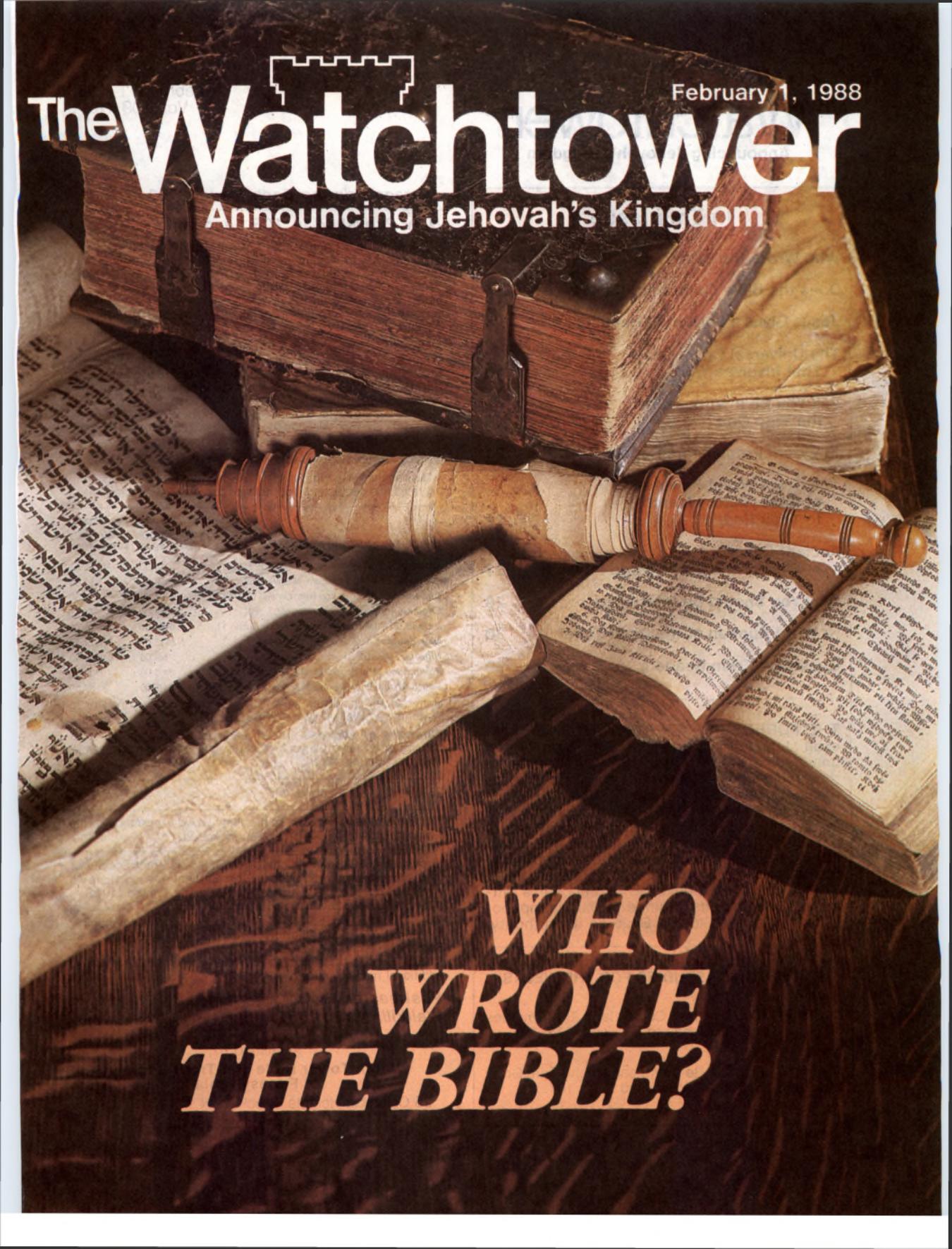


The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

February 1, 1988

The background of the cover features a collection of aged, worn books and scrolls. One prominent book in the center has its title page visible, showing "THE WATCHTOWER" and "ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM". Another scroll lies across the bottom left, partially unrolled, revealing Hebrew script. The overall theme is one of historical knowledge and religious tradition.

WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?

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

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Frederick W. Franz, President

Who Wrote the Bible?

THE Bible is full of contradictions," claim skeptics. "Besides, it contains human philosophy. Therefore, how can anyone accept the Bible as a trustworthy guide for life?"

Do you share the skeptics' viewpoint that the Bible is nothing more than a book expressing flawed human thinking? Some clergymen do. The late Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth wrote in his *Kirchliche Dogmatik* (Church Dogmatics): "The prophets and apostles as such were capable of making mistakes in speaking and in writing." True, differences in wording can be found in the narratives of an event covered by more than one Bible writer. And statements can be found that, on the surface, appear to differ completely from statements found elsewhere in the Bible. But are these really contradictions? Is the Bible simply the product of men? Indeed, who wrote the Bible?

The answer is simple: "Men spoke from God." But how did they know what to speak and what to write? The man just quoted, the apostle Simon Peter, goes on to explain that they spoke "as they were borne along by holy spirit."—2 Peter 1:21.

For a fact, time and time again the Bible stresses that it is "the word of God." In the 176 verses of Psalm 119 alone this point is alluded to 176

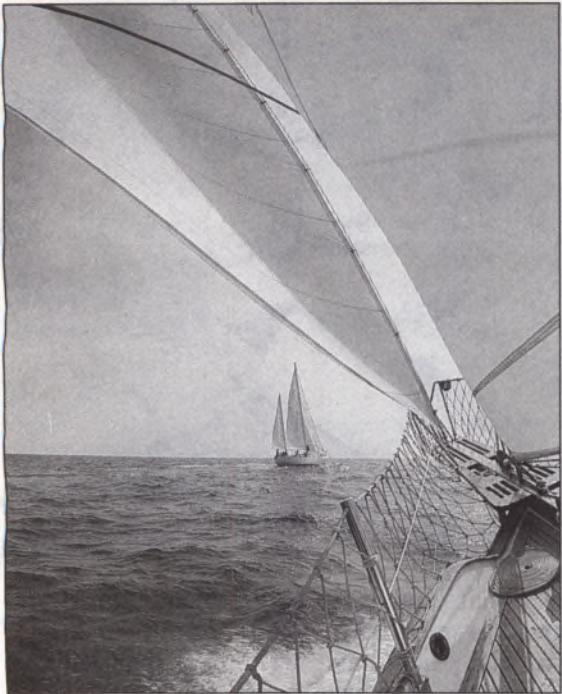


times! What makes this significant is that writers are normally interested in making known that *they* have written a particular work. But the men who wrote the Bible were not. All honor was to go to God. It was his book, not theirs.—1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Samuel 23:2.

"Borne Along by Holy Spirit"—How?

How were these men "borne along by holy spirit"? A letter to the first-century Christian Timothy provides an answer: "All Scripture is inspired of God." "Inspired of God" translates the Bible's original word of the Greek text *the-o'-pneu-stos*, which means, literally, "God-breathed." God used his invisible active force—his holy spirit—to "breathe" his ideas into the minds of the writers. Thus, Jehovah God is the Source and Producer of the Bible. His thoughts directed the writing much as a businessman uses a secretary to write letters for him.—2 Timothy 3:16.

Also, this concept of "God-breathed" finds a parallel in the Biblical expression "borne along by holy spirit." How so? "Borne along" is used in Greek with reference to ships that are moved along on a certain course by the wind. (Compare Acts 27:15, 17.) Thus, as a wind



As wind moves sailing ships, the Bible writers were 'borne along by God's holy spirit'

blows and moves a sailing ship, so the Bible writers thought, spoke, and wrote under God's influence, borne along by his holy spirit as he "breathed" on them.

The Men Used by God to Write

We have but few autobiographical details about the Bible writers. Far from considering themselves of great importance, they always strove to honor God by

keeping themselves in the background. We do know, however, that they included state officials, judges, prophets, kings, shepherds, farmers, and fishermen—some 40 men in all. Thus, the Bible, although a message from God, has the warmth, variety, and appeal of the human touch.

Many of the Bible writers did not know one another. They even lived centuries apart and were extremely different in temperament and experience, as well as in social and educational backgrounds. Yet, whether they were young or old, their writing shows a complete unity. Over a period of some 1,600 years, they wrote until the book was finally finished. After a careful examination, you will find that the Bible's statements reflect a remarkable harmony. The Bible thus echoes the mind of one Author, though many writers were used.

Should this not prompt us "to pay more than the usual attention" to this extraordinary book, the Bible? Should we not be able to reach the same conclusion as did Peter, who wrote: "All this only confirms for us the message of the prophets, to which you will do well to attend, because it is like a lamp shining in a murky place"? —Hebrews 2:1; 2 Peter 1:19, *The New English Bible*.

But now, what about the claim that the Bible contradicts itself? Does it? How do you answer?

"What a grand book! Stranger than its contents for me is its manner of expression, where the word becomes virtually a natural product like a tree, like a flower, like the sea, like the stars, like man himself. It sprouts, it flows, it shines, it laughs, one knows not how, one knows not why, one finds everything so completely natural. It is truly God's Word, in contrast to other books that testify of only human wisdom."—The 19th-century German poet and journalist Heinrich Heine's comments about the Bible.

Does the Bible Contradict Itself?

