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THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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STUDY ARTICLES FOR THE
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PURPOSE OF STUDY ARTICLES

STUDY ARTICLES 1, 2 PAGES 3-11

These articles examine what it means to dedicate oneself to Jehovah and why one needs to take that step. We will also consider why we can be confident that we will be able to do what Jehovah expects of us. Furthermore, we will learn what blessings are enjoyed by all those who belong to Jehovah.

STUDY ARTICLE 3 PAGES 12-16

This article examines five important areas in which each of us should strive to imitate Christ. By doing that, we will prove to be Christ's real followers, and we will be able to help sheeplike ones to recognize the true Christian congregation.

STUDY ARTICLES 4, 5 PAGES 24-32

The fourth article considers why human rulership independent from God has been a disaster and how it has served to highlight the excellence of Jehovah's way of ruling. The fifth article discusses how we can demonstrate that we have accepted Jehovah's way of ruling.

WHY DEDICATE YOURSELF TO JEHOVAH?

*“This night there stood near me
an angel of the God to whom I belong.”—ACTS 27:23.*

“ON THE basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will?” This is one of the two questions answered by baptismal candidates at the conclusion of a baptism talk. Why do Christians need to dedicate themselves to Jehovah? How does being dedicated to God benefit us? Why can one not worship God acceptably without being dedicated to him? To un-

1. What steps have those presenting themselves for baptism already taken, and what questions does this raise?

derstand the answers, we first need to consider what dedication is.

² What does dedicating oneself to God mean? Note how the apostle Paul described his relationship with God. Before many others aboard an imperiled ship, he called Jehovah “the God to whom I belong.” (*Read Acts 27:22-24.*) All true Christians belong to Jehovah. In contrast, the world in general is “lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) Christians come to belong to Jehovah when they make an acceptable dedication of themselves to him in prayer. Such a dedication is a personal vow. It is followed by water baptism.

³ Jesus provided an example for us when he made a personal choice to do God’s will. Because he had been born into the dedicated nation of Israel, he was already dedicated to God. Still, at his baptism he did something more than what was required under the Law. God’s Word indicates that he said: “Look! I am come . . . to do your will, O God.” (Heb. 10:7; Luke 3:21) So Jesus’ baptism symbolized his presentation of himself to God for the doing of his Father’s will. His followers imitate his example when they offer themselves for baptism. However, in their case,

2. What does it mean to dedicate oneself to Jehovah?

3. What did Jesus’ baptism symbolize, and how can his followers imitate his example?



water baptism is a public demonstration that they have made a personal dedication to God in prayer.

How Dedication Benefits Us

⁴ Christian dedication is a serious matter. It is more than a mere commitment. How, though, does making a dedication benefit us? By way of comparison, let us consider how making a commitment in human relationships brings benefits. One example is friendship. To enjoy the privilege of having a friend, you have to accept the responsibility of being a friend. That involves a commitment—you feel an obligation to care about your friend. One of the most outstanding friendships described in the Bible is that of David and Jonathan. They even made a covenant of friendship with each other. (*Read 1 Samuel 17:57; 18:1, 3.*) Although friendships with that level of commitment are rare, most friendships flourish when companions are committed, or feel some obligation, to each other.—Prov. 17:17; 18:24.

⁵ The Law that God gave to Israel describes another relationship in which people benefited by making a commitment. If a slave wanted the security of belonging permanently to a good master, he could enter a permanent and binding agreement with him. The Law states: “If the slave should insistently say, ‘I really love my master, my wife and my sons; I do not want to go out as one set free,’ then his master must bring him near to the true God and must bring him up against the door or the doorpost; and his master must pierce his ear through with an awl, and he must be his slave to time indefinite.”—Ex. 21:5, 6.

4. What does the friendship between David and Jonathan tell us about commitment?

5. How could a slave permanently benefit from belonging to a good master?

⁶ Marriage is a relationship that requires a high level of commitment. It is a commitment, not to a contract, but to a person. Two people who merely live together without getting married can never enjoy real security; neither can their children. But partners who are committed to each other in honorable marriage have an impelling Scriptural reason for striving to resolve their difficulties with love when problems arise.—Matt. 19:5, 6; 1 Cor. 13:7, 8; Heb. 13:4.

⁷ In Bible times, people benefited from having binding contracts in business and employment. (Matt. 20:1, 2, 8) Today, the same holds true. For example, we benefit from having a binding written agreement, or written contract, before we begin a business venture or start working as an employee in a company. Hence, if commitment enhances relationships such as friendship, marriage, and employment, how much more will making an unreserved dedication benefit you in your relationship with Jehovah! Let us now consider how people in the past have benefited from being dedicated to Jehovah God and how this was far more than just a commitment.

How Dedication to God Benefited Israel

⁸ The nation of Israel as a whole became dedicated to Jehovah when they made a vow to God. Jehovah had them assemble near Mount Sinai, and he said to them: “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 people answered unanimously: “All that Jehovah has spoken we are

6, 7. (a) How does commitment benefit people? (b) What does that indicate about our relationship with Jehovah?

8. What did being dedicated to God mean for Israel?

willing to do.” (Ex. 19:4-8) Being dedicated meant much more for Israel than being committed to do something. It meant that they belonged to Jehovah, and Jehovah treated them as his “special property.”

⁹ The Israelites benefited from belonging to Jehovah. He was loyal and cared for them as a loving parent cares for a child. To Israel, God said: “Can a wife forget her suckling so that she should not pity the son of her belly? Even these women can forget, yet I myself shall not forget you.” (Isa. 49:15) Jehovah gave them the guidance of the Law, the encouragement of the prophets, and the protection of the angels. A psalmist wrote: “He is telling his word to Jacob, his regulations and his judicial decisions to Israel. He has not done that way to any other nation.” (Ps. 147:19, 20; *read Psalm 34:7, 19; 48:14.*) As Jehovah cared for the nation that belonged to him in the past, so he will care for those who dedicate themselves to him today.

Why We Should Dedicate Ourselves to God

¹⁰ While contemplating Christian dedication and baptism, some may wonder, ‘Why can I not worship God without dedicating myself to him?’ The reason becomes clear when we consider the reality of our present standing before God. Remember, because of Adam’s sin, we are all born outside God’s family. (Rom. 3:23; 5:12) Dedicating ourselves to God is a vital requirement for being accepted into his universal family. Let us see why.

¹¹ None of us have a natural father who could pass on to us life as it should be—perfect life. (1 Tim. 6:19) We were not born as sons of God because when the first human

pair sinned, the human race was separated from its loving Father and Creator. (Compare Deuteronomy 32:5.) From that time onward, the world of mankind has lived outside Jehovah’s universal family, alienated from God.

¹² Nevertheless, as individuals we can request that God accept us into his family of approved servants.* How is that possible for sinners such as we are? The apostle Paul wrote: “When we were enemies, we became reconciled to God through the death of his Son.” (Rom. 5:10) At baptism we make a request to God for a good conscience so as to be acceptable to him. (1 Pet. 3:21) Prior to baptism, however, there are steps we must take. We must get to know God, learn to trust him, repent, and change our ways. (John 17:3; Acts 3:19; Heb. 11:6) And something else remains to be done before we can be accepted into God’s family. What is that?

