." However, according to the news service of the World Council of Churches, things are now looking up. After "a long and partly bitter campaign," the priests have recently gained a 40-hour work-week. But what if the Swedes need priestly help after working hours? The new labor agreement also guarantees overtime payment for each extra hour of pastoral care. Such overtime wages are expected to increase their yearly salaries by 10 to 12 percent.

In contrast with the concern among Swedish priests for better wages for their services, when Jesus sent his disciples out to preach, he told them: "You received free, give free. Do not procure gold or silver or copper for your girdle purses." (Matthew 10: 8, 9) What did he mean? The Kingdom good news was not to be commercialized, nor was it to be used for selfish personal advantage. The disciples adhered to Jesus' direction, and their ministry was accomplished. Why? Because God sustained them in the ministry.

JEHOVAH had a purpose in endowing us with speech. (Exodus 4:11) Chiefly, it was that our lips might "bubble forth praise" to him. (Psalm 119:171, 172) As the psalmist David said: "All your works will laud you, O Jehovah, and your loyal ones will bless you. About the glory of your kingship they will talk, and about your mightiness they will speak, to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts and the glory of the splendor of his kingship. Your kingship is a kingship for all times indefinite, and your dominion is throughout all successive generations." —Psalm 145:10-13.

² Anointed followers of Jesus Christ and their companions of the "great crowd" are eager to praise Jehovah, the "King of eternity." (Revelation 7:9; 15:3) Through diligent study of the Bible with *The Watchtower* and other Christian publications as aids, we can acquire accurate knowledge about God that is like a spring of pure, refreshing, life-giving water. Thus, in our case 'the well of wisdom becomes a torrent bubbling forth.' (Proverbs 18:4) We are impelled to "bubble forth praise" in house-to-house witnessing and other forms of the field ministry. But there is also a Scriptural reason for informal witnessing.

Scriptural Precedents

³ The first preaching Jesus did after being anointed with holy spirit was at his lodging place, to which he invited John, Andrew, and apparently Peter. They spent the day there, obviously receiving quite a witness in that informal setting. (John 1:35-42) It was also under informal circumstances—"while passing along"—that Je-

1. Chiefly, why has Jehovah endowed us with speech?
2. We are impelled to "bubble forth praise" to God in what ways?
3. Please cite an example of informal witnessing on the part of Jesus Christ.

Talk About the Glory of God's Kingship

"About the glory of your kingship they will talk, and about your mightiness they will speak."

—PSALM 145:11.

sus saw Matthew at the tax office and got positive results when He said: "Be my follower." —Matthew 9:9.

⁴ Jesus was the best example of 'a torrent of wisdom bubbling forth.' Although he sat hungry and weary by Jacob's fountain near Sychar, he witnessed to a Samaritan woman who came along to draw water. "Whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty at all," said Jesus, "but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water bubbling up to impart everlasting life." This informal witnessing led to Jesus' preaching to a group that the woman stirred up to come together and hear what he had to say. —John 4:6-42.

⁵ Philip the evangelizer hailed a passing chariot and witnessed informally to its occupant, who was reading Isaiah's prophecy. Invited up into the chariot, Philip explained "the good news about Jesus" to

4. What did Jesus say when witnessing to a Samaritan woman, and this led to what?
5. Philip the evangelizer and the apostle Paul furnish what examples of informal witnessing?