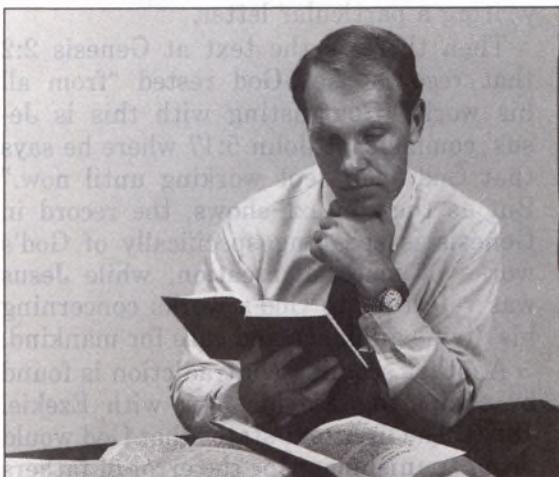
IT IS impossible for God to lie," declares the Bible. (Hebrews 6:18) So how could his book be filled with glaring inconsistencies and significant discrepancies and still be called the Word of God? It could not. 'Why, though, the discrepancies?' you ask.

As might be expected, in a book that for centuries was laboriously copied by hand and that needed to be translated into the popular languages of the day, some scribal variations crept in. But none are of such scope and weight as to cast doubt on the inspiration and authority of the Bible as a whole. By careful examination, seeming contradictions can be shown to have an honest solution. All too often, people who claim that the Bible contradicts itself have not made a thorough investigation themselves, but they merely accept this opinion that is thrust upon them by those who do not wish to believe the Bible or be governed by it. "When anyone is replying to a matter before he hears it, that is foolishness on his part and a humiliation," cautions the Bible at Proverbs 18:13.

At times, some object to the fact that Bible writers do not always seem to agree on matters relating to figures, order of events, wording of quotations, and so forth. But consider: If you were to ask

several eyewitnesses of an event to write down what they saw, would all accounts coincide entirely in wording and detail? If they did, would you not be suspicious of collusion among the writers? So, too, Bible writers were allowed by God to retain their own particular style and language, while he saw to it that his ideas and pertinent facts were conveyed accurately.

Quotations from earlier writings might be altered slightly from the original statements to meet the needs and purpose of the new writer, while still retaining the basic sense and thought. The same could be said about groupings of events. One writer may follow a strict chronological order, while another may list the events according to their association with ideas. Omissions would likewise be according to the writer's viewpoint and his condensation of the account. Hence, Matthew spoke of two blind men being healed by Jesus, while Mark and Luke mention only one. (Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46; Luke 18:35) Matthew's account is not contradictory. He is simply being more specific as to the number, while Mark and Luke focus on the one man to whom Jesus directed his conversation.



There were also different methods of computing time. The Jewish nation used two calendars—the sacred calendar and the secular, or agricultural, calendar—each starting at a different time of the year. Writers who differ in month and day when referring to the same event might merely be using different calendars. As Oriental writers seldom used fractions, parts of a year were counted as whole years. They were rounded off to the nearest whole number. Note this, for instance, in the genealogical records found in Genesis chapter 5.

Harmonizing “Contradictions”

But are there not texts in the Bible that say just the opposite of other texts? Let us consider a few that have been cited by some critics of the Bible.

At John 3:22 we read that Jesus “did baptizing,” while just a little further on, at John 4:2, the record states that “Jesus himself did no baptizing.” But as the rest of the text indicates, it was Jesus’ disciples who performed the actual baptisms in his name and under his direction. This is similar to the case in which a businessman and his secretary both can lay claim to writing a particular letter.

Then there is the text at Genesis 2:2 that records that God rested “from all his work.” Contrasting with this is Jesus’ comment at John 5:17 where he says that God “has kept working until now.” But as the context shows, the record in Genesis is speaking specifically of God’s works of material creation, while Jesus was referring to God’s works concerning his divine guidance and care for mankind.

Another seeming contradiction is found by comparing Exodus 34:7 with Ezekiel 18:20. The first text states that God would bring “punishment for the error of fathers

upon sons and upon grandsons,” while the latter states that “a son himself will bear nothing because of the error of the father.” Why do these texts appear to be contradictory? Because they are taken out of context. Examine the surrounding material and setting. It then becomes obvious that when God mentioned punishment as coming upon not only fathers but also sons and grandsons, he was speaking of what would result to Israelites as a *nation* if they sinned against him and were taken into captivity. On the other hand, when mentioning that a son would not be liable for the error of his father, he was speaking of *personal* accountability.

Differences can be found, such as in the accounts of Jesus’ birth as recorded at Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 1:26-38. But do they indicate contradiction?

Have you ever read two biographies about the same famous person? If so, have you noticed that these biographies will differ without being necessarily contradictory? Often, it is because of the writer’s personal impressions or the sources he has used. It also depends on what the author feels is important to relate in his presentation, the angle he is developing, and

If You Find a Bible “Contradiction,” Could It Be That:

- ◆ You are unaware of certain historical facts or ancient customs?
- ◆ You have failed to take the context into consideration?
- ◆ You have overlooked the writer’s viewpoint?
- ◆ You are trying to reconcile mistaken religious ideas with what the Bible really says?
- ◆ You are using an inexact or outdated Bible translation?



Matthew said that two blind men were healed by Jesus. Mark and Luke mentioned only one. Is this a contradiction?



Deserving of Our Confidence

God's holy spirit allowed Bible writers much leeway in writing their reports. (Acts 3:21) Thus, they were able to produce a colorful and graphic picture of what they saw. Their dissimilarities, however, actually establish their credibility and veracity, allowing no charge of deceit and collusion. (2 Peter 1:16-21) While writers differed in their method of presentation, all pointed in the same direction and had the same purpose: to show people what Jehovah God will do to make mankind happy and what humans for their part must do to receive God's approval.—Proverbs 2:3-6, 9.

having the audience in mind for whom the work is intended. Thus, accounts written with Gentile readers in mind would differ from those for Jewish readers, who already understood and accepted certain facts.

These are just a few examples of passages in the Bible that, without careful analysis, appear to contradict one another. But when carefully examined, keeping in mind the writer's viewpoint and the context, they are not contradictions at all but simply passages that require additional research. Most people fail to put forth this necessary effort, however, finding it so much easier just to say: "The Bible contradicts itself."

The Bible is a book that appeals to our power of reason. It is harmonious throughout. It does not contradict itself. All 66 books (1,189 chapters or 31,173 verses according to the *King James Version*) deserve our complete confidence. Yes, you can trust the Bible!

Jesus Gives a Lesson in Humility

FTER healing the demonized boy in the region near Caesarea Philippi, Jesus wishes to return home to Capernaum. However, he wants to be alone with his disciples on the trip so that he can further prepare them for his death and their responsibilities afterward. "The Son of man is to be delivered into men's hands," he explains to them, "and they will kill him, but, despite being killed, he will rise three days later."

Even though Jesus spoke earlier about this, and three apostles actually saw the transfiguration during which his "departure" was discussed, his followers are still without understanding regarding the matter. Although none of them try to deny that he will be killed, as Peter did earlier, they are afraid to question him further about it.

Eventually they come into Capernaum, which has been a kind of home base during Jesus' ministry. It is also the hometown of Peter and a number of other apostles. There, men who collect the temple tax approach Peter. Perhaps attempting to involve Jesus in some breach of accepted custom, they ask: "Does your teacher not pay the two drachmas [temple] tax?"

"Yes," Peter responds.

Jesus, who may have arrived at the house shortly afterward, is aware of what has occurred. So even before Pe-

ter can bring the matter up, Jesus asks: "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth receive duties or head tax? From their sons or from the strangers?"

"From the strangers," Peter answers.

"Really, then, the sons are tax-free," Jesus observes. Since Jesus' Father is the King of the universe, the One who is worshiped at the temple, it is not really a legal requirement for God's Son to

pay the temple tax. "But that we do not cause them to stumble,"

Jesus says, "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 [four drachmas] coin. Take that and give it to them for me and you."

When the disciples get together after their return to Capernaum, perhaps at Peter's house, they ask:

"Who really is greatest in the kingdom of the heavens?"

Jesus knows what it is that prompts their question, being aware of what was going on among them as they trailed behind him on their return from Caesarea Philippi. So he asks: "What were you arguing over on the road?" Embarrassed, the disciples keep silent, for they had argued among themselves over who is greater.

After nearly three years of Jesus' teaching, does it seem incredible that the disciples would have such an argu-





ment? Well, it reveals the strong influence of human imperfection, as well as of religious background. The Jewish religion in which the disciples had been reared stressed position or rank in all dealings. Furthermore, perhaps Peter, because of Jesus' promise of receiving certain "keys" to the Kingdom, felt superior. James and John may have had similar ideas because of being favored with witnessing Jesus' transfiguration.

Whatever the case, Jesus stages a moving demonstration in an effort to correct their attitudes. He calls a child, stands it in their midst, puts his arms around it, and says: "Unless you turn around and become as young children, you will by no means

enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Therefore, whoever will humble himself like this young child is the one that is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens; and whoever receives one such young child on the basis of my name receives me also."

What a marvelous way to correct his disciples! Jesus does not become angry with them and call them haughty, greedy, or ambitious. No, but he illustrates his corrective teaching by using young children, who are characteristically modest, free from ambition, and generally have no thought of rank among themselves. Thus Jesus shows that his disciples need to develop these same qualities that characterize humble children. As Jesus concludes: "He that conducts himself as a lesser one among all of you is the one that is great." **Matthew 17:22-27; 18:1-5; Mark 9:30-37; Luke 9:43-48.**

- ♦ On the return to Capernaum, what teaching does Jesus repeat, and how is it received?
- ♦ Why is Jesus not obligated to pay the temple tax, but why does he pay it?
- ♦ What perhaps contributed to the disciples' argument, and how did Jesus correct them?

The Universal Court Case That Involves You

"Bring your controversial case forward,' says Jehovah. 'Produce your arguments.'"

—ISAIAH 41:21.

