

JANUARY 15, 1994

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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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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Are Wars Inevitable?

WAR is a depressing feature of the news. Those bulletins of brutality doubtless sicken you. But perhaps they also make you wonder why weapons must be the arbiters of so many disputes. Will men never learn to live in peace?

A remedy for the plague of war seems more elusive than a cure for AIDS. During the 20th century, entire nations have been mobilized for war, millions of men have been thrown into battle, and hundreds of cities have been reduced to rubble. No end to the carnage seems to be in sight. A lucrative arms trade ensures that the world's armies—and guerrillas—will continue to be grimly effective.

As weapons of war became more deadly, casualty figures skyrocketed. More than half of the 65 million soldiers who fought in World War I were killed or wounded. Some 30 years later, just two atom bombs snuffed out the lives of more than 150,000 Japanese civilians. Since World War II, conflicts have been more localized. Nevertheless, they are lethal, especially for civilians, who now account for 80 percent of the casualties.

Ironically, this wholesale butchery has occurred during an age that has seen unparalleled efforts to outlaw war as a way of resolving disputes between nations. With the recent end of the Cold War, hopes were high that a new, peaceful world order would emerge. However, global peace remains as illusory as ever. Why?

Instituto Municipal de Historia, Barcelona



A Biological Necessity?

Some historians and anthropologists claim that wars are inevitable—even necessary—simply because they are part of an evolutionary struggle for survival. Influenced by such thinking, military analyst Friedrich von Bernhardi argued in 1914 that war is fought “in the interest of biological, social and moral progress.” The theory was that war is a way of weeding out weak individuals or nations, while leaving the fittest.

Such an argument would hardly console the millions of war widows and orphans. Apart from being morally repugnant, this thinking ignores the harsh realities of modern warfare. The machine gun is no respecter of the fittest, and the bomb annihilates the strong along with the weak.

Disregarding the sobering lessons of the first world war, Adolf Hitler dreamed of forging a master race through military conquest. In his book *Mein Kampf*, he wrote: “Mankind has grown great in eternal struggle, and only in eternal peace does it perish. . . . The stronger must dominate and not blend with the weaker.” Rather than uplift mankind, though, Hitler sacrificed millions of lives and devastated a whole continent.

Yet, if war is not a biological necessity, what drives mankind toward self-destruction? What forces bulldoze nations into this “business of barbarians”?* Following is a list of some underlying factors that stymie the best efforts of peacemakers.

Causes of War

Nationalism. Often invoked by politicians and generals, nationalism is one of the most powerful forces in promoting warfare.

* It was Napoléon who described war as a “business of barbarians.” Having spent most of his adult life in the military and nearly 20 years as supreme army commander, he experienced firsthand the barbarities of battle.

Many wars have been launched to protect “national interests” or defend “national honor.” When the mentality of my country right or wrong prevails, even naked aggression can be explained as a preemptive strike.

Ethnic animosity. Many regional wars are sparked and then fueled by long-standing hatred between races, tribes, and ethnic groups. The tragic wars in the former Yugoslavia, in Liberia, and in Somalia are recent examples.

Economic and military rivalry. In the outwardly peaceful days before World War I, European powers actually built up huge armies. Germany and Great Britain were locked in a battleship-building competition. Since each major nation that ultimately became involved in the carnage believed that a war would increase its power and bring a windfall of economic benefits, conditions were ripe for conflict.

Religious feuds. Especially when reinforced by racial divisions, religious differences can produce an explosive mixture. Conflicts in Lebanon and Northern Ireland, as well as the wars between India and Pakistan, have been rooted in religious animosity.

An unseen warmonger. The Bible reveals that “the god of this system of things,” Satan the Devil, is now more active than ever before. (2 Corinthians 4:4) Filled with great anger and having only “a short period of time,” he is stirring up conditions, including wars, that worsen the earth’s woeful state.—Revelation 12:12.

These underlying causes of war are not easy to eradicate. Over 2,000 years ago, Plato said that “only the dead have seen the end of war.” Is his bleak assessment a bitter truth we must learn to accept? Or do we have reason to hope that one day there will be a world without war?

Soon—A World Without War!

ON DECEMBER 24, 1914, a young British soldier named Jim Prince walked across no-man's-land to talk to a German infantryman. "I am a Saxon. You are an Anglo-Saxon. Why do we fight?" the German asked him. Years later, Prince confessed: "I still don't know the answer to that question."

For one extraordinary week in 1914, soldiers of the British and German armies fraternized, played soccer, and even exchanged Christmas presents. That truce was, of course, an unofficial one. The generals did not want their troops to discover that the "enemy" was not the vicious monster depicted by war propaganda. British soldier Albert Moren later recalled: "If the cease-fire had gone on for another week, it would have been very hard to get the war started again."

That spontaneous cease-fire suggests that even many trained soldiers yearn for peace rather than for war. Most soldiers who have known the horrors of battle would endorse the Spanish proverb: "Let him go to war who knows not what war is." Doubtless, a worldwide opinion poll conducted among the public at large would reveal that an overwhelming majority prefer peace to war. But how can this universal desire for peace be translated into a warless world?

Before war can be abolished, attitudes must change. The constitution of the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization states: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed." Yet present-day society, where mistrust and hatred are rampant, is getting more violent, not more peaceful.

Nevertheless, God himself promised that one day peace would be imprinted upon the minds of righteously disposed people. Through his prophet Isaiah, he said: "He [God] will certainly render judgment among the nations and set matters straight respecting many peoples. And they will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."—Isaiah 2:4.

Promoting Peace in the Mind

Can such a remarkable change in thinking occur? Will people ever learn to safeguard peace rather than glorify war? Consider the example of Wolfgang Kusserow. In 1942 the Nazis beheaded this 20-year-old German because he 'would not learn war.' Why did he choose to die? In a written statement, he quoted such Scriptural principles as, "You must love your neighbor as yourself" and, "All those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 22:39; 26:52) He then pointedly asked: "Did our Creator have all this written down for the trees?"

God's word, recorded in the Bible, "exerts power" and impelled this young Witness of Jehovah to pursue peace, regardless of the consequences. (Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 3:11) But Wolfgang Kusserow was not the only one who thus pursued peace. In the book *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches 1933-45*, J. S. Conway cites official Nazi archives testifying that Jehovah's Witnesses as a group refused to take up arms. As Conway points out, such a courageous stand virtually meant signing their own death warrant.

Jehovah's Witnesses today continue to pursue peace, irrespective of their race or nationality. Why? Because they have learned from the Bible that true servants of God have to beat their swords into plowshares. Alejandro, a young Argentinean man who immigrated to Israel in 1987, can personally testify to this fact.

For three years Alejandro lived in a kibbutz while studying at a university and working in various hotels and restaurants. During this time, he began to read the Bible and was searching for a purpose in life. Above all, he longed to see a world where people could enjoy peace and justice. Alejandro—a Jew—worked alongside Jews and Arabs but preferred not to favor either side.

In 1990 a friend who was studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses invited Alejandro to a one-day assembly in Haifa. Amazed to find 600 Jews and Arabs mingling happily at the assembly, he thought to himself, 'This is the right way for people to live.' Within six months, he became a Witness himself and now devotes most of his time to preaching the Bible's message of peace.

How God Will Bring Peace

Touching as these examples are, they are the exception rather than the rule in today's world. Although the present system pays lip service to peace, it waters the seeds of war. Would you like to live on a street where the residents spend between 7 and 16 percent of their earnings on guns and house protection? In effect, that is what the nations have been doing through military expenditures in recent years. Not surprisingly, Isaiah's prophecy reveals that mankind as a whole will never beat its swords into plowshares until God 'sets matters straight respecting many peoples.' How will he do that?

The principal means for setting things straight is Jehovah God's Kingdom. The prophet Daniel foretold that 'the God of heaven would set up a kingdom that would never be brought to ruin.' This Kingdom, he adds, "will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms [worldly governments], and it itself will stand to times indefinite." (Daniel 2:44) These words reveal that God's Kingdom will firmly establish its control over all the earth. By eliminating national boundaries, the Kingdom will make rivalries obsolete. Furthermore, since its subjects will be "persons taught by Jehovah," their peace "will be abundant." (Isaiah 54:13) No wonder Jesus told us to pray to God: "Let your kingdom come!"—Matthew 6:10.