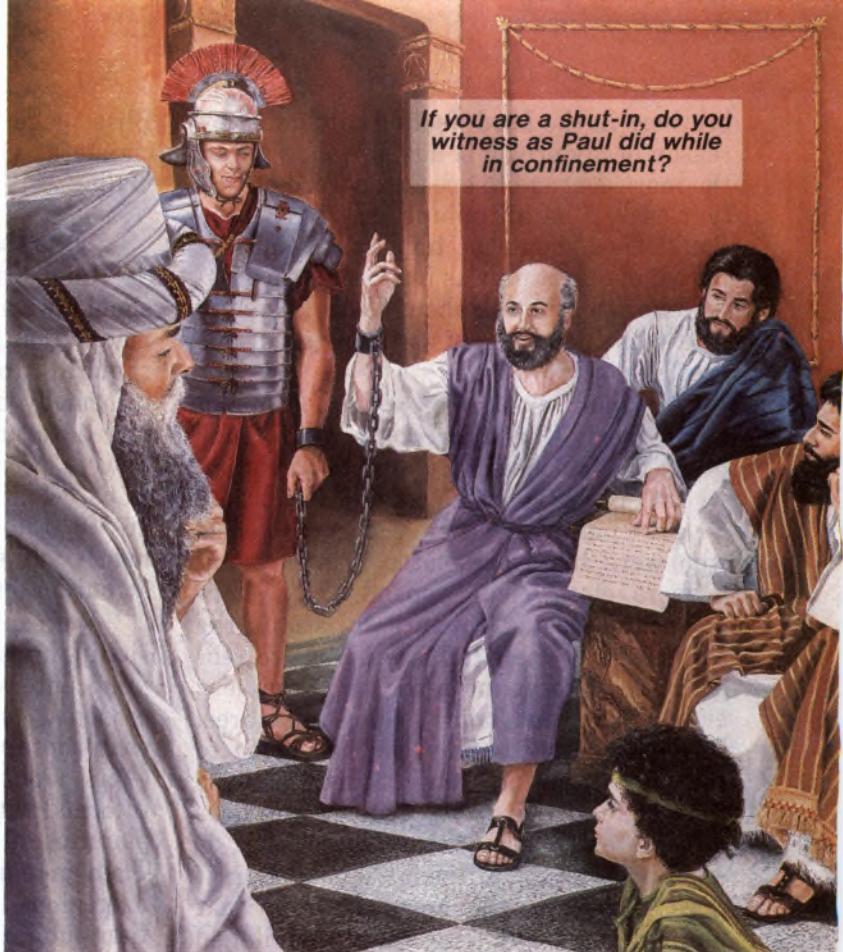
that Ethiopian eunuch, whose appreciative response resulted in his baptism. (Acts 8:26-38) When the apostle Paul's prison bonds were loosed in a great earthquake at Philippi, he witnessed informally to the jailer. The result? "One and all, he and his were baptized without delay."—Acts 16:19-34.

⁶ Today, informal witnessing is one means of declaring the good news where our Christian work is under restrictions. Even though we are persecuted, however, our hearts impel us to talk about the glory of God's kingship. After Stephen was stoned to death, most of the persecuted disciples were dispersed. Yet, they kept on declaring the good news, and doubtless informal witnessing was included in their Kingdom-preaching endeavors.—Acts 8:4-8; 11:19-21.

⁷ Informal witnessing is one way to talk about the glory of God's kingship if we are imprisoned or are confined to our homes because of illness or infirmity. Paul was confined for two years under Roman guard. But instead of pining away, he sent for an audience and "would kindly receive all those who came in to him, preaching the kingdom of God to them and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with the greatest freeness of

6. Informal witnessing likely played a part in what activities of Jesus' disciples after Stephen was stoned?

7. When confined, what did Paul do, this raising what question?



If you are a shut-in, do you witness as Paul did while in confinement?

speech." (Acts 28:16-31) What a fine example! If you are a shut-in witness of Jehovah, could you do something similar?

⁸ As Paul's guards shifted from time to time, different ones heard him talk to others about the glory of God's kingship. We can be sure, though, that he also witnessed directly to those guards. So effective was this informal witnessing that Paul could write: "My affairs have turned out for the advancement of the good news rather than otherwise, so that my bonds have become public knowledge in association with Christ among all the Praetorian Guard and all the rest; and most of the

8. How effective was Paul's informal witnessing?

brothers in the Lord, feeling confidence by reason of my prison bonds, are showing all the more courage to speak the word of God fearlessly." (Philippians 1:12-14) Like Paul, if we should be imprisoned and deprived of opportunities for formal witnessing, we can still talk about God's kingship. And what courage this will instill in our brothers!

