

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

APRIL 15, 1996



**GOOD NEWS  
AHEAD!**

# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

April 15, 1996

Average Printing Each Issue: 18,950,000

Vol. 117, No. 8

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

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Publication of "The Watchtower" is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

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The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589. Printed in U.S.A.

# INCREASING INCIDENCE OF Bad News

HAVE you ever noticed that headlines proclaiming bad news awaken more reader interest than those conveying good news? Whether it is a newspaper headline of a natural disaster or some scintillating gossip splashed on the front cover of a glossy magazine, it seems that bad news sells better than good news.

Today there is no shortage of bad news. But one sometimes wonders whether bad news is what reporters and journalists are trained to look for and ferret out—to the exclusion of any good news.

## Plentiful Throughout History

Indeed, bad news has been plentiful throughout the centuries, outweighing any good news. In the annals of history, the scales are heavily tipped toward human suffering, disappointment, and despair, which have been mankind's lot.



WHO/League of Red Cross

Let us consider just a few examples. The book *Chronicle of the World*, devised by Jacques Legrand, sets out a collection of stories, each written for the particular date on which the event happened but as if it were being told by a modern journalist reporting the event. From these well-researched reports, we get a bird's-eye view of the widespread bad news that man has heard throughout his troubled existence here on planet Earth.

First, consider this early report from Greece in 429 B.C.E. It is covering the war then being waged between Athens and Sparta: "The city-state of Potidaea has been forced to surrender to the besieging Athenians after being reduced to such a state of hunger that its people have been eating the bodies of their dead." Bad news indeed!

Moving on to the first century before our Common Era, we find a graphic report of the death of Julius Caesar, datelined Rome,

March 15, 44 B.C. "Julius Caesar has been assassinated. He was stabbed to death by a group of conspirators, some of them his closest friends, as he took his seat in the Senate House today, the Ides of March."

During the centuries that followed, bad news continued to abound. One shocking example is this news from Mexico in 1487: "In the most spectacular sacrificial display ever seen in the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, 20,000 people have lost their hearts to Huitzilopochtli, the war god."

Not only has man's cruelty provided bad news but his carelessness has added to the long list. The great fire of London seems to have been one such disaster. The report from London, England, dated September 5, 1666, reads: "At last, after four days and nights, the fire of London has been halted by the duke of York, who brought in naval gunpowder teams to blow up buildings in the path of the flames. Some 400 acres have been razed with 87 churches and over 13,000 houses destroyed. Miraculously, only nine lives were lost."

We must add to these examples of bad news the epidemics that have raged through many continents—for example, the cholera epidemic of the early 1830's. The printed heading reporting this reads: "The spectre of cholera haunts Europe." The realistic report that follows depicts bad news at its frightening worst: "Cholera, unknown in Europe until 1817, is spreading westwards from Asia. Already Russian cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg have had their populations decimated—the majority of the victims from the urban poor."

### **Escalation in Recent Years**

So while it is true that bad news has been a fact of life throughout recorded history,

recent decades of this 20th century give evidence that bad news is on the increase, indeed it is escalating rapidly.

Undoubtedly, war news has been the worst kind of bad news our present century has heard. The two greatest wars in history—aptly called World War I and World War II—certainly saw bad news reported on a horrendous scale. But that really has only been a fraction of the bad news this unhappy century has furnished.

Consider just a few headlines selected at random:

September 1, 1923: Quake razes Tokyo—300,000 dead; September 20, 1931: Crisis—Britain devalues the pound; June 25, 1950: North Korea marches into the South; October 26, 1956: Hungarians rise against Soviet rule; November 22, 1963: John Kennedy is shot dead in Dallas; August 21, 1968: Russian tanks roll in to crush the Prague uprising; September 12, 1970: Hijacked jets blown up in the desert; December 25, 1974: Cyclone Tracy flattens Darwin—66 die; April 17, 1975: Cambodia falls to Communist forces; November 18, 1978: Mass suicide in Guyana; October 31, 1984: Mrs. Gandhi shot dead; January 28, 1986: Space shuttle explodes on takeoff; April 26, 1986: Soviet reactor is on fire; October 19, 1987: Bottom falls out of the stock market; March 25, 1989: Alaska hit by oil spill; June 4, 1989: Troops massacre protesters in Tiananmen Square.

Yes, history shows that bad news has always been plentiful, while good news has been comparatively scarce. As bad news has escalated in recent decades, good news has diminished as each year goes by.

Why should this be? Will it always be so?

The next article will address these two questions.

# Good News Ahead!

**A**LL of us are saddened whenever we receive bad news of a personal nature. On the other hand, we rejoice when good news arrives—tidings of joy for ourselves or our loved ones. But when bad news affects others and not us, there is often an element of curiosity; some even enjoy learning about the misfortune of others. This may partly explain why bad news sells so well!

During the early part of World War II, there was a graphic example of the morbid interest in calamity that some people have. A 10,000-ton pocket battleship, the *Graf Spee*, was the pride of the German fleet in 1939. For weeks this battleship had been causing havoc among Allied merchant ships in the South Atlantic and Indian oceans. Finally, three British cruisers tracked down and attacked the *Graf Spee*, causing loss of life and forcing the ship to limp into the Uruguayan harbor of Montevideo for repairs. The Uruguayan government ordered the battleship back to sea immediately, otherwise it would be interned. So a fierce rather one-sided battle seemed imminent.

Hearing of this, a party of wealthy businessmen in the United States chartered a plane, at a cost of about \$2,500 a head, to fly to Uruguay to witness the gory battle. To their disappointment, the battle never did take place. Adolf Hitler gave orders for the *Graf Spee* to be scuttled. Thousands of spectators who thronged the waterfront expecting to witness the spectacle of a fierce sea battle, saw and heard instead a deafening explosion that sent the *Graf Spee* to the bottom, scuttled by her own crew. The captain committed suicide with a gunshot to his head.

Despite a somewhat gruesome streak in some people, most would agree that they prefer good news to bad news. Do you not feel that way? Why, then, does history record so much bad news and so little good news? Can the situation ever be reversed?

## Causes of All Bad News

The Bible tells of the time when only good news was the order of the day. Bad news was something unknown, unheard of. When Jehovah God completed his creative works, planet Earth was ready for man and beast to enjoy. The Genesis account tells us: “God saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good.”—Genesis 1:31.

The absence of bad news did not last too long after man’s creation. Before any offspring was born to Adam and Eve, the bad news of rebellion against God and his orderly universal arrangement of good was reported. A high-ranking spirit son became a traitor to his trusted position and succeeded in moving the first human couple to join him in his rebellious, traitorous course.—Genesis 3:1-6.

The abundance of bad news witnessed by mankind had its beginning at that time. It is little wonder that intrigue, deception, lies, untruths, and half-truths have featured so prominently in the bad news that has flooded the world ever since. Jesus Christ put the blame squarely on Satan the Devil as the originator of bad news, telling religious leaders of His day: “You are from your father the Devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father. That one was a manslayer when he began, and he did not stand fast in the truth, because truth is not in him. When he speaks the lie, he

speaks according to his own disposition, because he is a liar and the father of the lie.”—John 8:44.

As the human population increased in number, bad news increased along with it. Of course, this does not mean that there were no times of joy and happiness, for there were many things in life that were causes for joy. Yet, the clouds of trouble and sadness have been evident down through every generation of mankind until now.

There is another underlying cause for this sad state of affairs. That is our inherited leaning toward wrongdoing and calamity. Jehovah himself puts his finger on this unavoidable cause for bad news by saying: “The inclination of the heart of man is bad from his youth up.”—Genesis 8:21.

### Why the Escalation of Bad News?

There is, however, a reason why bad news has escalated in this 20th century. This reason is spelled out clearly in the Bible, which foretold that mankind in the 20th century would enter a unique period of time known as “the last days” or “the time of the end.” (2 Timothy 3:1; Daniel 12:4) Bible prophecy and Biblical chronology identify this “end period,” which began in 1914. For detailed Scriptural proof of this, please see chapter 11 of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

The last days were to begin with an event that would automatically cause bad news on earth to escalate. What was that? It was the casting down from heaven of Satan the Devil and his demon hosts. You may read this vivid description of the unavoidable increase of bad news at Revelation 12:9, 12: “Down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and

Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him.

