

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

APRIL 15, 2006



How Well Do You Communicate?



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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How Well Do You COMMUNICATE?

LOVE Letter by a 60-Year-Old." That was the theme of a sweepstakes contest by a bank in Japan a few years ago. It urged Japanese in their 50's and 60's to express their "honest feelings" toward their spouses. One contestant wrote to his wife: "You may laugh, but I'll regret it if I don't say it, so here I go, in a loud voice: Thank you for marrying me."

In a number of cultures, including some in the Orient, free expression of one's feelings has been discouraged. Yet, over 15,000 responded to that love-letter contest. It was so popular that a follow-up contest was conducted, and books were published based on the letters. This suggests that deep inside, many yearn to express how they feel about their cherished mate. Others, though, de-

cline to do so. Why? It may well be because it takes a measure of effort and skill for them to let others—such as a mate—understand how they feel.

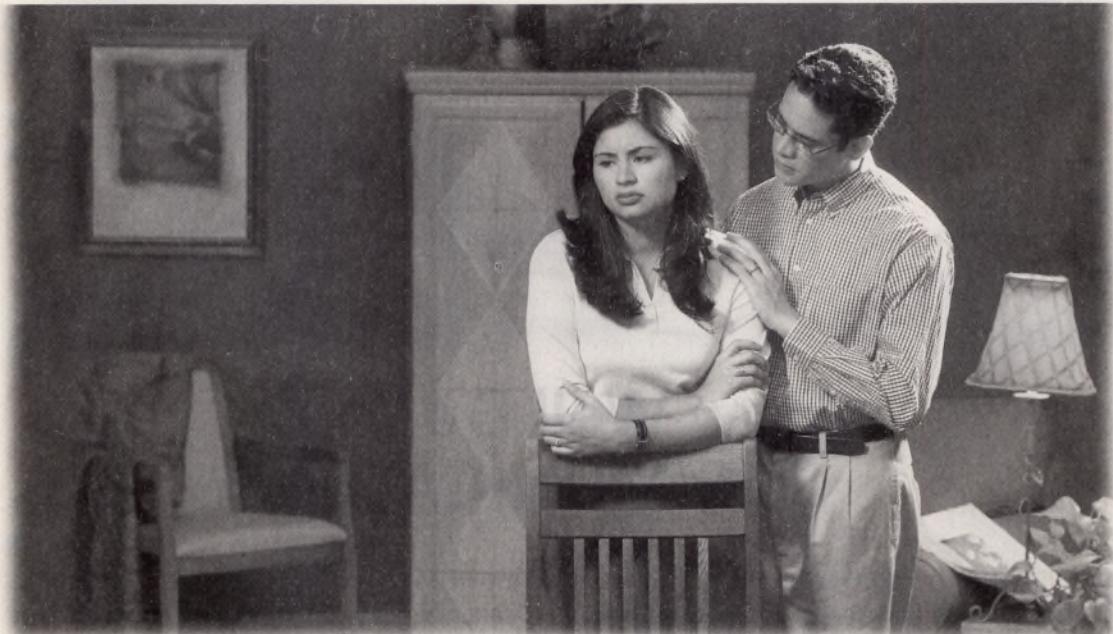
Hitoshi Kato, who wrote a book on retirement, says that among older couples in Japan, many divorce proceedings are initiated by wives because of deep-rooted resentments accumulated over the years. "But," he says, "it is also a result of the couple's not talking things out when faced with crises."

Upon retirement, a husband may be surprised when his wife hands him a notice of divorce. For many years the couple may not have discussed how they felt about each other. Husband and wife may have tried to express their feelings but were unable to

keep the conversation on a positive note. Instead of building a closer relationship, they found themselves embroiled in repeated arguments.

How can husband and wife deal with their differences in a peaceful way and com-

municate their feelings in a pleasant manner? You may be interested to know that the most practical suggestions are found, not in a recent book by a marriage counselor, but in an ancient book that has been appreciated for centuries—the Bible.



Keys to COMMUNICATING With Your Mate

'I SHOULD not have said that.' 'I did not express myself clearly.' Have you ever felt that way after trying to communicate with your mate? Communication is a skill that needs to be developed. As with any skill, some people seem to be able to master it quite easily, while others have a harder time. Still, even if you belong to the latter group, it

is possible for you to learn to convey your thoughts in a pleasant manner, to communicate effectively.

At times, cultural pressures squeeze people into a certain mold when it comes to dealing with their mates. 'To be manly,' men may have been told, 'you should not talk too much.' Talkative men may be

looked down on as frivolous and insincere. Granted, the Bible does say: "Every man must be swift about hearing, slow about speaking." (James 1:19) However, that counsel applies to both males and females and shows that communication involves more than just speaking. Two people might be talking to each other at length, but what if they fail to listen to each other? Likely, there would be no real communication. A major part of successful communication, as the above scripture shows, is the art of listening.

Communicating Without Words

In some communities, wives are expected to keep their opinions to themselves. Husbands are to remain resolutely aloof in the family. In such an environment, husband and wife are left to guess at what the mate wants in any given circumstance. Some wives become very good at discerning their husband's needs, acting quickly to fill them. In such cases, communication without words is going on between the husband and wife. Typically, though, this type of communication is one-directional. While the wife may learn to discern what her husband is thinking or feeling, the husband is rarely expected to develop the same skill and discern his wife's feelings.

True, in some cultures men observe women's emotional needs and try to fill them. Even in such cultures, however, many marriages would benefit from better communication.

Communication Vital

Frank communication can prevent misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Early in the history of the Israelites, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh who dwelled east of the Jordan River built "an altar great in conspicuousness" by the

Jordan. Other tribes misunderstood their actions. Thinking that their brothers across the Jordan had committed an act of apostasy, the tribes on the west prepared to war with the "rebels." Before setting out to war, though, they sent a delegation to communicate with the eastern tribes. What a wise move! They found that the altar was not for making illegal burnt offerings or sacrifices. Rather, the tribes on the east feared that in the future the other tribes would tell them: "You have no share in Jehovah." The altar would be a witness that they too were worshippers of Jehovah. (Joshua 22:10-29) They named the altar Witness, likely because it served as a witness that to them Jehovah was the true God.—Joshua 22:34, footnote.

Their explanation was enough to convince the other tribes, who dropped the idea of taking action against the two and a half tribes. Yes, open and frank communication averted armed conflict. Later, when Israel rebelled against Jehovah God, their figurative husband, he told them that he would mercifully 'speak to their heart.' (Hosea 2:14) What a fine pattern for married people! Yes, endeavor to reach your mate's heart so that he or she can understand your feelings. This is important, especially when strong emotions are involved. "Words are cheap, some say," observes Pattie Mihalik, a journalist in the United States, "but words can also be priceless. And while some might find it hard to express sentiment, the result can yield much more than money in the bank."

Developing Communication Skills

'Our marriage was a failure from the beginning,' some may claim. 'This marriage cannot be saved,' others may conclude. They may feel that it is impossible to improve their communication skills after the wedding day. Yet, think of those who live in societies where marriages are arranged by

relatives. Many in such cultures eventually establish good lines of communication in their married life.

One couple in an Oriental country were united in an arranged marriage. A go-between had been asked to travel a long distance to find a bride for the man. Still, the married couple, who lived almost 4,000 years ago, displayed outstanding skill in the art of communication. The man, Isaac, met the go-between and the bride-to-be in a field. The man serving as go-between "went relating to Isaac all the things he had done." The Bible account about this marriage continues: "After that Isaac brought her [Rebekah] into the tent of Sarah his mother [this step serving as the official wedding]. Thus he took Rebekah and she became his wife; and he fell in love with her."—Genesis 24:62-67.

Note that Isaac first heard the report and "after that" took Rebekah as his wife. The go-between was a trustworthy servant who was devoted to Jehovah God, whom Isaac worshipped. Isaac had good reason for trusting this man. Thereafter, Isaac "fell in love" with Rebekah, whom he had married.

Did Isaac and Rebekah develop good communication skills? After their son Esau married two daughters of Heth, a serious family problem arose. Rebekah "kept saying" to Isaac: "I have come to abhor this life of mine because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob [their younger son] ever takes a wife from the daughters of Heth . . . , of what good is life to me?" (Genesis 26:34; 27:46) Clearly, she communicated her concern in no uncertain terms.

Isaac told Jacob, Esau's twin brother, not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. (Genesis 28:1, 2) Rebekah had made her point. This couple had successfully communicated about a most sensitive family sub-

ject, providing a good example for us today. What, though, if mates cannot come to an agreement? What can be done?

When Faced With a Disagreement

If you and your mate have a serious disagreement, do not give your spouse the silent treatment. That would convey a very clear message: You are not happy, and you want your mate to be unhappy too. Yet, your mate may not even fully understand your wishes and feelings.

You and your mate may need to talk things over. If the issue is sensitive, it may not be easy to stay calm. Isaac's parents, Abraham and Sarah, once faced a difficult situation. Because Sarah was barren, she followed the custom of those days and provided him with her servant girl, Hagar, as a concubine to bear offspring. Hagar bore Abraham a boy, Ishmael. However, later Sarah herself became pregnant, and she bore Abraham a son, Isaac. When Isaac was to be weaned, Sarah noticed Ishmael poking fun at her son. So Sarah, perceiving danger for her son, urged Abraham to drive out the slave girl and Ishmael. Yes, Sarah communicated how she felt in a straightforward manner. But what she asked for proved to be very displeasing to Abraham.

How was the difference settled? The Bible account reads: "God said to Abraham: 'Do not let anything that Sarah keeps saying to you be displeasing to you about the boy and about your slave girl. Listen to her voice, because it is by means of Isaac that what will be called your seed will be.'" Abraham listened to Jehovah God's direction and acted accordingly.—Genesis 16:1-4; 21:1-14.

'Well,' you might say, 'if God would speak to us from the heavens, we could easily come to an agreement!' That brings us to another key to solving marital disputes. Married couples can listen to God. How? By

*When facing a disagreement,
will you seek God's direction?*

reading the Word of God together and accepting what it says as God's direction.—1 Thessalonians 2:13.

