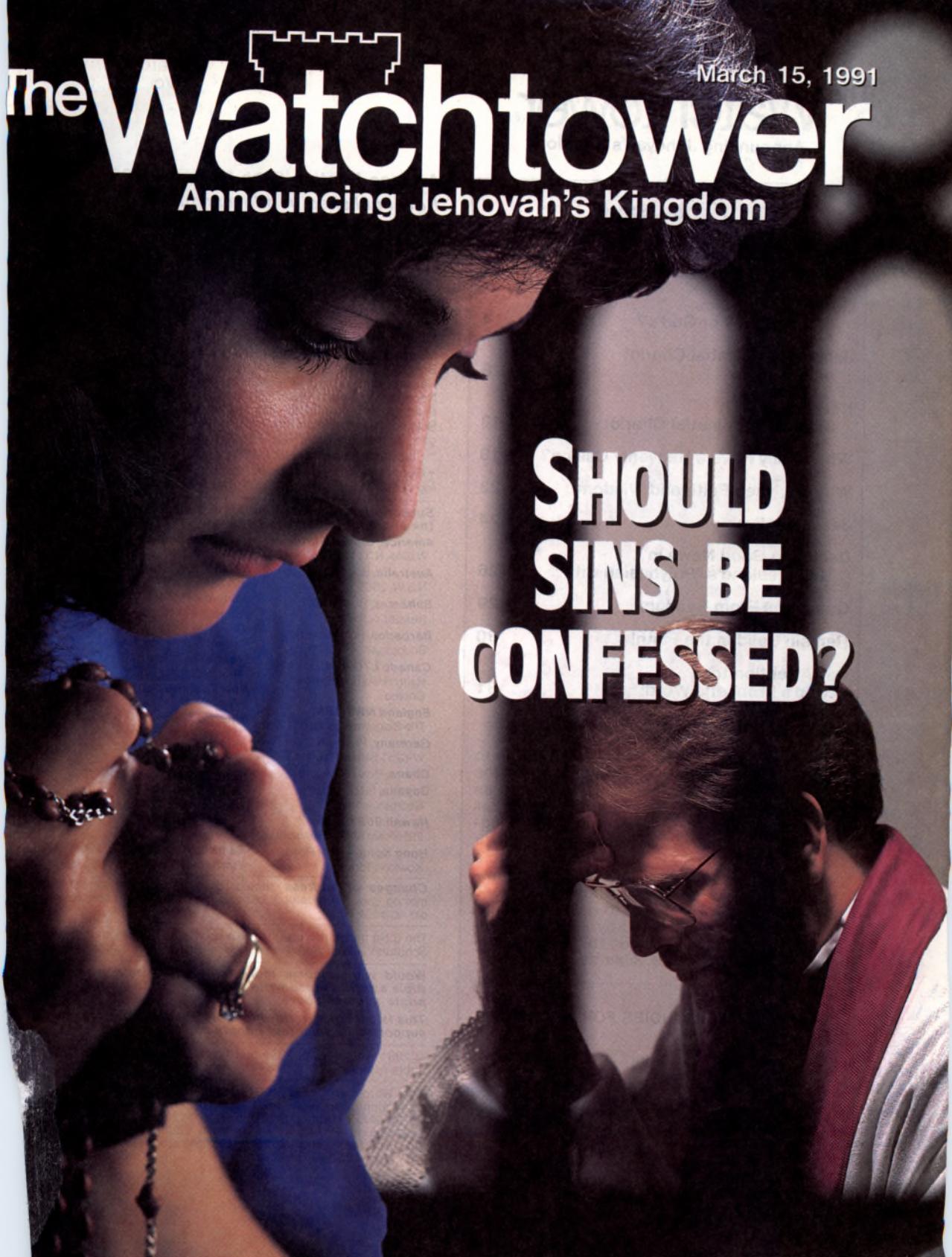


The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

March 15, 1991

SHOULD SINS BE CONFESSED?



In This Issue

Confession of Sins —Is Something Amiss?	3
Confession of Sins —Man's Way or God's?	4
Jehovah's Celestial Chariot on the Move	8
Keep Pace With Jehovah's Celestial Chariot	13
Who Really Have a Heavenly Calling?	19
Why We Need Faith and Wisdom	23
Jesus Is Alive!	24
Declaring Good News in New Zealand's "Polynesian City"	26
Questions From Readers	29
Remain Solid in the Faith!	30
Pay Attention to God's Prophetic Word!	31

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

WATCHTOWER STUDIES FOR WEEKS OF

April 22: Jehovah's Celestial Chariot on the Move.
Page 8. Songs to Be Used: 219, 97.

April 29: Keep Pace With Jehovah's Celestial Chariot. Page 13. Songs to Be Used: 215, 131.

Average Printing Each Issue: 15,290,000

Now Published in 111 Languages.

Semimonthly Languages Available by Mail: Afrikaans, Arabic, Cebuano, Chicheŵa, Chinese, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech, Danish,* Dutch,* Efik, English* (also Braille and cassettes†), Estonian, Finnish,* French,* German,* Greek,* Hiligaynon, Hungarian, Igbo, Iloko, Italian,* Japanese,* Korean, Macedonian, Malagasy, Maltese, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese,* Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,* Swahili, Swedish,* Tagalog, Thai, Tswana, Twi, Ukrainian, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

Monthly Languages Available by Mail: Albanian, Armenian, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Fijian, Greenlandic, Gujarati, Gun, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Icelandic, Kannada, Kwanyama/Ndonga, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, New Guinea Pidgin, Niuean, Pangasinan, Paplamento, Samar-Leyte, Sango, Silozi, Sinhalese, Solomon Islands-Pidgin, Sranan Tongo, Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Tongan, Turkish, Tuvaluan, Urdu, Venda, Vietnamese

* Study articles also available in large-print edition.

† Outside the United States and Canada, write U.S. office concerning certification for the blind and visually impaired.

Subscription requests should be sent to Watch Tower at the appropriate address below.

America, United States of, *India*, Post Bag 10, Lonavla, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589
Pune Dis., Mah., 410 401

Australia, Box 280, Ingleburn, Ireland, 29A Jamestown Road, N.S.W. 2565
Finglas, Dublin 11

Bahamas, Box N-1247, Jamaica, Box 180, Kingston 10
Nassau, N.P.

Barbados, Fontabelle Rd., Japan, 1271 Nakashinden, Ebina
Bridgetown City, Kanagawa Pref., 243-04

Canada L7G 4Y4, Box 4100, Kenya, Box 47788, Nairobi
Halton Hills (Georgetown),
Ontario
1000 Monrovia 10

New Zealand, P.O. Box 142,
Manurewa

Nigeria, P.M.B. 1090, Benin City,
Bendel State

Philippines, Republic of,
P.O. Box 2044, 1099 Manila

South Africa, Private Bag 2067,
Krugersdorp, 1740

Trinidad and Tobago, Rep. of,
Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane,
Curepe

Zambia, Rep. of, Box 21598, Kitwe
Zimbabwe, 35 Fife Avenue, Harare

Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

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

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please write Watch Tower, using the appropriate address above.

This is part of a worldwide Bible educational work that is supported by voluntary donations.

© 1991 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved.
Frederick W. Franz, President

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, N.Y. 12589.

Printed in U.S.A.

CONFESsION OF SINS

Is Something Amiss?

CONFESsION is a spiritual cleansing, a way to start again, a way to wipe the slate clean. I love going to Confession, telling the priest my sins, having him forgive me and the euphoria that follows." So says one devout Catholic.—*Bless Me, Father, for I Have Sinned.*

According to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, "to the priest alone Christ gave or deputed the power of binding and loosing, of forgiving and retaining" sins. The same reference work says that regular confession is meant "to restore the holiness of life forfeited by grievous sin and . . . to purify one's conscience." Yet, the moral climate in many lands shows that regular confession does not cause many who practice it to "turn away from what is bad, and do what is good." (Psalm 34:14) So is something amiss?

Just a Ritual?

Confession may begin as a mere ritual. In Ireland, first confession comes immediately before first Communion. And is it any surprise that a seven-year-old girl would think more about the pretty, miniature bride's dress she will wear than about 'restoring the holiness of life forfeited by grievous sin'?



"The thing that excited me the most was the dress, besides getting money from my relatives," admits Ramona, who made her first confession when she was seven. "Among all the girls I knew," she goes on, "there was no spiritual feeling. None of us even thought about God at the time."

In fact, obliging young children to confess sins regularly can lead to mechanical recitation. "I just used the same lines over and over again," says Michael, who also began the practice of confession as a seven-year-old.

Comments of some Catholics quoted in the book *Bless Me, Father, for I Have Sinned* show that confession had little spiritual value for them even after they got older. "Confession teaches you to lie, because there are some things you just can't bring yourself to tell the priest," admitted one person. Lack of consistency

among priests might be exploited for minimum penance. Some searched for a "good" confessor to get the counsel they wanted to hear. "After shopping around for three months, I found my confessor. I see him every month, face-to-face in the reconciliation room, and he's terrific," said one young woman. "If you were smart, you found a priest who was deaf and spoke no English except the words 'three Hail Marys,'" said another Catholic.

Evidently, then, something is amiss with confession as practiced by certain people. But the Bible indicates that there is a need to confess sins, for it says: "No one who conceals his sins will prosper, whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy."—Proverbs 28:13, *The New Jerusalem Bible*.

Does this mean that a Christian should confess all his sins? If so, to whom? The next article will examine these questions.

CONFESSiON OF SINS *Man's Way or God's?*

AMONG Catholics, confession has changed dramatically over the centuries. In the early years of the Catholic Church, confession and penance were required only for serious sins. Concerning this, the book *Religion in the Medieval West* says: "Until the late sixth century the penitential system was very harsh: the sacrament could be administered only once in a lifetime, confession was public, the penance was long and severe."

How severe was such penance? In 1052 one penitent was required to walk barefoot all the way from Bruges in Belgium to Jerusalem! "Catholics could still be found in 1700 at holy wells and springs, kneeling up to their necks in icy water to say their penitential prayers," says the book *Christianity in the West 1400-1700*. Since at that time absolution was withheld until after the completion of the penance, many delayed their confession until they were dying.