¹³ Before someone who is alienated from God can become a member of God’s family of approved servants, he first needs to make a solemn promise to Jehovah. To understand why, imagine a respectable father who shows kind interest in an orphaned youth and wishes to adopt him as a member of his own family. The father is known to be a good man. Still, before accepting the youth as his son, the man wants the boy to make a promise. So the man says, “Before I accept you as a son, I need to know that you will love and respect me as your father.” Only if the youth is

* Jesus’ “other sheep” will not become sons of God until the end of the thousand years. However, since they have dedicated themselves to God, they can properly address God as “Father” and can rightly be considered members of Jehovah’s family of worshippers.—John 10:16; Isa. 64:8; Matt. 6:9; Rev. 20:5.

12. (a) How can imperfect humans become members of God’s family? (b) What steps must we take prior to baptism?

13. Why is it fitting for a person to make a vow of dedication to God in order to be part of His family of approved worshippers?

9. How did Israel benefit from being dedicated to God?

10, 11. Are we born into God’s universal family? Explain.

willing to make a solemn promise will the man admit him into his family. Is that not reasonable? Similarly, Jehovah accepts into his family only those who are willing to make a vow of dedication to him. The Bible says: “Offer your very selves to him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for his acceptance.”—Rom. 12:1, *The New English Bible*.

An Act of Love and Faith

¹⁴ Making a vow of dedication to God is an expression of our heartfelt love for Jehovah. In some ways it is similar to a wedding vow. A Christian bridegroom expresses his love by vowing to be loyal to his bride, come what may. It is a pledge to a person rather than merely a promise to do something. A Christian bridegroom understands that he could not have the privilege of living with his bride if he would not make a marriage vow. In a similar way, we cannot fully enjoy the benefits of being a member of Jehovah’s family without making a vow of dedication. So we dedicate ourselves to God because, in spite of our imperfection, we desire to belong to him and are resolved to be loyal to him, come what may.—Matt. 22:37.

¹⁵ When we dedicate ourselves to God, we perform an act of faith. Why is that so? Our faith in Jehovah makes us confident that drawing close to God is good for us. (Ps. 73:28) We know that it will not always be easy to

14. In what way is dedication an expression of love?
15. How is dedication an act of faith?

How Would You Answer?

- What does dedicating oneself to God mean?
- How does being dedicated to God benefit us?
- Why do Christians need to be dedicated to Jehovah?



Living in harmony with our dedication leads to our lasting happiness

walk with God while living among “a crooked and twisted generation,” but we trust in God’s promise to support us in our efforts. (Phil. 2:15; 4:13) We know that we are imperfect, but we are confident that Jehovah will deal mercifully with us even when we make mistakes. (*Read Psalm 103:13, 14; Romans 7:21-25.*) We have faith that Jehovah will reward our resolve to keep our integrity.—Job 27:5.

Dedication to God Leads to Happiness

¹⁶ Being dedicated to Jehovah results in happiness because it involves the giving of ourselves. Jesus stated a basic truth when he said: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” (Acts 20:35) Jesus fully experienced the happiness of giving during his earthly ministry. When necessary, he went without rest, food, and comfort so that he could help others to find the road to life. (John 4:34) Jesus found delight in making his Father’s heart rejoice. Jesus said: “I always do the things pleasing to him.”—John 8:29; Prov. 27:11.

¹⁷ Thus, Jesus pointed his followers toward a satisfying way of life when he said: “If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown

16, 17. Why does making a dedication to Jehovah lead to happiness?

himself.” (Matt. 16:24) Doing so draws us closer to Jehovah. Could we place ourselves in the hands of anyone else who could care for us more lovingly?

¹⁸ Dedicating ourselves to Jehovah and thereafter living in harmony with that dedication by doing his will brings more happiness than being dedicated to anything or anyone else. For example, many people devote their life to the pursuit of material wealth without attaining true happiness and genuine satisfaction. However, those who dedicate themselves to Jehovah find long-lasting happiness. (Matt. 6:24) The honor of

18. Why does living in harmony with our dedication to Jehovah bring more happiness than being dedicated to anything or anyone else?

being “God’s fellow workers” makes them happy, yet their dedication is not to a work but to our appreciative God. (1 Cor. 3:9) No one could be more appreciative of their self-sacrifice than he is. He will even restore his loyal ones to their youth so that they can benefit from his care forever.—Job 33:25; *read Hebrews 6:10.*

¹⁹ Dedicating your life to Jehovah brings you into a close relationship with him. The Bible says: “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.” (Jas. 4:8; Ps. 25:14) In the following article, we will consider why we can be confident about making the choice to belong to Jehovah.

19. What privilege is enjoyed by those who are dedicated to Jehovah?

BELONGING TO JEHOVAH —AN UNDESERVED KINDNESS

“We belong to Jehovah.”—ROM. 14:8.

WHAT a precious privilege was offered to the nation of Israel when Jehovah said to them: “You will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples.” (Ex. 19:5) Today, members of the Christian congregation also have the honor of belonging to Jehovah. (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 7:9, 14, 15) It is a privilege that can benefit us forever.

² Besides being a privilege, belonging to Jehovah is also a responsibility. Some may wonder: ‘Will I be able to do what Jehovah expects of me? If I ever fall into sin, will he cast me off? Will belonging to Jehovah rob me of freedom?’ Such concerns are wor-

thy of consideration. First, though, another question deserves careful thought: What are the benefits of belonging to Jehovah?

Belonging to Jehovah Leads to Happiness

³ Do people who belong to Jehovah benefit from their situation? Consider the case of Rahab, a prostitute living in ancient Jericho. She had doubtless been raised to practice the depraved worship of the gods of Canaan. Yet, when she heard about the victories that Jehovah had given to Israel, she realized that Jehovah is the true God. So she risked her

1, 2. (a) What privilege do we have? (b) What questions will we consider?

3. How did Rahab’s decision to serve Jehovah benefit her?

***Ask others how they have benefited
from belonging to Jehovah***

life to protect God's chosen people and thus placed her future in their hands. The Bible says: "Was not also Rahab the harlot declared righteous by works, after she had received the messengers hospitably and sent them out by another way?" (Jas. 2:25) Imagine the benefits that came to her when she became a part of God's clean people, a people educated by God's Law in the ways of love and justice. How happy she must have been that she left behind her previous way of life! She married an Israelite and raised her son, Boaz, to be an outstanding man of God.—Josh. 6:25; Ruth 2:4-12; Matt. 1:5, 6.

⁴ Ruth of Moab also decided to serve Jehovah. As a girl, she had probably worshipped Chemosh and the other gods of Moab, but she came to know the true God, Jehovah, and she married an Israelite who had come to take refuge in her land. (*Read Ruth 1:1-6.*) Later, as Ruth and her sister-in-law, Orpah, started out with their mother-in-law, Naomi, for Bethlehem, Naomi urged the two young women to return home. It would not be easy for them to settle in Israel. Orpah indeed "returned to her people and her gods," but Ruth did not. She acted on her faith and knew to whom she wanted to belong. She told Naomi: "Do not plead with me to abandon you, to turn back from accompanying you; for where you go I shall go, and where you spend the night I shall spend the night. Your people will be my people, and your God my God." (Ruth 1:15, 16) Because of her choice to serve Jehovah, Ruth benefited from God's Law, which made special provi-

4. How did Ruth benefit from her decision to serve Jehovah?



sion for widows and for the poor and landless. Under Jehovah's wings, she found happiness, protection, and security.

⁵ You may know some individuals who after dedicating themselves to Jehovah have been serving him faithfully for decades. Ask them how they have benefited from serving him. Though no one is without problems, the evidence overwhelmingly supports the words of the psalmist: "Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah!"—Ps. 144:15.