... ‘Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time.’”

So in whatever time yet remains until the last days come to their conclusion, we can expect bad news to continue and even to increase in its amount and intensity.

### It Will Not Always Be So

Happily for earth’s inhabitants, the miserable state of affairs producing today’s epidemic of bad news will not always exist. In fact, we can say with confidence that the days of continual bad news are numbered. The situation is not hopeless, despite what may appear to be the case. The end of all bad news is close at hand and will come without fail in God’s due time.

We can be sure of this because the last days are prophesied to climax or conclude with God’s destruction and removal of all causes of bad news. He will remove the wicked human fomenters of strife who refuse to change and turn from their wrongful course. This climaxes in the war of the great day of God the Almighty, commonly known as the battle of Armageddon. (Revelation 16:16) Immediately after that, Satan the Devil and his hordes of demon forces will be put out of action. Revelation 20:1-3 describes the binding of Satan, the originator of all bad news: “I saw an angel coming down out of heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not mislead the nations anymore.”

Following these dramatic events, a time of unprecedented good news will come for the earth and its inhabitants. These inhabitants will include the millions who have survived the final war of Armageddon and the billions who will be resurrected from their sleep of death in the graves. This best-of-all good news is described in the last book of the Bible: "The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself

will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Can you imagine that happy time? Indeed a glorious future where bad news no longer exists. Yes, all bad news will have ended and will not be heard again. Good news will then reign supreme, and it will abound for all eternity.





## A Successful Witnessing Campaign in Greece

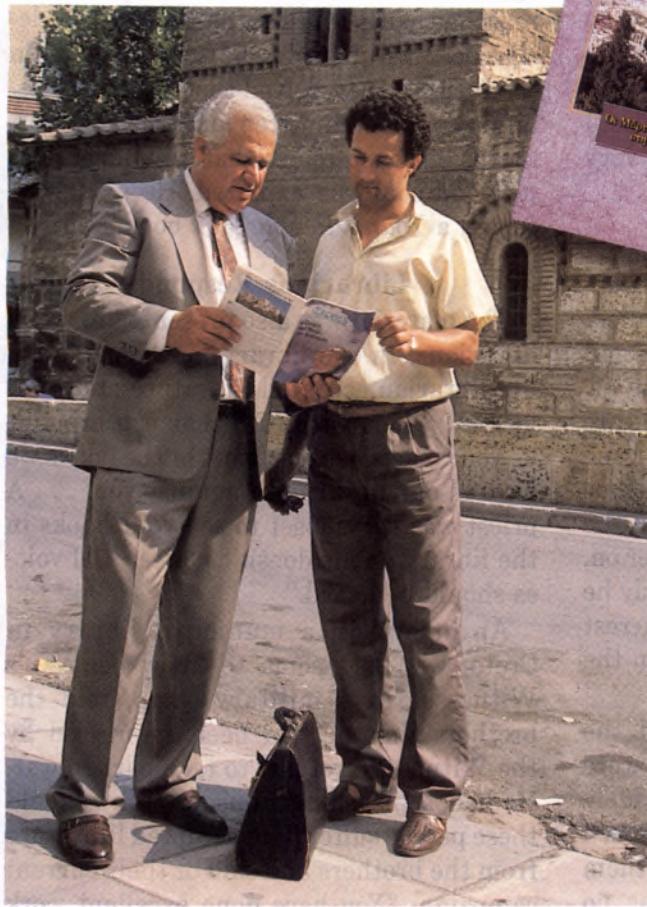
JEOVAH'S WITNESSES have long faced opposition in Greece. Some police, court, and government officials have persecuted Witnesses, often because of pressure from the Greek Orthodox clergy. Sometimes the excuse has been Greece's antiproslatism law, at other times the Witnesses' Bible-based refusal either to go to war or to accept blood transfusions.—Isaiah 2:2-5; Acts 15:28, 29.

In an effort to promote greater understanding among honesthearted authorities in Greece, some 200 Witnesses whom the Greek government recognizes as religious ministers, as well as some who are mem-

bers of the legal profession, recently engaged in a country-wide campaign. They offered a specially designed brochure, entitled *Jehovah's Witnesses in Greece*, as well as the book *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*. They also provided a packet of documents that demonstrate that there is no valid legal basis for the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Witnesses visited police chiefs, mayors, public prosecutors, and other officials.

The response? Hundreds of good experiences. Consider some examples.

The commander of a police station in



West Macedonia welcomed the brothers and said: "I have known you people for a long time, . . . and I admire your order. . . . I disagree with the law of proselytism, and if it were up to me, I would abolish it."

Commanders of various police stations in many cities made such comments as: "I commend you for the social service you perform." "Your community never makes work for the police; you accomplish a social work." "We have absolutely no problem with you. We respect you and appreciate you."

In Piraeus a high official in the security police told the brothers, with tears

in his eyes, that he knows to pray to Jehovah God by name through Jesus Christ. He surprised the Witnesses even further when he told them that he knew that they were expecting some persecution prior to Armageddon, and he hoped that God would use him to help them at that time! He accepted the brothers' invitation to have further discussions.

#### Government Officials Respond

One mayor in Thessaly said regarding the *Proclaimers* book: "It deserves a place in the library of the municipality—the first place!" He thereupon cleared books from a shelf and set the *Proclaimers* book there so that its cover could be seen.

In northern Greece a mayor greeted the brothers' visit warmly and said: "You are the best people

I could wish to have in my municipality." A kindly mayor in north Euboea told the brothers: "I am an ex-army officer. But you—I appreciate you very much." He agreed enthusiastically with the points the Witnesses made. When they showed a selection of the books published by the Watch Tower Society, he said: "If I promise to read all of them, will you give them to me?" They answered: "But of course—they are yours!" He was delighted and would hardly let the brothers leave.

In a suburb in Attica, a mayor happily accepted the literature that the brothers

offered and asked them to continue bringing him the Society's publications. As they were leaving, he told them: "The people are very disappointed by the politicians and search for the real truth somewhere else. I am sure that from now on you'll be very busy because you have the truth."

### Public Prosecutors Respond

The brothers who visited a deputy public prosecutor in northern Greece recalled: "He was impressed by our publications and by the presentation, as well as by the efforts we make to ensure that our people are not helpless when facing the serious issue of blood transfusion. Finally he thanked us and warmly commended us for taking the initiative to visit and inform him. Later on, we found out that four years previously he had called the police and ordered the arrest of two brothers who were engaging in the field service."

Two Witness lawyers who visited the public prosecutor's offices in Athens were surprised to see a well-known and widely respected older public prosecutor approach them. He took them aside and told them that the law against proselytism has no foundation and causes confusion in the Greek court system. He thanked them with a warm handshake.

In the north of Greece, a public prosecutor was very friendly and accepted literature. As he leafed through the pages of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, he was astounded to see the variety of chapters in the table of contents. He remarked: "What this book covers, I haven't seen in all of Orthodoxy."

A public prosecutor in Boeotia admitted that he, in the past, had issued orders for giving blood transfusions to Witnesses

against their will. But after the brothers reasoned with him on the matter, he declared: "I will never issue such an order in the future!" He resolved that the local Hospital Liaison Committee for Jehovah's Witnesses be consulted so that all alternatives to blood could be explored. He gladly accepted a *Young People Ask* book.

### Librarians Respond

The material was also presented to many librarians. In one library in Athens, a polite librarian accepted literature and commented: "It is very nice that you brought us your books because most of the books we have in our library are against you. . . . A priest was very upset to see your books in the library. . . . It doesn't matter. All voices should be heard."

An official in a municipal library in Crete, who had come to know Jehovah's Witnesses in a military camp, told the brothers that he had been impressed by the Witnesses' refusal to take part in war. He had kept asking himself, 'Why should these people suffer?' He accepted literature from the brothers and said of their current campaign: "You have done excellent work and should have done this years ago. . . . In Greece there is a lot of prejudice." He asked the brothers to visit him again soon.