⁹ Informal witnessing was so common among early Christians that even of later years it could be said: "From a Christian writer, probably in Carthage about 200, we get a picture . . . [that] concerns people who were highly educated. Three young lawyers, close friends, spend a day's holiday at the seaside. Two are Christians, the third pagan. Their talk soon turns to religion . . . The account of the long argument ends, 'We went home happy, all three. One was happy because he had come to the Christian faith, the others because they had led him to it.' The writing does not pretend to be actual history; it is an *Apology*, by Minucius Felix. But it does represent the sort of thing that happened among the more privileged people." (*Church History 1—The First Advance: AD 29—500*, by John Foster, pages 46, 48) Yes, and this account shows that informal witnessing had not died out among professing Christians of that time.

¹⁰ Concerning the early Christians, it has also been stated: "There was simply a constantly increasing number of individual Christian believers, who, wherever they went, whether on their regular business or driven by persecution, preached Christ . . . Of those who made their trade, their profession, their every-day occupation, of whatever sort, the means of extending their faith, there was a multitude." (*The Missionary Enterprise*, by Edwin Munsell

9, 10. What secular evidence is there that early Christians witnessed informally?

Bliss, page 14) Yes, early Kingdom proclaimers witnessed formally and informally.

Forethought and Preparation

¹¹ Like Jesus and his early followers, we should witness both formally and informally. Doing so effectively requires forethought and preparation. To witness informally or give instruction, Jesus referred to children, food, clothing, birds, flowers, weather conditions, and occupations. (Matthew 4:18, 19; 6:25-34; 11: 16-19; 13:3-8; 16:1-4) We too can use nearly any subject as a basis for focusing attention on God's truth.

¹² We can witness informally to people sitting in parks, standing in lines at shopping centers, and so forth. In Athens, Paul reasoned "every day in the marketplace with those who happened to be on hand." (Acts 17:17) But we need to prepare for informal witnessing. For instance, are you planning a trip by plane, train, or bus? Then take along a Bible and some tracts, magazines, or brochures. Reading Christian publications on public transportation or elsewhere often sparks a conversation.

¹³ A friendly introduction obviously comes first. The handbook *Reasoning From the Scriptures* suggests introductions for use in the field ministry, but some of these can be modified for use when witnessing informally. For example, if while traveling you are seated next to an elderly person, you might say: "My name is _____. I've been thinking quite a lot about the purpose of life. Many people are so busy making a living that they hardly have time to think about life's pur-

11. What can we learn from Jesus about focusing attention on God's truth?
12. When planning a trip, how can one prepare for informal witnessing?
13. Illustrate how you might start witnessing to an elderly person while traveling.

pose. As we get up in years, though, we realize that life is rather short and may wonder: 'Is this all that life is meant to be?' Do you think that God has a purpose for our existence?" Allow for a response. Then you might speak about God's purpose for mankind and comment on the grand things promised at Revelation 21:3, 4. For effective informal witnessing, you can also apply other fine points learned at congregation meetings and in Christian publications.

Good Results Can Be Expected

¹⁴ Like Jesus and his early followers, we can have success when witnessing informally. To illustrate: During a plane trip, one Witness spoke to a military officer who had been married for 20 years. That man's wife was on drugs, had attempted suicide several times, and was about to leave him for a younger man. When the Witness spoke of the Scriptural help that he was receiving from *The Watchtower* and its companion journal *Awake!*, the officer subscribed and wanted to have the magazines sent to his wife. Other passengers heard what the Witness said. The result? Why, because of witnessing on that occasion, he obtained 22 subscriptions and placed 45 magazines and 21 books!

¹⁵ What about witnessing informally to fellow workers? One brother left copies of our journals in the washroom at his place

14. What success did one brother have in witnessing informally during a trip?

15, 16. (a) Give examples of successful informal witnessing to fellow workers. (b) What do these results suggest to you?