When did the modern practice of confession begin? *Religion in the Medieval*

West states: "A new form of penance was introduced in France in the late sixth century by Celtic monks. . . . This was auricular confession, in which the penitent confessed his sins privately to a priest, and it was an adaption of the monastic practice of spiritual counselling." According to the older monastic practice, the monks confessed their sins to one another to get spiritual help in order to overcome their weaknesses. In newer auricular confession, however, the church claimed for the priest the much greater "power or authority to forgive sins."—*New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

Did Jesus really give some of his followers such power? What did he say that has led some to this conclusion?

"The Keys of the Kingdom"

On one occasion, Jesus Christ told the apostle Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall

be considered loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:19, *The Jerusalem Bible*) What did Jesus mean by "the keys of the kingdom"? We can understand this better if we look at another occasion when Jesus used the word "key."

Jesus once told the Jewish religious leaders versed in the Mosaic Law: "Alas for you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge! You have not gone in yourselves, and have prevented others going in who wanted to." (Luke 11:52, *JB*) 'Prevented others from going in' where? Jesus tells us at Matthew 23:13: "Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who shut up the kingdom of heaven in men's faces, neither going in yourselves nor allowing others to go in who want to." (*JB*) The Jewish clergy closed the door on many, as it were, by robbing them of the opportunity to be with Jesus Christ in heaven. The "key" those religious leaders had "taken away" had nothing to do with the forgiveness of sins. It was the key to divinely provided knowledge.

Similarly, "the keys of the kingdom" given to Peter do not represent power to inform heaven as to whose sins should be forgiven or retained. Rather, they represent Peter's great privilege of opening up the way to heaven by disseminating divinely provided knowledge through his ministry. He did this first for Jews and Jewish proselytes, then for Samaritans, and finally for the Gentiles.—Acts 2:1-41; 8:14-17; 10:1-48.

"Whatever You Bind on Earth"

Later, what Jesus had told Peter was repeated to other disciples. "I tell you solemnly," said Jesus, "whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:18, *JB*) What authority did Christ here

delegate to the disciples? The context shows that he was talking about settling problems between individual believers and keeping the congregation clean of unrepentant evildoers.—Matthew 18:15-17.

In matters involving serious violations of God's law, responsible men in the congregation would have to judge matters and decide whether a wrongdoer should be "bound" (viewed as guilty) or "loosed" (acquitted). Did this mean that heaven would follow the decisions of humans? No. As Bible scholar Robert Young indicates, any decision made by the disciples would follow heaven's decision, not precede it. He says that verse 18 should literally read: What you bind on earth "shall be that which has been bound (already)" in heaven.

Really, it is unreasonable to think that any imperfect human could make decisions that would be binding upon those in the heavenly courts. It is much more reasonable to say that Christ's appointed representatives would follow his directions so as to keep his congregation clean. They would do this by making a decision based on principles already laid down in heaven. Jesus himself would guide them in doing this.—Matthew 18:20.

Is any man able to "represent Christ as the fatherly judge" to the extent of deciding the eternal future of a fellow worshiper? (*New Catholic Encyclopedia*) Priests who hear confessions almost invariably grant absolution, even though "there seems to be an unspoken belief [among Catholic theologians] that it is a rare person who is really sorry for his sins." (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*) Indeed, when was the last time that you heard of a priest refusing to grant absolution or to acquit a wrongdoer? Likely, this is because the individual priest does not think he has the ability to judge whether a sinner is repentant or not. But if this is

the case, why does he claim the power to grant absolution?

Imagine a court of law in which a compassionate judge routinely acquitted criminals, even persistent lawbreakers, because they went through a ritual of admitting their crimes and saying that they were sorry. While this might satisfy wrongdoers, such a misguided view of mercy would seriously undermine respect for justice. Could it be that confession as practiced in the Catholic Church actually hardens people in a course of sin?—Ecclesiastes 8:11.

“Confession does not produce any inclination to try to avoid the sin in the future,” says Ramona, drawing on her experience of confessing as a Catholic since she was seven years old. She adds: “Confession develops the idea that God is all-forgiving and that whatever your imperfect flesh leads you to do he will forgive. It does not develop a deep desire to do what is right.”*

But what about Jesus’ words recorded at John 20:22, 23? There he told his disciples: “Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.” (JB) Does Jesus not here specifically give his disciples authority to forgive sins?

Taken alone, this Bible passage might seem to say that. However, when these words are considered along with the account at Matthew 18:15-18 and everything else that the Bible teaches about confession and forgiveness, what must we conclude? That at John 20:22, 23, Jesus gave his disciples authority to expel from the congregation unrepentant perpetra-

tors of grave sins. At the same time, Christ gave his followers authority to extend mercy and forgive repentant sinners. Jesus certainly was not saying that his disciples should confess every sin to a priest.

Responsible ones in the congregation were thus authorized to decide how to deal with those committing grave sins. Such decisions would be made under the guidance of God’s holy spirit and in harmony with God’s directions given through Jesus Christ and the Holy Scriptures. (Compare Acts 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 11-13.) Those responsible men would thereby respond to direction from heaven, not imposing their decisions on heaven.

“Confess Your Sins to One Another”

So, then, when is it appropriate for Christians to confess sins to one another? In the case of serious sin (not every little failing), an individual should confess to responsible overseers of the congregation. Even if a sin is not grievous but the sinner’s conscience troubles him excessively, there is great value in confessing and seeking spiritual help.

In this regard the Bible writer James says: “If one of you is [spiritually] ill, he should send for the elders of the church, and they must anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him. The prayer of faith will save the sick man and the Lord will raise him up again; and if he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. So confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another.”—James 5:14-16, JB.

In these words, there is no suggestion of a formal, ritualistic, auricular confession. Rather, when a Christian is so burdened with sin that he feels he cannot pray, he should call the appointed elders, or overseers, of the congregation, and

* In contrast, see Mark 3:29; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26. In these scriptures, the Bible writers show that God definitely does not forgive all sins.



they will pray with him. To help him recover spiritually, they will also apply the oil of God's Word.—Psalm 141:5; compare Luke 5:31, 32; Revelation 3:18.

Noteworthy is John the Baptizer's admonition to "produce fruit that befits repentance." (Matthew 3:8; compare Acts 26:20.) A truly repentant wrongdoer abandons his sinful course. Like King David of ancient Israel, the repentant sinner who confesses his error to God will receive forgiveness. David wrote: "My sin I finally confessed to you, and my error I did not cover. I said: 'I shall make confession over my transgressions to Jehovah.' And you yourself pardoned the error of my sins." —Psalm 32:5.

David confessed to Jehovah, who granted forgiveness

Penitential acts cannot earn such forgiveness. Only God can grant it. He takes the requirements of perfect justice into account, but his forgiveness expresses his love for mankind. His forgiveness is also a manifestation of undeserved kindness founded on the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ and is extended solely to repentant sinners who have turned away from what is bad in God's sight. (Psalm 51:7; Isaiah 1:18; John 3:16; Romans 3:23-26) Only those forgiven by Jehovah God will gain eternal life. And to receive such forgiveness, we must make confession in God's way, not man's.

JEHOVAH'S CELESTIAL CHARIOT ON THE MOVE

*"As regards the wheels, to them it was called out in my ears,
'O wheelwork!'" —EZEKIEL 10:13.*

IN THESE days of sleek jetliners, world leaders may feel they enjoy the ultimate in travel efficiency. Yet, 2,600 years ago, Jehovah God revealed that he has a superlative mode of transport, the likes of which no engineer has ever seen. It is a vast, awesome chariot!

1. What mode of transport does Jehovah have?

Does it seem strange that the Creator of the universe rides in a chariotlike vehicle? No, for Jehovah's celestial vehicle differs greatly from any conceived by men.



² In chapter 1 of Ezekiel's prophecy, Jehovah is pictured as riding in a colossal celestial chariot. This awe-inspiring four-wheeled vehicle is self-propelled and can do amazing things. Ezekiel saw this heavenly chariot in vision in 613 B.C.E., when he was by one of the canals of ancient Babylon. The prophet first draws our attention to those attending upon the celestial chariot of Jehovah. As we read, let us try to visualize what Ezekiel saw.

Four Living Creatures

³ Ezekiel reports: "I began to see, and, look! there

2. How does Ezekiel chapter 1 depict Jehovah's celestial chariot, and to whom does the prophet first draw our attention?

3. What is denoted by the four faces of each of the four cherubs?



was a tempestuous wind coming from the north, a great cloud mass and quivering fire, and it had a brightness all around . . . And out of the midst of it there was the likeness of four living creatures." (Ezekiel 1:4, 5) Each of these four living creatures, or cherubs, had four wings and four faces. They had a lion's face, denoting Jehovah's justice; a bull's face, representing God's power; and an eagle's face, signifying His wisdom. They also had a man's face, designating Jehovah's love.—Deuteronomy 32:4; Job 12:13; Isaiah 40:26; Ezekiel 1:10; 1 John 4:8.

⁴ Each cherub had a face looking in one of four directions. Hence, the cherubs could change course instantly and follow the face that looked in the desired direction. But what were those cherubs like for speed? Why, they could move with the speed of lightning! (Ezekiel 1:14) No man-made vehicle has ever achieved that speed.

⁵ Suddenly, the chariot's wheels come into view. How unusual they are! Verses 16 and 18 say: "Their appearance and their structure were just as when a wheel proved to be in the midst of a wheel. And as for their rims, they had such height that they caused fearfulness; and their rims were full of eyes all around the four of them." A wheel alongside each cherub would result in four wheels in four related places. The wheels glowed like chrysolite, a transparent or translucent yellow or green stone. This adds light and beauty to this glorious vision. Since the rims of the wheels were "full of eyes all around," they were not going blindly in just any direction. And the wheels were enormously high, thus being able to cover a great distance with just one revolution on their axis. They, like the four cherubs, could move as fast as lightning.

Wheels Within Wheels

⁶ Something else was unusual. Each wheel had a wheel inside it—one of the same diameter that fitted crosswise into the base wheel. Only in this way could the wheels be said to "go on their four respective sides." (Verse 17) Instantly, the wheels could change direction because there was a side of the wheel facing in each direction. The

4. Why did the cherubs have four faces, and what were the cherubs like for speed?

5. How did Ezekiel describe the chariot's wheels and their rims?

6. (a) How was it that the chariot had wheels within wheels?
(b) The wheels conformed the direction of their movement to what?

wheels conformed their direction of movement to that of the four cherubs. On the four wheels, the body of God's chariot could ride by invisible support similar to a powerful craft that is held up by a cushion of air as it skims over water.