Removing Religious Obstacles

God will also remove religious obstacles to peace. Religion was behind the longest armed conflict in history—the Crusades, or "Holy Wars," launched by Pope Urban II in 1095 C.E.* In our century the clergy have been prominent in drumming up popular support for wars, even those of an entirely secular nature.

Referring to the role of nominal Christian churches during World War I, historian Paul Johnson wrote: "Clergymen were unable, and for the most part unwilling, to place Christian faith before nationality. Most took the easy way out and equated Christianity with patriotism. Christian soldiers of all denominations were exhorted to kill each other in the name of their Saviour."

* Sometimes religious leaders themselves became warriors. At the Battle of Hastings (1066), Catholic bishop Odo justified his active involvement by wielding a mace rather than a sword. He claimed that if blood was not shed, a man of God could kill legitimately. Five centuries later, Cardinal Ximenes personally led a Spanish invasion of North Africa.



You can live in a new world without war

Religion has done more to kindle war than to nurture peace. In fact, the Bible depicts false religion as a "harlot" who panders to the world's rulers. (Revelation 17:1, 2) God pronounces her the principal culprit responsible for shedding the blood of all those slaughtered on the earth. (Revelation 18:24) Consequently, Jehovah God will eliminate this obstacle to peace once and for all.—Revelation 18:4, 5, 8.

Even with the disappearance of such divisive elements as politics and false religion, peace would never be secure without the removal of the greatest warmonger of all—Satan the Devil. That is the final task that God's Kingdom will undertake in its program to bring total peace to the earth. The Bible book of Revelation explains that

Satan will be "seized" and "bound" and "hurled . . . into the abyss" so that "he might not mislead the nations anymore." Thereafter he will be destroyed completely.—Revelation 20:2, 3, 10.

The Bible's promise of an end to war is not an idle dream. Jehovah God's arrangement for peace has already been set in motion. His Kingdom has been established in the heavens and is poised to carry out further measures to guarantee global peace. Meanwhile, millions of Jehovah's Witnesses, who support this heavenly government, have learned to live in peace.

Clearly, then, we have sound reasons to believe that wars are not inevitable. Better still, we can look forward to the day near at hand when Jehovah will make warfare cease forever. (Psalm 46:9) He will see to it that there will soon be a world without war.

Jehovah's Witnesses Around the World

THE 7,083 rugged tropical islands forming the Republic of the Philippines are the upper portion of a partly submerged mountain chain.* And the 62,000,000 inhabitants of the Philippines love to talk on almost any subject. This affable spirit results in a fertile field for Kingdom witnessing.

Witnessing in School

On the island of Masbate, a young high school student was able to witness to her teacher and class during a true-false quiz. She reports:

"The statement was, 'If God loves me, he will not give me problems or let me suffer.' When my teacher checked our papers, she found that all except me answered true. My teacher allowed me to explain to the class why I answered false. I said that it was not God who gave us problems, although he permits sufferings and allows us to be tested. Using my Bible, which I always take to school, I reasoned with the class on the words at 1 John 4:8, 'God is love.' After my explanation, my teacher was convinced, tapped her desk, and said: 'Marilou is right.' I was the only one who got the correct answer to this

question and received the highest mark."

The Kingdom Message Is Everywhere

While engaging in the house-to-house ministry in another part of the Philippines, a regular pioneer (full-time proclaimer of the good news) met the mother of three small children. The woman showed keen interest in the Kingdom message, and this made it easy to start a Bible study with her. Though her husband was not pleased that she was receiving Bible lessons, especially from Jehovah's Witnesses, the study continued.

The man moved his family to another city, thinking that this would end his wife's association with the Witnesses. It was not long, however, before they located this woman, and she resumed her Bible study. Needless to say, her husband was quite upset. He carried his anger with him to his job, where he vented his feelings on a customer whose vehicle he was repairing. The man did not know that this customer was one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Witness explained that it would be very beneficial for the entire family if his wife continued with her Bible lessons. She could start to apply the Bible's principles right in the home. It was also suggested that the husband himself could benefit

by learning about God's Kingdom.

What resulted from this discussion? The man's wife had more freedom to study the Bible, and he decided to move his family back to their original home. There the woman made spiritual progress to the point of becoming an unbaptized Kingdom publisher. Her husband also accepted a Bible study, and the whole family began to attend Christian meetings.

Marketplace witnessing brings fine results

Watchtower Society's branch office in Manila

COUNTRY PROFILE

1993 Service Year

PEAK NUMBER WITNESSING:

116,576

RATIO:

1 Witness to 549

MEMORIAL ATTENDANCE:

357,388

AVERAGE PIONEER PUBLISHERS:

22,705

AVERAGE BIBLE STUDIES:

94,370

NUMBER BAPTIZED:

7,559

NUMBER OF CONGREGATIONS:

3,332

BRANCH OFFICE:

MANILA

* For additional information, see the 1994 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses.



THE PHILIPPINE
REPUBLIC



JEHOVAH RULES—THROUGH THEOCRACY

"Jehovah will be king to time indefinite."—PSALM 146:10.

SINCE the time of Nimrod, men have tried different ways to govern human society. There have been dictatorships, monarchies, oligarchies, and various forms of democracy. Jehovah has permitted all of them. Indeed, since God is the ultimate Source of all authority, in a sense he placed the different rulers in their relative positions. (Romans 13:1) Nevertheless, all of man's efforts at government have failed. No human ruler has produced a long-lasting, stable, just society. All too frequently, "man has dominated man to his injury."—Ecclesiastes 8:9.

² Should this surprise us? Of course not! Imperfect man was not made to rule himself. "To earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." (Jeremiah 10:23) That is why, throughout all human history, only one form of government has been truly successful. Which one? Theocracy under Jehovah God. In Biblical Greek, "theocracy" means a rule [*kra'tos*] by God [*the·os'*]. What better government could there be than that of Jehovah God himself?

—Psalm 146:10.

³ Theocracy ruled for a short time in Eden, until Adam and Eve rebelled against Jehovah. (Genesis 3:1-6, 23) In Abraham's time, a theocracy appears to have existed in

1, 2. (a) Why have man's efforts at rulership failed? (b) What has been the only truly successful form of government?

3. What were some early examples of theocracy existing on earth?

the city of Salem, with Melchizedek as king-priest. (Genesis 14:18-20; Hebrews 7:1-3) However, the first *national* theocracy under Jehovah God was established in the wilderness of Sinai in the 16th century B.C.E. How did that come about? And how did that theocratic government work?

A Theocracy Is Born

⁴ In 1513 B.C.E., Jehovah rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and destroyed the pursuing armies of Pharaoh in the Red Sea. Then He led the Israelites to Mount Sinai. When they were encamped at the foot of the mountain, God told them through Moses: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, that I might carry you on wings of eagles and bring you to myself. And now if you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant, then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples." The Israelites responded: "All that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do." (Exodus 19:4, 5, 8) A covenant was made, and the theocratic nation of Israel was born.—Deuteronomy 26:18, 19.

⁵ How, though, was Israel ruled by Jehovah, who is invisible to human eyes? (Exodus 33:20) In that the laws and the priesthood of the nation were given by Jehovah. Those who obeyed the laws and worshiped

4. How did Jehovah set up the theocratic nation of Israel?

5. How could it be said that Jehovah ruled in Israel?

according to the divinely mandated arrangements served the Great Theocrat, Jehovah. Additionally, the high priest had the Urim and the Thummim, by which Jehovah God gave guidance in times of emergency. (Exodus 28:29, 30) Further, qualified older men were Jehovah's representatives in the theocracy and saw to the application of God's Law. If we consider the record of some of these men, we will better understand how humans should submit to God's rule.

Authority Under Theocracy

⁶ Those in positions of authority in Israel had a great privilege, but it was a challenge for them to keep their balance. They had to be careful that their own ego never became more important than the sanctification of Jehovah's name. The inspired statement that "it does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step" was as true of the Israelites as it was of the rest of mankind. Israel flourished only when the older men remembered that Israel was a theocracy and that they should do Jehovah's will, not their own. Soon after the founding of Israel, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, well described what kind of men they should be, that is, "capable men, fearing God, trustworthy men, hating unjust profit."—Exodus 18:21.