During this special campaign, the brothers placed more than 1,000 *Proclaimers* books, 1,600 *Jehovah's Witnesses in Greece* brochures, as well as hundreds of books and magazines. Better still, they spoke face-to-face with hundreds of Greek officials. Now it is the hope of faithful servants of Jehovah in Greece and around the world that honesthearted authorities in Greece will take a more fair-minded view of Jehovah's Witnesses.

# WHY WORLDLY RELIGION WILL END

*"Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues."*—REVELATION 18:4.

**B**ABYLON THE GREAT has fallen!" Yes, from Jehovah's standpoint the world empire of false religion has fallen. This has been true ever since 1919, when the remnant of Christ's brothers came out from under the influence of Christendom, a dominant part of mystic Babylon. As a result, they have been free to denounce false religion and to announce God's righteous rulership through the Messianic Kingdom. Throughout this century Jehovah's loyal Witnesses have exposed Satan's conglomeration of puppet religions, which he has manipulated to mislead "the entire inhabited earth."—Revelation 12:9; 14:8; 18:2.

## How Has Babylon the Great Fallen?

2 However, someone might ask, 'How can you say that Babylon has fallen, when religion seems to be flourishing in so many lands?' Catholicism and Islam claim over one billion believers each. Protestantism still prospers in the Americas, where new churches and chapels spring up constantly. Hundreds of millions follow the rituals of Buddhism and Hinduism. Yet, to what degree does all this religion exert a positive influence on the conduct of these billions? Has it prevented Catholics and Protestants

1. (a) In what way has Babylon the Great fallen? (b) How has this event affected Jehovah's Witnesses?
2. What is the present state of world religions?

from killing one another in Northern Ireland? Has it brought real peace to Jews and Muslims in the Middle East? Has it led to harmony between Hindus and Muslims in India? And, more recently, has it prevented Serbian Orthodox, Croatian Catholics, and Bosnian Muslims from pursuing "ethnic cleansing," plundering, raping, and slaughtering one another? Religion is often just a label, an eggshell-thin veneer that breaks under the slightest pressure.—Galatians 5:19-21; compare James 2:10, 11.

<sup>3</sup> From God's viewpoint, the religious support by the masses does not alter one inescapable fact—all religion is on judgment before God. Babylon the Great, as evidenced by her history, deserves to be judged adversely because "her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind." (Revelation 18:5) In prophetic language Hosea wrote: "For it is wind that they keep sowing, and a storm wind is what they will reap." All of Satan's false religions worldwide will pay the ultimate price for their betrayal of God, his love, his name, and his Son.—Hosea 8:7; Galatians 6:7; 1 John 2:22, 23.

## You Must Choose

- 4 We are living in the final part of "the last days," and as true Christians we are
3. Why is religion on judgment before God?
4. 5. (a) In what conditions are we living today? (b) What questions must we answer?

struggling to survive these "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) True Christians are temporary residents in Satan's world, which truly reflects his corrupt personality as a murderer, a liar, and a slanderer. (John 8:44; 1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 12:10) We are surrounded by violence, deceit, fraud, corruption, and crass immorality. Principles have gone by the board. Hedonism and expediency are the bywords. And in many cases the clergy condone moral corruption by diluting the Bible's clear condemnation of homosexuality, fornication, and adultery. Thus the question is, Do you support and condone false worship, or do you actively participate in true worship?—Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26, 27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

<sup>5</sup> Now is a time of sifting. Hence, there is all the more reason to distinguish between false worship and true. What else have the religions of Christendom done that make them so reprehensible?—Malachi 3:18; John 4:23, 24.

### False Religion Indicted

<sup>6</sup> Although millions in Christendom regularly use the Lord's Prayer, in which they pray for God's Kingdom to come, they have assiduously supported every form of political expression, to the exclusion of that theocratic rule. Centuries ago "princes" of the Catholic Church, such as Cardinals Richelieu, Mazarin, and Wolsey, acted also as secular statesmen, ministers of government.

<sup>7</sup> More than 50 years ago, in the booklet entitled *Religion Reaps the Whirlwind*, Jehovah's Witnesses exposed Christendom's involvement with politics.\* What

\* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., in 1944; now out of print.

6. How has Christendom betrayed God's Kingdom?
7. How did Jehovah's Witnesses expose Christendom's clergy over 50 years ago?

was said then applies with equal force today: "Honest investigation of the conduct of the religious clergy of all denominations will reveal that the religious leaders of all 'Christendom' are participating with keen interest in the politics of 'this present evil world' and are dabbling in its mundane affairs." Back then the Witnesses castigated Pope Pius XII for his concordats with Nazi Hitler (1933) and Fascist Franco (1941), as well as for the pope's exchange of diplomatic representatives with the aggressor nation Japan in March 1942, just a few months after the infamous Pearl Harbor attack. The pope failed to heed James' warning: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God."—James 4:4.

<sup>8</sup> What is the situation today? The papacy is still involved in politics, both through its clergy and through its laity representatives. Recent popes have put their stamp of approval on the United Nations by addressing that man-made counterfeit for world peace. A recent issue of *L'Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper, announced that seven new diplomats, "ambassadors to the Holy See," presented their credentials to the "Holy Father." Could we imagine Jesus and Peter being involved in such diplomatic exchanges? Jesus refused to be made king by the Jews and said that his Kingdom was not of this world.—John 6:15; 18:36.

<sup>9</sup> Are Protestant leaders any better than their Catholic counterparts? In the United States, many conservative Protestant religions, and Mormons as well, are identi-

8. How is the Roman Catholic Church involved in politics today?
9. Why can we say that the Protestant religions are no better than their Catholic counterparts?



**Throughout history religious leaders have meddled in politics**

fied with a certain political orientation. The Christian Coalition is deeply involved in U.S. politics. Other Protestant clergy clearly identify with a different political stance. It is sometimes forgotten that in the United States, political spokesmen such as Pat Robertson and Jesse Jackson are or were also "Reverends," as is British member of Parliament Ian Paisley of Northern Ireland. How do they ever justify their positions? —Acts 10:34, 35; Galatians 2:6.

<sup>10</sup> As *Religion Reaps the Whirlwind* asked in 1944, so do we now: "Can any organization that enters into treaties with worldly powers and actively wiggles itself into the political affairs of this world, seeking advantage in and protection from this world . . . be God's church or represent Christ Jesus on earth? . . . Manifestly, all religionists who make common cause with the kingdoms of this world cannot represent the kingdom of God by Christ Jesus."

### **False Religion's Spirit of Cain**

<sup>11</sup> Throughout history, false religion has shown the spirit of fratricidal Cain, who

10. What clear statement was made in 1944?

11. How did false religion follow Cain's example?

murdered his brother Abel. "The children of God and the children of the Devil are evident by this fact: Everyone who does not carry on righteousness does not originate with God, neither does he who does not love his brother. For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should have love for one another; not like Cain, who originated with the wicked one and slaughtered his brother. And for the sake of what did he slaughter him? Because his own works were wicked, but those of his brother were righteous." Intolerant of his brother's pure and acceptable worship of God, Cain resorted to violence—the last resort of those who lack a logical answer. —1 John 3:10-12.

<sup>12</sup> Do the facts support this indictment of false religion? In the book *Preachers Present Arms*, the author said: "In the history of civilizations, . . . two forces have ever been joined together in a dual alliance. They are war and religion. And, of all the great world religions, . . . none has been more devoted to [war] than has [Christendom]." Some years ago, *The Sun* newspaper of Vancouver, Canada, stated: "It is a weakness of perhaps all organized religion that the church follows the flag . . . What war was ever fought in which God wasn't claimed to be on each side?" You may have seen the proof of this in some local church. All too often, national flags adorn the altar. Under which flag do you think Jesus would march? His words have echoed down through the centuries: "My kingdom is no part of this world!" —John 18:36.

<sup>13</sup> Christendom's religions have not taught their flocks the truth of genuine brotherly

12. What evidence is there of religion's complicity in wars and strife?

13. (a) How has false religion failed in Africa? (b) What identifying sign of Christianity did Jesus give?

love. Instead, national, tribal, and ethnic differences are allowed to divide their ranks. Reports indicate that Catholic and Anglican clergy played a role in the divisions resulting in the tribal genocide in Rwanda. *The New York Times* reported: "The massacres in Rwanda have caused many Roman Catholics there to feel betrayed by the church hierarchy. The church was often divided along ethnic lines, between Hutu and Tutsi." The same newspaper quoted a Maryknoll priest as saying: "The church failed so miserably in Rwanda in 1994. Many Rwandans have in a sense written off the church. It no longer has any credibility." What a contrast to Jesus' words: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves."—John 13:35.