Jehovah's Reasonable Expectations

⁶ You may have wondered if you will be able to do what Jehovah expects of you. It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the prospect of being a servant of God, living by his law, and speaking in his name. For example, Moses felt inadequate when he was sent to speak to the Israelites and to the king of Egypt. But God was not unreasonable in what he expected of Moses. Jehovah 'taught him what to do.' (*Read Exodus 3:11; 4:1, 10, 13-15.*)

5. What have you observed about people who faithfully serve Jehovah?

6. Why should we not fear being unable to do what Jehovah expects of us?

Since Moses accepted the help offered, he experienced the joy of accomplishing God's will. Jehovah is just as reasonable in what he expects of us. He understands our imperfect nature, and he wants to help us. (Ps. 103:14) Serving God as a follower of Jesus is refreshing rather than overwhelming because such a life course benefits others and makes Jehovah's heart glad. Jesus said: "Come to me, . . . and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart."—Matt. 11:28, 29.

⁷ Jehovah will always provide the encouragement we need, as long as we rely on him for strength. For example, Jeremiah was evidently not outspoken by nature. Thus, when Jehovah assigned him to be His prophet, Jeremiah said: "Alas, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah! Here I actually do not know how to speak, for I am but a boy." Later, he even said: "I shall speak no more in his name." (Jer. 1:6; 20:9) Yet, with Jehovah's encouragement, Jeremiah was able to preach an unpopular message for 40 years. Jehovah repeatedly reassured him with the words: "I am with you, to save you and to deliver you." —Jer. 1:8, 19; 15:20.

⁸ Just as Jehovah strengthened Moses and Jeremiah, he can help us to do what he expects of Christians today. The key factor is to rely on God. The Bible says: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." (Prov. 3:5, 6) We reveal that we trust in Jehovah when we avail ourselves of the help he provides through his Word and through the congregation. If we allow Jehovah to guide our steps in life,

7. Why can you be confident that Jehovah will help you to do what he expects of you?

8. How do we reveal that we trust in Jehovah?

nothing will prevent us from being faithful to him.

Jehovah Cares for His People as Individuals

⁹ While contemplating their decision to dedicate themselves to Jehovah, some may have wondered about the danger of sinning, becoming unworthy, and being rejected by Jehovah. Happily, Jehovah provides us with all the protection we need to safeguard our precious relationship with him. Let us see how that is expressed in the 91st Psalm.

¹⁰ That psalm begins: "Anyone dwelling in the secret place of the Most High will procure himself lodging under the very shadow of the Almighty One. I will say to Jehovah: 'You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God, in whom I will trust.' For he himself will deliver you from the trap of the bird-catcher." (Ps. 91:1-3) Notice that God promises to protect those who love him and trust in him. (*Read Psalm 91:9, 14.*) What sort of protection did he mean? Well, Jehovah protected some of his ancient servants physically—in some cases to preserve the genealogical line leading to the promised Messiah. However, many other faithful men were imprisoned, tortured, and killed in devilish attempts to turn them away from faithfulness to God. (Heb. 11:34-39) They found the needed courage to endure because Jehovah protected them spiritually from the danger of breaking their integrity. Therefore, the 91st Psalm can be understood as a promise of spiritual protection.

¹¹ "The secret place of the Most High," mentioned by the psalmist, is thus a figurative place of spiritual protection. In it, those who lodge with God as his guests are safe

9, 10. What sort of protection does the 91st Psalm promise?

11. What is "the secret place of the Most High," and whom does God protect in it?

What are some ways in which Jehovah provides protection?

from anything and anyone that threatens their faith and their love for God. (Ps. 15:1, 2; 121:5) It is a secret place because unbelievers cannot discern it. Here, Jehovah protects people who say, in effect: ‘You are my God in whom I will trust.’ If we remain in this place of refuge, we need not worry unduly about losing God’s favor by falling into a trap of Satan, “the bird-catcher.”

¹² What dangers threaten our precious relationship with God? The psalmist mentions several dangers, among them “the pestilence that walks in the gloom, . . . [and] the destruction that despoils at midday.” (Ps. 91:5, 6) “The bird-catcher” has trapped many with a selfish desire for independence. (2 Cor. 11:3) He catches others by promoting greed, pride, and materialism. Still others he misleads by such philosophies as patriotism, evolution, and false religion. (Col. 2:8) And many have been lured into the trap of illicit sex relations. Such spiritually harmful plagues have caused millions to lose their love for God. —*Read Psalm 91:7-10; Matt. 24:12.*

Protecting Your Love for God

¹³ How does Jehovah protect his people from these spiritual dangers? The psalm says: “He will give his own angels a command concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.” (Ps. 91:11) Heavenly angels guide and protect us so that we can preach the good news. (Rev. 14:6) In addition to the angels, Christian elders, by holding firmly to



the Scriptures in their teaching, protect us from being deceived by false reasoning. They can provide individual help to any who are struggling to overcome worldly attitudes. (Titus 1:9; 1 Pet. 5:2) Also, “the faithful and discreet slave” provides spiritual food to protect us against the teaching of evolution, the enticement of immoral desires, the pursuit of riches and prominence, and numerous other harmful desires and influences. (Matt. 24:45) What has helped you to resist some of those dangers?

¹⁴ What must we do to remain in God’s “secret place” of protection? Just as we constantly have to protect ourselves from physical dangers, such as accidents, criminals, or infections, so we must act continuously to protect ourselves from spiritual dangers. Hence, we should regularly take advantage of the guidance that Jehovah provides for us in our publications and at congregation meetings and assemblies. We seek the advice of the elders. And do we not benefit from the variety of qualities displayed by our Christian brothers and sisters? Indeed, our

14. How can we take advantage of the protection God provides?

12. What dangers threaten our relationship with God?

13. How does Jehovah protect us from dangers that threaten our spiritual welfare?

association with the congregation helps us to become wise.—Prov. 13:20; read 1 Peter 4:10.

¹⁵ We have no reason to doubt that Jehovah can protect us from anything that could cause us to lose his approval. (Rom. 8:38, 39) He has protected the congregation from powerful religious and political enemies whose aim has usually been, not to kill us, but to separate us from our holy God. Jehovah's promise has proved true: "Any weapon whatever that will be formed against you will have no success."—Isa. 54:17.

Who Gives Us Freedom?

¹⁶ Will belonging to Jehovah rob us of freedom? On the contrary, belonging to the world would rob us of freedom. The world is alienated from Jehovah and ruled by a cruel god who enslaves people. (John 14:30) For example, Satan's system of things uses economic pressure to rob people of their freedom. (Compare Revelation 13:16, 17.) Sin also has a deceptive power to enslave people. (John 8:34; Heb. 3:13) So even though unbelievers may promise freedom when they promote a way of life that is at odds with Jehovah's teachings, any who listen to them will quickly find themselves enslaved to a sinful and degrading lifestyle.—Rom. 1:24-32.

¹⁷ On the other hand, Jehovah will set us free from everything that can harm us if we entrust ourselves to him. In some ways, our situation is like that of a person who puts his life into the hands of a skilled surgeon who can set him free from a life-threatening condition. We all have a life-threatening condition—an inheritance of sin. Only if we en-

15. Why can you be confident that Jehovah can protect you from anything that could cause you to lose his approval?

16. Why can the world not offer us freedom?

17. What freedom does Jehovah offer us?

trust ourselves to Jehovah, on the basis of Christ's sacrifice, can we hope to escape the effects of sin and live forever. (John 3:36) Just as our confidence in a surgeon may grow as we learn of his reputation, so our trust in Jehovah will grow as we continue to learn about him. Hence, we continue to study God's Word carefully because that will help us to love him in a way that will dispel any fear of belonging to him.—1 John 4:18.