⁷ The first to exercise high authority in Israel was Moses. He was a fine example of a theocratic authority figure. True, on one occasion human weakness showed through. However, Moses always relied on Jehovah. When questions arose that had not already been resolved, he sought Jehovah's guidance. (Compare Numbers 15:32-36.) How did Moses resist the temptation to use his high position for his own glory? Well, although he

6. Why was it a challenge for humans to hold authority in a theocracy, and what kind of men were needed for this responsibility?

7. In what ways was Moses a fine example of one who held authority under Jehovah God?

led a nation of millions, he was "by far the meekest of all the men who were upon the surface of the ground." (Numbers 12:3) He had no personal ambitions but was concerned about God's glory. (Exodus 32:7-14) And Moses had strong faith. Speaking of him before he became a national leader, the apostle Paul said: "He continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible." (Hebrews 11:27) Clearly, Moses never forgot that Jehovah was the real Ruler of the nation. (Psalm 90:1, 2) What a fine example for us today!

⁸ When the oversight of Israel proved too much for Moses alone, Jehovah put his spirit upon 70 older men who would support him in judging the nation. (Numbers 11:16-25) In later years each city would have its older men. (Compare Deuteronomy 19:12; 22:15-18; 25:7-9.) After Moses died, Jehovah made Joshua leader of the nation. We can imagine that with this privilege, Joshua had much to do. Nevertheless, Jehovah told him that there was one thing he should never omit: "This book of the law should not depart from your mouth, and you must in an undertone read in it day and night, in order that you may take care to do according to all that is written in it." (Joshua 1:8) Notice that although Joshua had more than 40 years of service behind him, he needed to keep reading the Law. We too need to study the Bible and refresh our minds as to Jehovah's laws and principles—no matter how long our record of service is or how many privileges we have.—Psalm 119:111, 112.

⁹ Joshua was followed by a series of judges. Unhappily, during their time the Israelites frequently "fell to doing what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah." (Judges 2:11) Concerning the period of the judges, the record says: "In

8. What command did Jehovah give Joshua, and why is this noteworthy?

9. What happened in Israel during the time of the judges?

Before Pontius Pilate, the Jewish rulers acknowledged Caesar rather than Jehovah's theocratically appointed King

those days there was no king in Israel. What was right in his own eyes was what each one was accustomed to do." (Judges 21:25) Each one made his own decisions about conduct and worship, and history shows that many Israelites made bad decisions. They fell away to idol worship and sometimes committed horrible crimes. (Judges 19:25-30) Some, though, displayed exemplary faith.—Hebrews 11:32-38.

¹⁰ During the lifetime of the last judge, Samuel, Israel went through a crisis as to government. Influenced by the surrounding enemy nations, all ruled by kings, the Israelites reasoned that they too needed a king. They forgot that they already had a King, that their government was a theocracy. Jehovah told Samuel: "It is not you whom they have rejected, but it is I whom they have rejected from being king over them." (1 Samuel 8:7) Their example reminds us how easy it is to lose our spiritual view and be influenced by the world around us.—Compare 1 Corinthians 2:14-16.

¹¹ Nevertheless, Jehovah consented to the Israelites' request and chose their first two kings, Saul and David. Israel continued to be

10. How did government in Israel change radically during the time of Samuel, and what led to this?

11. (a) Despite the change in government, how can it be said that Israel continued to be a theocracy under the kings? (b) What command did Jehovah give to Israel's kings, and with what purpose?



a theocracy, ruled by Jehovah. So that her kings would remember this, each one of them was obliged to make his own copy of the Law and read it daily, "in order that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God so as to keep all the words of this law and these regulations by doing them; that his heart may not exalt itself above his brothers." (Deuteronomy 17:19, 20) Yes, Jehovah desired that those with authority in his theocracy should not exalt themselves and that their actions should reflect his Law.

¹² King David had outstanding faith in Jehovah, and God covenanted that he would be

12. What record of faithfulness did King David make?

father of a line of kings that would last forever. (2 Samuel 7:16; 1 Kings 9:5; Psalm 89:29) David's humble submission to Jehovah was worthy of imitation. He said: "O Jehovah, in your strength the king rejoices; and in your salvation how very joyful he wants to be!" (Psalm 21:1) Although David sometimes fell short because of fleshly weakness, as a rule he relied on Jehovah's strength, not on his own.

Untheocratic Deeds and Attitudes

¹³ Not all Israelite leaders were like Moses and David. Many showed gross disrespect for the theocratic arrangement, allowing false worship in Israel. Even some of the faithful rulers acted untheocratically on occasion. Very tragic was the case of Solomon, who was granted great wisdom and prosperity. (1 Kings 4:25, 29) Yet, in disregard of Jehovah's law, he married many wives and permitted idol worship in Israel. Evidently, Solomon's rule was oppressive in his later years.—Deuteronomy 17:14-17; 1 Kings 11:1-8; 12:4.

¹⁴ Solomon's son Rehoboam faced a demand that he lighten his subjects' load. Instead of handling the situation mildly, he belligerently asserted his authority—and lost 10 of the 12 tribes. (2 Chronicles 10:4-17) The first king of the breakaway ten-tribe kingdom was Jeroboam. In an effort to ensure that his kingdom should never rejoin its sister nation, he set up calf worship. This may have seemed to be a clever move politically, but it showed blatant disregard for theocracy. (1 Kings 12:26-30) Later, at the end of a long life of faithful service, King Asa allowed pride to blemish his record. He mistreated the prophet who came to him with counsel from Jehovah. (2 Chronicles 16:7-11) Yes, even old-timers sometimes need counsel.

13, 14. What were some of the untheocratic actions taken by David's successors?

The End of a Theocracy

¹⁵ When Jesus Christ was on the earth, Israel was still a theocracy. Sadly, though, many of her responsible older men were not spiritually minded. They certainly failed to cultivate the meekness that Moses displayed. Jesus pointed to their spiritual corruption when he said: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the seat of Moses. 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."—Matthew 23:2, 3.

¹⁶ After handing Jesus over to Pontius Pilate, the Jewish leaders showed how far they had strayed from theocratic submission. Pilate examined Jesus and concluded that he was an innocent man. Bringing Jesus out before the Jews, Pilate said: "See! Your king!" When the Jews clamored for Jesus' death, Pilate asked: "Shall I impale your king?" The chief priests answered: "We have no king but Caesar." (John 19:14, 15) They acknowledged Caesar as king, not Jesus, 'who came in Jehovah's name'!—Matthew 21:9.

¹⁷ In rejecting Jesus, the Jews rejected theocracy, for he was to be the main figure in future theocratic arrangements. Jesus was the royal son of David who would reign forever. (Isaiah 9:6, 7; Luke 1:33; 3:23, 31) Thus, fleshly Israel ceased to be God's chosen nation.—Romans 9:31-33.

A New Theocracy

¹⁸ God's rejection of fleshly Israel was not the end of theocracy on earth, however.

15. When Jesus was on the earth, how did the Jewish leaders fail as authority figures in a theocracy?
16. How did first-century Jewish leaders show that they had no respect for theocracy?
17. Why did fleshly Israel cease to be a theocratic nation?
18. What new theocracy was born in the first century? Explain.

Through Jesus Christ, Jehovah established a new theocracy. This was the anointed Christian congregation, which was actually a new nation. (1 Peter 2:9) The apostle Paul called it "the Israel of God," and eventually its members came "out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." (Galatians 6:16; Revelation 5:9, 10) While subject to the human governments under which they lived, members of this new theocracy were indeed ruled by God. (1 Peter 2:13, 14, 17) Soon after the birth of the new theocracy, the rulers of fleshly Israel tried to force some disciples to cease obeying a command that Jesus had given them. The response? "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) Truly, a theocratic viewpoint!

¹⁹ How, though, did the new theocracy function? Well, there was a King, Jesus Christ, representing the Great Theocrat, Jehovah God. (Colossians 1:13) Although the King was invisible in the heavens, his rule was real to his subjects, and his words governed their lives. As for visible oversight, spiritually qualified older men were appointed. In Jerusalem a group of such men functioned as a governing body. Representing that body were traveling elders, such as Paul, Timothy, and Titus. And each congregation was cared for by a body of older men, or elders. (Titus 1:5) When a difficult problem arose, the elders consulted the governing body or one of its representatives, such as Paul. (Compare Acts 15:2; 1 Corinthians 7:1; 8:1; 12:1.) Further, each member of the congregation played a part in upholding the theocracy. Each one was responsible before Jehovah to apply Scriptural principles in his life.—Romans 14:4, 12.