<sup>14</sup> The other major religions of Babylon the Great have not set a better example. The terrible massacres of 1947, when India was partitioned, show that the major religions there have not produced tolerance. Continued communal violence in India bears out that most people have not changed. Little wonder that the magazine *India Today* concluded: "Religion has been the banner under

14. What record of conduct do major non-Christian religions present?

### Do You Recall?

- What is Babylon the Great's present standing before God?
- On what basis is false religion indicted?
- How has false religion shown the spirit of Cain?
- What principle did Jesus express for judging any religion?

which the most hideous crimes have been perpetrated. . . . It unleashes tremendous violence and is a very destructive force."

### "Striking Paradox"

<sup>15</sup> Even secular commentators have noted religion's failure to convince, to inculcate true values, and to resist the inroads of secularism. In his book *Out of Control*, former U.S. national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote: "It is a striking paradox that the greatest victory for the proposition that 'God is dead' has occurred not in the Marxist-dominated states . . . but in Western liberal democratic societies, which have culturally nurtured moral apathy. In the latter, the fact is that religion has ceased to be a major social force." He continued: "The hold of religion on European culture has greatly waned, and Europe today—even more so than America—is essentially a secular society."

<sup>16</sup> What did Jesus say about the Jewish clergy of his day? "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the seat of Moses [to teach the Torah, the Law]. Therefore all the things they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say but do not perform." Yes, religious hypocrisy is nothing new.—Matthew 23:2, 3.

<sup>17</sup> The fruitage of false religion condemns it. The rule given by Jesus is so applicable: "Every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit; a good tree cannot bear worthless fruit, neither can a rotten tree produce fine fruit. Every tree not producing fine fruit gets cut down and thrown into the fire. Really, then,

15. What is the state of religion in the western world?

16, 17. (a) What counsel did Jesus give regarding the clergy of his day? (b) What fine principle did Jesus express about fruitage?



**These clergymen were also powerful statesmen**

Cardinal Mazarin  
Cardinal Richelieu  
Cardinal Wolsey

Cardinal Mazarin and Cardinal Richelieu: From the book *Ridpath's History of the World* (Vol. VI and Vol. V respectively). Cardinal Wolsey: From the book *The History of Protestantism* (Vol. I).

by their fruits you will recognize those men.”—Matthew 7:17-20.

<sup>18</sup> If the religions of Christendom were conscientiously to apply the Christian discipline of disfellowshipping, or excommunication, for all the lawless acts committed by those claiming to be its members, what would happen? What would happen to all the unrepentant liars, fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, swindlers, criminals, drug peddlers and addicts, and members of organized crime? Unquestionably, Christendom’s rotten fruitage makes it fit only for destruction by God.—1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 John 10, 11.

<sup>19</sup> The general assembly for the Presbyterian Church in the United States admitted: “We are facing a crisis terrible in its proportions and implications. . . . Between 10 and 23 percent of clergy nationwide have engaged in sexualized behavior or sexual contact with parishioners, clients, employees, etc.” A U.S. businessman summed up the point quite well: “Religious institutions have failed to transmit their historic values, and in many cases, have become part of the problem.”

18. How should Christendom have kept its ranks clean?  
19. What admissions have been made regarding religious leadership?

<sup>20</sup> Jesus’ denunciation of religious hypocrisy holds true today as it did in his time: “You hypocrites, Isaiah aptly prophesied about you, when he said, ‘This people honors me with their lips, yet their heart is far removed from me. It is in vain that they keep worshiping me, because they teach commands of men as doctrines.’” (Matthew 15:7-9) Paul’s words to Titus also describe our modern situation: “They publicly declare they know God, but they disown him by their works, because they are detestable and disobedient and not approved for good work of any sort.”—Titus 1:16.

<sup>21</sup> Jesus said that if a blind man guides a blind man, both fall into the pit. (Matthew 15:14) Do you want to come to an end with Babylon the Great? Or do you want to walk in straight paths with your eyes open and enjoy Jehovah’s blessing? The questions that now confront us are: Which religion, if any, produces godly fruitage? How can we identify the true worship acceptable to God? —Psalm 119:105.

20, 21. (a) How did Jesus and Paul denounce hypocrisy? (b) What questions remain to be answered?

# WHY TRUE WORSHIP RECEIVES GOD'S BLESSING

*"Praise Jah, you people! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God, because his judgments are true and righteous."*—REVELATION 19:1, 2.

**B**ABYLON THE GREAT" has fallen in God's sight and now faces extinction. Bible prophecy indicates that this worldwide religious harlot will soon meet execution at the hands of her political paramours; her end will be sudden and swift. Jesus' revelation to John contained these prophetic words: "A strong angel lifted up a stone like a great millstone and hurled it into the sea, saying: 'Thus with a swift pitch will Babylon the great city be hurled down, and she will never be found again.'”—Revelation 18:2, 21.

<sup>2</sup> The destruction of Babylon the Great will be lamented by some elements of Satan's world but certainly not by God's servants, heavenly or earthly. Their joyful shout to God will be: "Praise Jah, you people! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God, because his judgments are true and righteous. For he has executed judgment upon the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged the blood of his slaves at her hand."—Revelation 18:9, 10; 19:1, 2.

## What Fruitage Must True Religion Produce?

<sup>3</sup> Since the earth is to be wiped clean of

1. How will Babylon the Great come to her end?
2. How will Jehovah's servants react to Babylon's destruction?
3. What questions require an answer?

false religion, what kind of worship will remain? How can we determine today which religious group will survive the destruction of Satan's world empire of false religion? What is the righteous fruitage that this group must produce? There are at least ten criteria for distinguishing Jehovah's true worship.—Malachi 3:18; Matthew 13:43.

<sup>4</sup> First and foremost, true Christians *must uphold the sovereignty* for which Jesus died—his Father's sovereignty. Jesus did not give up his life for any political, tribal, ethnic, or social cause. He put his Father's Kingdom ahead of all Jewish political or revolutionary aspirations. He answered Satan's offer of worldly power with the words: "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'" He knew from the Hebrew Scriptures that Jehovah is the true Sovereign over all the earth. Which religious group unequivocally supports Jehovah's rulership rather than this world's political systems?—Matthew 4:10; Psalm 83:18.

<sup>5</sup> A second requirement is that *true worship must magnify and sanctify God's name*. The Almighty revealed his name, Jehovah (rendered Yahweh in some Bi-

4. What is a first requirement for true worship, and how did Jesus set the example in this regard?
5. (a) How should true worshipers view God's name? (b) What shows that Jehovah's Witnesses do honor that name?



**Jehovah's Witnesses are preaching  
and teaching the good news of  
God's Kingdom**

ted the divine name from their Bibles, Jehovah's Witnesses have given that name its due position and respect in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. They honor that name, even as did the early Christians. James testified: "Symeon has related thoroughly how God for the first time turned his attention to the nations to take out of them a people for his name. And with this the words of the Prophets agree, . . . 'in order that those who remain of the men may earnestly seek Jehovah, together with people of all the nations, people who are called by my name,' says Jehovah, who is doing these things.'”—Acts 15:14-17; Amos 9:11, 12.

ble versions), to his people Israel, and it is used thousands of times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Even before that, Adam, Eve, and others knew the name, though they did not always respect it. (Genesis 4:1; 9:26; 22:14; Exodus 6:2) While Christendom's and Jewry's translators have usually omit-



<sup>6</sup> A third requirement for true worship is that it should exalt God's Kingdom as the only legitimate and viable solution to mankind's problems of rulership. Jesus clearly taught his followers to pray for that Kingdom to come, for God's rule to take over control of the earth. Daniel was inspired to prophesy regarding the last days: "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. . . . It will crush and put an end to all these [worldly, political] kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite." Who have shown by their course of action in this 20th century that they render undivided support

6. (a) What is a third requirement for true worship? (b) How did Jesus and Daniel emphasize Kingdom rulership? (Luke 17:20, 21)

to that Kingdom—the religions of Babylon the Great or Jehovah's Witnesses?—Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:10; 24:14.