THROUGHOUT history there have been countless court cases. In these, witnesses have been brought forth and evidence presented to contend for one side or the other. Many of these cases have involved individuals, while others have affected greater numbers of people. But all such cases pale into insignificance compared to the universal court case that is now being argued. It is by far the most crucial court case in history. Its results will affect every person on earth, whether he chooses to be involved or not.

² The central figure in this case is the highest personage in the universe, Jehovah God, "the Creator of the heavens and the Grand One stretching them out; the One laying out the earth and its produce, the One giving breath to the people on it." (Isaiah 42:5) What is at issue? His godship is at issue—the righteousness of his rulership of the entire universe, including the earth and its inhabitants. This can be called the issue of universal sovereignty.

³ Basic to the issue are these questions: Which of all the gods worshiped have proved so trustworthy that you could stake your life and your future on them? Which have actually existed, and which have

1, 2. (a) Who is involved in the most crucial court case ever to be argued? (b) What is at issue?

3. What questions are basic to the issue of universal sovereignty?



merely been human inventions? Is there a true, living, supreme God who can deliver mankind from its present desperate condition and bring about the right kind of government that will ensure genuine peace, security, prosperity, and health?

⁴ Many people feel that there is no issue for them, since they say that they already believe in God. But can they present evidence that the deity they worship is indeed the true God, that his promises are reliable, and that his purposes and laws guide their lives? If such people answer yes, then they should also be able to answer these questions: Just what is the evidence that there is a true God whose promises are reliable? What is God's purpose for humankind and the earth? Where are we in God's timetable, and what does the immediate future hold? What does he want us

4. What can be said of those who feel that there is no issue, since they say they already believe in God?

to do as individuals if we are to uphold him?

⁵ Most people who say that they believe in God are unable to answer these questions authoritatively. Such ones may be likened to those who professed to believe in God in the first century but whose works belied their claim. Of them God's Word states: "They publicly declare they know God, but they disown him by their works." Yes, "faith without works is dead." (Titus 1:16; James 2:26) Hence, those who say that they believe in God but cannot produce solid evidence to support it are in no way different from people of past centuries who believed in false gods that have long since disappeared as objects of worship.

Test Cases

⁶ An example of this was the case brought against the gods of ancient Egypt about 1,500 years before our Common Era. The Egyptians worshiped a multitude of gods, including animals such as the bull, the cat, the cow, the crocodile, the falcon, the frog, the jackal, the lion, the serpent, the vulture, and the wolf. Many of these animals were considered to be incarnations of a god or goddess, and deliberately killing one brought the death penalty. Sacred animals were mummified and given elaborate burials.

⁷ Opposed to all those gods was the God

5. To whom may people be likened when they do not produce evidence to support their belief in God?

6, 7. (a) Describe the religion of the ancient Egyptians. (b) How were the Israelites involved in the issue between Jehovah and Egypt's gods?

whom ancient Israel worshiped, Jehovah. His representative, Moses, was sent to ask Pharaoh to release Jehovah's people, who were then in slavery, since Jehovah had promised them their freedom. (Exodus 3:6-10) But Pharaoh declared: "Who is Jehovah, so that I should obey his voice to send Israel away? I do not know Jehovah at all and, what is more, I am not going to send Israel away." (Exodus 5:2) Pharaoh felt confident that Egypt's gods were superior to Jehovah.

⁸ Who would prove to be the true God who was able to keep his promises and able to protect his people? The answer was soon to come. Jehovah foretold: "On all the gods of Egypt I shall execute judgments." (Exodus 12:12) Did he fulfill that prophecy? Yes! Jehovah brought ten devastating plagues designed to humiliate Egypt's gods. None of those gods could protect the Egyptians. And the tenth plague was especially significant, for it killed the Egyptian firstborn, including Pharaoh's. This was a direct blow to their chief god Ra (Amon-Ra), since the rulers of Egypt considered themselves gods, the sons of Ra. To the Egyptians, the death of Pharaoh's firstborn meant the death of a god.

⁹ However, not one Israelite firstborn

8, 9. (a) How did Jehovah prove his superiority over Egypt's gods? (b) In view of what happened, what must be said of the gods of Egypt?



Egypt's gods were powerless before the true God, Jehovah

was killed, as they had Jehovah's protection. Too, God gave his people the freedom that he had promised them. And as a final blow to Egypt's false gods, Pharaoh and his army—every one of them—were destroyed in the Red Sea. Thus, Jehovah proved to be the true God. His promises were the ones that were fulfilled, and his worshipers the ones that were protected. (Exodus 14:21-31) On the other hand, Egypt's gods were powerless to help their worshipers. Those gods had not really existed at all but were the inventions of humans.

¹⁰ Another case involving godship came to the fore some eight centuries later, in the time of King Hezekiah.* Jehovah's worshipers were being threatened by the ferocious Assyrian World Power that had conquered all nations in its path. Now it demanded the surrender of Jerusalem, the city that held "Jehovah's throne," representing his worship on earth. (1 Chronicles 29:23) Judah's king, Hezekiah, acknowledged that the Assyrians 'had devastated all those other lands and had consigned the gods of those lands to the fire because

* The January 15 issue of *The Watchtower* discussed how Jehovah rewarded Hezekiah's trust in Him. Those dramatic events also involved godship.

10. What issue confronted Jehovah's worshipers and Assyria?



they were no gods, but the workmanship of man's hands.'—Isaiah 37:18, 19.

¹¹ Faithful Hezekiah then prayed to Jehovah, asking for his protection. Jehovah promised that not one Assyrian weapon would strike Jerusalem. (Isaiah 37:33) True to that prophecy, not one did. Instead, "the angel of Jehovah proceeded to go forth and strike down a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians." After that crushing defeat, the king of Assyria, Sennacherib, retreated. Later, when he was worshiping his god Nisroch, his sons assassinated him. (Isaiah 37:36-38) Thus Jehovah again proved to be the God of true prophecy who can deliver his worshipers. The gods of Assyria and the surrounding nations proved to be false, nonexistent, unable to protect their followers.

¹² About two centuries later, God allowed his people, who had been unfaithful, to be taken captive by the next world power, Babylon. Its chief feature was its multitudes of gods, goddesses, and temples of worship. But in a boastful fit of ego, Babylonian king Belshazzar mocked Jehovah. At a huge feast, he ordered the sacred vessels that were captured from Jerusalem's temple brought in. "From them the king and his grandees, his concubines and his secondary wives drank. They drank wine, and they praised the gods of gold and of silver, copper, iron, wood and stone."—Daniel 5:1-4.

¹³ This was a direct affront to Jehovah,

11. How did Jehovah rescue his worshipers, and what did this demonstrate?

12. In what way did Belshazzar mock Jehovah?

13. What did Jehovah cause Daniel to say to Belshazzar?

Assyria's gods and their adherents were dealt a crushing blow by the true God

a challenge to him in the name of Babylon's gods. Jehovah then had his prophet Daniel boldly bear testimony to King Belshazzar and to all who were present at the feast. Daniel upheld Jehovah's godship and told King Belshazzar: "You have not humbled your heart . . . But against the Lord of the heavens you exalted yourself, . . . and you have praised mere gods of silver and of gold, copper, iron, wood and stone, that are beholding nothing or hearing nothing or knowing nothing; but the God in whose hand your breath is and to whom all your ways belong you have not glorified."—Daniel 5:22, 23.

¹⁴ Then Daniel delivered Jehovah's message, which was this: Arrogant King Belshazzar and Babylon would be overthrown by the Medes and the Persians that very night! (Daniel 5:24-27) Did this prophecy come true? Yes. "In that very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed and Darius the Mede himself received the kingdom." (Daniel 5:30, 31) Again, as with Egypt and Assyria, Jehovah proved to be the true God, the God who fulfills his promises. God's servants benefited, for they were released from captivity and returned to their homeland. Those who persisted in following false gods came to disaster.

Prophecies for Our Time

¹⁵ The prophet Isaiah was inspired to

14. How did Jehovah demonstrate that he was the true God?

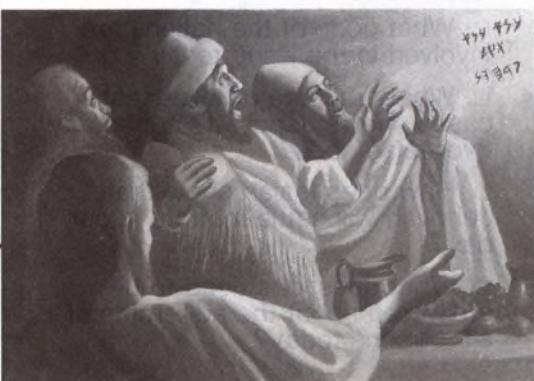
15. (a) What feature do many Bible prophecies have? (b) To what do we also refer when we use the word "god"?

Daniel delivered Jehovah's message to the worshipers of Babylon's false gods

record prophecies that had a fulfillment back in ancient times. But often in Bible prophecy, there is another larger fulfillment having to do with our time. This was the case with many things that Isaiah wrote. Part of his message contained prophecies regarding Jehovah's modern-day challenge to all the nations and their gods. And by the word "gods" we refer not only to the gods directly worshiped by people in all parts of the world, including so-called pagan nations today, but also to those things that fit the definition of that word. One dictionary definition of the word "god" is: "One controlling a particular aspect or part of reality; a person or thing of supreme value."

¹⁶ Those regarded as gods today include the millions of gods worshiped by Hindus, as well as those worshiped by Buddhists, Shintoists, animists, and other religionists. It also includes the god of materialism, the thing of supreme value for most people on earth, the main motivation in their lives. It also includes the gods of military might and science that the nations look to for security and salvation. Too, most people even in Christendom who say that they believe in God do not really trust him or loyally serve him, but instead

16. What gods do people of the nations, including Christendom, worship today?



they trust and serve people or things as their objects of primary loyalty.