²⁰ Paul warned that after the death of the apostles, apostasy would develop, which is

19. How could the first-century Christian congregation be called a theocracy?
20. What can be said about theocracy in post-apostolic times?

exactly what happened. (2 Thessalonians 2:3) As time went by, the number of those claiming to be Christians rose to the millions and then to the hundreds of millions. They developed different kinds of church government, such as hierarchical, presbyterian, and congregational. However, neither the conduct nor the beliefs of these churches reflected the rulership of Jehovah. They were not theocracies!

²¹ During the time of the end of this system of things, there was to be a separating of true Christians from false Christians. (Matthew 13:37-43) This happened in 1919, a pivotal year in the history of theocracy. At that time the glorious prophecy of Isaiah 66:8 was fulfilled: "Who has seen things like these? Will a land be brought forth with labor pains in one day? Or will a nation be born at one time?" The answer to those questions was a resounding yes! In 1919 the Christian congregation once again existed as a separate "nation." A theocratic "land" was indeed born as in one day! As the time of the end progressed, the organization of this new nation was adjusted to bring it as close as possible to what existed in the first

21, 22. (a) How has Jehovah restored theocracy during the time of the end? (b) What questions about theocracy will be answered next?

Can You Explain?

- What is a theocracy?
- In what way was Israel a theocracy?
- What arrangement did Jehovah make to remind the kings that Israel was a theocracy?
- In what way was the Christian congregation a theocracy, and how was it organized?
- What theocratic organization has been established in our time?

century. (Isaiah 60:17) But it was always a theocracy. In conduct and belief, it always reflected the divinely inspired laws and principles in the Scriptures. And it was always subject to the enthroned King, Jesus Christ.—Psalm 45:17; 72:1, 2.

²² Are you associated with this theocracy? Do you have a position of authority in it? If so, do you know what it means to act theocratically? Do you know what snares to avoid? The last two questions will be discussed in the following article.

SHEPHERDS AND SHEEP IN A THEOCRACY

“Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Statute-giver, Jehovah is our King; he himself will save us.”—ISAIAH 33:22.

THEOCRACY means a rule by God. It involves accepting Jehovah's authority and following his guidelines and instructions in the large and small decisions we make in life. The first-century congregation was a genuine theocracy. Christians then could honestly say: “Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Statute-giver, Jehovah is our King.” (Isaiah 33:22) With the anointed remnant as its nucleus, Jehovah God's organization today is similarly a real theocracy.

In What Ways Are We Theocratic Today?

² How can we say that Jehovah's earthly organization is a theocracy? Because those who belong to it do indeed submit to Jehovah's rule. And they follow the lead of Jesus Christ, the one whom Jehovah has enthroned as King. For example, in the time of

1. How can it be said that first-century Christians and Christians today are a theocracy?
2. What is one way that Jehovah's Witnesses submit to Jehovah's rule?

the end, this direct command from the Great Theocrat is conveyed to Jesus: “Put your sickle in and reap, because the hour has come to reap, for the harvest of the earth is thoroughly ripe.” (Revelation 14:15) Jesus obeys and undertakes the harvesting of the earth. Christians support their King in this great work by zealously preaching the good news and making disciples. (Matthew 28:19; Mark 13:10; Acts 1:8) In doing so, they are also fellow workers with Jehovah, the Great Theocrat.—1 Corinthians 3:9.

³ In conduct, too, Christians submit to God's rule. Jesus said: “He that does what is true comes to the light, in order that his works may be made manifest as having been worked in harmony with God.” (John 3:21) Today, there are endless debates over moral standards, but these disputes have no place among Christians. They view as immoral what Jehovah says is immoral, and they avoid it like the plague! They also care for

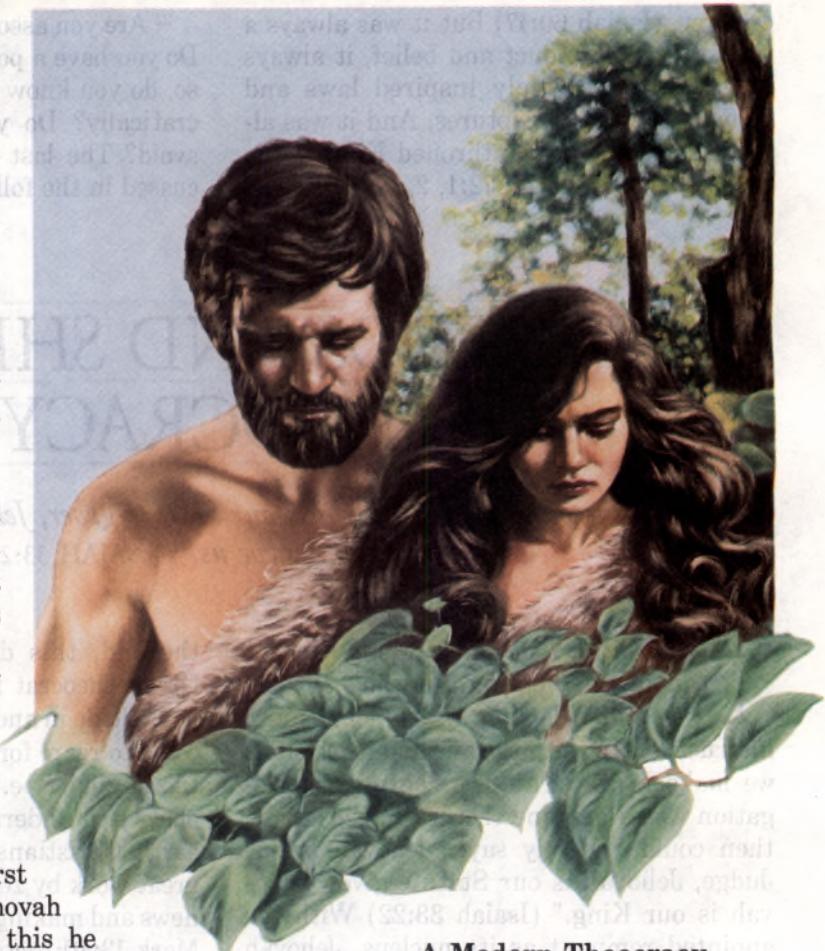
3. How do Christians submit to theocracy in matters of morality?

Adam and Eve lost Paradise because they wanted to make their own decisions about right and wrong

their families, obey their parents, and remain subject to the superior authorities. (Ephesians 5:3-5, 22-33; 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 5:8; Titus 3:1) Thus, they act theocratically, in harmony with God.

⁴ Adam and Eve lost Paradise because they wanted to make their own decisions as to what was right and what was wrong. Jesus wanted the exact opposite. He said: "I seek, not my own will, but the will of him that sent me." Christians seek the same thing. (John 5:30; Luke 22:42; Romans 12:2; Hebrews 10:7) Saul, the first king of Israel, did obey Jehovah—but only partially. For this he was rejected. Samuel told him: "To obey is better than a sacrifice, to pay attention than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel 15:22) Is it theocratic to follow Jehovah's will to a certain extent, perhaps by being regular in the preaching work or in meeting attendance, and then to compromise in matters of morality or in some other way? Of course not! We strive to 'do the will of God whole-souled.' (Ephesians 6:6; 1 Peter 4:1, 2) Unlike Saul, we submit totally to God's rule.

4. What wrong attitudes were manifested by Adam and Eve and Saul, and how do Christians show a different attitude?



A Modern Theocracy

⁵ In the past, Jehovah ruled and revealed truths through individuals, such as prophets, kings, and apostles. Today, that is no longer the case; there are no inspired prophets or apostles. Rather, Jesus said that during his royal presence, he would identify a faithful body of followers, a "faithful and discreet slave," and would appoint it over all his belongings. (Matthew 24:45-47; Isaiah 43:10) In 1919 that slave was identified as the remnant of anointed Christians. Since 5, 6. How does Jehovah deal with mankind today, and in what does cooperation with this arrangement result?

then, as represented by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, it has been the center of theocracy on earth. Around the world, the Governing Body is represented by Branch Committees, traveling overseers, and congregation elders.