<sup>7</sup> A fourth requisite for God's approval is that the true servants of God should *uphold the Bible as God's inspired Word*. They would therefore not become victims of higher criticism, which attempts to reduce the Bible to a simple human literary work with all the failings that this would imply. Jehovah's Witnesses believe the Bible to be God's inspired Word, even as Paul wrote to Timothy: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the

7. How do true worshipers view the Bible?

man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work.”\* Therefore, Jehovah’s Witnesses take the Bible as their guide, their manual for daily living, and their fountain of hope for the future.—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

### The Religion of Love, Not Hatred

<sup>8</sup> How did Jesus distinguish his true followers? His answer brings us to a vital fifth identifying mark of true worship. Jesus said: “I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. *By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves.*” (John 13:34, 35) How did Jesus show his love? By giving his life as a ransom sacrifice. (Matthew 20:28; John 3:16) Why is genuine love an essential quality for true Christians? John explained: “Beloved ones, let us continue loving one another, because love is from God . . . He that does not love has not come to know God, because God is love.”—1 John 4:7, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Who in our times have displayed this kind of love, even in the face of racial, national, or ethnic hatred? Who have passed the supreme test, even unto death, so that their love should prevail? Can we say that it is the Catholic priests and nuns who admittedly share some responsibility for the genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994? Is it the Orthodox of Serbia or the Catholics of Croatia who have engaged in “ethnic cleansing” and other unchristian acts in that civil war in the Balkans? Or is it the Catholic or Protestant clergy who

\* Bible translations themselves are not inspired by God. Translations, by their very nature, may reflect variations of the understanding of the original tongues in which the Bible was recorded.

8. What is a fifth requisite for true worship?
9. Who have shown true love, and how?

have fanned the flames of prejudice and hatred in Northern Ireland over the last few decades? Certainly Jehovah’s Witnesses cannot be accused of having participated in any such conflicts. They have suffered in prisons and concentration camps, even to the death, rather than betray their Christian love.—John 15:17.

<sup>10</sup> A sixth requisite for worship acceptable to God is that of *neutrality regarding the political affairs of this world*. Why should Christians remain neutral in politics? Paul, James, and John give us solid reason for that stance. The apostle Paul wrote that Satan is “the god of this system of things,” who is blinding the minds of the unbelievers by every means possible, including divisive politics. The disciple James stated that “friendship with the world is enmity with God,” and the apostle John said that “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” A true Christian, therefore, cannot compromise his devotion to God by being involved in Satan’s corrupt world of politics and power.—2 Corinthians 4:4; James 4:4; 1 John 5:19.

<sup>11</sup> In view of the preceding two requirements, a seventh becomes obvious, namely, that *true Christian worshipers should not take part in wars*. Since the true religion is a worldwide brotherhood based on love, then nothing can divide or subvert that “entire association of . . . brothers in the world.” Jesus taught love, not hatred; peace, not war. (1 Peter 5:9; Matthew 26:51, 52) The same “wicked one,” Satan, who induced Cain to murder Abel continues to sow hatred among mankind and to provoke conflicts and bloodshed on

10. Why do true Christians remain neutral?
11. (a) How do Christians view war? (b) What Scriptural basis is there for this position? (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

the basis of political, religious, and ethnic divisions. True Christians 'learn war no more,' regardless of the price to be paid. Figuratively, they have already 'beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears.' They produce the peaceful fruitage of God's spirit.—1 John 3:10-12; Isaiah 2:2-4; Galatians 5:22, 23.

### God Blesses Purity of Conduct and Teachings

<sup>12</sup> Christian unity is the eighth requirement of true worship. However, Christendom's divisive religions have not helped to this end. Many so-called mainstream denominations have splintered into a variety of sects, and confusion is the result. Take, for example, the Baptist religion in the United States, which is split between Northern Baptists (American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.) and Southern Baptists (Southern Baptist Convention), as well as dozens of other Baptist groups that have resulted from schisms. (*World Christian Encyclopedia*, page 714) Many divisions have sprung from differences of

12. (a) What is the eighth requirement, but what religious divisions can you cite? (b) How did Paul highlight this eighth requirement?

### In Our Next Issue

God and Caesar

Maintain Your Confidence  
Firm to the End

Serving Under  
Jehovah's Loving Hand

doctrine or church government (for example, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Congregational). The divisions of Christendom are paralleled by those of religions outside Christendom—whether Buddhism, Islam, or Hinduism. What did the apostle Paul counsel the early Christians? "Now I exhort you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you should all speak in agreement, and that there should not be divisions among you, but that you may be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought."—1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11.

<sup>13</sup> What is a ninth requirement for religion approved by God? A Bible principle is expressed at Leviticus 11:45: "You must prove yourselves holy, because I am holy." The apostle Peter repeated this requirement when he wrote: "In accord with the Holy One who called you, do you also become holy yourselves in all your conduct."—1 Peter 1:15.

<sup>14</sup> What is implied in this need to be holy? That Jehovah's worshipers should be spiritually and morally clean. (2 Peter 3:14) There is no room for unrepentant, deliberate sinners, who by their conduct show disdain for Christ's ransom sacrifice. (Hebrews 6:4-6) Jehovah requires that the Christian congregation be kept clean and holy. How is that accomplished? In part by the judicial process of disfellowshipping those who would taint the congregation.—1 Corinthians 5:9-13.

<sup>15</sup> Before knowing Christian truth, many lived dissolute, hedonistic, self-centered lives. But the word about the Christ changed them, and they have obtained for-

13, 14. (a) What is meant by 'being holy'? (b) How is true worship kept clean?  
15, 16. What changes have many Christians made in their lives?

givenness for their sins. Paul expressed it forcibly when he wrote: “What! Do you not know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men, nor thieves, nor greedy persons, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit God’s kingdom. *And yet that is what some of you were. But you have been washed clean.*”—1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

<sup>16</sup> It is evident that Jehovah approves of those who repent of their unscriptural conduct, turn around, and become true followers of Christ and his teachings. They truly love their neighbors as themselves and show it in many ways, such as by persisting in a ministry that offers the message of life to all who would hear.—2 Timothy 4:5.

### “The Truth Will Set You Free”

<sup>17</sup> There is a tenth requirement that Jehovah has for those who worship him in spirit and in truth—*pure teaching*. (John 4:23, 24) Jesus said to his followers: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32) The truth of the Bible frees us from God-dishonoring doctrines, such as the immortal soul, hellfire, and purgatory. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10; Ezekiel 18:4, 20) It frees us from the Babylonish mystery of Christendom’s “Most Holy Trinity.” (Deuteronomy 4:35; 6:4; 1 Corinthians 15:27, 28) Obedience to Bible truth results in loving, concerned, kind, merciful people. True Christianity has never fostered vengeful, intolerant inquisitors, such as Tomás de Torquemada, or hateful warmongers, such as the papal promoters of the Crusades. Yet, Babylon the Great

17. What is a tenth requirement for true worship? Give examples.

has produced this kind of fruitage down through history, from at least the time of Nimrod until now.—Genesis 10:8, 9.

### A Name That Is Distinctive

<sup>18</sup> Who today really fulfill these ten requirements of true worship? Who are known and recognized by others for their record of integrity and peaceableness? Around the globe Jehovah’s Witnesses are noted for their being “no part of the world.” (John 15:19; 17:14, 16; 18:36) Jehovah’s people are honored to bear his name and to be his Witnesses, even as Jesus Christ was a faithful witness to his Father. We bear that holy name, conscious of our responsibility to live up to what it represents. And, as his Witnesses, what a glorious prospect lies before us! That is to be part of an obedient, united human family, worshiping the Universal Sovereign in a restored paradise here on earth. To receive such a blessing, let us continue to identify ourselves clearly with true worship and to bear the name Jehovah’s Witnesses proudly “because his judgments are true and righteous”!—Revelation 19:2; Isaiah 43:10-12; Ezekiel 3:11.