One experienced Christian wife said: "Many times, when a young woman comes to me for advice about her marriage, I ask her if she and her husband have been reading the Bible together. Most who have problems in their marriage do not have that habit." (Titus 2:3-5) We can all benefit from her observation. Regularly read the Word of God with your mate. In that way, you "hear" God's words as to how to conduct yourself day by day. (Isaiah 30:21) Just a word of caution: Do not use the Bible as a rod to beat your mate, continually pointing to scriptures that you feel your mate is failing to apply. Rather, try to see how both of you can put into practice what you read.

If you are trying to handle a difficult problem, why not check the *Watch Tower Publications Index** about your specific concern? Perhaps you are caring for aged parents, and that is causing tensions in your marriage. Instead of arguing about what your mate should or should not be doing, why not sit down and check the *Index* together? First, look up the main heading "Parents." You may want to look up the references under the subheadings, such as "caring for aged parents." Read together the related articles from the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses. You may be surprised at how much you and your mate can benefit from the Bible-based information, which has helped many sincere Christians.



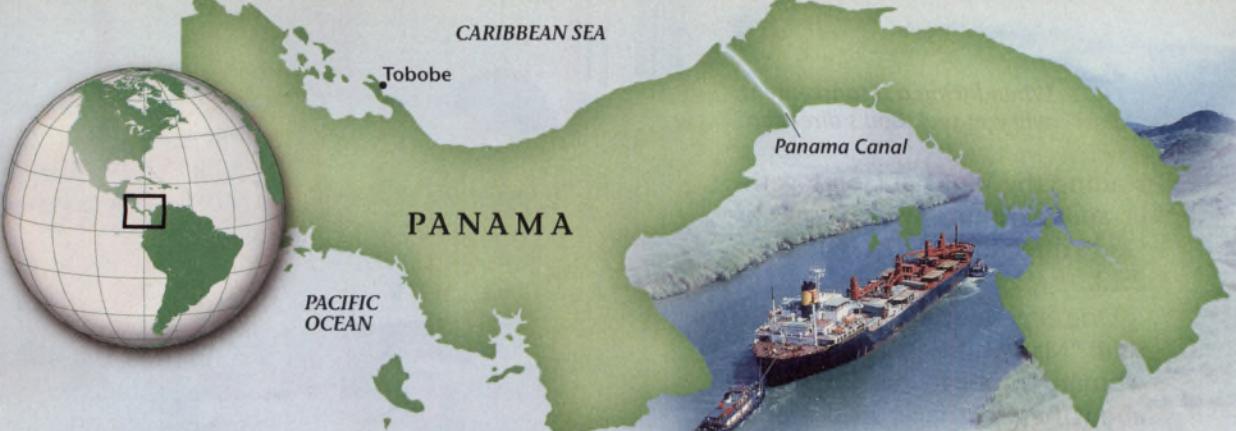
Checking those references and reading the material together will help you to get an objective view of your problem. You will find Scriptural quotations and citations that give you God's thinking. Look them up in the Bible, and read them together. Yes, you will hear what God says about the problem you are facing!

Keep the Lines of Communication Open

Have you ever tried to open a door that has not been used for some time? Squeaking, the rusted hinges gradually give way. But what if the door had regularly been used and its hinges were well greased? It would have been easy to open. The same is true with the door of communication. If you make it a practice to communicate and lubricate the hinges of the door of communication with Christian love, you can more easily communicate your thoughts even when you have serious disagreements.

You have to begin somewhere. Although communicating may initially require much effort, work at it. Then you can eventually enjoy an easier relationship with your mate, resulting in lasting understanding.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



Bridging Gaps in PANAMA

PANAMA, bridge of the world." Half a century ago, this motto was mentioned in a popular radio program in that Central American country. Today, it has come to express the feelings many have about that country.

Panama serves as a type of bridge between North and South America. Moreover, the actual Bridge of the Americas straddles the famous Panama Canal. A remarkable feat of engineering, the canal extends across the country, uniting the Atlantic and the Pacific

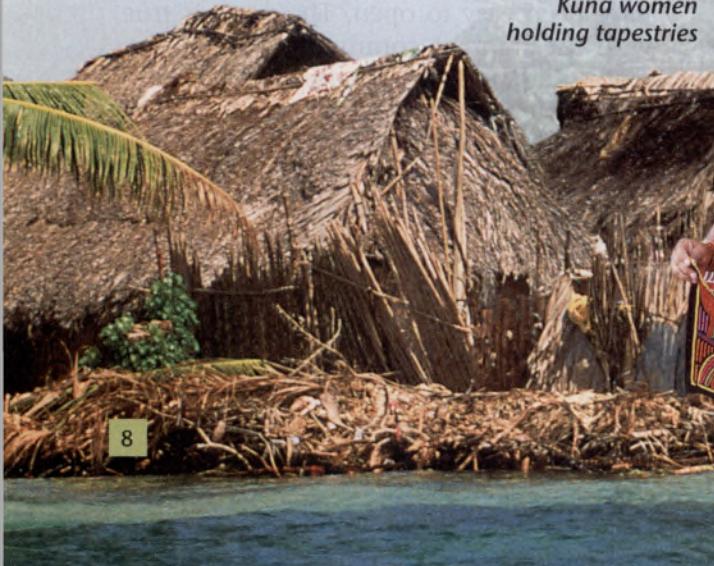
oceans. This allows seagoing vessels from around the world to cross in a matter of hours what would otherwise require a journey by sea of some days or weeks. Yes, Panama does serve as an important bridge to much of the world.

A Bridge and a Melting Pot

Panama has also become a melting pot of people from various national and ethnic backgrounds. These people, together with the many indigenous groups, have pro-

Ship and Kuna women: © William Floyd Holdman/Index Stock Imagery; village: © Timothy O'Keefe/Index Stock Imagery

Kuna women holding tapestries



duced a diverse population that is scattered throughout this beautiful land. However, is it possible to bridge the resulting social, cultural, religious, and linguistic differences and produce unity of thought and purpose based on the priceless truths found in God's Word?

Yes, it is. The apostle Paul's words recorded at Ephesians 2:17, 18 indicate that first-century Christians—Jew and Gentile alike—did accomplish just that on the basis of the unifying effect of Christ's sacrifice. Paul wrote: "He [Jesus] came and declared the good news of peace to you, the ones far off, and peace to those near, because through him we, both peoples, have the approach to the Father by one spirit."

In like manner today, Jehovah's Witnesses are declaring "the good news of peace" in Panama to individuals and groups who have come from far off, both spiritually and, at times, literally. There develops blessed unity among those who "approach" Jehovah. As a result, congregations have been formed in Panama in six different languages—Spanish, Cantonese, Panamanian Sign Language, English, and two of the indigenous languages, namely Kuna and Ngobere (Guaymi). It is encouraging to learn how members of these language groups have become united in their worship of Jehovah.

Crossing Bridges in the Comarca

The Ngobe group is the largest of the eight indigenous peoples of Panama. Some 170,000 make up this group, the majority of whom live in an extensive area that was recently designated a *comarca*, or reservation. A large part of this area consists of rugged jungle mountains accessible mainly on foot, as well as beautiful coastal regions accessible by sea. Communities are often established near rivers, which serve as convenient arteries of transportation, as well as along the

A missionary preaching to a Ngobe woman



coast. Many of the residents of the *comarca* make a meager living on coffee plantations in the mountains, by fishing, or by working the land. Many are members of churches of Christendom. However, there are adherents of a local religion known as Mama Tata. Others turn to local *sukias* (shamans) for healing when they are sick or feel that they are being harassed by wicked spirits. Though many speak Spanish, the language best understood is Ngobere.

Rowing to Reach Hearts

Jehovah's Witnesses realize that it is important to help people to learn the truth in a way that reaches not only their mind but also their heart. This can provide the needed motivation to make the necessary changes in their lives in order to conform to Bible principles. Therefore, the special pioneer ministers assigned to eight different sectors of the reservation have studied the Ngobere language with the help of qualified local Witnesses.

The 14 congregations that have developed in the area show remarkable potential for

Witnesses from Ngobe boarding a canoe to attend a special assembly day program



growth. For instance, a few years ago, Dimas and Gisela, a special pioneer couple, were assigned to a small congregation of about 40 in the coastal area of Tobobe. It was not easy for them to get used to the frequent trips in a canoe in order to preach to the humble people along the Atlantic Coast. Dimas and Gisela discovered that calm ocean waters can quickly become deadly waves. Their arms and backs often ached after rowing from one village to another. Learning the local language was another challenge. However, their sacrifices and persistence were rewarded in 2001 when some 552 people attended the Memorial of Christ's death.

Across the bay from Tobobe is the village of Punta Escondida. For some time, a small group of publishers regularly rowed across the bay—weather permitting—to attend meetings in Tobobe, and reports indicated that there were good possibilities for forming a new congregation in this area. With that in mind, Dimas and Gisela were asked to relocate to Punta Escondida. In less than two years, the group in Punta Escondida became a congregation of 28, with an average meeting attendance of 114 at the weekly public talk. In 2004 the new congregation was delighted when a total of 458 attended the Memorial of Christ's death.

Spanning the Gap of Illiteracy

For many honesthearted ones, overcoming illiteracy has helped them to develop a close relationship with Jehovah. Such was the case of Fermina, a young woman from the mountainous region of the *comarca*. Witness missionaries working in the isolated area where she lived found her to be very attentive to the Kingdom message. When offered a Bible study, she replied that she would like to learn more. There was a problem, though. She spoke both

Spanish and Ngobere, but she could not read or write either language. One of the missionaries offered to teach her, using the brochure *Apply Yourself to Reading and Writing*.*

Fermina was an excellent student, eagerly preparing her lessons, doing all her homework, and practicing her spelling diligently. Within a year, she had progressed enough to study the brochure *You Can Be God's Friend!** When meetings were arranged, Fermina began to attend. Because of the family's poverty, however, it was very difficult for her to pay the fare to get to the meetings with her children. One of the pioneers, aware of Fermina's circumstances, suggested that she consider making and selling traditional Ngobe women's dresses. Fermina did so and, despite other material needs, made sure to use the money thus obtained only to attend Christian meetings. She and her family have now moved to another area, and she continues to progress spiritually. They are pleased not only to have overcome illiteracy but, more important, to have come to know Jehovah.

Overcoming the Barrier of Deafness

In Panama, many families with hearing-impaired members tend to feel ashamed. At

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Bible truth bridges culture and language differences in Panama

times, such ones have been deprived of any type of education. Many deaf ones feel isolated and excluded, while communication with them is very difficult.