¹⁷ The greater fulfillment of Isaiah's message is pointed to all such gods in our time. Jehovah tells national groups to collect themselves and "speak." He challenges them: "Let us come up close together for the judgment itself." (Isaiah 41:1) Today, we live in the "judgment" time for this world. It is in its "last days" as foretold at 2 Timothy 3:1-5 and Matthew 24:1-14. At this time Jehovah challenges the gods of the nations to foretell accurately the future and so prove that they are gods. He also challenges them to protect their adherents if they can. "Bring your controversial case forward," he states. "Produce your arguments . . . and tell to us the things that are going to happen."—Isaiah 41:21, 22.

¹⁸ The almighty God identifies who he is: "I am Jehovah. That is my name; and to no one else shall I give my own glory, neither my praise to graven images." (Isa-

17. To what does the greater fulfillment of Isaiah's message point?

18. How does almighty God identify himself, and what does he promise his worshipers?

Review Questions

- What is the issue of universal sovereignty?
- What gods of the nations are involved in the issue today?
- What outcome of three test cases shows Jehovah's superiority over false gods?
- How does Isaiah show that Jehovah will settle matters in our day?
- What questions need to be answered about the adherents of all religions today?

iah 42:8) And he tells those who uphold him: "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not gaze about, for I am your God. I will fortify you. I will really help you." He promises them: "All those getting heated up against you will become ashamed and be humiliated. The men in a quarrel with you will become as nothing and will perish." "Any weapon whatever that will be formed against you will have no success . . . This is the hereditary possession of the servants of Jehovah."—Isaiah 41:10, 11; 54:17.

¹⁹ For a long time, for centuries, Jehovah has let the nations go their own ways. However, his appointed time for settling matters on earth has arrived. So he declares: "I have kept quiet for a long time. I continued silent. I kept exercising self-control." But now, "like a mighty man Jehovah himself will go forth. Like a warrior he will awaken zeal. He will shout, yes, he will let out a war cry; over his enemies he will show himself mightier." (Isaiah 42:13, 14) In the prophecies of Isaiah and other Bible writers, as well as those of Jesus, Jehovah foretells his raising up a people in these "last days" to bear zealous testimony to him, as if they were witnesses in a court case.

²⁰ The people that Jehovah brings forth to serve him present evidence that he is the true God, the Saver of his worshipers and the Destroyer of false gods and their adherents. Jehovah's people today 'sing his praises from the extremity of the earth, from all the nations and islands, from the top of the mountains.' (Isaiah 42:10-12) This fulfills yet another prophecy of Isaiah that foretold: "In the final part of the days [in our time] . . . the mountain of the

19, 20. (a) How does Isaiah show that there is an appointed time for Jehovah to settle matters? (b) Whom does Jehovah bring forth in these "last days," and how do they represent him?

house of Jehovah [his true worship] will become firmly established above the top of the mountains, and it will certainly be lifted up above the hills [above all other types of worship]; and to it [people from] all the nations must stream." And what do they urge others to do? They entreat honesthearted ones: "Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, . . . and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths."—Isaiah 2:2-4.

²¹ Thus, as though addressing a court, Jehovah says: "Let the nations all be collected together at one place, and let national groups be gathered together. . . . Let

21. What questions are raised by Jehovah's challenge to the gods of the nations?

them furnish their witnesses, that they may be declared righteous, or let them hear and say, 'It is the truth!'" (Isaiah 43:9) This is a direct challenge to the gods of the nations. Can any of them tell what is in the future? Were they able to do this in the past? Can they find anyone to bear witness with solid evidence that such gods have proved to be true, worthy of our loyalty? What record have the gods of the nations, and their followers, produced in our time? Has it been any better than what the gods of the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians produced? On the other hand, have those who bear witness to Jehovah produced solid evidence that Jehovah is the true God, the only One worthy of our worship? The following article will discuss these matters.

Will You Be a Witness for the True God?

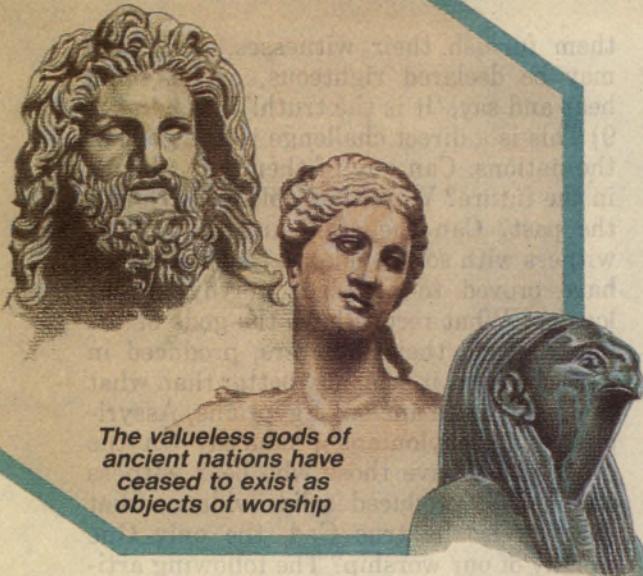
"'You are my witnesses,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and I am God.'"—ISAIAH 43:12.

SHORTLY before Jesus died, he 'raised his eyes to heaven' to pray. He addressed the One to whom he was praying as "the only true God." (John 17:1, 3) Reasonably, there can be only one living and true God, the Sovereign of the universe, the Creator. Since we owe our existence to the true God, we should render him the honor that he deserves. As Revelation 4:11 expresses it: "You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created."

1. Why should we honor the true God?

² It would be logical to expect that the true God would not forever tolerate the bad conditions that have marred his earthly creations. And it would also be logical to believe that he would keep his worshipers informed as to what he will do and what he wants them to do before he executes his judgments. (Amos 3:7) How does he communicate with truth seekers? He uses willing humans as his spokesmen. "'You are my witnesses,' is the utterance of Jehovah . . . 'Before me there was no

2. (a) What is it logical to believe about the true God? (b) How does he communicate with those who want to worship him?



The valueless gods of ancient nations have ceased to exist as objects of worship

God formed, and after me there continued to be none. I—I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no savior.' " (Isaiah 43:10, 11) But how can a person identify those whom the true God uses as his witnesses? How do they, and their message, contrast with worshipers of other gods?

A Challenge to Other Gods

³ Jehovah inspired Isaiah to record this challenge to all other gods: "Who is there among them [the gods of the nations and peoples] that can tell this [accurate prophecy]? Or can they cause us to hear even the first things [that will happen in the future]? Let them [as gods] furnish their witnesses, that they [as gods] may be declared righteous, or let them [the peoples of the nations] hear and say, 'It is the truth!'" (Isaiah 43:9) Thus Jehovah challenges all the gods that people worship to prove that they are gods. Their witnesses should produce evidence that their gods are reliable and worthy of being worshiped.

3. What challenge does Jehovah issue to all other gods?

⁴ But what have those gods and their worshipers produced? Have they led us to genuine peace, prosperity, health, and life? History testifies that the many gods of ancient nations proved valueless and powerless. They could not even survive as objects of worship, since they are not in existence today. The many gods of ancient Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and other nations proved false. They exist only in history books or in museums where statues of them are mere objects of curiosity.

⁵ Yet, are the modern gods and their worshipers any better than the ancient ones? The Hindu religion alone has millions of gods. Buddhists, Catholics, Confucianists, Jews, Protestants, Shintoists, Taoists, and many others have their own gods. In Africa, Asia, and elsewhere, the forces of nature, animals, and objects are worshiped as gods. Nationalism and materialism, and even a person's self, have become gods, in that many people give them their main devotion. Which way of worship actually represents the one who declares: "I am Jehovah, and there is no one else. With the exception of me there is no God"?—Isaiah 45:5.

"By Their Fruits You Will Recognize Them"

⁶ Jesus laid down a dependable rule for identifying what is true or false in regard to religion. He said: "By their fruits you will recognize them. . . . Every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit . . . Every tree

4. How do we know that the gods of ancient nations were valueless?
5. What may we ask about the gods of modern times?
6. How can we distinguish true worship from false worship?

not producing fine fruit gets cut down and thrown into the fire." (Matthew 7:16-19) Thus, to determine the true God from false ones, and true worshipers from false ones, we need to examine what they produce. Is their fruitage "fine," or is it "worthless"?

⁷ For example, which of the world's religions has established genuine peace among its adherents earth wide? Surely, members of the true religion, spiritual brothers, should not be killing one another. But a hundred million people have been killed in the wars of this 20th century, and all those wars have been supported by the religions of this world. As a result, religious people have killed other religious people. Much of the time, they have killed people of their own religion. Catholics have killed Catholics, Protestants have killed Protestants, Muslims have killed Muslims, and those of other religions have followed the same course.

⁸ In an editorial entitled "The Violence Done in God's Name," Mike Royko, as if addressing God, said of this world's religions: "They are expressing their devotion to you by killing each other by the hundreds. I guess they figure that if one side can wipe the other side out, it will prove that their way of worshiping you is correct." He said that while the pope portrays himself as a peaceful man, "his followers have been known to shed a few million gallons of blood when their tempers are up." Too, when former United States President Carter observed that "the world has gone mad," he said: "Deep religious conviction, which should bind people in love, seems often to be part of the madness and murder."

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7. What does the history of this century tell us about the religions of this world?
 8. How do observers comment on religious failure in our time?