¹⁸ Jehovah grants freedom of choice to all people. His Word says: "You must *choose* life in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring, by loving Jehovah your God." (Deut. 30:19, 20) He wants us to express our love for him by freely choosing to serve him. Rather than robbing us of freedom, belonging to the God we love will surely make and keep us happy.

¹⁹ As sinners, we do not deserve to belong to a perfect God. Only God's undeserved kindness makes it possible. (2 Tim. 1:9) Hence, Paul wrote: "Both if we live, we live to Jehovah, and if we die, we die to Jehovah. Therefore both if we live and if we die, we belong to Jehovah." (Rom. 14:8) We will surely never regret choosing to belong to Jehovah.

18. What will be the result for those who belong to Jehovah?

19. Why is belonging to Jehovah an undeserved kindness?

How Would You Answer?

- What are the benefits of belonging to Jehovah?
- Why are we able to do what God expects of us?
- How does Jehovah provide protection for his servants?

PROVE TO BE A REAL FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

“Every good tree produces fine fruit, but every rotten tree produces worthless fruit.”—MATT. 7:17.

JESUS said that those falsely professing to serve him would be distinguished from his true followers by their fruits—their teachings and their conduct. (Matt. 7:15-17, 20) Indeed, people are inevitably influenced by what they take into their mind and heart. (Matt. 15:18, 19) Those who are fed falsehoods produce “worthless fruit,” whereas those who are taught spiritual truth produce “fine fruit.”

² The two kinds of fruits have become clearly manifest during this time of the end. (Read *Daniel 12:3, 10.*) False Christians have a distorted view of God and often a hypocritical form of godly devotion, whereas those having spiritual insight worship God “with spirit and truth.” (John 4:24; 2 Tim. 3:1-5) They strive to display Christlike qualities. But what about us personally? As you consider the following five identifying marks of true Christianity, ask yourself: ‘Do my conduct and teachings clearly harmonize with God’s Word? Do I beautify the truth in the eyes of those searching for it?’

Live by God’s Word

³ “Not everyone saying to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of the heavens,” said Jesus, “but the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will.” (Matt. 7:21) Yes, it is not the *professing* of

1, 2. How are Christ’s true followers set apart from the false, especially during this time of the end?

3. What pleases Jehovah, and what does this involve for true Christians?

Christianity that pleases Jehovah but the *practicing* of it. For Christ’s true followers, that involves their whole way of life, including their attitude toward money, secular work, entertainment, worldly customs and celebrations, and marriage and other relationships with fellow humans. False Christians, however, adopt the thinking and ways of the world, which have become increasingly ungodly during these last days.—Ps. 92:7.

⁴ Accordingly, the prophet Malachi wrote: “You people will again certainly see the distinction between a righteous one and a wicked one, between one serving God and one who has not served him.” (Mal. 3:18) As you reflect on those words, ask yourself: ‘Do I blend in with the world, or do I stand out as different? Do I always strive to fit in with my secular associates, whether at school or at work, or do I remain firm for Bible principles, even speaking up when appropriate?’ (Read *1 Peter 3:16.*) Of course, we do not want to appear self-righteous, but we should stand out as different from those who do not love and serve Jehovah.

⁵ If you see room for improvement, why not pray about the matter and seek spiritual strength through regular Bible study, prayer, and meeting attendance? The more God’s Word becomes a part of you, the more you will produce “fine fruit,” including “the

4, 5. How can we apply Jehovah’s words found at Malachi 3:18 in our life?

fruit of lips which make public declaration to [God's] name."—Heb. 13:15.

Advocate God's Kingdom

⁶ Jesus said: "To other cities I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this I was sent forth." (Luke 4:43) Why did Jesus make God's Kingdom the main theme of his ministry? He knew that he himself as King of that Kingdom, along with his resurrected spirit-begotten brothers, would deal with the root causes of mankind's woes—sin and the Devil. (Rom. 5:12; Rev. 20:10) Hence, he commanded his followers to proclaim that Kingdom until the end of the present system of things. (Matt. 24:14) People who merely profess to be followers of Christ do not engage in this work—in fact, they cannot. Why? For at least three reasons: First, they cannot preach what they do not understand. Second, most of them lack the humility and courage needed to face the ridicule and opposition that may result from sharing the Kingdom message with their neighbors. (Matt. 24:9; 1 Pet. 2:23) And third, false Christians do not have God's spirit.—John 14:16, 17.

⁷ Christ's true followers, on the other hand, understand what God's Kingdom is and what it will accomplish. Moreover, they give the interests of that Kingdom priority in life, proclaiming it worldwide, with the help of Jehovah's spirit. (Zech. 4:6) Are you having a regular share in this work? Are you trying to improve as a Kingdom proclaimer, perhaps by spending more time in the ministry or by being more effective in it? Some have tried to improve the quality of their ministry by making better use of the Bible. "The word of God is alive and exerts power," wrote the apostle Paul, who made it his cus-

6, 7. In regard to the Kingdom message, what contrast can be seen between true and false Christians?

tom to reason from the Scriptures.—Heb. 4:12; Acts 17:2, 3.

⁸ When in the door-to-door work, a brother read Daniel 2:44 to a Catholic man and explained how God's Kingdom will bring about true peace and security. The man responded: "I really appreciate your opening the Bible and showing me what the scripture said instead of just telling me." When a brother read a scripture to a Greek Orthodox woman, she asked a number of good questions. In this case too, the brother, along with his wife, answered from the Bible. Later, the woman said: "Do you know why I was willing to talk with you? You came to my door with the Bible, and you read from it."

⁹ Of course, our literature is important and should be offered in the field. The Bible, however, is our primary tool. So if it has not been your custom to use it regularly in your

8, 9. (a) What experiences highlight the value of using the Bible in our ministry? (b) How can we become more adept at using God's Word?

Is it your custom to use the Bible regularly in your ministry?



ministry, why not make it your goal to do so? Perhaps you could select a few key texts that explain what God's Kingdom is and how it will solve specific problems that concern people in your neighborhood. Then be prepared to read them as you preach from door to door.

Proudly Bear God's Name

¹⁰ " 'You are my witnesses,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and I am God.' " (Isa. 43:12) Jehovah's preeminent Witness, Jesus Christ, considered it an honor to bear God's name and to make it known. (*Read Exodus 3:15; John 17:6; Hebrews 2:12.*) In fact, because Jesus proclaimed his Father's name, he was called "the Faithful Witness."—Rev. 1:5; Matt. 6:9.

¹¹ In contrast, many who claim to represent God and his Son have displayed a shameful attitude toward the divine name, even removing it from their versions of the Bible. Reflecting a similar spirit, a recent directive to Catholic bishops said that "the name of God in the form of the *tetragrammaton* YHWH is neither to be used or pronounced" during worship.* How reprehensible such thinking is!

¹² In imitation of both Christ and the great "cloud of witnesses" who preceded him, true Christians proudly use God's name. (Heb. 12:1) In fact, in the year 1931, God's servants became even more closely identified with Jehovah by accepting the name Jehovah's Witnesses. (*Read Isaiah 43:10-12.*) Thus, in a very special sense, Christ's true followers be-

* Some modern Catholic publications in English, including *The Jerusalem Bible*, render the tetragrammaton "Yahweh."

10, 11. Regarding the use of God's name, what contrast is there between Jesus and many who claim to follow him?

12. How did Jehovah's servants become even more closely identified with Jehovah in the year 1931?

came a "people who are called by [God's] name."—Acts 15:14, 17.