⁷ Where did the wheels get this power to conform to all the movements of the four cherubs? From the holy spirit of Almighty God. Verse 20 says: "Wherever the spirit inclined to go, they would go . . . The spirit of the living creature was in the wheels." The same invisible active force of God that was within the cherubs was in those wheels.

⁸ The wheels are referred to by the term "wheelwork." (Ezekiel 10:13) This was evidently occasioned by what each wheel does. It rolls along or whirls. Designating this part of the celestial chariot in such a way calls attention to the speed with which the celestial chariot moves. Although its wheels whirled so speedily, they could always see their way because of their fullness of eyes.

⁹ But now let us look and see what is above those fearfully high, fast-moving four wheels. Verse 22 of Ezekiel chapter 1 says: "Over the heads of the living creatures there was the likeness of an expanse like the sparkle of awesome ice, stretched out over their heads up above." The expanse, though solid, was translucent, "like the sparkle of awesome ice." It was sparkling like thousands of diamonds as the sun strikes them. Awe-inspiring indeed!

The Glorious Chariot Rider

¹⁰ Evidently, the chariot stops so that its Rider may speak to Ezekiel. Above the

7. What was the power source for the wheels?
8. What name was given the wheels, and why?
9. How did Ezekiel describe what was above the chariot's fast-moving four wheels?
10. (a) How are the throne and the One on the throne described? (b) What is denoted by the fact that the chariot Rider is enveloped in glory?

expanse, there is the likeness of a throne, sapphire, or deep blue, in appearance. On the throne, there is Someone whose appearance is like an earthling man. The human form could best help Ezekiel to appreciate this divine manifestation. But that human form is enveloped in glory, so that it glows like electrum, a shining alloy of silver and gold. What quivering beauty! From the waist of this manlike form, this elegant glory extends both upward and downward. The whole form is thus surrounded with glory. This indicates that Jehovah is indescribably glorious. Moreover, the chariot Rider is accompanied by a lovely rainbow. What calmness and tranquillity a rainbow communicates after a storm! Having that calm attitude, Jehovah keeps his attributes of wisdom, justice, power, and love in perfect balance.

¹¹ Jehovah's chariot and throne are surrounded by light and beautiful colors. What a contrast to Satan, the prince of darkness and of the occult! And how was Ezekiel affected by all of this? "When I got to see it," he says, "then I fell upon my face, and I began to hear the voice of one speaking."—Ezekiel 1:28.

What the Chariot Depicted

¹² What is pictured by this marvelous chariot? The celestial, or heavenly, organization of Jehovah God. It is composed of all of his holy spirit creatures in the invisible realm—seraphs, cherubs, and angels. Since Jehovah is the Most High God, all of his spirit creatures are subject to him, and he rides them in the sense of benevolently dominating them and using them according to his purpose.—Psalm 103:20.

11. How was Ezekiel affected by the vision of Jehovah's chariot and throne?
12. What is pictured by Jehovah's celestial chariot?

¹³ Jehovah rides this organization as if on a chariot, causing it to move to wherever his spirit impels it to move. It is not running wild, without control or intelligent supervision. God is not letting this organization go in any direction it might be inclined to go. Rather, it follows his directions. Together, all are moving unitedly forward to the full accomplishment of God's objectives. What a marvelous heavenly organization is revealed by this vision of Jehovah's four-wheeled celestial chariot on the move! In harmony with this, Jehovah's organization is represented as being foursquare, in perfect balance.

Appointed as a Watchman

¹⁴ But who is pictured by the prophet Ezekiel? From the facts of history, it is evident that the body of spirit-anointed Witnesses of Jehovah has been associated with the celestial chariot. Thus, Ezekiel well pictures the anointed remnant of Jehovah's Witnesses since 1919. Spiritually, God's heavenly organization got in touch with the anointed remnant in that year, to revive them as Witnesses of Jehovah to all the world. (Compare Revelation 11:1-12.) That chariotlike organization was then on the move, even as it is today. In fact, its wheels of progress are turning faster than ever. Jehovah rides swiftly onward!

¹⁵ Ezekiel desired to know why the celestial chariot had drawn up before him and stopped. He found out as a voice came to him from the One sitting upon the chariot. Overwhelmed at this awe-inspiring spectacle, Ezekiel prostrated himself. Listen as the voice of the Rider of the celestial

13. (a) Why can it be said that Jehovah rides his organization? (b) How does the vision of Jehovah's four-wheeled chariot on the move affect you?

14. Who is pictured by the prophet Ezekiel?

15. What does the voice of the Rider of the celestial chariot say, and what commission does Ezekiel receive?

chariot says: "Son of man, stand up upon your feet that I may speak with you." (Ezekiel 2:1) Jehovah then commissions Ezekiel to be a watchman and to warn the rebellious house of Israel. He is even commissioned to speak in the divine name. Ezekiel's name means "God Strengthens." So it is that God has strengthened the Ezekiel class and sent them forth, appointing them as a watchman to Christendom.

¹⁶ The vision of the celestial chariot was sobering and stunning to Ezekiel, but it also prepared him for his commission as a watchman to sound the warning of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. The same has been true of the watchman class today. Their understanding of the vision of Jehovah's celestial chariot on the move has had great impact on the anointed remnant. In 1931 they learned more about Ezekiel's vision, as revealed in *Vindication*, Book One. They were then filled with such sober appreciation that from the issue of October 15, 1931, to that of August 1, 1950, the front-cover design of *The Watchtower* carried in its upper right-hand corner an artist's conception of Ezekiel's vision of the celestial chariot. Thus, the Ezekiel class has acted upon the commission given them, and they have been serving as a watchman, sounding out the divine warning. The time for Christendom's fiery destruction from Jehovah enthroned on his celestial chariot was never nearer!

¹⁷ Today, "a great crowd" of sheeplike people are associated with the anointed remnant. (Revelation 7:9) Together, they are sounding forth the warning of the coming destruction upon Christendom

16, 17. (a) How did the vision of the celestial chariot benefit Ezekiel? (b) In our day, how has the understanding of the vision of the celestial chariot affected the Ezekiel class and the great crowd?

and this entire diabolic system of things. That warning work is going on apace, and as indicated at Revelation 14:6, 7, the angels are supporting it.

Moving With the Celestial Chariot

¹⁸ The submissive angels move in concert as part of God's heavenly organization while assisting Jehovah's earthly servants in fulfilling their commission to declare divine judgment warnings. If we desire the continued protection and guidance of these mighty angelic servants of God, we too must move in concert and keep pace with the symbolic wheelwork. Moreover, as part of Jehovah's visible organization moving in parallel with his celestial chariot, we must be sensitive to the leadings of God's spirit. (Compare Philippians 2:13.) If we are Jehovah's Witnesses, we must move in the same direction as the celestial chariot. We surely must not work at cross-purposes with it. When given direction in the way we should go, we should follow it. Thus, the congregation is not divided.—1 Corinthians 1:10.

18. What must be done to get the continued support of the angels, and to what should we be sensitive?

How Would You Answer?

- What qualities are represented by the four living creatures seen by Ezekiel?
- Jehovah's celestial chariot pictures what?
- Who is pictured by God's prophet Ezekiel?
- How has the understanding of Jehovah's celestial chariot affected the Ezekiel class and the great crowd?

¹⁹ The eyes all around the wheels of God's chariot indicate alertness. Just as the heavenly organization is alert, so we must be alert to support Jehovah's earthly organization. On a congregational level, we can show that support by cooperating with the local elders. (Hebrews 13:17) And in these turbulent times, Christians need to stick very close to Jehovah's organization. We do not want to place our own interpretation on events, for then we would not be moving with Jehovah's celestial chariot. Let us always ask ourselves, 'Which way is the celestial chariot moving?' If we move ahead with God's visible organization, we will also be moving with the invisible organization.

²⁰ In this regard, Paul wrote: "Brothers, I do not yet consider myself as having laid hold on it; but there is one thing about it: Forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things ahead, I am pursuing down toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God by means of Christ Jesus. Let us, then, as many of us as are mature, be of this mental attitude; and if you are mentally inclined otherwise in any respect, God will reveal the above attitude to you. At any rate, to what extent we have made progress, let us go on walking orderly in this same routine."—Philippians 3:13-16.

²¹ Here the word "routine" does not mean a bad rut from which we cannot extricate ourselves. Jehovah's servants have a fine routine by means of which they make spiritual advancement.

19. (a) Just as the celestial chariot's wheels have eyes all around them, to what must Jehovah's people be alert? (b) What should be our course of action in these turbulent times?

20. What fine counsel does the apostle Paul give at Philippians 3:13-16?

21. By following what routine is it possible to make spiritual advancement with God's organization?

It is a routine of engaging in personal Bible study, attending congregation meetings, regularly preaching the good news of the Kingdom, and reflecting the qualities of God's heavenly organization. Such a routine enables them to follow the leadings of Jehovah's celestial chariotlike organization. By persevering in this manner, we shall attain our goal, whether it is the prize of immortal life in the heavens or everlasting life on a paradise earth.

²² As John 10:16 indicates, the "other sheep" and the Ezekiel class would be unitedly organized. Thus, it is essential that all in Jehovah's organization grasp the full meaning and significance of the vision recorded in Ezekiel chapter 1 if they are to move in concert with God's celestial chariot. The vision of it helps us

22. (a) For the anointed remnant and the great crowd of other sheep to be unitedly organized, what must be done? (b) What does not escape Jehovah's notice?

to appreciate that we should move in harmony with God's organization, visible and invisible. Keep in mind, too, that Jehovah's eyes "are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him." (2 Chronicles 16:9) Not a single thing escapes Jehovah's notice, especially anything regarding his purpose to vindicate himself as Universal Sovereign.

²³ Jehovah's celestial chariot is certainly on the move today. Soon everything will be brought to glory in harmony with the glorious One who rides that chariot—all in vindication of him as the Sovereign Lord of the universe. His seraphs, cherubs, and angels are backing us up in our great worldwide preaching work. Let us move ahead, then, with Jehovah's heavenly organization. But how can we keep pace with that fast-moving celestial chariot?

23. With Jehovah's celestial chariot on the move, what must we do?

KEEP PACE WITH JEHOVAH'S CELESTIAL CHARIOT

"You must speak my words to them, regardless of whether they hear or they refrain."—EZEKIEL 2:7.

JEHOVAH'S celestial chariot now stands before his servants. With eyes of faith, they behold that regal conveyance of their Sovereign Lord. It is glorious, awesome, majestic.