⁶ Cooperation with theocratic organization is a vital part of submitting to theocracy. Such cooperation works for unity and order worldwide in "the whole association of brothers." (1 Peter 2:17) In turn, this pleases Jehovah, who is "a God, not of disorder, but of peace."—1 Corinthians 14:33.

Elders in a Theocracy

⁷ All appointed older men, whatever their position of authority, fulfill the qualifications outlined in the Bible for the office of overseer, or older man. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) Further, Paul's words to the Ephesian elders apply to all elders: "Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God." (Acts 20:28) Yes, the elders are appointed by holy spirit, which comes from Jehovah God. (John 14:26) Their appointment is theocratic. Moreover, they shepherd the flock of God. The flock belongs to Jehovah, not to the elders. It is a theocracy.

⁸ In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul outlined the general responsibilities of the elders, saying: "He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers, with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones, for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ." (Ephesians 4:11, 12) Apostles and prophets passed away with the infancy of "the body of the Christ." (Com-

7. Why can it be said that Christian elders are appointed theocratically?
8. What are the general responsibilities of elders today?

pare 1 Corinthians 13:8.) But elders are still very busy evangelizing, shepherding, and teaching.—2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9.

⁹ Since theocracy is God rule, effective elders are thoroughly familiar with God's will. Joshua was commanded to read the Law daily. Elders too need to study and consult the Scriptures regularly and to be thoroughly familiar with Bible literature published by the faithful and discreet slave. (2 Timothy 3:14, 15) This includes the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines and other publications that show how Bible principles apply to specific situations.* However, while it is important for an elder to know and to follow guidelines published in the Watch Tower Society's literature, he should also be thoroughly familiar with the Scriptural principles that lie behind them. He will then be in a position to apply Scriptural guidelines with understanding and compassion.

—Compare Micah 6:8.

Serving With a Christian Spirit

¹⁰ About the year 55 C.E., the apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the congregation in Corinth. One of the problems he handled had to do with certain men wanting to be prominent in the congregation. Paul wrote: "You men already have your fill, do you? You are rich already, are you? You have begun ruling as kings without us, have you? And I wish indeed that you had begun ruling as kings, that we also might rule with you as kings." (1 Corinthians 4:8) In the first century C.E., all Christians had the hope of ruling as heavenly kings and priests with Jesus.

* Among such publications is the book "*Pay Attention to Yourselves and to All the Flock*," which contains Scriptural guidelines and is provided for appointed congregation overseers, or elders.

9. How should elders prepare themselves to represent God's will in the congregation?
10. What bad attitude should elders guard against, and how?

If an elder deals humbly and lovingly with the sheep, he will always be a force for good

(Revelation 20:4, 6) Evidently, though, some in Corinth forgot that on earth there are no kings in the Christian theocracy. Rather than act like kings of this world, Christian shepherds cultivate humility, a quality that pleases Jehovah.—Psalm 138:6; Luke 22:25-27.

¹¹ Is humility a weakness? By no means! Jehovah himself is described as being humble. (Psalm 18:35) The kings of Israel led armies into battle and ruled the nation under Jehovah. Yet, each one had

to be careful ‘that his heart did not exalt itself above his brothers.’ (Deuteronomy 17:20) The resurrected Jesus is a heavenly King. When on earth, however, he washed the feet of his disciples. What humility! And showing that he wanted his apostles to be similarly humble, he said: “If I, although Lord and Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash the feet of one another.” (John 13:14; Philippians 2:5-8) All glory and praise should go to Jehovah, not to any man. (Revelation 4:11) Whether they are elders or not, all Christians should think of themselves in the light of Jesus’ words: “We are good-for-nothing slaves. What we have done is what we ought to have done.” (Luke 17:10) Any other view is untheocratic.

11. (a) What are some outstanding examples of humility? (b) What view of themselves should elders and all other Christians have?



¹² Along with humility, Christian elders cultivate love. The apostle John showed the importance of love when he said: “He that does not love has not come to know God, because God is love.” (1 John 4:8) Unloving individuals are not theocratic. They do not know Jehovah. Regarding the Son of God, the Bible says: “Jesus, having loved his own that were in the world, loved them to the end.” (John 13:1) Speaking to 11 men who would be part of the governing body in the Christian congregation, Jesus said: “This is my commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you.” (John 15:12) Love is the identifying mark of true Christianity. It attracts the brokenhearted, the mourning ones, and the spiritual captives

12. Why is love a vital quality for Christian elders to cultivate?

who long for freedom. (Isaiah 61:1, 2; John 13:35) Elders must be exemplary in showing it.

¹³ Today, elders are often asked to help handle complex problems. Marriage difficulties can be deep-rooted and persistent. Young people have problems that adults may find hard to grasp. Emotional sicknesses are often difficult to comprehend. An elder faced with such things may be unsure as to what to do. But he can be confident that if he prayerfully relies on Jehovah's wisdom, if he does research in the Bible and in information published by the faithful and discreet slave, and if he deals humbly and lovingly with the sheep, he will be a force for good even in the most difficult situation.

¹⁴ Jehovah has richly blessed his organization with "gifts in men." (Ephesians 4:8) From time to time, the Watch Tower Society receives heartwarming letters testifying to the love shown by humble elders who compassionately shepherd God's sheep. For example, a congregation elder writes: "I cannot remember a circuit overseer's visit that affected me more or that is still being commented on in the congregation. The circuit overseer helped me see the importance of a positive attitude when dealing with the brothers, with an emphasis on commendation."

¹⁵ A sister who had to travel to a distant clinic to receive treatment writes: "How reassuring to be able to meet with an elder that first anxious night in a hospital so far from home! He and other brothers spent much time with me. Even people in the world who were familiar with what I was going through felt that I would never have

13. Although problems today may be difficult, how can an elder be a force for good in all situations?

14, 15. What are some expressions showing that Jehovah has blessed his people with many fine elders?

survived without the comfort, care, and prayers of those loving and devoted brothers." Another sister writes: "I am alive today because the body of elders patiently guided me through my battle with major depression. . . . One brother and his wife did not know what to say to me. . . . But what touched me the most was that even though they did not completely understand what I was going through, they lovingly cared about me."

¹⁶ Yes, many elders are applying the exhortation of the apostle Peter: "Shepherd the flock of God in your care, not under compulsion, but willingly; neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly; neither as lording it over those who are God's inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:1-3) What a blessing such theocratic elders are!

Sheep in the Theocracy

¹⁷ However, a theocracy is not made up merely of elders. If the shepherds must be theocratic, so must the sheep. In what ways? Well, the same principles that guide the shepherds must guide the sheep. All Christians, not only elders, must be humble if they are to receive Jehovah's blessing. (James 4:6) All must cultivate love because without it our sacrifices to Jehovah are not pleasing to him. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3) And all of us, not just the elders, should "be filled with the accurate knowledge of [Jehovah's] will in all wisdom and spiritual comprehension."—Colossians 1:9.

¹⁸ Young and old alike are constantly faced with difficult decisions as they try to remain faithful despite living in Satan's

16. What exhortation does Peter give to elders?
17. Name some qualities that all members of the congregation should cultivate.

18. (a) Why is a mere surface knowledge of the truth not enough? (b) How can all of us be filled with accurate knowledge?

world. The world's trends in clothing, music, movies, and literature challenge the spirituality of some. A surface knowledge of the truth is not enough to help us keep our balance. To be sure of staying faithful, we need to be filled with accurate knowledge. We need the discernment and wisdom that only God's Word can give us. (Proverbs 2:1-5) This means cultivating good study habits, meditating on what we learn, and putting it into practice. (Psalm 1:1-3; Revelation 1:3) Paul was writing to all Christians, not just elders, when he said: "Solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong."—Hebrews 5:14.

Shepherds and Sheep Work Together

¹⁹ Finally, it should be said that a truly theocratic spirit is shown by those who cooperate with the elders. Paul wrote to Timothy: "Let the older men who preside in a fine way be reckoned worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard in speaking and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Peter

19, 20. What exhortations are given to all to cooperate with the elders, and why?

What Does the Bible Show?

- In what way do Christians submit to theocracy?
- How is theocracy organized today?
- In what ways should elders prepare themselves to fulfill their responsibilities?
- What Christian qualities is it vital for elders to cultivate and display?
- In the theocracy, what relationship should exist between the sheep and the shepherds?