18. (a) Who measure up to the ten requirements for true worship and how? (b) What must we individually do to inherit the blessing that lies before us?

### How Would You Answer?

- How do Jehovah’s servants regard Babylon the Great’s destruction?
- What are key requirements for true worship?
- How does the truth set you free?
- What special honor do we have as Jehovah’s Witnesses?

# Expansion With Jehovah's Blessing

**A** DEDICATION program on the evening of September 18, 1995, emphasized that Jehovah God has truly blessed the expansion of his Witnesses at the location of their world headquarters in Brooklyn, New York.

Over 6,000 listened to the dedication program. They assembled in Brooklyn, where the program originated, as well as at other locations, including the large facilities of Jehovah's Witnesses near Patterson and Wallkill, New York, and at their branch near Toronto, Canada. Those at locations other than Brooklyn heard the proceedings over telephone tie lines.

## A Heartwarming Program

The Bethelites, as the volunteer workers are called, listening to the program made up a large part of the worldwide Bethel family of over 16,400 members. Such members serve in about a hundred countries, where they print Bible literature and provide support services for the more than 78,600 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in the world.

Anticipation was high when the dedication program began at 6:30 p.m. with song, followed by prayer by Karl Klein. The program chairman, Lloyd Barry, warmly welcomed all with brief comments on the significance of the occasion. Albert Schroeder reviewed the week's *Watchtower* lesson, and then Daniel Sydlik spoke on the theme "Our Sacred Service at Bethel." These first ones on the program were all members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The next two program parts—"Meeting Our Expanding Accommodation Needs,

1974-1995," and "Highlights of Bethel Renovation and Construction in Brooklyn"—featured highlights of the construction or obtaining of the buildings that were dedicated. The remarks focused attention on the recently finished residence building that about a thousand Bethelites now occupy. This 378-foot-high home at 90 Sands Street adjoins the printing factory complex.

The program featured the dedication talk by Milton Henschel, president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. He emphasized Bible precedents for dedicating buildings to be used in Jehovah's service. After a song the proceedings were concluded with prayer by Carey Barber, also a member of the Governing Body. But what were some of the highlights of the program?

## The Buildings Dedicated

The Bethel Home overseer, George Couch, explained that 17 residences have been added since the last dedication of a Bethel residence in Brooklyn on May 2, 1969.\* These were either newly built homes or buildings that were purchased and renovated. This dedication actually was of these 17 residences, of two small buildings—purchased in the 1940's but modified as Bethel residences—as well as of the factory and office facilities that had been built or purchased since the dedication of the executive offices of Jehovah's Witnesses on March 15, 1982.<sup>#</sup>

The largest of the buildings that were dedicated is the one at 360 Furman Street. Originally constructed in 1928, it was purchased by Jehovah's Witnesses on March 15,

\* *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1969, pages 379-82.

# *The Watchtower*, December 1, 1982, pages 23-31.

90 SANDS ST. • 1995





97 COLUMBIA HTS. • 1986

BOSSERT HOTEL, 98 MONTAGUE ST. • 1983



34 ORANGE ST. • 1945



STANDISH HOTEL,  
169 COLUMBIA HTS. • 1981



1983, and totally renovated. It has a million square feet of floor space, or nearly 23 acres. Other buildings included in the dedication were the factory at 175 Pearl Street and large garages that were built in recent years.

### Why More Housing Needed

In 1969, when the last Brooklyn Bethel residence building was dedicated, there was a peak of 1,336,112 Witnesses preaching the good news of God's Kingdom worldwide. But in 1995 there were 5,199,895 doing so, more than three-and-a-half times as many! Thus, to keep pace with the growing demand for Bible literature, the Brooklyn Bethel family has increased from 1,042 regular members in 1969 to more than 3,360, who now live in 22 residences!

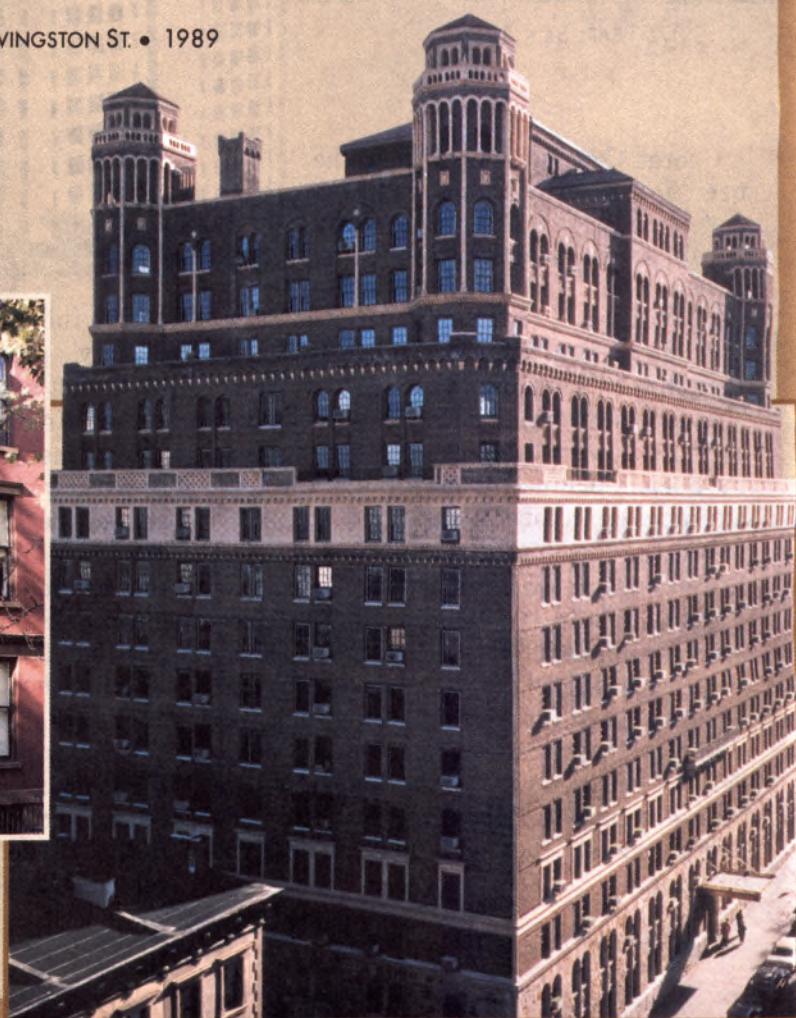
**Some of the additional  
residences that were  
dedicated**



67 LIVINGSTON ST. • 1989



108 JORALEMON ST. • 1988



TOWERS HOTEL,  
79-99 WILLOW ST. • 1975





175 PEARL ST. • 1983



69 ADAMS ST. • 1991

360 FURMAN ST. • 1983



George Couch discussed how the need for additional housing was met from 1974 to 1995. In the early 1970's, several floors in the nearby Towers Hotel were leased by Jehovah's Witnesses to accommodate the growing Bethel family. In December 1973, Nathan Knorr, then president of the Watch Tower Society, wrote both the Bethel Office and the Towers management, saying that the Society planned to 'move out of the Towers Hotel by October 1, 1974.'

Brother Couch said that he was shocked because there was nowhere to house the Bethelites living in the Towers. The Towers management was also shocked, since they were relying on the Society's rent money to keep them going. The upshot was that the Towers management urged Jehovah's Witnesses to buy the hotel. "You've been growing ever since we've been in the neighborhood," they said, "and you need the building."

"It's full of tenants," was the reply of the Society's representatives. "If we bought it, we'd want to put our own people in there."

"We'll empty the building for you," the Towers management promised. Well, shortly afterward Jehovah's Witnesses purchased the Towers building at an appropriate price. "Why did Brother Knorr write that letter?" Couch asked his fascinated audience. "He probably didn't know himself, but that is the thing that sold the Towers Hotel to the Watch Tower Society."

The speaker also described how Jehovah's Witnesses purchased 97 Columbia Heights, the former site of the famous Margaret Hotel, just across the street from the original Bethel Home. The location is ideal, since it could easily be tied in with the Bethel com-

plex by an under-the-street tunnel. In February 1980, when the building was in the course of being remodeled, it burned down. Then, because the owner had trouble putting up a new building on the site, he sold the property to Jehovah's Witnesses.