² The same royal carriage pulled up before God's prophet Ezekiel in vision some

1, 2. What royal carriage did Ezekiel behold, and what was he told?

2,600 years ago. From this throne-bearing chariot—God's heavenly organization of spirit creatures—Jehovah issued this dramatic command to Ezekiel: "The sons insolent of face and hard of heart—I am sending you to them, and you must say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said.' And as for them, whether they will hear or will refrain—for

they are a rebellious house—they will certainly know also that a prophet himself happened to be in the midst of them.”—Ezekiel 2:4, 5.

³ Ezekiel resolutely carried out that commission, serving as a single instrument in the divine hand. Similarly, God now has a single organizational instrument in his control. The Ezekiel class, the anointed remnant, is at the forefront of the work of giving a final witness, with “a great crowd” of “other sheep” rallying around in support. (Revelation 7:9, 10; John 10:16) Together they are “one flock,” with the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ, leading them under the sovereignty of the grand Chariot Rider, Jehovah God.

⁴ Under Jehovah’s direction, this worldwide organization has grown from small beginnings to become a powerful agency for proclaiming the decree to “fear God and give him glory, because the hour of the judgment by him has arrived.” (Revelation 14:7) As Ezekiel did not raise up or appoint himself as a prophet, so God’s visible organization did not create or appoint itself. It did not spring from human will or effort. The divine Chariot Rider caused this organization to come into existence. Empowered by God’s spirit and backed by holy angels, Jehovah’s people have experienced such dramatic expansion that ‘the small one has become a mighty nation.’—Isaiah 60:22.

⁵ Over 4,000,000 Witnesses of Jehovah are proclaiming the Kingdom message in 212 lands. They are grouped in more than 63,000 congregations organized into circuits and districts. Extensive branch office and printing facilities are operating under

3. What modern-day counterpart does Ezekiel have?

4, 5. How did God’s visible organization come into existence, and what has it experienced in harmony with Isaiah 60:22?

the direction of the Governing Body as the center of the headquarters organization. As though they were one person, all are moving forward, preaching the good news, educating those who respond, building meeting places. Yes, Jehovah’s visible organization is keeping pace with the celestial chariot and its Rider.

⁶ If you are one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, are you keeping pace with God’s visible organization? Doing so is not simply a matter of attending Christian meetings and spending time in the ministry. Primarily, pace has to do with progress and spiritual growth. It involves having a positive outlook, setting proper priorities, and being up-to-date. If we are keeping pace with Jehovah’s celestial chariot, our lives are consistent with the message we proclaim.

⁷ In the matter of keeping pace, Jehovah’s modern-day servants can learn much from Ezekiel’s example. Though specially appointed as a prophet by Jehovah, Ezekiel still had feelings, concerns, and needs. For instance, as a comparatively young married man, he suffered the grief of losing his wife in death. Yet, he never lost sight of his commission as Jehovah’s prophet. By considering how Ezekiel conducted himself in other respects too, we can strengthen ourselves to keep pace with God’s visible organization. This will enable us to keep pace with his invisible organization.

Commission Accepted and Fulfilled

⁸ Ezekiel set a fine example by accepting his commission and fulfilling it. However,

6. What is involved in keeping pace with Jehovah’s visible organization?

7. Why consider Ezekiel’s conduct as God’s prophet?

8. With regard to his commission, what example did Ezekiel set?



What is required to keep pace with Jehovah's celestial chariot?

¹⁰ As in Ezekiel's case, the anointed Ezekiel class have accepted their God-given commission and are fulfilling it. If we are Jehovah's Witnesses, we should remember that our life and the lives of others depend upon our obedience. (1 Timothy 4:15, 16) Each Witness needs to keep pace with Jehovah's organization. God will not tie us to his chariot and drag us along. Apathy and a divided heart demean the Chariot Rider. So Jehovah's visible organization exhorts us to keep divine interests at the center of our lives. A consistent response to such exhortation keeps us in step with God's organization and elevates our sacred ministry above the routine, the mechanical. Certainly, Jehovah's people as a whole display remarkable devotion. Our individual part is to maintain the pace.

obedience and courage were needed to carry it out, for we read: "O son of man, do not be afraid of them; and of their words do not be afraid, because there are obstinate ones and things pricking you and it is among scorpions that you are dwelling. Of their words do not you be afraid, and at their faces do not you be struck with terror, for they are a rebellious house. And you must speak my words to them, regardless of whether they hear or they refrain, for they are a case of rebellion. And you, O son of man, hear what I am speaking to you. Do not become rebellious like the rebellious house."—Ezekiel 2:6-8.

⁹ Ezekiel was not to be apathetic or fearful, needing to be prodded constantly to fulfill his commission. He would be free of bloodguilt only if he willingly and boldly spoke Jehovah's words. Ezekiel was told: "In case you have warned someone wicked and he does not actually turn back from his wickedness and from his wicked way, he himself for his error will die; but as for you, you will have delivered your own soul."—Ezekiel 3:19.

9. Only by doing what would Ezekiel be free of bloodguilt?

God's Words Taken Into the Heart

¹¹ Ezekiel also set a fine example by taking God's words into his heart. On command, he ate a God-given roll, or scroll. "It came to be in my mouth like honey for sweetness," said Ezekiel. Though the roll was filled with "dirges and moaning and wailing," it was sweet to Ezekiel because he appreciated the honor of representing Jehovah. It was a sweet experience to the prophet to fulfill his God-given assignment. God told him: "Son of man, all my words that I shall speak to you, take into your heart and hear with your own ears." (Ezekiel 2:9-3:3, 10) Those visions made Ezekiel acutely aware of what God allowed him to participate in and strengthened his relationship with Jehovah.

10. How has the Ezekiel class proved to be like the prophet?

11. What example did Ezekiel set as regards God's words?

Ezekiel appreciated his God-given privileges. Do you?

¹² Ezekiel was given visions and messages for various purposes and audiences. He had to listen carefully and then speak and act as directed. New information and procedures were revealed to him progressively during some 22 years of prophetic service. Sometimes Ezekiel spoke a specially worded message. At other times, he resorted to pantomime, as in lying before a brick symbolizing Jerusalem. (Ezekiel 4:1-8) His example in personal matters, such as his reaction to his wife's death, also carried a message. (Ezekiel 24:15-19) He had to be current, always presenting the right message and taking the right action at the right time. Ezekiel was bound in a very close, progressive working relationship with Jehovah.

¹³ Similarly, to build and maintain a close relationship with Jehovah as his fellow workers, we must take God's Word into our heart. (1 Corinthians 3:9) Keeping pace with God's visible organization in this respect requires that we keep up with the flow of spiritual food as it is supplied at the proper time. (Matthew 24:45-47) The "pure language" is constantly expanding. (Zephaniah 3:9) Only if we are up-to-date will we really be able to respond obediently to the direction of the Chariot Rider.

12. What did Ezekiel do in more than two decades of prophetic service?

13. How can we build a close relationship with Jehovah?



¹⁴ To that end, we need a good routine of personal prayer, private study, and participation in the holy ministry of the good news. (Romans 15:16) Recall Ezekiel's example in eating the roll containing God's message. Ezekiel consumed the entire roll, not part of it. He did not pick and choose morsels that might have been more to his personal taste. Similarly, our personal study of the Bible and Christian publications should be regulated to keep pace with the flow of spiritual food, and we should partake of all that is put on the spiritual table, including deeper truths.

¹⁵ Do we make prayerful effort to get the sense of the solid food? Keeping pace requires that our knowledge and understanding progress beyond the elementary, for we read: "Everyone that partakes of milk is unacquainted with the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to mature people, to those

14, 15. What routine is needed to keep the pace set by God's organization?

who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong." (Hebrews 5:13, 14) Yes, making spiritual progress is a vital part of keeping the pace God's organization sets.

Not Deterred by Indifference

¹⁶ Ezekiel also set a fine example by being obedient and not allowing himself to be deterred by indifference or ridicule. Similarly, by keeping up with the development of the pure language, we are attuned to the direction taken by the royal Chariot Rider. Thus we are equipped to respond to his commands, strengthened to be undeterred by the indifference or ridicule of those to whom we speak Jehovah's judgment message. As with Ezekiel, God has forewarned us that some people would actively oppose, being hardheaded and hard-hearted. Others would not hear because they do not want to listen to Jehovah. (Ezekiel 3:7-9) Still others would be hypocrites, as Ezekiel 33:31, 32 states: "They will come in to you, like the coming in of people, and sit before you as my people; and they will certainly hear your words but these they will not do, for with their mouth they are expressing lustful desires and after their unjust gain is where their heart is going. And, look! you are to them like a song of sensuous loves, like one with a pretty voice and playing a stringed instrument well. And they will certainly hear your words, but there are none doing them."

¹⁷ What would be the outcome? Verse 33 adds: "And when it comes true—look! it must come true—they will also have to know that a prophet himself had proved to be in the midst of them." Those words reveal that Ezekiel did not give up because of lack of response. The apathy of others

16, 17. How did Ezekiel deal with indifference, ridicule, and lack of response?

did not make him apathetic. Whether people listened or not, he obeyed God and fulfilled his commission.

¹⁸ Jehovah's visible organization is now intensifying the proclamation that all should fear God and give him glory. Do you persevere when criticized for taking a bold stand in giving the Kingdom witness, for being moral in your life-style? Are you standing firm when you are the target of pressure because of not accepting blood, not worshiping national emblems, not celebrating worldly holidays?—Matthew 5: 11, 12; 1 Peter 4:4, 5.

¹⁹ This course is not an easy one, but those who endure to the end will be saved. (Matthew 24:13) With Jehovah's help, we will not let people of the world make us like them and thus get us out of pace with Jehovah's celestial chariot. (Ezekiel 2:8; Romans 12:21) If we are keeping pace with the chariotlike angelic organization, we will promptly comply with direction and instructions received through God's visible organization. Jehovah provides what we need to meet attacks on our faith, to maintain our grip on the Word of life, and to keep our eyes fixed on the spiritual realities that center on the Royal Rider of the celestial chariot.