5:5, 6) Eldership is a wonderful privilege, but most elders are family men who go to their secular work every day and who have wives and children to care for. While they are happy to serve, their service is easier and more rewarding when the congregation is supportive, not overly critical and demanding.—Hebrews 13:17.

²⁰ The apostle Paul said: "Remember those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out imitate their faith." (Hebrews 13:7) No, Paul did not encourage the brothers to follow the elders. (1 Corinthians 1:12) Following a man is not theocratic. But it is surely wise to imitate the proven faith of a theocratic elder who is active in the evangelizing work, who is regular at meetings, and who deals humbly and lovingly with the congregation.

A Testament to Faith

²¹ Truly, the existence of a theocratic organization in this most degenerate time of human history is a testimony to the power of the Great Theocrat. (Isaiah 2:2-5) It is also a testimony to the faith of almost five million Christian men, women, and children, who struggle with the problems of daily life but never forget that Jehovah is their Ruler. Just as faithful Moses "continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible," so Christians today have similar strong faith. (Hebrews 11:27) They are privileged to live in a theocracy, and they daily thank Jehovah for it. (Psalm 100:4, 5) As they experience the saving power of Jehovah, they are happy to proclaim: "Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Statute-giver, Jehovah is our King; he himself will save us."—Isaiah 33:22.

21. How do Christians manifest a strong faith like that of Moses?

PIONEERS *Bestow and Receive Blessings*

PIONEERING is worth far more than a successful secular career. There is nothing more satisfying than helping people to get to know Jehovah and his truth." So said one Christian woman who chose pioneering—full-time Kingdom preaching—as her career. How many other careers can give such happiness?

Pioneering is both a lofty goal and a precious privilege. How can an individual choose such a life? What is needed to stick with pioneering long enough to reap the blessings that it offers?

Two things are vital. First, the right circumstances. Many live in circumstances that clearly make pioneering out of the question. And second, the proper spiritual qualifications and outlook. Of course, whether present circumstances permit a person to pioneer or not, all can work to develop mature Christian qualities.

Why Some Pioneer

What are the qualifications for successful pioneering? Well, preaching skills are vital. Pioneers need to know how to present the good news to strangers, make return visits on interested ones, and conduct home Bible studies. Lack of these skills can discourage a pioneer. Nevertheless, other things are also important.

For example, everything to do with our worship is related to our relationship with Jehovah and his organization. This includes pioneering. A young pioneer named Rado explained: "For a young person, there is nothing finer than remembering Jehovah

and walking in the way of the truth." Yes, pioneering is a fine way for youths to demonstrate their love for Jehovah and closeness to him.—Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Knowledge and understanding are also indispensable. (Philippians 1:9-11) In effect, these are the fuel that keeps our spiritual engine running. Regular personal study is essential to avoid becoming spiritually drained, losing our enthusiasm and conviction. Of course, the knowledge we take in should affect not only the intellect but also the heart. (Proverbs 2:2) In addition to personal study, therefore, we need time for prayer and meditation so that the knowledge we gain touches the heart. Then, if our circumstances permit, we will *want* to pioneer.—Compare Ezra 7:10.

Taking up the pioneer service also demands the *spirit of self-sacrifice*. A young man named Ron had all his plans for pioneering made. He was just waiting for the right circumstances so that he could go ahead. Specifically, he wanted a job that would allow him to pioneer and at the same time enjoy some of the finer things of life. When he mentioned this to a mature sister, her answer jolted him. She said: "Jehovah blesses deeds, not promises." The young man found a job with a lower salary that allowed time for pioneering. Applying Matthew 6:25-34 will help a person to get along on a smaller income.

A humble willingness to follow good suggestions may well contribute to our entering the pioneer service. Early in her life as a

Christian, Hanna cultivated a desire to pioneer. But she did not pioneer while raising a family, and later she got involved in a business career. Heeding good counsel from alert elders, she turned her back on her interesting secular career and took up the pioneer service. Hanna now experiences great joy in bringing others to dedication and helping inactive ones.

Gratefulness for what the truth has done in one's life can also be an incentive to pioneer. Consider the case of one deeply depressed woman whose marriage was breaking up. This situation changed dramatically when she learned the truth of God's Word and put it into practice. Thrilled by what the truth had done for her, she decided that the best way for her to show appreciation would be to pioneer and help others. This she did, and she now experiences the blessings of many Bible studies and a happy family life.

Others Can Help

Pioneers often produce other pioneers. Rado, mentioned earlier, was six years old when two pioneers studied the Bible with his parents. When still very young, he regularly accompanied these full-time preachers in the field ministry. Rado himself became a regular pioneer at the age of 17. Another young man, Arno, was raised in a Christian home but became spiritually weak. Later, he set out to restore his spiritual strength, and he now says: "I received a lot of encouragement from the pioneers. I associated with them especially during school vacations and at times reported as much as 60 hours a month in field service. After that, the step to the regular pioneer service [calling for 90 hours monthly] was not so great." Meditating on the counsel of 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 not to use the world to the full has really helped such young people.

The pioneer spirit can take root more easily in a home where *spiritual interests have first place and parents encourage their children to enter the full-time ministry*. Philo, who grew up in such a home, remarks: "Many advised me to continue my education, to work for a secular future. But my parents helped me to make a wiser choice. They told me that if I really wanted to build for the future, my first priority should be developing a relationship with Jehovah."

A young woman named Thamar also attributes her pioneer service to the example and efforts of her parents. She says: "I cannot really say when I developed a spiritual view of life, but I know I was not born with one. My parents' custom of regularly sharing in field service and attending meetings, as well as their deep love of the truth, greatly helped me develop my spiritual outlook."

Sticking to Your Decision

After a person enters the pioneer service, persevering in it enables him or her to reap the full benefit of that wise decision. Much practical counsel could be given to that end. For example, pioneers do well to learn how to schedule their time to make it as productive as possible. Yet, the most important factor remains an individual's relationship with Jehovah and His organization.

Related to this is a *prayerful attitude*. "When I came into the truth, I wanted to pioneer very badly," says Cor. However, his father demanded that he first finish a course at the Agricultural University. Afterward, Cor started pioneering. In time he got married, and his wife joined him in the pioneer work. When she became pregnant, he was faced with the possibility of leaving the pioneer work. "I prayed often to Jehovah and put before him my heart's desire to continue pioneering," says Cor. Eventually Cor found the kind of employment that enabled him to pioneer while raising a family.

Being content with material necessities is another factor that often helps a person to remain in the pioneer ministry. The apostle Paul wrote: "Let your manner of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things. For he has said: 'I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you.' " (Hebrews 13:5) Being content with the present things helped Harry and Irene to continue pioneering. Irene, who is blind, has been a pioneer for eight years. "We have never viewed our financial situation as a problem," she says. "We just

took care never to take on unnecessary financial burdens. We have always counted the cost. Our lives have always been simple, although very pleasant, and they have been rich in blessings."

Many Joys and Blessings

Looking back over nine years of pioneering, Thamar says: "You come to be very close to Jehovah, as if he had actually taken hold of your hand." (Psalm 73:23) Some trials also come to mind. "My own imperfections combined with those of others regularly troubled me," adds Thamar. "Moreover, I would look at brothers and sisters who chose a more materially rewarding way of life, and their choice seemed rather appealing when I was out there trudging in the rain and cold.



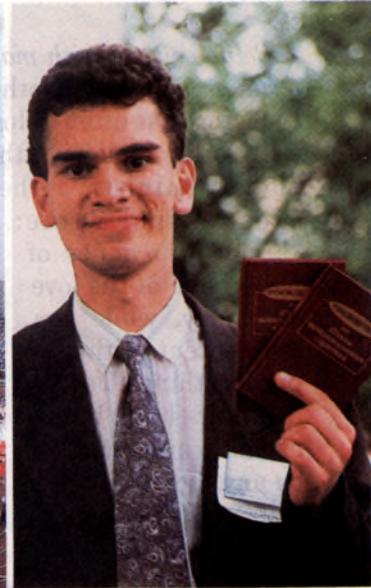
But in the depths of my heart, I would never want to trade places. What else except pioneering could bring such joy, such spiritual satisfaction, and such blessings?" Would you highly value similar joys and blessings?