It became evident, therefore, that something had to be done to reach the hearing-impaired with the good news. With the encouragement of a traveling overseer, a group of eager pioneers and others set about learning Panamanian Sign Language. Their resourcefulness was rewarded.

By the latter part of 2001, a sign-language group had been established in Panama City. The meeting attendance was about 20. As the brothers and sisters became more proficient in the language, they were able to reach out to many who for the first time "heard" Bible truth in their language. Many Witnesses with hearing-impaired children also began attending the meetings and discovered that their children more readily understood Bible teachings and became more enthusiastic about the truth. Often, parents learned to sign and could thus communicate better with their children. The parents could help their children spiritually and found that the family was strengthened. The experience of Elsa and her daughter, Iraida, well illustrates this.



A Witness working with the sign-language group learned about Iraida, visited her, and placed the brochure *Enjoy Life on Earth Forever!** Iraida greatly appreciated what she was able to learn from the pictures about the new world. A Bible study was started in the brochure. Upon concluding the study of that publication, they used the brochure *What Does God Require of Us?** At that point, Iraida started to ask her mother to help her to prepare and to explain the information to her.

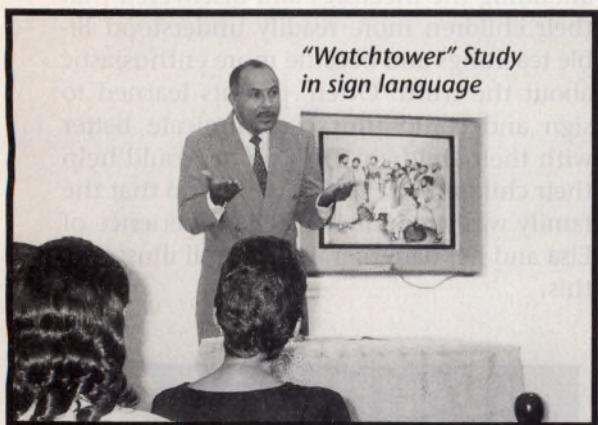
Elsa had two problems: Not being a Witness, she did not know Bible truth, and she did not understand sign language. She had been told that she should not sign to her daughter but that her daughter had to learn to speak. Consequently, communication between mother and daughter was limited.

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Moved by Iraida's request for help, Elsa asked that a Witness in the congregation study with her. She said: "I made the request for my daughter's sake, since I have never seen Iraida so excited about anything." Elsa joined her daughter in her study and learned sign language. As Elsa dedicated more time to her daughter, communication at home improved. Iraida began to be more selective about the friends she made, and she associated with the congregation. Now both mother and daughter attend Christian meetings regularly. Elsa was recently baptized, and Iraida is progressing toward that goal. Elsa relates that for the first time, she is getting to know her daughter and that they can now talk about many important things that are dear to both of them.

The sign-language group, which became a congregation in April 2003, has now grown to some 50 Kingdom publishers, with more than that attending meetings. Over one third are deaf. Other sign-language groups are being formed in three cities outside of the metropolitan area of Panama City. Though there is still much to do in this field, there is no doubt that a major step has been taken to bridge the gap of "silence" between honest-hearted deaf people and their loving Creator, Jehovah God.

Such results are typical of what is happening throughout Panama. Though they come from different cultures, languages, and backgrounds, many have become united in the worship of the only true God. The truth of Jehovah's Word has successfully bridged communication gaps in this country, which many consider to be the "bridge of the world."—Ephesians 4:4.



Elsa and her daughter, Iraida, enjoy meaningful communication



How Can You Make Decisions God's Way?

A MAN in the United States went into a bank with a check amounting to \$25,000. He intended to put the money in a time deposit. However, the banker advised him to invest it in the stock market, claiming that in the long run, the stock market never loses its value. The man decided to take the advice. Not too long thereafter, his investment lost much of its value.

This experience illustrates that making wise decisions is a challenge. What about various decisions we face in life? Many decisions can make the difference between success and failure—and sooner or later, between life and death. How, then, can we be confident that we are making wise decisions?

"This Is the Way"

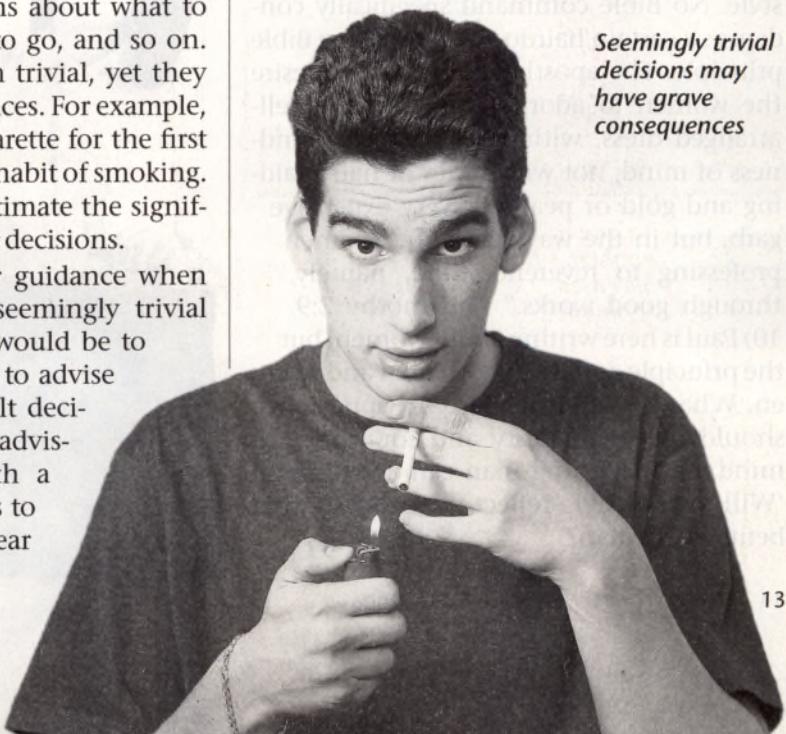
Daily, we make decisions about what to eat, what to wear, where to go, and so on. Some decisions may seem trivial, yet they may have grave consequences. For example, the decision to light a cigarette for the first time can lead to a lifelong habit of smoking. We should never underestimate the significance of seemingly minor decisions.

Where can we look for guidance when making decisions, even seemingly trivial ones? How wonderful it would be to have a reliable consultant to advise us when we face a difficult decision! You can find such an adviser. An ancient book with a message for today has this to say: "Your own ears will hear

a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people,' in case you people should go to the right or in case you should go to the left." (Isaiah 30:21) Whose words are these? And how can you be sure that his guidance is reliable?

The above assurance is found in the Bible, which millions have studied and have come to realize is inspired by Jehovah God, the Creator. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Jehovah knows how we are made, so he is the best source of guidance. He can also foresee the future, being "the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done; the One saying, 'My own counsel will stand.'" (Isaiah 46:10) Thus, a psalmist expressed his

Seemingly trivial decisions may have grave consequences



trust in Jehovah's Word: "Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway." (Psalm 119:105) Yet, how does Jehovah help us to steer our course to safety amid the troubled waters of today's world? How can we make decisions God's way?

Apply Bible Principles

Jehovah God gave Christians divine principles so that they can make sound decisions. Learning Bible principles and applying them can be likened to learning a language and using it. Once you have mastered the language, you can often tell when someone makes grammatical mistakes because what he says does not sound quite right. You may not be able to point out in specific grammatical terms exactly what is wrong with the statement, but you know it is wrong. When you learn Bible principles to the point of making them part of yourself, you can usually tell when a certain decision is inappropriate, out of harmony with divine principles.

Take, for example, the decision a young man might face in choosing his hairstyle. No Bible command specifically condemns a certain hairdo. Yet, consider a Bible principle. The apostle Paul wrote: "I desire the women to adorn themselves in well-arranged dress, with modesty and soundness of mind, not with styles of hair braiding and gold or pearls or very expensive garb, but in the way that befits women professing to reverence God, namely, through good works." (1 Timothy 2:9, 10) Paul is here writing about women, but the principle applies to both men and women. What is the principle? Our appearance should reflect modesty and soundness of mind. So the young man can ask himself, 'Will my hairstyle reflect the modesty that befits a Christian?'

And what helpful principle can a young person extract from the following words of the disciple James? "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) Christians loathe the thought of being a friend of the world, which is at enmity with God. Would the type of hairstyle that his peers are fond of make him seem to be a friend of God or a friend of the world? The young man pondering the question of hairstyle can use such Bible-based principles in making a wise decision. Yes, divine principles help us make decisions. And when we become accustomed to making decisions based on godly principles, it gets easier to come to wise conclusions that do not have negative consequences.

How could Bible principles help her decide wisely?



We can find many principles in God's Word. To be sure, we may not find a text that specifically addresses our situation. Still, we can read about how some people obeyed divine guidance and how others ignored divine warnings. (Genesis 4:6, 7, 13-16; Deuteronomy 30:15-20; 1 Corinthians 10:11) Reading such accounts and analyzing the outcomes, we will perceive divine principles that can help us in making decisions that please God.

Take as an example a brief conversation that Jesus Christ had with his apostle Peter. The men collecting the two drachmas tax had asked Peter: "Does your teacher not pay the two drachmas tax?" Peter had answered: "Yes." Shortly thereafter, Jesus asked Peter: "From whom do the kings of the earth receive duties or head tax? From their sons or from the strangers?" When Peter said: "From the strangers," Jesus told him: "Really, then, the sons are tax-free. But that we do not cause them to stumble, you go to the sea, cast a fishhook, and take the first fish coming up and, when you open its mouth, you will find a stater coin. Take that and give it to them for me and you." (Matthew 17:24-27) What divine principles can we find in this account?

By asking a series of questions, Jesus guided Peter's reasoning: As the Son of God, Jesus was tax-exempt. Although Peter had initially failed to grasp that point, Jesus kindly helped him to do so. Faced with a mistake others make, we may decide, in imitation of Jesus, to treat them compassionately rather than harshly point out their fault or condemn them.

Peter could then see the reason for paying the head tax—not to stumble others. Here is another principle we can glean from this account. Taking into consideration the con-



Jesus spoke compassionately to Peter

science of others is more important than insisting on our rights.