U.S. Army photo

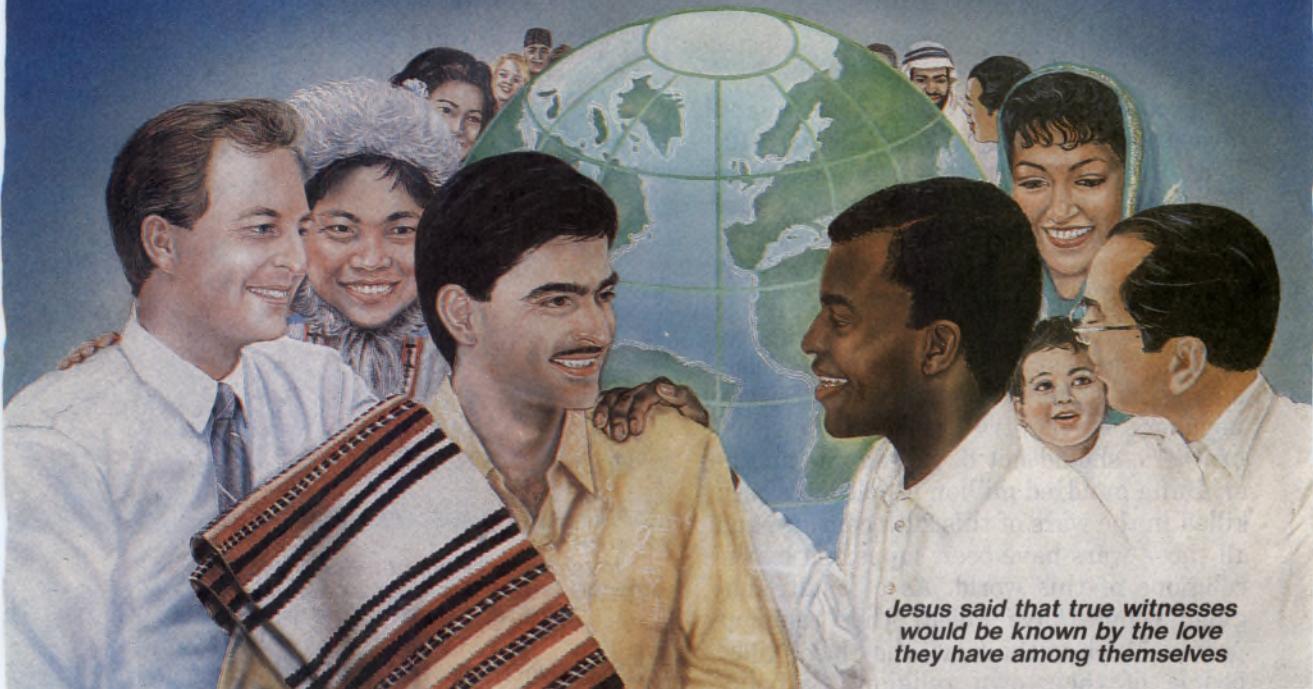
In our century about a hundred million people have been killed in wars supported by the religions of this world

⁹ Such worthless fruitage is the opposite of what must be produced by those who worship the true God. (Galatians 5:19-23) Hence, those who support warring religions and philosophies are part of false worship as surely as were the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and others who looked to "valueless gods that are speechless." (Habakkuk 2:18) And just as the true God's prophetic word was fulfilled on ancient false worship, so it will be in our time: "The valueless gods themselves will pass away completely." (Isaiah 2:18) Trustworthy is his warning: "Do not turn yourselves to valueless gods."—Leviticus 19:4.

Who Are Witnessing for Jehovah?

¹⁰ A witness for the true God should be one who bears testimony about Him. Do the adherents of this world's religions bear such testimony? How often do people of these religions talk to you about their worship? When have they called at your home to bear witness about their god? The

9. Why should we not follow "valueless gods"?
10. Are the adherents of this world's religions witnesses for the true God?



Jesus said that true witnesses would be known by the love they have among themselves

challenge that the true God has issued to false ones to produce witnesses goes unheeded. The people of this world's religions do not bear such witness. They cannot tell you who the true God is or what his purposes are. Their clergy have failed to teach them the truth. "Blind guides is what they are. If, then, a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit." —Matthew 15:14.

¹¹ Who are willing to sacrifice time, material resources, even their lives, to witness for the true God? Who tell people that the true God declares: "I am Jehovah. That is my name"? (Isaiah 42:8) Who teach that "you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth"? (Psalm 83:18) In his time, Jesus could say to the true God: "I have made your name manifest." (John 17:6) In our time, only Jehovah's Witnesses can say that. How appropriate their name is—Jehovah's Witnesses!

11. Who only are bearing witness to the name of the true God?

Witnessing About the Kingdom

¹² In addition to making known the true God's name, what, especially, would his witnesses be saying about his purposes? Jesus set the example by teaching his followers to pray to the true God: "Let your kingdom come." (Matthew 6:10) God's heavenly Kingdom is the government that will ultimately rule the entire earth. (Daniel 2:44) It was the theme of Jesus' teaching. (Matthew 4:23) Because the Kingdom is the only solution for mankind's troubles, he urged: "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness." —Matthew 6:33.

¹³ Who today bear testimony for God's Kingdom? Professor C. S. Braden, a keen student of the world's religions, said: "Jehovah's Witnesses have literally covered

12. What vital teaching must true witnesses be telling others?

13. (a) What do the facts show about the preaching of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding God's Kingdom? (b) How is the Kingdom preaching an evidence that Jehovah is the only God of true prophecy?

the earth with their witnessing. . . . It may be truly said that no single religious group in the world displayed more zeal and persistence in the attempt to spread the good news of the Kingdom than Jehovah's Witnesses." But he wrote that nearly 40 years ago! Today a far greater Kingdom witness is being accomplished, for there are more than ten times as many Witnesses now! Some three-and-a-half million of them, in over 54,900 congregations earth wide, are testifying for the Kingdom, and their numbers are rapidly growing. This fine fruitage is evidence that Jehovah is the God of true prophecy. He it was who inspired his Son, Jesus, to foretell concerning our time: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come."

—Matthew 24:14; John 8:28.

Imitating God's Love

¹⁴ The true witnesses of God must imitate his foremost quality—love. "He that does not love has not come to know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8) Indeed, "the children of God and the children of the Devil are evident by this fact: Everyone who does not carry on righteousness does not originate with God, neither does he who does not love his brother. . . . We should have love for one another; not like Cain, who originated with the wicked one and slaughtered his brother."—1 John 3: 10-12.

¹⁵ Jehovah's Witnesses alone have that kind of love. They do not submit to the gods of war, nationalism, and racism. They do not support any wars of this world and so are never in a situation where they would support the killing of

14. What quality must God's true witnesses imitate, and what does it mean if they do not?

15. Why can we say that Jehovah's Witnesses manifest genuine love?

their spiritual brothers in other parts of the world. They are, as Jesus said, "no part of the world" and have 'put down the sword.'—John 17:14; Matthew 26:52.

¹⁶ A study entitled "More About Justifying Violence" said: "Jehovah's Witnesses have consistently maintained their stand of nonviolent 'Christian neutrality' . . . Their continuing stand against national service of any form, military or civilian, and their refusal to honor symbols of national identity have resulted in periods of prosecution, imprisonment, and mob action in many countries . . . The Witnesses, however, have never responded with violence." The Brazilian newspaper *O Tempo* said of them: "Although there are many imposing religions with their propaganda in all parts of the globe, there does not exist a single one on the face of the earth today that shows the same love." This genuine love, Jesus declared, identifies the true witnesses of God. "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves."—John 13:35.

Persecution Increases Witness

¹⁷ Persecution can even result in a wider Kingdom witness. For example, in India there are only some 8,000 witnesses of Jehovah. Yet, recently Jehovah's name and purposes were given extensive publicity in that land by what 11 Witness children did in imitation of first-century Christians who said to a court: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) The Indian children had been expelled from school for not singing the national anthem. But India's Supreme Court ruled, as reported in the *Deccan Herald* of Bangalore, that "there is no obligation in this country to sing the

16. How do others help identify the true witnesses of God?

17, 18. What recent example shows how persecution can add to the Kingdom witness?

National Anthem.” The Court noted that the children “had shown proper respect” and that their not singing “did not in any way amount to insubordination.” The Court ordered that the children be readmitted to school.

¹⁸ The same newspaper also observed: “These children refused to sing the National Anthem because Jehovah’s Witnesses consider themselves to be Christians and devoted entirely to the Kingdom of God. . . . They therefore do not participate in any of the political activity of the State.” Also, *The Telegraph* of Calcutta reported: “The schoolchildren’s action has also brought into the limelight . . . Jehovah’s Witnesses, which had remained largely obscure in our country till recently.” Yes, ‘this good news of the kingdom will be preached for a witness to all the nations’ before the end comes.—Matthew 24:14.

Ingathering of Witnesses for the True God

¹⁹ Today, the true God, Jehovah, is having his people bear witness to his sovereignty and purposes. As they proclaim his message with ever greater force, he gathers increasing numbers of honesthearted people from all nations into association with his worshipers. (Isaiah 2:2-4) They abandon their false gods and turn to the worship of the true God, just as those who wanted to worship Jehovah were released from captivity to ancient Babylon, where the worship of false gods was rampant.

—Isaiah 43:14.

²⁰ Will you be a witness for the true God? Will you take your stand for true worship and avoid sharing the bloodguilt and moral culpability of this world and its

19. What do honesthearted persons need to do if they want to worship the true God?
20, 21. Why is it urgent to abandon false gods now and not be mere bystanders?

false gods? God’s Word urges: “Get out of her [Babylonish false worship], my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues.” (Revelation 18:4) Yes, “get out,” take action before it is too late! Do not be like the man who, when asked about his religious preference by a Catholic magazine, said: “I guess I’m a Jehovah’s Bystander. I believe pretty much what Jehovah’s Witnesses believe—but I don’t want to get involved.”