Because pioneers spend much time in the Christian ministry, they are in a position to help a number of individuals to gain a knowledge of Bible truth. Harry and Irene, previously mentioned, say: "There are many privileges to be had in Jehovah's organization, but helping a newly interested one to progress to the point of becoming a servant of Jehovah is the grandest of all."

Another pioneer expressed matters well when he said: "The words of Proverbs 10:22 have proved true in my case: 'The blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it.' Time and again, this scripture has been fulfilled for me during the years I have served Jehovah."

Parents, are you instilling in your children the desire to pioneer? Pioneers, do you endeavor to kindle this desire in others? Elders, do you support the pioneers in your congregation and help to build a pioneer spirit in others? May more and more of Jehovah's people be moved to reach out for such rich blessings as they engage in the pioneer service.

THRILLING CONVENTIONS PROMOTE DIVINE TEACHING



TODAY, the world is experiencing an information explosion. On television and radio, in book form or through computers, there is an almost limitless supply of knowledge on practically any subject imaginable. Still, people fall sick and die. Crime, hunger, and poverty exist all around the earth, and emotional disorders take a bigger toll than ever. All the available knowledge has failed to correct matters. Why? Because mankind has turned its back on God's wisdom.

How fitting, then, that "Divine Teaching" was the theme chosen for the recent conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses! The program reminded those present that it is only the teaching found in God's Word, the Bible, that has real, lifesaving value.

The first convention started on Thursday, June 3, in Uniondale, New York, U.S.A. From then on, the program was presented

in different cities in one country after another, ending on the continents of Africa and South America.

Afternoon of the First Day

Each day had a theme that stressed an aspect of divine teaching. For example, the program for the first day was based on the theme "Knowing the Teaching That Is From God." (John 7:17) This thought was well developed as the day progressed.

After a song and prayer, the convention chairman opened the program with the talk entitled "Divine Teaching Brings Us Together." He showed that Jehovah's people are united by learning His ways and walking in His paths. (Micah 4:1-5) Divine teaching strengthens their unity. Conventioners were encouraged to rejoice in their united fellowship.—Psalm 133:1-3.

A little later in the afternoon, regular congregation meetings were discussed in a symposium entitled "Meetings That Instruct Us About Jehovah's Ways." The first speaker reminded conventioners that when we meet together, we honor Jehovah and thus receive His blessing. The following speaker stressed

The "Divine Teaching" conventions in Moscow and Kiev resulted in great joy





1



2

1. By being baptized, many symbolized their dedication to God
2. A 100-year-old conventioner was thrilled to receive a new publication
- 3, 4. Thought-provoking dramas were greatly appreciated
5. Missionaries interviewed at conventions highlighted the benefits of divine teaching



3





5

the need to participate in meetings. In doing so, we praise Jehovah publicly, demonstrate our faith, and strengthen the faith of others. The third speaker in the symposium showed the need to put into practice what we learn at meetings. We have to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only."—James 1:22.

Next came a fine discussion of the singing of praises to Jehovah. Heartfelt song is a significant part of our worship. This talk was followed by the keynote address, "Divine Teaching Triumphs." What an excellent theme! "Jehovah is the Source of the best teaching anyone can receive," said the speaker. Then, after a short discussion of the miracle of the human brain, he said: "We should use our thinking faculties primarily to receive divine teaching. It alone results in genuine wisdom." How true!

The Second Morning

"Keep Adorning the Teaching of Our Savior, God" was the theme of the second day of the convention. (Titus 2:10) This principle came to the fore in the talk "Divine Teaching Versus Teachings of Demons." Yes, the demons have their teachings. (1 Timothy 4:1) As the speaker explained, divine teaching triumphs over Satan's "wisdom" by expos-

ing false teachings and the cunning ways of the Devil. Because of this, some 4,500,000 righthearted Christians are no longer slaves in Satan's darkness.—John 8:32.

Still, we have to keep on resisting Satan. This was emphasized by the talk "Are You Resisting the Spirit of the World?" This world's spirit is deadly. It encourages debased morality, a rebellious view of authority, and an acquisitive desire for material things. A Christian has to examine himself constantly. Does he still have elevated standards when it comes to what he watches, listens to, or reads? Encouragingly, the speaker said: "We commend you, brothers, sisters, and young ones, for the earnest effort you are already exerting in this regard."

—1 John 2:15-17.

There is a factor that makes it hard to resist the spirit of the world. What is that? All of us are imperfect. True, Jesus died for our sins, but we still have to fight the inclination to sin. This was considered in the talk "Combating Sin's Grip on Fallen Flesh." Among other things, the speaker said that we can win our struggle with sin if we put on the new personality and avoid anything that panders to our sinful tendencies.

"Make Healthful Teaching Your Way of Life" was the title of the next talk. Some make a fetish of physical health. In truth, though, spiritual health is far more important. The speaker emphasized the need to take our responsibilities seriously in this regard, and he had an especially encouraging word for Christian women. He said: "We greatly appreciate both the older sisters and the younger sisters who are well balanced in their zeal for the ministry and in their care of personal responsibilities." Yes, and all of us thank Jehovah for the healthful teaching that separates us from the world.

Concluding the morning program was the talk "Divine Teaching Reveals the Purpose of Life." The speaker said: "Sooner or later, nearly everybody wonders, 'What is the purpose of life?'" With powerful arguments, he proved that only the Bible gives a real answer to that question. Then, the speaker showed that God's wonderful promises effectively give us a purpose in life. Likely, many in the audience were thinking, 'This is exactly what people in my territory need to hear.' The Governing Body agreed. A new brochure, entitled *What Is the Purpose of Life?* was released at the end of this talk. How delighted everyone was! The midday break afforded an opportunity to look through the new publication.

The Second Afternoon

The first talk in the afternoon had the comforting theme "Throw All Your Anxieties Upon Jehovah." Many things cause anxiety; yet, God's Word says that we should throw *all* our anxieties upon him. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) True, some problems persist, and in this regard the speaker urged: 'Be patient. Wait on Jehovah. Firmly believe that following the Bible is always best. If we keep our hearts fixed on Jehovah, we will come to enjoy "the peace of God" that excels all thought.'—Philippians 4:6, 7.

The next four talks showed that divine teaching applies to family life. The first, "Making Marriage a Lasting Union," reminded the conventioners that in Jehovah's eyes marriage is not disposable, as it is viewed by many in the world. However, to make a success of marriage, we have to follow Jehovah's guidance. He made us. Therefore, his inspired Word contains the best marriage counsel available.

The talk "Work Hard for the Salvation of Your Household" discussed the challenges of caring for a family in these critical times. (2 Timothy 3:1) Parents teach their children physical hygiene, good manners, how to work, and how to be generous and caring toward others. More important, they must teach their offspring to be devoted servants of Jehovah.—Proverbs 22:6.

In the following discussion, "Parents, Your Children Need Specialized Attention," the speaker reminded conventioners of the need to commend children, while not closing one's eyes to their weaknesses. Parents must be especially alert for trends toward dishonesty, materialism, or selfishness.

Particularly did younger conventioners listen carefully to the talk "Youths—Whose Teachings Do You Heed?" Things are difficult for young Christians today. To go along with the world is easy, but this leads to death. Though choosing to stick with divine teaching takes courage for a young person, it brings great blessings now and everlasting life to come.—1 Timothy 4:8.

Day two concluded with the heartwarming drama *Youths Who Remember Their Creator Now*. In the introduction, the director called young people in God's organization "a theocratic army loyally engaged in devoted service to Jehovah God and his appointed heavenly King, Christ Jesus." He added: "Our young people are indeed accomplishing something *good!*" The drama

graphically showed that if a parent trains a child well, that will stand the child in good stead when he grows up and serves Jehovah on his own.

Morning of the Third Day

The theme for day three was "Go On Teaching People of All Nations." (Matthew 28:19, 20) The conventioners doubtless expected timely counsel on the preaching work, and they were not disappointed. A symposium entitled "Joyfully Fulfilling Our Preaching and Teaching Commission" strengthened their determination to keep on sharing in the witnessing work. The opening talk discussed initial calls; the second, return visits; and the third, Bible studies. Missionaries around the world had been invited to return home and attend a convention with their families and friends. In some locations, missionaries shared in this part of the program. It was delightful to receive some insight into the success they are having in their assignments. Next, "Reaching Everyone With the Good News" considered the impact of informal witnessing.