Motivated to Keep Pace

²⁰ Ezekiel's visions should motivate us to keep pace. He not only declared God's judgments on Israel but also recorded prophecies of restoration. Ezekiel pointed to the One who would have the legal right to rule on Jehovah's throne at the appointed time. (Ezekiel 21:27) That Royal Servant, "David," would regather God's

18. What questions might you ask yourself?
19. As to direction, what will we do if we are keeping pace with Jehovah's celestial chariot?
20. What are some things recorded by Ezekiel that should motivate us to keep pace?

people and shepherd them. (Ezekiel 34:23, 24) Though they would be attacked by Gog of Magog, God would deliver them, and His foes would be forced to 'know Jehovah' even as they went into destruction. (Ezekiel 38:8-12; 39:4, 7) Then God's servants would enjoy endless life in a system of pure worship involving a spiritual temple. Waters of life flowing from the sanctuary would be a source of nourishment and healing, and a land inheritance would be apportioned for their blessing.

—Ezekiel 40:2; 47:9, 12, 21.

²¹ How thrilled Ezekiel must have been to record those prophecies! Yet, the role of Jehovah's modern-day Witnesses is greater. We are living when some of those prophecies are being fulfilled. In fact, we are active participants in certain fulfillments. By the way we live, do we individually show our conviction that Jesus now rules as the One having the legal right? Are we personally convinced that Jehovah will soon sanctify himself and deliver into his new world those who keep pace with his organization? (2 Peter 3:13) Such conviction, accompanied by works of faith, demonstrates that we are indeed keeping pace with Jehovah's celestial chariot.

Continue to Keep Pace

²² Having 'put our hand to the plow,' we must not look back longingly to anything the world has to offer. (Luke 9:62; 17:32; Titus 2:11-13) So let us curb any inclination to store up treasures on earth, and let us keep our eye simple, focused on the Kingdom. (Matthew 6:19-22, 33) Simplifying our lives, shedding mundane weights wherever possible, will help us to keep pace with Jehovah's organization. (He-

21. Why is the role of Jehovah's modern-day Witnesses greater than that of Ezekiel?
22. What can be done to avoid distractions so as to maintain a clear spiritual outlook?

brews 12:1-3) Distractions can blur our vision of the celestial chariot and its Rider. But with his help, we can maintain a clear spiritual outlook, as did Ezekiel.

²³ Part of our responsibility as Jehovah's Witnesses involves helping the many new ones to keep pace with God's celestial chariot. In 1990 nearly 10,000,000 attended the Memorial of Jesus Christ's death. While many of these individuals may be attending a few Christian meetings, they need to see the importance of progressing with Jehovah's visible organization. As faithful Witnesses, we can help them by the spirit we show and the encouragement we give.

²⁴ These are climactic times. With eyes of faith, we have seen the celestial chariot pull up before us. The regal Chariot Rider has given his visible organization a commission to preach to the nations so that, in the finale, they will know who Jehovah is. (Ezekiel 39:7) Make the most of this grand opportunity to share in the vindication of God's sovereignty and the sanctification of his holy name by keeping pace with Jehovah's celestial chariot.

23. What do faithful Witnesses need to do in behalf of new ones?

24. We should do what in these climactic times?

How Would You Answer?

- Ezekiel set what example as far as his commission was concerned?
- What does it mean to keep pace with God's organization?
- How did Ezekiel view Jehovah's words?
- How can we follow Ezekiel's example in dealing with indifference?
- What should motivate Jehovah's servants to keep pace with his celestial chariot?

WHO REALLY HAVE A HEAVENLY CALLING?

JEHOVAH loves the human race. Why, this love is so great that he gave his Son, Jesus Christ, as a ransom to redeem what our forefather Adam lost! And what was that? Eternal, perfect human life with all its rights and prospects. (John 3:16) The ransom was also an expression of Jesus' love for mankind.—Matthew 20:28.

Divine love has been displayed in opening up two God-given hopes based on the merit of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. (1 John 2:1, 2) Before Jesus died as a man, the only hope open to those having divine approval was that of life in an earthly paradise. (Luke 23:43) After Pentecost 33 C.E., however, Jehovah gave a heavenly hope to a "little flock." (Luke 12:32) But what has happened in recent times? Since 1931 the Kingdom message has focused more attention on the "other sheep," and from 1935 onward God has been drawing "a great crowd" of such sheeplike ones to himself through Christ. (John 10:16; Revelation 7:9) In their heart, God has put the hope of eternal life in an earthly paradise. They want to eat perfect food, have loving dominion over animals, and enjoy association with righteous fellow humans forever.

Compassionate Priests and Kings

Since love moved Jesus to give his life as a ransom, surely he will be a compassionate heavenly King. Yet, Jesus will not be alone in uplifting mankind to perfection during his Thousand Year Reign. Jehovah has made provision for other compassionate kings in heaven. Yes, "they will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as

kings with him for the thousand years."
—Revelation 20:1-6.

How many rulers will Christ have, and how are they chosen for such an awesome privilege? Well, the apostle John saw 144,000 on heavenly Mount Zion with the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Having been "bought from among mankind," they will know what it means to experience trials, endure the burdens of imperfection, suffer, and die as humans. (Revelation 14:1-5; Job 14:1) Therefore, what compassionate king-priests they will be!

The Spirit's Witness

The 144,000 "have an anointing from the holy one," Jehovah. (1 John 2:20) It is an anointing to a heavenly hope. God has 'put his seal upon them and has given them the token of what is to come, that is, the spirit, in their hearts.'—2 Corinthians 1:21, 22.

Yes, those with the heavenly calling have the testimony of God's spirit to that effect. Concerning this, Paul wrote at Romans 8:15-17: "You did not receive a spirit of slavery causing fear again, but you received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which spirit we cry out: 'Abba, Father!' The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ, provided we suffer together that we may also be glorified together." It is by means of God's spirit, or active force, that anointed ones cry out, "Abba, Father!"

The chief evidence that a person has been anointed to the heavenly calling is a

spirit, or dominant sense, of sonship. (Galatians 4:6, 7) Such an individual is absolutely sure that he has been begotten by God to spiritual sonship as one of the 144,000 joint heirs of the heavenly Kingdom. He can testify that his heavenly hope is not his own cultivated desire or his imagination; rather, it is from Jehovah as a result of the action of God's spirit toward him.—1 Peter 1:3, 4.

Under the influence of God's holy spirit, the spirit, or dominant attitude, of anointed ones acts as an impelling force. It moves them to respond positively to what God's Word says about the heavenly hope. They also respond in a positive way to Jehovah's dealings with them by means of the holy spirit. Thus, they are sure that they are God's spiritual children and heirs.

When anointed ones read what God's Word says about his spiritual children and the heavenly hope, their spontaneous inclination is to say within themselves, 'This means me!' Yes, they respond joyfully when their Father's Word promises a heavenly reward. They say, 'That means me!' when they read: "Beloved ones, now we are children of God." (1 John 3:2) And when anointed ones read that God has brought people forth "to be certain firstfruits of his creatures," their mental inclination is to respond, 'Yes, he brought me forth for that purpose.' (James 1:18) They know that they have been "baptized into Christ Jesus" and into his death. (Romans 6:3) So they have the firm conviction of being part of Christ's spiritual body and entertain the hope of undergoing a death like his and being resurrected to heavenly life.

To inherit the heavenly Kingdom, anointed ones must 'do their utmost to make their calling and choosing sure.' (2 Peter 1:5-11) They walk by faith and keep growing spiritually, as do those with earthly hopes. So, what else is there to the witness of the spirit?

Why They Partake

Anointed Christians do not want to go to heaven because of malcontent over present-day earthly life. (Compare Jude 3, 4, 16.) Rather, the holy spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are God's children. They are also certain that they have been taken into the new covenant. The parties to this covenant are Jehovah God and spiritual Israel. (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Galatians 6:15, 16; Hebrews 12:22-24) This covenant, made operative by Jesus' shed blood, takes out a people for Jehovah's name and makes these anointed Christians part of Abraham's "seed." (Galatians 3: 26-29; Acts 15:14) The new covenant remains in operation until all spiritual Israelites are resurrected to immortal life in heaven.

Furthermore, those who truly have the heavenly calling have no doubt that they are also in the covenant for the heavenly Kingdom. Jesus referred to this covenant between himself and his followers when he said: "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 22:28-30) This covenant was inaugurated toward Jesus' disciples by their being anointed with holy spirit on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E. It remains operative between Christ and his associate kings forever.—Revelation 22:5.

Those having the heavenly calling are positive that they are in the new covenant and the covenant for a Kingdom. Therefore, they properly partake of the emblematic bread and wine at annual commemorations of the Lord's Evening Meal, or Memorial of Jesus Christ's death. The unleavened bread symbolizes Jesus' sinless human body, and the wine his perfect blood

poured out in death and validating the new covenant.—1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

If Jehovah has cultivated in you the undeniable hope of heavenly life, you are counting on that. You offer prayers in expression of that hope. It engrosses you, and you cannot get it out of your system. You have consuming spiritual aspirations. But if you are divided and uncertain, then surely you should not partake of the emblems of the Lord's Evening Meal.

Why Wrong Assumptions?

Some may wrongly partake of the Memorial emblems because they really do not acknowledge that anointing "depends, not upon the one wishing nor upon the one running, but upon God." (Romans 9:16) It is not up to the individual to decide that he or she would like to be taken into the new covenant and become a joint heir with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom. Jehovah's choice is what counts. In ancient Israel, God chose those who would serve as his priests, and he executed Korah for presumptuously seeking the priesthood divinely placed in Aaron's family. (Exodus 28:1; Numbers 16:4-11, 31-35; 2 Chronicles 26:18; Hebrews 5:4, 5) Similarly, it would displease Jehovah if a person presented himself as one called to be among the heavenly kings and priests when God had not given him such a calling.—Compare 1 Timothy 5:24, 25.

A person may mistakenly assume that he has the heavenly calling because of strong emotion arising from severe problems. Death of a mate or another tragedy might cause a person to lose interest in life on earth. Or a close associate may profess to be of the anointed, and the person may desire the same destiny. Such factors might make him feel that life in heaven is for him. But this is not God's way of giving anyone the spirit of sonship. It would show

a lack of gratitude for God's purpose regarding the earth if one desired to go to heaven because of undesirable situations or emotional distress related to earthly life.

Former religious views might also cause a person to conclude wrongly that he has the heavenly calling. Perhaps he was once associated with a false religion that held out heavenly life as the only hope for the faithful. Hence, a Christian needs to guard against being swayed by emotion and past wrong views.

Careful Examination Vital

A very significant point was made by the apostle Paul when he wrote: "Whoever eats the loaf or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty respecting the body and the blood of the Lord. First let a man approve himself after scrutiny, and thus let him eat of the loaf and drink of the cup. For he that eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment against himself if he does not discern the body." (1 Corinthians 11:27-29) Therefore, a baptized Christian who in recent years began to think that he received the heavenly calling should give the matter very careful and prayerful thought.