What motivates us to make decisions that will show respect for the conscience of others? Love for our neighbor. Jesus Christ taught that loving our neighbor as ourselves is the commandment second in importance only to that of loving God with our whole soul. (Matthew 22:39) However, we are living in a self-centered world, and our sinful tendencies incline us toward being selfish. So if a person is to love his neighbor as himself, he has to make his mind over.—Romans 12:2.

Many have made such changes, and they consider others when making decisions, whether major or trivial. Paul wrote: "You were, of course, called for freedom, brothers; only do not use this freedom as an inducement for the flesh, but through love slave for one another." (Galatians 5:13) How can we do that? Consider a young girl who moved to a rural town to help people to learn about God's Word. As she talked to the people, she realized that her clothes,

though modest by the standards of urban fashion, were becoming the talk of the town. Her dress and grooming were modest, yet she decided to wear clothes that were more subdued "so that the word of God [would] not be spoken of abusively."—Titus 2:5.

How would you have reacted if you faced some decision about your grooming or another matter of personal taste? You can be sure that Jehovah will be pleased when your decisions reflect your concern for the conscience of others.

Have a Long-Range View

Apart from Bible principles and the conscience of others, what may we consider when making decisions? Though the path of Christians is rugged and narrow, God gives them much leeway within his set limits. (Matthew 7:13, 14) We need to consider how our decisions will affect our spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical well-being in the future.

Suppose you were thinking of accepting a job. Perhaps there is nothing immoral or inappropriate about the nature of the work. You will be able to attend Christian meetings and conventions. The paycheck will be more than you ever expected. The employer values your skill very highly and wants to use you to the fullest. Besides, you like the type of work involved. Should anything hold you back from accepting the offer? Well, what if you foresee the possibility of your falling in love with the work. You are told that you would not be forced to work overtime. But to finish a project, would you be willing to push yourself more than you should? Might such overtime become frequent? Could that take you away from your family and eventually from spiritual activities that you definitely should not miss?

Consider how Jim made a major decision about his employment. He worked tirelessly and moved up the corporate ladder. Eventually he became the managing director of his company in the Orient, the chief executive officer of its affiliate in the United States, and a member of the board of directors of its European operations. When there was an economic downturn in Japan, however, he realized how futile it was to pursue money and power. His hard-earned money quickly disappeared. He lost direction in his life. 'What will I be doing ten years from now?' he asked himself. Then he realized that his wife and children were focused on more meaningful goals in life. Over the years, they had been associating with Jehovah's Witnesses. Jim wanted to share the happiness and contentment his family enjoyed. So he started to study the Bible.

Soon Jim could see that his lifestyle hindered him from leading a purposeful life as a Christian. Constantly traveling between Asia, the United States, and Europe, he did not have enough time to study the Bible and associate with fellow believers. He faced a decision: 'Will I continue to lead the life I have lived for the past 50 years, or will I pursue a new way of life?' He prayerfully considered the long-range effect of his decision and decided to quit all his jobs except one so that he would have time for spiritual pursuits. (1 Timothy 6:6-8) His decision made him happier, giving him the opportunity to be busy with Christian activities.

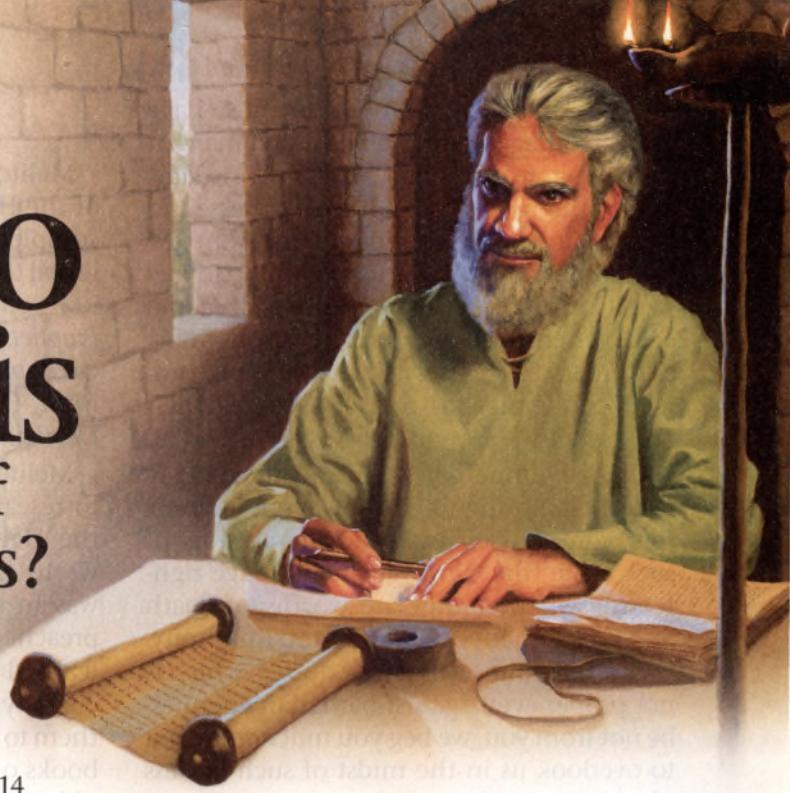
Be they major or trivial, your decisions matter. A decision you make today may mean the difference between success and failure, even life and death in the future. You can make wise decisions if you take into consideration Bible principles, the conscience of others, and the long-range effect of your action. Make decisions God's way.

Melito of Sardis

Defender of Bible Truths?

EVERY year true Christians observe the Lord's Evening Meal on the date that corresponds to Nisan 14 on the Hebrew calendar. They are obeying Jesus' command: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." It was actually on that day in 33 C.E. that Jesus, after having observed the Passover, instituted the Memorial of his sacrificial death. His death took place before that day ended.—Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28.

During the second century C.E., some started to change the time of the commemoration and the manner in which it was held. The date of Jesus' death continued to be used in Asia Minor. However, as one reference work points out, "the custom in Rome and Alexandria was to observe the resurrection on the following Sunday," calling it Resurrection Passover. A group known as the Quartodecimans (Fourteenthers) defended the observance of Jesus Christ's death on Nisan 14. Melito of Sardis was of a similar mind. Who was Melito? In what way did he defend this Bible truth and others?



A 'Great Luminary'

At the end of the second century, according to Eusebius of Caesarea in his work *Ecclesiastical History*, Polycrates of Ephesus sent a letter to Rome defending the observance of "the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the Gospel, never deviating, but following according to the rule of the faith." According to this letter, Melito—Bishop of Sardis, in Lydia—was one of those who supported Nisan 14 as the date to be observed. The letter stated that his contemporaries considered Melito to be among the 'great luminaries who have fallen asleep.' Polycrates said that Melito had not married and that he "lived entirely in the Holy Spirit and lies in Sardis awaiting the visitation from heaven when he will rise from the dead." This could mean that Melito was among those who believed that the resurrection would not occur until Christ's return.—Revelation 20:1-6.

It appears, then, that Melito must have been a courageous and determined man. In fact, he wrote an *Apology* for the Christians, one of the first ever recorded, addressed to Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor from 161 to 180 C.E. Melito was not afraid to defend Christianity and denounce wicked and greedy men. Such men sought various imperial orders as excuses to persecute and unjustly condemn Christians so as to steal their possessions.

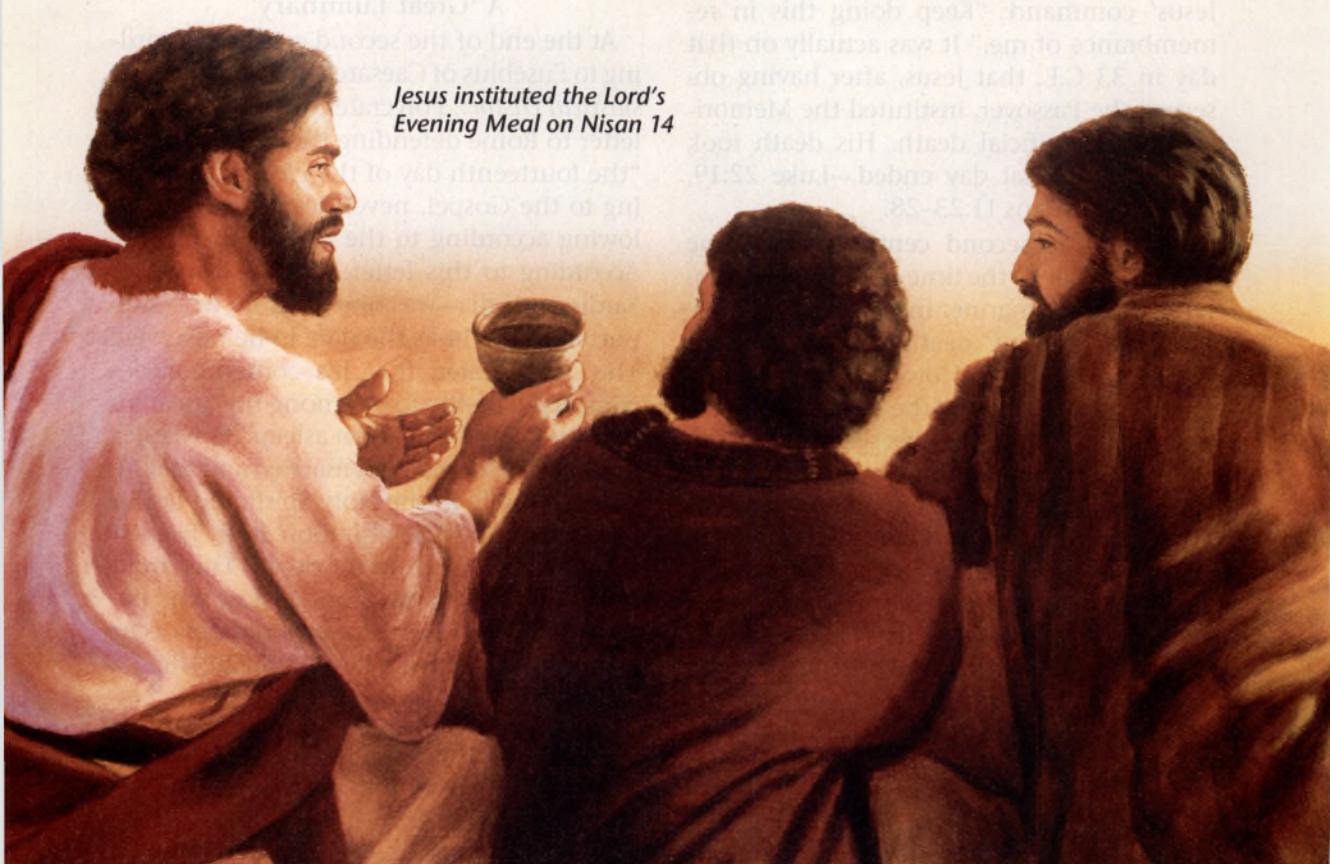
To the emperor, Melito courageously wrote: "We bring to you this request alone, that you yourself examine the authors of such strife [the Christians], and judge righteously whether they are worthy of death and punishment or of safety and immunity. But, if this counsel and new decree, which is not proper even against barbarian enemies, be not from you, we beg you much more not to overlook us in the midst of such lawless plundering by the mob."