²¹ However, every person on earth will soon be involved when Jehovah executes the false gods of this world and their worshipers: “The gods that did not make the very heavens and the earth are the ones who will perish from the earth and from under these heavens.” (Jeremiah 10:11) There will be no bystanders then. There will only be those who are witnesses for the true God and those who are not. (Matthew 24:37-39; 2 Peter 2:5; Revelation 7:9-15) Will you be a witness for the true God? You should be, for “the true God is for us a God of saving acts; and to Jehovah the Sovereign Lord belong the ways out from death.”—Psalm 68:20.

Review Questions

- What challenge does the true God issue to false gods?
- By what dependable rule can we distinguish true worship from false worship?
- What fruitage shows the gods of this world to be as valueless as ancient ones?
- What fine fruitage must witnesses for the true God be producing, and who is manifesting it?
- Why is it urgent to take action now to abandon false worship?

Kingdom Proclaimers Report

Persistence in Their Divine Commission

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES take very seriously their divine commission to preach the good news of God's Kingdom. (1 Corinthians 9:16; Acts 20:26, 27) A couple in France felt the force of this commission to reach everyone with the good news. In their territory was a hostel that kept political refugees and young foreign workers. The couple explain: "We wondered how we could ever get inside unless invited in by someone that lived there. So we decided to contact people just outside and possibly get an invitation to visit them on the inside. A young man eagerly accepted the magazines and asked to be visited.

"We visited this young man, and a study was immediately started. Each time a friend of his was present, but the friend never said a word. When, at the

end of the second study, we asked if he too would like to learn more about God's Word, he replied: 'Why not?' Thus a second study was started. We invited them to the meetings from the start, and they have not missed one since. Their progress was very evident, especially at the hostel, where they immediately started talking about the things they were learning, resulting in a third study being started with a couple. One day the whole group was in the entrance, ready to leave for the meeting, when another friend decided to come along too. She was very enthusiastic and wanted her boyfriend to learn all about it. Both started studying.

"Up to then five studies were being conducted. Each was like a meeting! Everyone attended

everyone else's study, and new ones joined in too. They all talked about the truth, and as a result, a sixth study was started with another man, who also started attending meetings and witnessed to his girlfriend.

"Of course, all of this was a marvelous witness in the hostel. It was not easy for these young people to put on the new personality. They had to overcome smoking, alcoholism, violence, loose morals, and bad company. Satan saw to it that former friends tried to hinder their progress, enticing them to smoke or have noisy parties. One of the interested men was engaged to a girl who belonged to a cult. She tried to turn him away from the truth. However, she eventually started studying and since then has made good progress.

"According to the latest news," report the couple, "one of the young men went to prison for his stand on neutrality. In less than a year, six others were baptized, five of whom immediately entered the auxiliary pioneer service. Out of the whole group, six are now regular pioneers, with special-pioneer work as their goal."

How richly rewarded this couple were for their persistence in carrying out their divine commission to search for sheeplike ones! Jehovah certainly blessed their faithful efforts. While we may not have such outstanding experiences, we always want to carry out faithfully our divine commission to preach the good news of the Kingdom.—Matthew 24:14.



The couple in France along with the six regular pioneers

The Great World Powers of Bible History March to Their End!

CAN you imagine history written in advance? 'Impossible,' you say? Yet, there is a book that really did tell history in advance—hundreds, sometimes even thousands of years before the events occurred! That book is the Bible.

The Bible not only reported ancient events with accuracy but in a most amazing way it even foretold the major outline of world history as it would affect God's people, from the time of ancient Babylon, more than 2,500 years ago, down to and even beyond our present day.

Daniel, a prophet who lived in the sixth century before our Common Era, was given four separate revelations that dealt with the future of world history. Where did he get his information? Said Daniel: "There exists a God in the heavens who is a Revealer of secrets." (Daniel 2:28) Archaeologists, uncovering the remains left by ancient world powers, have found astounding proof of the truthfulness both of the history and of the prophecy found in the Bible.

Two of the great world powers of Biblical history, Egypt and Assyria, existed long before Daniel's time. Babylon was ruling in Daniel's day, and the names of the succeeding two world powers were revealed to the prophet. (Daniel 2:47, 48; 8:20, 21) Two others would follow these, bringing us up to the present time.

How Many?

According to the Bible, how many of such world powers would there be? The answer was given to the aged apostle John and shows where we are in the stream of time. An angel told John: "There are seven kings: five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet arrived."—Revelation 17:10.

What five world powers had already come and gone by John's day? Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. Which one still existed? Rome. And which

power had "not yet arrived"? The Anglo-American World Power of our day. These are the world powers with which God's people, ancient and modern, have been primarily concerned.

An especially important fact is this: There was to be a succession of only seven such world powers! A contemporaneous eighth power, which would include remnants of the seven, was foretold to exist for a short time during the days of the seventh. (Revelation 17:10, 11) This means that we are living during the time of the last of the great world powers ruled by man. There will be no more!

Soon now, the world powers will have had their day. Daniel prophesied that these human systems will be crushed and 'carried away by the wind.' (Daniel 2:35) What will replace them? Something far better! Daniel reports: "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. . . . It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite," forever. (Daniel 2:44) So nothing less than God's Kingdom will replace these human world powers. What a magnificent improvement in world rulership!

No doubt you know something about the world powers. But would further knowledge of their customs, their religion, and their relationship with God's people and Bible prophecy help you to understand more about mankind's history in the light of the Scriptures?

Yes, indeed. So we are pleased to publish, starting with this issue, a series of eight articles dealing with the world powers. These articles should help to convince you that the history related in the Bible is reliable and trustworthy. They should also strengthen your faith in the fact that the Bible's prophecies are faithful and true!

ANCIENT EGYPT

First of the Great World Powers

Mediterranean Sea



Carchemish •

Euphrates

EGYPT—ancient land of the Pharaohs and of the Nile—was one of the world's major civilizations. Its art adorns great museums. Its history is related in school textbooks. Its massive monuments awe tourists. Furthermore, many Biblical events either occurred in or involved this land. Egypt and its people are referred to more than 700 times in the Bible.

Yet, what do you really know about ancient Egypt? Learning more about it will help you to understand many things mentioned in the Bible.

In Egypt, archaeologists have found much that confirms the Bible record. For example, consider the account about Joseph. Names, titles, Joseph's position as a house manager, the position given him as second ruler in the land and as food administrator, the Egyptian burial practices, and even the practice of bakers' carrying baskets of bread on their heads—all of these have been found to conform to Egyptian customs of that time.—Genesis, chapters 39–47; 50:1–3.

The Land and Its People

Egypt depends on the Nile. That river's rich valley, averaging only about 12 miles in width from Aswān to Cairo, stretches northward like a narrow green ribbon across the parched African desert. In the past, its annual floods brought soil-enriching silt that made Egypt an exporter of food and a place of refuge in time of famine. (Genesis 12:10) Papyrus reeds, found along its banks, were made into the earliest paper.

Based on a map copyrighted by Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est. and Survey of Israel

The broad delta, where the Nile's waters fan out before flowing into the blue Mediterranean, is called Lower Egypt. Here, apparently, lay "the land of Goshen," where the Israelites lived during their long sojourn in Egypt.—Genesis 47:27.

Egyptian Religion

The ancient Egyptians believed that their Pharaoh was a god. This fact adds meaning to Pharaoh's disdainful question to Moses: "Who is Jehovah, so that I should obey his voice?" (Exodus 5:2) The Egyptians also had many other gods. The names of some 740 of these were found in a list discovered in the tomb of Thut-

mose III. The Egyptians worshiped triads of gods, or trinities, and one of the most popular of these was the triad of Osiris, Isis, and Horus.

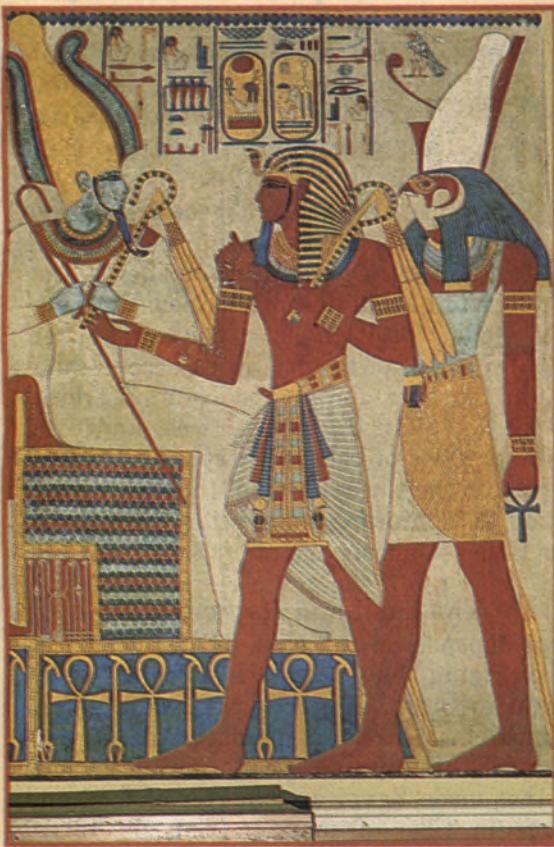
Many of Egypt's most prominent gods were depicted with human bodies and animal heads. The Egyptians represented Horus with a falcon's head and Thoth with the head of an ibis or an ape. Cats, jackals, crocodiles, baboons, and various birds were considered sacred because of their association with certain gods. The Apis bull, viewed as the incarnation of the god Osiris, was kept in a temple at Memphis, then given an elaborate funeral and even mummified at death. Famed Egyptian scarabs, worn like beads as protective charms, were representations of the dung beetle—thought to be a manifestation of the creator-god.