Such a person might also ask himself: 'Have others influenced me to entertain the idea of heavenly life?' This would be improper, for God has not assigned anyone to recruit others for such a privilege. A tendency toward fantasy would be no indication of anointing by God, and he does not anoint Kingdom heirs by causing them to hear voices with messages to that effect.

Some might ask themselves: 'Before becoming a Christian, was I involved in drug abuse? Am I using medications that affect the emotions? Have I received treatment for mental or emotional problems?' Some have said that they first fought against what they thought was the heavenly hope.

Others have said that for a time God took away their earthly hope and finally gave them a heavenly one. But such a procedure is contrary to divine dealings. Moreover, faith is not uncertain; it is sure.—Hebrews 11:6.

A person might also ask himself: ‘Do I desire prominence? Am I ambitious for a position of authority now or as one of the kings and priests associated with Christ?’ In the first century C.E., when a general invitation was going out to seek entrance into the heavenly Kingdom, not all anointed Christians held positions of responsibility as members of the governing body or as elders or ministerial servants. Many were women, and they had no special authority; nor does spirit anointing bring extraordinary understanding of God’s Word, for Paul found it necessary to instruct and counsel certain anointed ones. (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:11-14) Those with the heavenly calling do not view themselves as prominent individuals, and they do not draw attention to their being anointed ones. Rather, they manifest the humility rightly expected of those having “the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16) They also realize that God’s righteous requirements must be met by all Christians, whether their hope is heavenly or earthly.

Professing to have a heavenly calling does not bring a person special revelations. God has a channel of communication through which he provides spiritual food for his earthly organization. (Matthew 24:45-47) So nobody should think that being an anointed Christian gives him wisdom superior to that of the “great crowd” with the earthly hope. (Revelation 7:9) Spirit anointing is not indicated by proficiency in witnessing, answering Scriptural questions, or giving Bible talks, for Christians with the earthly hope also do very well in these respects. Like anointed ones, they too are living exemplary Christian

lives. For that matter, Samson and others of pre-Christian times had God’s spirit and were filled with zeal and understanding. Yet, none of that ‘great cloud of witnesses’ had the heavenly hope.—Hebrews 11:32-38; 12:1; Exodus 35:30, 31; Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Samuel 16:13; Ezekiel 2:2.

Remember Who Makes the Choice

If a fellow believer asks about the heavenly calling, an appointed elder or other mature Christian can discuss the matter with him. But one person cannot make this decision for another, and it is Jehovah who imparts the heavenly hope. An individual who truly has the heavenly calling never needs to ask fellow Christians if he has such a hope. Anointed ones “have been given a new birth, not by corruptible, but by incorruptible reproductive seed, through the word of the living and enduring God.” (1 Peter 1:23) By his spirit and Word, God implants the “seed” that makes the individual “a new creation,” with a heavenly hope. (2 Corinthians 5:17) Yes, Jehovah makes the choice.

When studying the Bible with new ones, therefore, it is not good to suggest that they try to decide whether they have the heavenly calling. But what if an anointed Christian proved unfaithful and a replacement was needed? Then it would be reasonable to conclude that God would give the heavenly calling to someone who had been exemplary in rendering faithful service to our heavenly Father for very many years.

Today, the main thrust of God’s message is not for people to become members of Christ’s heavenly bride. Rather, “the spirit and the bride keep on saying: ‘Come!’” This is an invitation to life in an earthly paradise. (Revelation 22:1, 2, 17) As anointed ones take the lead in this activity, they display “lowliness of mind” and work ‘to make their calling and choosing sure.’—Ephesians 4:1-3; 2 Peter 1:5-11.

Why We Need Faith and Wisdom

Highlights From the Letter of James

JEHOVAH'S servants need endurance when under trial. They must also avoid conduct that would result in divine disapproval. Such points are emphasized in the letter of James, and doing something positive about them calls for active faith and heavenly wisdom.

The writer of this letter does not identify himself as one of Jesus' two apostles named James but as 'a slave of God and of Christ.' Similarly, Jesus' half brother Jude says he is "a slave of Jesus Christ, but a brother of James." (James 1:1; Jude 1; Matthew 10:2, 3) Hence, Jesus' half brother James evidently wrote the letter bearing his name.—Mark 6:3.

This letter does not mention Jerusalem's destruction in 70 C.E., and the historian Josephus indicates that James was martyred shortly after the death of the Roman procurator Festus in about 62 C.E. Apparently, then, the letter was written before 62 C.E. It was addressed to "the twelve tribes" of spiritual Israel, for it was directed to those holding to "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ."—James 1:1; 2:1; Galatians 6:16.

James uses illustrations that can help us to remember his counsel. For instance, he shows that a man asking God for wisdom should not doubt, "for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and blown about." (1:5-8) Our tongue should be controlled because it can direct our course as a rudder directs a boat. (3:1, 4) And to cope with trials, we need to display patient endurance as does a farmer when awaiting the harvest.—5:7, 8.

Faith, Trials, and Works

James first shows that we can be happy as Christians despite our trials. (1:1-18) Some of these trials, such as illnesses, are common to all humans, but Christians also suffer for being slaves of God and of Christ. Jehovah will grant us the wisdom needed to endure if we keep asking for it in faith. He never tries us with evil things, and we can rely on him to provide what is good.

To receive God's help, we must render worship to him through works that demonstrate our faith. (1:19-2:26) This requires that we be "doers of the word," not mere hearers. We must control the tongue, look after orphans and widows, and remain without spot

from the world. If we favored the rich and disregarded the poor, we would violate "the kingly law" of love. We also need to remember that faith is shown by works, as the examples of Abraham and Rahab well illustrate. Indeed, "faith without works is dead."

Heavenly Wisdom and Prayer

Teachers need both faith and wisdom to discharge their duties. (3:1-18) They have a very heavy responsibility as instructors. Like them, we must control the tongue—something that heavenly wisdom helps us to do.

Wisdom also enables us to realize that yielding to worldly tendencies would damage our relationship with God. (4:1-5:12) If we have fought to attain selfish aims or have condemned our brothers, we need to repent. And how important it is to avoid friendship with this world, for this is spiritual adultery! Let us never ignore God's will by materialistic planning, and may we guard against a spirit of impatience and sighing against one another.

Anyone spiritually sick should seek the help of congregation elders. (5:13-20) If sins have been committed, their prayers and wise counsel will help to restore a repentant sinner's spiritual health. In fact, "he who turns a sinner back from the error of his way will save [the wrongdoer's] soul from [spiritual and eternal] death."

Doers of the Word: We should be "doers of the word, and not hearers only." (James 1:22-25) A mere hearer "is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror." After a brief inspection, he departs "and immediately forgets what sort of man he is." But a 'doer of the word' carefully looks at God's perfect, or complete, law, embracing everything required of a Christian. He "persists in it," continuing to scrutinize that law with a view to making corrections so as to conform to it closely. (Psalm 119:16) How does "a doer of the work" differ from a man who glances into a mirror and forgets what it reveals? Why, the doer puts Jehovah's word to work and enjoys His favor!—Psalm 19:7-11.



Jesus Is Alive!

WHEN the women find Jesus' tomb empty, Mary Magdalene runs off to tell Peter and John. However, the other women evidently remain at the tomb. Soon, an angel appears and invites them inside.

Here the women see yet another angel, and one of the angels says to them: "Do not you be fearful, for I know you are looking for Jesus who was impaled. He is not here, for he was raised up, as he said. Come, see the place where he was lying. And go quickly and tell his disciples that he was raised up from the dead." So with fear and great joy, these women also run off.

By this time, Mary has found Peter and John, and she reports to them: "They have taken away the Lord out of the

memorial tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." Immediately the two apostles take off running. John is fleeter of foot—evidently being younger—and he reaches the tomb first. By this time the women have left, so no one is around. Stooping down, John peers into the tomb and sees the bandages, but he remains outside.

When Peter arrives, he does not hesitate but goes right on in. He sees the bandages lying there and also the cloth used to wrap Jesus' head. It is rolled up in one place. John now also enters the tomb, and he believes Mary's report. But neither Peter nor John grasps that Jesus has been raised up, even though He had often told them that He would be. Puzzled, the two return home, but Mary,

who has come back to the tomb, remains.

In the meantime, the other women are hurrying to tell the disciples that Jesus has been resurrected, as the angels commanded them to do. While they are running along as fast as they can, Jesus meets them and says: "Good day!" Falling at his feet, they do obeisance to him. Then Jesus says: "Have no fear! Go, report to my brothers, that they may go off into Galilee; and there they will see me."

Earlier, when the earthquake occurred and the angels appeared, the soldiers on guard were stunned and became as dead men. Upon recovering, they immediately went into the city and told the chief priests what had happened. After consulting with the "older men" of the Jews, the decision is made to try to hush up the matter by bribing the soldiers. They are instructed: "Say, 'His disciples came in the night and stole him while we were sleeping.'"

Since Roman soldiers may be punished with death for falling asleep at their posts, the priests promise: "If this [report of your falling asleep] gets to the governor's ears, we will persuade him and will set you free from worry." Since the size of the bribe is sufficiently large, the soldiers do as they are instructed. As a result, the false report about the theft of Jesus' body becomes widely spread among the Jews.

Mary Magdalene, who remains behind at the tomb, is overcome by grief. Where could Jesus be? Stooping forward to look into the tomb, she sees the two angels in white, who have reappeared! One is sitting at the head and the other at the foot of where Jesus' body had been lying. "Woman, why are you weeping?" they ask.

"They have taken my Lord away," Mary answers, "and I do not know where they have laid him." Then she turns around and sees someone who repeats the question: "Woman, why are you weeping?" And this one also asks: "Whom are you looking for?"

Imagining this person to be the caretaker of the garden in which the tomb is situated, she says to him: "Sir, if you have carried him off, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."

"Mary!" the person says. And immediately she knows, by the familiar way he speaks to her, it is Jesus. "*Rab-bo'ni!*" (meaning "Teacher!") she exclaims. And with unbounded joy, she grabs hold of him. But Jesus says: "Stop clinging to me. For I have not yet ascended to the Father. But be on your way to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God.'"

Mary now runs to where the apostles and fellow disciples have gathered. She adds her account to the report that the other women have already given about seeing the resurrected Jesus. Yet, these men, who did not believe the first women, apparently do not believe Mary either.
Matthew 28:3-15; Mark 16:5-8; Luke 24:4-12; John 20:2-18.