Using Scripture to Defend Christianity

Melito showed great interest in the study of the Holy Scriptures. We do not have the complete list of his writings, yet some titles reveal the interest he showed in Biblical topics. Some are *On Christian Life and the Prophets*, *On the Faith of Man*, *On Creation*, *On Baptism and Truth and Faith and Christ's Birth*, *On Hospitality*, *The Key*, and *On the Devil and the Apocalypse of John*.

Melito personally traveled to Bible lands to research the exact number of books of the Hebrew Scriptures. In this regard he wrote: "Accordingly, when I went East and was in the place where these things were preached and practiced, and after I had learned the books of the Old Testament accurately and had set down the facts, I sent them to you." This list does not mention the books of Nehemiah and Esther, yet it is the oldest catalog of the canonical books of the

Jesus instituted the Lord's Evening Meal on Nisan 14



Hebrew Scriptures in writings by professed Christians.

During this research, Melito compiled a series of verses taken from the Hebrew Scriptures that contained prophecies about Jesus. Melito's work, entitled the *Extracts*, shows that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah and that the Mosaic Law and the Prophets pointed to Christ.

Defending the Value of the Ransom

A strong Jewish presence was felt in the important cities of Asia Minor. The Jews of Sardis, where Melito lived, observed the Hebrew Passover on Nisan 14. Melito wrote a homily entitled *The Passover* that showed the legitimacy of the Passover under the Law and defended the Christian observance of the Lord's Evening Meal on Nisan 14.

After making comments on Exodus chapter 12 and having showed that the Passover foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice, Melito explained why it made no sense for Christians to observe the Passover. This was because God had done away with the Mosaic Law. He then showed why Christ's sacrifice was necessary: God placed Adam in a paradise so that he could live a happy life. But the first man disobeyed the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and bad. There thus arose a need for a ransom.

Melito reiterated that Jesus was sent to the earth and died on a stake to ransom believing mankind from sin and death. Interestingly, Melito used the Greek word *xylon*, meaning "wood," when writing about the stake on which Jesus died.—Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29.

Melito was known beyond Asia Minor. Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Ori-

gen were familiar with his works. Yet, historian Raniero Cantalamessa states: "The decline of Melito, which progressively led to the disappearance of his writings, began when—after the triumph of the custom of the Sunday Passover—the Quartodecimans started to be considered heretics." In the end, the writings of Melito were almost completely lost.

A Victim of Apostasy?

After the death of the apostles, a foretold apostasy made its way into true Christianity. (Acts 20:29, 30) Clearly, this affected Melito. The elaborate style of his writings seems to reflect the writings of Greek philosophy and the Roman world. Maybe that is why Melito called Christianity "our philosophy." He also considered the integration of so-called Christianity with the Roman Empire "the greatest proof... for good."

Melito certainly did not take to heart the apostle Paul's counsel: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ." Therefore, while Melito defended Bible truths to a limited extent, in many respects he abandoned them.—Colossians 2:8.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Follow Jesus' Example and Show Concern for the Poor

Have No Fear—Jehovah Is With You!

Jehovah Trains Shepherds for His Flock

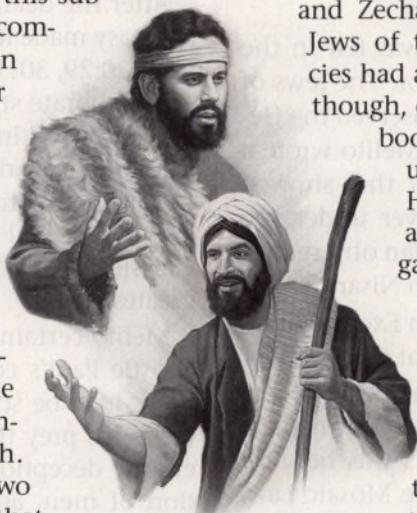
"I AM WITH YOU PEOPLE"

"The messenger of Jehovah went on to say: . . . 'I am with you people,' is the utterance of Jehovah.'"—HAGGAI 1:13.

WE ARE living at a momentous time in history. As evidenced by the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, since 1914 we have been in "the Lord's day." (Revelation 1:10) You may well have studied this subject, so you know that Jesus compared "the days of the Son of man" in Kingdom power to "the days of Noah" and "the days of Lot." (Luke 17:26, 28) The Bible thus indicates that this is a prophetic parallel. Yet, there is another parallel that deserves our serious consideration.

² Let us consider a situation that existed back in the days of the Hebrew prophets Haggai and Zechariah. What message did those two faithful prophets provide that has pointed application for Jehovah's people in our time? Haggai and Zechariah were 'messengers of Jehovah' to the Jews after their return from captivity in Babylon. They were commissioned to assure the Israelites of God's backing in rebuilding the temple. (Haggai 1:13; Zechariah 4:8, 9) Though the books that Haggai and Zechariah wrote are short, they are part of "all Scripture [that] is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for

1. To what prophetic parallel for our day did Jesus refer?
2. To what role did Jehovah assign Haggai and Zechariah?



Haggai and Zechariah's writings assure us of God's backing

disciplining in righteousness."—2 Timothy 3:16.

They Should Concern Us

³ Certainly, the messages of Haggai and Zechariah were beneficial to the Jews of their day, and their prophecies had a fulfillment back then. Why, though, can we be sure that these two

books should be of concern to us today? We find a clue at Hebrews 12:26-29. There the apostle Paul quotes from Haggai 2:6, which speaks of God's "rocking the heavens and the earth." The rocking would ultimately "overthrow the throne of kingdoms and annihilate the strength of the kingdoms of the nations."—Haggai 2:22.

⁴ In quoting Haggai, Paul states what is to happen to "the kingdoms of the nations" and speaks of the superiority of the unshakable Kingdom that anointed Christians will receive. (Hebrews 12:28) You can see from this that the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah point to a time that was still future when the book of Hebrews was written in the first century of our Common Era. There still is on earth today a remnant of anointed Christians, who are heirs of the Messianic Kingdom with Jesus. Hence, Haggai and Zechariah must have import for our time.

- 3, 4. Why should Haggai and Zechariah's messages be of interest to us?

⁵ The book of Ezra provides some historical background. After the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon in 537 B.C.E., Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua (or Jeshua) supervised the laying of the foundation of the new temple in 536 B.C.E. (Ezra 3:8-13; 5:1) While that was cause for great rejoicing, before long, fright began to come upon the Jews. Adversaries, “the people of the land,” says Ezra 4:4, “were continually weakening the hands of the people of Judah and disheartening them from building.” Such enemies, particularly Samaritans, made false accusations against the Jews. These opposers induced the king of Persia to ban the temple construction work.—Ezra 4:10-21.

⁶ Initial enthusiasm for the temple work waned. The Jews turned to personal interests. However, in 520 B.C.E., 16 years after the foundation of the temple was laid, Jehovah raised up Haggai and Zechariah to stir up the people to renew the work on the temple. (Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1) Roused by God’s messengers and having clear evidence of Jehovah’s backing, the Jews resumed the work on the temple and completed it in 515 B.C.E.—Ezra 6:14, 15.

⁷ Do you know the significance of all of this for us? We have work to do in connection with the preaching of the “good news of the kingdom.” (Matthew 24:14) That work took on special emphasis after World War I. Just as the ancient Jews were released from literal captivity in Babylon, so Jehovah’s modern-day people were freed from captivity to Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. God’s anointed ones applied themselves to the work of preaching, teaching, and directing people to true worship. That work continues today on an even greater scale, and you may be sharing in it. Now is the time for

5, 6. What was the background of Haggai and Zechariah’s service?

7. The situation in the prophets’ day has what parallel in modern times?

it to be done, for the end of this wicked system is just ahead! This God-ordained work must continue until Jehovah intervenes in human affairs at the “great tribulation.” (Matthew 24:21) That will clear away wickedness and allow true worship to flourish fully on earth.

⁸ As the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah show, we can be certain of Jehovah’s backing and blessing as we share wholeheartedly in this work. Despite the efforts of some to suppress God’s servants or ban their assigned work, no government has been able to halt the progress of the evangelizing work. Think of how Jehovah has blessed the Kingdom work with increase over the decades following World War I and right up to our time. There is still, though, much to do.

⁹ How can what we learn from Haggai and Zechariah stir us even more to obey the divine command to preach and to teach? Well, let us take note of some lessons that we might draw from these two Bible books. For example, consider a few details that relate to the temple-building work that the restored Jews were to carry out. As noted, the Jews who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon did not persevere in their work on the temple. After they laid the foundation, they slacked off. What mistaken viewpoint had developed among them? And what can we learn from that?

Getting a Correct View

¹⁰ The restored Jews were saying: “The time has not come.” (Haggai 1:2) When they *began* the temple-building work, laying the foundation in 536 B.C.E., they were not saying that “the time has not come.” But they

8. Why can we be confident of God’s backing on our work?
9. To what ancient situation should we give attention, and why?
10. The Jews developed what mistaken view, and with what result?

soon allowed opposition from neighbors and interference from the government to affect them. The Jews began putting more emphasis on their own houses and their own comforts. Given the contrast between their private homes paneled with fine woods and the uncompleted temple, Jehovah asked: "Is it the time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house is waste?"—Haggai 1:4.

¹¹ Yes, the priorities of the Jews had shifted. Instead of keeping in first place Jehovah's purpose to have the temple rebuilt, God's people became focused on themselves and their dwellings. Work on God's house of worship was neglected. Jehovah's word recorded at Haggai 1:5 encouraged the Jews to 'set their heart upon their ways.' Jehovah was telling them to stop and meditate on what they were doing and to consider how they were being affected by not keeping the temple-building work in first place in their lives.