Despite a long stay in Egypt and close contact with the people of that land, the Israelites had only *one* God, Jehovah, and were to serve him alone. They were warned not to make any religious image—either of God himself or of a bird, beast, fish, or anything else. Their worship of a golden calf shortly after their exodus from Egypt may have resulted from Egyptian influence.—Exodus 32:1-28; Deuteronomy 4:15-20.

Belief in Immortality

The Egyptians were firm believers in immortality. Thus, the Egyptian rulers prepared elaborate tombs, laden with life's necessities and luxuries, hoping to secure eternal happiness in an afterlife. The pyramids are the most outstanding example of this practice.

Gold jewelry, clothing, furniture, wine, food, pottery, ivory boxes, and even little slabs for grinding eye paint were all carefully placed in Egyptian tombs. It was believed that these items could be used in a life beyond the grave. In earlier times,



Courtesy of the British Museum, London

Egyptian god depicted with a human body and a falcon's head



Courtesy of the Superintendence of the Museo Egizio, Turin

Section of "Book of the Dead" found inside an Egyptian coffin

slaves were killed and buried along with their masters, to serve them after death. A collection of spells known as the "Book of the Dead" has been found inside thousands of Egyptian coffins. It was hoped that these spells would help a dead person to overcome the various perils of the afterlife.

How different was the Israelites' view! They knew, as the Bible would later say, that "as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all." And when a man dies, "in that day his thoughts do perish."^{*} Their hope for future life was in the resurrection.—Ecclesiastes 9: 5, 10; Psalm 146:4; Job 14:13-15.

Who Lived When?

Egyptologists identify 31 "dynasties" of Egyptian kings and speak of the Old Kingdom (Dynasties 3-6), the Middle Kingdom (Dynasties 11, 12), and the New Kingdom (Dynasties 18-20). But this way of reckoning is far from

* *The Jewish Encyclopedia* says: "The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is . . . nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture."

accurate. It involves questionable and fragmentary writings and may even include several kings ruling in different regions at the same time, rather than a succession ruling one after the other.*

When Moses began writing the first books of the Bible, he followed what apparently was the Egyptians' own custom of referring to their king as "Pharaoh," without using a personal name. Thus, we do not know the name of the Pharaohs that Abraham and Joseph knew or

which one ruled at the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt. However, the title "Pharaoh" later began to be coupled with the king's own name, making it possible to link Biblical events with the Egyptian king list. Here are some of the Pharaohs of particular interest to a student of the Bible:

* For an interesting discussion of the problems associated with these lists, see the book *Aid to Bible Understanding*, pages 324-5, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



Courtesy of the Superintendence of the Museo Egizio, Turin

Egyptian coffin and cover for mummy



Courtesy of the Superintendence of the Museo Egizio, Turin

King Tutankhamen next to the seated god Amon

Akhenaton (of the so-called 18th Dynasty) was a fervent worshiper of the sun disk Aton. In 1887 a collection of some 377 clay tablets was found at Tel el-Amarna, about 200 miles south of Cairo. These interesting tablets were diplomatic correspondence received by Akhenaton and his father Amenhotep III. Included were letters from the rulers of Jerusalem, Megiddo, Hazor, Shechem, Lachish, Hebron, Gaza, and other city-states in Palestine. Perhaps written shortly before Israel entered Canaan, these letters reveal warring feuds and intrigue. They also show that each town had its own king, as the Bible book of Joshua indicates.

Tutankhamen, a son-in-law of Akhenaton, is the famed "King Tut" whose splendid golden tomb furnishings were uncovered by archaeologists and have been displayed in various museums. These furnishings are an

outstanding demonstration of the wealth of the Pharaohs. It was wealth such as this that Moses had earlier turned his back on when he "refused to be called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh, choosing to be ill-treated with the people of God rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin."

—Hebrews 11:24, 25.

Merneptah was of the "19th Dynasty." On a victory monument found in a temple at Thebes, this Pharaoh recorded that "Israel is laid waste, his seed is not." This is the only direct mention of Israel as a nation yet found in ancient Egyptian records. While evidently an idle boast, this claim seems to indicate that the Israelite conquest of Canaan had already occurred. Thus, that conquest of 1473 B.C.E. must have occurred between the time Akhenaton received the Tel el-Amarna letters and the days of Merneptah.

Shishak (Sheshonk I, "22nd Dynasty") is the first Pharaoh mentioned by name in the Bible. With a mighty force of chariots and horsemen, he invaded Judah, threatened Jerusalem, and "took the treasures of the house of Jehovah and the treasures of the king's house. Everything he took." (2 Chronicles 12:9) This event is confirmed by a relief on the southern wall of the temple of Amon at Karnak (ancient Thebes). It shows 156 manacled prisoners, each representing a captured city or village, including Megiddo, Shunem, and Gibeon. Among the places captured, Shishak even lists the "Field of Abram"—the earliest reference to Abraham in Egyptian records.

Other World Powers Arise

Eventually, Egypt was replaced by Assyria as dominant world power. But she remained a potent political force. Hoshea, the last king of the ten-tribe northern kingdom of Israel, conspired with King So of Egypt in an unsuccessful attempt to throw off the yoke of Assyria. (2 Kings 17:3, 4) Years later, during the reign of King

Hezekiah of Judah, King Tirhakah of Ethiopia (probably the Ethiopian ruler of Egypt, Pharaoh Taharqa) marched into Canaan and temporarily diverted Assyrian king Sennacherib's attack. (2 Kings 19:8-10) Sennacherib's own annals, found in Assyria, apparently refer to this when they say: "I personally captured alive . . . the chariooteers of the king of Ethiopia."—Oriental Institute Prism of Sennacherib, University of Chicago.

Jehovah's prophet Isaiah had foretold that Egypt would be delivered into "the hand of a hard master" and that a "strong" king would rule over the Egyptians. (Isaiah 19:4) The truthfulness of this prophecy is confirmed by an Assyrian document in which Sennacherib's son Esar-haddon boasts about his conquest of Egypt, saying: "Its king, Tirhakah, I wounded five times with arrowshots and ruled over his entire country."

Pharaoh Necho marched northward about 629 B.C.E. to intercept the armies of the upcoming third world power, Babylon. The Bible says that Josiah of Jerusalem unwisely tried to stop the Egyptian forces at Megiddo and was defeated and killed.*

* This was one of the decisive battles fought at Megiddo, which leads to its being used as a symbol of God's decisive final battle against rebellious human nations at Har-Magedon, or Armageddon.—Revelation 16:16.

(2 Chronicles 35:20-24) About four years later, in 625 B.C.E., Pharaoh Necho himself was defeated by the Babylonians at Carchemish. Both the Bible and the Babylonian Chronicles refer to this event, which gave the Babylonians mastery over western Asia.

In 525 B.C.E., Egypt came under the control of the fourth world power, Medo-Persia. Almost two centuries later, in 332 B.C.E., Alexander the Great came on the scene and brought Egypt under the fifth world power, Greece. Alexander founded the city of Alexandria in Egypt's Nile-delta area, where, about 280 B.C.E., the first translation of the Bible from Hebrew into Greek was begun. This translation, which became known as the *Septuagint*, was the Bible used by Jesus' followers in the Greek-speaking world.

In the time of Rome, the sixth world power, Jesus was brought to Egypt as a young child to save him from jealous Herod. (Matthew 2:13-15) Egyptians were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E. to hear the marvelous preaching of the Christian good news. And the eloquent first-century Christian Apollos came from there.—Acts 2:10; 18:24.

Yes, Egypt and the Egyptians have figured prominently in Bible history, and many archaeological discoveries confirm what the Scriptures say about this ancient land. Indeed, Egypt was so prominent that in some prophetic passages, it symbolizes the whole world under Satan's domination. (Ezekiel 31:2; Revelation 11:8) But ancient Egypt, despite its strength as a world power, was never able to thwart the fulfillment of Jehovah's purposes. And this was also true of the second world power of Bible history, Assyria, as we shall see in the next issue of the *Watchtower* magazine.

In Our Next Issue

- Is Honesty Out-Of-Date?
- "Do Not Let Your Hearts Be Troubled"
- Cruel Assyria—The Second Great World Power

Why You Should Be Interested

INTERESTED in what? The greatest change that will take place in the history of mankind! An entirely new government of God's making is about to take over the earthly scene. (Daniel 2:44) The takeover will affect every man, woman, and child—either for good or for bad. This remarkable change is to take place within the generation mentioned at Matthew 24:34. Thus, the message about that change requires the sincere and earnest interest of all people. Indeed, it would be wrong to say, 'I'm not interested.'

When Many Showed No Interest

Our modern day is not the first time that an important and urgent message was announced that should have aroused the interest of those who were invited to hear it. Noah's day was one such time. Because of man's wicked, immoral, and violent personality at that time, Jehovah God purposed to destroy mankind in a global flood. (Genesis 6: 5-7, 13) However, before acting to annihilate the ungodly, he arranged for Noah, a preacher of righteousness, to warn them of the coming Deluge and the course of action they needed to pursue to be preserved alive. Important as that message was, the people in general who heard

about it "took no note." (Matthew 24:39; Luke 17:26, 27; 2 Peter 2:5) They were apathetic, indifferent—just *not interested!* Because of this, they lost everything.

Much the same situation existed in the days of the inhabitants of the notoriously immoral cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Although warned of their impending destruction because of their gross badness, they did not listen. They too were not interested in anyone who would disturb their routine of life. The man Lot was the only exception.—Genesis 18:20-30; 19:1-29; Luke 17:28-30.

Thus, the message was not popular among the inhabitants of these cities. Perhaps they were more concerned about what their neighbors would think of them if they showed interest. Or perhaps they feared that they would have to make changes in their lives that they were unwilling to make. Apparently, they enjoyed their licentious lifestyle. (Jude 7) So up to the day when their destruction did come, they suspected nothing and did not grasp what was about to happen.