¹³ How can we personally live up to our unique name? For one thing, we must faithfully bear witness to God. "Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved," wrote Paul. "However, how will they call on him in whom they have not put faith? How, in turn, will they put faith in him of whom they have not heard? How, in turn, will they hear without someone to preach? How, in turn, will they preach unless they have been sent forth?" (Rom. 10:13-15) Also, we should tactfully expose religious falsehoods that malign our Creator, such as the doctrine of hell-fire, which in reality attributes to the God of love the cruel traits of the Devil.—Jer. 7:31; 1 John 4:8; compare Mark 9:17-27.

¹⁴ Are you proud to bear the name of your heavenly Father? Do you help others to come to know that holy name? A woman in Paris, France, heard that Jehovah's Witnesses knew the name of God, so she asked the next Witness she met to show her that name in her Bible. When she read Psalm 83:18, the impact was profound. She began to study the Bible and is now a faithful sister serving in another land. When a Catholic lady living in Australia saw God's name in the Bible for the first time, she wept for joy. For many years now, she has been a regular pioneer. More recently, when Witnesses in Jamaica showed a woman there God's name in her own Bible, she too shed tears of joy. So be proud to bear God's name and, in imitation of Jesus, to make that precious name manifest to all.

"Do Not Be Loving . . . the World"

¹⁵ "Do not be loving either the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the

13. How can we live up to our God-given name?

14. When learning of God's personal name, how have some responded?

15, 16. How do true Christians view the world, and what questions should we ask ourselves?



Do others know your stand on unscriptural celebrations?

world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15) The world and its fleshly spirit stand in opposition to Jehovah and his holy spirit. Hence, Christ’s true followers do not merely refrain from being a part of the world. They reject it at heart, knowing that as the disciple James wrote, “friendship with the world is enmity with God.”—Jas. 4:4.

¹⁶ It can be a challenge to heed James’ words in a world that offers countless temptations. (2 Tim. 4:10) Jesus therefore prayed in behalf of his followers: “I request you, not to take them out of the world, but to watch over them because of the wicked one. They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world.” (John 17:15, 16) Ask yourself: ‘Do I strive to be no part of the world? Do others know my stand on unscriptural celebrations and customs as well as on those that may not have a pagan origin but clearly reflect the spirit of the world?’—2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Pet. 4:3, 4.

¹⁷ To be sure, our Bible-based stand will not win us the world’s favor, but it may arouse the curiosity of honesthearted ones. Indeed, when such individuals observe that our faith is firmly rooted in the Scriptures and involves our whole way of life, they may respond by, in effect, saying to the anointed: “We will go

17. What may move honesthearted ones to take sides with Jehovah?

with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people.”—Zech. 8:23.

Show True Christian Love

¹⁸ Jesus said: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind” and “you must love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matt. 22:37, 39) That love (*a·ga’pe* in Greek) is a moral love that takes into account duty, principle, and propriety, but it often includes strong emotion. It can be warm and intense. (1 Pet. 1:22) It is the very opposite of selfishness, for it is reflected in selfless words and deeds.—*Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.*

¹⁹ Because love is a product of God’s holy

18. What is involved in showing love for Jehovah and our neighbor?

19, 20. Relate some experiences that show the power of Christian love.

Do You Remember?

- How are Christ’s true followers distinguished from the false?
- Name some “fruits” that identify true Christians.
- In producing Christian fruitage, what goals can you set?

spirit, it enables true Christians to do what others cannot do, such as overcome racial, cultural, and political barriers. (*Read John 13: 34, 35; Gal. 5:22*) Sheeplike ones cannot help but be moved when they see such love. For example, when a young Jewish man in Israel attended his first Christian meeting, he was amazed to see Jewish and Arab brothers worshipping Jehovah side by side. As a result, he began to attend meetings regularly and accepted a Bible study. Do you show such heartfelt love to your brothers? And do you make it a point to extend a warm welcome to newcomers at your Kingdom Hall, regardless of their nationality, skin color, or social standing?

²⁰ As true Christians, we strive to show love toward all. In El Salvador, a young publisher was studying the Bible with an 87-year-old Catholic woman who clung to her church. One day, the woman became gravely ill and was hospitalized. When she returned home,

the Witnesses called and made sure that she had food. This went on for about a month. Nobody from the woman's church visited. The result? She discarded her images, resigned from her church, and resumed her Bible study. Yes, Christian love has power! It can reach hearts in ways that the spoken word may not.

²¹ Soon, Jesus will say to all who falsely claim to serve him: "I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness." (Matt. 7:23) Let us, therefore, produce fruitage that honors both the Father and the Son. "Everyone that hears these sayings of mine and does them," said Jesus, "will be likened to a discreet man, who built his house upon the rock-mass." (Matt. 7:24) Yes, if we prove to be *real* followers of Christ, we will receive God's favor, and our future will be secure, as if founded on rock!

21. How can we make our future secure?

SATAN'S WAY OF RULING SURE TO FAIL

"It will not turn out well at all with the wicked one."—ECCL. 8:13.

SOONER or later the wicked will have to be brought to justice. They will have to answer for what they have done. (Prov. 5:22; Eccl. 8:12, 13) That is comforting news, especially for those who love righteousness and who have suffered injustice and mistreatment at the hands of the wicked. Foremost among the wicked who will be brought to justice is the father of wickedness, Satan the Devil.—John 8:44.

² Back in Eden, Satan, consumed by feelings of self-importance, caused humans to reject Jehovah's way of governing. As a result, our first parents joined Satan in challenging Jehovah's rightful authority and became sinners in His sight. (Rom. 5:12-14) Of course, Jehovah knew how their disrespectful and rebellious course would turn out for them. However, that inevitable outcome had to be made obvious to all intelligent creatures. Hence, time was needed to settle the issue and to demonstrate convincingly that the rebels were utterly wrong.

³ Since humans rejected Jehovah's oversight, they had to set up their own forms of government. The apostle Paul, writing to fellow believers in Rome, spoke of such human governments as "the superior authorities." In Paul's day, the superior authorities were primarily the government of Rome

under Emperor Nero, who ruled from 54-68 C.E. Paul said that such superior authorities "stand placed in their relative positions by God." (*Read Romans 13:1, 2.*) Does that mean that Paul was advocating human rule as superior to God's way of governing? By no means. Rather, he was simply saying that as long as Jehovah allows human rulership to exist, Christians should respect "the arrangement of God" and accept such rulers.

A Path Leading to Disaster

⁴ Still, human rule influenced by Satan is certain to fail. Why? For one thing, because it is not based on divine wisdom. Only Jehovah possesses perfect wisdom. Thus, he is the only reliable guide as to what constitutes successful rulership. (Jer. 8:9; Rom. 16:27) Unlike humans, who often learn by trial and error, Jehovah always knows the best possible way to act. Any governmental arrangement that does not follow his guidance is bound to be inferior. For that reason alone—not to mention the wicked motive involved—Satan's alternative way of governing by means of human rule was sure to fail from the start.