¹² As you can imagine, the misplaced priorities of the Jews affected them personally. Note God's view expressed at Haggai 1:6: "You have sown much seed, but there is a bringing of little in. There is an eating, but it is not to satisfaction. There is a drinking, but not to the point of getting intoxicated. There is a putting on of clothes, but it is not with anyone's getting warm; and he that is hiring himself out is hiring himself out for a bag having holes."

¹³ The Jews were in the land that God had given them, yet it was not producing as they would have liked. Jehovah was withholding his blessing, as he had forewarned. (Deuteronomy 28:38-48) Without his backing, the Jews sowed seed but had a meager harvest, not enough food to satisfy them. Lack-

11. Why did Jehovah have to counsel the Jews of Haggai's time?

12, 13. How does Haggai 1:6 describe the situation of the Jews, and what does that verse mean?

ing his blessing, they were unable to clothe themselves with warm garments. It even seemed as if the money they earned went into a bag full of holes, with no benefit to the wage earners. What of the expression: "There is a drinking, but not to the point of getting intoxicated"? It could not imply that getting drunk would have shown God's blessing; he condemns drunkenness. (1 Samuel 25:36; Proverbs 23:29-35) Rather, the expression is another reference to the lack of God's blessing on the Jews. Any wine they could make would be limited, not being enough to produce intoxication. The *Revised Standard Version* renders Haggai 1:6: "You drink, but you never have your fill."

¹⁴ The lesson we should learn from all of that is not about home design or decorating. Long before the exile, the prophet Amos had rebuked wealthy ones in Israel for their "houses of ivory" and for their "lying down on couches of ivory." (Amos 3:15; 6:4) The fancy houses and decorated furniture did not last. Those things were plundered by enemy conquerors. Yet, years later, after an exile of 70 years, many of God's people had not learned from this. Will we? It would be fitting for each of us to ask: 'Frankly, how much emphasis do I put on my home and its decoration? What about arranging for extra education to advance a career, though doing that would take up considerable time for a number of years, crowding out important aspects of my spiritual life?'—Luke 12:20, 21; 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

¹⁵ What we read at Haggai 1:6 should bring home to us our need for God's blessing in our lives. Those Jews of old lacked that, to their detriment. Whether we have an abundance of material things or not, if we fail to receive Jehovah's blessing, it will definitely be to our spiritual detriment. (Matthew 25:34-40; 2 Corinthians 9:8-12) Yet, how can we receive that blessing?

14, 15. What lesson do we learn from Haggai 1:6?

Jehovah Helps by Means of His Spirit

¹⁶ Haggai's fellow prophet, Zechariah, was moved to highlight the very means by which Jehovah motivated and blessed devoted ones back then. And this shows how he will bless you too. We read: "Not by a military force, nor by power, but by my spirit," Jehovah of armies has said." (Zechariah 4:6) You may often have heard this verse quoted, but what meaning did it have for the Jews in the days of Haggai and Zechariah, and thus what is its import for you?

¹⁷ Recall that the inspired words of Haggai and Zechariah had a wonderful effect back at that time. What those two prophets said reinvigorated the faithful Jews. Haggai started to prophesy in the sixth month of 520 B.C.E. Zechariah began to prophesy in the eighth month of that year. (Zechariah 1:1) As you can see from Haggai 2:18, work on the foundation resumed in earnest in the ninth month. So the Jews were stirred to action, and they obeyed Jehovah with confidence in his support. The words at Zechariah 4:6 relate to God's backing.

¹⁸ When the Jews returned to their homeland in 537 B.C.E., they had no military force.

16-18. In its ancient context, what does Zechariah 4:6 mean?

Nonetheless, Jehovah protected them and guided them on the trip from Babylon. And his spirit was directing matters when they started the work on the temple shortly thereafter. Once they began to work wholeheartedly again, he would back them by means of his holy spirit.

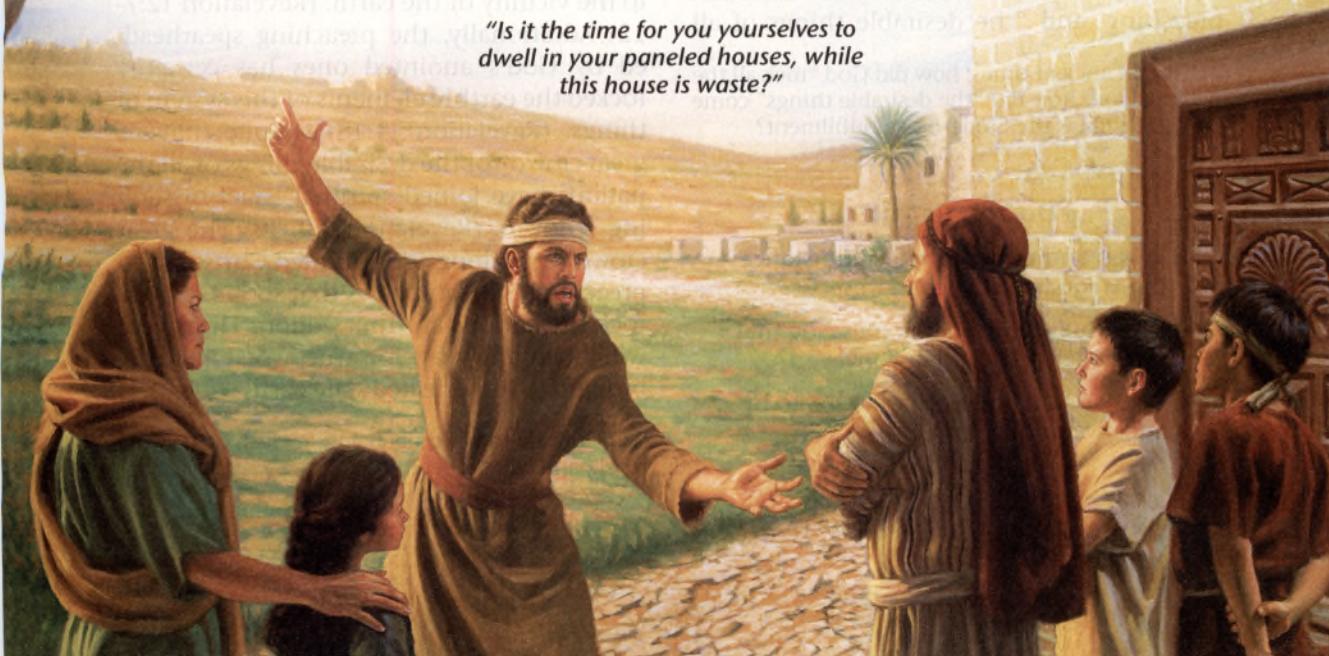
¹⁹ Through a series of eight visions, Zechariah was assured that Jehovah would be with his people, who would faithfully carry the temple work to a finish. The fourth vision, recorded in chapter 3, shows that Satan was active in resisting the efforts of the Jews to complete the building of the temple. (Zechariah 3:1) Satan would certainly not be pleased to see High Priest Joshua perform services in behalf of the people at a new temple. Although the Devil was active in hindering the Jews from building the temple, Jehovah's spirit would play a major role in removing obstacles and energizing the Jews to move ahead until the temple was completed.

²⁰ It appeared as if there were an insurmountable obstacle of opposition, coming from government officials who had been able to get a ban placed on the work.

19. God's spirit overcame what strong influence?

20. How did holy spirit help the Jews to carry out God's will?

"Is it the time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house is waste?"



Yet, Jehovah promised that this seeming "mountain" would be removed and become "level land." (Zechariah 4:7) And that happened! King Darius I made an investigation and discovered Cyrus' memorandum that authorized the Jews to rebuild the temple. So Darius rescinded the ban and authorized that money from the royal treasury be given to the Jews to help pay the expenses of the work. What an astounding reversal! Did God's spirit play a role in this? We can be sure that it did. The temple was completed in 515 B.C.E., the sixth year of the reign of Darius I.—Ezra 6:1, 15.

²¹ At Haggai 2:5, the prophet reminded the Jews of the covenant that God established with them at Mount Sinai when "the whole mountain was trembling very much." (Exodus 19:18) In the days of Haggai and Zechariah, Jehovah was going to cause another shake-up, as described in the figurative language of verses 6 and 7. The state of affairs in the Persian Empire would become unsettled, but the work at the temple would move ahead to its completion. Non-Jews, "the desirable things of all the nations," would end up glorifying God along with the Jews in that place of worship. In a major way in our time, God has 'rocked the nations' by our Christian preaching, and "the desirable things of all

21. (a) In ancient times, how did God "rock all the nations," and how did "the desirable things" come out? (b) What is the modern-day fulfillment?

Do You Recall?

- When and under what circumstances did Haggai and Zechariah serve?
- How can you apply the message that Haggai and Zechariah conveyed?
- Why do you find Zechariah 4:6 to be encouraging?



*Jehovah's people share in reaching
'desirable ones of the nations'*

"the nations" have come in to worship God alongside the anointed remnant. Truly, the anointed and the other sheep together are now filling Jehovah's house with glory. Such true worshippers await with faith the time when Jehovah will 'rock the heavens and the earth' in another sense. That will be in order to overthrow and annihilate the strength of the kingdoms of the nations.—Haggai 2:22.

²² We are reminded of the upheaval that has occurred in different elements pictured by "the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry ground." For one thing, Satan the Devil and his demons were hurled down to the vicinity of the earth. (Revelation 12:7-12) Additionally, the preaching spearheaded by God's anointed ones has certainly rocked the earthly elements of this system of things. (Revelation 11:18) Despite that, "a great crowd" of the desirable things of all the nations have joined spiritual Israel in serving Jehovah. (Revelation 7:9, 10) The great crowd work alongside anointed Christians in preaching the good news that soon God will rock the nations at Armageddon. That event will open the way for true worship to be brought to its perfected state earth wide.

22. How are the nations being 'rocked,' with what result, and what is yet to occur?

LET YOUR HANDS BE STRONG

"Let the hands of you people be strong, you who are hearing in these days these words from the mouth of the prophets."—ZECHARIAH 8:9.