Those Not Interested in Jesus' Day

When the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was on earth, he sent out his followers to



announce the good news about God's heavenly government. (Matthew 10:7) In fact, he instructed his disciples in the manner in which they should present this unusual and important message at each home and what steps to take where householders failed to show genuine interest. Listen to him as he proceeds to train his disciples: "When you are entering into the house, greet the household; and if the house is deserving, let the peace you wish it come upon it; but if it is not deserving, let the peace from you return upon you. Wherever anyone does not take you in or listen to your words, on going out of that house or that city shake the dust off your feet."—Matthew 10:12-14.

Note that Jesus instructed his disciples to "shake the dust off [their] feet" when they left a home or a town where there was a complete lack of interest in Jehovah's Kingdom. What did he mean by this advice? Shaking the dust off one's feet indicated a disclaiming of responsibility or accountability for the consequences that a householder would suffer because of lack of interest in God's message. It implied that Jesus' followers were peacefully departing and leaving that house or city to the consequences that would eventually come from God.

Show Interest—It Means Your Life!

It is of interest to note that Jesus Christ compared the responses of our day to those of the days of Noah and of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-30) Immorality and violence were prevalent both in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot. Indeed, the righteous man Lot was tormented and distressed when observing the lawlessness and the indulgence in loose conduct by the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.—2 Peter 2:6-8.

Yet, when Jesus refers to Noah's day and to Lot's day, he focuses our attention, not on the immorality and violence of those times, but, rather, on matters of daily concern—eating, drinking, marrying, being given in marriage, buying, selling, building, and planting. He indicated that many would not respond to the message of the good news of God's Kingdom but would be preoccupied with the everyday affairs of life and thus show no interest in what Jehovah purposes to do. The message is one of life-or-death importance. Failure to listen would be costly. To take no note or show *no interest* is a serious sin.—Compare Matthew 6:31, 32.

Just how serious? Jesus went on to explain: "On the Judgment Day God will show more mercy to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah than to the people of that town" who did not listen or show interest. (Matthew 10:15, *Today's English Version*) If a person does show interest, listens, and believes the message, even though he may be immoral and violent, he can change his personality and find favor in Jehovah's eyes to qualify as a subject of the Kingdom, even as the early Christians in Corinth did.—1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

In all his conversations with his disciples, Jesus Christ urged them to listen, to pay attention, to *show interest* in the important message of the Kingdom of God. To rouse the attention of those to whom he spoke, he admonished: "Pay attention to how you listen." "Let him that has ears to listen listen." "Listen to me, all of you, and get the meaning." "Listen and get the sense of it."—Luke 8:18; Mark 4:9; 7:14; Matthew 15:10.

Therefore, the next time one of Jehovah's Witnesses calls at your home, it will be to your benefit to say: 'Come in, I'm interested.'

"A Word Spoken at the Right Time"

"As apples of gold in silver carvings is a word spoken at the right time for it," says Proverbs 25:11. Our thoughtful words and kind deeds can gently nudge a righteous person's heart along the pathway of Jehovah's approval. Something that we may have said or done, even years ago, may still be fondly remembered by another person. For example, while visiting a congregation, a circuit overseer and his wife were the guests of a newly baptized sister. The circuit overseer's wife sent a thank-you note in appreciation for the hospitality shown. More than seven years later, she received the following letter:

"I felt I just had to write and tell you of the help you have been to me over the years without your really being aware of it. I had you and Jim over for just a little lunch, and you sent me a very nice thank-you card. It was very warm, but it was the scripture that reached my heart, and I never forgot it. This was in 1976. I was the only one in my family that really was interested in the truth.

I studied with my girls and tried to be a good wife. But at times I wanted out, out of the truth, out of the responsibilities—just out. But that scripture you wrote would tug at my heart, and I would say to myself, 'How selfish of me,' and keep going.

"No single thing in all those eight years had such an effect on me, and I wanted to tell you about it. Besides the scripture, I thought how nice it was that someone as busy as you would take the time to thank me for doing something that I should be doing.

"Oh, yes—the scripture—2 John 8.

"Sandra"

Today, Sandra's husband is baptized and joins her as a publisher of the good news. One of their two daughters is a regular pioneer, and the other daughter has been auxiliary pioneering since her recent graduation from high school.

Finally, what does 2 John 8 say? "Look out for yourselves, that you do not lose the things we have worked to produce, but that you may obtain a full reward."

Questions From Readers

■ Why do so few of Jehovah's Witnesses partake of the bread and the wine at the yearly celebration of the Lord's Evening Meal?

This is because Jehovah's Witnesses, in contrast to the churches of Christendom, accept the Bible's teaching that a small number of humans will gain heavenly life and the rest of God's faithful servants will be rewarded with everlasting life on earth.

The churches have long taught that heaven is the reward for all who please God; the rest go to a hellfire. The Bible says otherwise. The Scriptures clearly show that only some humans, such as the apostles, will reign with Christ in heaven. Jesus said that these are a "little flock." The Bible says that they number 144,000. (Luke 12:32; Revelation 14:3, 4) Many who served Jehovah faithfully

and had his approval died before Jesus opened up the way to heavenly life. (Matthew 11:11; Hebrews 10:19-21) And after the selection of the "little flock," millions of others have become true Christians. For all these loyal ones not of the "little flock," the Bible holds out the prospect of endless life in a restored earthly paradise. (Psalm 37:20, 29; Revelation 21:4, 5) But why do such ones not also partake of the bread and the wine? Jesus indicated that partaking of the emblems during the Lord's Evening Meal was only for those called to life in heaven, those who are in the new covenant.

Of course, faith in Jesus' sacri-

fice is vital for all who would gain God's forgiveness and everlasting life, whether life in heaven or life on a paradise earth. Christ showed this at John 6:51-54: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever; . . . the bread that I shall give is my flesh in behalf of the life of the world [of redeemable mankind]. . . He that feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life."

Yet, it is noteworthy that Jesus addressed those words to more than his disciples. A day after he had miraculously fed thousands, the crowd came to Jesus in the area of Capernaum. This crowd engaged him in the conversation that included his words at John 6:51-54. So Jesus was not

speaking primarily to disciples when he said that he was the figurative "bread that came down from heaven" that can provide more enduring life prospects than the manna that had been eaten in the wilderness.—John 6:24-34.

In considering that ancient experience in the wilderness, recall who had come out of Egypt into the wilderness. It was 'the sons of Israel numbering six hundred thousand able-bodied men on foot, besides little ones, *and a vast mixed company.*' (Exodus 12:37, 38; 16:13-18) This "mixed company" included Egyptians who were married to Israelites and other Egyptians who had thrown in their lot with Israel. Both the Israelites and the "mixed company" needed manna to stay alive. Did the "mixed company," though, have the same prospects as the Israelites? No, they did not. Even though they could worship among the Israelites and could hope to enter the Promised Land, they could never be kings or priests under the Law covenant. So eating the literal manna in the wilderness did not give everyone the same prospects.

This is a distinction to remember as you reflect on what Jesus said to his disciples about a year after he spoke the words at John 6:51-54. On this later occasion, Jesus was describing a new practice involving actual bread and wine that was to symbolize his flesh and blood. While he was instituting the celebration of the Lord's Evening Meal, Jesus said to his close followers: "This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood, which is to be poured out in your behalf." To the same small group of apostles, he added: "You are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials; and I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a



covenant with me, for a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel."—Luke 22:20, 28-30.

Observe from these later words that the ones who were to eat the actual bread and drink the actual wine as emblems symbolizing Jesus' body and blood were the disciples in "the new covenant." Such ones would also be in another covenant, one that Jesus makes with them so that they could share rulership 'in his kingdom.' Clearly, Jesus was here referring to those who would be 'made a kingdom and priests to our God, to rule as kings over the earth.' (Revelation 5:10) In the first century, God began selecting the 144,000 who would share in the heavenly Kingdom. Christians in Corinth were of that group, for they were described as ones who had "been sanctified in union with Christ Jesus, called to be holy ones." (1 Corinthians 1:2; compare Romans 1:7; 8:15-17.) Such "holy ones" were to share in the Lord's Evening Meal, partaking with appreciation of the emblematic bread and also the wine meaning "the new covenant by virtue of [his] blood."—1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

Today there remains alive on earth only a small remnant of those chosen by God for heaven-

ly life. Only such ones who are in "the new covenant" are authorized to partake of the emblems, the bread and the wine, during the annual Memorial celebration.

Of course, all true Christians today who look forward to living forever on earth under Kingdom rulership know that this is possible by exercising faith in Jesus' sacrifice. As Jesus told the crowd, he is "the living bread that came down from heaven." (John 6:51) Yet, that does not mean that those with the earthly hope ought to partake of the literal Memorial emblems, for they are not in "the new covenant," nor are they in the covenant with Jesus to be 'in his kingdom, sitting on thrones.'

Consequently, this large group with earthly hopes does not partake of the emblems, the bread and the wine. But this in no way reflects a lack of faith in or appreciation for Jesus' body and blood. In fact, because of their deep appreciation for his sacrifice and the delightful earthly prospect before them, they most definitely are present each year as respectful observers at the celebration of the Lord's Evening Meal. In this way, they reflect their own faith and give happy evidence that the remnant of the "little flock" and the multitudinous "other sheep" are in warm unity.—John 10:16.

Knowledge That Brings Inner Peace

A young woman from Ohio, U.S.A., writes: "I was raised a Catholic, attended a Methodist church while in college, dated a Jewish boy, then married a Lutheran. I was never happy with any of these religions that kept 'changing with the times.' I began reading the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, hesitantly at first and admiring the beautiful illustrations. I became engrossed and fervently read the last half in four hours."

The woman now says she thanks God "for my new knowledge and inner peace."