⁵ A sensible person generally refrains from embarking on an endeavor that is doomed to fail. If he insists on going ahead with his endeavor, he will be forced to recognize his error. History has proved many times over that it is useless to stand in

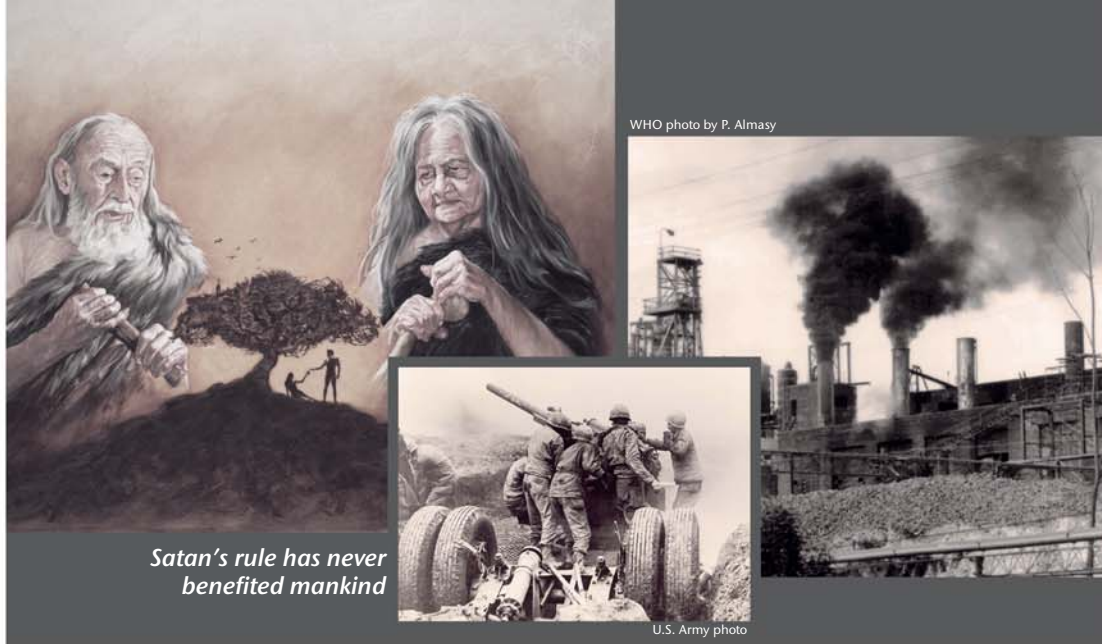
1. Why is the coming judgment of the wicked comforting news?

2. Why was time needed to settle the issue raised in Eden?

3. What is our position toward human governments?

4. Explain why human rule is bound to fail.

5, 6. What apparently led Satan into his course of opposition to Jehovah?



opposition to the almighty Creator. (Read *Proverbs 21:30*.) Satan, however, blinded by feelings of self-importance and pride, turned his back on Jehovah. Thus the Devil plunged headlong onto a path that could end only in disaster.

⁶ Satan's presumptuous attitude was later reflected by a Babylonian ruler who is recorded as boasting: "To the heavens I shall go up. Above the stars of God I shall lift up my throne, and I shall sit down upon the mountain of meeting, in the remotest parts of the north. I shall go up above the high places of the clouds; I shall make myself resemble the Most High." (Isa. 14:13-15) That ruler's senseless undertaking failed, and the Babylonian dynasty came to an inglorious end. Similarly, Satan and his world will soon go down in total defeat.

Why Permitted?

⁷ Some may wonder why Jehovah did not prevent humans from taking sides with Satan and from following an alternative plan for governing that was certain to fail. As God Almighty, he could surely have done so. (Ex.

7, 8. What are some benefits from Jehovah's allowing wickedness to exist for some time?

6:3) Nevertheless, he held back. His wisdom dictated that temporarily refraining from interfering in man's rebellion would in the long run work out for the best. Eventually, Jehovah would be vindicated as being a righteous and loving Ruler, and faithful humans would benefit from God's decision.

⁸ What misery could have been spared the human family if humans had rejected Satan's advances and refused to strike out for independence from God's rule! Still, Jehovah's decision to allow humans to rule themselves for a time has had benefits. It has deeply impressed on righthearted individuals the wisdom of listening to God and of trusting in him. Over the centuries, humans have experimented with numerous kinds of governments, but not one of them has proved to be ideal. That fact has served to strengthen worshippers of God in their conviction that Jehovah's way of governing is indeed best. Granted, Jehovah's permission of Satan's wicked rulership has resulted in hardships for mankind, including for those who faithfully worship God. Still, the temporary permission of wickedness has also resulted in benefits for these faithful worshippers.

A Rebellion That Has Served to Glorify Jehovah

⁹ Allowing humans to be influenced by Satan and to rule themselves has in no way discredited Jehovah's way of governing. On the contrary! History proves that Jeremiah's statement, uttered under inspiration, about the inability of humans to govern themselves is correct. (*Read Jeremiah 10:23.*) In addition, Satan's rebellion has given Jehovah an opportunity to demonstrate His fine qualities in a more pronounced way. How so?

¹⁰ Against the backdrop of Satan's disastrous rule, Jehovah's perfect qualities are even more obvious than they otherwise might have been. In this way, he has been magnified in the eyes of those who love him. Yes, paradoxical as it may sound, Satan's way of governing has in reality served to glorify God. It has highlighted the superlative way in which Jehovah has dealt with this challenge to his sovereignty. To illustrate that truth, let us briefly consider some of Jehovah's qualities and see how Satan's wicked rule has moved Jehovah to show these qualities in additional ways.

¹¹ *Love.* The Scriptures tell us that "God is love." (1 John 4:8) The creation of humans was, in the first place, an expression of God's love. Furthermore, the fear-inspiring and wonderful way in which we are made bears witness to God's love. Jehovah also lovingly provided humans with a beautiful home containing everything necessary for their happiness. (Gen. 1:29-31; 2:8, 9; Ps. 139:14-16) But once wickedness was introduced into the hu-

9, 10. Explain how Satan's rule results in Jehovah's glory.

11. How has Jehovah's love been manifested?

man family, Jehovah expressed his love in new ways. How? The apostle John quotes Jesus as saying: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Could God have shown his love for mankind in a more remarkable way than by sending his only-begotten Son to earth in order to ransom sinners? (John 15:13) This great demonstration of love also served as a pattern for humans, giving them the opportunity to reflect God's self-sacrificing love in everyday life, even as Jesus did.—John 17:25, 26.

¹² *Power.* Only "God, the Almighty," has the power to create life. (Rev. 11:17; Ps. 36:9) At birth, a human starts out like a blank sheet of paper, as it were. At death, he has filled that blank sheet with the decisions, actions, and experiences of a lifetime that shaped his individuality and personality. That information can be filed away in Jehovah's memory. In due time, Jehovah can restore the individual to life again, complete

12. In what way is Jehovah's power demonstrated?

Jehovah's power reaches even beyond the grave



with his unique life pattern. (John 5:28, 29) Thus, although not God's original purpose for humans, death has given Jehovah the opportunity to show that his power reaches even beyond the grave. Indeed, Jehovah is "God, the Almighty."

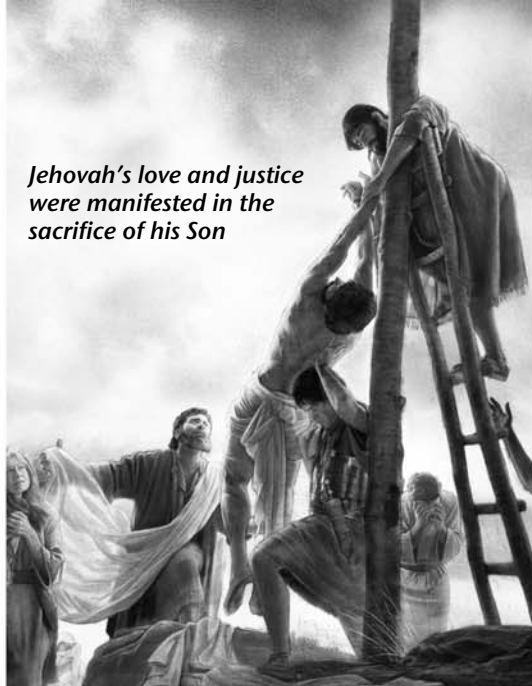
¹³ *Justice.* Jehovah does not lie; neither does he act unjustly. (Deut. 32:4; Titus 1:2) He always holds to the highest standards of truth and of justice, even when doing so appears to be to his own disadvantage. (Rom. 8:32) How painful it must have been for Jehovah to see his beloved Son die on a torture stake as if Jesus were an unfaithful blasphemer! Yet, out of love for imperfect humans, Jehovah was willing to permit this painful event to take place in order to uphold his own perfect standard of justice. (Read Romans 5:18-21.) A world full of injustice gave Jehovah the opportunity of demonstrating himself to be the pinnacle of justice.