Brother Couch noted: "Practically every one of these buildings has an interesting story behind it that would point to one thing—that Jehovah God is the one who directed the visible organization to acquire that particular building."

### The Story Behind 90 Sands

The newest and the largest residence is 90 Sands Street. When the property was purchased by Jehovah's Witnesses in December 1986, it accommodated a large factory at 160 Jay Street.\* The factory was torn down, and on August 30, 1990, the Bethel family was told that a permit had been issued to erect a 30-story residence facility on the site.

In an interview conducted by Governing Body member Theodore Jaracz, the Society's Brooklyn factory overseer, Max Larson, described how permission was granted for building the 90 Sands Street residence. What happened back in 1965, Brother Larson explained, was crucial.

Back then the Society wanted to put up a ten-story factory on a block next to its other factories, but that block's zoning allowed for only two-story construction. An architect agreed to prepare building prints for the newly proposed factory, but he said: "I won't embarrass myself by presenting them to the board." He was convinced that the Board of Standards and Appeals would never change their zoning regulations for the block. When the building prints were ap-

proved, he exclaimed: "How in the world did you get that!"

The reason, Larson continued, was that when that block was rezoned for our ten-story factory, nearby blocks were also rezoned, including the one with the 160 Jay Street building. And, amazingly, the rezoning allowed for a hotel. But, Larson noted, it was something no one ever took note of—at least not until some 25 years later, after we began looking for a site for building a new Bethel home. Then the zoning regulation was rediscovered!

Brother Larson explained what happened: "When we prepared the prints for our 30-story residence and took them down to the building department, we were told: 'You can't have a residence there. That's all manufacturing, and they won't change the zoning for you.'

"They don't have to change it," we informed the officials. 'It's already zoned for a hotel.' When they looked up the records, they could hardly believe it! Well, that's how we got our 30-story building," Larson concluded.

### Jehovah's Blessing Evident

A Bible psalmist wrote: "Unless Jehovah himself builds the house, it is to no avail that its builders have worked hard on it." (Psalm 127:1) Clearly, Jehovah's blessing has been on the construction activity of Jehovah's Witnesses to facilitate the worldwide preaching and teaching work that Jesus commanded his followers to do.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.

Those privileged to hear the program on September 18, 1995, were thrilled at the evidence of such blessing upon the expansion at the world headquarters of Jehovah's servants. Jehovah's people can be confident of his continued blessing as they keep on doing what he commands.

\* *Awake!* of December 22, 1987, pages 16-18.

## QUESTIONS FROM READERS

**Jesus said: "If you forgive the sins of any persons, they stand forgiven to them; if you retain those of any persons, they stand retained." Do these words mean that Christians can forgive sins?**

There is no Scriptural basis for concluding that Christians in general, or even appointed elders in the congregations, have divine authority to forgive sins. Yet, what Jesus said to his disciples at John 20:23, quoted above, indicates that God granted the apostles special powers in this regard. And Jesus' statement there may relate to what he said at Matthew 18:18 about heavenly decisions.

Christians can forgive certain offenses, in line with the apostle Paul's counsel recorded at Ephesians 4:32: "Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave you." Paul was here speaking about personal problems between Christians, such as careless talk. They should strive to settle these matters, forgiving one another. Recall Jesus' words: "If, then, you are bringing your gift to the altar and you there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar, and go away; first make your peace with your brother, and then, when you have come back, offer up your gift."—Matthew 5:23, 24; 1 Peter 4:8.

However, the context of John 20:23 suggests that Jesus was referring to more serious sins, as indicated by what else he then said to this distinct audience. Let us see why.

On the day that he was resurrected, Jesus appeared to the disciples in a locked room in Jerusalem. The account says: "Jesus, therefore, said to them again: 'May you have peace. Just as the Father has sent me forth, I also am sending you.' And after he said this he blew upon them and said to them: 'Receive holy spirit. If you

forgive the sins of any persons, they stand forgiven to them; if you retain those of any persons, they stand retained.'"—John 20:21-23.

Likely, the disciples mentioned were principally the faithful apostles. (Compare verse 24.) By blowing on them and saying, "Receive holy spirit," Jesus symbolically gave them notice that soon holy spirit would be poured out on them. Jesus went on to say that they would have authority concerning forgiveness of sins. Reasonably, his two statements are linked, one leading to the next.

Fifty days from his resurrection, on the day of Pentecost, Jesus poured out holy spirit. What did that accomplish? For one thing, those who received the spirit were born again as spiritual sons of God with the hope of being rulers with Christ in heaven. (John 3:3-5; Romans 8:15-17; 2 Corinthians 1:22) But that outpouring of spirit did more. Some recipients gained miraculous powers. By that means some could speak in foreign tongues that they did not know. Others could prophesy. Yet others could heal the sick or raise the dead to life.—1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

Since Jesus' words at John 20:22 pointed to this outpouring of holy spirit on the disciples, his connected words about forgiving sins seem to mean that the apostles had divinely provided to them through an operation of the spirit a unique authority to forgive or retain sins.—See *The Watchtower*, March 1, 1949, page 78.

The Bible does not give us a complete account of every time the apostles used such authority, but neither does it record every case when they used a miraculous gift to speak in tongues, to prophesy, or to heal.—2 Corinthians 12:12; Galatians 3:5; Hebrews 2:4.

One case that involved apostolic authority to forgive or retain sins involved Ananias and Sapphira, who played false to the spirit. Peter, who heard Jesus utter what we read at John 20:22,

23, exposed Ananias and Sapphira. Peter first addressed Ananias, who died on the spot. When Sapphira later came in and kept up the falsehood, Peter proclaimed her judgment. Peter did not forgive her sin but said: "Look! The feet of those who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." She too died on the spot.—Acts 5:1-11.

In this instance the apostle Peter used special authority to express a definite retaining of sin, a miraculous knowledge that God would not pardon the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. The apostles also appear to have had superhuman insight into cases where they were sure that sins had been forgiven on the basis of Christ's sacrifice. So those spirit-empowered apostles could declare the forgiveness or retention of sins.\*

This is not to say that all spirit-anointed elders back then had such miraculous authority. We can see that from what the apostle Paul said about the man disfellowshipped from the Corinthian congregation. Paul did not say, 'I forgive that man's sins' or even, 'I know that the man has been forgiven in heaven, so accept him back.' Rather, Paul urged the entire congregation to forgive this reinstated Christian and show love for him. Paul added: "Anything you kindly forgive anyone, I do too."—2 Corinthians 2:5-11.

Once the man was reinstated into the congregation, all the Christian brothers and sisters could forgive in the sense of not holding against him what he had done. First, though, he would have to repent and be reinstated. How would that occur?

There are serious sins that congregation elders have to handle, such as stealing, lying, or gross immorality. They try to correct and reprove such wrongdoers, moving them to repentance. But if someone unrepentantly practices grave sin, these elders apply the divine direction to disfellow-

\* Even before Jesus died and provided the ransom, he had authority to say that someone's sins were forgiven.—Matthew 9:2-6; compare "Questions From Readers" in The Watchtower of June 1, 1995.

ship the wrongdoer. (1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 11-13) What Jesus said at John 20:23 does not apply in such cases. These elders do not have miraculous gifts of the spirit, such as the ability to heal the physically sick or raise the dead; those gifts served their purpose in the first century and then ended. (1 Corinthians 13:8-10) Furthermore, elders today do not have divine authority to forgive serious wrongdoing in the sense of pronouncing a serious sinner clean in the eyes of Jehovah. This kind of forgiveness has to be on the basis of the ransom sacrifice, and only Jehovah can forgive on that basis.—Psalm 32:5; Matthew 6:9, 12; 1 John 1:9.

As in the case of the man in ancient Corinth, when a gross sinner refuses to repent, he has to be disfellowshipped. If he later repents and produces works befitting repentance, divine forgiveness is possible. (Acts 26:20) In such a situation, the Scriptures give the elders reason to believe that Jehovah has indeed forgiven the wrongdoer. Then, once the person is reinstated, the elders can help him spiritually to become firm in the faith. The others in the congregation can forgive in the same way the Corinthian Christians forgave the disfellowshipped man who was reinstated back then.