The morning concluded with the baptism talk, always a highlight at large gatherings of Jehovah's Witnesses. In convention after convention, large groups of newly dedicated ones stood before the assembled crowds and confidently answered yes to the two questions directed to them. They then underwent public baptism. What powerful evidence of the grand effect of divine teaching!

Afternoon of the Third Day

The afternoon program began with a deep Scriptural discussion. Jehovah's Witnesses are familiar with the words of Matthew chapter 24 and Luke chapter 21. Did some think that nothing new could be said about these Bible chapters? How wrong they were! The talks "What Will Be the Sign of Your

Presence?" and "Tell Us, When Will These Things Be?" led the conventioners through a fascinating discussion of sections of those two chapters and offered updated explanations of some verses. There were lively discussions after the session as conventioners compared notes to see if they had understood the points. Doubtless, many questions will be answered when this information is published in *The Watchtower*.

The Bible study theme was continued in the talk "Informative Answers to Your Bible Questions." Then the program took a different direction. The year 1993 marked the 50th anniversary of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. The talk "Fifty Years of Gilead Missionary Training and Activity" showed conventioners what had been accomplished during that period. If there were any missionaries present during the talk "Evangelizing Accomplishments in the Global Field," they were invited to share some of their experiences with the audience. Hearing the missionaries' accounts was thrilling!

The following talk, "Why Jehovah's Witnesses Keep on the Watch," was another history lesson. It showed that Christians had been on the watch from the first century C.E. up till now. That led to another

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surprise. Early in the following talk, entitled "Kingdom Proclaimers Active in All the Earth," the speaker lifted up a large volume (when already available in the local language) and said: "It is a pleasure to announce here today the release of this new book, entitled *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*." The book contains a detailed account of the modern-day history of Jehovah's Witnesses. It tells a thrilling story of endurance, determination, and success, giving powerful evidence of Jehovah's spirit being active upon his servants.

The Fourth Morning

Already it was the final day of the convention. The day's theme, "Benefiting Ourselves by Divine Teaching," promised a fine climax to the program. (Isaiah 48:17) In the morning the attention of conventioners was riveted on a symposium of three powerful talks. Entitled "Jeremiah's Inspired Warning Message—For the Past and the Present," the symposium contained a verse-by-verse discussion of Jeremiah chapters 23, 24, and 25. What a strong message these chapters contain! Unfaithful Israel of Jeremiah's day must have shuddered at his frank, divinely inspired warnings. The whole world shuddered even more when those warnings were fulfilled. Are things different today? Not at all. Jehovah's Witnesses courageously preach God's messages of judgment. Eventually, this whole system of things will have to face Jehovah's judgment acts. That will mean total destruction for Satan's world.

Sunday morning concluded with a second drama, *Do Not Be Misled or Mock God*. In a graphic way, it showed how divine teaching can protect us from being influenced by debasing videos and music and from a tendency to sow discord among fellow Christians.

At the conclusion of the drama, the chairman quoted these thought-provoking words of one of the characters: "We are not immune to the world's influence. If we don't resist, the world can subtly corrupt our thinking. And whether we remain faithful or not is going to depend upon what we have been sowing." How true!

The Final Afternoon

The convention was rapidly drawing to a close as the speaker went to the podium to deliver the public discourse, entitled "Helpful Teaching for Our Critical Times." In a clear and logical way, he identified key problems that affect us today and pointed out some ways that divine teaching can help us to enjoy a better life. He said that if we are following Scriptural teaching now, we will be able to follow it forever in Jehovah's new world.

After a summary of the weekly *Watchtower* lesson, it was time for the final talk. The speaker went rapidly through the high points of the four-day program and reminded the conventioners of the new publications. He also announced that the second videocassette in the series *The Bible—A Book of Fact and Prophecy* would soon be released. In fact, that videocassette, entitled *The Bible—Mankind's Oldest Modern Book*, is now available in English. Touching reports were read from places where there are serious crises, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina. In conclusion, the speaker read the words of Ecclesiastes 12:13: "The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man."

What a fine reminder! Let us live for the day when all mankind will praise our Grand Instructor, Jehovah, and heed his divine teaching.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Since the Bible often mentions "the fatherless boy," does this indicate less concern for girls?

Definitely not.

The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures uses the phrase "the fatherless boy" in many verses that manifest God's concern for children who lack a parent. God made this concern clear in the laws he gave to Israel.

For example, God stated: "You people must not afflict any widow or fatherless boy. If you should afflict him at all, then if he cries out to me at all, I shall unfailingly hear his outcry; and my anger will indeed blaze, and I shall certainly kill you with the sword, and your wives must become widows and your sons fatherless boys." (Exodus 22:22-24) Jehovah your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the God great, mighty and fear-inspiring, who treats none with partiality nor accepts a bribe, executing judgment for the fatherless boy and the widow."

—Deuteronomy 10:17, 18; 14:29; 24:17; 27:19.

Many Bible versions read "fatherless child" or "orphan" in these verses, thus covering boys and girls. However, such renderings ignore a flavor found in the underlying Hebrew word (*ya-thohm'*), which is in the masculine gender. Instead, the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures uses the accurate rendering "fatherless boy(s)," as at Psalm 68:5, which reads: "A father of fatherless boys and a judge of widows is God in his holy dwelling." Based on the same sensitivity to the underlying Hebrew, the feminine gender of a verb in Psalm 68:11 recommends the reading: "The women telling the good news are a large army."*



* The Jewish Tanakh reads: "The LORD gives a command; the women who bring the news are a great host."

Even though "fatherless boy" is the principal rendering of *ya-thohm'*, this should not be taken as suggesting an absence of concern for girls who lack a parent. The passages quoted and others show that God's people were encouraged to care for females, for widows. (Psalm 146:9; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 22:3; Zechariah 7:9, 10; Malachi 3:5)

In the Law, God also included an account about a judicial decision that guaranteed an inheritance for the fatherless daughters of Zelophehad. That ruling became a statute for handling similar situations, thus upholding the rights of fatherless girls.—Numbers 27:1-8.

Jesus did not discriminate by gender in showing kindness to children. Instead, we read: "People began bringing him young children for him to touch these; but the disciples reprimanded them.

At seeing this Jesus was indignant and said to them: 'Let the young children come to me; do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of

God belongs to suchlike ones. Truly I say to you, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a young child will by no means enter into it.' And he took the children into his arms and began blessing them."—Mark 10:13-16.

The Greek word here rendered "young children" is in the neuter gender. A noted Greek lexicon says that this word is "used of boys and girls." Jesus was reflecting a corresponding interest by Jehovah in all children, boys and girls. (Hebrews 1:3; compare Deuteronomy 16:14; Mark 5:35, 38-42.) It should thus be recognized that counsel in the Hebrew Scriptures about caring for "fatherless boys" amounts to advice on how we should be concerned about all children who lack a parent or parents.

LIKE APPLES OF GOLD



APPLES—how they delight both the eye and the palate! The Bible uses this delicious fruit in a thought-provoking simile when it says: "As apples of gold in silver carvings is a word spoken at the right time for it." (Proverbs 25:11) What is meant by this statement?

"Apples of gold in silver carvings" may denote carved work, such as an engraved silver tray with fruit of gold on it. Since earlier verses in this chapter mention approach to a king, this verse could refer to presents given to a ruler—golden ornaments in the shape of apples placed on silver trays. (Proverbs 25:6, 7) Impressively beautiful, indeed!

There is similar beauty in appropriate, dignified, timely words, whether written or spoken. They are delightful, encouraging, and beneficial in many ways. Especially are the divinely inspired contents of the Bible like beautiful "apples of gold in silver carvings."

As illustrated by King Solomon's wise saying at Proverbs 25:11, he "sought to find the delightful words and the writing of correct words of truth." (Ecclesiastes 12:10; Proverbs 25:1) Centuries later, the Christian apostle Paul wrote: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial." (2 Timothy 3:16) Yes, the Bible contains beneficial counsel, prophecies, word pictures, and truths of such brilliance and beauty that they greatly surpass the works of the finest artisans. Moreover, anyone gaining wisdom from God's Word, the Bible, acquires a priceless possession and can entertain the hope of eternal life.—Proverbs 4:7-9; John 17:3.