THE prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah were written some 2,500 years ago, yet they certainly are relevant to your life. The Bible accounts found in these two books are not mere history. They are part of "all the things that were written aforetime . . . for our instruction." (Romans 15:4) Much of what we read in them makes us think of real situations that have been transpiring since the Kingdom was established in heaven in 1914.

² Referring to events and circumstances experienced by God's people long before, the apostle Paul stated: "Now these things went on befalling them as examples, and they were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived." (1 Corinthians 10:11) So you might well wonder, 'What value do the books of Haggai and Zechariah have in our day?'

³ As the preceding article noted, the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah involved the time when the Jews returned to their God-given land after their release from captivity in Babylon. The two prophets gave attention to the rebuilding of the temple. The Jews laid the foundation of the temple in 536 B.C.E. While some older Jews focused on the past, overall there was much "shouting for joy." In reality, though, something

1, 2. Why do the books of Haggai and Zechariah deserve our attention?
3. On what do Haggai and Zechariah focus?

even more momentous has occurred in our time. How so?—Ezra 3:3-13.

⁴ Soon after World War I, Jehovah's anointed ones were released from captivity to Babylon the Great. That represented a major indication of Jehovah's support. Earlier it seemed that religious leaders and their political associates had brought an end to the Bible Students' public preaching and teaching work. (Ezra 4:8, 13, 21-24) However, Jehovah God cleared away obstacles to the preaching and disciple-making work. Over the decades since 1919, the Kingdom work has flourished and nothing has been able to stop its progress.

⁵ We can be sure that the preaching and teaching done by Jehovah's obedient servants in our time will continue with his backing. At Zechariah 4:7, we read: "He will certainly bring forth the headstone. There will be shoutings to it: 'How charming! How charming!'" To what grand accomplishment in our time does this point?

⁶ Zechariah 4:7 is pointing to the time when true worship of the Sovereign Lord will be brought to its perfected state in the earthly courtyards of his spiritual temple. That temple is Jehovah's arrangement for approaching him in worship on the basis of the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Granted, the great spiritual temple has

4. What took place soon after World War I?
5, 6. To what grand accomplishment does Zechariah 4:7 point?

existed since the first century C.E. Yet, true worship in its earthly courtyard will yet be *perfected*. Millions of worshippers now serve in the earthly courtyard of the spiritual temple. These and multitudes of resurrected ones will be brought to perfection during the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus Christ. At the end of the thousand years, only true worshippers of God will be left on the cleansed earth.

⁷ Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua were on hand to witness the temple's completion in 515 B.C.E. Zechariah 6:12, 13 foretold Jesus' comparable role in bringing true worship to its perfected state: "This is what Jehovah of armies has said: 'Here is the man whose name is Sprout. And from his own place he will sprout, and he will certainly build the temple of Jehovah. And . . . he, for his part, will carry the dignity; and he must sit down and rule on his throne, and he must become a priest upon his throne.'" In view of the fact that Jesus, who is in heaven

7. Jesus has what role regarding bringing true worship to its perfected state in our day, and why should we find that encouraging?

and causes the Davidic line of kings to sprout, is backing the Kingdom work at the spiritual temple, do you think that anyone can hinder its progress? Not at all! Should this not encourage us to move ahead in our ministry, not getting sidetracked by everyday concerns?

Priorities

⁸ In order to have Jehovah's backing and blessing, we must keep the work at the spiritual temple in first place in our lives. Unlike the Jews who said, "The time has not come," we must remember that we are living in "the last days." (Haggai 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:1) Jesus foretold that his loyal followers would preach the good news of the Kingdom and make disciples. We must be careful not to neglect our privilege of service. The preaching and teaching work that was temporarily halted by the world's opposition was resumed in 1919, but it has not been completed. You can be sure, though, that it certainly will be!

8. Why must we give the work at the spiritual temple first place in our lives?

Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the Jews to work whole-souled and thus receive a blessing



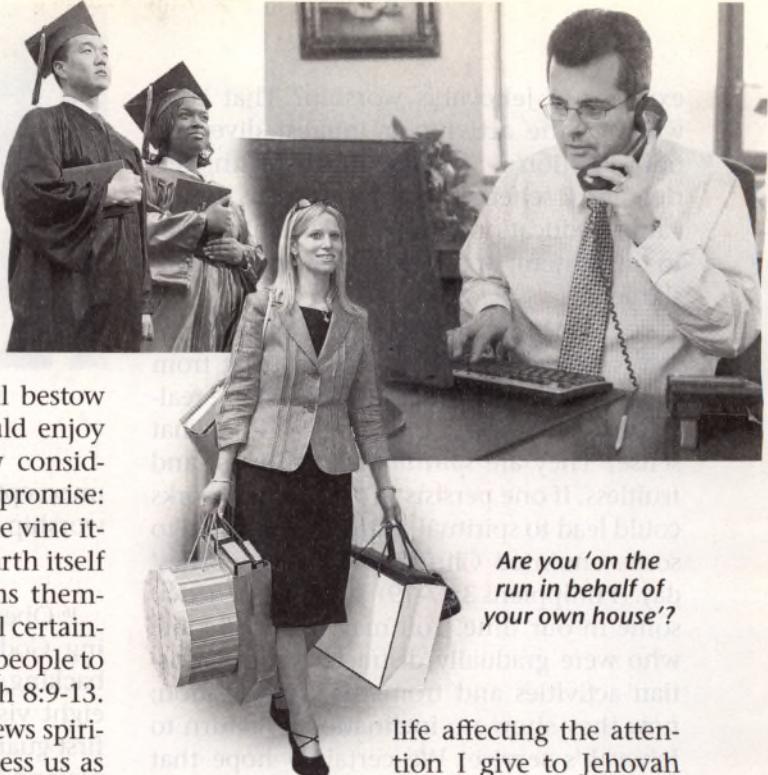
⁹ To the extent that we continue to work in earnest, we will be blessed—as a people and as individuals. Note Jehovah's promise from which we can draw assurance. Once the Jews returned in whole-souled worship and resumed in earnest their work on the foundation of the temple, Jehovah said: "From this day I shall bestow blessing." (Haggai 2:19) They would enjoy full restoration of his favor. Now consider the blessings found in God's promise: "There will be the seed of peace; the vine itself will give its fruitage, and the earth itself will give its yield, and the heavens themselves will give their dew; and I shall certainly cause the remaining ones of this people to inherit all these things."—Zechariah 8:9-13.

¹⁰ Just as Jehovah blessed those Jews spiritually and materially, so he will bless us as we diligently, and with a happy heart, do the work he has assigned to us. These blessings include peace among ourselves, security, prosperity, and spiritual growth. Yet, you can be certain that God's continued blessing depends on our doing the work at the spiritual temple in the way that Jehovah wants it done.

¹¹ Now is the time to 'set our heart upon our ways.' (Haggai 1:5, 7) We should take some time to analyze our priorities in life. Jehovah's blessing on us today depends on the extent to which we are magnifying his name and moving ahead in our work at his spiritual temple. You might ask yourself: 'Have my priorities changed? How does my zeal for Jehovah, his truth, and his work compare to the zeal I had when I was baptized? Is interest in a comfortable

9, 10. On what does Jehovah's blessing depend, meaning what to us?

11. How might we analyze ourselves?



Are you 'on the run in behalf of your own house'?

life affecting the attention I give to Jehovah and his Kingdom? Is fear of man—concern about what others will think—holding me back somewhat?"—Revelation 2:2-4.

¹² We do not want God to hold back his rich blessing because of our neglecting the work of magnifying his name. Recall that after getting off to a good start, the restored Jews were "on the run, each one in behalf of his own house," as Haggai 1:9 reports. They became preoccupied with their own daily needs and way of life. Consequently, there was "a bringing of little in," a shortage of good food, drink, and warm clothing. (Haggai 1:6) Jehovah withdrew his blessing. Is there a lesson in this for us?

¹³ Do you not agree that to continue enjoying divine blessings, we must resist seeking things for ourselves at the

12. What situation among the Jews is highlighted at Haggai 1:6, 9?

13, 14. How can we apply the lesson drawn from Haggai 1:6, 9, and why is this important?

expense of Jehovah's worship? That is so whether the activity or interest diverting our attention is the pursuit of wealth, get-rich-quick schemes, ambitious plans for advanced education to have a desirable career in this system, or programs for personal fulfillment.

¹⁴ Such things may not be sins in themselves. However, do you not see that from the standpoint of everlasting life, those really are "dead works"? (Hebrews 9:14) In what sense? They are *spiritually* dead, vain, and fruitless. If one persists in them, such works could lead to spiritual death. It happened to some anointed Christians in the apostles' day. (Philippians 3:17-19) It has happened to some in our time. You may know of some who were gradually distracted from Christian activities and from the congregation; now they show no inclination to return to Jehovah's service. We certainly hope that such ones will return to Jehovah, but the fact is that pursuing "dead works" can result in the loss of Jehovah's favor and blessing. You can see how sad a development that would be. It would mean the loss of the joy and peace that God's spirit produces. And imagine what a loss it would be not to share in the warm Christian brotherhood!—Galatians 1:6; 5:7, 13, 22-24.

¹⁵ This is a very serious matter. Note from Haggai 2:14 how Jehovah viewed the Jews who neglected his house of worship in favor of paneling their own houses, literally or figuratively. "'That is how this people is, and that is how this nation is before me,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and that is how all the work of their hands is, and whatever they present there. It is unclean.'" Whatever token sacrifices the halfhearted Jews offered up on the temporary altar in Jerusalem were

15. How does Haggai 2:14 show the seriousness of our worship?



*Jehovah promised a blessing,
and he has given it*

unacceptable as long as they neglected true worship.—Ezra 3:3.

Guaranteed Backing

¹⁶ Obedient Jews who worked at rebuilding God's temple were assured of divine backing, as God indicated through a series of eight visions that Zechariah received. The first guaranteed the completion of the temple and prosperity for Jerusalem and Judah as long as the Jews obediently carried out the work at hand. (Zechariah 1:8-17) The second vision promised the end of all governments that opposed true worship. (Zechariah 1:18-21) Other visions ensured divine protection of the building work, an influx of people of many nations to Jehovah's completed house of worship, true peace and security, the leveling of seemingly insurmountable obstacles to the God-assigned work, a removal of wickedness, and angelic oversight and protection. (Zechariah 2:5, 11; 3:10; 4:7; 5:6-11; 6:1-8) You can understand why with such guarantees of divine support, obedient ones adjusted their lifestyle and centered their attention on the work for which God had liberated them.