In handling matters this way, the elders do not make up their own standards of judgment. They apply Bible principles and closely follow Scriptural procedures that Jehovah set out. Hence, any forgiving or not forgiving on the part of the elders would be in the sense of Jesus' words at Matthew 18:18: "Truly I say to you men, Whatever things you may bind on earth will be things bound in heaven, and whatever things you may loose on earth will be things loosed in heaven." Their actions would simply reflect Jehovah's view of matters as presented in the Bible.

Consequently, what Jesus said, as recorded at John 20:23, is not in conflict with the rest of the Scriptures, but it indicates that the apostles had a special authorization regarding forgiveness, in line with their special role in the infancy of the Christian congregation.

# DO YOU REMEMBER?

Have you found the recent issues of The Watchtower of practical value to you? Then why not test your memory with the following questions:

**□ What lesson can we learn from the downfall of the Ammonites? (Zephaniah 2:9, 10)** Jehovah does not take lightly repaying his kindness with hostility, and in his due time, he will again take action, just as he did in ancient times. (Compare Psalm 2:6-12.)—2/15, page 10.

**□ In what ways do Christians have peace?** First, they have “peace with God through [their] Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1) Second, they have peace among themselves by cultivating “the wisdom from above,” which is “first of all chaste, then peaceable.” (James 3:17)—1/1, page 11.

**□ What are some things to which God’s Word is likened, and how is this helpful to us?** God’s Word is likened to nourishing milk, solid food, refreshing and cleansing water, a mirror, and a sharp sword. Understanding what these terms imply helps a minister to use the Bible skillfully.—1/1, page 29.

**□ What should a balanced secular education help us to do?** To read well, to write clearly, to develop mentally and morally, and to acquire the practical training needed for day-to-day living and effective sacred service.—2/1, page 10.

**□ What valuable lesson regarding education can we learn from Jesus?** Education should be used, not to glorify ourselves, but to bring praise to the greatest Educator, Jehovah God. (John 7:18)—2/1, page 10.

**□ What is the Kingdom of God?** The Kingdom is a divinely instituted heavenly government that brings about God’s will to eliminate the effects of sin and death and to restore righteous conditions on earth. (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15; 12:10)—2/1, page 16.

**□ How does the Bible provide the education needed for bringing violence to a permanent end?** Through his Word, the Bible, Jehovah teaches people to be peace-loving and righteous. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) God’s Word has the power to reach in and touch a person’s heart, changing his thinking and behavior. (Hebrews 4:12)—2/15, page 6.

**□ In what way can the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 35 be said to have three fulfillments?** Isaiah’s prophecy had a first fulfillment when the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity in 537 B.C.E. It has

an ongoing spiritual fulfillment today since the release of spiritual Israel from captivity to Babylon the Great. And it will have a third fulfillment in connection with the Biblical assurance of literal paradise conditions on earth. (Psalm 37:10, 11; Revelation 21:4, 5)—2/15, page 17.

**□ How was God’s personal interest in humans demonstrated in the miracles performed by his Son, Jesus?** Since Jesus “cannot do a single thing of his own initiative, but only what he beholds the Father doing,” his compassion paints a touching portrait of Jehovah’s concern for each one of his servants. (John 5:19)—3/1, page 5.

**□ What is implied by Jesus’ expression “memorial tombs” used at John 5:28, 29?** The Greek word *mne-meíon* (memorial tomb) here used suggests that Jehovah remembers the record of the person who has died, including his or her inherited traits and complete memory. This gives strong proof that God cares about humans on an individual basis!—3/1, page 6.

**□ What warning message in the prophecy of Zephaniah is of practical help to us?** Today is no time to allow doubts to take root in our hearts and to put off in our minds the coming of Jehovah’s day. Also, we should be on guard against the debilitating effects of indifference. (Zephaniah 1:12, 13; 3:8)—3/1, page 17.

**□ Why does loyalty to God present a challenge?** Because loyalty clashes with selfish tendencies that we have inherited from our parents. (Genesis 8:21; Romans 7:19) More important, Satan and his demons are determined to make us disloyal to God. (Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8)—3/15, page 10.

**□ In what four areas must we meet the challenge of loyalty, and what will help us to do so?** Four areas are loyalty to Jehovah, to his organization, to the congregation, and to our marriage mates. One aid in meeting these challenges is appreciating that the challenge of loyalty is bound up with the vindication of Jehovah’s sovereignty.—3/15, page 20.

**□ What lesson can we learn from David’s experience in trying to bring the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem? (2 Samuel 6:2-7)** David ignored the instructions that Jehovah had given regarding the carrying of the Ark, and this brought calamity. The lesson is that we should never blame Jehovah for problems that result when we ignore his clear instructions. (Proverbs 19:3)—4/1, pages 28, 29.

# Why He Used the Greatest Name

"I have sinned, according to one of my reviewers, in the introduction of the word 'Jehovah' instead of 'the Lord,' which has for centuries been its customary equivalent."

This was the comment of J. J. Stewart Perowne in the preface to the second edition of his translation of the book of Psalms, first published in 1864. The reviewer, writing in the Saturday Review of July 2, 1864, objected to the use of God's name in the translation, as it was no longer used in either the Jewish or the Christian churches. He claimed that the name Jehovah is too closely associated with the Jews and that another word should be used, such as "Lord" or "God," "which has nothing local or national about it."

Perowne did not agree with these arguments, since he did not "wish to efface a single character" of God's revelation to man. He rightly contended that translators who render the Hebrew divine name "Lord" fail to distinguish between two Hebrew words.

Further, Perowne asserted that there were very good authorities who favored the restoration of the divine name. He quoted the famous English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

"Why continue the translation of the Hebrew into English at second hand, through the medium of the Septuagint? Have we not adopted the Hebrew word Jehovah? Is not the *Kύριος*, or Lord, of the Septuagint, a Greek substitute in countless instances for the Hebrew, Jehovah? Why not, then, restore the original word; and in the Old Testament religiously render Jehovah, by Jehovah; and every text in the New Testament, referring to the Old, by the Hebrew word in the text referred to?"



Perowne admitted that the exact pronunciation of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton has been lost, but he remarked: "If owing to merely superstitious scruples the name fell out of use in the Jewish Church, and if owing to a too slavish copying of the Greek and Latin Versions our own [English] Version lost the word, these are reasons of no force whatever against a return to the original use." Perowne favored the form "Jehovah" because it was well known. Since then a number of more modern translations have also used the divine name. The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures uses the name Jehovah more than 7,200 times in the Hebrew and the Christian Greek Scriptures.

In his translation of the Psalms, Perowne tried to adhere "closely to the form of the Hebrew, both in its idiom and in the structure of the clauses." When translating Psalm 69, verses 5 and 6, he saw the need to distinguish between the Hebrew words for "God" ('Elo-him'), "Lord" ('Adho-nai'), and "Jehovah": "O God ['Elo-him'], Thou knowest my foolishness, and my guiltiness hath not been hid from Thee. Let not them that wait on Thee be ashamed through me, O Lord ['Adho-nai'], Jehovah (God of) hosts. Let not them be confounded, through me, that seek Thee, O God of Israel."

# "It Is the Work of Jehovah"

That was the title of an article in *El Norte*, a newspaper of Monterrey City, Mexico. The article was about a new Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Monterrey is a city with a population of 2,300,000 (including the suburbs) in the northern part of Mexico, and it has 19,200 Kingdom publishers. For about a year and a half, the Witnesses united their efforts to build a beautiful and practical Assembly Hall with 3,000 comfortable seats and air conditioning. The local Witnesses rejoiced when a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses presented the dedication talk. The program included a brief history of the work in Monterrey, and there were interviews with those who took part in the construction. Then the 4,500 attending the meeting enjoyed the dedication talk.

This is the third of the recent Assembly Halls that have been constructed in Mexico in what has been described as a campaign for "More, Larger, and Better Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls."

With more than 443,000 publishers in Mexico, and with an attendance of 1,492,500 at the Memorial in 1995, new Assembly Halls, such as the one in Monterrey, certainly will serve the divine purpose.



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