Advance preparation will enable us to witness informally in an effective way



of employment. A workmate read the magazines, contacted the brother, and subscribed for them. The man also accepted a Bible study and abandoned his debauched life, but his wife left the house every time God's name was mentioned. When the man wanted to resign from the local church, the minister came to discuss this, finding only the man's wife home. The minister's lack of faith and his lies about Jehovah's Witnesses shocked her, for she had seen her husband change for the better. She told the minister: "You can write a certificate of resignation for me and the children too!" In time, this man and his wife became baptized Witnesses.

¹⁶ Years ago, a brother now living in the United States witnessed informally to a coworker in England and took the young man to a film showing arranged by Jehovah's Witnesses. Thirty-one years later,

the brother received this letter: "I would like to tell you now that the witness you gave [the young man] paid off, for about two years later another brother spoke to him, placed magazines, and took him along to the local Kingdom Hall . . . He became a Witness, was baptized in 1959, and now is an elder in his congregation . . . After some 14 years his wife became a Witness and was baptized also. Two years later his daughter was baptized and is now a regular pioneer in North Derbyshire . . . From that bit of witnessing you did way back there in Ashford, that chap, his wife and daughter, a cousin and her daughter, husband and five children, and one child of the cousin's other daughter all became Witnesses. . . . I would like to thank you, Ted, very much indeed, for I am the steel erector, and the story I have just related is my own story of your witness to me and how it all turned out."

¹⁷ You younger servants of Jehovah also have a fine witnessing territory—your schoolmates and teachers. Do you give an informal witness in essays, oral reviews, and so forth? As source material for an essay, an Ecuadorean high school student with whom a Bible study was being conducted used the August 22, 1985, *Awake!*

17. What opportunities for informal witnessing do younger servants of Jehovah have?

What Are Your Answers?

- Informal witnessing has what Scriptural basis?
- What are some ways to prepare for informal witnessing?
- If we witness informally, what results may we expect?
- How should we view informal witnessing in relation to regular field ministry?

cover series "Hiroshima—Has Its Lesson Been Lost?" Her composition won the commendation of judges in an international contest and resulted in a free trip to Japan. Of course, the winning of contests is not the purpose of Christian publications. But this illustrates the value of such literature and the effectiveness of giving a witness to God's praise in school.

¹⁸ For financial reasons, a sister had to rent out a room. Upon receiving a telephone inquiry about it, she told the female caller that she was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and could not permit promiscuity in her home. Visitors would have to leave at an early hour, and male visitors would have to be visible at all times. The caller hesitated, then said: "I studied when I was a teenager, but it didn't impress me. So I went to college." Asked if she wished to resume her Bible study, she replied, "Yes." In time, the caller, her mother, and her sister became dedicated servants of Jehovah—all because a sister witnessed informally.

¹⁹ In the Bahamas a certain Catholic woman's conscience bothered her because she had not been to church for five years. So one rainy Sunday morning, she set out on the road to church. Along came three Witnesses, who gave her a car ride—and a witness. When they got to the church, she wanted to hear more and remained with them as they drove on to pick up a Bible student. They again passed the church, yet she wanted to hear more and so went on to the Kingdom Hall. The public talk was on the very subject discussed in the car. A Bible study was started with the woman, who dismissed the man with whom she was living (the father of her four children), and she was baptized

18. What resulted from giving a brief witness to a person seeking to rent a room?

19. How did informal witnessing turn out in the case of a woman in the Bahamas?

during a convention in Nassau in 1986. How happy she was that someone witnessed to her informally!

Keep Talking About God's Kingship!