- ♦ After finding the tomb empty, what does Mary Magdalene do, and what experience do the other women have?
- ♦ How do Peter and John react at finding the tomb empty?
- ♦ What do the other women encounter on their way to report Jesus' resurrection to the disciples?
- ♦ What happens to the soldier guard, and what is the response to their report to the priests?
- ♦ What happens when Mary Magdalene is alone at the tomb, and what is the response of the disciples to the reports of the women?

DECLARING GOOD NEWS IN NEW ZEALAND'S “POLYNESIAN CITY”

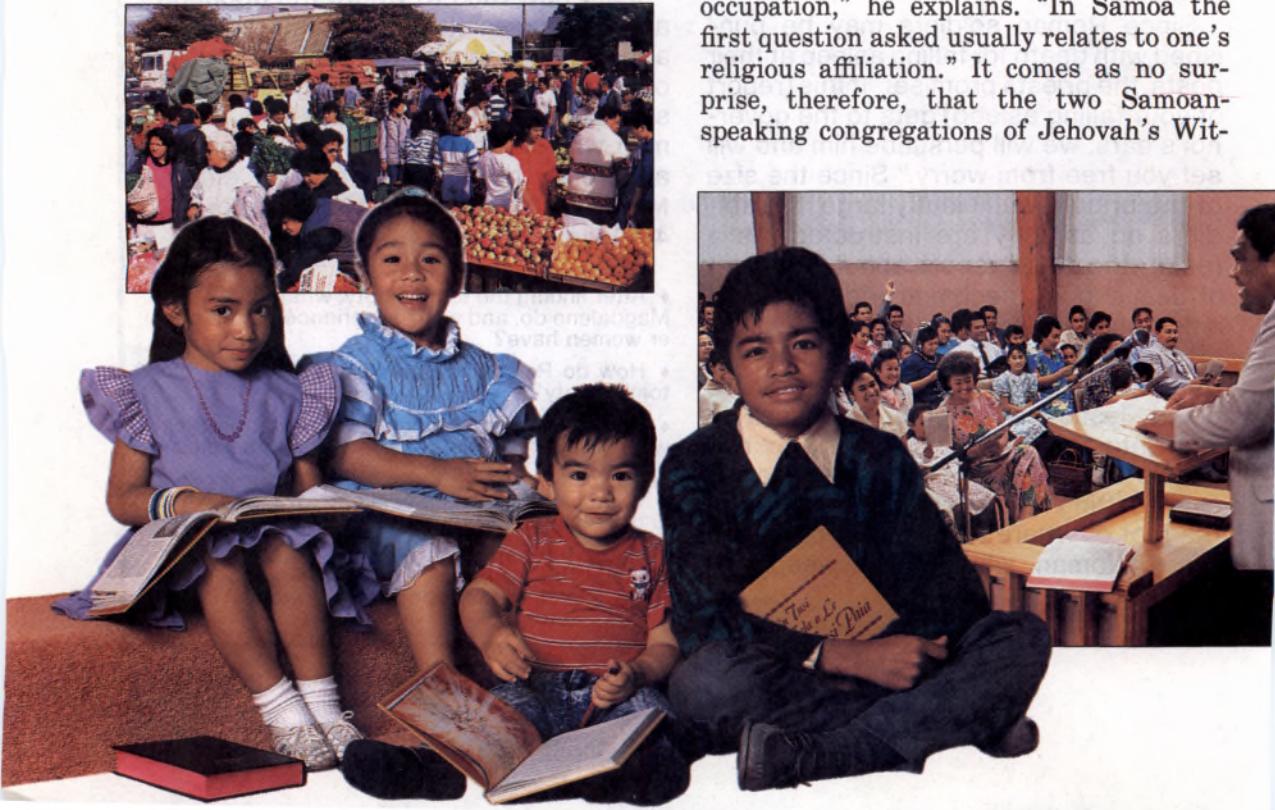
THE World's Largest Polynesian City.” That is what some have called New Zealand's metropolis Auckland. Why? Not just because it is the home of New Zealand's own Polynesians, the Maori, but also because tens of thousands of other Polynesians live there. In recent years, they have emigrated from Western Samoa, the Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue, and other Pacific islands. Why, there are now more Cook Island Maori in New Zealand than in all of the Cook Island group itself! Similarly, Niuean residents in Auckland considerably outnumber those in Niue.

Although these Pacific islanders have moved to Auckland primarily for economic

reasons, they also have other needs to be filled. An important one for these basically Bible-loving people is their spiritual need. (Matthew 5:3) Recognizing this, Jehovah's Witnesses in New Zealand have put forth considerable effort to declare the “good news of the kingdom” among these islanders. (Matthew 24:14) What has been done in this regard, and how have the islanders responded?

The Samoans Making Headway

The comment made by a missionary in Samoa tells us something about the islanders' outlook on spiritual things. “When you first meet someone in New Zealand, it is customary to inquire about his secular occupation,” he explains. “In Samoa the first question asked usually relates to one's religious affiliation.” It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the two Samoan-speaking congregations of Jehovah's Wit-



nesses in Auckland are growing at a much faster pace than the average congregation in New Zealand.

The first Samoan congregation in Auckland was established in 1977. Because of God-given growth, a second one was formed seven years later. (Compare 1 Corinthians 3:6.) In these two congregations, there is a total of 154 Kingdom proclaimers, 12 of whom are active in the full-time ministry. On an average Sunday, more than 275 people attend the Bible-based meetings held at the Kingdom Hall.

The Samoan brothers and sisters take their faith seriously, as is demonstrated by the zeal and determination they show in their Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. (Matthew 28:19, 20) This can be seen from the following experience of a Samoan sister:

In the house-to-house ministry, the sister met a woman who denounced all religions as hypocritical and shut the door. Stunned and frustrated, the sister wondered what to do. 'I cannot leave her thinking that Jehovah's Witnesses are hypocrites,' she thought. So she decided to leave a note. "I briefly explained the Scriptural basis for my work and asked if she would give me time to explain to her the hope that the Bible offers. I also included my phone number."

The sister then went on with her ministry, calling at other homes. As she reached the fourth house along the way, she was given a telephone message to go back to see the woman who had angrily shut the door earlier. "The lady apologized for her initial response," the sister relates, "and expressed appreciation for the note I left. A fruitful discussion followed, and a home Bible study was established."

It is also heartwarming to see the self-sacrificing missionary spirit shown by some of the Samoan Witnesses. One brother and his family moved from Auckland to

Wellington in 1981 to help the small group working among the Samoan population there. From a nucleus of 11 Kingdom publishers at that time, a congregation of 47 has developed. "The rewards far outweighed the sacrifices," said the brother. Recently, he and his family have answered the 'Macedonian call' and have moved back to Western Samoa. (Acts 16:9, 10) Others too have returned to their former places of residence and have taken up special pioneer, missionary, or Bethel service.

The Niuean Response

The preaching work is also moving ahead among the Niueans in Auckland. The traveling overseer reports: "In the house-to-house ministry, it is customary to be invited in. The family Bible is usually close at hand, and it is considered the normal thing to discuss it."

There is now a very active Niuean congregation in Auckland. During a visit of the traveling overseer last year, the 76 Kingdom publishers associated with it were able to welcome 127 people to the public Bible lecture on Sunday. And there is a fine spirit among the brothers and sisters.

"The visit is viewed as a special week of encouragement for all," observes the traveling overseer. "Each meal is a congregation affair. And these are occasions for serving such Niuean favorites as *takihi* (a dish of papaws [papayas], taros [a tropical root vegetable], and coconut cream wrapped in banana leaves), *pitako* (a loaf made from taros, bananas, and tapioca), and *punu povi* (canned corned beef), sometimes jokingly referred to as the islanders' porterhouse steak."

Polynesian-Language Publications

To satisfy the spiritual needs of the Polynesian population in Auckland and elsewhere, the Watch Tower Society has

arranged to produce a number of Bible publications in the Polynesian languages. For example, the Rarotongan, or Cook Island Maori, *Watchtower* is published semi-monthly. The monthly Niuean *Watchtower* is also well received. Circulation of the Rarotongan and Niuean editions of *The Watchtower* is currently about 1,000 copies each, and some 900 copies of the Samoan edition are now being circulated in New Zealand.

In addition to *The Watchtower*, a number of books and brochures are available in various Polynesian languages. The book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, published in Niuean in 1989, is the first publication in that language providing an understanding of basic Bible teachings. Particularly effective in the Cook Island Maori (Rarotongan) field is the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* in that language. Virtually all home Bible studies are conducted with the help of that book. "Testifying to its being an effective teaching aid," observes an elder, "is the readiness with which the students start attending congregation meetings."

In addition to their usual house-to-house distribution of these publications, Jehovah's people place much literature in what could be called flea-market witnessing. Because of the Polynesian population explosion in Auckland in recent years, large markets with temporary stalls specializing in Pacific Island foods and crafts have cropped up. As many as 25,000 people may come to such a market on a Saturday morning. Making wise use of this opportunity, the Witnesses go to these markets and talk to the stall owners and the shoppers about God's Kingdom.

Through their ministry, Jehovah's Witnesses have been able to sow abundant Kingdom seed and place large amounts of Bible literature with the Polynesian people. The Watch Tower Society's branch

office reports that during the 1990 service year, 23,928 pieces of Polynesian-language literature were shipped from the factory.

Rejoicing at One Spiritual Table

Being conscious of their spiritual need, the Polynesian Witnesses place high priority on attending the weekly Christian meetings at the Kingdom Halls, as well as attending their assemblies and conventions. (Hebrews 10:23-25) At the "Divine Justice" District Convention held in Auckland in December 1988, separate sessions were held in Samoan, Niuean, and Cook Island Maori. A highlight of the Samoan program was a well-rehearsed and enthusiastic Bible drama. Auckland's Niuean and Cook Island Witnesses demonstrated their Christian hospitality by serving as gracious hosts to visitors from their native islands. The convention proved to be an occasion for feasting and rejoicing at Jehovah's spiritual table. At the 1990 "Pure Language" Convention in Auckland, a peak of 503 attended the Samoan sessions.

Positive response to the Kingdom message is clear evidence that people from the South Pacific Polynesian islands have been 'waiting for Jehovah's law.' (Compare Isaiah 42:4, 12.) In turn, they joyously share in declaring the good news in New Zealand's "Polynesian city."