¹⁴ *Wisdom.* Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, Jehovah revealed the way that he would undo all the bad effects caused by their rebellion. (Gen. 3:15) Such immediate action, as well as his progressively revealing details of this purpose to his servants, brought Jehovah's wisdom into sharp focus. (Rom. 11:33) Nothing can impede God's ability to handle matters successfully. In a world marked by immorality, war, unreasonableness, disobedience, mercilessness, partiality, and hypocrisy, Jehovah has had ample opportunity to demonstrate to his creatures what real wisdom is. The disciple James said: "The wisdom from above is first of all chaste, then peaceable, reasonable, ready to obey, full of mercy and good

13. How was Jesus' sacrifice a demonstration of Jehovah's perfect justice?

14, 15. What are some of the ways that Jehovah's superlative wisdom and patience have been manifested?

Jehovah's love and justice were manifested in the sacrifice of his Son



fruits, not making partial distinctions, not hypocritical."—Jas. 3:17.

¹⁵ *Patience and Long-Suffering.* Jehovah's qualities of patience and long-suffering would scarcely have come so prominently to the fore had it not become necessary for him to deal with human imperfections, sins, and shortcomings. Jehovah's willingness to do so for thousands of years demonstrates that he possesses these marvelous qualities to a perfect degree, and for that we should be most grateful. The apostle Peter rightly stated that we should "consider the patience of our Lord as salvation."—2 Pet. 3:9, 15.

¹⁶ *Willingness to Forgive.* We are all sinners,

16. Why is Jehovah's willingness to forgive a cause for great joy?

What Did We Learn About Rulership From Reading . . .

- Romans 13:1, 2?
- Proverbs 21:30?
- Jeremiah 10:23?
- Colossians 3:13?

and we all stumble many times. (Jas. 3:2; 1 John 1:8, 9) How grateful we should be that Jehovah is willing to forgive “in a large way”! (Isa. 55:7) Consider also this fact: Having been born as imperfect sinners, we are in a position to experience the profound joy we feel when God forgives us our errors. (Ps. 51: 5, 9, 17) Personally experiencing that heart-warming characteristic of Jehovah strengthens our love for him and encourages us to follow his example in our dealings with others.—*Read Colossians 3:13.*

Why the World Is Sick

¹⁷ Satan’s entire world system—a product of his way of governing—has repeatedly and consistently failed over the centuries. In

17, 18. In what ways has Satan’s way of ruling failed?

1991, the newspaper *The European* noted: “Is the world sick? Yes, indeed, but . . . not by [an] act of God—the world’s illness was inflicted by its peoples.” How true! Influenced by Satan, our first parents chose human rule over rule by Jehovah. They thereby set in motion a way of governing that was bound to fail. The pain and misery experienced by people worldwide are signs that human rule is afflicted by a dreadful illness.

¹⁸ Satan’s way of governing appeals to selfishness. However, selfishness can never conquer love, which is the basis of Jehovah’s way of governing. Satan’s way of governing has failed to deliver stability, happiness, or security. Jehovah’s way of ruling stands vindicated! Do we have modern-day evidence of that? Yes, as we will see in the next article.

JEHOVAH’S WAY OF RULING VINDICATED!

“The Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind.”—DAN. 4:17.

HUMAN rule has failed! Of that there is no doubt. A major reason for that failure is that humans lack the wisdom to rule successfully. The failure of man’s rule is especially evident today when so many rulers have shown themselves to be ‘lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, disloyal, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, and puffed up with pride.’—2 Tim. 3: 2-4.

1, 2. What are some reasons why human rule has failed?

² Long ago, our first parents rejected God’s way of ruling. In doing so, they may have thought that they were choosing independence. In reality, though, they were submitting to Satan’s way of ruling. Six millenniums of human mismanagement—powerfully influenced by “the ruler of this world,” Satan—have brought us to the current low point in human history. (John 12: 31) Commenting on the state of mankind today, *The Oxford History of the Twentieth Century* states that it is useless “looking for a perfect world.” It explains: “Not only can it not be found, but the attempt to create it



*Jehovah has always
maintained his rulership*

leads to disaster, totalitarianism, and war at its worst.” What a frank admission that human rule is a failure!

³ How tragic, then, that our first parents rejected the only kind of rule that does work—rule by God! Of course, we do not know precisely how Jehovah would have structured his way of governing the earth if Adam and Eve had remained faithful to him. However, we can be certain that divine rulership accepted by all mankind would have been marked by love and impartiality. (Acts 10:34; 1 John 4:8) In view of God’s matchless wisdom, we can also be sure that if mankind had remained under Jehovah’s rule, all the mistakes made by proponents of human rule would have been avoided. God-rule, theocracy, would have been successful in “satisfying the desire of every living thing.” (Ps. 145:16) In short, it would have been a perfect rulership. (Deut. 32:4) How tragic that humans rejected it!

⁴ Still, it is good to remember that even though Jehovah permitted humans to exercise self-rule, he at no time relinquished his

right to rule over his creatures. Even the powerful king of Babylon was forced to realize that ultimately “the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind.” (Dan. 4:17) In the long run, God’s Kingdom will cause his will to be done. (Matt. 6:10) True, in the short term, Jehovah has allowed Satan to act as “the god of this system of things” in order to provide a convincing answer to the issues that were raised by that opposer. (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19) Nevertheless, Satan has never been able to go beyond what Jehovah permits. (2 Chron. 20:6; compare Job 1:11, 12; 2:3-6.) And there have always been some individuals who chose to subject themselves to God, even though they were living in a world ruled by God’s great Adversary.

God’s Rulership Over Israel

⁵ From the time of Abel up to the time of the patriarchs, a number of faithful individuals worshipped Jehovah and obeyed his commands. (Heb. 11:4-22) In Moses’ day, Jehovah entered into a covenant with the offspring of the patriarch Jacob, and these became the nation of Israel. In 1513 B.C.E., the Israelites committed themselves and their descendants to accept Jehovah as Ruler,

3. What can we say about the way God would have ruled if Adam and Eve had not sinned?

4. To what extent has Satan been permitted to govern?

5. What commitment did Israel make to God?

saying: “All that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do.”—Ex. 19:8.

⁶ Jehovah had a purpose in choosing the Israelites to be his people. (*Read Deuteronomy 7:7, 8.*) This choice involved more than just the welfare of the Israelites. God’s name and sovereignty were also involved, and they were of greater significance. Israel was to serve as a witness to the fact that Jehovah is the only true God. (Isa. 43:10; 44:6-8) Hence, Jehovah said to that nation: “You are a holy people to Jehovah your God, and Jehovah has chosen you to become his people, a special property, out of all the peoples who are on the surface of the ground.”—Deut. 14:2.