²⁰ Witnessing informally is no substitute for the regular field ministry of Jehovah's Witnesses. Preaching from house to house clearly is both Scriptural and effective. (Acts 5:42; 20:20, 21) Nevertheless, informal witnessing is fruitful, and Jehovah's servants should share in it. Wherever there are people—relatives, fellow students, workmates, others—there are opportunities to talk about the glory of God's kingship. So let neither fear nor timidity hinder you. (Proverbs 29:25;

20. (a) How should informal witnessing be viewed in relation to the field ministry? (b) What is suggested if one is reluctant to witness informally?

2 Timothy 1:6-8) If you are reluctant to witness informally, why not pray as did Jesus' persecuted disciples? They pleaded: "Jehovah, . . . grant your slaves to keep speaking your word with all boldness." Was their prayer answered? Yes, for "the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were one and all filled with the holy spirit and were speaking the word of God with boldness."—Acts 4:23-31.

²¹ So, then, cultivate a positive attitude toward informal witnessing. Let love for God move you to give a witness under all kinds of circumstances. Be enthusiastic, virtually bubbling with the truth at every opportunity. Indeed, keep talking about the glory of God's kingship.

21. What will motivate a person to give a witness under all circumstances?

Opening the Way to Increase in Gibraltar

THE stadium is in full view of Gibraltar—only about a mile away. Yet, for more than 13 years, the Gibraltarians had to make a journey of at least ten hours to get there. It involved a voyage by sea first to North Africa, then back to Spain, and finally a ride by bus. Why so long a journey to get to a point so close?

In 1969 Spain's Franco regime closed the border at the narrow isthmus connecting Spain and Gibraltar. It was the result of a dispute between Spain and Britain over territorial sovereignty regarding the Rock, as Gibraltar is often called. Such an inconvenience, however, was not new for the Gibraltarians. Be-

cause of its unique strategic importance, Gibraltar has been a fortress often isolated from neighboring countries.

Early in the eighth century, Moorish invaders under Tārik captured this piece of land and named it "Jabal Tāriq" (Tārik's mountain), which has since been corrupted to "Gibraltar." The Moors strongly fortified the Rock, which rises about 1,400 feet above sea level. Over the centuries, it was the scene of numerous sieges by the Moors and the Spaniards. The Spaniards finally took over Gibraltar in 1462, holding it till 1704, when the British captured it and built a naval base there.



In addition to the garrison, people from many countries settled in the town that lies at the foot of the Rock, giving rise to a mixed population descended largely from Moorish, Spanish, British, Hebrew, and Genoese settlers. The majority of the population now speak Spanish and English.

Bible Truth Reaches Gibraltar

In modern times, seeds of Bible truth were first planted in Gibraltar in the summer of 1958. Jehovah's Witnesses traveling to attend a convention in London, England, took advantage of their port of call at Gibraltar to preach the good news of the Kingdom. Some residents accepted subscriptions to *The Watchtower*.

A missionary couple arrived in Gibraltar the following year to water these "seeds." But the authorities yielded to the pressure from religious leaders and expelled the couple after two years. Yet, a small group of some 25 Witnesses had been formed, and their faithful work over the years has been rewarded by a steady increase, reaching 132 Kingdom proclaimers in March 1987. Certainly, this growth testifies to the endurance of the

congregation in the face of problems peculiar to Gibraltar.

Isolation—A Unique Problem

Apart from the economic and social problems that subsequently arose from the border closing, Jehovah's Witnesses were severely hampered in associating with others of their faith in neighboring congregations in Spain. During the 13 years of the land blockade, however, they did not miss out on the rich spiritual food offered at both the circuit assemblies and district conventions. The program was always repeated later at the local Kingdom Hall in Gibraltar.

The forced isolation posed a special test for the younger ones of the congregation. Restricted to the 2.25-square-mile area of Gibraltar, they had to act wisely to face the issues of nationalism, materialism, and marriage.

Marriage? Yes, for being restricted to just their small congregation limited their opportunity of finding a suitable marriage mate. Female members of the congregation were besieged by invitations from worldly youths who wanted to date them. The young Witnesses in Gibraltar had to

take to heart the wise counsel of the Bible to marry "only in the Lord."—1 Corinthians 7:39; compare Genesis 24:1-4.