¹⁷ Similarly, the guarantee we have of the

16. Based on visions Zechariah received, of what could the Jews be sure?

17. In view of the guarantee we have, what should we ask ourselves?

certain triumph of true worship should stir us to activity and motivate us to think seriously about Jehovah's house of worship. Ask yourself: 'If I believe that now is the time to do the work of preaching the good news of the Kingdom and making disciples, do my goals and lifestyle harmonize with my conviction? Am I spending an appropriate amount of time studying God's prophetic Word, making it my concern, and conversing about it with fellow Christians as well as with others whom I meet?'

¹⁸ Zechariah referred to the destruction of Babylon the Great followed by the war of Armageddon. We read: "It must become one day that is known as belonging to Jehovah. It will not be day, neither will it be night; and it must occur that at evening time it will become light." Yes, Jehovah's day will truly be a dark, cold day for his enemies on earth! But it will mean continuous light and favor for Jehovah's faithful worshippers. Zechariah also described how everything in the new world will proclaim Jehovah's holiness. True worship at God's great spiritual temple will be the only form of worship on earth. (Zechariah 14:7, 16-19) What a guarantee! We will experience the fulfillment of what was foretold and will see the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty. How unique will be that day belonging to Jehovah!

Permanent Blessings

¹⁹ Following that stupendous accomplishment, Satan and his demons will be confined to an abyss of inactivity. (Revelation 20:1-3, 7) Then blessings will flow during Christ's Thousand Year Reign. Zechariah 14:8, 9 says: "It must occur in that day that living waters will go forth from Jerusalem, half

18. What lies ahead, according to Zechariah chapter 14?

19, 20. Why do you find Zechariah 14:8, 9 encouraging?

of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. In summer and in winter it will occur. And Jehovah must become king over all the earth. In that day Jehovah will prove to be one, and his name one."

²⁰ "Living waters," or "a river of water of life," picturing Jehovah's provisions for life, will continuously flow from the seat of the Messianic Kingdom. (Revelation 22:1, 2) A great crowd of Jehovah's worshippers, having survived Armageddon, will benefit by being released from the condemnation of Adamic death. Even those who are already dead will benefit by means of a resurrection. Thus will begin a new phase of Jehovah's rulership over the earth. Humans earth wide will recognize Jehovah as the Universal Sovereign, the only one to be worshipped.

²¹ In view of all that Haggai and Zechariah foretold and all that has been fulfilled, we have solid reason to move ahead in the work that God has assigned us to do in the earthly courtyards of his spiritual temple. Until true worship is brought to its perfected state, may we all strive to keep Kingdom interests in first place. Zechariah 8:9 urges us: "Let the hands of you people be strong, you who are hearing in these days these words from the mouth of the prophets."

21. What should be our resolve?

Do You Recall?

- What historical parallel makes the books of Haggai and Zechariah relevant today?
- Haggai and Zechariah offer us what lesson about priorities?
- Why does considering Haggai and Zechariah give us reason for confidence about the future?

Do You Remember?

Have you appreciated reading the recent issues of *The Watchtower*?
See if you can answer the following questions:

- **What are some reasons why so much evil exists today?**

One cause of evil acts is man's inclination toward badness. (Genesis 8:21) Another is that most people lack accurate knowledge of God's will. Furthermore, Satan, the originator of evil, continues to meddle in human affairs.—1/1, pages 4-6.

- **What positive effects can result from a good word at the right time? (Proverbs 12:25)**

It can build confidence in the recipient, encourage and motivate him, and create in him a sense of belonging. Also, as we seek to commend, we are helped to see the good in others.—1/1, pages 16-17.

- **What did the ark of the covenant contain?**

It held the two stone tablets of the Law as well as some of the manna. After Korah's rebellion, Aaron's rod was put in the Ark to serve as a witness against that generation. (Hebrews 9:4) The rod and the manna may have been removed from the Ark before the dedication of Solomon's temple.—1/15, page 31.

- **Why did the Jews in Nehemiah's day have to bring wood to the temple?**

The Mosaic Law did not require an offering of wood. But in Nehemiah's day there was a need for an ongoing supply of wood in order to burn sacrifices on the altar.—2/1, page 11.

- **What is the Muratorian Fragment?**

It is part of a Latin manuscript. The text was originally composed in Greek about the end

of the second century C.E. It contains the oldest list of books of the Christian Greek Scriptures viewed as authoritative, as well as comments on the books and their writers.—2/15, pages 13-14.

- **Why did Persian Queen Vashti keep refusing to come to the king? (Esther 1:10-12)**

The Bible does not state her motives. Some scholars suggest that she refused because she did not want to degrade herself before the king's drunken guests. Or maybe this physically attractive queen was really not submissive, thus setting a bad example for other wives in the Persian Empire.—3/1, page 9.

- **How does the ransom provide deliverance?**

Jesus' sacrifice can deliver us from inherited sin and can liberate us from the fatal effects of sin. (Romans 6:23) This sacrifice frees true Christians from a guilty conscience. And by exercising faith in the ransom, we can be delivered from fear regarding our standing before God. (1 John 2:1)—3/15, page 8.

- **What can we learn from the prohibition in the Law not to boil a kid in its mother's milk? (Exodus 23:19)**

Such boiling may have been a pagan ritual performed to produce rain. (Leviticus 20:23) God provided the milk of a mother goat to nourish the kid and help it grow. Cooking the kid in that milk would show contempt for the God-established relation between parent and young. The law against this shows God's tender compassion.—4/1, page 31.

Questions From Readers

If a person is being harassed by the demons, what can he do to get relief?

God's Word shows that those who are suffering from demon attacks can get free from such harassment. Prayer plays a vital role in such liberation. (Mark 9:25-29) But someone troubled by demons may need to take additional steps. Events involving first-century Christians illustrate what else may be required.

Before they became followers of Christ, some individuals in ancient Ephesus were involved with demonism. However, after they made up their mind to serve God, "those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them up before everybody." (Acts 19:19) By destroying their books on divination, those new believers in Ephesus set an example for any who wish to free themselves from demon attacks today. It is imperative for such ones to get rid of all objects related to spiritism. This includes books, magazines, movies, material from electronic sources, music recordings that have spiritistic overtones, as well as amulets or other items worn for "protection" or linked to spiritistic practices.—Deuteronomy 7:25, 26; 1 Corinthians 10:21.

Some years after those Christians in Ephesus had destroyed their books on magic, the apostle Paul wrote: "We have a wrestling . . . against the wicked spirit forces." (Ephesians 6:12) Paul urged Christians: "Put on the complete suit of armor from God that you may be able to stand firm against the machinations [crafty acts, footnote] of the Devil." (Ephesians 6:11) That advice is still valid. Christians must fortify their spiritual defenses in order to stay out of the reach of wicked spirits. "Above all things," stressed Paul, "take up the large shield of faith, with which

you will be able to quench all the wicked one's burning missiles." (Ephesians 6:16) A person strengthens his faith through Bible study. (Romans 10:17; Colossians 2:6, 7) Hence, regular Bible study helps us to develop faith that serves as a bulwark against the influence of wicked spirits.—Psalm 91:4; 1 John 5:5.

Those Christians in Ephesus needed to take yet another important step. Paul told them: "With every form of prayer and supplication . . . carry on prayer on every occasion in spirit." (Ephesians 6:18) Yes, praying intensely for Jehovah's protection is, indeed, essential for those who want to be set free from demon attacks today. (Proverbs 18:10; Matthew 6:13; 1 John 5:18, 19) The Bible fittingly says: "Subject yourselves, therefore, to God; but oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you."—James 4:7.

While the one under demon attack should pray fervently for relief, other true Christians may also pray in behalf of the individual who deeply desires to serve Jehovah and who is earnestly trying to resist wicked forces. They can ask God that the one afflicted by demons might gain the spiritual strength to resist demonic assaults. Since God's Word states that "a righteous man's supplication, when it is at work, has much force," prayers said by God's servants will certainly benefit afflicted ones who are doing their utmost to "oppose the Devil."—James 5:16.

*Believers in Ephesus
destroyed their
books on magic*



The Right to Have a Name

EVERY person has the right to have a name. In Tahiti, even an abandoned newborn whose father and mother are unknown is given a name. The registry office designates a first and a last name for the abandoned child.

Yet, there is one person who in a sense has been denied this basic right, a right granted to virtually all humans. Amazingly, he is "the Father, to whom every family in heaven and on earth owes its name"! (Ephesians 3:14, 15) You see, many people actually refuse to use the name of the Creator as it appears in the Bible. They prefer to replace it with such titles as "God," "the Lord," or "the Eternal One." What, then, is his name? The psalmist answers that question: "You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth."—Psalm 83:18.

In the first half of the 19th century when the missionaries of the London Missionary Society arrived in Tahiti, Polynesian people worshipped several gods. Each had its own distinctive name, the principal gods being *Oro* and *Taa-roa*. In distinguishing the God of the Bible from others, those missionaries did not hesitate to make wide use of the divine name, transliterated *Iehova* in Tahitian.

That name came to be well-known and commonly used in everyday conversation and correspondence. King Pomare II of Tahiti, who reigned in the early 19th century, used it frequently in his personal correspondence. Evidence of that fact appears in the letter reproduced here. Written in English, it is exhibited in the Museum of Tahiti and Its Islands. This letter testifies to the absence of prejudice regarding the use of the divine name at that time. What is more, God's personal name appears thousands of times in the first Tahitian version of the Bible, which was completed in 1835.

King and letter: Collection du Musée de Tahiti et des îles, Punaauia, Tahiti



King Pomare II

Malavaï, Otaheite

Friends.

I wish you every blessing
since in your country, with success in
this foolish land, this wicked land, this
ant of good, this land that knoweth
regards no land.

Friends, I wish you health and prosperity
may *Jehovah* save us all.

Friends with respect to your letter you will
say to you, that your business with me, a
consent to, and shall consequently banish
him to Rarotonga -

Friends I do therefore believe and shall obey
Friends I hope you also will consent to my
I wish you to send a great number of my
children here -

Friends send also property, and cloth for us,
adopt English customs -

Friends send also plenty of Muskets and
are frequent in our country - Should I
have nothing in