⁷ God’s way of governing the Israelites took into account that they were imperfect. At the same time, his laws were perfect and reflected the qualities of their Giver. Jehovah’s commandments given through Moses clearly highlighted God’s holiness, his love of justice, his willingness to forgive, and his patience. Later, in the day of Joshua and his generation, the nation obeyed Jehovah’s commandments and enjoyed peace and spiritual blessings. (Josh. 24:21, 22, 31) That period of Israel’s history demonstrated the success of Jehovah’s way of ruling.

Human Rulership Comes at a Price

⁸ Over time, though, the Israelites frequently turned away from God’s rule and suffered the loss of his protection. Eventually, through the prophet Samuel, Israel demanded a visible, human king. Jehovah told Samuel to grant their request. However, Jehovah added: “It is not you whom they have rejected, but it is I whom they have rejected from being king over them.” (1 Sam. 8:7) Although Jehovah permitted Israel to have a

visible king, he warned them that rule by a human king would come at a price.—*Read 1 Samuel 8:9-18.*

⁹ History demonstrated the truth of Jehovah’s warning. Being ruled by a human king led to serious problems for Israel, especially when that king proved unfaithful. With that example of Israel in mind, it is not surprising that throughout the ages, government in the hands of humans who do not know Jehovah has failed to bring permanent good results. True, some politicians invoke God’s blessing on their efforts to achieve peace and security, but how can God bless those who do not submit to his way of ruling?—Ps. 2: 10-12.

A New Nation Under God’s Rule

¹⁰ The nation of Israel proved unwilling to serve Jehovah faithfully. Eventually, they rejected God’s appointed Messiah, and Jehovah rejected them and purposed to replace them with a group of people who formed a new nation. As a consequence, the year 33 C.E. saw the birth of the Christian congregation of anointed worshippers of Jehovah. That congregation was, in effect, a new nation under Jehovah’s governing authority. Paul spoke of it as “the Israel of God.”—Gal. 6:16.

¹¹ Between the original nation of Israel and the new “Israel of God” there are both differences and similarities. Unlike ancient Israel, the Christian congregation has no human king and it has no need for offering animal sacrifices in behalf of sinners. One similarity between the nation of Israel and the Christian congregation is the arrangement of older men, or elders. (Ex. 19:3-8) Such Christian elders do not rule over the flock.

10. Why was Israel replaced as God’s chosen nation?

11, 12. What similarities as to oversight are there between Israel and “the Israel of God”?

6, 7. How was God’s rule of Israel characterized?

8, 9. What unwise request did Israel make, and with what results?

Rather, they shepherd the congregation and unstintingly take the lead in Christian activities. They deal lovingly with each individual in the congregation, according honor and dignity to all.—2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Pet. 5:2, 3.

¹² By meditating on God's dealings with Israel, members of "the Israel of God" and their "other sheep" companions develop greater appreciation for Jehovah and his way of governing. (John 10:16) For example, history shows that the human rulers of Israel greatly influenced their subjects, either for good or for bad. That fact impresses upon those taking the lead among Christians that, although they are not rulers like those ancient kings, they must always set a good example of faith.—Heb. 13:7.

How Jehovah Rules Today

¹³ Christians today proclaim to the world that human rule over mankind is nearing its end. In 1914, Jehovah established his Kingdom in the heavens under his appointed King, Jesus Christ. At that time, he granted Jesus authority to go forth "conquering and to complete his conquest." (Rev. 6:2) The

13. What important milestone was reached in 1914?

newly enthroned King was told: "Go subduing in the midst of your enemies." (Ps. 110:2) Sadly, the nations have consistently refused to submit to Jehovah's rule. They have continued to act as if "there is no Jehovah."—Ps. 14:1.

¹⁴ A few anointed members of "the Israel of God" still remain, and as Jesus' brothers, they continue to act as "ambassadors substituting for Christ." (2 Cor. 5:20) They have been appointed as a faithful and discreet slave class to care for and provide spiritual food for anointed ones and a growing crowd of Christians, who now include millions having the hope of living on earth forever. (Matt. 24:45-47; Rev. 7:9-15) Jehovah's blessing on that arrangement is evident in the spiritual prosperity enjoyed by true worshippers today.

¹⁵ Each of us would do well to ask himself: 'Do I fully recognize the responsibilities that I should shoulder within the Christian congregation? Am I properly supporting Jehovah's way of governing? Am I proud to be a

14, 15. (a) How are we ruled by God's Kingdom today, and in view of this, what questions should we ask ourselves? (b) How is the superiority of God's rule seen even today?

Willing submission to Jehovah's way of governing results in worldwide unity



subject of Jehovah's ruling Kingdom? Am I determined to continue telling others about God's Kingdom to the extent that I reasonably can?' As a group, we willingly submit ourselves to the direction given by the Governing Body and cooperate with the appointed elders in the congregations. In such ways, we demonstrate our acceptance of God's way of ruling. (*Read Hebrews 13:17.*) Willing submission results in a worldwide unity that is unique in this divided world. It also produces peace and righteousness and brings glory to Jehovah, demonstrating that his way of ruling is by far the best.

Jehovah's Rule Triumphant

¹⁶ The time is fast approaching when the issues raised in Eden will be resolved. Hence, now is the time for people to make a decision. Each individual must decide whether he will accept Jehovah's way of governing or he will cling to human rule. It is our privilege to help meek ones to make the right decision. Soon, at Armageddon, Jehovah's way of governing will permanently replace human-based governments under Satan's influence. (Dan. 2:44; Rev. 16:16) Human rule will end, and God's Kingdom will hold sway over the entire earth. In the fullest sense of the word, Jehovah's way of governing will stand vindicated.—*Read Revelation 21:3-5.*

16. What decision faces everyone today?

As Regards God's Rulership, What Did We Learn From Reading . . .

- Deuteronomy 7:7, 8?
- 1 Samuel 8:9-18?
- Hebrews 13:17?
- Revelation 21:3-5?

¹⁷ Those who have not as yet made a definite decision in favor of Jehovah should prayerfully consider the benefits that God's way of ruling will bring to mankind. Human rule has been unable to solve the problem of crime, including terrorism. God's rule will remove all the wicked from the earthly scene. (Ps. 37:1, 2, 9) Man's rule has led to incessant warfare, but God's rule will make "wars to cease to the extremity of the earth." (Ps. 46:9) Why, God's rule will even restore peace between humans and animals! (Isa. 11:6-9) Poverty and hunger have been constant features under human rule, but God's rule will eliminate them. (Isa. 65:21) Even human rulers having the best of intentions have been unable to remove sickness and death, but under God's rule, the old and the sick will delight in a return to youthful vigor. (Job 33:25; Isa. 35:5, 6) Indeed, the earth will become a paradise in which there will even be a resurrection of the dead.—Luke 23:43; Acts 24:15.

¹⁸ Yes, God's rule will undo all the harm that Satan caused when he influenced our first parents to turn away from their Creator. And consider, Satan has been causing harm for some 6,000 years, but God, through Christ, will undo all that harm within 1,000 years! What a crowning proof of the superiority of God's way of governing! As Witnesses for our God, we accept him as our Ruler. Hence, let us demonstrate each day, indeed each hour, of our lives that we are worshipers of Jehovah, subjects of his Kingdom, and proud to be his Witnesses. And let us use every opportunity to tell whoever will listen that Jehovah's way of ruling is the very best.

17. What facts help meek individuals to make a good decision regarding rulership?

18. How can we demonstrate that we believe that God's way of ruling is best?