In one case a young Witness, ignoring the counsel from the Author of marriage, started dating a local girl who was not a member of the congregation. But the patient help of the elders in the congregation made him think more seriously about the dangers involved. Finally, he approached his girlfriend and told her that although he felt strong affection for her, his Bible knowledge obligated him to terminate their relationship. 'I want to marry a girl with whom I can live forever, not just for a few years,' he explained.

Though surprised and upset, she was intrigued over just what it was that could interest him more than her companionship. Eventually she started to study the Bible. What began as curiosity blossomed into genuine interest, and she made rapid progress in the truth and was baptized. After this clear indication of her desire to serve Jehovah, the brother renewed the courtship. Some time later they were happily married, reaping the blessing of following Jehovah's wise counsel on marriage.

Border Opening Leads to Theocratic Increase

December 14, 1982, saw the opening of a pedestrian gate on the border. Then on February 6, 1985, free passage was completely restored. The populace fell into a more relaxed atmosphere. Capitalizing on this development, the local congregation stepped up their witnessing work and utilized the occasions to meet together in larger gatherings. Favorably disposed persons now had greater opportunities to come to know the love and harmony that exists among Jehovah's congregational throngs.

For example, a man whose wife had

been a Witness for some 20 years decided to accept the invitation to accompany his wife and children as they attended a circuit assembly in Spain. He enjoyed the program and association so much that he decided to stay for the second day. When the assembly concluded, he was offered a home Bible study. "Why not?" he replied, adding, "How about starting this week?" His wife, after long years of praying for such an outcome, was overjoyed.

To make full use of the additional opportunities for preaching, the number of Witnesses serving as auxiliary pioneers (those who devote 60 hours a month to the public ministry) increased. Such zealous activity has brought about a 35-percent increase in the congregation since 1982.

Informal witnessing has also played a large part in the growth of the congregation. Two Witnesses making an inspection at the port during their secular work noticed a New World Translation Bible that was just barely visible through the porthole of a yacht. Immediately, they looked up the owner. He turned out to be the pier master, who had studied with Jehovah's Witnesses in Britain before recently settling in Gibraltar. He readily renewed his study and made rapid progress together with his lady companion. Soon they legalized their marital status

In Our Next Issue

- **Religion and Superstition
—Friends or Foes?**
- **Are You Remaining Clean
in Every Respect?**
- **Religion's Tidal Wave
—The Final Reckoning**

and were baptized. This British couple now devote much of the time they spend in the ministry working among the English-speaking community and have been instrumental in the formation of a study group there.

One Bible study they started was with Tim and Tracy, a young married couple living in a military barracks. Although Tim played the trombone in the regiment's band, he became determined to devote himself wholly to the peaceful Kingdom interests of Jehovah. Relatives brought pressure on the couple, urging them to stop associating with the Witnesses. However, they continued their Bible study and became firmer in their faith.

Tim requested a discharge, though he had originally enlisted for a six-year term. When the review of his case seemed to delay unnecessarily, Tim took the initiative to speak to the military doctor, explaining that the uncertainty of their future was adversely affecting his wife.

The doctor concurred and used his influence to speed up the review. Soon Tim was transferred back to England with his regiment, where he finally won his discharge. Now both are serving as dedicated Witnesses.

Future Prospects

With the border opened, the Witnesses in Gibraltar also have been able to give a helping hand to nearby Spanish congregations. They preach along the renowned Costa del Sol (Sun Coast), where many English-speaking people are found.

Although the "Gibraltar question" still remains unresolved from a political point of view, Jehovah's Witnesses in Gibraltar and Spain are completely united spiritually, as is true earth wide. They put their trust in the "Rock" whose strength is eternal, echoing the words of the psalmist: "O come let us cry out joyfully to Jehovah! Let us shout in triumph to our Rock of salvation."—Psalm 95:1.