In Our Next Issue

■ Is It Later Than You Think?

■ Mankind's Search for God

■ Counting the Cost of Moving
to an Affluent Land

Questions From Readers

- Which Bible writer was a "general," as mentioned in the book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?**

That helpful book about God's Word says on page 10: "The Bible is also unique because of the claim made by many of its writers. Some 40 individuals, including kings, shepherds, fishermen, civil servants, priests, at least one general, and a physician, had a hand in writing the different parts of the Bible. But time and again, the writers made the same claim: that they were writing not their own thoughts but God's."

Some have asked which Bible writers were identified with those various professions or activities. In this regard, please consider the following:

Kings: A number of Bible writers were kings. David and Solomon may come to mind most readily. (Psalm 3, superscription; Proverbs 1:1; Ecclesiastes 1:1) However, the song in Isaiah 38: 10-20 was written by Hezekiah. (Verse 9) Many scholars believe that he also composed Psalm 119, perhaps before becoming king. And Hezekiah played a role in compiling Proverbs chapters 25-29. (Proverbs 25:1) The last chapter of Proverbs was prepared by "Lemuel the king." Some identify him with King Hezekiah, though others think that Lemuel was King Solomon.—Proverbs 31:1.

Shepherds: David and the prophet Amos worked as shepherds. (1 Samuel 16:11-13; 17: 15, 28, 34; Amos 1:1) Amos wrote the Bible book bearing his name, and David composed numerous psalms. The famous Psalm 23 certainly reflects Da-

vid's familiarity with shepherding.

Fishermen: Of Jesus' apostles who were fishermen, John and Peter were later inspired to write books of the Bible. (Matthew 4: 18-22) Under divine inspiration John penned a Gospel account as well as three letters and the book of Revelation. Peter wrote two inspired letters.

Civil servants: Both Daniel and Nehemiah were civil servants of foreign governments that exercised authority over God's people. (Nehemiah 1:1, 11; 2:1, 2; Daniel 1:19; 2:49; 6:1-3) Two Bible books bear the names of these men.

Priests: Two of God's prophets used to pen Bible books were priests. They were Jeremiah and Ezekiel. (Jeremiah 1:1; Ezekiel

1:1-3) Additionally, Ezra was an Aaronic priest who "was a skilled copyist in the law of Moses." He "prepared his heart to consult the law of Jehovah and to do it and to teach in Israel regulation and justice."—Ezra 7:1-6, 10, 11.

General: The role Joshua played in leading the army as the Israelites moved into the Promised Land and battled against many enemy peoples qualifies him as a general. (Joshua 1:1-3; 11:5, 6) He was privileged to write the book of Joshua. Then, too, some Bible readers may view David as a man who functioned as a general before he became a king.—1 Samuel 19:8; 23:1-5.

Physician: Finally, Colossians 4:14 mentions "Luke the beloved physician." Luke wrote the Gospel bearing his name, and evidently Acts of Apostles as well.



* Published in 1989 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

Remain Solid in the Faith!

Highlights From First Peter

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES face various trials, or tests of their faith. In some lands, their Kingdom-preaching work is done in the face of great persecution. Behind these and other efforts to destroy their relationship with God is Satan the Devil. But he will not succeed, for Jehovah makes his servants firm—yes, solid in the faith.

The apostle Peter was privileged to 'strengthen his brothers' who were being "grieved by various trials." (Luke 22:32; 1 Peter 1:6, 7) He did so in his first letter, written about 62-64 C.E. from Babylon. In it Peter counseled, comforted, and encouraged Jewish and Gentile Christians, helping them to withstand Satan's assaults and remain "solid in the faith." (1 Peter 1:1, 2; 5:8, 9) Now that the Devil's time is short and his attacks so vicious, surely Jehovah's people can benefit from Peter's inspired words.

Conduct Based on Godly Principles

Whether our hope is heavenly or earthly, it should help us to endure trials and act in a godly way. (1:1-2;12) The hope of a heavenly inheritance causes anointed ones to rejoice in the face of trials, which actually refine their faith. As a spiritual house built on the foundation of Christ, they offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God and conduct themselves in a fine manner that brings Him glory.

Our dealings with all fellow humans should be governed by godly principles. (2:13-3:12) Peter showed that we should be in subjection to human rulers. House servants were to be subject to their masters, and wives to their husbands. A Christian wife's godly conduct might win her unbelieving husband over to the true faith. And a believing husband should 'assign his wife honor as to a weaker vessel.' All Christians should show fellow feeling, have brotherly affection, do what is good, and pursue peace.

Endurance Brings Blessings

True Christians' faithful endurance of suffering will result in blessings. (3:13-4:19) If we suffer for righteousness' sake, we should be happy. Moreover, since Christ suffered in the flesh to lead us to God, we should no longer live according to fleshly desires. If we endure trials faithfully, we will share in great rejoicing at Jesus' revelation. Bearing reproach for Christ's name, or as his disciples, should make us happy because it proves that we have Jehovah's spirit. So as we suffer in accord with God's will, let us commend ourselves to him and continue to do good.

As Christians, we need to discharge our duties faithfully and humble ourselves under God's mighty hand. (5:1-14) Elders must shepherd God's flock willingly, and all of us should throw our anxiety upon Jehovah, realizing that he really cares for us. We also need to take our stand against the Devil and never become disheartened, for our brothers undergo the same sufferings we do. Always remember that Jehovah God will make us firm and will enable us to remain solid in the faith.

Feminine Adornment: In counsel to Christian women, Peter said: "Do not let your adornment be that of the external braiding of the hair and of the putting on of gold ornaments or the wearing of outer garments, but let it be the secret person of the heart in the incorruptible apparel of the quiet and mild spirit, which is of great value in the eyes of God." (1 Peter 3:3, 4) During the first century C.E., pagan women often had elaborate coiffures, plaiting their long hair into ostentatious designs and setting gold ornaments in the braids. Likely, many did so as a showy display—something unbecoming to Christians. (1 Timothy 2:9, 10) Yet, not all adornment is wrong, for Peter includes "the wearing of outer garments"—clearly a necessity. Jewelry was also used by God's servants of ancient times. (Genesis 24:53; Exodus 3:22; 2 Samuel 1:24; Jeremiah 2:32; Luke 15:22) However, a Christian woman wisely avoids gaudy ornaments and sensuous attire and should be careful that any use of cosmetics is tasteful. The point of the apostolic counsel is that she should place emphasis, not on outward, but on inward adornment. To be truly attractive, she must dress modestly and have the disposition of one fearing God.—Proverbs 31:30; Micah 6:8.



Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums; Israel Museum/David Harris

Pay Attention to God's Prophetic Word!

Highlights From Second Peter

JEHOVAH'S prophetic word, or message, is like a lamp shining in a dark place, and true Christians need to pay strict attention to it. That is not easy when false teachers try to promote apostasy. But it can be done with divine help. And we must steadfastly adhere to God's word if we are to survive the rapidly approaching day of Jehovah.

The apostle Peter's second inspired letter can help us to pay attention to God's prophetic word. Peter wrote this epistle perhaps from Babylon in about 64 C.E. In his letter he champions God's truth, warns fellow believers of the thief-like coming of Jehovah's day, and helps his readers not to be led away by

the error of law-defying people. Since the day of Jehovah is nearly upon us, we can benefit greatly from Peter's inspired words.

Trust in the Prophetic Word

As Christians, we need to exert ourselves to display godly qualities and must pay attention to the prophetic word. (1:1-21) To avoid becoming inactive or unfruitful, we need to 'supply to our faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godly devotion, brotherly affection, and love.' When Peter saw Jesus transfigured and heard God speak about Christ on that occasion, the prophetic word was made more sure. (Mark 9:1-8) To that divinely inspired word we need to pay attention.

Guard Against Apostates

By paying strict attention to God's prophetic word, we can guard against apostates and other corrupt individuals. (2:1-22) Peter warned that false teachers would infiltrate the congregation. However, Jehovah would render adverse judgment against these apostates, even as he judged the disobedient angels, the ungodly world of Noah's day, and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The false teachers despise God-given authority and entice the weak to join them in wrongdoing. It would have been better for such apostates not to have known "the path of righteousness than after knowing it accurately to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them."

Jehovah's Day Is Coming!

As those paying attention to the prophetic word in these last days, we must not allow ourselves to be influenced by ridiculers who mock the message about Jesus' presence. (3:1-18) They forget that the God who has purposed to destroy this system of things destroyed the pre-Flood world. Jehovah's patience should not be viewed as slowness, for he wants people to repent. This system will be destroyed in "the day of Jehovah" and will be replaced by the 'new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness is to dwell.' Therefore, we should do our utmost to be "spotless and unblemished and in peace." Instead of being misled by false teachers, let us grow in knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Let us take Peter's words to heart. Never fail to be on guard against false teachers. Live with an awareness that Jehovah's day is coming soon. And always pay attention to God's prophetic word.

Thrown Into Tartarus: Jehovah "did not hold back from punishing the angels that sinned, but, by throwing them into Tartarus, delivered them to pits of dense darkness to be reserved for judgment." (2 Peter 2:4) This is not the mythological Tartarus represented in Homer's *Iliad* as an underground place where lesser false gods, Cronus and other Titan spirits, were imprisoned. The Biblical Tartarus is the abased, prisonlike condition into which God threw the disobedient angels in Noah's day. (Genesis 6:1-8; 1 Peter 3:19, 20; Jude 6) "Dense darkness" results from their being cut off from spiritual light by God as outcasts from his family. As those reserved for his adverse judgment, they have only a dark outlook. Tartarus is a precursor of the abyssing that Satan and his demons will experience before the start of Christ's Thousand Year Reign. Their destruction will occur after Jesus' Millennial Rule.

—Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10, 14.



National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece
Zeus cast lesser gods into a mythological Tartarus

Millions Are Going. Are You?

Going where? To the annual observance of the death of Jesus Christ.

In 1990 a worldwide total of 9,950,058 attended.

Why do people go? Because of what the death of Christ means for humankind.

It means imminent relief from sickness, suffering, and death.

Even dead loved ones will be resurrected to life on an earth restored to Paradise.

How can the death of Jesus bring such blessings? You are invited to find out.

Jehovah's Witnesses welcome you to join them during this important event.

Attend at the Kingdom Hall nearest to your home.

This year the date is Saturday, March 30, after sunset.

Check with the Witnesses locally for the exact time.