Questions From Readers

- What was Moses' error that cost him the privilege of entering the Promised Land? Was it that he *hit* the rock instead of just *speaking* to it or that he failed to glorify Jehovah God?

It seems that Moses' error was more than just that he hit the rock instead of speaking to it, as God had directed.

Near the end of 40 years of wandering, the Israelites camped at Kadesh-barnea in the wilderness of Zin (or, Paran). They had camped there decades earlier, likely because three springs in the area produce a verdant oasis, such as seen in the accompanying photograph. On this occasion, though, water was scarce, which may have meant that the people could not find much food.

So they quarreled with Moses, Jehovah's representative, saying: "Why have you conducted us up out of Egypt to bring us into this evil place? It is no place of seed and figs and vines and pomegranates, and there is no water to drink."—Numbers 20:5.

Then God told Moses and Aaron: "Take the rod and call the assembly together, . . . and you must speak to the crag before their eyes that it may indeed give its water; and you must bring out water for them from the crag and give the assembly and their

beasts of burden drink." (Numbers 20:8) What happened next?

"Moses and Aaron called the congregation together before the crag, and he proceeded to say to them: 'Hear, now, you rebels! Is it from this crag that we shall bring out water for you?' With that Moses lifted his hand up and struck the crag with his rod twice; and much water began to come out."—Numbers 20:10, 11.

Some have noted that God directed Moses and Aaron to "speak to the crag," but they "struck the crag." Did this difference so displease Jehovah that he told Moses and Aaron that He would not permit them to lead Israel into the Promised Land?

*Springtime at oasis around one
of the springs in the area
of Kadesh-barnea*



It does not seem so. The fact is that just months after the Exodus, the people had first complained over lack of water. This was near Mount Sinai (Horeb), at a place that came to be called Meribah (in the area seen below). Note what God told Moses on that occasion: "I am standing before you there on the rock in Horeb. And you must strike on the rock, and water must come out of it, and the people must drink it." (Exodus 17:2-7; 33:6) So when, at Kadesh, Moses was told to

speak to the rock, he might have been inclined to do what he had earlier done at God's direction, even if God meant that *speaking* to the rock would be sufficient.

It seems that something more led to God's judgment of Moses and Aaron. What might that have been? Moses said to the quarrelsome people: "Is it from this crag that we shall bring out water for you?" Psalm 106:33 gives us insight into this, for it shows that Moses acted out of a bitter spirit and that he 'spoke rashly with his

lips.' With angry words, he called attention to himself and Aaron rather than to the One who really could miraculously provide water. Thus, just before Moses died at the border of the Promised Land, God referred to the incident at Kadesh-barnea and indicated that Moses' error was that he failed to 'sanctify God before the eyes of the people.'—Numbers 27:12-14.

We can take a lesson from this. While it certainly is important to restrain ourselves from angry acts, it is equally vital to control our spirit, particularly when others fall short. If we let ourselves become overly disturbed, we might begin to view God's servants on a human basis, rather than recognizing that they still are God's "sheep." True, they are imperfect and may do irritating things, but they are "his people and the sheep of his pasturage." (Psalm 100:3) God let his Son die for such ones, so should we not strive to be patient with them, focusing less on how we feel or are affected and more on their standing with God?





She Missed the Bus

ONE day James saw his daughter Rebecca walking with unusual slowness to meet the school bus. Though Rebecca could see the bus coming, she walked even slower and deliberately missed the bus.

That same evening James and his wife, Veronica, discussed the matter by reviewing the story of "Jonah and the Big Fish" from *My Book of Bible Stories*. It was one of Rebecca's favorites. After finishing the story, the parents tied it in with their daughter's problem. She

really got the point and said: "Even though Jonah ran away and got into trouble in the sea, and he was swallowed by the fish and was vomited out —his work for Jehovah was still waiting for him to do."

The next day Rebecca went to school with a new attitude and *My Book of Bible Stories* under her arm.

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